

Trade unionism a must: analysts

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Rights activists and labour leaders yesterday called for trade unions at all garment factories to give the workers a platform to ensure their rights.

They also favoured a system of determining the minimum wages for garments workers by considering the cost of living, and not just by taking food inflation into account.

Their pleas came at a national consultation with the United Nations mandate holders on women in the readymade garments sector in Bangladesh at BRAC Centre Inn in Dhaka.

The discussion was organised by Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development; Ain o Salish Kendra and Nijera Kori.

"The existence of trade unions is vital to fight to ensure workers' rights," said Heisoo Shin, a member of the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

Manufacturers should set minimum wages by following international standards under International Labour Organisation, Shin said. Increasing the buying power of garment workers will benefit the whole economy, she added.

"It will be unwise to fix the minimum wages by considering inflation. Factors such as the cost of education, health and others should also be taken into account," said Khushi Kabir, coordinator of Nijera Kori.

Owners should ensure a minimum standard of living for the workers to increase



Second from right, Khushi Kabir, coordinator of Nijera Kori, a non-government organisation, speaks at a consultation with the United Nations mandate holders on women in the garment sector, at BRAC Centre Inn in Dhaka yesterday.

their productivity and develop the sector, Kabir added.

"There is no alternative to trade unions to benefit the workers," said Zafrul Hasan, secretary general of Jatiyabadi Samik Dal, labour wing of main opposition BNP.

The government should fix minimum wages in such a manner that the interest of both workers and owners are preserved, Hasan said. The government should set a minimum basic of Tk 8,000 as wages

considering their living costs, he said.

Garment workers, who are mostly women, receive one of the lowest minimum wages among the major industrial sectors in Bangladesh, said Shaheen Anam, executive director of Manusher Jonno Foundation.

It is also the lowest among Bangladesh's competitors in Asia such as Vietnam, China and Pakistan, she said.

The owners should give minimum wages

to the workers, which will give social recognition to live in society, she added.

"We have cheap labour and so we should go for collective bargain with the international buyers to develop the recent scenario of the garments sector."

International retailers want to give low prices to their consumers and therefore, they are not concerned about the minimum wage for garment workers, said Fahmida Khatun, research director and head of research of Centre for Policy Dialogue.

She suggested increasing the allocation for wages in the supply chain process.

She said 50 percent of the garment factories in Bangladesh go for subcontracting, which are not fully compliant. The owners should train workers to increase their efficiency and develop the working environment to increase productivity, she added.

The high productivity of workers will ensure high wages for the workers, she said.

Rights Activist Sultana Kamal said a mutual sense of accountability is needed between workers and manufacturers to develop the sector. The owners should give living wages instead of minimum wages to the workers, said Kamal, who is also a former adviser to the caretaker government.

The owners are taking facilities from the government through public money, and so they have a responsibility to the workers, she added. "It is a crime and also illogical that owners do not want to give standard wages to the workers."

Stocks see dent in gaining streak

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Breaking a three-day gaining streak, stocks returned to the red yesterday as investors were lured by profit booking.

DSEX, the benchmark general index of the Dhaka Stock Exchange, closed the day at 3,946 points, after suffering a loss of 43 points, or 1 percent.

A significant portion of investors went for profit booking, creating some selling pressure, IDLC Investments said in its regular market analysis.

"Poor quarterly declarations, especially in the heavyweight banking sector sparked disappointments amid investors, and accelerated the downward roll."

Turnover also trailed back to Tk 3,843 crore, as investors remained meticulous and opted to stay watchful, the merchant bank said.

LankaBangla Securities, a leading stockbroker, said the market participation of traders remained steady

following the last couple of days; sellers outstripped buyers throughout the day, amid strong encounters between the two forces that kept the market volatile.

Among the major sectors, engineering advanced 1.73 percent, textiles 1.23 percent and cement 1.07 percent, while banks declined 3.44 percent, telecommunications 1.25 percent and non life insurance 1.04 percent.

A total of 1.09 lakh trades were executed with 11.81 crore shares and mutual fund units changing hands on the premier bourse. Of the traded issues, 124 advanced, 125 declined and 31 remained unchanged on the DSE floor.

Generation Next Fashions topped the most traded stocks chart with 1.09 crore shares worth Tk 28.75 crore changing hands.

The Chittagong Stock Exchange also fell yesterday with its selective categories index, CSCX, declining 87.92 points, to close the day at 7,740

Robi launches 3.5G

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Mobile operator Robi Axiata yesterday announced the launch of its 3.5G services for its customers at select areas in Dhaka, Chittagong and Sylhet.

Robi customers can now enjoy much faster online services like viewing multimedia content, playing games and downloading files with the 3.5G technology, the operator said in a statement.

Last month, Robi launched its third generation (3G) network in parts of Dhaka and Chittagong, which it brands as '3.5G', though technically it is the same technology offloaded by the other telecom operators in the country.

As an introductory special promotional bonus pack, existing Robi subscribers of 2G

monthly packs of 1GB, 3GB and 5GB will get 1GB of 3G data bonus for free, according to the statement.

The 1GB, 2GB and 5GB packs all have 30-day validity for 2G data, but the free 1GB of 3G data will be valid for 90 days.

The 1GB monthly pack will cost Tk 275, the 3GB pack Tk 450, and 5GB Tk 650.

The 'Pay as You Go' tariff will also be applied at a flat rate of Tk 0.015/KB, the operator said.

Robi customers can also avail an extra bonus offer for free online Robi-to-Robi video calls throughout the month of November on their 3G-enabled cell phones.

Through the offer Robi customers on a 3G network can place a video call to any of their contacts who are also on a 3G network.



Ali Reza Iftekhar, managing director of Eastern Bank, and Lucia Ballelli, head of international business development at Banca UBAE of Italy, exchange documents of a bilateral loan agreement in Dhaka recently. The Italian bank will provide foreign currency fund to Eastern Bank.

20 RMG units shut in Gazipur

FROM PAGE B1

Shahid Ullah of Ashulia industrial police said workers started demonstrating when they came to the factory in the morning and found it shut.

He said the owners of the factory, which has more than 900 workers, did not pay the salaries for September yet.

Jahangir Bhuiyan, assistant superintendent of Ashulia Industrial Police, said factory management assured workers that they would pay the arrears on October 27, and had declared the factory shut till yesterday.

But the workers became restless as factory management could not pay the arrears, he said.

Some workers said management is terminating workers gradually without paying their salaries.

Muzibur Rahman, managing director of the factory admitted to The Daily Star that the factory is now facing a financial crisis.

"I will pay the workers by Monday."

New DMD for Mutual Trust Bank



STAR BUSINESS DESK

Syed Rafiqul Haq has recently joined Mutual Trust Bank Ltd (MTB) as its deputy managing director, the bank said in a statement yesterday.

Haq joined Eastern Bank in 1998 and served the bank as area head for corporate banking before joining MTB.

He completed his MBA from the Institute of Business Administration under Dhaka University after completing his MSc from the same varsity.

Haq began his banking career with IFIC Bank as a probationary officer in 1984, according to the statement.

Shipbuilding: better days ahead as buyers return

FROM PAGE B1

"We are expecting better days in the future," she said, adding that the company is set to deliver one ship worth Tk 100 crore to an international buyer next month and another three months later.

The domestic market, however, helped Tk 3,000 crore-industry survive the lean times.

"It [the domestic market] is maturing. The demand for tankers, fishing trawlers, passenger ships, passenger ferries and container ships is on the rise," said the Western Marine MD.

A total of 100 container vessels will be needed for the new river route to Pangaon

Inland Container Terminal in Keraniganj, due to start from November 7.

"We have got six orders already for building container carrying vessels for the new river route between Chittagong and Dhaka," he said.

The impending series of shutdowns, however, is poised to slow down the industry, according to Bari. "Our workers cannot go to the shipyards during hartal. We have deadlines to honour - we cannot afford to sit idle for 2-3 days straight."

She urged political parties to keep the sector free from political disruption.

Tax return deadline now December 1

FROM PAGE B1

The official announcement for the extension will be made today, an NBR official said.

This year, the government offices remained closed for 11 days for the Eid and Puja holidays, and the opposition enforced a three-day shutdown across the county at the end of the month, the official added.

Different trade bodies, including the

Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industries, appealed for an extension.

Though revenue collection rose 17 percent in the first quarter of the current fiscal year, it fell short of its target by Tk 1,313 crore.

The NBR official said the tax returns till date are much lower than those in the last fiscal year.

High imports to drag onion prices down

FROM PAGE B1

Quoting participating importers and wholesale traders, the statement said onion prices would follow a declining trend from now.

Onions were sold at between Tk 90 and Tk 110 a kilogram in city markets yesterday, according to Trading

Corporation of Bangladesh.

Local prices increased manifold after bad weather in India, the country's main source. This created a supply crunch and compelled the neighbouring country to hike the export price to as high as \$900 a tonne from \$250 a few months ago.

Owners to propose Tk 4,250 as minimum wage today

FROM PAGE B1

The figure, however, is lower than the amount (Tk 4,680) he earlier conveyed to journalists.

The government might increase the amount slightly, as in previous cases, so the final amount is likely to be Tk 4,500, Dipu added. The new wage structure would take effect on November 1, regardless of the timing of its announcement by the labour ministry.

"If the minimum salary goes any higher than Tk 4,500, many small and medium garment factories will be in trouble as their financial bases are not too strong." Moreover, the international retailers are not paying higher prices for

the garment items, although the cost of production increased more than 13 percent over the last few years, he said.

Asked about possible labour unrest owing to the new wage being much lower than the workers' demand of Tk 8,114, Dipu said: "Everyone should act responsibly as the international garment business has now become very competitive."

Meanwhile, Home Minister Muhiuddin Khan Alamgir yesterday urged all to keep the readymade garment sector out of all kinds of subversive activities for the sector's commendable contribution to the economy.

"The country's per capita income stands at \$1,044 and it was only possible because of the significant contribution of the RMG sector," he said while addressing a group of fire-fighting officers recently recruited by the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association.

BGMEA President Atiqul Islam said the new recruits will impart training in member factories of the association.

Commerce Secretary Mahbub Ahmed said the government has been working based on four documents-- National Action Plan, National Tripartite Agreement, Compact and

Petition on DSE EGM withdrawn

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The Dhaka Stock Exchange is now free to hold its extraordinary meeting (EGM) any day, as a stockbroker has withdrawn the petition, which he filed with the court a couple of days ago challenging the EGM.

"I never oppose the demutualisation of the exchanges or the Demutualisation Act. I filed the petition as there were some loopholes in the process," said Ahmed Iqbal Hasan, the petitioner.

"However, I withdrew the petition to clear the way of demutualisation process, as it was being said that the petition would hamper the demutualisation of the bourse."

A DSE official said the board will set a fresh date for the EGM after receiving the certified copy of the petition withdrawal.

Earlier on Monday, the High Court imposed a 4-week injunction on the Dhaka bourse's EGM that was scheduled to be held on Tuesday in line with

the approved demutualisation scheme.

Justice Mamnoon Rahman issued the injunction after Ahmed Iqbal Hasan, who is also a stockbroker and a former president of DSE, filed the petition.

The EGM is a must to modify the memorandum and articles of association of the premier bourse in line with the demutualisation scheme.

The DSE is also supposed to adopt the demutualisation scheme and select the first Board of Directors for the exchange under the scheme at the EGM.

EDCL ESSENTIAL DRUGS COMPANY LIMITED
395-397, Tejgaon Industrial Area, Dhaka-1208

INTERNATIONAL TENDER NOTICE (SHORT DATED)

EDCL invites two envelope system International Tender for Supply of following items for Essential Drugs Company Limited, Dhaka Factory on C&F© Dhaka by Air basis:-

SL.No.	Tender No. Date	Name of the Item	Cost of Tender Schedule	Last date of Closing & opening
01.	IMP/Instrument /SEM/35/ 2013-2014 Dated 29/10/2013	Supply of following Instrument for Dhaka Plant 1. Anemometer/Balometer with Hood -01 pcs.	Tk.750.00/set Equivalent to US\$ 10.00 Non-refundable	Closing: 13/11/2013 at 3.00 PM Opening: 13/11/2013 at 3.15 PM
02.	IMP/Digit/SEM/36/ 2013-2014 Dated 29/10/2013	Supply of embossing digit as numerical, alphabetic and space for young Tech Pack (six Truck) Sacheting Machine as follows) 1. Numerical Digit- 0,1 to 9 - 910 pcs. 2. Alphabetic : "E" & "M" Space -72 pcs. -36 pcs.	Tk.500.00/set Equivalent to US\$ 7.00 Non-refundable	Closing: 18/11/2013 at 3.00 PM Opening: 18/11/2013 at 3.15 PM

Tender schedule will be sold from the Accounts Department of Essential Drugs Company Limited, Dhaka on payment as stated above during office hours on all working days (except Friday, Saturday and Govt. Holidays). No tender schedule will be sold on the opening date of the tender.

The tender will be accompanied by an amount of Earnest Money as mentioned above in the from of Bank Draft/Pay Order/Bank Guarantee from any Schedule Bank of Bangladesh in favour of "Essential Drugs Co. Ltd." without which the tender will be considered as non-responsive.

EDCL authority reserves the right to accept or reject any or all the tenders without assigning any reason whatsoever.

N.B: This Information is also available at our Website: www.edcl.gov.bd

Dy. General Manager
Planning & Procurement
For: Managing Director.