

Rubana Huq, Managing Director of the Mohammadi Group, speaks on the Perceptions and Realities of a Garment Wallah at ULAB

The Center for Enterprise and Society at the University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh (ULAB) organized a talk entitled “**The Perceptions and Realities of a Garment Wallah**” on July 17, 2012 at ULAB’s campus in Dhanmondi. Rubana Huq, Managing Director of the Mohammadi Group, one of Bangladesh’s foremost garment manufacturers and an employer of over 9,000, spoke to a full house of ULAB students and faculty as well as several members of the business community.



Ms. Huq spoke about the many challenges facing an entrepreneur in the garment sector. In particular, she focused on the challenge of improving the lives of workers while also meeting the uncompromising demands of the international market. She shared her personal experiences with labor disputes, dealing with labor leaders, and attempting to create a democratically elected Worker’s Welfare Committee at one of her factories. Garment producers should not only comply with existing regulations, she contended, but they should go

a step further. As such, Ms. Huq argued for greater corporate social responsibility, a concept that she prefers to think of as “accountability to one’s conscious.” In her case, Mohammadi group has been working with the Jaago Foundation to establish an English-medium school for the garment factory workers’ children, an idea that she has been promoting among other manufacturers.

She argued that the industry as a whole needs to wrestle more with labor issues. Despite its enormous contribution to the Bangladeshi economy, as a mature industry, the garment sector is doing too little too late for its workers. She expressed frustration with the large gap between what the law says and what is actually done in practice. Welcoming a government proposal to extend maternity leave to six months, Huq criticized a Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association argument that such a change would only encourage a population boom.

In her parting words, Ms. Huq pushed the students to take advantage of the opportunities that were not available to her generation, to learn all the time, to be humble and think in terms of “we” instead of “me,” and to separate ambition from greed.

The newly created **Center for Enterprise Society (CES)** at ULAB seeks to advance understanding of the opportunities and challenges to entrepreneurship and enterprise development in Bangladesh through objective, academic study. For more information, please visit: <http://www.ulab.edu.bd/CES/center-for-enterprise-and-society/>