

961 export-oriented RMG units come under digital mapping

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A total of 961 export-oriented readymade garment (RMG) factories located in Dhaka district have been brought under the digital mapping system to have better ideas about the industry based on credible data. Under the public database system, the authorities map factory names, GPS location, postal address, number of workers, products, export countries, brands and buyers, memberships, affiliations and certifications. Of them, 855 units are registered by the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) and 144 are members of Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BKMEA). There are some units that have registered with both the trade bodies. About 774,422 workers have been listed under the mapping where 60.8 per cent are female and 39.2 per cent are male workers. Out of the 961 factories, 13 are not members of any of the trade bodies-BGMEA and BKMEA, said Syed Hasibuddin Hussain, project manager of Digital RMG Factory Mapping in Bangladesh (DRFM-B) while talking to the FE at the launching ceremony of the digital map containing information on export-oriented RMG factories. Commerce Minister Tipu Munshi launched the map on Saturday at the BGMEA headquarters in the city. Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI) president Shafiul Islam Mohiuddin, BGMEA president Md Siddiqur Rahman, BKMEA vice president Mansoor Ahmed, Department of Inspections for Factories and Establishments (DIFE) inspector general Shamsuzzaman Bhuiyan, among others, were present at the launching ceremony. Out of the 961 factories, some 448 factories have been assessed on fire, electrical and structural integrity by Accord and 169 by Alliance, according to the map information. A total of 579 units are affiliated with Business Social Compliance Initiative, 356 with SEDEX, 175 with OEKO-TEX, 126 with WRAP and 109 with ISO inspection organisations, it shows. Initiated in 2017, the map incorporating factories from across the country was expected

to be completed in 2021, Mr Hussain said. Led by Brac University with lead funding from C&A Foundation and support from Brac USA, the BGMEA, BKMEA and DIFE also are the strategic partners of the project. Terming the map time-befitting and important both for buyers and apparel makers, the minister stressed the need for including information on buyers who so far increased prices of apparels and how much after the latest wage hike and those who expressed interests in doing so. He also stressed the need for fair prices from buyers. FBCCI president Mohiuddin pressed for fair prices for locally-made garment items and ensuring transparency in the whole supply chain. BGMEA president Md Siddiqur Rahman said though apparel makers invested a huge amount of money for workplace safety, prices of apparels were not increasing in tandem with the cost of production. He expressed fear that many workers might be jobless due to failure to implement the latest wage structure by the garment factories. He, however, suggested including information of only export-oriented garment factories in the map saying they couldn't take the responsibility of those not affiliated with the trade bodies.