

Invest in human resources: analysts

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Chief executives, business leaders and entrepreneurs advised companies to invest in human resources development to build the next generation of leaders.

A separate human resources ministry with the prime responsibility of creating and developing skilled manpower for the country's corporate and business sectors should also be established by the government, they added.

They were speaking at a discussion on the sidelines of a daylong international conference on human resources organised by Bangladesh Society for Human Resource Management in association with Grameenphone in Dhaka.

At a session styled 'Human resources development: challenges and opportunities', Arif Dowla, managing director of Advanced Chemical Industries (ACI), said employees have to understand the purpose and values of their organisation.

It's intangible, but critical, and makes the employees passionate about working at an organisation; so companies should invest in it, he said.

"When we come to empowerment, you have to understand the

relative achievement of your team and you will have to do it based on their performance, initiatives and compliance," he said.

Different people have to be empowered differently, he said. "We have to understand who to empower more or less."

Shehzad Munim, managing director of British American Tobacco Bangladesh, said his company's aim is to remain a high performing organisation that can retain the next generation of leaders.

"To develop leadership in the organisation we have to have a plan, build experience and have the youth as a driving force. We ensure experience by learning on the job to make sure that people actually acquire skills that they need through the real life experience."

Jalalul Azim, managing director of Pragati Life Insurance, said the organisation that neglects its human resources may not be successful in the long run. "Developing human resources is not an expenditure, it's an investment."

Vivek Sood, chief executive of Grameenphone, said employees should remain engaged towards the business goal. "Most important is how you communicate with your employees."

"You have to have a clear desire

and ambition and that desire has to be something that people can associate with. You have to create a spirit of something to achieve every day, and I think that drives an organisation," he said.

Speaking at another session on the "Role of entrepreneurs and government in promoting best human resource practices", Mohammad Noor Ali, chairman of Unique Group of Companies, said: "We have advertised several times for top level executives such as chief financial officer and general manager for our business entities, but we did not find anyone, and then we recruited top executives from abroad."

Skilled manpower needs to be created first, he said. "Then we can develop a corporate culture."

The government should also introduce technical subjects from primary or secondary school levels, along with traditional subjects, so that a student can find a job soon after completing his or her education, he added.

Md Sabur Khan, immediate past president of Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry, urged the government to remove the quota system in recruiting public service officers. "Otherwise, we will not get proper people in proper places."

He also said human resource

managers are now playing a key role. "It is going to be the heart of the industries," added Khan, also chairman of Daffodil University.

Moderating the discussion, Aftab-ul Islam, president of American Chamber of Commerce, said human resource development receives low investment and fewer priorities.

"We need government policy on human resource management and development in the country."

AR Khan, chairman of Bangladesh Energy Regulatory Commission, however said it may not be possible for the government to impart trainings on a large scale, as the government deals more with peoples' basic needs.

"The private sector can come forward to set up a training institute for human resources development and the government can play the role of a facilitator here," he said.

Ernesto G Espinosa, president of Asia Pacific Federation of Human Resources Management, and Graham Moore, an international thought leader on emotional intelligence, presented two separate keynote papers.

Md Musharraf Hossain, president of Bangladesh Society for Human Resource Management, was awarded the Life Time Achievement Award for 2013.



Md Nurun Newaz Salim, chairman of NCC Bank, poses with the participants of a training on laws and practices in banking, in Dhaka on Thursday. Rafiaul Islam, assistant secretary of Bangladesh Association of Banks, was also present.

Yunus backs business with human connections

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Professor Yunus also had meeting with noted actor of the "Bourne" films and activist Matt Damon who has launched an organisation called Water.org that seeks to bring clean water to remote parts of Africa and India where poorest people lack access.

Damon said his work is inspired by Professor Yunus, whose work he has been following for many years.

He also had a special review meeting with the Prime Minister of Haiti Laurent Lamothe to review the ongoing social business being carried on the island nation by Yunus Social Business, particularly the progress of the social business to reforest the island, for which his government has already allocated 10,000 hectares of land.

Professor Yunus had separate meetings with the CEOs of German airline Lufthansa, leading Swiss Bank UBS and investment bank Goldman Sachs and worked out plans

for their initiatives in social business particularly focusing on youth unemployment in South European countries.

He addressed the Young Global Shapers, outstanding young people selected by the Schwab Foundation for leadership qualities already demonstrated in work that changes the world.

Later he attended the board meeting of the Schwab Foundation for social entrepreneurs, of which he has been a founding member along with Klaus Schwab, Hilda Schwab and Queen Mathilde of Belgium.

In Wiesbaden, Germany he had a meeting with the newly elected mayor, Sven Gerich, to review the social business programmes of the city, which declared itself as the social business city.

Yunus visited Brussels to speak on social business. A leading business family of Belgium expressed their intention to create a social business fund.



Samuel S Chowdhury, chairman of Guardian Life Insurance Ltd, poses at the company's launch at Bangabandhu International Conference Centre in Dhaka on Friday. Syed Nasim Manzur, director, was also present.



Humayun Kabir, chairman of Modhumoti Bank, opens the bank's fourth branch in Dhaka on Thursday. Md Mizanur Rahman, managing director, was also present.

HR practices pick up: study

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Most organisations have established a separate HR department to manage people, the survey added.

"It means that organisations have realised the need for HR," said Md Musharraf Hossain, president of BSHRM and head of Human Resource Management of the International Centre for Diarrhoeal Disease Research, Bangladesh.

Hossain, along with D Rajiv Krishnan, an advisory partner of Ernst & Young LLP, shared the survey results at an International HR Conference at Bangabandhu International Conference Centre yesterday in Dhaka.

The study also showed that 75 percent of respondents said their organisations have structured mechanisms in place to manage employee grievances and obtain feedback.

Another indicator of a progressive attitude by organisations is that about 30 percent of respondents said their organisations have preventive mechanisms in place to avoid conflicts, it said.

"Traditionally, the selection processes focused on technical competencies—knowledge, experience and functional proficiency. However, organisations are now increasingly focusing on emotional quotient rather than on intelligence quotient," it said.

A global beverage company, for example, introduced a creative way to select the right person. During the interview, interviewers pretended to have a sudden heart attack or set-off a fire alarm to see the candidate's natural response.

Most organisations in Bangladesh, however, still lag behind in modern human resource practices, said the study.

More than 25 percent of respondents revealed that their organisation does not identify their training needs or training given is basic in nature.

Services sectors, including healthcare, NGOs and IT, are relatively stricter in conducting training programmes.

About a third of respondents said they used internal referrals and print media for recruitment. A similar percentage has indicated at outsourcing the recruitment process. The use of social media and mobile applications for recruitment is limited, according to the study.

About 60 percent of respondents revealed said the reference check in their organisation is conducted sporadically and/or informally, the study said.

"This should be a cause for concern, because the process not only reaffirms that the candidate is fit for the role, but also his/her ethical standards and integrity," it said.

The study showed about 95 percent of companies do not provide long-term incentives to retain employees.

Almost all respondents from fast moving consumer goods and pharmaceuticals sectors and about 66 percent from manufacturing and telecommunications linked performance to short-term incentives for all the departments, according to the survey. Across the world, about 87 percent of recognition programmes focus on long-service awards, it said.

The survey revealed that in many organisations in Bangladesh, the need identification process either does not exist or exists at a basic level.

More than 55 percent of respondents indicated that their organisations do not have any defined employee reward and recognition programme.

Performance rating is mainly calculated on functional metrics and not as regularly on behaviour aspects, it said.

The study however said companies in IT and telecoms are adopting leading practices in performance evaluation and training needs identification.

BTRC records a hike in court expenses

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The BTRC was facing around a dozen of cases filed by telecom companies, including mobile operators Grameenphone and Banglalink, WiMax operator Banglalion and landline operator PeoplesTel, according to the list.

Md Abdus Samad, commissioner of legal and licensing department of the BTRC, said expenses went up due to a large number of cases filed by the licensees. "We engaged senior lawyers to face the cases filed by big companies."

The operators sometimes go to court when the regulator asks them to pay dues, he said. Filing cases against the regulator is not unusual, but the hike in its legal expenditure does not reflect any failure of the telecom regulator; Samad added. "Any aggrieved party can go to court."

The BTRC has been getting good results from court battles for the last couple of years as it is engaging senior lawyers, said a lawyer of the Supreme Court, who also works as a consultant for some telecom operators.

The BTRC was defeated in only one case, which was with a chartered accountancy firm regarding the appointment of an audit firm that audited Grameenphone, the lawyer said, asking not to be named.

Proactive info key to corruption battle: analysts

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Shamsul Alam, a member of the planning commission, said the Right to Information Act could help curb corruption if it can be used in the right manner.

Iftikharuzzaman, executive director of the Transparency International Bangladesh, backed him, adding Bangladesh could have done better with the millennium development goals were there no challenges by way of governance and corruption.

At least 13.6 percent of the national budget has been lost to corruption in the key sectors of MDGs in fiscal 2011-12, Iftikharuzzaman said.

Access to information is fundamental to fighting corruption, particularly in empowering people to raise questions.

"It will be important when we talk about the sustainable development goals [SDGs], so that we don't make the same mistakes."

The anti-graft campaigner said key development goals in areas of education and health have been exposed to serious risks and hostage to politics.

"We will have to address these issues. Otherwise, we will lag behind when it comes to SDGs."

Nazul Islam, additional secretary of the cabinet division, admitted that the ministries cannot answer emails due to lack of preparedness. "It is a shameful reality."

He said the government plans to use 4,500 union information and services centres to boost people's access to information and launch a website of 25,000 website links later this month, with a mandatory provision for keeping those websites updated.

Akram H Chowdhury, a former

lawmaker, identified the lack of readiness in providing information as a missing link.

Shaheer Anam, executive director of Manusher Jonno Foundation, who successfully campaigned for the enactment of the Right to Information Act, said the MDGs have left out critical aspects of human rights and governance, which created a huge pocket of marginalised and poor people.

"As the high level committee of the UN has recognised those issues this time, it will be our role to help integrate those issues in the SDGs."

She said people would have to be made the central figure of the SDGs. "People having access to all kinds of information is a prerequisite for that."

"It is also about holding the government accountable. It happens when people have proper access to information at the right time."

Political will, complete independence of the regulatory bodies such as the Information Commission, the Anti-Corruption Commission and the Election Commission, and democracy within the democratic institutions are very important, the MJF executive director added.

Tanjib-ul Alam, a lawyer of the Supreme Court who helped draft the Right to Information Act on behalf of civil society, said the answer to the deep-rooted corruption lies with the enforcement of laws.

Salehuddin Ahmed, managing editor of The Daily Star, who moderated the discussion, said the MDGs have been set for only developing countries while the SDGs would be for all countries.

"So, when something is for all coun-

tries then there is risk that the developing countries might be marginalised. We have to keep our interest at the forefront."

He said ensuring the right to information is a precondition to people's participation. The government values the access to information issue although it is not highlighted predominantly in the UN discussions, said Saida Muna Tasneem, director general of the UN and Human Rights desk at the foreign affairs ministry.

The youth would have to be engaged with the issue of access to information to take the movement forward, said Monisha Biswas, policy advocacy manager of Oxfam.

Awareness about the benefit of the Right to Information act has to be raised to get people interested, said Mohammad Kamruzzaman of Bangladesh NGOs Network for Radio and Communications.

The government also needs to make public the bilateral and international treaties, said Asgar Ali Sabri, a director at ActionAid Bangladesh.

"The people don't know about some of the treaties and agreements the government has recently signed."

MS Siddiqui, an author, alleged that the government uses trickery to camouflage corruption and inefficiency in the development spending and the system loss of the service providers.

The National Broadcasting Policy would take Bangladesh backward, undermining the achievements it made through the Right to Information act, said Faruque Ahmed, executive editor of the New Nation.

Rezaul Karim Chowdhury, chief moderator of EquityBD, and Tahmina



AK Azad, chairman of Shahjalal Islami Bank, attends the opening session of a two-day annual managers' conference organised by the bank at Ruposhi Bangla Hotel in Dhaka on Friday. Farman R Chowdhury, managing director, was also present.



SM Amzad Hossain, chairman of South Bangla Agriculture and Commerce Bank, inaugurates the bank's training institution at its head office in Dhaka recently. Md Rofiqul Islam, managing director, was also present.