

## 8<sup>th</sup> Bangladesh Round Table on Social Compliance

### - Synopsis -

The 8<sup>th</sup> Bangladesh Round Table on Social Compliance, held on 22<sup>nd</sup> March at Chittagong on the topic:

“Occupational Health & Safety”

“Water Treatment”

The Round Table was attended by engineers, doctors, advocates, NGOs, workers representative, academia, industrial police, Department of Environment, leaders of labour unions, Water Authority WASA, factory owners Fire Brigade, the Chittagong EPZ, BGMEA and BKMEA.

As Chief Guest the Minister for Industries, Mr. Dilip Barua Barua gave his views on the relevance of Social Compliance as well as on the necessity of Effluent Treatment Plant (ETP) for the Industry.

The session was moderated by the Vice-chancellor of East Delta University, Muhammed

Sikander Khan and Christian von Mitzlaff, the Organizer and BSCI Representative for Bangladesh.

After seven previous sessions in Dhaka, this time first it has been held in Chittagong and received a positive response requesting to organize alternatively between Dhaka and Chittagong.

Industries Minister Dilip Barua, elaborated on the increasing importance of Social Compliance in Bangladesh. He added, “Without social awareness no compliance will work in the society.” The Minister also spoke on the Effluent Treatment Plant. “Either each and every factory should have their own ETP or it must be central ETP system in the industrial areas. He said, the EU will stop importing leather goods if local tanneries don’t have an ETP and pointed out the ongoing tannery relocation of Hazaribag in Dhaka old town to Savar.”

Mr. Zia Ahad from PVH Corporation shared his past experience of the meetings that took place in Dhaka. He said, “Back in 2009 when the meeting was first held



things were not that much clear to me though in course of time it started turning out to be fruitful as I have attended here 7 out of 8 times.” He mentioned that bridging between of the two entities (owners and workers) in an industry is a key thing. The importance of being respectful to others thoughts, having the tendency of negotiation in urgent moments is huge. Stating the uprising in the RMG industry in 2010 he said, “Had there been proper practice of negotiation, the unwanted situation would have never been created and we would control things easily.”

Mr. Zafar Alam, Director Department of Environment, said water metre is a key to be introduced and the Comilla EPZ has started for water meter in many factories. He warned about the potential serious pollution in the Chittagong river Karnaphuli, following same example like the major river Buriganga in Dhaka, being deadly affected.

Mr. Anwar Hossain, labour leader, expressed the 2nd generation of factory ownership or management would not show tolerance rather than being tougher to the workers. He urged the authority to make the industrialists of our country follow special building code so that any kind of accident of calamity can do less harm.

Mr. Shahin from the NGO YPSA said, “occupational health is good enough for the workers and employers but what about the environment on the coastal area of Patenga, where toxic are being discharged daily being incredibly fatal and disastrous particular for newborn babies after 20 years.

Officials from BGMEA and BKMEA delivered their speeches and proposed several points for the betterment of the RMG industry. Talking about water treatment, urging WASA to grow awareness with the help of the Department of Environment. “We need to realize, we cannot control the situation unless and until we change our view”, the speaker stated.



Mr. Sultanul Alam, Lindex, noticed that the EPT does not necessarily need to be a costly set up as alternatives exists with new technologies and latest devices.

BKMEA Chairman, Shawkat Osman suggested that speakers shall stop blaming each other. Regarding water treatment he said, “Department of Environment as well as WASA have to work together to overcome the problem by creating awareness.”

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The advocates, workers representatives and NGOs emphasized on the implementation of the labour law. Mr. Mohammad Salim, Solidarity Centre said, "in our labour code are a lot of laws for workers, but those are hardly applied."

Mr. Khairul Basher, Director Compliance at Ha-meem Group, reported from his long experiences and listed practical measures to reduce the risk of fire at the factories.

Mr. Tabarak Uddin, BGMEA advisor made a comment, that maximum number of physicians are appointed on part time basis only. Dr. Renuka Alam, Project Director at Surjer Hashi Clinic pointed out that many health related issues are particular relevant to the women workers are not yet addressed.

The participants urged not to allow any gender discrimination at the working place and the recruiting of safety officers as factory has been urged at the Round Table.

This Round Table session ended with the proposals of being united, avoid blaming and rather building trust among the professional groups. The participants welcomed the Round Table session at Chittagong and like to continue with a self-set agenda. The moderated concluded with the appeal to create credibility and to be cooperative beyond the known difficulties.



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