

Dhaka to export skilled textile workers to Russia

After establishing itself as a major manufacturer and exporter of readymade garments and knitwear, Bangladesh is set to export its skilled workers from these sectors to Russia.

The first batch of 60 workers will leave for Russia in the next two months, with more to follow, to a Russian apparel company, The Daily star said Sunday.

The Russian company Visozstoy will employ the workers at a monthly wage of \$450, plus medical and travel benefits.

This is evidence of Bangladesh's growing status as a world leader in garment expertise, said Abdul Matin Chowdhury, secretary to the Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment.

Readymade garments and knitwear are Bangladesh's highest foreign exchange earners, employing an estimated 2.5 million.

The industry is plagued by frequent violence due to poor wages and working conditions and employers not sticking to the terms of agreement.

Though there is a shortage of skilled workers, this new line of manpower export is another major foreign exchange earner for Bangladesh.

'I have already approved a local recruiting agency to select the manpower to export to Russia,' Chowdhury said, adding that a ministry delegation will attend a forum on employment in Russia at the end of the month.

Fazlul Hoque, president of Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BKMEA), said although the country has been suffering from a skilled manpower shortage, the initiative is good.

Bangladesh's garment exporters have also received a boost this year with India allowing an annual duty free export of eight million pieces of garments as a major concession to the least developed countries (LDCs) in the South Asian region.

Bangladesh and India are otherwise competitors in the world market.

Industry insiders said garment workers, comprising 80 percent women, are employed in nearly 4,500 woven garment factories, nearly 1,700 knitwear factories and more than 1,300 textile factories.

Hoque said Russia is also a potential readymade garments (RMG) products' market for Bangladesh. Every year, Russian buyers outsource a significant number of RMG products to Bangladesh, he said.

Market operators said remittances from expatriate Bangladeshis could exceed \$7 billion in 2008 as more and more skilled and semi-skilled workers are going abroad for jobs.

According to official statistics, the country received nearly \$6 billion in remittances from non-resident Bangladeshis last year and their contribution to the gross domestic product crossed 13 percent.

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