

LEAD launches entrepreneurship training

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Leadership Excellence and Development or LEAD yesterday launched a special training for new entrepreneurs in partnership with globally renowned organisations.

LEAD focuses on training, mentoring and capacity building in leadership and entrepreneurship, said Ashfaq Zaman, president of the organisation.

"Our aim is to ignite the true potential of leaders to their full extent by inspiring, mentoring and equipping them with the right skills to compete globally."

By unlocking the potential, LEAD can positively contribute to the country's economy by grooming second-generation entrepreneurs, visionary leaders and pioneers, he said at a programme at Lakeshore Hotel in Dhaka. LEAD that organises all-year training is also endorsed and certified by the world's largest education organisation -- Pearson of the UK -- which owns both the Financial Times and Edexcel.

LEAD is going to organise its first session training programme with Al-Arafah Islami Bank, for a 50-student batch, which begins on May 13, organisers said.

The next batch will come from Anwar

Group, which has already signed a deal, according to Zaman. LEAD also offers some free courses for young people.

The Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry has also signed a deal with LEAD, to run a competition across the country, the winners of which will be able to get training for free.

Thousands of graduates in Bangladesh are unable to join any productive work from lack of proper training, said Mohammad Mahbubur Rahman, former information secretary.

LEAD can play an important role and reorganise the youth's thinking pattern toward entrepreneurship, he said.

Rubina Husain, vice president of Bangladesh Federation of Women Entrepreneurs; Niaz Rahim, director of Rahimafrooz Group, and Saidur Rahman, country manager of Pearson Bangladesh, also spoke at the event.

LEAD has also designed a video tutorial, which will be launched by July, showing entrepreneurs the way to plan a business model and the process for applying for a trade licence. LEAD has been accepted at the 11th World Economic Forum 2015 as the only Bangladeshi startup organisation.

Ford Motor to recall 42,300 cars in India

REUTERS

Ford Motor Co will recall 42,300 cars in India likely affected by a software error "which could result in the airbags not deploying in certain collisions in which they are intended to deploy", the carmaker's local arm said on Friday.

Ford India will recall the Figo hatchback and Figo Aspire compact sedan built at its new plant in Sanand in the western state of Gujarat, it said in a statement.

The company did not clarify if the software error affects only domestic sales or exports from the plant as well.

"A corrective action on all Figo and Figo Aspire vehicles, presently at Ford dealerships, has been undertaken, leading to a resumption of deliveries to customers," Ford India said, adding that the recalled cars would also get a software upgrade.



Aleya Azam, a social activist, opens the 113th branch of Social Islami Bank in Netrokona on Thursday. Md Abdur Rahman, chairman of the board audit committee of the bank, was also present.

Justice still eludes Rana Plaza victims: CPD

FROM PAGE B1

"The miseries of the missing workers' families are double as they did not get the compensation yet," Bhattacharya said.

The government should urgently find the newly-identified missing workers' families to pay them the compensation.

According to the findings of the study, the rate of re-employment of Rana Plaza survivors is still very low, at 21.4 percent, as many of them do not want to go back to the workplace either for their physical health-related problems or mental trauma.

About 48 percent of the survivors are not fully employed, said Khondaker Golam Moazzem, additional director of research for the CPD, while presenting the findings of the study.

Regarding the improvements in workplace safety in the garment sector, he said Rana Plaza's legacy has been gradually evolving from 'poor compliance' to 'efforts towards better compliance'.

Although Bangladesh's garment sector is slowly heading towards the direction of a decent working environment, the pace of the remediation works needs to speed up.

Development partners may consider financing the remediation-related works as the estimated cost for the factory repairs will be about \$448 million, he added.

Srinivas Reddy, country director of the International Labour Organisation, said the immediate priority after the collapse was to undertake the structural, fire and electrical inspection of the factory buildings.

"The safety progress deserves appreciation," he said, adding that a large number of factories that produce for local consumption have not been inspected yet.

"Each and every garment factory in Bangladesh should go for inspection and remediation. This is a major message for the country," Reddy added.

Mikail Shipar, secretary to the ministry of labour and employment, said shared and rented buildings are major challenges in the factory remediation process.

The other major challenges are the

lack of personnel with the technical know-how and financing for acceleration of the remediation works.

Establishing a harmonious relationship between the factory owners, workers and trade union leaders is also a major challenge in the sector, he added.

Marcia Bernicat, US ambassador to Bangladesh, said the remediation pace is still slow in the garment factories.

She said more trade and workers welfare associations are needed for a strong voice of the workers.

"I strongly protest that the garment industry in Bangladesh has been built on the back of cheap labour. They have been producing world-class garment items," Bernicat added.

While protesting an allegation from a garment maker, Rob Ways, executive director of Accord on Fire and Building Safety in Bangladesh, asked the garment factory owners to lodge complaints to the agency's office if there is any specific complaint of corruption by any of the engineers and officials of the Accord.

"Rana Plaza building collapse was a wake-up call for us," said Faruque Hassan, vice-president of Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association.

Rehman Sobhan, chairman of the CPD, said garment factory owners need to give institutional recognition to workers as partners in the industry and not as casualised inputs that can be dispensed with as and when market shifts.

"They are the people who actually add value to the industry and are central to global competitiveness."

Rehman said the global market dynamics, which demands that garment exporters should constantly strive to keep their costs down, has created the problem of Rana Plaza.

In fear of losing buyers, the exporters scrimped on building materials, paying wages to workers or putting arrangements in place for workers' safety, he added.

Arshad Jamal Dipu, a former director of BCGMEA, said he believes those who are conducting factory inspections are also promoting their com-

mercial purposes.

"It has to be addressed. Otherwise, the effectiveness of this corrective action will not be there. The quality of inspections has to be ensured," he said, adding that the government should be the driving force in inspection.

Ways of the Accord rejected the allegations of Arshad.

He said the Accord stood by the inspections done by Bangladeshi and international engineers during the initial inspection and by Bangladeshi engineers in the follow-up inspections.

He also said it is untrue that it has pushed garment factories to buy any specific service or product for remediation. "We have a list of the companies who are doing different types of work related to remediation. We state that we are not recommending and endorsing them. We have simply provided the information to the factory owners."

He said the Accord coordinated extensively informally on a daily basis and formally on a monthly basis with the Alliance, another factory inspection agency.

Babul Akhter, secretary general of IndustriALL Bangladesh, the local chapter of the global union federation, said the injured should always receive medical treatment.

He also said Accord and Alliance should work in Bangladesh until all the factories are fully safe.

Babul and a number of other labour leaders said the money the families of the deceased and the injured had received so far from various sources cannot be termed compensation; they are grants.

Marcia said: "We also believe it is critically important for workers to have a strong and powerful voice, to be able to say 'we will not work in that building with a cracked wall' and be heard and respected."

Johan Frisell, ambassador of Sweden, said there should be effective trade unions where employees and employers can engage in effective dialogues and settle disagreements.

Leoni Margaretha Cuclenaere, ambassador of the Netherlands, also spoke.



Aftab Mahmud Khurshid, group chief marketing officer of Super Star Group, receives the Global Brand Excellence Award for brand marketing excellence in electrical and electronics durable category, at the 25th World Brand Congress from Debashish Biswas, country head of CIMA India, in Malaysia.

Tarana for tax cuts on handset imports

FROM PAGE B1

She also urged mobile phone importers and service operators to offer monthly instalment payment options on handsets for customers.

"We have no alternative to offering instalment facilities on handsets, if we want to increase internet penetration," she said.

To allow for handset models locked to particular operators, some changes must be made to the existing regulations, said Shahjahan Mahmood, chairman of Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission.

Currently, mobile operators cannot import handsets, but if they were allowed to make joint arrangements, handset prices would drop by 15 percent to 20 percent, said Mahmud Hossain, chief corporate affairs officer at Grameenphone.

"Allow locking of handsets to an operator for 2-3 years so smartphones can be offered with special bundles for the subscribers," Hossain said.

Mahmood asked handset importers to submit a proposal on reviewing VAT and tax immediately, so they can take appropriate measures to promote the industry.

Currently, there is a 25 percent tax on handset imports and around 60 percent tax on different accessories, which present no business case for the entrepreneurs to establish assembly plants, said Ruhul Alam Al Mahbub Manik, president of Bangladesh Mobile Phone Importers Association.

Abu Saeed Khan, senior policy fellow at Colombo-based LIRNEasia, said a high tax on handsets and accessories is an incentive for smuggling to flourish.

Referring to research by different global organisations, Khan said Bangladesh will acquire five million new internet connections every year for the next five years. "Is the regulator or the government ready to regulate the market?"

The National Board of Revenue needs specific proposals from investors to review tax and VAT structures on imported handsets, said Moinul Khan, director general of Customs Intelligence and Investigation Department.

He said the IMEI (international mobile equipment identity) number, or the 15- or 17-digit code that uniquely identifies mobile handsets, would solve all the problems regard-

ing security and counterfeit handsets.

The commission has initiated a six-month pilot project to monitor legal handset imports and later, it would move to register handsets, said Col Nasim Parvez, BTRC's director general on spectrum management.

Bangladesh would be a huge market if at least one smartphone could be ensured for each of the country's nearly 8 crore unique mobile users, said BMPIA General Secretary Rezwatul Hoque said.

"A master roadmap is needed to address where we want to go in the next few years."

There are currently only 1.5 crore smartphones in the market and it has enormous prospects if the tax regulation is okay with the importers, Hoque added.

Some 1.6 crore mobile handsets have been imported so far at an estimated cost of Tk 1,970 crore and the government has earned a revenue of Tk 422 crore from it, said Lutfur Rahman, commissioner of Dhaka Customs House.

TRNB General Secretary Shamim Ahmed presented a keynote paper, while President Rashed Mehdi moderated the discussion.

Hong Kong summit to spotlight opportunities in Bangladesh

FROM PAGE B1

Biru Paksha Paul, chief economist of Bangladesh Bank, will deliver a keynote presentation on 'monetary policy for tomorrow's Bangladesh' and Paban Chowdhury, executive chairman of Bangladesh Economic Zones Authority, will speak on investments in the economic zones.

Six other panel discussions will be organised as part of the summit to discuss a wide range of topics that will include -- Bangladesh investment today; power and energy; export potential and ICT developments; investment opportunities in Bangladesh: foreign investors; Bangladesh capital markets; and PPP and their role in Bangladesh.

Act fast on regional connectivity: analysts

FROM PAGE B1

For instance, China's 'One Belt, One Road' policy should be considered when Bangladesh's policymakers discuss the issue of regional connectivity.

"Myanmar is going to be run by a civilian government and has taken up large infrastructure projects. India is also moving fast, establishing connectivity with Thailand, Vietnam as part of its Look East policy. They are moving fast."

He said the rivalry between India and China must be sidestepped while tapping into the prospects of connectivity.

Mohammad Yunus, senior research fellow of BIDS, said Bangladesh should

take a balanced approach to enhance peace, stability and prosperity.

At the inauguration, BIDS Director General KAS Murshid said Bangladesh has made strides in various areas and that contributed to economic growth and poverty reduction.

In particular, agriculture played a crucial role in poverty alleviation and employment generation, especially in recent years, he said.

"As is well-known, major gains have been made in education, health and gender parity," he added.

Citing the latest Labour Force Survey, economist Hossain Zillur Rahman said

only six lakh jobs have been created in the three years to 2015.

"Employment is a key area where we need to focus," he said, adding that discussions stemming from the current economic growth rate can generate complacency.

Improving the quality of secondary education is essential to take the nation forward, he said. In the absence of quality education, a large number of foreigners work in various sectors, including garment.

"We get \$15 billion in remittance but \$5-6 billion is going out of the country every year for lack of skilled and educated

workforce," said Rahman, a former adviser to caretaker government.

He also touched upon the issue of Bangladesh becoming a middle-income country.

"Becoming a middle-income country is not an issue of per capita income. It is about the quality of life. We need to focus on a more inclusive middle-income discourse."

Economics and politics will be important in the next journey of Bangladesh, according to Rahman.

"At present there is political stability but there is also uncertainty. It is a paradox."