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Check GSP forgery to maintain Euro markets

European Commission deadline ends Oct 30

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Forgery of documents by a section of foreign investors is causing a loss to the local fabric industry and could put at risk Generalised System of Preference (GSP) facilities the country enjoys in European markets.

The garments exporters called upon the authorities concerned for measures to stop such a forgery and making an arrangement to comply with the new format provided by the European Commission (EC) to put an end to the malpractice before the extended time that expires on October 30.

The EC under the GSP offers lower tariffs or duty-free access for imports from 178 developing countries and territories, including Bangladesh, into the European Union (EU) markets.

To avail the facilities, a firm has to strictly follow the EC rules titled 'Rules of Origin' that makes it obligatory to use raw materials from EU countries or produced at the GSP beneficiary country itself.

But a section of dishonest entrepreneurs, including several companies from the countries

that do not enjoy GSP facility, import raw materials from China, Korea, Hong Kong and Taiwan and use fake certificates while export their products to European countries, sources said.

As per the EC Rules of Origin, in case of any such forgery GSP issued through manipulation of documents as well as the registration (bond license) will be cancelled.

The exporters said delay in action against forgery had prompted the EC to bring changes in some customs recently.

European Anti-fraud Office (OLAF) instructed all the national customs authorities in the EU member countries to inspect the authenticity of Origin Form A (GSP Forms) for all products imported from Bangladesh before providing GSP facilities, said the sources.

Accordingly the Foreign Trade Association (FTA) of Brussels also informed the EU member states of the changes asking for submission of a preventative payment bond.

The submitted bond (bank guarantee) for 12 per cent of the normal Most Favoured Nation (MFN) rate will be refunded only

after the GSP forms are found valid to release the facilities, said the sources.

The buyers, who will have to submit the bonds, have already started asking their exporters in Bangladesh for making arrangements for forthcoming buying trips and offer price accordingly, said an owner of a garments factory at Chittagong Export Processing Zone preferring anonymity.

Following a request from the exporters and the government of Bangladesh, the EC, however, agreed to postpone the customs changes until October 30 to comply with the new format of GSP forms to stop forgery.

BGMEA First Vice-president MA Salam said, "EC has instructed for inspecting the authenticity of Origin Form A (GSP Forms) since the time given to make arrangement for complying with the new format of GSP form expired around two months ago." "With the time extended until 30, the preventative bond won't have to be submitted during this time," he said.

"We expect an end to the malpractice as imposition of 12 per cent bank guarantee will discourage

the EU buyers in importing our products and cause the export volume decline," he said.

Absence of stern action encouraged the dishonest entrepreneurs and foreign companies to indulge in GSP forgery in compliance with a section of government officials.

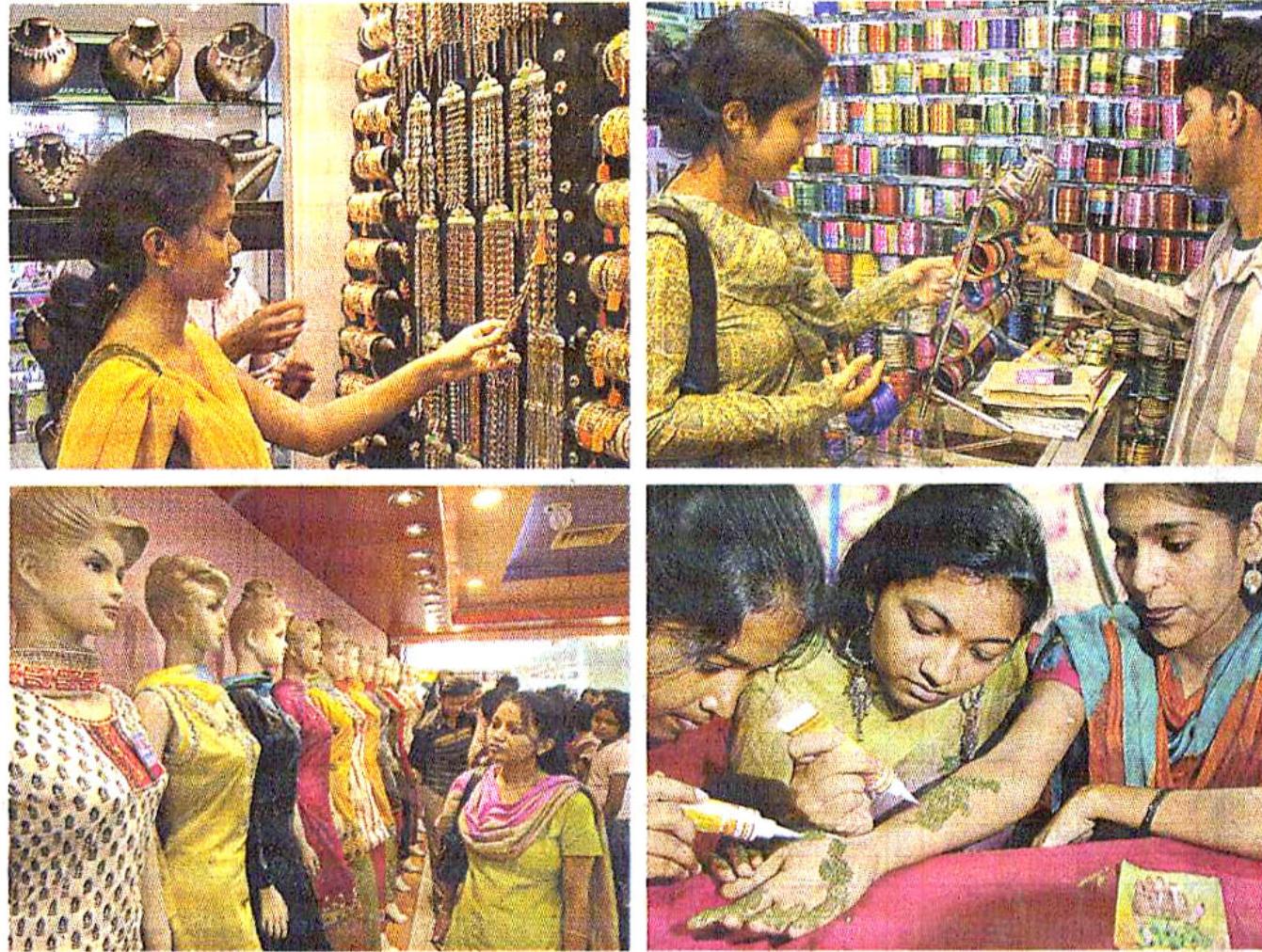
In this respect exporters referred to the repeated incidents of such malpractice by a Korean company for availing of GSP benefits using fake certificates.

A probe committee comprising Export Promotion Bureau (EPB), Commerce Ministry, Bangladesh Export Processing Zone Authority (BEPZA), and BGMEA found a Korean company at CEPZ had availed GSP facility of 3.5 million US dollar (equivalent to Tk 25 crore) through seven fake GSP forms during the year 1998 to 1999.

EPB awarded the company engaged in manufacturing and exporting tents a mere financial penalty of Tk 50,000 for forging seals and signs of its officials.

The company along with another company, owned by same group, also obtained 12 fake GSP certificates from January 4 to March 19 this year.

SHOPPING FEVER FOR EID



Shoppers crowd the popular malls in the port city ahead of the Eid. Young girls admire ornaments at a jeweller at Sunmar Ocean City, top left, bangles at a shop of Central Plaza, top right, and dresses of latest design, bottom left, while others busy with decorative hands with Mehedi (henna) at Sunmar Ocean City.

People at wit's end over power outage

Port city experiences loadshedding 15 to 20 times a day

SHAHIDUL ISLAM

Frequent power outage with an average daily loadshedding of around 150MW has been wreaking havoc on city life in Chittagong since the beginning of the holy month of Ramadan.

Vast areas of the city, especially the densely-populated localities, remained plunged into darkness for six to ten hours in several phases of power outage everyday. The erratic power supply is hampering production in industries, including garments and frozen

food sectors.

After second or third day of the Ramadan, large number of city dwellers at Bakalia, Chawk Bazar, Kapashgola, Bakuratala, Sholoshahar, Bohaddarhat, Anderkilla, Dewan Bazar, Muradpur, MM Ali Road, Halishahar, Kattali, Pahartali, Madarbari, Pathantri, Dewanhat, Oxygen and Jalalabad areas are feeling the pinch of the loadshedding to great extent.

Of these areas, the situation at West, East and South Bakalia, Chawk Bazar, Kapashgola,

Bakuratala and Dewan Bazar under Bakalia Sub-Division of the Power Development Board (PDB) are the worst and power outage pushes the residents to an unbearable state during the last few days.

The areas, the most densely-populated in Chittagong, on an average face loadshedding for eight to ten hours daily. In daytime, supply of power in Bakalia Sub-Division areas trips at least four to six times while blackout transcends the areas for 15 to 20 times from Iftar to Sehri, since the first Ramadan.

"The PDB is not only playing a discriminatory role as far as 'even' power supply is concerned but also taxing our patience," said Shahidul Islam, commissioner of West Bakalia Ward of Chittagong City Corporation (CCC).

He said power cut has gone beyond the limit of patience from the second day of Ramadan and the sub-division engineers hardly respond to their complaints.

Syed Golam Haider Mintu, ward commissioner of Chawk Bazar, expressed strong ire over

poor and unpredictable supply of power in his localities by the PDB.

"In comparison to other areas in the city, what the PDB is doing with its consumers under Bakalia Sub-Division is in fact an step-motherly attitude," MA Taher, vice-chairman of Tea Traders Association of Bangladesh (TTAB) told The Daily Star on Sunday.

He said power cuts at night especially during Iftar and Sehri have become a routine in Bakalia Sub-Division areas.

Admitting the crisis,

Executive Engineer of Bakalia Mintu Ranjan Chowdhury said the sub-division is an 'Under Frequency Zone' in Chittagong due to its density and huge power consumption. He said whenever the PDB requires a scheduled loadshedding the axe used to fall on this sub-division that ultimately worsens the situation here.

"The situation is likely to improve soon as the PDB has lifted the 'Under Frequency Zone' consideration last week.

Total generation of all 11 plants in Chittagong, including

five units of Kaptai Hydroelectric Power Project, is supposed to be 766MW if they function to the full capacity. The demand here is 575 to 580 MW in peak hours but for last two weeks Chittagong was getting, more or less, 420 to 430 MW.

Moniruzzaman, public relations officer of the PDB, said the power plants are not able to go to their full capacity for non-availability of sufficient gas supply.

"Two units of 210MW Raozan Power Plant now produce only 220MW against its regular pro-

duction capacity of 360 MW while one of the units at Shikalbha Barge-mounted Plant on the south bank of river Karnaphuli is out of order since September 23. These factors alongside inadequate gas supply from Sangu are causing loadshedding of, more or less, 150MW everyday," he said.

The PDB officials, however, said the plants in Chittagong region need immediate and proper overhauling, replacement of some key machineries and expansion of electricity lines to get rid of the situation.

the week that was

Boutique fair begins

A 15-day "Boutique Fair" began on the Bangladesh Women Association (BWA) premises in the port city on Friday.

Chittagong Women Chamber of Commerce and Industries (CWCCI) organised the fair aiming to marketing the products of woman entrepreneurs.

BWA Chittagong President Quamrun Malek inaugurated the fair while CWCCI President Monwara Hakim Ali, Senior Vice-President Khaleda Awal and other CWCCI leaders were present.

A good number of boutique shops of the port city took part in the fair while Eid dresses of renowned fashion designers were displayed in it welcoming the World Tourism Month and Eid-Ul-Fitr.

The fair will remain open for all from 10.00am to 10.00pm everyday until the Eid day.

22 Unilever staffs awarded

"Good and Long Service Award" and "Chairman Kaizen Award" giving ceremony of Unilever Bangladesh Limited was held at its factory in the Kalurhati Industrial Area in the port city on Thursday.

The company Chairman and Managing Director Rakesh Mohon handed over crests among the awardees as the chief guest.

Supply Chain Director Imran Momin, Finance Director Mahtab Uddin Ahmed, Technical Services

Manager Inam Ahmed, Employees' Union President AM Shahidul Alam and General Secretary Selim Enayet spoke at the function with General Factory Manager Rajib Barua in the chair.

Rakesh congratulated the awardees and praised them for their hard work.

He said efforts of the awardees will encourage other employees to express their latent talents.

This year, eight officers and employees were awarded "Good and Long service Award" for their contribution during their 25-year of service in the company while 14 others got "Good service Award" for contribution during their 15-year of service.

Besides, one official and 14 employees got "Chairman Kaizen Award" for 2006.

Meanwhile, winners of the competition titled "Five S" held in July under total productive maintenance (TPM) programme in the company and children of the officers and employees, who achieved outstanding results in the HSC examinations, were also awarded in the ceremony.

'Ensure rights of children with disabilities'

Speakers at a view exchange meeting emphasised the need for ensuring social dignity, education, sports and recreation as well as rights for the children with disabilities.

They called upon all to come forward for removing the discrimination among the children with a view to protecting the rights of the children

with disabilities.

They were addressing the meeting organised by Centre for Disabilities Concern (CDC) on the occasion of "World Children's Day" at the CDC Training Centre at Dampara in the port city.

The speakers said if the children with disabilities get opportunities like other children they will be able to express their latent talents.

Prof Ataur Rahman was the main speaker in the meeting where CDC Executive Director Selim Nazrul,

other organisers, trainers and guardians were present.

Drishti training begins

A weeklong training for the members of Drishti, an educational and cultural organisation, began at its Office at Lusal Bhaban at Momin Road in the port city on Friday.

Former president of the organisa-

tion and composer Shahin Anwar inaugurated the training session where the Daily Bhorer Kagoj Chittagong Bureau Chief Omar Kaiser conducted the training on news report writing and Drishti General Secretary Saif Chowdhury on leadership development and increasing organisational efficiency.

Drishti President Masud Bakul presided over the inaugural function. Saif Chowdhury, Joint Secretary Shahidul Islam and former publicity secretary Banakusham Barua spoke

among others.

A total of 47 members took part in the training.

Body to observe Mahbubul Alam's birth anniversary

A committee was formed to observe the eightieth birth anniversary of language veteran Poet Mahbubul Alam Chowdhury.

Eminent Scientist Prof Dr Jamal Nazrul Islam, local daily Dainik Azadi Editor MA Malek and Artist Mahbub Hasan were elected president, executive president and general secretary of the committee at a preparatory meeting on Saturday.

AKM Emdadul Islam, Advocate Rana Das Gupta and Nurjahan Khan were elected co-chairmen, journalist Nasiruddin Chowdhury coordinator, artist Ranjit Raksit and Prof Shimul Barua joint secretary, Riaz Haider publicity and publication secretary, Anup Biswas finance secretary and Shaukat Bangali office secretary.

Poet Kamalesh Das Gupta, dramatist Pradip Dewanjee, Ahmed Iqbal Haider, M Saiful Alam, Khairul Anwar, Rashid Mamun, Dipen Chowdhury, Ahsanul Kabir Riton, Saidul Islam and Pranab Chowdhury were present at the meeting.

Contribution of Pritilata recalled

Speakers at a discussion said the revolutionary characters of the independent movement against British imperialism could still show the way of enlightenment for the young generation.

They said this at a discussion marking the 75th self-sacrifice anniversary of Pritilata Waddedar on Friday.

Pritilata Almathuri Dibas Uddapan Parishad organised the meeting at Studio Theatre.

Educationist Shila Momen was the chief guest at the meeting with the Parishad Member Secretary Parvin Akhter in the chair.

Prof Hossain Kabir, Saifuzzaman Shakan, Ayesha Parvin Rimi and Popy Chakma also spoke at the meeting.

The speakers said young generation could not learn about the moral teachings of those heroic characters.

Tribute paid to Yusuf Chy

Speakers at a meeting paid tribute to Mohammad Yusuf Chowdhury, founder of the local Daily Purbokone.

They said Yusuf Chowdhury will remain immortal for his contribution to social development, education and culture of this region.

Raozan Samity, Chittagong Metropolitan unit organised the meeting at Muslim Institute Hall on Monday.

The speakers said Yusuf Chowdhury was a pioneer in printing and newspaper industry in Chittagong.

Local daily Azadi Editor MA Malek presided over the meeting. Acting Chittagong City Corporation (CCC) Mayor M Manjur Alam, Assistant Indian High Commissioner Subrata Bhattacharya, Bangladesh Federal Union of Journalists (BFU) former President Iqbal Sobhan Chowdhury, the Daily Purbokone Editor Architect Taslim Uddin Chowdhury, Chittagong Press Club President Ali Abbas and Chittagong Union of Journalists (CUJ) General Secretary Reaz Haider addressed the meeting.

Yusuf Chowdhury passed away in Saudi Arabia on September 9 while performing Umrah.



Aparajeo Bangladesh, a non-government organisation, takes out a colourful procession, marking the Child Rights Week '07 on Saturday.

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