

Workshop on jute sector concludes

Continuous training needed for higher productivity

By Staff Correspondent

The speakers at the concluding session of the workshop on the jute sector adjustment credit (JSAC) underlined the need for continuous training of the workers to develop their skill.

However, they also felt that productivity should be looked upon as an interaction between all the three factors of production - man, machine and management.

The session on technical assistance was chaired by Jute Secretary, Mohammad Abu Hena while Md Janibul Huq, Joint Secretary, presented a paper on the topic.

Faisal Siddiqui of the Bangladesh Jute Mills Association (BJMA) speaking at the session said, training of the workers could help compete with the productivity of other countries like India.

He felt that if necessary, foreign experts should be brought in for imparting training to workers.

Mumayyaz Shamsul Kabir, Joint Secretary, Labour and

Manpower Ministry, said the causes of low productivity must be analysed carefully as the same labourers of Bangladesh show high productivity abroad. He also said the training institutes for workers must be market-oriented to get the best results.

Shahidullah Chowdhury, a CBA leader of the Latif Bawani Jute Mills, said if the training programme had been undertaken while the mills were still viable, the jute sector might not sustain the existing losses.

He observed that the JSAC programme does not clearly say about the fate of the workers of the mills to be privatised. "We do not know whether they will still get their existing facilities or wages or if they would still be in their jobs", Chowdhury said.

He suggested that training should be given selectively as training or retraining of the elderly workers would yield no results. About labour productivity, he said the productivity is low because of poor manage-

nance of the mills.

"The restructuring does not envisage any modernisation of machinery," he pointed out. "So, we even do not need to train the existing workers."

Motaharuddin, a labour leader of the Jubilee Jute Mills said unless the politicization of labourers is stopped, the productivity would not improve.

Kamran Rahman of the Pubali Jute Mills urged the World Bank to establish a credit line for modernisation of the mills.

Abdul Aziz, a director of a private sector mills, said provision should be made for training of workers of the private mills.

The Chairman of the Bangladesh Jute Spinners Association (BJSA), Md Mahmud, said honest labour and management is a must for increased productivity. He said the training of the workers can be organised in the respective mills and there is no need for separate institutional set-up for the same.

GATT ministerial meet begins

Dhaka for implementation of provisions

Bangladesh has called upon the developed countries to implement fully the provisions of special and differential treatment for the least developed countries (LDCs) for improving their facilities in world trade, reports UNB.

The call came from Commerce Minister M Shamsul Islam while addressing a plenary session of the GATT ministerial meeting on behalf of the LDCs at Marrakesh in Morocco on Tuesday, according to a message received in Dhaka yesterday.

"International cooperation is needed for adoption of concerted global strategy on environment and to assist developing countries in implementing plans aimed at sustainable development," he told the meeting where the international trade agreement reached through the Uruguay Round is scheduled to be signed tomorrow.

Describing the Uruguay Round as an "ambitious round of trade negotiations", Islam said comprehensive assessment of the negative outcome of the round need to be redressed through appropriate action, including additional trade preference development assistance and debt relief.

Referring to the declining share of the LDCs in world trade, he called upon the negotiators to improve the trading opportunities of these countries that need substantial technical assistance for implementing the recommendations of the round.

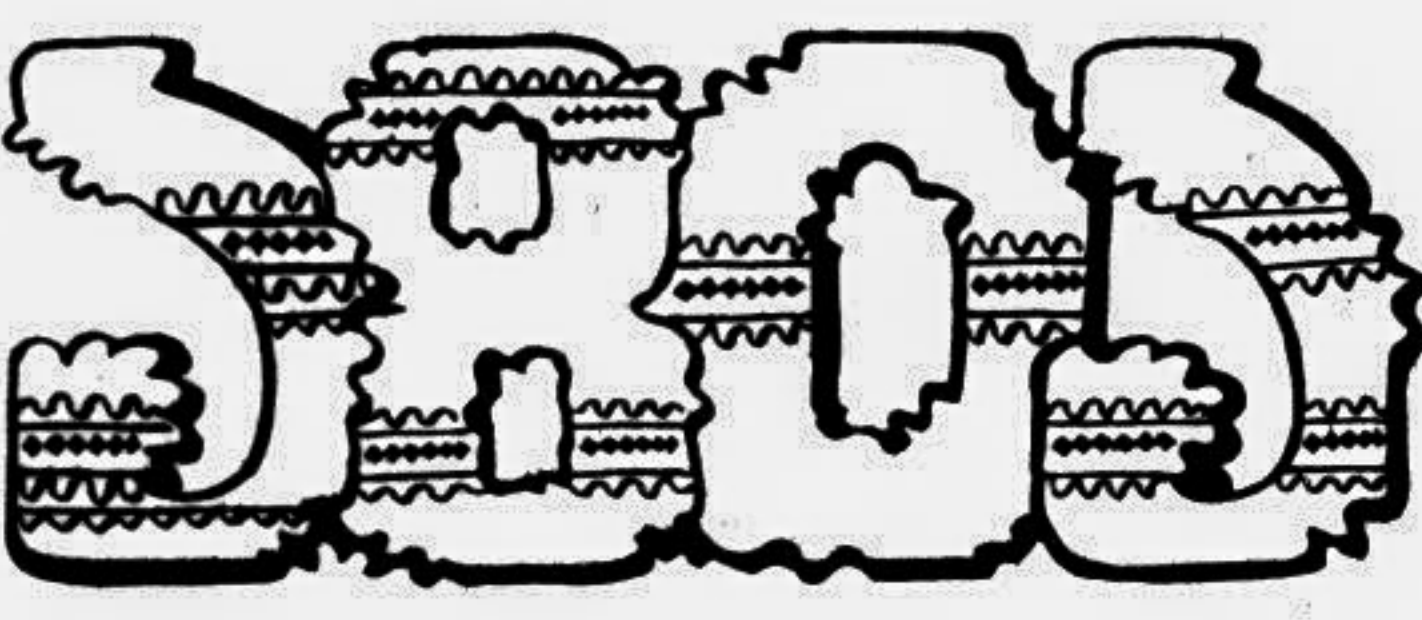
Ustad Sagiruddin Khan dead

Ustad Mohammad Sagiruddin Khan, the sarengi maestro who later earned fame as a classical vocalist, aged 70, died at the BIRDEM in Dhaka last night, reports BSS.

Harshad Mehta arrested

NEW DELHI, Apr 13: Stock broker, Harshad 'big bull' Mehta, the chief suspect in India's biggest financial scandal, was briefly arrested today in connection with a bank fraud, the AFP reports quoting Press Trust of India (PTI).

It was the first time that Mehta, 40, had been arrested since he was released in 1992 after spending 110 days in prison.



নববর্ষের শুভেচ্ছা

ইসলাম গ্রুপ

ইসলাম চেম্বার, ১২৫/এ মতিবিল বাণিজ্যিক এলাকা, ঢাকা-১০০০
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Awami League chief and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Sheikh Hasina speaking as the chief guest at a civic condolence meeting organised by the Muktijoddha Solidarity Council in the city yesterday.

Political posturing

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any undue concessions because they still enjoy the people's confidence. They said the BNP was preparing for the next general elections which are likely to be held several months ahead of schedule. The elections are due in early 1996.

According to parliamentary sources, the Fifth Parliament can hold its session even if the Opposition continues its boycott. As per the constitution, if a member remains absent from the House for 90 working days, then the authorities can take legal action, that is, stripping the MP's membership.

"But most of the MPs, while boycotting the session, sign their attendance register!" he said.

It will be an unhealthy situation in Parliament if the Opposition members continue boycotting the sessions, said another source.

BNP sources say they would try their best to bring the boycotting MPs to Parliament and Speaker Shaikh Razzak Ali's resignation from the BNP central committee was a 'positive democratic gesture' of the ruling party. But the sources categorically made it clear that the BNP would not appease the Opposition on certain vital issues, including the demand for

elections under a care-taker government.

Meanwhile, the AL has convened a meeting of the central working committee tomorrow to review the situation. Party sources said, the AL central leaders might delegate powers to the party president Sheikh Hasina to decide whether to join the parliamentary session or not. They would also review the stance of other parliamentary parties.

The JP, on the other hand, is closely watching the activities of the AL both in and outside Parliament. The JP had supported the April 7 siege of the secretariat, the hartal on April 10 and will support the planned hartal on April 26.

But the third largest opposition - the Jamaat-e-Islami, Bangladesh - joined the boycott of Parliament following Nazmul Huda's comment but did not participate in any action programme called by the JP and the AL.

The distance between the BNP and the Jamaat widened after the ruling party MPs criticised the Jamaat in Parliament in September last year, but the Jamaat is still against a total boycott of the JS sessions. The party, however, strongly demands the provision of a care-taker government to hold the next general elections.

In the present political scenario, the role of the Jamaat during the next Parliament session is unpredictable. Other smaller parties, however, are in favour of a dialogue between the AL and the BNP.

The 14th session of the Fifth Parliament is likely to be convened on May 2.

However, the leaders of the political parties sounded a caution, saying "There is no last word in politics."

Razzak Ali quits posts

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according to them, they could not attend a session chaired by a BNP vice-president. Shaikh Razzak Ali's election as chief of Khulna BNP also came under criticism of opposition, particularly the Awami League, for the similar reasons.

According to agency reports, the Speaker, in his resignation letter addressed to the BNP chief, said that during his political career he had always held the national interest above personal gain or benefit.

He said he was quitting the posts in order to uphold the neutrality of the Speaker's chair and as a mark of respect to the sentiments expressed by certain opposition quarters and also in the hope that this gesture would create an atmosphere favourable to the growth of healthy democratic practice.

The Speaker, in his letter, also said that there was neither any legal bar nor was it contrary to parliamentary custom and tradition in this country against holding party positions. Yet, he was resigning in the greater interest of the country and democracy.

He said democracy has been restored in the country after a long struggle and it was the responsibility of every patriotic citizen to contribute his mite to give it an institutional shape.

The Speaker also thanked the Prime Minister and expressed gratitude to her for reposing confidence in him by giving him the prestigious party position.

When contacted last night, leaders of the Awami League (AL) and Jatiya Party (JP), the two major opposition parties in Parliament, reacted positively to the Speaker's decision.

AL General Secretary Zillur Rahman claimed it as a "victory of the opposition," saying, "He resigned because of opposition pressure." However, Zillur maintained that "By accepting the post earlier, the Speaker had proved that he was not unbiased."

The AL leader said that it was not fair on the part of the BNP to offer the Speaker a party post; on his part, the Speaker should not have accepted it in the first place.

Moudud Ahmed, acting

leader of the JP parliamentary party, said "Although delayed, the Speaker has come to realise that his office is an institution and he must keep himself above partisan politics in order to maintain his neutrality and dignity."

The JP leader appreciated Razzak Ali's decision saying, "It is good to see that he has responded to our reaction." Moudud maintained that the Speaker should have resigned from the Khulna district post much earlier, but he did not do so. "However, better late than never," he added.

Shaikh Razzak Ali was not available for comments at the time of writing this report late last night. His family sources in Dhaka said he had left for Khulna yesterday.

Border firing

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told The Daily Star that the BSF intruders had kidnapped the Bangladeshi nationals in violation of international border rules. They also took away five shallow pump engines on their way back to India, the CO added.

A battalion-level flag meeting was held between the border forces of the two countries at Benapole on April 1 to solve various incidents of the border.

Formal talks

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also briefed the Chinese Foreign Minister on the people-oriented development efforts of Bangladesh.

Rahman raised the issue of sharing the dry season flow of the Ganges and the Teesta river which, he said, is causing environmental disaster to one third of Bangladesh and destroying economy of northern and western areas of the country. Qian Qichen said that China fully understands Bangladesh's justified demands and is aware of its adverse effects on the country.

He suggested that Bangladesh and India should negotiate and solve the problem peacefully. He said that since the issue was raised with him in Dhaka, China has had contacts with India through diplomatic channel on the matter.

The Midnight File

US-EU dispute over bidding govt contracts resolved

MARRAKESH, MOROCCO, Apr 13: The United States' and the European Union (EU) have resolved a dispute over bidding on government contracts, the EU announced today. The announcement was made by EU trade commissioner Sir Leon Brittan at a press conference with US trade representative Mickey Kantor.

New Kuwaiti cabinet

KUWAIT, Apr 13: Kuwait announced the formation of a new government, the official Kuwait News Agency reported today. Prime Minister Sheikh Saad Al-Abdulla Al-Sabah and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah remained in their posts. Five ministers were dropped including Oil Minister Ali Ahmed Al-Baghlil, reports Reuters.

Pahela Baishakh today

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was also a century of turbulence. Hundreds of youths walked bravely to the gallows, thousands fell to bullets, and millions were massacred for the freedom of their motherland.

Despite the vagaries of nature and the often cruel hands dealt by fate, Bangladeshis have every time like the proverbial Phoenix, risen from the depths of despair to rededicate themselves to the realisation of a better future.

Over the years, and especially since the founding of sovereign Bangladesh, Pahela Baishakh has acquired a very special place in the thoughts and traditions of the people.

It is no longer confined to the opening of "halkatas" or fresh accounts books by the traders and shopkeepers and feasting well in the hope of enjoying good meals throughout the year. Today, Pahela Baishakh is more than those time-honoured rituals. It is a celebration, on a national scale, by institutions and individuals alike. A celebration of life, of the distinct identity of all those who speak and think in the Bangla language. A celebration of our customs, our traditions, of our heritage.

The programmes of the day include colourful processions, Baishakhi melas or fairs, discussions, musical soiree, children's rallies and other cultural functions across the country.

In the capital, the central focus of the festivity will be the Ramna Batamul where lakhs of people are expected to throng to enjoy the various musical soirees and the Baishakhi Mela.

Bangladesh Small and Cottage Industries Corporation (BSCIC) has organised a week-long, Baishakhi Mela at the Dhanmandi Club ground. Handicraft will be displayed and sold in the fair.

The Islamic Foundation is holding a two-day function at its premises. A three-day Bata photo contest titled "Rupashi Bangla", organised by the Bangladesh Photo-Journalists' Association, began at the Jatiya Press Club yesterday.

The BNP and its front organisations, including the Jatiyatobadi Samajik-Sanskritik Sangstha, will welcome the new century through a day-long programme. The Awami League, the Jatiya Party, the Workers' Party, CPB, JCD, and other political parties have also drawn up similar programmes.

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সঙ্গে করে আনে রবিকর।

বৈশাখ

কপোর্টে ডেভেলপার্স

১৭ নং, ধানমন্ডি সড়ক নং ২, ঢাকা ১২০৫