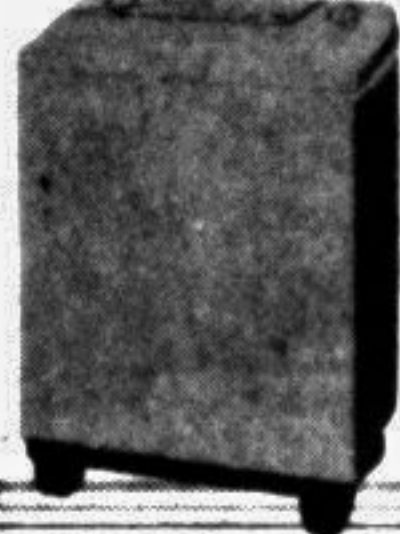



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# The Daily Star BUSINESS

DHAKA SUNDAY, JULY 23, 1995



**HYUNDAI**  
CARS THAT MAKE SENSE

Commerce Minister tells seminar

## Import of spl packaging materials for exportables may continue

The government will consider continuing import of special packaging materials for exportables, despite a scheduled restriction to be imposed next December, reports UNB.

Commerce and Information Minister M Shamsul Islam assured this at a seminar yesterday saying that export trade, which to some extent is dependent on quality packaging, should not be hindered in any circumstances.

"Our prime objective and one of the main development strategies is to expand export trade," said Islam, inaugurating the day-long seminar on "Packaging for Export Products", organised by Export Promotion Bureau (EPB) at the DCCI auditorium.

The government had earlier imposed ban on import of any packaging materials to help flourish the local packaging industry, but later lifted the restrictions only for export products facing sharp reaction from exporters.

As the exporters insisted that quality of packaging material available at home is not up to the buyers' requirement, the commerce ministry allowed import of such materials for export products only upto December this year with its approval. The minister said both the exporters and entrepreneurs of packaging industries should understand properly the government's decision and get

ready to use and develop locally produced packaging materials.

Commerce Secretary M Asafiddowah said although the government banned import of packaging materials, it could not be continued after December 96 as the World Trade Organisation would not allow such restriction.

"You must develop your industry within this short period of protection," he told the audience, most of them were the owners of different packaging industries.

Shamsul Islam said the government had already offered various incentives for developing the domestic packaging industry as part of its policy of encouraging backward linkage.

But, he regretted, the export-assisted packaging industry could not flourish at the desired level as there is a lack of packaging materials for export-oriented products.

Stressing that a coordination should be developed between packaging and export industries, the minister hoped that the packaging sector would exploit the facilities given by the government.

He also assured the entrepreneurs of continuous assistance from the government to develop the quality of export packaging that should be acceptable to all importers.

Pointing at recent boom in

packaging industry, Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry (DCCI) President Rashed Maksud Khan said a lack of technical know-how hindered further growth of the industry.

He urged the government to facilitate the owners of packaging industry in attending various industrial fairs abroad to help them acquiring latest packaging methods. EPB Vice-Chairman Anisul Haque Chowdhury and Director General M Akmal Hossain also addressed the inaugural session of the seminar.

Presenting a paper in the first working session, former national consultant of UNDP/ITC/EPB Export Development Project, M Ahsan Ullah said all horticulture crops such as fresh fruits, vegetable and flowers deserve special packaging, polietizations and containering.

Every year, Bangladesh is exporting around 12,000 tons of fresh fruits and vegetable, including betel leaf, earning some 3,000 dollars per ton on an average.

But as exporters do supplement 20 per cent of the export items, Ullah said, the country in actual sense exports around 10,000 tons, suffering a huge loss.

He attributed the loss to poor pre and post-harvest handling, poor pre-storage situation and poor packaging.

President of Packaging Industries Association of Bangladesh Mohammad Ar-

shad Ali said packaging is one of the most vital elements in export strategy as the country not only competes in price but also in quality of packaging.

"Unfortunately, exporters neglect this vital packaging chapter," Ali said, presenting his paper on "Export Package of Fresh Products and World Market."

Pointing at increasing awareness about ecological imbalance and environmental pollution, he said many a packaging tradition has changed to alternative materials and system.

The association president urged the government to set up a full-fledged Institute of Packaging to help and grow increasing demand of packaging materials for export boost-up.

## Tk 500cr rail road being constructed

TANGAIL, July 22: Bangladesh Railway is constructing 85 km long rail road to connect the Jamuna multipurpose bridge with the Joydevpur rail station via Tangail at a total cost of Taka 500 crore, reports BSS.

Official sources said that there would be six stations in Tangail district, located at Mirzapur, Mohera, Karatia, Tangail, Elega and Ibrahimabad.

Of the total length, 28.73 kms fall in Gazipur district and the rest in Tangail district. The road will include fourteen bridges.

Work on the road will start after the rainy season, the source said.

**Smuggled Indian goods seized in B'baria**  
BRAHMABARIA, July 22: Bangladesh Rifles seized smuggled Indian goods worth Taka 1.43 lakh in different raids on July 13, reports UNB.

According to official sources, 23 rifle battalion conducted the raids and recovered contrabands including sugar, ganja, pulse, shidur, phensidyl, medicine, wine and saree.

The goods were deposited with the Akhaura and Shaistagonj customs offices godown and the local narcotics control office.

In another raid on July 9, police seized Indian smuggled motor parts worth Taka 1.30 lakh from Shulaghar near Cornel bazar in Akhaura thana.

Police sources said, acting on a tip-off they raided the area and recovered the goods. All the goods were deposited with the Akhaura customs godown.

**SAARC information network to link Chamber of Commerce**  
COLOMBO, July 22: SAARC member countries yesterday decided to have an information network linking their chambers of commerce and industries to ensure a freer flow of information, reports PTI.

The information network would be operational within three months.

The decision to set up the network was taken by the executive committee of the SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industries which concluded its two-day meeting here yesterday.

Addressing a press conference, President of the SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industries (SCCI), SM Inam said the meeting also discussed the ways to implement the South Asia Preferential Trade Agreement SAPTA which is expected to be operational with ratification by India, Pakistan and Bangladesh in November this year.

Bhutan, the Maldives, Nepal and Sri Lanka have already ratified the SAPTA.

The Executive Committee also discussed various issues including the proposal for setting of the SAARC Development Bank. It was decided to hold more seminars and workshops in the member-countries to enable the trade and the industry more access, he said.

## Women Entrepreneurs

Rafeya Abedin : Restaurant owner

## Women can prove better than men if they really intend so

By Rashda Khan

Out of all her achievements what makes Rafeya Abedin most proud is that she is a self-made successful entrepreneur. And she should be proud too because what she has achieved is no small thing.

"I don't believe it when people say they can't make it. I have done everything myself. Men can only dominate us when the women concerned are not capable of supporting themselves," says Abedin. "True freedom comes only when you can establish yourself. Solvency is the key."

Abedin is the owner of Chung King, a Chinese and Thai restaurant in Dhanmondi, which she established on January 9, 1982. She remembers the date distinctly. "I had been in the banking profession in Abu Dhabi, when I returned I decided I wanted to do something that would give me more control over my time. As I had a knack for cooking I decided on the restaurant business," explains Abedin.

When she started the business there were not many women in the work place, especially in the restaurant sector. "Many people said and thought many things but I ignored them," she says. "I believe every profession has respect if done sincerely, and that remains true for both men and women."

And maybe to practise what she preaches she has gone into a number of different areas. Abedin also owns Reniaz Services and Supplies, which is made of two separate components. On the one side she rents out potted indoor plants and provides interior decoration services. On the other side she does block printing on all sorts of clothes (saris, curtains, shawl-kameezes etc.) and manufactures labels for garments factories.

Simultaneously, Abedin is running Reniaz Publications and Printers. She, having done her Master's in Bengali from Dhaka University, is hoping to publish a women's magazine called "Pashpash". "Though it is targeted towards women, it won't have

things like cooking or beauty tips. Instead, this will be an attempt to give moral and professional support to women," she says. "Our women have a tendency to think that they won't be able to do this or that. Why shouldn't they be able to do something? We need to build up women's confidences."

How has she been able to achieve so much? Abedin says that her father always told her that women need to stand on their own feet. On the other hand, her husband never supported her entrepreneurship. "He was one of those men who believed that a woman's place is only in the kitchen. However, as I went through life I realised how true my father's words were. And I did what I had to do," she says.

Her separation from her husband was an added incentive. "Many women accept abusive husbands because they think they don't have any alternatives. I think if a man can support a family so can a woman," says Abedin. She thinks it is a pity that more women don't come out professionally because experience has taught her that women tend to be more conscientious workers. "I have seen that women are more honest and responsible, men tend to be 'jakiबाजे' (prone to avoid work)." However, she quickly adds that women can work better than men only when and if they want to.

One of the major problems that she notices in Bangladesh today is that society seems to have come to a mental standstill. She believes that change can only be achieved when attitudes are changed. She points out that most people say that men need to change, but women need to change too.

"A majority of our women are still content to let the husband earn while they can remain social housewives (housewives who have enough time to socialize on a daily basis). They can't and don't want to question where the money is coming from," says Abedin.

Only when they are working can women have an idea



Rafeya Abedin

of how much can be earned in a given situation. Thus, Abedin says, women will have more realistic expectations of their husband and not demand things that are beyond his means. This will also lead to the reduction of much of the dishonesty that is rampant in our society. "Those who commit a crime and those who quietly accept it are equally guilty," says Abedin.

Another problem is that most women think that they will need a lot of capital and that scares them. However, Abedin holds that people should do whatever they can. "All my ventures are related to things I took an interest in and was able to do. It's possible to start small and go far."

She also says that for all the pro-women hype going around, our society is still not ready for the working woman. When a man does business, he may go to ten offices, talk to different people, establish liaisons and land a contract, points out Abedin. "But were a woman to do the

same thing, there would be much negative talk against the woman's character."

Abedin gives herself as an example. "One of the reasons why I have been successful in this society is because I can do all my business from my desk. I don't have to go in search of work, instead work comes to me. But this isn't possible in all economic sectors."

Thus, she says, people say a lot but there is little implementation. As a result women entrepreneurs are at a disadvantage. Men, who are more visible, have better chances of landing deals.

"I think women (that is, capable women) should be given preference. Something like a quota system so that more women get the chance to prove themselves," she says. "How can you judge somebody's ability without giving them a chance first? But that's exactly what this society is doing — building up stereotypes."

"However, you can't hide the moon's light," quotes Abedin, an ever optimist.



Commerce and Information Minister M Shamsul Islam addressing as chief guest the seminar on 'Packaging of exportable goods' organised by Export Promotion Bureau at the auditorium of Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry yesterday. — PID photo

## Massive scheme for aman paddy cultivation in N-districts

CHAPAINAWABGANJ, July 22: Agricultural Extension Department has taken up a massive scheme to cultivate aman paddy on about 17 lakh hectares of land in 16 northern districts in the current season, reports UNB.

The districts are Chapainawabganj, Rajshahi, Natore, Naogaon, Pabna, Sirajganj, Bogra, Joypurhat, Rangpur, Gaibandha, Kurigram, Nilphamari, Lalmonirhat, Dinajpur, Thakurgaon and Panchagarh.

Bangladesh Agriculture Development Corporation (BADC) will supply seeds, fertilisers, insecticides and other agricultural inputs to the farmers at fair prices for the implementation of the scheme.

## Biman earns Tk 192 cr profit in three years

Bangladesh Biman earned a profit of Taka 67.91 crore in 1992-93, Taka 63.94 crore in 1993-94 and Taka 60.00 crore (projected) in 1994-95 year, reports BSS.

An official handout said this was informed in the 39th meeting of the parliamentary standing committee on the Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism held at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhavan here yesterday.

Chairman of the committee, State Minister for Civil Aviation and Tourism Major (ret'd) Abdul Mannan, presided over the meeting.

The meeting discussed and reviewed the overall development activities of the airlines and Bangladesh Parjaton Corporation.

The Acting Managing Director of Biman presented a

report in the meeting on various development activities. It was informed in the meeting that Biman is operating flights in 26 international and seven domestic destinations now.

The meeting also discussed the timing of the celebration of Parjaton Month. The State Minister directed the Biman authority to gear up its activities so that it can earn more profit.

Committee members Alam Khan and Rahima Khandaker attended the meeting. Chairman Civil Aviation Authority Abdus Samad Bhuiyan, Acting Chairman of Biman, Lt Col (ret'd) Mahmudur Rahman and Acting Chairman of Civil Aviation Authority Group Captain Nazmul Haque Chowdhury were present.



Shafat Ahmed Chowdhury, Chairman of Green Delta Insurance Company Ltd, seen presiding over the 9th Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the company at a city hotel on Thursday. Other Directors and Managing Director Nasir Ahmed Chowdhury are also seen.

## WEA celebrates completion of 1 year

By Staff Correspondent

Women Entrepreneurs' Association (WEA) celebrated its one year of existence at its Annual General Meeting (AGM) held yesterday.

At this meeting, Hajera, a member narrated her experience of business. "When I first started, people would tell my father-in-law 'your son's wife goes to Dhaka without a burkha,' being pressurized he would try to talk me out of doing business. But I told him if someone wanted to be bad they could be bad whether they were wearing burkha or not. I said he knew me and he could not assure that I would not become bad. I wouldn't let anyone stop me from doing business."

"She was followed by three other women. They set themselves up as examples to provide encouragement to the other women in the room and to celebrate the spirit of entrepreneurship."

WEA was born at a two-day seminar last year, titled "Women in Business: Women Entrepreneurship Development," held by Bangladesh

Employers' Association. The seminar was held to create awareness among women and was attended by a large number of women.

"The women were very excited about meeting each other. The last session was devoted to open discussion and women decided they wanted a permanent association of their own," recalls Nilufar Ahmed Karim, secretary of WEA. "They wanted a forum where they could discuss their concerns and have an exchange of ideas." Thus, the idea for WEA formed.

WEA was created to promote female entrepreneurship and help and encourage potential entrepreneurs. "There are many who have the resources but need guidance to start the business. We are there to help them achieve what they want," says Fauzia Mirza, a working member.

Also a lot of people are not aware of what women are doing in Bangladesh. "Through WEA we hope to show that we are present in different economic sectors, from root level to top level," says Mirza.

"Seeing us, other women will get encouraged to come forward. We are here to set an example and provide a support network."

Keeping these objectives in mind, WEA has done a lot in its one year of existence. It arranged an exhibition to familiarize members with each others products. "There is a lot of networking among our members," says Rokia Rahman, president of WEA. "They help each other whenever they can. For example, one member may provide a sales outlet for another's products."

The networking aspect of WEA is its strongest point. "We have many resources among our members," says Rahman. "We encourage our members to cooperate and help each other."

WEA follows the philosophy of rising together. WEA also holds periodic fairs to raise funds for the running of the association.

It has also provided its membership list to various organizations, like ILO, BASC etc, so that the women can be invited to participate in

various seminars, workshops and trainings. "Our members attended an advertising and marketing workshop arranged by MIDAS recently," says Rahman.

They also have guest speakers come in and talk about different aspects of business. For example, at the recent meeting they had advocate Tarana Halim discuss the legal aspects of doing business, and Naba Krishna Munt of MIDAS presented a talk on starting a business. Speakers are invited based on what WEA members are interested in learning about.

WEA is also used as a forum where members can make announcements. For example, Brotee is creating a resource data base and asked professional women to send in their CVs. And MIDAS announced a future workshop on accounting.

Today WEA, which started with 50 official members, has 70 official members, a number which is rapidly increasing. WEA members are 80 per cent entrepreneurs and 10 per cent potential entrepreneurs. However, potential entrepreneurs are given only a three year membership, within which time they have start their own businesses. If they fail to do so, their membership is cancelled.

WEA's membership displays the diversity of Bangladeshi women. There are women who are strict practitioners of purdah, there are city women and rural women, there are those who have small businesses like personal boutiques and then there are cold storage owners, there are women who are 60 and there are women who are 26. It's inspiring to see what the women of Bangladesh are doing.



Women Entrepreneurs' Association (WEA) held its annual general meeting at the MCCI auditorium in the city yesterday. — Star photo