



Policy Working Group Meeting on Trade and Employment in Services : IT Sector



Bangladesh has the potential to be in a strong position in global IT industry. However, special measures are needed to be taken to enable the sector to further grow which include favorable policies, regulations and investment support- said Mr. Md Ghulam Hussain, Secretary, Ministry of Commerce and the co-chair, PWG in a recently held policy working group (PWG) meeting of the ETE project. Emphasizing on the improvement of the quality of the IT related curriculum and the internship provisions; Mr. Hussain said that to capture all required measures it is immensely important to develop an Action Plan for the IT sector and to implement it in a coordinated manner.

The meeting was held on 7 October 2012 at Hotel Ruposhi Bangla. The theme of the meeting was Trade and Employment in Services with particular reference to the Information Technology (IT) sector. The meeting was co-chaired by Mr. Md Ghulam Hussain, Secretary, Ministry of Commerce and Mr. Mikail Shipar, Secretary, Ministry of Labour and Employment. Mr. André Bogui, Director, ILO Country Office for Bangladesh had delivered the welcome remarks in the meeting.

The meeting gathered representatives from Ministry of Commerce, Ministry of Labour and Employment, General Economics Division, Ministry of Information and Communication Technology, Ministry of Industry, Industry Skill Council of the IT sector, Bangladesh Foreign Trade Institute, Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS), Bangladesh Employers' Federation and National Coordination Council for Workers' Education (NCCWE) to speak on different aspects of trade and employment in IT sector.



Representatives from development partners namely SDC, EC Delegation in Bangladesh, GIZ, Netherlands Embassy, Trade Policy Support Programme (TPSP) also attended the meeting. A recent ETE study on trade and employment in IT sector by Dr. Selim Raihan, Associated Professor, Dhaka University was presented and discussed at the meeting. Mr. Mostan Hossain, Deputy Secretary, Ministry of Labour and Employment and the Member Secretary of the PWG facilitated the discussion.



Highlighting the mutually supportive relationship between service and the IT subsector, Mr. Bogui mentioned that services sector being one of the main purchasers of ICT equipment has been significantly transformed by ICTs in terms of both performance and quality improvements. He also said that IT subsector has been playing an increasingly important role in Bangladesh economy with a sharply increasing export volume to over 60 countries. With this increasing trade volume this sector has been playing an important role in: establishing linkage between education and industry, improving skill base of the country and generating employment.

Now it is important for the country to improve sectoral quality and overall competitiveness of the IT industries to reap the new opportunities of global transfer of services and to turn Bangladesh into an important destination of global outsourcing, he mentioned.



Mr. Mikail Shipar, Secretary, Ministry of Labour and Employment and Co-chair, PWG in his remarks mentioned that in 1999 the government has declared IT as a thrust sector and embarked multi pronged initiatives which include: moderately high speed telecom links, enactment of software copyright law and bank loan facilities for the industry. Besides government has put emphasize on skill training. With these basic supports the industry is already in a position now and there has been a rising global confidence on Bangladesh and its IT industry in recent years- he said. To boost further growth of the sector, Mr. Shipar emphasized on addressing the following challenges: skill gap

determination and targeted training programme to overcome skill shortage, reliable IT structure, marketing promotion and branding for Bangladeshi IT product and enhancement of productivity and competitiveness of the IT firms.

The members discussed the opportunities and challenges for Bangladesh with regard to Trade and Employment in IT sector and pointed out that the country should harmonize its sectoral policies, regulations, investment policies and skill policies to reap the employment opportunities created from a vibrant IT sector.

