

EMBASSY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

PUBLIC AFFAIRS SECTION

TEL: 8802-8855500

FAX: 880-2-9881677, 9885688

E-MAIL: DhakaPA@state.gov

WEBSITE: <http://dhaka.usembassy.gov>



**REMARKS
BY
U.S. AMBASSADOR TO BANGLADESH DAN MOZENA
ILO TRAINING WORKSHOP
WORKPLACE COOPERATION IN THE RMG SECTOR
(BRINGING EMPLOYERS AND WORKERS TOGETHER)
CLOSING SESSION
BRAC CENTER INN, DHAKA
OCTOBER 16, 2014**

Honorable Md, Mujibul Haque Chunnu, State Minister of Labor and Employment

Mikail Shipar, Secretary, Ministry of Labor and Employment

Srinivas Reddy, Country Director, ILO

Tapan Chowdhury, President, Bangladesh Employers Federation

Md. Atiqul Islam, President, BGMEA

AKM Salim Osman, MP, and President BKMEA

Zakir Hossain, Chairperson, National Coordinating Committee for Workers Education

... and you ... the workers, the managers of the RMG sector ... you who have shown the courage and willingness to be the first to sit down together and work together to help make the apparel sector of Bangladesh the best, the biggest in the world ...

Asalaam mlaikum, Nameskar and Good Afternoon

I have a vision ...

... actually, I have two visions ...

... visions that are quite different ...

One vision is of Bangladesh as the greatest provider of apparel in the world ...

... of Bangladesh's apparel industry humming with huge domestic and foreign investments ...

... of efficient, productive factories with 8 million, 12 million workers all making clothes in clean, safe conditions ...

... of factories driven by ample supplies of power and energy ...

... of roads, railroads, ports ... modern, expanded ... efficiently taking Bangladeshi apparel products to the global market ...

It's a grand vision, a wondrous vision, a beautiful vision, a vision that should be the reality of Bangladesh.

Maybe this vision will be Bangladesh's new reality ...

Or, maybe it will not be the nation's new reality.

As, you see, there is a second vision ... a vision I hope never comes true ...

By this vision, Bangladesh's apparel industry has shrunk as a result of horrific industrial accidents killing hundreds of employees, as a result of poisonous, confrontational relations between the workers and the factory owners and managers that destroy worker productivity...

By this ugly vision, Bangladesh has dropped to the twelfth or fourteenth largest apparel exporter in the world ... I hate this second vision ... it gives me nightmares.

Which vision will become Bangladesh's new reality?

The answer to that question will be determined by the people in this very room at this very moment.

I speak of the factory owners; I speak of the Government of Bangladesh; I speak of the international friends and partners of Bangladesh ...

...but most importantly, I speak of you, the participants in this workshop ... I speak of you, the apparel industry workers ... I speak of you, the factory managers ...

... you who are seated in front of me ...

... even more so than the titans of industry and government who sit beside me on this dais ...

... you participants in this workshop will most determine the fate of Bangladesh's apparel industry ...

... you the workers, you the managers will most determine whether Brand Bangladesh becomes a Preferred Brand, a Premium, the Best Brand, the Biggest Brand in the world ... creating millions and millions and millions of good jobs for Bangladeshi workers.

Experience in America and around the world shows that industrial success is greatly link to the quality of the partnership between the workers and the managers ...

... where workers work hard, efficiently, productively, loyally ...

... where managers and owners respect their workers, listen to their workers, enable their workers to freely associate and organize, provider their workers clean, safe working conditions, thereby ensuring no more Rana Plazas, no more Tazreen Fashions disasters.

Bangladesh is indeed at a critical crossroads ... confronted by two starkly different visions of the future of the apparel industry.

As I stand here ...

... flanked by the leaders of industry and government ...

... facing the apparel workers and factory managers who have shown through their successful participation in this workshop that they understand that they both ... workers and managers ... succeed and prosper when they work in partnership ... not confrontation ...

As I stand here beside you ... and before you ... I believe more than ever ...

... I believe more than ever that you ... owners, managers, workers, government ... will choose to realize the first vision ... the vision of Brand Bangladesh as the best and greatest Brand in the world ...

By this vision, I see modern, safe, clean, efficient, productive factories ...

I see managers who respect the rights and welfare of workers ...

I see workers committed to work hard and efficiently so their factories succeed and prosper ... I see workers free to associate and organize without fear of harassment, intimidation or violence...

I see government establishing a mediation mechanism whereby the inevitable frictions that arise between managers and workers can be resolved quickly and peacefully.

I see government building the ports, roads, railroad, power and energy infrastructure needed to support the world's greatest apparel industry.

That is the vision that I believe will be the new reality of Bangladesh.

I am pleased that America by supporting this series of worker-management workshops and in so many other ways is Bangladesh's partner in the pursuit of this great vision.

I commit myself, my Mission, my government to remain deeply engaged to continue to support Bangladesh as it transforms its apparel industry by bringing it to agreed standards for fire safety, factory structural soundness, and respect for workers' rights.

But in the end, it is not America or any of Bangladesh's many friends around the world who will determine the future of the apparel industry. It is you ... owners, managers, workers, government ... who will choose the path that leads to Bangladesh's becoming a Middle-Income country ... that leads to Bangladesh realizing its dream of Sonar Bangla.

Thank you.

=====

**As prepared for delivery*