

Dhaka, Friday, January 30 2015

RMG factory assessment programme under govt-ILO initiative stumbles

Inconsistency in info, owners' non-cooperation blamed

Monira Munni

The garment factory assessment programme under the government-ILO joint initiative is facing hurdles due to inconsistency in factory information and non-cooperation from the owners, sources said.

Meanwhile, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) recently hired two companies to assess garment factories that remained outside the purview of western retailers' inspection programmes, they added.

The two companies have been entrusted with the task replacing Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET) because the latter failed to progress its job on time, they added.

Confirming the ILO's recruitment of the said companies, labour secretary

Mikail Shipar said that the inspection programme is facing some problems as some of the owners are not cooperating in this regard while address and contact details of a good number of factories are not correct as per the provided list.

"TUV-SUD Bangladesh Pvt Ltd and Veritas Engineering and Consultant are the two companies that will inspect some 1,200 garment factories which are not covered by either Accord or Alliance," ILO country director Srinivas Reddy told the FE.

The two companies have already started factory inspection, he said expressing the hope that the flaws identification would be completed by April next.

Replying to a question about the problems faced by the inspection teams, he

said the ILO has sought assistance from Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) and Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BKMEA) in this respect.

Responding to another query, Mr Reddy said BUET will now provide the corrective action plan for the assessed factories.

Since the inception of the programme on November 15 last, the BUET has so far assessed structural, fire and electrical integrity in some 500 garment factories, sources said.

On the other hand, two western retailers and brands groups-Accord and Alliance-have already assessed about 1,700 factories within their set deadline that revealed safety flaws in majority of the factories.

However, sources have attributed the delay in the BUET's completion of the first phase inspection reports to ending disputes between local and foreign experts over inspection standards and resolution of other procedural complexities including renewal of the second phase of inspection, incorrect address, and contact details of factories and also unwillingness of owners to carry out the inspection.

When contacted, Mehedi Ahmed Ansari, a BUET professor, said, there was inconsistency in information including factory location. Contact numbers were found in only 50 per cent out of the 300 factories of the list provided to them to assess during the second phase.

"BUET sent a list of 150

Continued to page 7 Col. 4

RMG factory assessment

Continued from page 8 col. 8

factories to the labour ministry that did not cooperate in assessing the factories. Some of them were reluctant while few were dillydallying," a source involved in the process said.

When contacted, disagreeing with the allegation of non-cooperation from the factory owners, BGMEA vice president Md Shahidullah Azim, explained that "sometimes it is difficult for the factory management when three teams-structural, fire and electrical-go for inspection separately."

He requested for conducting all three types of assessment in a factory at a time.

He, however, said the association has again informed its member factories to cooperate with the inspection teams who are carrying out inspection under the National Tripartite Plan of Action, Accord and Alliance.

"There is no denying the fact that all must undergo the scrutiny of safety. If anyone refuses to do that, BGMEA will not take its responsibility," he warned.

According to BGMEA, there are some factories that have been relocated, authorities of some units changed with contact details while a good number of units have no existence due to many reasons which BGMEA has delisted from its membership list.

The association is now collecting details of those factories and sending those to the ILO, sources said.

munni_fe@yahoo.com