

# Set up a high-tech park in heart of Dhaka: ICT donors

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The government should establish a high-tech park at a prime location in the capital to attract more foreign investors, analysts said at a workshop yesterday.

They also wanted key stakeholders of the IT industry to come forward with coordinated efforts to materialise the 2014-2018 vision of Bangladesh Association of Software and Information Services (BASIS).

In February, BASIS launched goals to export software worth \$1 billion, train and employ one million IT-skilled professionals, and contribute 1 percent to gross domestic product from the IT sector by 2018, and realise the 2021 vision of a Digital Bangladesh.

They were speaking at a two-day workshop organised by BASIS, Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry,

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands, and International Trade Centre at The Daily Star Centre in Dhaka.

The government is now building a high-tech park in Kaliakoir near Dhaka and plans to build another in Jessore.

The recommendations of the workshop will be handed over to Zunaid Ahmed Palak, ICT state minister, to achieve the visions of BASIS.

Representatives of different foreign donor agencies of the Netherlands, Norway, Denmark, Japan and Canada that work with BASIS participated at the workshop.

Sami Ahmed, executive director of BASIS, said different donor agencies and government bodies are currently working in Bangladesh to develop the ICT sector, but group efforts are absent and project duplications are

sometimes observed.

Bangladesh does not have a coordinated voice in Europe to brand its IT capacity, he said.

"From now on, donors will work as a group and in a coordinated way," Ahmed said.

The donors will provide Bangladesh's IT firms with financial help to achieve international certification, such as CMMI or ISO, which are very costly to get, he added.

The donors have enough money for Bangladesh, but they need definite projects to invest in, said Katie Gove, a consultant of International Trade Centre.

The donors will help Bangladesh financially so that international reports of KPMG or AT Kearney can be updated, which were published a few years ago, Gove added.

## Govt to import 50,000 tonnes of wheat

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The government will import 50,000 tonnes of wheat at \$270 a tonne as the cabinet committee on purchase approved a proposal of the food ministry on Sunday.

The import price will be lower than a previous estimate at \$288 to \$298 a tonne.

The government, in this fiscal year's budget, has set a target to collect nine lakh tonnes of wheat through import.

On December 2, the government's stock of food grain was 12.47 lakh tonnes, of which 1.46 lakh tonnes were wheat, according to the ministry.

## Media must be a partner in the \$50b journey

FROM PAGE B4

Avedis H Seferian, president and chief executive officer of Worldwide Responsible Accredited Production, a global compliance certification body, echoed Anam, saying constructive criticism is very valuable.

"It is not the media's job to focus entirely on negatives and simply point out what is bad. The media should, in all fairness, be a reflection of society and report truly and fairly about what is going on and call out the bad things that need to be called out and criticise where it is worthwhile."

He said everybody has to understand that the partnership between the media and the garment sector would not be the similar to the one seen between the business and social sectors.

"We don't have such types of partnership with the media -- and you don't even want to have that. This is not a situation where you want to be able to tell the media what you want them to report for you -- they are not going to do that. They should not do that. They have a job and they have their own mission to fulfil."

Seferian said if there is any partnership between the media and the industry it would not be a relationship with any degree

of control.

"The media will do its job, whether we cooperate with them or not. So, we all have to act responsibly," he said, while stressing that the media needs to make sure that the news is true.

Muzaffar U Siddique, founder chairman of BGMEA University of Fashion and Technology, said the media are already helping the sector, while calling for constructive journalism for the sector's growth.

He also said the media can play an important role in improving the country's infrastructure and can help open the eyes of the government.

Dhyana van der Pols, head of textile innovation, sourcing and manufacturing of the World Federation of the Sporting Goods Industry, called for transmission of knowledge to media, as there is a gap when it comes to sharing information with journalists.

Magnus Schmid, programme coordinator of the Promotion of Social and Environmental Standards project run in Bangladesh by GIZ, the German development agency, also spoke, while Monjurul Ahsan Bulbul, editor-in-chief of Boishakhi Television, moderated the discussion.



Sami Ahmed, executive director of BASIS, attends a workshop on the ICT sector, organised by the association, at The Daily Star Centre in Dhaka on Sunday.

## IDA's \$60m fund to strengthen NBR

STAR BUSINESS DESK

The International Development Association will give a fund of \$60 million to the government's Revenue Mobilisation Programme for Results to strengthen and modernise the value-added tax wing of the National Board of Revenue.

Kazi Shafiqul Azam, additional secretary of the Economic Relations Division, and Salman Zaidi, acting country director of the World Bank, signed a deal in this regard on Sunday.

The Association will provide the fund through a multi-donor trust fund administered by the World Bank, the finance ministry said in a statement.

This financing credit is soft and concessional in nature, and carries a service charge of 0.75 percent on the withdrawn amount. It is repayable in 40 years with a grace period of 10 years with no commitment fee.

## Need of the time: Fix safety flaws

FROM PAGE B1

But, he said, the tragedies have created an opportunity to take Bangladesh's garment sector to international standards in fire safety, structural soundness of factories and worker rights.

"Truly, since Rana Plaza collapse, amazing and unbelievable things have happened. Brands have come together, development partners like America, the EU, the ILO, workers, the BGMEA, owners and the government -- all have come together. All the stars are lining up to transform the apparel industry," he said.

"I remain convinced that brand Bangladesh is going to be a premium brand, a preferred brand. I believe that the brand Bangladesh should be the number one brand in the world and I believe it could be and should be," he said.

There needs to be some kind of mechanism by which workers, owners and the managers can resolve disputes, as there always will be some disputes, Mozena said. "More unions need to be recognised. Rules and regulations need to be put in place."

"All workers in Bangladesh including those in the export processing zones need to have the same rights and privileges under the law," he said.

Ian Spaulding, adviser to the Alliance for Bangladesh Worker Safety, a platform of 26 retailers from North America, said remediation of factories is a complex process and takes years to complete.

Besides inspection, remediation and training, it is also necessary to change the mindset of factory owners about safety, he said.

"Now our focus is on training. We also focus on building capacity of workers' representatives, supervisors and managers so that they can continue training themselves and others," Spaulding said.

Brad Loewen, chief safety inspector of the Accord, a platform of 150 retailers and brands mainly from Europe, said things are improving, but still a lot of work remains to be done.

It is good to see that the government, buyers, owners and workers have been involved to improve the whole situation in the garment sector, he said.

However, referring to the sacking of workers at two factories on charges of meeting with the Accord officials, he said the move was a wrong one. "The more we bring and transfer knowledge to Bangladesh it will help the industry," he said.

Ali Ahmed Khan, director general of Bangladesh Fire Service and Civil Defence, said unplanned industrialisation, unregulated building construction, lack of fire stations in industrial areas, narrow roads and inadequate awareness on fire safety are some of the major challenges in the garment sector.

He said it is necessary to have fire service stations in an area from where fire fighters can reach the spot within 10 minutes. "For quick response in case of disaster in the industrial zones like Gazipur, Savar, Narayanganj and

Ashulia, it is necessary to have additional five to six fire stations to reduce disaster risk," he said.

Consumers always ask to extend support to the RMG sector and help to build the capacity to make the products more sustainable in terms of environmental implications, which are also a great concern for the German government, said Ferdinand von Weyhe, chargé d'affaires of German Embassy in Dhaka.

Anisur Rahman Sinha, former president of BGMEA, said the Rana Plaza collapse was an eye-opener. "Problems are everywhere. But these have to be faced professionally. Bangladesh will face all the problems confidently and will succeed," he said.

Without resilient entrepreneurs, management and workers, the success of the garment sector could not be made, he added.

Tuomo Poutiainen, International Labour Organisation's programme manager for the RMG sector, said true safety cultures cannot be established without workers' involvement.

He said education and investment are important for capacity building of government, regulatory agencies, young entrepreneurs, workers and young professionals, which are the key to ensuring long-term sustainable safety.

ZM Kamrul Anam, president of Bangladesh Textile and Garment Workers League, and coordinator (textile group) of IndustriALL Bangladesh Council, said as per the ILO convention ratified by Bangladesh workers have the right to be organised and bargain.

It is equally important for the management to have a worker representative to discuss any issues that arise, he said, adding that trade unions and workers have their rights and responsibilities as well.

Farzana Chowdhury, managing director of Green Delta Insurance Company, said insurance companies can work strategically with factory owners on building worker safety awareness and insurance policy by organising roadshows and cultural shows in the industrial areas.

Debbie Coulter, head of programmes of Joint ETI (Ethical Trading Initiative), said there is an increasing demand from buyers for owners to have social dialogue with workers. A harmonious relationship between the workers and the management also critical, she said.

Reaz Bin-Mahmood, vice-president of Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association, moderated the discussion.

The three-day summit organised by BGMEA began at Bangabandhu International Conference Centre in Dhaka on Sunday.

On the sidelines, organisers ran a mobile SMS poll where almost half of the participants expressed that "workers' and managers' awareness" is mostly needed for ensuring safe working conditions. Entrepreneurs' mindset came in second.

## Three apparel units get \$1.3m funds

FROM PAGE B1

VF's guarantee to back the loans makes it possible for IFC, a member of the World Bank Group, to lend at lower interest rates, according to a statement received yesterday.

This initiative will help VF suppliers in Bangladesh overcome financial obstacles to improving workplace safety conditions.

"Providing these loans to help supplier factories fund the necessary improvements is another positive step forward in VF's efforts to ensure the safety of the people making our products in Bangladesh," said Tom Glaser, VF's president of supply chain.

The financing structure from VF and IFC helps factory owners meet the stringent standards set by the Alliance for Bangladesh Worker Safety, an industry group of international apparel manufacturers and buyers whose work includes the inspection of Bangladeshi garment factories. VF is one of 26 Alliance members.

IFC disbursed an initial set of loan payments, totalling \$1.3 million, to three fac-

tory owners: Arunima Sportswear, Olio Apparels, and Radisson Apparel. These owners will use the capital to invest in safety upgrades such as the installation of fire sprinklers, fire doors and detection systems, along with other necessary repairs and safety precautions.

"The apparel industry has provided employment and reduced poverty for millions of people in Bangladesh. This financing model, which we think could work well for other buyers and suppliers, will help improve work conditions and facilitate growth and development," said Sergio Pimenta, IFC director for manufacturing, agribusiness and services.

VF and IFC are granting loans to VF's supplier factories in the range of \$100,000 to \$1 million. The lending programme is part of VF's efforts to help suppliers achieve performance standards for assessing and managing environmental and social risks and impacts, and labour and working conditions.

## Act before it's too late: analyst

FROM PAGE B1

Bangladesh now has the lowest labour cost and is the lowest price competitor, he said. "That, like in every other country, only lasts for a certain time. Your time is running out."

"As we try to move up in terms of price, sophistication and technology, we have to make sure that we bring the workforce along with that process," said Kochan. "We have to engage employees and their representatives in this process. So, for management, it means shifting business strategies."

The MIT professor also suggested adapting to world expectations of labour standards, making sure that the industry employing 4.4 million people addresses these issues. The world is watching and media attention constantly makes the industry visible to the rest of the world, he added.

"We just want to say, you are in the limelight. Bangladesh, the world is watching you. The world is concerned for the tragedies for the last several years," said Kochan.

"And now the world expects that you will take the next step and use the opportunity to really improve conditions for your society, your economy, your workforce and your consumers, who benefit from your hard work."

Nongovernment organisation and legitimate labour unions also have special responsibilities; they should work cooperatively and creatively to bring the workers' voice to the process to resolve conflict in ways that work for the workforce, business and society, he said.

Negotiations also have to be legitimate and done regularly and continuously; a mechanism of negotiations should be in place even before any problem arises, he added.

"We have to establish a viable safety and health system," he said, suggesting that all stakeholders, including international brands, work together to improve the labour and safety standards in the apparel industry.

A just or fair supply chain cannot be ensured by anyone alone and it has to be done by all parties concerned, added Kochan, recommending buyers to be fair in pricing.

"You (entrepreneurs) need to re-examine and reconsider the process and the way you are operating your business," said Arnold Marshal Zack, professor of Harvard Law School, Boston.

Mediation is a very good device and Bangladesh can make use of it, he said. The mediator should be someone whom both parties trust, he added.

Tuomo Poutiainen, programme manager, readymade garment sector of International Labour Organisation, Dhaka, said the new generation who are in trade unions can change the scenario.

It is important to build the mediation and negotiation capacities of employees, he said. The government also needs to build the capacity of the labour department to resolve disputes, he added.

Md Shafiqul Islam, an ex-president of BGMEA, said the trade body has an arbitration/conciliation committee, which has so far resolved more than eight thousand cases of disputes and grievances.

BGMEA and Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers and Exporters Association are working with the government, brands, and other stakeholders to train mid-level management and workers in rights and responsibilities, he added.

"The way we are developing reflects our efforts and shows our willingness to improve."

## Expatriates allowed to take money abroad

FROM PAGE B1

The central bank has not set any ceiling for outward remittance; the amount will be fixed while giving such permissions case by case, he said.

But, the BB will now allow anybody to take away money selling their lands or homes in Bangladesh, the official added.

The expatriates can take abroad only their incomes deposited in their taka accounts, he said.

### Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Local Government Engineering Department  
Office of the Executive Engineer  
District: Mymensingh  
www.lged.gov.bd

Tel: 091-64365, Fax: 091-66178, E-mail: xen.mymensingh@lged.gov.bd

Reference No.:

- (1) IFT 125/2014-2015, Memo No.: LGED/XEN/Mym/2014/3274 Date: 04-12-2014 (2<sup>nd</sup> call)
- (2) IFT 126/2014-2015, Memo No.: LGED/XEN/Mym/2014/3275 Date: 04-12-2014 (9<sup>th</sup> call)
- (3) IFT 127/2014-2015, Memo No.: LGED/XEN/Mym/2014/3276 Date: 04-12-2014 (9<sup>th</sup> call)
- (4) IFT 128/2014-2015, Memo No.: LGED/XEN/Mym/2014/3277 Date: 04-12-2014 (7<sup>th</sup> call)
- (5) IFT 129/2014-2015, Memo No.: LGED/XEN/Mym/2014/3278 Date: 04-12-2014 (14<sup>th</sup> call)

### e-Tender Notice

e-Tender is invited in the national e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the procurement of (1) Improvement of Kashor Advance Textile Mill Ltd.-Gouripur Bazar (Jamirdia Master Bari-Paragaon) Road from ch. 2645-3145m under Bhaluka Upazila, District-Mymensingh (Package No.: GMRIDP/MYM/BHAL/VR/18) (ID-15613 e-GP), (2) Improvement of Kalikapur-Jamgora (Gabgastola Bazar) Road by BC from ch. 1400-2400m including 3 Nos. U-drain at ch. 1750m, 1850m, 1950m under Muktagacha Upazila, District-Mymensingh (Package No.: IRIDP/MYM/W-240) (ID-15615 e-GP), (3) Improvement of Chechua (Valuk Chapor Mor)-Sholakuri via Kachari Ghat Road by BC from ch. 00-1000m including 3 Nos. U-drain at ch. 450m, 850m, 950m under Muktagacha Upazila, District-Mymensingh (Package No.: IRIDP/MYM/W-237) (ID-15616 e-GP), (4) Improvement of Mukshapur GPS-Shankibanga via Shapkhal Road from ch. 00-1000m including 2 Nos. U-drain at different chainage under Trishal Upazila, District-Mymensingh (Package No.: IRIDP/MYM/W-251) (ID-15620 e-GP), (5) Improvement of Palgaon-Basbari Road from ch. 3800-4584m including 1 No. U-drain under Bhaluka Upazila, District-Mymensingh (Package No.: IRIDP/MYM/W-160) (ID-15621 e-GP).

These are an online tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted.

To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required.

The fees for downloading the e-Tender documents from the National e-GP Portal have to be deposited on line through any registered banks branches up to 12:00pm on 24-12-2014. Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk ([helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd](mailto:helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd)) also from E-mail: [xen.mymensingh@lged.gov.bd](mailto:xen.mymensingh@lged.gov.bd) or Call to 091-66110 or 091-66376.

Interested persons can communicate with the undersigned during office hours.

AKM Ismat Kibria  
Executive Engineer  
LGED Mymensingh

[xen.mymensingh@lged.gov.bd](mailto:xen.mymensingh@lged.gov.bd)

## Japan recession worse than thought

AFP, Tokyo

Japan's economy contracted more than initially thought in the July-September quarter, revised official data revealed Monday, showing the world's third largest economy sank deeper into recession.

The economy shrank 0.5 percent quarter-on-quarter, worse than the 0.4 percent estimated in initial data released three weeks ago, the Cabinet Office said.

Advertorial

**5th Anniversary Celebrations of VEIT Bangladesh.**

VEIT Group (Germany) comprising of VEIT BRISAY Kannegiesser celebrated its 5th year anniversary program for the liaison office on 4th Dec, 2014 in Dhaka. Investors from all around Bangladesh has graced the function along with many international buyers and buyer's representatives wishing them for the milestone.

Mr Gunter Veit, Chairman of VEIT Group, Honorary chief guest, Mr Shahidullah Azim (Vice President, BGMEA), Mr Duminda Mangala, Mr Axel Baumanns (Product Management, VEIT Group) addressed the gathering, thanking the customers on how important they are for the group and how their latest products focuses on energy conservations and the importance of producing garments in a green environment.