

ILO opens Kyoto meeting today on economic stress

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Ministers, representatives of workers' and employers' organisations and academics from more than 46 countries gather in the Japanese city of Kyoto today to discuss how employment, economic and social progress can be safeguarded in the face of the uncertain global economic outlook.

The 15th Asia and the Pacific Regional Meeting of the International Labour Organisation will continue until December 7 at the Kyoto International Convention Centre, the ILO said in a statement.

About 500 people, including about 30 labour and employment ministers from Asia, the Pacific and Arab states are expected to attend the event.

Japan's Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda will give the keynote statement at the opening ceremony. ILO Director

General Juan Somavia will also speak.

Discussions at the meeting will focus on co-ordinating macroeconomic, employment and social protection policies; supporting productive employment, sustainable enterprises and skills development; and rights at work and social dialogue, according to the statement.

A Youth Leaders' Forum will tackle the pressing challenge of youth employment and there will be special sessions on green jobs, employment-led natural disaster response and partnerships for decent work, the ILO said.

The meeting opens at a time of extreme economic uncertainty and amid growing concern that, while the region's economic performance remains positive, it will not be immune from the turbulence affecting its key export markets.

"The existing unbalanced growth

cannot continue. It has failed to deliver jobs of the quality and quantity needed to assure women and men and their families a decent life," Somavia said.

"Today, unemployment levels in Asia and the Pacific have yet to reach the pre-crisis low of 76.9 million in 2007. Nearly 60 percent of the region's workers are in vulnerable employment. We need a model of growth that is more socially and economically efficient," he said.

"The crisis of youth employment demands urgent action. Young people make up around 20 percent of the region's population but are half of the jobless. We must restore their hope in a better future through opportunities for decent work," Somavia said.

The ILO normally organises the Asia-Pacific event every four years. The last meeting was in Busan, South Korea, in 2006.

Draft ship-breaking rules to be finalised today

UNB, Dhaka

Stakeholders of the ship-breaking and ship recycling sector along with the industries ministry will hold a discussion today to finalise draft of 'Ship Breaking and Ship Recycling Rules-2011'.

The rules are being designed to make the country's growing ship-breaking industry green and workers' friendly.

Recommendations will be sought from the stakeholders and experts to finalise the rules to help grow the sector by protecting the environment and offering better benefits to workers.

Industries Minister Dilip Barua will attend the meeting at Ruposhi Bangla Hotel in the capital.

The government is considering the experience and ideas gained from different ship-breaking nations like China and India in finalising the rules for ship-breaking, which was recently recognised as an industry.

The parties involved in the sector said they would take it as a serious job to make sure that least damage is done to the environment and better deals are offered to the workers engaged in the sector.



NCC Bank
Dhaka Based Managers' Conference
DATE: 3RD DECEMBER, 2011
Head Office, Dhaka

Md Nurun Newaz Salim, chairman of NCC Bank, attends a conference of the bank's Dhaka-based managers, at its head office in the capital yesterday. Mohammed Nurul Amin, managing director, was also present.

LankaBangla Finance gets new MD

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Mohammed Nasir Uddin Chowdhury has recently been appointed managing director of LankaBangla Finance Ltd, the company said in a statement yesterday.

Prior to the appointment, Chowdhury was the deputy managing director of the company.

He was the chief executive officer of LankaBangla Securities and director of MIDAS Financing. Chowdhury also served Dhaka Stock Exchange as senior vice president.

He completed his graduation and postgraduation from Chittagong University.



SME outsourcing comes under focus

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Bangladeshi companies looking for a slice of the global IT outsourcing market should put more emphasis on winning the trust and confidence of foreign firms that source IT services from offshore, IT analysts said yesterday.

Local firms also need to focus on their core competencies and brand Bangladesh as a reliable IT outsourcing destination by sharing their success stories to attract companies in markets like Europe, they said.

A panel of IT analysts from abroad placed these suggestions at a seminar on challenges and opportunities for emerging SME outsourcing market on the sidelines of Asia's mega information and communications technology (ICT) event, eAsia 2011, at Bangabandhu International Conference Centre.

The recommendations came at a time when Bangladesh is being regarded as one of the top IT outsourcing destinations of the world by European Commission and Gartner, one of the respected global consulting groups.

Henriette Kahre Freris of Danish Federation of Small and Medium Enterprises (DFSME) said foreign companies engaged in sourcing IT services from offshore want companies that they can trust with regard to product secrets and delivery.

She said Bangladeshi companies, instead of focusing on all their skills, should focus on their core competencies and stay focused on those competencies when they deal with foreign companies.

"Don't try to conquer the world at once," she said. Freris also stressed the need for better communication skills and continued follow-up to win more business of IT outsourcing from abroad. "Make a marketing plan and try to use all communication platforms," said Freris.

Sharing his experience on promoting Bangladeshi companies in the Netherlands, an outsourcing expert Paul Tjia said Dutch SMEs source offshore services from many countries including India, Vietnam and Bangladesh.

He said two Dutch firms have opened their captive centres in Dhaka last year and both are happy with the results.

Tjia said local companies should now do additional marketing to get businesses from Dutch companies. "Bangladeshi companies should now start outsourcing of marketing work in Europe," he said.

Martin Dommerby, director of Business Development of KalVruksh Technologies, said the primary reason for companies looking for sourcing offshore IT services is access to resources. Other main reasons include flexibility, increased productivity and reduced cost.



Atiur Rahman, governor of Bangladesh Bank; Rokia Afzal Rahman, a former caretaker government adviser; and K Mahmood Sattar, managing director of City Bank, hand over a cheque to Angela Gomez, second from right, executive director of Banchte Shekha, at a ceremony in Dhaka yesterday. They will use the Tk 42.52 lakh fund to train about 200 vulnerable women in Jessore to save them from hard-core poverty. Mobinul Islam Mobin, editor of the Gramer Kagoj, was also present.

City Bank joins MRDI to lift women out of poverty

STAR BUSINESS DESK

City Bank Ltd and Management and Resources Development Initiative (MRDI) have joined hands to train more than 200 vulnerable women of a remote village in Jessore to help them get rid of hardcore poverty.

The private commercial bank and the research organisation have come forward to help the poverty-hit women of Basatpur, a village near Benapole border in the district.

Under the Tk 42.52 lakh project, a sewing training centre would be set up to train the women, who are often victims of violence and trafficking.

The project will help lift many families in the village out of poverty, officials said during an agreement signing and cheque hand over ceremony at Hotel Lakeshore in Dhaka yesterday, according to an MRDI statement.

Dr Atiur Rahman, governor of Bangladesh Bank, attended the event as chief guest. Rokia Afzal Rahman, former adviser to a caretaker government and adviser of MRDI's CSR initiative, K Mahmood Sattar, managing director of City Bank, Shitangshu Kumar Sur Chowdhury, executive director of Bangladesh Bank, and Hasibur Rahman, executive director of MRDI, spoke on the occasion.

The project is part of MRDI's effort to use corporate social responsibility (CSR)

funds as an alternative social development support in partnership with Manusher Jonno Foundation, an organisation that promotes human rights and good governance.

Development organisation Banchte Shekha and the daily Gramer Kagoj will jointly implement the intervention under the supervision of MRDI.

Officials said, of the village's 10,000 people, more than 85 percent live below the poverty line.

The governor appreciated the joint initiative of City Bank and MRDI in using CSR funds to address poverty.

Rokia Rahman termed it as an important step towards building partnership between corporate and civil society organisations for optimum utilisation of CSR funds in development.

Sur Chowdhury lauded the move aimed at solving an acute problem of the distressed women of the remote village. He thanked Banchte Shekha and Gramer Kagoj for taking the responsibility to implement the project.

Mahmood Sattar said the initiative would empower a group of poor women and protect them from risks of vulnerability and insecurity.

Over the next three years, the project will not only train about 200 vulnerable women, but also create market access for them, said Hasibur Rahman.



Md Mehmood Husain, president and managing director of Bank Asia, opens the Sirajdikhan SME Service Centre of the bank in Munshiganj as a full-fledged SME/Agri branch recently. Md Arfan Ali, senior executive vice president and chief business officer, was also present.

BRAC opens green retail outlet

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

BRAC Kanon, an outlet of BRAC Social Enterprises, started operation in the capital yesterday with an aim to encourage city-dwellers to save energy, money and trees.

Irene Khan, an internationally renowned human rights activist and a member of BRAC governing body, inaugurated the display and sales centre of green products at a ceremony in the city.

Located on Gulshan-Tejgaon Link road and spread over one bigha of land, this is the country's first ever green retail outlet which comprises four enterprises -- BRAC Solar, BRAC Nursery, BRAC Recycled Handmade Paper and BRAC Sericulture, featuring their products and services.

It offers ornamental, fruit, timber and medicinal plants, landscaping and plant rental services, silk products produced by rural artisans, recycled handmade paper-based products and office stationery, and energy saving solar instant power supply and power solutions.

The outlet is fully powered by BRAC Solar with whole night backup solution supporting 2.4 kilowatt load for

eight hours.

BRAC Kanon is an expression of BRAC Social Enterprises towards a greener future.

"These enterprises were established a long ago, offering products and services in rural areas, but people in urban centres do not know about them," said Muhammad A (Rumee) Ali, managing director of Enterprises and Investments, BRAC.

"We have to acquaint people with such enterprises and what they can do to make a difference in saving the environment," he said.

He said the platform would promote green enterprises, presenting green products with a new look.

Syeda Rizwana Hasan, executive director of Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association, said Dhaka has lost gardens due to rapid urbanisation.

Iqbal Habib, consultant architect of BRAC Kanon, said: "The outlet shows what we can do even in a small way to create a new revolution."

Mahabub Hossain, executive director of BRAC, and Nazra Mahjabeen Sabet, programme head of BRAC Enterprises, also spoke.

First Bangladeshi workers' union in UK

UNB, Dhaka

The Bangladeshi community in East London made history this week, with the formation of the first ever workers' union catering to the rights of Bangladeshi workers in the UK.

Already commanding a membership of over 500, on November 28 the Bangladeshi Workers Union became an affiliate member of GMB -- one of the UK's three largest trade unions -- through a ceremony at Pream Restaurant in Brick Lane, the heart of East London's Bengali community.

Tower Hamlets MP Jim Fitzpatrick, local councillor Shiria Khatun, and Labour peer Maurice Glasman attended the programme.

As would be expected, the overwhelming majority of the workers are drawn from

the restaurant industry, but there are also members from manufacturing and other trades. Although it only became official by affiliating itself with GMB last Tuesday, members have been meeting on Mondays -- the typical day off for restaurant workers -- since early August.

The union has managed to recruit members from all over the UK, with workers reportedly travelling into London to attend meetings from as far away as Birmingham, Portsmouth and Tunbridge Wells.

Most of the members have been living in the UK for 5-10 years, and the group hasn't yet come across anyone living illegally in the UK seeking membership.

Councillor Khatun said to the agency yesterday that a collective bargaining unit for Bangladeshi workers has been "long, long overdue".



Kutubuddin Ahmed, chairman of Sheltech; Toufiq M Seraj, managing director, and Tanvir Ahmed, director for development, open a 15-day housing fair organised by the realtor on Panthapath in Dhaka on Thursday.

Facebook to hire 'thousands' over next year

AFP, New York

Facebook said Friday that it plans to hire thousands of employees over the next year and add an engineering team to its office in New York.

"We will hire as many high quality engineers as we can here in New York," Facebook chief operating officer Sheryl Sandberg told reporters at an event also attended by New York mayor Michael Bloomberg.

"We're going to grow as quickly as we can in New York," Sandberg said.

She said Facebook would also be adding engineers at its Palo Alto, California, headquarters and in Seattle in addition to New York.

An engineering team in New York would be the company's first outside of the West Coast.