



...achilles' heel

FROM PAGE 29

The image of the industry also improves in the world market if the workers are provided with their basic rights. It has been

found that when child labour was abolished from our garment industry during 1995/96, it has had a very positive effect on the industry

since it has improved the image of this industry in the world. Because of which a lot of foreign investment have flowed into this industry. Similarly, if

the workers are provided with other basic rights, along with the cost of labour, productivity and profitability of garment manufacturing will also increase. Therefore, garment manufacturers should not be afraid that they would lose comparative advantages on labour as a result of the rise in the cost of labor.

However, it is not the sole responsibility of the owner to provide garment workers with their basic rights. It is also the responsibility of the GOB, multinational buyers and even of the international agencies working in Bangladesh. Besides, NGOs, trade unions, women's organisations and finally the workers themselves, are also responsible for playing a role in providing basic rights of the workers. If everyone can work together, then it would be easy to provide the garment workers with their basic rights.

To provide workers with their basic rights and to protect these rights are primarily responsibilities of the government of a country since the owners always try to maximise their profit, even if it comes at the cost of denying workers' rights. The government also needs to take proper and urgent steps to address the problems facing the garment owners such as lack of gas and electricity, lack of proper infrastructure, lack of banking and port facilities, lack of transport and road communication etc.

A healthy and cordial worker-employer relationship is one of the most effective ways to refrain the workers from getting involved in any violent activities to attain their rights. Through this relationship employers can understand the problems facing the workers and the workers also can understand the difficulties of the employers. Other than providing the workers with their basic rights, some social steps should be taken for a healthy worker-employer relationship. The two parties should sit for a regular meeting every two to three months to discuss each other's problems and difficulties. A yearly cultural program can also be arranged jointly by the owners and workers. Allowing workers to form trade unions is another effective way of improving the worker-employer relationship.

Perhaps, the most effective way to refrain the garment workers from making any agitation and unrest is to instill a sense of belonging among them regarding their factory. For this purpose, the employ-



ers must distribute a part of the ownership of their factories among the workers through selling of factory's share among them. Researches have shown that the garment workers, particularly the female garment workers have high propensity to save. Therefore, the garment workers have the ability to buy shares of their factories if these are sold in small block.

Multinational buying companies have played a major role in helping the employed in the garment workers to obtain some rights currently enjoyed, by monitoring of compliance of labour standards in the garment factories. If these multinational buyers can implement their code of conduct and monitor compliance of labour standards in the factories doing sub-contract work, then most of the workers would be able to enjoy their basic rights.

In the past few years, various NGOs working in Bangladesh have taken some steps to provide and protect the rights of the garment workers. The scope of work of these NGOs has to be expanded and more NGOs have to come forward to help garment workers obtain their rights. The GOB can take some steps in the national budget that would encourage NGOs to come forward to help the garment workers.

To obtain labour rights, workers have to demand for it in an organized way. For this purpose the workers have to organise themselves and have to earn the trust of the owners that their organisation is composed solely of garment workers and no one from outside the industry is either associated with it or can influence it. They have to treat the factory as their own and should protect all assets owned by the factory. Moreover, the workers must understand the difficulties and problems

faced by the owners. If the workers understand the owners' problems, the owners in turn will

understand the problems faced by them. The whole process has to be done with mutual respect

and understanding.

The author is, Senior Research Fellow, BIDS...



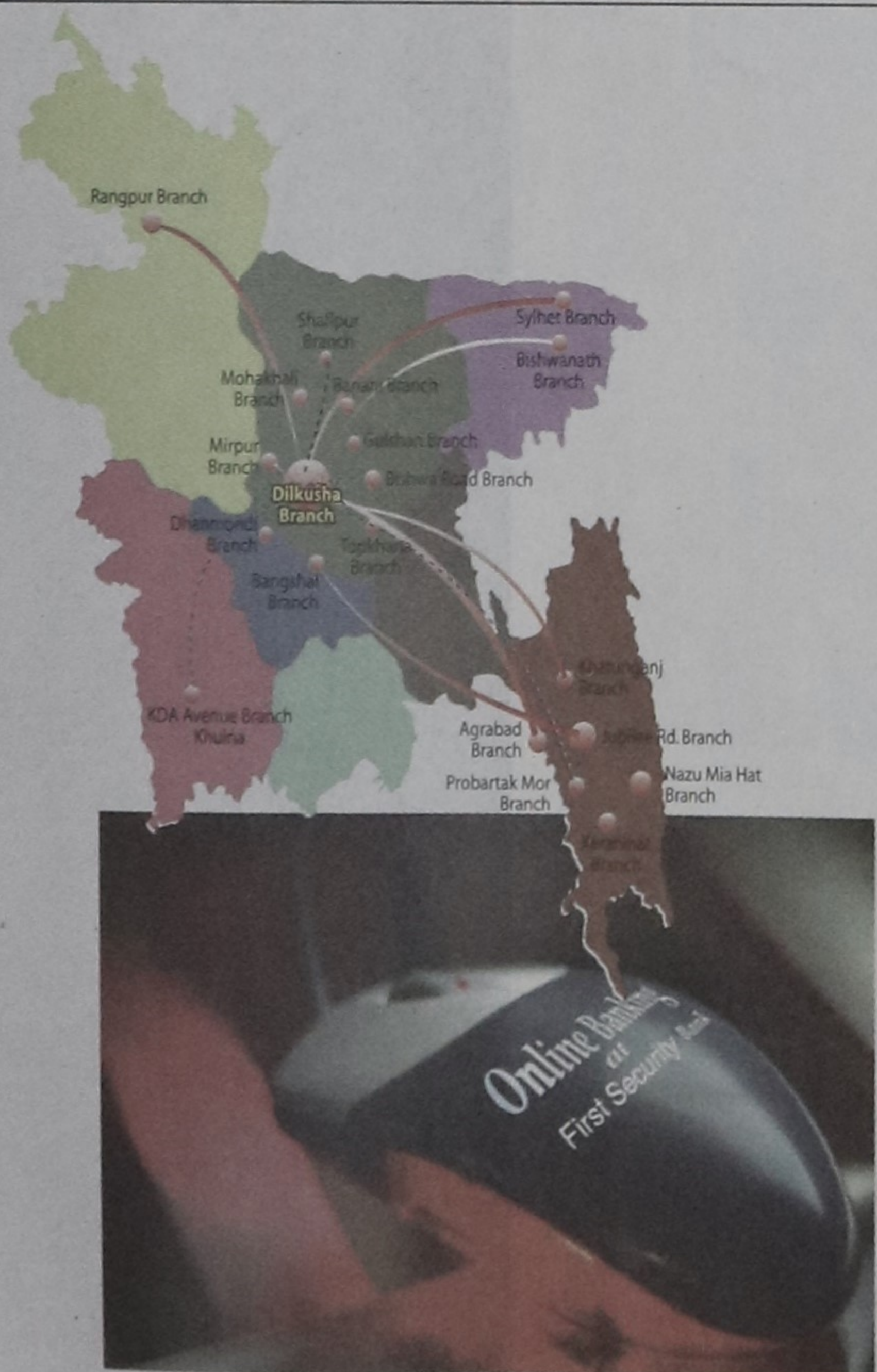
Novartis (Bangladesh) Limited

Novartis is a world leader in offering medicines to protect health, treat disease and improve well-being. Our goal is to discover, develop and successfully market innovative products to treat patients, ease suffering and enhance the quality of life. Novartis is the only company with leadership positions in both patented and generic pharmaceuticals. Headquartered in Basel, Switzerland, Novartis Group companies employ about 96,000 people and operate in over 140 countries around the world.

Novartis has manufacturing and marketing operation in Bangladesh since 1973 in areas of Research, Off Patent Branded Generic (Sandoz), and OTC Pharmaceuticals, along with Animal Health.



Novartis (Bangladesh) Limited
House 50, Road 2A, Dhanmondi, Dhaka



Wherever you are, you can bank with us...

FIRST SECURITY BANK LIMITED

Head Office: 23 Dikusha C/A, Dhaka-1000, PABX: 9560229 (Hunting), Fax: 880-2-9561637

web: www.fsbibd.com

Manufacturer and Exporter of Quality Offset Printing Ink



ISO 9001 : 2000 Certified

TOKA INK BANGLADESH LIMITED

A JOINT VENTURE INDUSTRY OF BANGLADESH AND JAPAN

2 DIT Avenue (Extn.) Motijheel C.A. Dhaka 1000 Bangladesh

Tel: 9568888, 9554143 Fax: 8802-9568887

উড়ে চলুন ভাবনাহীন নতুন দিগন্তে

ডিপোজিট স্কীমে

১ বছরে ১৩.০০% ২ বছরে ১৩.২৫% ৩ বছরে ১৩.৩৫% এবং

৫ই বছর পেরলেই দ্বিগুন

PHOENIX

মাসিক, ত্রৈমাসিক, মাসাধিক ভিত্তিতে মুনাম্বা অগ্রীম মুনাম্বা ও ৯ বছরে ৩ গুন মুনাম্বা স্কীম



ফিনিট্র ফাইন্যান্স এন্ড ইনভেস্টমেন্টস লিমিটেড

হেড অফিস: ইউনিস সেন্টার (লেভেল-১১), ৫২-৫৩, দিলকুশা বা/এ, ঢাকা, ফোন: ৯৫৬৯০০৭, ৯৫৫৫৮৫, ফ্যাক্স: ৯৫৬৭৭৮৭, চট্টগ্রাম শাখা: আইডিসি ট্রেড সেন্টার (৩য় তলা), ১২৬৯/বি, শেখ মুজিব রোড, আগারগাঁও বা/এ, চট্টগ্রাম, ফোন: ৭১০০৮৯, ০১৮১৯-৩২৪০৩১, ০১৮১৯-৩২৪০৩২, ফ্যাক্স: ৩১-৭১০০৮৯, খুলনা শাখা: ২এ, কে. ডি. এ. এডিনিউ, ফাতেমা টাওয়ার, খুলনা, ফোন: ০৪১-৮১২২৯২৪, ০২৭১৫-০১৮৫৫৬, ফ্যাক্স: ৪১-৮১২২৯৩১, বগুড়া শাখা: শেখ হাজা (৩য় তলা), হোটিং নং- ২১০৩, সুহাসপুর, শেরপুর রোড, বগুড়া, ফোন: ০৫১-৬৯৮২৮, ০১৮১৯-৭৭০০০২, ০১৮১৯-৭১০৭৮৯, ফ্যাক্স: ৫১-৬৯৭৬৯, এসএমই শাখা: মুন ম্যানশন (২য় তলা), ১২, দিলকুশা বা/এ, ঢাকা, ফোন: ৯৫৬৪৬৪৩, ৯৫৫৭৮২৩, ৯৫৫০৫১৯, ৯৫৬৫৫৩৭, ফ্যাক্স: ৯৫৬৬৬০১, বরেন্দ্র সাইট: www.phoenixleasing.com.bd, ই-মেইল: mail@phoenixleasing.com.bd