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DHAKA THURSDAY DECEMBER 6, 2012, e-mail:business@thedailystar.net

Factory fire: a call to action

Mozena advises Bangladesh to fix workplace safety problems to obtain duty-free privileges from US

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

US Ambassador Dan Mozena yesterday advised Bangladesh to fix workplace safety and labour rights problems immediately -- to obtain duty-free privileges from his country.

The Tazreen fire that killed more than 100 workers was a call to action, the envoy said in his speech on the branding of Bangladesh at an event at Sonargaon Hotel in Dhaka.

In the wake of the tragedy, Bangladesh has the choice to address the "serious workplace problems" that continue to impact the garment sector or to do nothing, which would smear 'Brand Bangladesh'.

"Bangladesh can choose to let the Ashulia fire fade into history and ignore the GSP [generalised system of preferences] review process currently underway in Washington and revert to business



Dan Mozena

as usual in regard to workplace conditions and workers' rights to associate."

He added the approach would put off international buyers and consumers from opting for Bangladeshi products and services.

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Novo Nordisk, Eskayef launch locally made insulins

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Novo Nordisk, the world's biggest insulin maker, yesterday launched three locally manufactured insulin products in Bangladesh.

The three products -- Mixtard 30, Insulatard and Actrapid -- all manufactured by the Danish company's local partner Eskayef Bangladesh Ltd, were unveiled at a ceremony at the Westin Hotel in the city.

With the launch, Novo Nordisk, which controls 75 percent of the local insulin market, and Eskayef, Bangladesh's one of the fastest growing medicine makers, will be able to take the insulin products to the patients at affordable prices.

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From left: Svend Olling, Danish ambassador to Bangladesh; Mozibur Rahman Fakir, state minister for health and family welfare; Prof Gowher Rizvi, the PM's international affairs adviser; Pia Olsen Dyhr, the Danish trade minister; Prof AK Azad Khan, president of Diabetic Association of Bangladesh; Latifur Rahman, chairman of Eskayef Bangladesh; Simeen Hossain, CEO of Eskayef; Maziar Mike Doustdar, vice president of Novo Nordisk; and A Rajan Kumar, MD of Novo Nordisk Pharma, attend the launch of locally-made insulins at the Westin Hotel in Dhaka yesterday.

Economic policies not in sync: analyst

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Huge disparities in national economic policies create a bottleneck for fresh investments leaving a negative impact on the economy, an expert said yesterday.

"There is a mismatch between macro- and micro-economic policies," said Mozibur Rahman, chief executive officer of Bangladesh Foreign Trade Institute.

With regards to the 10 industries, the government has chosen as the thrust sectors, he said: "Half of them do not get incentives, while many non-trust sectors get lots of incentives."

Rahman blamed the lack of co-ordination between the different ministries for the wide discrepancy.

"Thrust sectors are declared by one ministry, but incentives are given by another -- which creates the problem."

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Most garment factories in Ctg lack fire safety checks

Staff Correspondent, Ctg

Most garment factories in Chittagong do not have concealed electric wiring systems, and their emergency stairs are too narrow to be effective in case of fire incidents.

They lack water storage capacity and fire-fighting tools, according to findings by seven teams of Bangladesh Fire Service and Civil Defence.

The teams consisting of four officials in each inspected 74 garment factories in the port city in the last three days.

Inspection of the fire safety systems started in Chittagong on Monday, as part of an effort to inspect the country's garment units after the Ashulia tragedy on November 24.

The firemen will check 916 factories and submit a report to their headquarters in 20 days.

At Shailpik Fashion and Crafts in Mistripara area, a fire vigilance team saw around 200 workers on the factory's third and fourth floors, where there was no emergency exit.

The only emergency exit was through the second floor, where factory officials work.

Besides, the wiring is mostly uncealed and the factory's workers said they have no fire safety training.

However, Samu Dey, administrative officer of the factory, claimed that the management had given fire preventive training to the workers.

Mir Fazlur Rahman, owner of Mir Fashion Ware Ltd in Doublemooring area, said most of the garment factories cannot install a fully-concealed cabling system due to their set-up pattern.

"We have to rely on open wiring to some extent, as every worker uses an electrical sewing machine. But we mostly try to avoid it," he said.

The firemen found four RMG factories are set up in a single narrow alley in Mistripara area under Doublemooring Police Station in the city.

Narrow alleys create serious problems of access in case of a fire breakout, said Farid Ahmed Chowdhury, senior station officer of the fire service's Chittagong headquarters.

Another vigilance team found some faults with the wiring system of GH Haewae Company Ltd in Karnaphuli Export Processing Zone.

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Women entrepreneurs to get 10pc of industrial plots

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The government will allocate 10 percent of all its industrial plots to women entrepreneurs to promote women's participation in business, Industries Minister Dilip Barua said yesterday.

He spoke at a seminar organised by Bangladesh Women Chamber and Commerce and Industry in Dhaka where BWCCI President Sangita Ahmed was also present.

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