



Solar panels cover the entire roof of the unit 4 of Green Textile Ltd, allowing it to meet 60 per cent of its electricity demand from renewable energy sources. This is just one of the features that have sent the Bhaluka-based Bangladeshi apparel manufacturer to the top position among the world's best eco-friendly garment factories. PHOTO: GREEN TEXTILE LTD

World's greenest factory: making clothes, caring for nature

SOHEL PARVEZ

While passing through Nijhury Baraid Bazar, Bhaluka, around 100 kilometres north of Dhaka, anyone would spot the factory building on the side of the road.

For the onlooker, the building may seem to be one of the many factories that have emerged sporadically in the region. But if the individual has an inquisitive mind, he or she would find that he or she is looking at the world's best eco-friendly garment factory.

This is Green Textile Ltd (GTL). One of its units of the factory, Green Textile Ltd unit 4, in February, topped the chart of eco-friendly garment factories in the entire globe.

With a score of 104 out of 110, the unit became the highest Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) platinum-rated factory as per the United States Green Building Council, replacing an Indonesian garment factory, which scores 101.

Along with the greenest factory, Bangladesh is home to more than half of the top 100 LEED certified eco-friendly industrial units, with the number standing at 53, according to the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association.

"When we heard the news, it was difficult to believe that our factory is the most compliant factory in the world," said an elated Tanvir Ahmed, managing director of Green Textile Ltd, a joint venture between Envoy Legacy and Epic Group.

"This is really a matter of great satisfaction and delight."

Inside the premise of GTL, whose three other units have also LEED certification

as well, more than 6,100 workers are busy at their machines, completing the tasks at hand.

A quiet road and a walkway have divided the 16-acre premise of GTL, which has set up manufacturing units on both sides.

A couple of hundred yards inside the campus, one will come across an open clearing, a parking facility for bicycles and bikes and a training facility called by the factory authority as EPIC University.



Tanvir Ahmed

There are charging facilities for electric vehicle as well.

GTL unit 4 sits on one side of the open space. Its 733-kWh solar rooftop power plant generates 980,000 units of electricity, meeting 60 per cent of its electricity requirement.

The 54,000-square-foot building has a large number of windows to let workers and employees enjoy daylight and views.

There are 60 evaporating coolers to keep the inner temperature of the factory low to allow its 1,100 workers to work at ease. The average temperature inside the factory ranges between 26 degrees Celsius and 28 degrees Celsius during summer.

In terms of energy consumption, a regular factory consumes 1,960,000 kWh of electricity whereas Green Textile Unit-4 uses one-third of that, or 653,333 units.

"We have kept 30 per cent space open. We have created facilities for daylight-saving and rainwater harvesting," Ahmed said.

Officials say the factory has been designed in a way that ensures efficient use of resources and reduces carbon footprint.

"We used an integrative design process when planning for the factory. This means that architectural, mechanical, electrical, plumbing and other service engineers worked together in multiple cycles to optimise the overall building performance," said Vidhura Ralapanawe, executive vice-president for innovation and sustainability at Epic Group.

The factory has a rainwater harvesting facility and a proper rainwater runoff management system.

According to Ralapanawe, the heat island effect is mitigated by using light-coloured surfaces and greenery. The site lighting is designed to reduce light pollution.

Its efficient fixtures and fittings reduce the water requirement by 51 per cent.

"Detailed metering allows us to monitor water use and take action to reduce it," said Ralapanawe.

GTL said building and equipment design, including ventilation systems, has been done to reduce energy use.

Its detailed metering allows factory management to monitor water, electricity, and steam use and take action to improve efficiency. It sources 32 per cent of raw materials locally and used

recycled ingredients.

The factory authority said 100 per cent of the area is ventilated mechanically to provide better indoor air quality. To do so, it has carefully selected materials and paints.

Ahmed said it had a target to make a LEED platinum factory.

"It required a lot of passion. This will enable us to brand Bangladesh better."

He said if anyone looks at the investment, the amount may seem high.

"But the long-term benefits of establishing an eco-friendly factory are high. Besides, it gives a lot of gratification when a good institution can be developed."

"You are building a good institution and doing something for the nation."

Although the eco-friendly factory is not bringing in better prices, Ahmed says it gives buyers the confidence to place orders.



"Our buyers are major players in the world. So, ethical business practice is vital. We must care for workers and the environment and remain compliant."

Bangladesh is now the second-largest garment exporting nation after China and is home to the highest number of green garment factories in the world.

"This is not a small deal. This will create a new paradigm," Ahmed said.

New Bank Company Act: can it heal the wounds?

MAMUN RASHID

Last week the cabinet of Bangladesh okayed the draft Bank Company Act 2023 with an expressed intention to improve financial governance in our country. It was desired that if implemented properly, it could have major consequences for popularly known willful loan defaulters as well as the way our bank boards are formed and run.

This has been long overdue. Experts have been talking about it for years, and finally, the government has decided to go for the amendment with a reasonable amount of loan from the World Bank hanging in the balance for this. The International Monetary Fund, as part of its \$4.7 billion loan, also stipulated that the government submits the draft law before parliament by September.

Regardless of the reason behind the decision to finally approve the draft act, it is no doubt a welcome development for our banking sector. It could undo a lot of the bad policies adopted in recent times, such as increasing the maximum number of members from the same family that could serve on a bank's board.

It will also require bank directors and their family members to provide collateral, bonds, or securities to secure loans from the bank, the absence of which has led to numerous scandals and massive insider loans across our banking sector.



As stipulated in this Act, banks will have to publish the lists of willful defaulters. An individual will be considered a willful defaulter if they don't repay a loan taken in their name or their company's name despite having the means to pay it back. And any person will be treated as a habitual defaulter if they

take loans under the name of a non-existent company.

Additionally, banks will have to inform the Bangladesh Bank about willful loan defaulters and the central bank can then issue a ban on their foreign travel, obtaining trade licence, and companies' registration with the Registrar of Joint Stock Companies and Firms and the Bangladesh Securities and Exchange Commission, which can act as a deterrent against the culture of willful loan default.

The draft act also broadens the role of the central bank in some respects for it to investigate whether rules are being broken.

There is an old saying: a law is only as effective as its enforcement. One may recall that the Bangladesh Bank has time and again flouted its own rules and regulations over the years. Such violations and misgovernance resulted in undue benefits for a few at the expense of many. So, while the draft act seems promising, the proof of how sincere the government really is in addressing the problems, after having done the almost opposite for years, will be in how well it implements it.

Our banking sector is plagued with large bad loans, rampant insider lending, a few influential board members only dictating the terms along with very few products offering and low automation. Hence only lowering the number of directors from one family may be the tip of the iceberg.

If we are sincere to heal the wounds in our banking sector, we must make sure the ownership of a well-run bank doesn't get changed in the night in a five-star hotel and more importantly a CEO of a bank is not forced to resign, or his replacement is not approved during odd hours. Hence along with an updated Bank Company Act, we need to sponsor an all-out reform in the banking sector, including putting up a detailed bankruptcy or insolvency law.

The author is an economic analyst

India probing some Adani offshore deals

REUTERS, Mumbai

India's market regulator is investigating possible violation of 'related party' transaction rules in the Adani Group's dealings with at least three offshore entities that have links to the brother of the conglomerate's founder, two people said.

The three entities allegedly entered into several investment transactions with unlisted units of the ports-to-power conglomerate founded by billionaire Gautam Adani over the last 13 years, said the sources with direct knowledge of the matter.

Vinod Adani, Gautam Adani's brother, is either a beneficial owner, director or has links with those three offshore entities, said the two sources, adding the regulator, the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI), is probing if lack of that disclosure violated 'related party transaction' rules.

Under Indian laws, direct relatives, promoter groups and subsidiaries of listed companies are considered related parties. A promoter group is defined as an entity that has a large shareholding in a listed company and can influence company policy.

Transactions between such entities have to be disclosed in regulatory and public filings and require shareholder approval above a specified threshold. Violations typically attract monetary fines. An e-mail to SEBI requesting comment was not answered. SEBI chairperson Madhabi Puri Buch declined to comment on the Adani investigations at a news conference on Wednesday.

An Adani Group spokesperson said Vinod Adani is a member of the Adani family and is part of the promoter group, but he does not hold any managerial position in any of the listed Adani entities or their subsidiaries.



People through a wholesale market in Karachi. Years of financial mismanagement and political instability have pushed Pakistan's economy to the brink of collapse, exacerbated by a global energy crisis and devastating floods that submerged a third of the country in 2022. PHOTO: AFP/FILE

Pakistan inflation hits 50-year high

AFP, Islamabad

Pakistan's year-on-year inflation hit 35.37 per cent in March -- the highest in nearly five decades -- as the government scrambled to meet International Monetary Fund (IMF) conditions to unlock a desperately needed bailout.

Month-on-month inflation was 3.72 per cent, according to government data released Saturday, while the average inflation rate for the past year was 27.26 per cent.

Years of financial mismanagement and political instability have pushed Pakistan's economy to the brink of collapse, exacerbated by a global energy crisis and devastating floods that submerged a third of the country in 2022.

The country needs billions of dollars of financing to service existing debt, while foreign exchange reserves have dwindled and the rupee is in freefall.