It's time to talk about sustainability and finance in RMG sector



industry people appear to be the best at is explaining, often in great detail, the problems and challenges that we face. The existing

purchase practices are unfair and harming suppliers and their workers, we are told. Yes, we know that already. Fast fashion is harming the environment and leading to a surplus of poorquality clothes, they say. We are aware of that, too. There is a "funding gap" in terms of supply chain upgrades and

To my knowledge, the investment required in Bangladesh as well as in supply chains globally is much greater. And I haven't seen investors queuing up to support RMG suppliers in Bangladesh to "green" their operations these past few years.

> investment in sustainable garment production, we are informed. People have been telling us of all these for well over a decade. Garment workers are underpaid. Again, that's fairly obvious.

> The latest report outlining our woes, but not really offering any meaningful and practical solutions, came out in the wake of the recently held UN Climate Change Conference (COP26). The report, the authors of which I will not

name here, suggests that decarbonising global fashion supply chains to achieve a net zero fashion industry by 2050 will cost more than USD 1 trillion.

The report says 61 percent of the fund will be required to implement the "existing solutions," and the rest will be required to further develop, scale and implement new innovations. It says that investments should be focused on using renewable electricity and reducing coal dependence in supply chains, as well as using sustainable materials in fashion and finding options for extended use/recycling.

Most notably, as far as RMG suppliers are concerned, the report tells us that the current levels of financing are insufficient to succeed in decarbonising the industry before 2050. It is argued that the industry—that's us, the suppliers—is unlikely to achieve necessary transformation without a significant change in financing flows.

The report tells us that the USD 1 trillion fund that our industry needs to raise will come via financiers (debt and equity), manufacturers, brands, philanthropy, and governments.

USD 1 trillion is a nice round number, at least. With so many variables involved, so many different actors in play, the figure could easily have been double, and few would be in a position to question it. This figure seems quite arbitrary, but it will undoubtedly grab headlines.

A few thoughts pop up in my mind when reading reports like this, a great many of which have come out over the years. The first is that they are simply framing and rehashing a problem that the industry leaders all recognise—be it suppliers, buyers or other fashion industry stakeholders. The second thought is that these reports sell investment in sustainable supply chains as an "opportunity" quite often. In this case, the authors state that



We know what problems exist in our RMG sector; now we need to come together and find sustainable solutions to those problems. PHOTO: COLLECTED

while an investment in excess of USD 1 trillion over the next 30 years is a huge amount, the majority of it is for projects that offer an attractive financial return on investment.

Really? For whom? In Bangladesh and other garment sourcing hubs, we have seen factories spending money on water- and energy-saving initiatives over the years and, yes, these do have a return, but a small one. It is also a simple fact that many factory owners struggle to even make small, incremental investments such as this.

In any case, to my knowledge, the investment required in Bangladesh as well as in supply chains globally is much greater. And I haven't seen investors queuing up to support RMG suppliers in Bangladesh to "green" their operations these past few years. Ask any garment manufacturer here about the challenges of getting access to finance

for green investment. Yes, the money might be there, but accessing such finance is an onerous task. Moreover, things have become much, much harder since the pandemic broke out many suppliers are still paying debts incurred after the huge downturn in business in 2020.

In terms of external investment, there have been various pilot initiatives over the years which typically involve a tripartite structure of factory, buyer and a third-party environmental nonprofit entity, which can leverage public money for "green" projects over a certain period of time. Such initiatives are supposed to encourage and foster green investment, but I hear that such initiatives nearly always fall by the wayside as soon as the public money dries up. No one—certainly not the buyer or factory owner—has any desire to cover the funding of such work

We know there is a lack of capital to meet the needs of industrial upgrading required to future-proof our industry and make it more sustainable. With this in mind, it is time to move beyond framing the problem and onto actually developing clear, practical plans about how it will be tackled. We can't afford to have continued talking shops, which produce plenty of soundbites and nice corporate speak but do not move us any closer to where we want to be. The danger is that these same conversations will happen again in another five years' time, or even 10 years' time. It will be too late then if this status quo stays.

Coming back to the issue of poor purchase practices, I must say they are the root of all problems in our industry. We have all known this for years, and don't need another report to tell us so. Some mythical, outside investor is not going to come and save us all—of that we can be certain. This is a problem which, by and large, needs to be solved from within. The only real question is this: Who pays for it? Who pays to upgrade the supply chains? Is it the suppliers or the buyers, or both? And where and how do the government and other third parties come in?

These are the only questions I see as relevant moving forward. If we are going to have more talking shops, let's at least allow them to be about this issue where we can all have a frank, honest and transparent debate about how we are going to move our industry to where it needs to be.

We know the problems our industry faces. It's now time to talk in great detail about the solutions and set out clear, actionable goals about how those solutions can be achieved.

Mostafiz Uddin is the managing director of Denim Expert Limited, and the founder and CEO of Bangladesh Apparel Exchange (BAE) and

The identity crisis and challenges that women face in Bangladesh



essentialist

concepts of

female, gender

often socially

constructed

the ideology

male and

identities

are most

of a community. Ideologies are a set

of beliefs, ideas, public discourses,

and values used to make sense of

the world over time. Many societal

every aspect of life. Inequalities like these don't just affect how people

are seen on a personal level; they

also contribute to and maintain

the existing status quo of gender imbalance in significant public

women confront difficulties in their

if they contest or fail to adhere to

perceptible and imperceptible

gender norms, resulting in various

disparities. Given that Bangladesh is

prevalent gender norms can be very

challenging—if not impossible—for

still a traditional society, surviving the

everyday lives, which are exacerbated

sector operations. As a result,

stereotypes collide with men's

or women's identity, resulting in

significant variations in almost

and in-laws forced her to leave her job after the birth of her first child. Though she had no intention of sacrificing her career, her position was not strong enough to oppose this pressure.

Given that Bangladesh has a patriarchal society, which places a low premium on women's paid work, the man in the family is still considered the principal breadwinner. in the workforce has increased over time, family recognition of their monetary contribution is still a long way off. Samia was forced to give up her identity as a working mother to conform to the patriarchal cultural legitimacy by becoming a conventional housewife. Furthermore, the cultural construction of "proper womanhood" in the eyes of society often limits women's power to oppose man-made rules and regulations.

Samia, soon after her marriage, realised how a woman's identity crisis problematised her survival in Bangladesh. The so-called cultural legitimacy distinguishes men's and women's identities in such a way that women are almost entirely reliant on men throughout their lives. Her father is her guardian before her marriage, her husband takes custody after marriage, and at her old age, her eldest son becomes her guardian.

can depend on their self-identity to function as independent human beings. Their struggle for survival intersects with their having or not having male guardians, resulting in a form of servitude.

Samia's second course of action was to find a job. She attended many interviews. Most of the interview board, led by men, were more interested in her personal life-e.g.,

> Given that Bangladesh has a patriarchal society, which places a low premium on women's paid work, the man in the family is still considered the principal breadwinner.

would marry again, who was her guardian now, etc. Moreover, her age was also a topic of discussion during the job interviews.

Then came the social stigma. Samia tried to revive old friendships and restore regular communication with her relatives. But soon after her divorce, she realised many of her friends and relatives, including her own family members, had started to avoid her. She was also subjected to many suggestions from her relatives and acquaintances, who said she should "improve" her "acceptability" in society by practising a religious code of conduct. Samia found it difficult to reconcile that these were the same people who had shared many pleasant moments with her, before her divorce. After her divorce, their attitude towards her changed completely.

Samia lost her identity as a woman, a citizen of Bangladesh, and a human being in the eyes of society after getting a divorce. In her life, she donned multiple identities—a daughter, a wife, and a mother, to name a few. Men shape women's identities, and women are burdened with a plethora of those identities, some of which may be imaginary. In Samia's case, the landlords saw her only as a divorcee, her friends and relatives saw her as a woman with questionable reputation, and employers saw her as a destitute

woman in need of a job.

But what about her former husband? He got married six months after their divorce. He is now living a new life with his new wife, and continuing his job smoothly. He did not face an identity crisis to marry, rent a home, continue his career, and communicate with his family members and acquaintances. While Samia struggles in every aspect of her life today, her former husband appears to be content with his current situation. This is the case because society sets different boundaries for divorced men and

women in the country, resulting in gender discrimination.

The term "Equality before the law" in Article 27 of our constitution protects all citizens of the state, reflecting Articles 6 and 7 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and Article 16 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). Specifically, our constitution states against any person solely on the basis of religion, race, caste, sex, or place of birth." The term "sex" is used interchangeably with "gender"

here. The Bangladesh government's undertaking of this policy has advocated a statutory entitlement of equality between men and women. But the ubiquity of patriarchal cultural legitimacy overshadows a woman's legal rights in society. It is because the policy rhetoric per se does not necessarily guarantee policy effectiveness. As a result, the practice of woman-friendly norms and culture must be envisioned for future Bangladesh.

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গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার

বাংলাদেশ প্রলিশ কমান্ড্যান্ট (পুলিশ সুপার) এর কার্যালয় ইন-সার্ভিস ট্রেনিং সেন্টার, টাঙ্গাইল



মারক নং-৪**১৬/ইন-সার্ভিস (টাঙ্গাইল**)

০৫ অগ্রহায়ণ ১৪২৮ বঙ্গাব্দ ২০ নভেম্বর ২০২১ খ্রিস্টাব্দ

পাৰলিক প্ৰকিউরমেন্ট আইন, ২০০৬ ও পাৰলিক প্ৰকিউরমেন্ট বিধিমালা-২০০৮ এবং তৎপরবর্তীতে সংশোধিত ও প্ৰণীত আইন/বিধিমালা মোতাবেক ২০২১-২০২২ অর্থ সালে ইন

۱ د	মন্ত্রণালয়/বিভাগ/অধিদপ্তর	0 3	ররাষ্ট্র মন্ত্রণালয়/জননিরাপত্তা বি	বৈভাগ/পুলিশ অধিদপ্তর।			
২।	সংস্থা		াংলাদেশ পুলিশ।	,			
٥١	দরপত্র সম্পাদনকারী প্রধান	8 3	ন-সার্ভিস ট্রেনিং সেন্টার, টাহ	াইল।			
8	সংগ্রাহক সত্ত্রার জেলা/ইউনিট	8 3	মান্ড্যান্ট (পুলিশ সুপার), ইন	-সার্ভিস ট্রেনিং সেন্টার, টাঙ্গাইল।			
¢ 1	দরপত্র আহ্বানের সূত্র ও তারিখ		। পুঃহেঃকোঃস্মারক নং-ি	क् ন্যান্স/88.0 ১.000.08 ৩.১৯১ -	৩১.১৫(অংশ১)/১০২৯ তাং-১২/০৯/২০২১খ্রিঃ। -২০১৪(অংশ/১৪৫৯১) তাং-১৬/০৫/২০২১খ্রিঃ।		
৬।	দরপত্রের বিষয়	1	াাধ্যমে নিৰ্মাণ কাজ।		কাজ ও ২য় তলার অবশিষ্ট অংশ Retrofitting এর		
٩١	দরপত্রের পদ্ধতি	8 7	উন্মুক্ত দরপত্র পদ্ধতি (OTM)।				
b 1	বাজেট ও অর্থনৈতিক খাত	-	রাজস্ব খাত।				
৯ ৷	দরপত্র প্রকাশের তারিখ						
104	দরপত্র সিডিউল প্রাপ্তির সর্বশেষ তারিখ		১৩/১২/২০২১খ্রিঃ তারিখ অফিস চলাকালিন সময় পর্যন্ত।				
77	দরপত্র জমা প্রদানের তারিখ ও সময়		৪/১২/২০২১খ্রিঃ সকাল ১২.৫				
১ २ ।	দরপত্র খোলার তারিখ ও সময়		থাকেন) দরপত্রসমূহ খোলা হবে।				
१०।	দরপত্র প্রাপ্তির স্থান				াইল ও ইন-সার্ভিস ট্রেনিং সেন্টার, টাঙ্গাইল।		
184	দরপত্র দাখিল ও খোলার স্থান			কার্যালয়, ইন-সার্ভিস ট্রেনিং সেন্টার	র, টাঙ্গাইল।		
1 34	দরপত্র মূল্যায়নের তারিখ ও সময়		৫/১২/২০২১খ্রিঃ সকাল ১১.৩				
১৬।	দরপত্রদাতার যোগ্যতা	((ক) উপযুক্ত ঠিকাদার হিসেবে প্রমাণের জন্য সংখ্রিষ্ট কাগজপত্র। (খ) পাবলিক প্রকিউরমেন্ট আইন, ২০০৬ ও পাবলিক প্রকিউরমেন্ট বিধিমালা-২০০৮ এবং তৎপরবর্তীতে সংশোধিত ও প্রণীত আইন/বিধিমালা এর সকল শর্তাবলী প্রযোজ্য হবে। 				
\$91	দরপত্রের সাথে যে সকল কাগজপত্র জমা প্রদান করতে হবে) () () 0	(ক) হালনাগাদ ঠিকাদারী লাইসেন্স, হালনাগাদ ট্রেড লাইসেন্স, হালনাগাদ ভ্যাট রেজিষ্ট্রেশন সনদপত্র, হালনাগাদ আয়কর সনদপত্র ও ভোটার আইডি এবং নাগরিকত্ব সনদপত্র। (খ) নিজস্ব প্যাডে কালো তালিকাভুক্ত নয় মর্মে অপ্লীকারনামা (১ম শ্রেণীর গেজেটেড কর্মকর্তা কর্তৃক সত্যায়িত), নমুনা স্বাক্ষর, মালিকানা সনদপত্র, সংশ্লিষ্ট কাজের পূর্ব অভিজ্ঞতার সনদপত্র এবং হালনাগাদ ব্যাংক স্বচ্চলতা সনদপত্রসহ স্টেটমেন্ট এর মূলকপি, পাসপোর্ট সাইজের ০১ (এক) কপি রঙ্গিন ছবি, সংশ্লিষ্ট কাজের অভিজ্ঞতার সনদপত্র, দরপত্র জামানত ও দরপত্রের সাথে সংযুক্ত সকল কাগজপত্র সত্যায়িত করে দাখিল করতে হবে। দরপত্র সংক্রান্ত শর্তাবলি ও অন্যান্য তথ্যাদি দরপত্র সংগ্রহকালে নিমুশ্বাক্ষরকারীর কার্যালয় হতে জানা যাবে।				
2p. I	দরপত্র আহ্বানকারী কর্মকর্তার নাম ও পদবী			ট (পুলিশ সুপার), ইন-সার্ভিস ট্রেনি			
১৯।	দরপত্র আহ্বানকারীর সাথে যোগাযোগের মাধ্যম 🕴 ফোনঃ ০৯২১-৬২৫৩৭, ফ্যাল্লঃ ০৯২১-৬২৬২৩ এবং মোবাইল নং-০১৩২০-২২০৪০০।						
२० ।	পণ্য/কাজের সংক্ষিপ্ত বিবরণঃ						
লট নং	কাজের বিবরণ		সিডিউলের মূল্য (অফেরতযোগ্য)	দরপত্র জামানতের পরিমাণ	সরবরাহের সমাপ্তির সময়		
(ক)	ভাড়ায় চালিত গাড়ি সরবরাহ কাজ।		3,000/-	৬৬,০০০/-	৩০ জুন/২০২২ পর্যন্ত		
(খ)	২য় তলার অবশিষ্ট অংশ Retrofitting এর মাধ্যমে নির্মাণ কাজ।		জ। ১,৫০০/-	3.60,000/-	কার্যাদেশ মোতাবেক		

স্থান হতে অফিস চলাকালীন সময় দরপত্র সিডিউল সংগ্রহ করা যাবে, ২) ঠিকাদার ব্যতিত বা ঠিকাদার কর্তৃক প্রদত্ত ক্ষমতাপত্রসহ প্রেরিত প্রতিনিধি ছাড়া অন্য ব্যক্তিকে সিডিউল প্রদান করা হবে না, ৩) সিভিউল বিক্রয়ের শেষ ও দাখিলের এবং খোলার নির্ধারিত তারিখে অনিবার্য কারণে অফিস বন্ধ থাকলে পরবর্তী কার্যদিবসে একই সময়ে ও নিয়মে দরপত্র বিক্রয়, দাখিল ও খোলা হবে। এ সংক্রান্ত কোন বিভ্জন্তি বা নোটিশ দেয়া হবে না, ৪) অভিজ্ঞ সরবরাহকারী প্রতিষ্ঠানকে অগ্রাধিকার প্রদান করা হবে, ৫) কর্তৃপক্ষ কোন কারণ দর্শানো ব্যতিরেকে যে কোন বা সকল দরপত্র গ্রহণ/বাতিলের ক্ষমতা সংরক্ষণ করেন, ৬) কোন কারণবশতঃ দরপত্র কার্যক্রমের তারিখ পরিবর্তন হলে তা পত্রিকায় প্রকাশ করা হবে, ৭) অকৃতকার্য দরদাতার দরপত্র জামানত যথাসময়ে ফেরত দেয়া হবে।

মোহাঃ ইমামুর রশীদ বিপি-৬৯০১০৮২৭৭৬ কমাভ্যান্ট (পুলিশ সুপার) ইন-সার্ভিস ট্রেনিং সেন্টার, টাঙ্গাইল ফোনঃ ০৯২১-৬২৫৩৭, ফ্যাব্রঃ ০৯২১-৬২৬২৩

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Men and women in Bangladesh are equal on	РНОТО:	

paper, but not in practice.

Take, for example, this case study that elucidates how women's identity crises push them to struggle in their daily lives. Samia (not real name), a 38-year-old woman, divorced her husband three years ago, after 11 years of marriage. She is a mother of two children, aged 10 and 8. She earned a master's degree from a public university and began working for a private company after a year of her marriage. However, her husband

Although women's reliance on men shifts with time, their independence remains precarious throughout their

After her divorce, Samia's first endeavour was to find a rented flat. When she was looking for a new place to live, she was told by multiple landlords that she would not be able to rent since she was divorced. She needed a male guardian to rent a flat. Women in Bangladesh seldom

COLLECTED