

Ready Made



Garments

DHAKA, WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 7, 2011, E-MAIL: business@thedailystar.net

Local designers make a mark

REFAYET ULLAH MIRDHA

SHAMIM, who did not give his surname, has been working with a renowned European clothing brand as a senior design and product developer in Dhaka for a couple of years now.

He collects more than \$2,000 a month as salaries. Some of his colleagues, mostly foreign design and product developers, who have vast experience in this profession draw more than \$3000 a month.

Upon graduating in Accounting, Shamim began his career as a fashion designer at a local garments group seven years ago with a monthly remuneration package of Tk 15,000. At the time, he had only one Bangladeshi colleague. The rest were all foreigners for a dearth of local skilled fashion designers.

Since then, he has gathered experience and a diploma on fashion and design to be more informed on the subject.

The scenario has changed a lot in Bangladesh over the years. "Now I have many experienced Bangladeshi colleagues, along with foreigners," Shamim said.

With development of the fashion institutes, more and more graduates are coming out every year to get jobs with international names, fashion houses and buying houses in the country.

Creativity and talent plays an important role in determining demand for designers, he said.

Chowdhury, who also refused to give his surname, is working as a fashion designer and product developer with a Hong Kong-based garments buying house. He said a good number of graduates are coming to this profession every year as demand is increasing.

Graduates mostly start work as



AMRAN HOSSAIN

Workers at a garments factory in Dhaka run quality checks on the final export goods.

assistants to the more experienced designers, he said. "The most important thing about this profession is maintaining the deadline. As a result, many cannot continue," he added.

He receives nearly \$1,000 a month and said many Bangladeshi people are now employed in such sophisticated fashion and design develop-

ment work.

Previously, Bangladeshis were mainly involved in sewing, but now they are employed in fashion and design, he said.

The garment factory owners have to be more responsible in making the work more popular, he added.

The job as a fashion designer and product developer has glamour, but at the same time, there are some challenges as well, he added.

Rushmita Alam, head of the Fashion Design and Technology department of BGMEA Institute of Fashion and Technology (BIFT), said every year 150 graduates come out from this institute to address demand for fashion designers both in the local garment factories and multinational-

Not only BIFT, some universities have also opened courses on fashion and design, as demand is soaring, she said.

"Now the local educational institutes are equipped to address demand for fashion designers -- which was not the case previously," she says.

There are two important aspects in fashion and design -- one is solely design development and the other is product development, she added.

In design development, a designer has to work hard as the employee has

to spend time getting to know the culture, environment, geography and surroundings of a particular market or area.

In the case of product development, designers work on designs provided by buyers. Here, designers make the product attractive by adding more value, she said.

A fashion designer has to possess a creative mindset, because designs change quickly.

Designers have to travel the world to capture the essence of fashion trends for future forecasts on the matter, she added.

But the problem is that they are not able to produce any individual designs for a lack of patronisation from the companies that employ them, said Jahangir Karim, head of fashion and merchandising of International Institute of Fashion and Design (INIFD).

Companies do not want to spend a huge amount of money to develop designs, he said. To produce a unique design, a designer requires spending at least six months in a foreign land to study the environment and customer surroundings to know what is popular there, he added.

As a result, local fashion designers develop designs supplied by the international buyers. "Buyers have a lot of requirements that need to be

fulfilled by a designer."

Fashion designing is related to many things. It is difficult as it is a matter of psychology. Moreover, no mega fashion events take place in the country, from which the students and participants can learn something.

At the institutes, most learning is imparted theoretically. There are not enough scopes for practical learning.

However, a few garment factories are working to develop fashion designs locally.

There are many renowned organisations worldwide that deal with fashion and design only, he said.

KM Rezaul Hasanat, managing director of Viyellatex Group, said many qualified designers from local educational institutes are joining the industry now.

"The garments buyers and factory owners are satisfied with the performance of those locally produced fashion designers and product developers. The fresh graduates are creative as they compete with the foreign experts," he added.

An experienced design team is important when a garments group works for a renowned clothing brand, he said. In most cases, the buyers mainly supply the designs, he added.

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Training institutes gear up

REFAYET ULLAH MIRDHA

SEVERAL educational institutes and training centres focused on fashion and design are thriving in Bangladesh as demand for specialised personnel is on the rise in the readymade garments sector.

However, not all are able to deliver quality education to students for a lack of proper facilities and infrastructure.

In order to raise quality and meet international standards, Bangladesh

Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) has been trying to elevate BGMEA Institute of Fashion and Technology (BIFT) as separate university over the last few years, said Siddiqui Rahman, a governing body member of BIFT.

BIFT renders education on garment manufacturing management, pattern, cutting and design, merchandising, production management and quality control.

He said a five bigha plot of land has

already been purchased in Uttara, Dhaka to establish BIFT University.

At present, BIFT operates from a rented building in Uttara and management cannot accommodate a large number of students there.

BIFT started its journey in 2000 with a few hundred students; today about 2,600 students graduate every year.

BIFT offers four-year honours courses, BBA, MBA and diploma degree courses of various durations, he said.

"Every year we receive many applica-

tions from students, but we cannot admit them for a lack of accommodation facilities and a crisis of teachers and space," he said.

At present, BIFT is run under the National University, and it has also tied up with different foreign universities to exchange faculty members and experts for skills development of both students and teachers.

Jahangir Karim, head of fashion and merchandising of International Institute of Fashion and Design (INIFD), said many

students are going abroad to receive education on this creative subject.

One or two foreign education groups have also opened branches in Dhaka to deliver different courses on the subject to meet growing demand, he added.

The large garment groups should come forward to develop fashion and design education in Bangladesh as the country has vast potential in the area for the future, he said.

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