

# RMG workers to get fair wage: Minister

UNB, Dhaka

The government is in its final stage to come up with a new wage structure for readymade garment workers, which is expected to be acceptable to both owners and workers, a minister said yesterday.

"I hope the new wage structure to be announced on July 28 will satisfy both owners and workers," said Minister for Expatriates Welfare and Overseas Employment Khandker Musharraf Hossain.

"The committee that works on it will ensure a win-win situation for both parties," he told reporters after a seminar.

Bangladesh Enterprise Institute (BEI) in association with CSR Centre arranged the seminar titled "UN Global Compact Labour Standards" at Lake Shore Hotel in Dhaka with its president Farooq Sobhan in the chair.

Musharraf said the cries of garment

workers remained unheard due to non-existence of trade unions in the garment sector.

"Trade union is urgent in the garment sector. We want introduction of trade union in this sector as we believe it will protect the right of both workers and owners," Musharraf said.

He said the government is in talks with the related parties to create a formal trade union for the RMG sector in an effort to free the sector from trouble.

Justifying his stand on trade union, he said: "We want to listen to complaints and grievances."

The minister said the government is actively reviewing the wage structures of 46 sectors with special attention to the readymade garment industry to ensure a harmonised environment for owners and employees.

"An independent committee is working on it and the committee has so far held 10 meetings which were fruit-

ful," the minister said.

He reassured that the government would form special security force -- industrial police -- to ensure peace in industrial zones.

Musharraf also said the government is reviewing the Labour Act (2006) to remove all discrepancies including difference of wages between male and female workers.

On enhancing skill and efficiency of workers, he said training is a must and the government has taken all required steps to produce skilled workers for sending abroad.

"Apart from the existing training institutes across the country, establishment of 31 new training centres is underway," he said adding that currently 70 lakh Bangladeshi workers are working abroad.

Earlier, the panel speakers focused on child labour, forced labour, discrimination and right to collective bargaining.



Zafar Uddin Siddiqui, director for sales and marketing of Citygroup, and M Shamsul Huda, adviser (sales and marketing) of ATN Bangla, exchange documents after signing an advertisement renewal agreement, in Dhaka recently. Geeteara Safiya Choudhury, chairman of Adcomm Ltd, is also seen.

## Avoid irrational profit, cut pressure on consumers

### Commerce minister tells businesspeople

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The government now plans to sell some essentials, imported by the state-run Trading Corporation of Bangladesh, through designated dealers to lessen pressure on consumers during the Ramadan, the commerce minister told businesspeople at a meeting yesterday.

The minister also reiterated his call to them to keep the prices of basic commodities at tolerable level.

"The next Ramadan is a test for the businesspeople. Do not make irrational profit this month (Ramadan) keeping the consumers under pressure," Faruk Khan urged them when the new leadership of apex trade body FBCCI met him yesterday.

Khan also stressed maintenance of the quality of foodstuffs.

The minister claimed that the prices of no item except sugar surged abnormally in the last Ramadan. He pointed to the surge in sugar price because it went high in the international market.

He told the FBCCI's newly elected executives that the government has adequate stock of sugar this time.

The minister assured them of a remarkable improvement in the power and gas supply situation in industrial plants next year when the point of higher cost of industrial production was raised during the meeting.

Faruk Khan also underlined the need for strengthening the research capacities of the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry. He said the government is keen on utilising the trade body's research findings in government's policy adoption, and also in negotiations with international trade partners.

AK Azad, FBCCI's president who led the delegation, raised a set of demands during the talks with the minister.

Azad sought a Tk 30 crore government fund for his organisation to run research works and complete the unfinished tasks of the district chambers.

The trade body chief also sought

cooperation from the commerce ministry so that the government hastens the process of allotting Janata Tower, an abandoned building in the city's Karwan Bazar area, to the FBCCI for its official purposes. The FBCCI has now no building of its own.

Recently, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina asked her adviser HT Imam for examining the FBCCI proposal in this regard, Azad pointed out.

Azad also demanded that the government sell diesel and furnace oil to the businesspeople at a price level of imports to reduce the production cost in the industrial sector.

The new FBCCI boss urged the government to lower bank interest rates at a single digit.

The other demands include establishment of special economic zones, formation of the industrial police force to control the unrest in the industrial sector and brining efficiency in the Chittgaong Port operation.



Abu Nasser Muhammad Abdus Zaher, chairman of Islami Bank Bangladesh Ltd, speaks at the bank's performance review meeting in Dhaka on Saturday. Mohammad Abdul Mannan, managing director, presided over the event.

## Truce between Indian brothers opens door to expansion

AFP, Mumbai

India's billionaire Ambani brothers are signing deals and drawing up expansion plans after calling a halt to their very public five-year battle over the spoils of their father's vast business empire.

The warring siblings, Mukesh, 53, and Anil, 51, buried the hatchet in May on a venomous feud arising from the division of the huge conglomerate left by their father's riches father Dhirubhai, who died in 2002 without a will.

The brothers have promised a new "environment of harmony, cooperation and collaboration", and analysts say the rapprochement could strengthen their positions at the top of India's corporate pile.

"They clearly want to move on," said Deepak Pareek, an oil analyst with Mumbai's Angel Broking.

Any lingering personal animosity is being shoved into the background, as the brothers push an image of fraternal solidarity that saw them holiday together in June with their families in a South African game reserve.

It was the first joint vacation for a decade for the Ambanis, who spent their early years in a two-bedroom tenement while their father built Reliance into a corporate colossus.

The original division of spoils between the two brothers had seen Mukesh keep the oil, gas and petrochemicals businesses of the group's flagship Reliance Industries, India's biggest private company.

Anil got Reliance Energy, one of India's biggest power utility firms, the phone company Reliance



Mukesh Ambani

Communications and the financial services arm, Reliance Capital.

The May truce saw them tear up a non-competition pact that had prevented them entering the same sectors -- a move that the brothers said would provide greater "operational and financial" flexibility to their respective groups.

Mukesh, who is in a vastly stronger financial position with a personal fortune estimated by Forbes magazine at 29 billion dollars, has announced what he calls "mega-expansion" plans into telecom and banking -- high-growth areas in India that had hitherto been Anil's turf.

He has already moved into mobile broadband with Infotel Broadband, the only company to win a nationwide licence in a recent auction of broadband wireless spectrum.

Mukesh's Reliance Industries has also tied up with global financial services giant DE Shaw, at a time when the central bank is mulling issuing fresh banking licences.

"The biggest game-changer is that the brothers will complement each other," said Gaurang Shah of



Anil Ambani

Geojit BNP Paribas Financial Services.

As well as allowing them to explore the potential for working in concert, the truce has also allowed the brothers to focus on their own businesses rather than expending time and effort on mutual recriminations.

Anil has begun seeking suitors for the sale of a stake in Reliance Communications as he seeks to raise badly needed capital.

Two years ago, he had lined up MTN of South Africa as a prospective buyer, but Mukesh scotched the deal by invoking a right of first refusal enshrined in the terms under which the brothers divided their father's business.

Nicknamed "Marathon Man" because of his daily jogs and regarded as the more outgoing of the two, Anil has a fortune calculated by Forbes at 13.7 billion dollars -- less than half that of his older brother.

Throughout their battles, the Ambanis continued to live under the same roof -- albeit on different floors -- in a towering Mumbai mansion with their mother, whom they both revere.

## Hili falls behind revenue target

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

Hili, the second largest land port in the country, now falls behind the revenue target set for the immediate past fiscal year.

The amount earned by the port in FY 2009-10 is Tk127.73 crore, which is Tk 28 crore less than the targeted Tk 155.82 crore.

The port officials said this is a major shortfall of Hili's revenue earning since the takeover of its management by Hili Panama Port Link Ltd, a private port operator.

The traders pointed out that a ban on the imports of some 20 popular Indian items through this land port had led to the setback in the earning.

Also, they complained of traders' harassment by both the private operator and customs officials, which caused a stalemate in business.

However, Hili's Deputy Customs Commissioner Abdul Mannan Sardar pointed his finger at the imports of Indian items, maximum of which are duty-free. Such zero tariff facility is the key to the fall in revenue earning, he said.

## Gold recovers on fresh demand

REUTERS, London

Gold edged higher yesterday, rising back above \$1,190 an ounce, as fresh demand emerged for the precious metal after its correction from recent record highs.

Chart support above \$1,180 an ounce has also helped limit losses in gold, analysts said.

Spot gold was bid at \$1,195.25 an ounce at 1447 GMT, against \$1,191.50 late in New York on Tuesday. U.S. gold futures for August delivery were up \$0.60 to \$1,195.70.

## Laptop fair begins in Dhaka

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

A three-day laptop fair began at Bangabandhu International Conference Centre in Dhaka yesterday.

State Minister for Law Md Qamrul Islam inaugurated the show -- Dhaka Laptop Fair 2010.

Computer Source, Executive Technology, Rishit Computers, Smart Technology and Global Brand are showcasing brands such as HP, Compaq, Samsung, Dell, Fujitsu, Gateway, Gigabyte, Asus, Lenovo, Toshiba, Acer, MSI, BenQ and Apple.

They also offered price discounts and gifts on every purchase.

The show, sponsored by Acer, Lenovo, Samsung and Toshiba, will remain open for visitors from 10:30am to 8:30pm with an entry fee of Tk20.

There are a total of 14 pavilions and 11 stalls at the fair.

Muhammad Zinnatul Habib, manager (in-charge) of communication and administration of Rishit Computers, said they offered different brands ranging from Tk 20,500 to Tk 175,000.

## RMG workers urge govt to fast-track new wage

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

A forum of garment workers yesterday demanded the government fast-track the new minimum wage for RMG workers.

The forum, known as Revolutionary Garment Workers Solidarity, demanded the right to trade union and amendments to the labour law to make it labour-friendly.

Forum leaders also urged the government to reverse a decision to put industrial police in place.

"The government should ensure reasonable wages for garment workers to ensure their good health. Workers need at least 3,400 kilocalories a day to remain physically fit," said Zubran Ali Jewel, convener of the organisation.

"The workers cannot afford it, as it takes Tk 7,000 a month to meet such a calorie intake, where the minimum wage now stands at Tk 1,665. So, we demand a minimum wage of Tk 5,000

to make the industry sustainable."

He was speaking at a press conference organised at the office of Revolutionary Workers Party of Bangladesh in Dhaka.

The existing minimum wage for the readymade garment workers was set in 2006, but in the meantime, the cost of living has doubled, he said.

He stressed the workers' right to join trade unions at all factories, so that the union can play a role to settle disputes between workers and factory owners.

He said the recent labour unrest took place, as garment workers do not have any access to trade union.

Jewel said the alliance of 41 labour organisations would take tough moves if the government fails to meet demand by July 27.

Firoz Khan, general secretary, and Rashida Begum, member of Revolutionary Garment Workers Solidarity, were also present.

## Pharma expo in Manila bags orders

Bss, Dhaka

Fifteen Bangladeshi pharmaceutical companies received prospective export orders worth around \$29.08 million at the Bangladesh Pharmaceuticals Expo-10, a single country trade fair held in Manila recently.

The Export Promotion Bureau (EPB) organised the three-day fair in cooperation with the Bangladesh embassy in Manila, Philippines, from June 16.

The fair held at the SMX Convention Centre in Manila, gave an opportunity to Bangladesh to export pharmaceutical products to the Philippines and other Southeast Asian countries.

A good number of visitors, buyers, distributors, traders and specialised people from the pharmaceuticals sector visited the 15 stalls by Bangladeshi companies.

A seminar was also organised on the occasion, where Ikhtiar M Chowdhury, Bangladesh ambassador to Philippines, delivered the welcome speech.

SM Sofiuzzaman, the immediate past president of Bangladesh Association of Pharmaceuticals Industries, presented his paper on the Bangladesh Pharmaceuticals Industry.

Joyce Cirunay, chief of products for service division of Bureau of Food and Drugs in Philippines, delivered a speech on the rules and regulations of the Philippines on pharmaceuticals.

### SHAHI EXPORTS PVT. LTD IS LOOKING FOR WOVEN RMG FACTORIES AS BUSINESS PARTNERS

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