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## Entrepreneurs suggest at BGMEA-EPB seminar Backward linkage industries must to sustain RMG sector

By Staff Correspondent

The country's lone jewel in the crown, the ready-made garment (RMG) sector needs to go for either a massive renovation or establishment of new production units in the textile industry to confront the challenges of quota liberalisation.

Experts and entrepreneurs, both from home and abroad, at a seminar in the city yesterday, felt the critical requirement for establishing backward linkage industries as an indispensable instrument to sustain the RMG sector that bags 62 per cent of the total export earnings from the fierce competition after the phasing out of the multi-fibre arrangement (MFA).

However, a latest survey on the present status of the textile industries and its potential up to the year 2000, carried out by Bangladesh Shilpa Bank (BSB), which was quoted in the seminar, paints a depressing picture.

"It transpires that the existing production of domestic fabrics suitable for the export-oriented RMG sector is only 165 million metres against a requirement of 1647 million meters. This

presently meets only 4 per cent requirements of the women and 41 per cent of the knit garments," quoted a speaker.

Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) and Export Promotion Bureau (EPB) jointly organised the seminar in collaboration with Geneva-based International Trade Centre (ITC) to discuss the implications of the phasing out of MFA.

Presided over by BGMEA President Redwan Ahmed MP, the inaugural session was addressed by Minister for Commerce and Information M Shamsul Islam as chief guest while EPB vice-chairman Anisul Huq Chowdhury, BGMEA vice-president S M Fazlul Huq and senior market development officer of ITC Antero Hyvarinen also addressed the opening session.

Later, in the working sessions, three resource persons from ITC presented papers on 'the changing pattern of the international trade in textiles and clothing', 'the MFA phase-out effects for certain South Asian countries' and 'international trade policy issues: A west-

ern European perspective.' Listing the measures undertaken to decontrol of both domestic and private investment, the minister for commerce and information M Shamsul Islam mainly dwelt on the contribution of the RMG sector which has attained a phenomenal growth. During 1993-94, some 2000 units fetched 1.66 US billion dollar, he said.

But, the minister said, "the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters are required to understand the implications of the phasing out of MFA and the integration of textiles and clothing into the GATT discipline," Islam said.

In his address, EPB vice-chairman Anisul Huq Chowdhury quoting the BSB survey said if a modest annual growth rate of only 5 per cent is visualised, the total requirement of fabrics, both woven and knit, will stand at 2,057 million metres by the turn of the century against the total domestic productions of 473 million metres.

"I am afraid, I cannot foresee the development of our fabric production capacity exceeding 25 per cent of

the requirement by the industry by 2005," said EPB chief executive.

Chowdhury, however, said the packaging materials are the only area where the country's garment industry is in a comfortable position and the domestic cartoon industry is expected to meet the entire requirement of RMG sector by 2000.

Emphasising to improve the productivity, Chowdhury proposed for setting up of training institutes for the workers as done by some South and South East Asian countries to maintain competitiveness.

He also strongly advocated for diversification as the country is exporting only 60 categories of product to about 60 countries.

Winding up the inaugural session, BGMEA president Redwan Ahmed said that the future of the RMG sector would be "full of potential uncertainties" due to a very poor backward linkage.



The Export Promotion Bureau (EPB) and Bangladesh Garments Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) jointly organised a seminar titled 'Implications of the Phasing Out of the Multifibre Arrangement' at Hotel Sonargaon in the city yesterday. Picture shows Commerce Minister M Shamsul Islam (3rd — L) addressing the seminar. Also seen in the picture (from right): Anisul Huq Chowdhury, Vice-Chairman, EPB, Redwan Ahmed MP, President BGMEA, S M Fazlul Huq, 1st Vice-President, BGMEA and Antero Hyvarinen, Senior Marketing Development Officer ITC, Geneva. —Star photo

## Women Entrepreneurs Neeva Chowdhury hopes to start a toy factory in future Cooperation of spouse a must to achieve business success

Rashda Khan

"When I look back on my life, I am still amazed, I still find it hard to believe that I was able to do all that I have done. But the results are here, so I guess I must have," says Neeva Chowdhury, 35, an entrepreneur.

Chowdhury has done a lot in her life. She had been very active from her student days. While studying at Dhaka University, Chowdhury was also working at BVS, which she describes as the first Non-Government Organization (NGO) in Bangladesh. Her work there impressed the management enough to give her a scholarship to Japan for a short management course. There too she was so successful that the university wanted her to stay back for another longer course. However, she found out her father was ill and returned to Bangladesh.

"My father became paralysed and my mother sort of panicked. We were three sisters of marriageable age and my mother started arranging our marriages as soon as she could," recalls Chowdhury.

There were two very good proposals for her. One meant settling in Canada, so Chowdhury agreed to the other. "Most of my brothers and sisters were living abroad I didn't want to leave my mother alone," she says. So in 1982, she was married to M H Khan Monju.

Upon marriage she entered into his joint-family, where there were 45 members. "When I came into the family, I found many of my monods (husband's sisters) still in school. So, you can say, I helped raise them. They grew up in front of me."

Her husband was interested in politics. She says 'addicted'. "He was always

busy with politics and didn't have much time for anything else. So, he gave me complete licence to do anything I wanted." Soon after her marriage, he became the Secretary General of Jubo Shinghati. When she asked him if this was paid employment, he replied that it was honest work and that they would manage with whatever she could do. "On the one side, he was politically addicted and on the other, there was no money coming in. So I decided that I would have to do something," she recalls.

So she took a loan from Corporation of Tk 6 lac and started on the house, which was completed in 1989. "The house had 6 floors to comfortably accommodate all the family members," she recalls. In 1986, she also established Narita, a boutique. "Some poor women approached me for work, so I trained them and started this." Now she has 60 women working under her. At first she supplied to Shetuli and HEAD Bangladesh. Now she has her own outlet at House No 67, Road No 12/A Dhanmondi. She also supplies to other businesses and has

counts. "I help out when needed. When I had first started, I had decided not to have children till I was established. Now I have four (three sons and one daughter) and they are my priority," she says. In 1994, she also started Narita caterings. She supplies Bangladeshi, Chinese and Indonesian food items. She has helpers but does the cooking herself. She takes three days' time per order. "I usually supply dinners and parties," she says. She says she will never give up her boutique and catering. "The boutique is especially my gharer lokkhi. Many of my workers depend on this for survival. I'll always continue this." She usually goes out in the morning to buy supplies, and spends rest of the day running her businesses and family from home.

Chowdhury plans to open a toy factory in the future. "I always wanted to have a toy factory. I see toys from abroad, they are so nice but expensive. I think we could produce toys of the same standard at a cheaper cost." She believes she has done so much, hopefully she will be able to achieve her future dreams.

her sister and another from AB Bank and bought a ship. "I bought a ship that had been sunk for thirty years and decided to remodel it. After much search, I found an engineering company — Rahim Engineering Co — which made my ship almost new. I named it *Shonar Horin*, it was an oil tanker." In its first month the ship made four trips and earned back 3 lac 75 thousand. And that is how Raihan Shipping Lines Ltd was established.

Once her business was up and running, she started thinking about building a house. She took a loan from House Building Finance

orders from America. In 1992 she bought a new ship called 'Latifa' and established a fishery in her husband's village Gopalganj. She has now handed over the shipping and fishery business to her husband. "I had always wanted to be a housewife but fate took me in other directions. Now he can take care of it, while I relax. He does both politics and business." In the beginning, she would go to her office early in the morning and return home at about 11 pm.

She still visits the business once in a while. Her husband also consults her for advice on business and ac-

### Foundation of WTC in mid-Sept likely

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Aug 9: The foundation laying function of 'World Trade Centre (WTC)' to be built by Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industry completely on private initiative is expected to be held by the middle of September.

This was disclosed by the president of CCC&I Sarwar Jamal Nizam at the time of deed registration of the land donated by the government for WTC on Sunday at Chittagong district registrar office.

Nizam said that Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia would lay the foundation of WTC with a colourful function.

## 1 lakh Bangladeshis get jobs in Kuwait in 4 yrs

Foreign Minister A S M Mostafizur Rahman yesterday said that more than one lakh people from Bangladesh joined different jobs in Kuwait at government and private levels over the last four years and described this as a great success for the government, reports BSS.

Addressing as the chief guest the Kuwait-Iraq Bangladeshi Repatriates Association's central delegates conference at the Institute of the Engineers here, he said this has been made possible following the visit of Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia to Kuwait

in 1991.

Amanullah Aman, MP, also spoke on the occasion. The Foreign Minister said the Gulf War not only brought devastations in that region but to many countries of the world including Bangladesh. Many Bangladeshis had to come back from Kuwait and Iraq as a result of the war, he added.

In this context, Rahman said, the compensations to the affected in Kuwait will be met from the money of Iraqi oil sale as decided by the United Nations, and several affected countries including Bangladesh have urged the United Nations to place Iraqi

money in different countries under the disposal of this compensation fund.

Iraqi money is seized in Western and other countries, and Bangladesh is also trying at bilateral levels to facilitate the disposal of this money to the compensation fund so that the affected can receive their claims, he said.

The Foreign Minister assured the repatriates that Bangladesh will continue its efforts towards this direction and settlement is expected soon.

Alhaj Sharaf Ali Khan, President of the association, presided over the conference.

### JS body on jute meet held

The 28th meeting of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Ministry of Jute was held here yesterday at Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban with Jute Minister A S M Hannan Shah in the chair, reports UNB.

The meeting observed that the efficiency, production and export performance of the public-sector jute mills are better than those of private sectors.

It was also reviewed the production and quantity of export of jute goods by the private-sector jute mills.

Bangladesh Jute Mills Association (BJMA) President Syed Mohsin Ali explained the various aspects of private sector jute mills before the committee.

The committee recommended some measures to boost production like administrative measures, rationalising the number of officers and members of the staff and workers proportionally in BJMC run jute mills.

An enquiry report on loss and the said corruption in now defunct BJC was placed in the meeting by the enquiry sub-committee.

It was also informed that BJC had incurred a loss of Tk 1,300 crore since its inception in 1985 to 1991.

Members of the committee A K M Fazlul Haque, MP, Adv Khairul Enam, MP, and Joint Secretary of the Jute Ministry Khan Amir Ali attended the meeting.

## Country to receive \$32.5m additional US food aid

David N Merrill, US Ambassador in Bangladesh and Md Lutfulahil Majid, the Secretary of the Economic Relations Division of the Ministry of Finance, have agreed that the United States will provide an additional 141,000 metric tons of food aid wheat in 1995. Including shipping costs from the United States, the wheat is valued at 32.5 million US dollars, according to USIS.

This agreement increases the total amount of wheat provided under the current US Bangladesh multi-year PL 480 Title III food aid agreement to 907,000 metric tons, valued at approximately

180.6 million US dollars. The wheat grant will fill a continuing gap between Bangladesh's wheat consumption and domestic wheat production. The wheat will be sold and the two governments intend to use the funds generated by the food aid agreement to support certain social sectors of the government's Annual Development Programme (ADP) and NGO activities in the areas of agricultural productivity and nutrition. Since 1991, PL-480 Title III agreements have generated Tk 718 crore. Of this amount, approximately Tk 106 crore has been programmed for agriculture; Tk

279 crore for health and family welfare; Tk 15 crore for water and sanitation; and Tk 205 crore for primary and mass education.

The wheat will be used for the Food Education programme that enables poor households to send their children to primary school. This programme will provide wheat for education to approximately two million primary school age children from families too poor to send them to school, including child workers in the garment industry who may lose their jobs as a result of a recent agreement between the BGMEA, UNICEF and ILO on child labour.



### New Vice-Chairman of Nepal Arab Bank

At a board meeting of Nepal Arab Bank Ltd held on August 4 in Kathmandu, Nepal, Abdul Awal Mintoo, Chairman, National Bank Ltd has been elected Vice-Chairman of the Board of Directors of Nepal Arab Bank Ltd, the largest private commercial bank of Nepal, says a press release.

National Bank Limited has taken equity participation as well as management of Nepal Arab Bank Ltd. Abdul Awal Mintoo is the President of the Multimode Group of Companies and a leading industrialist. He is one of the founder Directors of National Bank Limited.

### Tea sale shows growing demand at Ctg auction

CHITTAGONG, Aug 9: The weekly tea sale was held here on Tuesday showing a growing demand from all sections of the market forces, according to market sources, reports UNB.

Internal buyers showed more activity particularly for the medium Fanninos and Smaller Brokens.

Sources detailed buyers for Poland and Jordan lent useful support. But there was only a small buying from Pakistan for medium Fannings and Smaller Brokens.

CTC: Bold Brokens continued to meet with a commendable market and sold at firm rates. Large Brokens were firm while Medium and Smaller Brokens showed an improved demand but were occasionally easier. Popular types had a good market and sold between Tk 46 and Tk 51.

Primary Fannings were in the trends of slightly rising demand. But sold at generally earlier rates. Medium and Planner varieties remained about steady when better types eased by Tk 50 to Tk 1.

Popular types were similarly easier and sold between Tk 45.50 and Tk 51.70. GREEN TEA: Some 360 chests of Green tea indicate fresh rising curve. YH was sold at lower rates

### US productivity up 3 pc

WASHINGTON, Aug 9: US productivity was up three per cent in the second quarter, compared to 2.5 per cent for the first quarter of the year, the labour department said here yesterday, reports AFP.

The seasonally-adjusted annual rate for April to June — which does not take into account farming measures how efficient industry is at producing goods at low costs.

Meanwhile, the total number of hours worked fell by 2.4 per cent over the same period, the largest decrease since a 3.4 per cent drop in 1980.

### Sugar price, stable

The sugar production of the mills under Bangladesh Sugar and Food Industries (BSFI) now stands at 2.70 lakh tons, reports UNB.

This was disclosed at a meeting on sugar-industry of the country held in the Ministry of Industries on Tuesday with State Minister in charge of Industries Lutfur Rahman Khan in the chair.

Country's sugar industry has been able to become profitable covering all previous losses as a result of the 'pragmatic' and 'constructive' policies of the present government, said a press release.

### Sri Lanka's maiden grant for ICDDR, B

The government of Sri Lanka gave its first annual contribution to ICDDR,B, the Centre for Health and Population Research, yesterday, says a press release.

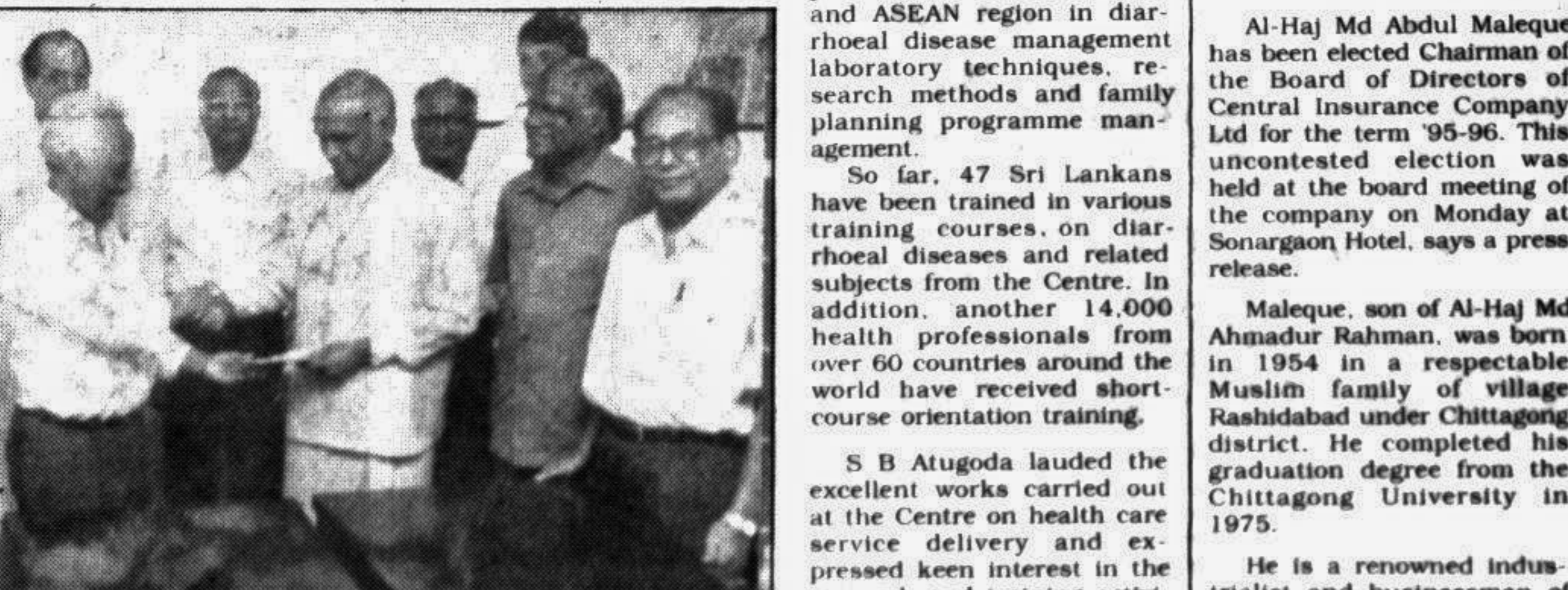
This donation was made in recognition of the importance of the Centre's work for developing countries throughout the world. Research findings developed at the Centre provide guidelines for policy makers, relief agencies and health and family planning professionals not only in Bangladesh but all over the world.

So far, 47 Sri Lankans have been trained in various training courses on diarrhoeal diseases and related subjects from the Centre. In addition, another 14,000 health professionals from over 60 countries around the world have received short-course orientation training.

S B Atugoda lauded the excellent works carried out at the Centre on health care service delivery and expressed keen interest in the research and training activities of the Centre.



Sri Lanka gave its first annual contribution to ICDDR,B yesterday.



Al-Haj Md Abdul Maleque has been elected Chairman of the Board of Directors of Central Insurance Company Ltd for the term '95-96. This uncontested election was held at the board meeting of the company on Monday at Sonargaon Hotel, says a press release. Maleque, son of Al-Haj Md Ahmadur Rahman, was born in 1954 in a respectable Muslim family of village Rashidabad under Chittagong district. He completed his graduation degree from the Chittagong University in 1975. He is a renowned industrialist and businessman of the country.