

How to develop knowledge within the RMG sector



MOSTAFIZ UDDIN

"KNOWLEDGE is power" is an adage I am fond of saying to my team, and this expression keeps springing to mind with the growing attention that is being given to how the readymade garments (RMG) sector of Bangladesh will develop as the nation prepares to evolve from a least developed country to a developing one, with the official developing country status expected to be awarded by 2024.

One area that has emerged in various conversations (most notably at a panel discussion held at the Bangladesh Denim Expo in May 2018) is that Bangladesh needs to make a concerted effort to expand the development of innovative and high-ticket items and to continue investment in innovation in the sector so as to maintain a competitive price edge and offer advanced products in the coming days.

Investment in innovation in the production process is one issue that needs to be addressed. Whether it is the development of advanced R&D facilities, improvements in manufacturing practices, state-of-the-art manufacturing units, or innovations in logistics to improve the through-put time of production—these are all undeniably vital for the evolution of the RMG sector. But it is the education and development of knowledge of our workforce, particularly those involved with the product design and development processes, that I would like to focus on.

The education of our workforce goes beyond basic university or technical college training and certification—whether in design, merchandising or product development. What is critical for the continuing education of these key contributors to the RMG sector is exposure to the target markets and customers and the development of an understanding of the end consumer's needs as well as the specific demands on product design and development that come along with it. The more market knowledge our design and



The education of our workforce goes beyond basic university or technical college training and certification.

PHOTO: REUTERS

development teams possess, the more efficient the whole development process will become.

How can we, for example, expect a young designer/merchandiser based in Chittagong to fully appreciate what a 19-year-old skateboarder from Biarritz, France, is looking for in his product choices, unless they are exposed to the market and the cultural influences experienced by the target consumer? Gaining insight into external markets and understanding regional trends and differences in taste will benefit all those involved with the design and development of product. And it can only be achieved through exposure to the relevant markets.

What we need to develop is a culture of continual education for our workforce. You are never too old to learn, and our industry is in a constant state of change—in terms

of design, fabrication, technology, production methods, and so on and so forth. In my experience, the most effective method to garner knowledge is through exposure to the target market and consumer. Ideally, this would take the form of market visits to customers outside of Bangladesh, so that first-hand knowledge is gained through store visits, attending trade shows and immersion in the actual market itself to experience the sights, sounds and culture that the end consumer is exposed to. The knowledge to be gained through this level of exposure is invaluable and would serve all relevant design and development personnel well in their day-to-day working lives.

This approach may well be financially restrictive to some, but there are other avenues that can be explored to offer

designers, merchandisers, product developers and technicians exposure to the target market and increase their understanding of it. The most obvious of these is the Internet. In this age of computer-aided communication, it is possible to research trends and direction on styling, fitting, colour and finishing by trawling through the Internet or by subscription to any number of international on-line trend forecasting agencies. Our young design and development teams should be encouraged to religiously research information relevant to the target customer and gain an understanding of what the end consumer is demanding and how they are styling and wearing the product they purchase.

Factory owners and managers should be encouraged to adopt a policy whereby their staff working in the design and development

departments are given the opportunity to meet face-to-face with customers when they visit their offices or factory. Developing a personal relationship with the customer and understanding their needs is a crucial factor in the successful development of product. It is not something that can be achieved effectively through e-mail correspondences alone.

Another area offering exposure to the target market is through increased interaction with the suppliers. Design, development and technical teams should be encouraged to meet with the relevant suppliers when they visit the company's offices or factory. A great deal about the emerging trends and customers' needs can be learned from the fabric suppliers, trim suppliers, chemical suppliers and machinery companies. It can be argued that an excellent product starts with the fabric, so exposure to information regarding fabric development can only benefit the design and development process as a whole.

Not only can the relevant personnel advance their technical knowledge through a meeting with suppliers, exposure to this level of information also offers them an insight into potential developments that can be achieved, using the latest product available. Developing relationships with the suppliers has the added benefit of gaining insight into the demands of other markets; they can learn about their experiences with customers at home and abroad.

The next few years will be an exciting time for the RMG sector and we can expect wonderful things to happen if we establish a system whereby our workforce has the opportunity to continue learning about new developments in markets and product. Exposure and continual education will enable our workforce to develop the products necessary to take the sector to the next level and further increase its contribution to the GDP of our nation.

Mostafiz Uddin is the Founder & CEO of Bangladesh Apparel Exchange (BAE) and Bangladesh Denim Expo. He is the Managing Director of Denim Expert Limited. Email: mostafiz@denimexpert.com

Proving 'good character' in a rape trial

TASLIMA YASMIN

IT is often the case that rape victims prefer to remain silent or "settle" the matter through informal village mediations, instead of resorting to the formal legal system. Together with the practical hurdles that a woman victim faces in accessing the courts, a significant reason for not taking legal steps is the widely known reality of rape trials which commonly allow in-depth and often irrelevant scrutiny of a rape victim's "character" and past sexual life, that too mostly in open sessions. Not only does this potential character assassination during a trial bar rape victims from accessing legal remedies, many a times it discourages them from proceeding any further with the case. As such the accused successfully escapes all consequences.

Since a rape victim who is seeking legal redress is usually received with utmost suspicion, the courts often emphasise on the "character" of the victim in order to assess her credibility. This is based on an assessment of her past sexual history or behaviour. The Evidence Act of 1872 allows for information, to show that the victim was of "immoral character", to be used as evidence to discredit the victim's testimony. Section 155 (4) of our Evidence Act provides that "when a man is prosecuted for rape or an attempt to ravish, it may be shown that the prosecutrix was of generally immoral

character". Needless to say, this archaic provision is a law from the colonial era and unfortunately like many other colonial legacies, it still continues, thus giving legality to the deliberate process of humiliation and victim-blaming designed by the accused to evade criminal liability.

The admissibility of such "character evidence" is absolutely degrading for a victim of rape. Her moral character is irrelevant in deciding whether she had given consent to the sexual intercourse. Nevertheless, there are often cases where a victim's testimony is discredited in courts, even though there had been a non-consensual intercourse, on the premise that she is a "woman of easy virtue". Of course what makes a woman to be "of easy virtue" is again determined by the stereotypical ideas surrounding a rape victim which are mere manifestations of patriarchal social practices and customs, often relating "bad character" with lack of education, lack of "social status", and mostly with past sexual life of the victim. In addition to section 155, section 146 of the Evidence Act which deals with cross examination of a witness is also often used against victims of rape and other sexual offences. Section 146 provides that during cross examination, a witness may be asked any question which tend to "shake his credit, by injuring his character".

Harassment during trials through



use of this defence weapon of "character evidence" is viewed to be one of the major reasons for low reporting of rape cases as well as the extremely low rate of conviction in rape prosecutions. Because of the presence of such a highly degrading provisions in the law, it is often said that a rape victim goes through a double trauma through the humiliation during trial.

In order to ensure a conducive environment for women who seek help from the criminal justice system, it is imperative that the past sexual history of the victim or any evidence regarding the "character" of the victim is made inadmissible in court. At the same time provisions should be

incorporated which would bar the defence from adducing any evidence or putting any question during cross examination as to the general character or past sexual behaviour of a rape victim to infer her consent to the sexual intercourse. Such "rape shield" provisions have been incorporated in the laws of a number of other

countries including India. The Criminal Law Amendment Act 2013 in India has added section 53A in the Indian Evidence Act, providing that in order to prove consent in a rape prosecution, the victim's character or previous sexual experience will not be relevant. Also, a proviso has been added to section 146 of the Act which bars admissibility of character evidence in order to ascertain consent in a rape case.

It is also important to make necessary changes in the Code of Criminal Procedure so that *in camera* trials or trials conducted in private can be made mandatory for cases of rape or other sexual offences. Such provisions would ensure privacy of the victim and of the prosecution witnesses and may have a positive impact in earning the confidence of a woman facing sexual violence to take resort of the court. Section 352 of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CRPC), which ensures an open court for trial of offences with public access during the trial procedure, may consider an exception to be added which would

make an *in camera* trials for sexual offences mandatory. Section 327 of the Code of Criminal Procedure 1973 in India can be a learning example where a provision has been added making *in camera* trials of sexual offences mandatory. Although under section 352 of our CRPC as well as under section 9(6) of the Nari-o-Shishu Nirjatan Daman Ain, 2000, provisions have been made where the court may conduct trial *in camera*, such provisions are not mandatory and are subject to an application of a party or initiative of the court itself. Most importantly however, our justice system should consciously acknowledge that rape has no logical link with the supposed "good" or "bad" character of the victim. It needs to move beyond the patriarchal colonial portrayals of a rape victim. A victim of rape in the witness box should be required to prove her testimony and not her character.

Taslina Yasmin is a legal researcher who teaches gender in law at the University of Dhaka. Email: taslima47@yahoo.com

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

- ACROSS**

 - 1 Flat floater
 - 5 Horse-related
 - 11 Clarinet's cousin
 - 12 CNN founder Ted
 - 13 Laura of "Jurassic Park"
 - 14 Big schnozz
 - 15 Shade tree
 - 16 Obtains
 - 17 Not out of it
 - 19 Hornets' org.
 - 22 Greek letters
 - 24 Thread holder
 - 26 Dry
 - 27 Prepares for battle
 - 28 Surrenders
 - 30 Large size
 - 31 Spot
 - 32 Eucalyptus eater
 - 34 Minute
- 35 Faucet
 - 38 Cellist Pablo
 - 41 Pacific island nation
 - 42 Winter dripper
 - 43 Notorious czar
 - 44 With no markup
 - 45 Printed matter
- DOWN**

 - 1 Took the bus
 - 2 Third person
 - 3 Developmental
 - 4 Rating max
 - 5 Old anesthetic
 - 6 Brokers' numbers
 - 7 Coffee dispensers
 - 8 Pen fill
 - 9 Maiden name
 - 10 Blunder
 - 16 Argon, for one
- 18 Walk in water
 - 19 Derived from a standard
 - 20 Movie flop
 - 21 To boot
 - 22 Changes direction
 - 23 Buffalo's county
 - 25 Painter Klee
 - 29 Useful abilities
 - 30 Crested bird
 - 33 Beginning
 - 34 Folded food
 - 36 Trojan War hero
 - 37 Milk buy
 - 38 KGB competitor
 - 39 Do something
 - 40 [Not my spelling]
 - 41 In shape

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11				12					
13				14					
15				16					
		17	18				19	20	21
22	23				24	25			
26					27				
28			29		30				
31				32	33				
			34				35	36	37
38	39	40					41		
42							43		
44							45		

6-27

YESTERDAY'S ANSWER

C	A	P	P		N	U	M	B	S
A	R	R	O	W	A	P	A	R	T
V	I	O	L	I	N	M	A	K	E
E	S	P		Z	E	E		E	A
S	E	E	S	A	W		L	U	S
			S	L	U	R	S		O
				A	D	M	E	N	
A	V	I	V		A	N	G	S	T
R	E	N	E		K	I	S	M	E
A	L	L		P	E	G		O	N
B	O	I	L	E	R	M	A	K	E
L	U	N	A	R		A	B	E	T
E	R	E	C	T		E	R	S	E

The perfect location to grow your business

LAUNCHING

Lake Palisade

AT DHANMONDI 27

AA2 Credit Rating

FIXED PRICE

REHAB MEMBERSHIP 001

ISO 9001:2008 CERTIFIED

16604, 096 13 19 1919

www.btibd.com

bti building technology & ideas ltd. since 1984

in pursuit of excellence...