Press Release

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Exploring Growth Opportunities: Production and Export of Medical and Personal Protective Equipment

The Government of Bangladesh is committed to provide all-out support to promote the Medical and Personal Protective Equipment (MPPE) industry in Bangladesh as an important sector for attaining export diversification and deeper industrialization, said Mr. Tipu Munshi, MP, Hon’ble Minister, Ministry of Commerce in his speech as the Chief Guest of a webinar titled “Exploring Growth Opportunities: Production and Export of Medical and Personal Protective Equipment”. The event was organized by Business Initiative Leading Development (BUILD) on December 13, 2021 to share the findings of the studies and gather ideas and insights from the stakeholders.

The Commerce Minister added that the Ministry of Commerce will take necessary steps to ensure that enabling policies and regulations are put in place for the sector. While the COVID-19 has posed a major challenge to the development dynamic of Bangladesh, the country has weathered the challenges and is now set to resume its accelerated growth pathway towards its transition to a developed economy.

Bangladesh needs to develop the MPPE industry in a strategic manner, setting targets, extending the right incentives, ensuring public-private cooperation, and following up closely on the progress and constraints, emphasized Tapan Kanti Ghosh, Secretary, Ministry of Commerce.

Recognising the export diversification is a major challenge for the Bangladesh economy as the country seeks to alleviate its heavy dependence on the RMG sector, BUILD Chairperson Abul Kasem Khan mentioned that the best strategy to begin diversification is to build on our strength. He mentioned five key areas to focus on to develop the sector: right products, proper incentives, appropriate policies, knowledge and skills, as well as proper technology and logistical system.

Nuzhat Anwar, Acting Country Manager, Bangladesh, Bhutan and Nepal, International Finance Corporation (IFC) said that businesses need to find innovative and sustainable ways to boost their production and export revenue to recover from the impacts of COVID19. IFC is providing the necessary support to bridge knowledge gaps in the Medical and Personal Protective Equipment (MPPE) sector in order to enhance private sector growth and support economic recovery.”

Faruque Hasan President, BGMEA was present as the Special Guest and appreciated BUILD for coming up with a number of useful suggestions which is very much required for the sector. He said, Strengthening collaboration along with the regulatory bodies, Technical Know-How and a robust backward linkage is important, he also emphasized the need for attracting FDI in this respect”.

In the keynote presentation on Market Assessment for MPPE, Shubham Gupta, Partner, Deloitte highlighted that the private sector should lead building capabilities and market development by putting concentration on knowledge management of technical and testing issues, market intelligence, global outreach to collaborate with the leading brands. Deloitte identified 12 MPPE products that bear high-potential for development.

The keynote presentation on policy and regulatory environment was delivered by Ms. Ferdaus Ara Begum, CEO of Business Initiative Leading Development (BUILD). She noted that Bangladesh is already making progress in the MPPE sector especially in 12 products of which 8 are included in the WHO list of MPPEs. No-objection certificate (NOC) from Directorate General of Drug Administration (DGDA) has been availed by43 firms for surgical masks as well as 57 for coveralls/ PPE gowns as of September 2021. Bangladesh has a competitive edge when it comes to exporting to countries that provide Generalized System of Preferences (GSP). There are financial incentives provided by the government such as cash assistance for 42 non-traditional products. RMG sector was the first to focus on the MPPE segment, with dwindling demand for staple products at the early stages of the pandemic. Renowned pharma companies are investing in OTC or Non-medicinal products, expecting high demand and export. MPPE products are highly regulated with stringent quality requirements and require strong technical know-how, which has emerged as a key challenge.

The panel discussion was conducted by Asif Ibrahim, Chairman, Chittagong Stock Exchange (CSE). He recognized the importance of public-private collaboration for promoting the MPPE industry.

A. H. M. Ahsan, Vice Chairman, Export Promotion Bureau (EPB), Ministry of Commerce mentioned that Bangladesh had 25% export growth during July-November 2021 over the same quarter in the preceding year. In a brief study of its own, EPB found it difficult to identify and segregate MPPEs due to multiple use of the products. He also mentioned overdependency on China on sourcing of raw materials to produce MPPE items.

Major General Md. Mahbubur Rahman, Director General, Directorate General of Drug Administration (DGDA) mentioned that although Bangladeshi pharmaceutical industry meets 98% of local demand and exports to 57 countries, the country imports more than 95% of medical devices.

Shamim Ahmed, President, Bangladesh Plastic Goods Manufacturers & Exporters Association (BPGMEA) mentioned that the plastic industry has been playing a key role in supplying essential equipment along the course of the pandemic.

Dr. Mohidus Samad Khan, Associate Professor, Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET) mentioned that it is important to choose whether we go for low-hanging fruits or innovation. Innovative export would require close compliance with international standards.

The meeting was attended by Hosna Ferdous Sumi, Private Sector Specialist, World Bank, Mashfique Ibne Akbar, Private Sector Development Adviser, Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO), including high ups from both public and private sectors.



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