

Apparel skills development centre needs a boost: analysts

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The Center of Excellence for Bangladesh Apparel Industry (CEBAI), an institute for skills development, should be nurtured further to help retain the country's position as one of the top garment exporters, analysts said yesterday.

They spoke at a workshop at the BGMEA Apparel Club in Dhaka where the contribution of the CEBAI towards enhancing skills in the garment industry was also recognised.

In November 2014, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina inaugurated the centre—run by Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA)—to address the skills gap in the garment sector.

Up until November this year, the CEBAI was supported by the International Labour Organisation (ILO), Sweden and international fashion retailer H&M.

Much has been accomplished, but the CEBAI is still in its infancy, Atiqul Islam, president of the centre, said at the programme. "We must continue to nurture it so that it is able to provide the support industry needs to move up the value chain and gain further share in the world market."

The vision of the CEBAI is to establish a replicable model of industry-driven training and support services, the ILO said in a statement.

Its actions have benefitted workers

and employers alike as it has helped create a firm foundation for future skills development in the sector, according to the statement.

"For the industry to fulfill its true potential we need to upgrade the skills of our workforce," said Siddiqur Rahman, president of BGMEA.

"There is also a strong need for research that will guide the development of the industry. Looking forward, the CEBAI should continue to play a key role to meet both these requirements."

Achievements of the centre include the setting up of the CEBAI Training Centre in Ashulia where a variety of courses for basic sewing machine operators, supervisory and management skills are taught.

Training methods and curricula that meet the demands of industry have been introduced.

New competency standards and curricula developed as part of the National Technical and Vocational Qualification Framework offer basic operator skills in knitwear, denim, lingerie and woven products.

The recognition of prior learning—which provides an opportunity to workers to identify their skills gained through work or past experience, have it assessed and formally acknowledged—has been introduced, according to the statement.

The ILO said the industry needs are being met though piloting of enterprise-based training facilities in 10

leading garment groups where more than 4,100 workers have been trained.

Collaboration with the Muslim Aid, the UCEP and the Bangladesh-Korea Technical Training Centre have seen 480 disadvantaged people in Dhaka and Chittagong gain access to training and get jobs in the garment sector.

The initiative has also supported three leading garment companies—Ananta, Bitopi and Shin Shin—to sign an inclusive business policy to promote gender equality and create better access for persons with disabilities, a step which can be a model for other companies in the industry, the ILO said.

"Although prospects in this sector are bright, the Bangladesh garment industry has enormous scope to improve productivity through skills development," said Srinivas Reddy, country director of the ILO for Bangladesh.

"I call on the industry to look at what the CEBAI has achieved and to build further on these efforts to achieve a more flexible, demand-driven and inclusive skills development system in Bangladesh."

Md Mustafizur Rahman, chairman of the Bangladesh Technical Education Board; Charlotta Schlyter, ambassador of Sweden; Kiron Gokathoti, sustainability manager of H&M Bangladesh, and Aftab Uddin Ahmad, CEO of the CEBAI, were also present.

SME expo ends in Chittagong

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

The three-day International SME Expo-2017 ended on Monday at World Trade Centre in the port city organised by Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

The event provided small and medium entrepreneurs with an opportunity to showcase their innovation in a greater platform, Chittagong City Corporation Mayor AJM Nasir Uddin said at the closing ceremony as the chief guest.

Every big company starts its journey as a small entity and becomes large with the time, Chittagong Chamber's President Mahbul Alam said.

He also underscored the need for enhancing facilities for the small and medium entrepreneurs to encourage them.



Shoeb Md Asaduzzaman, executive director for marketing and sales at City Group, at a press conference at Channel i's office in Dhaka on Monday announcing the start of Teer Advanced Kitchen, a television reality show, which will be aired on the channel from mid-February next year.

Laptop fair starts in Dhaka tomorrow

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A three-day laptop fair starts at Bangabandhu International Conference Centre in Dhaka tomorrow.

Expo Maker is organising the Techshohor laptop fair, for the 19th time that will remain open from 10am to 8pm.

There will be one mega pavilion, five sponsored pavilions, 14 mini pavilions and 27 stalls at the fair this time.

In a press conference at La Vinci Hotel yesterday, organisers said Techshohor will be the title sponsor of this year's fair. Acer, Asus, HP, Dell and Lenovo are the other co-sponsors of the show, said Muhammad

Khan, Expo Maker's planning consultant.

The companies will exhibit laptops, tablet computers, internet devices, antivirus packages and laptop related accessories, some of which are not yet available in the market, organisers said. Entry fee of the fair will be Tk 30 and school students will enjoy free access like the previous years.

Science and Technology Minister Yeafesh Osman will inaugurate the event.

At the press meet, Country Head of Asus Md Al Fuad, Country Marketing Manager for Dell Protap Saha, Business Development Manager for HP Salahuddin Mohamed Adel and Lenovo's Manager for Sales Rashed Kabir were also present.



MA Mannan, chairman of Butterfly Marketing Ltd, and Mustafizur Rahman Shazid, CEO, pose at the company's dealer conference in the capital's Krishibid Institution Bangladesh last week.

WB to stop financing oil, gas projects

AFP, Paris

The World Bank will stop financing oil and gas exploration and extraction from 2019, it announced Tuesday at a climate summit seeking to boost the global economy's shift to clean energy.

"The World Bank Group will no longer finance upstream oil and gas, after 2019," it said in a statement in Paris, where world leaders sought to unlock more money for the shift away from Earth-warming fossil fuels.

The move, it said, was meant to help countries meet the greenhouse gas-cutting pledges they had made in support of the 2015 Paris Agreement to limit global warming.

"In exceptional circumstances, consideration will be given to financ-

ing upstream gas in the poorest countries where there is a clear benefit in terms of energy access for the poor and the project fits within the countries' Paris Agreement commitments," the statement said.

The bank also announced it was "on track to meet its target of 28 percent of its lending going to climate action by 2020."

The World Bank's mandate is to provide finance and other assistance to aid the economic advancement of developing countries.

It co-sponsored the one-day summit called by French President Emmanuel Macron to find ways to unlock the money needed for the global economy's costly shift away from fossil fuels to less-polluting energy sources, and to shore up coun-

tries' defences against climate-change induced weather disasters. Trillions of dollars must be invested in clean energy technology to meet the Paris Agreement's goal of limiting average global warming to two degrees Celsius (3.6 degrees Fahrenheit) over pre-Industrial Revolution levels, experts say.

A lack of money has long been a constraint to the global effort to limit global warming, worsened by US President Donald Trump's decision to withdraw America from the Paris Agreement and slash funding for climate projects.

In its 2016 annual report, the World Bank Group said it had invested just over \$3 billion in "extractive industries", which also include mining, in 2016—three times as much as the year before.

Islami Bank lends Tk 315cr bending rules

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For instance, Unilliance was allowed to transfer its export earnings amounting to Tk 211 crore to the Uttara branch of Dutch-Bangla Bank from the Gulshan branch of IBBL.

"IBBL should have adjusted its credit and not let the company transfer funds to another bank," the BB report said.

The BB wrote to the IBBL in June informing its investigation findings and called for punitive measures against the officials concerned. But the bank refuted all the misdemeanours mentioned in the report.

The central bank sent another letter to the bank in August instructing it not to give further rescheduling facility to Unilliance and recover the overdue amount by December.

If it fails to recover the due by the deadline, the loans must be classified.

But on October 30, in a direct defiance to the central bank's directive IBBL rescheduled another Tk 61 crore of Unilliance and gave the company five years to repay the sum.

"The Banking Regulation and Policy Department of the central bank gave the approval to IBBL to reschedule the loans," a BB official told The Daily Star wishing not to be named.

Contacted, Shah S Alam, managing director of Unilliance, told The Daily Star that IBBL had rescheduled the loans by taking prior approval from the central bank. Alam, who is also a senior vice-

president of the Bangladesh Terry Towel and Linen Manufacturers and Exporters Association, went on to allege that the bank was not adequately cooperative.

IBBL tended not to release funds on time, due to which he had to face problems.

Asked why his company took loans by resorting to unethical ways, Alam said: "The Bangladesh Bank inspection was unnecessary. I do not have any illegal money. I run my business following all rules properly."

Unilliance manufactures home textile products at its plant spanning 16 acres in Sreepur of Gazipur. Its turnover in 2016 stood at \$32 million, up 6.67 percent from a year earlier, according to the company's website.

Contacted, Arastoo Khan, chairman of IBBL, said the bank had financed Unilliance by maintaining all rules and regulations.

"There is no problem with this client," he said, while referring the correspondent to Muhammad Qaisar Ali, head of IBBL's Corporate Investment Division-1.

Ali said IBBL had already started the process to take punitive measures against the officials concerned as per the BB directive.

"The involved officials' names have been passed on to the Human Resources Department."

Ali said Unilliance is now paying instalments on a regular basis after rescheduling the loans.

Economic corridor in southwest will bump up growth: ADB

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The other routes include Jessore-Magura-Faridpur-Dhaka via Paturia and Jessore-Narail-Kasiani-Bhanga via Padma bridge.

SWBEC will include two industrial nodes like Khulna and Dhaka covering six districts, where high growth sectors will be promoted.

A phase-wise approach for nodal development is recommended, with development of the Dhaka node— which would comprise of Dhaka, Narayanganj and Munshiganj—on a priority basis.

It would be followed by the Khulna node that includes Khulna, Bagerhat and Jessore districts.

The study identified some potential sectors that can drive industrialisation in this economic corridor.

The sectors include food processing, pharmaceuticals, leather and leather-based products, footwear, textile and garment, bicycles, automobiles and ship-building.

Robust infrastructure covering multi-modal transport connectivity, logistics and gateway, as well as power will be developed in the corridor to attract centres of production and consumption and facilitate greater access to markets.

The study estimates \$140 billion of investment will be needed over the next 30 years for the transformational infrastructure.

The study also suggested including the Bangladesh Economic Zones Authority and the Bangladesh Export Processing Zones Authority for operating the proposed economic corridor.

At the event, Manmohan Parkash, country director of ADB, said Bangladesh wants to achieve 8 percent economic growth by 2020. But for that to happen, the country needs to implement such economic corridors.

The implementation of such economic corridors will create a significant number of jobs in the country, Parkash said.

Finance Minister AMA Muhith said the issue of communication between the capital and the southwest areas should be considered seriously.

In 2016, trade growth was slower than the national income growth. "It's a concern. This is a very unhappy indicator for the economy."

There has been a decline in the demand for garments almost everywhere, which is another cause for worry.

"We have to put emphasis on our domestic demand. Domestic demand can be substantially increased."

The proposed economic corridor will not only create connectivity in the southwest region of Bangladesh, but also with some neighbouring countries like Nepal, Bhutan and the northeast regions of India.

Audi CEO drops plan to sell motorcycle brand Ducati

REUTERS, Germany

Germany's Audi has abandoned plans to sell its Italian motorcycle brand Ducati, its chief executive Rupert Stadler said, in a sign of confidence that the carmaker expects to be able to carry the costs of its transformation.

Steps to reduce costs by 10 billion euros (\$11.8 billion), cut red tape and deepen ties with fellow Volkswagen-owned brand Porsche are "gradually increasing our financial and organisational leeway for the strategic realignment," chief executive Rupert Stadler told reporters.

Philippine bank accuses BB of heist 'cover-up'

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RCBC on Tuesday said Muhith's remarks were "extremely irresponsible". "Last year's theft of \$81 million of Bangladesh's Central Bank's (BB) funds was an inside job and BB is engaging in a massive cover-up by maligning RCBC and refusing to divulge its findings," the bank said in a statement on Tuesday. "BB should stop making RCBC its scapegoat."

The Philippines last year imposed a record \$21-million fine on RCBC after a "special examination" of the bank and its role in the audacious cyber heist.

Philippine authorities have filed money laundering charges against the RCBC branch manager. On Tuesday RCBC said an "inside job" at Bangladesh Bank made the heist possible. "If it was stolen by your own people, why ask us? We are actually a victim of BB's negligence," RCBC said.

Asked about the allegation of an inside job, Bangladesh Bank deputy governor Razeen Hassan insisted RCBC was at fault for releasing the stolen money.

"(RCBC) did not do due diligence. Their central bank did not fine them without any reason," he told AFP.



Chandan Poleker, country head of Godrej Household Products (BD) Pvt Ltd, attends the launch of a bathroom air freshener called Godrej AER Pocket at a hotel in Dhaka on Sunday.

Muhith again defends allowing new banks

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Of them, Farmers Bank and NRB Commercial Bank saw massive changes in their board, including in the posts of chairmen.

Farmers Bank Chairman Muhiuddin Khan Alamgir, also a former home minister, was forced to resign.

Against this backdrop, the BB is going to provide licences to set up three new banks under the finance ministry's directive. Muhith was also asked about the recent changes in the boards of a number of private banks.

The minister, without mentioning any name, said a business group has been borrowing heavily from the market and buying other banks. The government is looking into it.

In recent times S Alam Group has taken control of a good number of private banks by way of purchasing shares, including that of Islami Bank Bangladesh.



Omar Farooque, chairman and managing director of Alin Food Products Ltd, and AFM Fakhru Islam Munshi, president of Bangladesh Agro Processors' Association, attend the launch of Alin's marketing in Bangladesh through a programme at the Institution of Diploma Engineers, Bangladesh in the capital.