

They got some fire tools, not training

Firemen inspect 20 garment factories in Ctg, find safety measures scanty

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Most garment factories in the port city have at least a few sets of fire fighting equipment but the workers do not know how to operate the extinguishers, officials of Fire Service and Civil Defence found yesterday.

The factories also do not have adequate water storage capacity and sufficient exits for emergency, said the officials who found the picture after visiting around 20 factories across the city.

Farid Ahmed Chowdhury, senior station officer of the government department in Chittagong, said his team visited five factories yesterday.

Firemen will visit 916 garment factories in Chittagong to

check their fire safety measures as a part of an inspection of the country's garment units after a fire in Ashulia killed at least 110 workers last month.

After visiting the factories, the department will submit a report to its headquarters within 20 days.

After visiting New Tech Apparels Ltd in Dewanhat area, the team found the factory operators were working in a risky environment beside dangerous electric equipment of the factory.

Though some fire extinguishers were there, the workers do not know how to operate those. The exits were also too narrow.

But the owner of the factory, Nirmal Kanti Dev, said there are around 500 workers in the factory and the exits are enough for

the workers.

"Though my workers are not trained up, we have 25 trained people to operate the fire extinguishers," said Dev.

Assistant Director of Fire Service and Civil Defence in Chittagong Abdul Mannan said, only 25 trained people for 500 untrained workers is not enough.

"Everyone should be trained up," Mannan said.

Another team, while visiting Delmas Garments Ltd in Mistripara, found the factory has only one exit and the workers do not know how use the fire safety tools.

The team also found the underground water storage in the factory is not sufficient, said Mannan.

The owner of the factory

was not present during the inspection.

Mannan said the other teams of the department found the same picture in the factories during the first-day visit across the city.

Ruhul Amin, deputy director of the department in Chittagong, said if any factory is found to lack fire safety standards, it will be given a month's deadline to take the measures.

If any factory does not take any measure within the deadline, the department will go for action through mobile courts, he said.

The department will also ask Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association to compel the factory owners to comply with fire safety measures at their factories, Amin said.

Air India launches Dhaka-Delhi flight

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Air India yesterday introduced a daily Dhaka-Delhi flight.

The route's maiden flight arrived at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport in Dhaka at 8:45am.

Faruk Khan, the civil aviation and tourism minister, said the route would boost commerce and tourism between the two countries.

Pankaj Saran, the Indian high commissioner to Bangladesh, and R Dayal, executive director of Air India, the flag carrier of India, were also present on the occasion.

Saran hoped that Air India will maintain the expectation of its passengers in Bangladesh by providing high-quality and timely services.

Air India offers attractive promotional fares effective throughout December, 2012 for tickets to be used by March.

Passengers will be able to get convenient connections to Middle East and Europe, including London, Frankfurt and Paris, from Delhi.



Shajidur Rahman Khan, director of Singer Bangladesh, inaugurates a Singer Plus Shop at Chatmohor of Pabna recently. Mokbulla Huda Chowdhury, sales director, was also present.

Danish trade minister due today

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Danish Minister for Trade and Investment Pia Olsen Dyhr is due in Dhaka today for a two-day visit with a business delegation of Denmark's 12 leading companies from clean-tech, energy and water and life science sectors.

Dyhr, the first Danish trade minister to visit Bangladesh, will be accompanied by three Danish parliament members, the foreign secretary and officials from the foreign ministry.

She is expected to meet Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and a number of ministers, businesspeople and civil society leaders to enhance bilateral trade.

Trade between Bangladesh and Denmark has grown more than 200 percent in the last three years,



Pia Olsen Dyhr



Afroza Abbas, former vice chairperson of Dhaka Bank, inaugurates the bank's 68th branch at Banasree in Dhaka yesterday. Khondker Fazle Rashid, managing director, was also present.



Faruk Khan, civil aviation and tourism minister, cuts a cake to mark the launch of Air India's Dhaka-Delhi flight at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport in Dhaka yesterday. Pankaj Saran, Indian high commissioner, and R Dayal, executive director of Air India, were also present.

IFIC gets new MD

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Shah A Sarwar has joined IFIC Bank Ltd as its managing director, the bank said in a statement yesterday.

He was serving as the managing director of Trust Bank Ltd prior to this appointment.

Sarwar started his career as management trainee at ANZ Grindlays Bank in 1982 and has since worked with Standard Chartered Bank, American Express Bank and United Commercial Bank Ltd.

He has also served as managing director and chief executive officer of Industrial Promotion & Development Company Bangladesh Ltd and Premier Bank.



Shah A Sarwar

Build business transparency

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Mahbubur Rahman, president of ICCB, said the government has initiated a process of reforming policies but at a snail pace. "The process should be fast-tracked."

"Bangladesh Bank has undertaken many reforms in the banking sector over the years. Yet, much more remains to be done," he said.

"There are problems on both sides: the investors and the government. But the positive thing is that reforms are taking place," he said.

Rahman stressed the need for positive commitments from the private sector and the government to overcome the hindrances to the economy.

The panel discussion was a sequel to a recently concluded workshop, "Challenges & Solution for Effective and Transparent Business Practices".

Top business leaders came together to discuss and share experiences of the challenges of doing business in Bangladesh and how to overcome them. The workshop also addressed how the business community can be a change-maker to adopt more transparent practices in Bangladesh.

"Let's not point fingers at the policy difficulties of the government; rather let's work as a driving force for ethical practices for a win-win business climate in Bangladesh," Klokkehaug said.

Klokkehaug observed that the business community can be the driving force in bringing transparency and ethical practices to business.

Describing the difficulties faced by IT companies in rendering services, Jahrat Adib Chowdhury, head of corporate affairs of GPIT, said Bangladesh lags in adopting the best practices, especially in intellectual property.

Ragne Birte Lund, Norwegian ambassador to Bangladesh, also spoke.

A Norwegian baroque ensemble, Trio Nightingale, presented baroque, renaissance, rococo and folk music to cap the function.

Insurers worried over rising RMG accidents

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Hossain said insurers face problems during claims settlement as the policyholders do not cover all the machinery and risks.

"When we carry out survey for claims settlement we find major loopholes," he said.

Hossain, who is also the chairman of Sonar Bangla Insurance, said his company is witnessing a rise in claims for accidents in garment factories.

He said factory owners do not insure their workers, their policies only cover the factories.

The garment industry having more than 5,000 factories produces clothes for the western countries. Garments account for 80 percent of Bangladesh's exports, with earnings of nearly \$19 billion in the last financial year. Nearly 3.5 million people, mostly women, are employed in the industry.

BRAND BANGLADESH 500 experts join Dhaka event tomorrow

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

About 500 experts including economists, business leaders, policymakers, civil society members, diplomats and brand consultants from home and abroad will gather in Dhaka tomorrow to help Bangladesh present itself on the global stage.

They will converge in the capital to attend a two-day international conference styled 'Positioning Bangladesh: Branding for Business', which also aims to woo investment to the country.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will inaugurate the event at Sonargaon Hotel in the city, said organisers yesterday.

Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry (DCCI), Business Initiative Leading Development, KATALYST and Bangladesh Association of Software and Information Services will jointly organise the conference.

Speaking at a press briefing in his office, DCCI President Asif Ibrahim said a total of 23 foreign speakers and 60 resource persons are expected to deliver speeches at the conference comprising seven sessions.

The conference will focus on 12 sectors, including readymade garment, labour, pharmaceuticals and information technology, he said.

Full-on efforts to boost IT sector

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The government will organise a three-day exposition to boost the country's information communication and technology sector.

The exposition, to be held from December 6-8 at Bangabandhu International Conference Centre, will have a total of 120 stalls.

"We want to showcase Bangladesh's freelancing and outsourcing capabilities to the developed world," said Munir Hasan, a senior consultant of the event.

"We are initiating 3 studies on free-

lancing, electronic and mobile commerce to gauge the success of the event," he said.

Forty-three international experts are due to speak at a series of seminars to be held as part of the event.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh Association of Software and Information Services (BASIS) is arranging another conference to promote the country's outsourcing competency at Sonargaon Hotel on December 6.

High-ups of 12 prominent global companies in the field are expected at the conference, organisers said at a press conference yesterday.



Shamsur Rahman, chairman of Bay Group, and MA Quader, chief executive officer, open a Bay Emporium showroom on Shahid Faruk Road in Jatrabari, Dhaka recently.



Irteza A Khan, head of consumer division of IDLC Finance, and Farzana Khan, assistant director of Hyundai Motors Bangladesh, attend the signing ceremony of an agreement between their companies in Dhaka recently. IDLC will provide car loans with lower interest rates, flexible repayment plans and faster processing time to Hyundai customers.

India Show brightens investment prospects

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Indian businesspeople should invest in Bangladesh and take advantage of the facilities the country offers and then export the goods and products to the vast Indian market, said Kanoria, who is also the chairman and managing director of New Delhi-based Kanoria Chemicals and Industries Ltd.

He also called for improving trade-related infrastructure on both sides of the border.

Indian Commerce Secretary SR Rao said he hopes the India Show would lead to greater investment and open new vistas in the business opportunities.

The secretary said India is committed to reducing the trade imbalance with Bangladesh further. Bangladesh's exports to India increased ten-fold in the last one decade. "This shows the success of our policies, but a lot more still needs to be done from the India side not only deepening the integration but also to make trade relations more equitable and sustainable, as our prime minister has suggested."

He said India has already given duty- and quota-free access to Bangladeshi products into its markets. "We hope Bangladesh's industries will make best use of this new opportunity as we want to see more exports from Bangladesh to India."

Rao said they are ready to open four more border markets on Tripura border.

He also said India also welcomes Bangladesh's investment in the country, which would make Bangladesh a regional hub.

Speaking as the chief guest, GM Quader, commerce minister, said the Bangladeshi government offers the most liberal trade regime in the world in setting up fully-owned or joint venture businesses.

"You can invest in the country as much as you want and take out your profit and investment whenever you want," he said.

Given the deficit in trade balance, India's decision of allowing duty- and quota-free market access to Bangladeshi products is a very good gesture from the Indian side to boost up trade between the two countries and encourage businesspeople to export more.

Bangladesh imported goods from India worth \$5 billion and exported goods worth about \$500 million in 2011-12. The trade balance between the two countries is heavily tilted towards India, said Kazi Akramuddin Ahamed, president of FBCCI.

"There is a need to reduce this trade gap by boosting imports from Bangladesh."

Although India has allowed the duty- and quota-free export facility, the country's businesspeople have failed to give a major boost to trade due to existing non-tariff and para-tariff barriers, said Ahamed, who is also the chairman of Standard Bank Ltd.

Pankaj Saran, Indian high commissioner, said the show is the testimony of the Indian business delegation's belief that Bangladesh has a huge growth potential and is poised to expand.

Abdul Matlub Ahmad, president of IBCCI, and A Didar Singh, secretary general of Ficci, were