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DHAKA THURSDAY JANUARY 24, 2013, e-mail:business@thedailystar.net



Sigve Brekke

Fix VAT, audit disputes: GP

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Grameenphone yesterday urged the government to resolve the issues tied to a 15 percent VAT rebate for 2G licence renewal and audit disputes, before the upcoming 3G auction.

GP seeks to know whether 15 percent VAT which was paid to the government during its licence renewal will be rebated to the telecom operator.

Sigve Brekke, chairman of GP, met the finance minister, telecom secretary and the chairman of Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission to discuss the issues yesterday.

"It will be challenging for us to participate in the 3G auction, if the issues are not solved by then," Brekke told reporters in Dhaka.

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Wal-Mart under fire for 'unethical business practices'

Labour and garment industry leaders criticise US retail giant for distancing itself from Tazreen fire

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Labour and garment sector leaders yesterday came down hard on US retail giant Wal-Mart over its conduct following the Tazreen fire, saying its business practices were unethical.

"After a fire, Wal-Mart cannot simply say that it would not take products from the factory," Roy Ramesh Chandra, chairman of Bangladesh National Council (BNC), said at a discussion on the Bangladeshi garment sector.

Chandra, also a member of International Labour Organisation's governing board, added: "The company will have to take responsibility for their part and give compensation to the workers for the loss of future earnings."

"Otherwise, we will not allow Wal-Mart to do undisturbed business anywhere in the world," he threatened.

Tazreen Fashions was manufacturing garment products for Wal-Mart at the time of the fire that claimed at least 112 lives.

In the aftermath of the fire, Wal-Mart cancelled all ties with Success Apparel, a New York-based sourcing company that used to buy merchandise from Tazreen in a complex sub-contract.

Mohammad Hatem, first vice-president of Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BKMEA), too, criticised Wal-Mart for distancing itself following the Tazreen fire -- and refusing to take any responsibility.

"Their approach was not right. They should come forward and help improve the fire safety conditions in the apparel industry," Hatem said.

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AMRAN HOSSAIN

A man operates a machine to stick labels on plastic bottles, at a stall at the Dhaka International Plastic, Packaging and Printing Industrial Fair that started at Bangabandhu International Conference Centre in Dhaka yesterday.

Plastic goods exports to reach \$1b a year

Muhith says at the launch of four-day plastic fair

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Bangladesh's plastic exports will rise 10 times to \$1 billion a year in the next five years, thanks to growing demand, Finance Minister AMA Muhith said yesterday.

"Bangladesh has made its mark as a plastic goods-exporting country," said Muhith at the launch of the four-day plastic fair at Bangabandhu International Conference Centre.

The country now exports around \$100 million worth of plastic products a year, the minister said, adding that the figures would increase significantly due to diversified use of plastic globally.

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The per capita use of plastic goods in Bangladesh is still very low: 5kg a year, Muhith said.

On the other hand, Asean countries use 17kg, compared to around 30kg in the rest of the world, he said.

"The present consumption level of plastic [per capita] should double," said Muhith, while praising plastic's usefulness thanks to modern technology.

Industries Minister Dilip Barua said the government is seriously working to establish a dedicated industrial park.

"It [plastic industrial estate] is the demand of the time -- and the attention of the prime minister has been drawn to this end."

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Progress made in GSP commitments: official

Bangladesh has prepared its position paper for next hearing in US

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Bangladesh achieved substantial progress in fulfilling the commitments made in the third hearing in January last year on retaining duty waiver in the US market, Commerce Secretary Mahbub Ahmed said yesterday.

Being the lead agency of the government for replying to the United States Trade Representative, the commerce ministry has already prepared the country's position paper on the next hearing on the generalised system of preferences (GSP), he said.

"We will be able to respond to the hearing by January 31, the deadline set by USTR," Ahmed told reporters at the secretariat in Dhaka emerging from a meeting with stakeholders.

Bangladesh has made the position paper when the USTR sent a letter to the commerce ministry in December last year to know the updates of the promises made to improve the working environment and uphold workers' rights in garment and shrimp factories.

The letter was sent just after a deadly fire killed 112 workers at Tazreen Fashions in Ashulia in Savar on November 24 last year.

Asked, the secretary named three areas in which Bangladesh made progress after the third USTR hearing held in the US on January 24 last year.

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