

High-level meet held  
Ways discussed to  
privatise loosing  
jute, textile mills

A high-level meeting Saturday discussed alternative ways to privatise the non-profitable state-owned jute and textile mills, reports BSS.

Finance Minister Shah AMS Kibria chaired the third meeting of the committee formed to review the prevailing situation in jute and textile mills.

Meeting sources said the committee is expected to take final decision regarding privatisation of the state-owned jute and textile mills in its next meeting on March 3.

The meeting was attended by Commerce and Industries Minister Tofael Ahmed, State Minister for Jute and Textiles K Faizul Haque and parliament members Ahsanullah Master, Shahjahan Khan, Shamsul Haq and Shah Hadizuzzaman.

Jatiya Sramik League President Abdus Salam Khan, Convener of Jute and Textile Mills Workers-Employees Action Council Abul Basar, Adamjee Jute Mills CBA President and President of Jute Mills Sramik League Rehanuddin Rehan, Yarn and Textile Mills Workers-Employees Federation President Badrul Alam Khan Labu and Textile Mills Sramik League President Kamruzzaman also took part in the discussion.

Finance, jute and textile secretaries were present.

**Japanese OECF team calls on Telecom Minister**

A five-member delegation of Japan's Overseas Economic Cooperation Fund (OECF) led by Koji Fujimoto, Managing Director of OECF, called on Post and telecommunications Minister Mohammad Nasim at the latter's secretariat office yesterday, reports BSS.

Additional Secretary in charge of the Ministry of Post and Telecommunications Mahbub Kabir was present.

During the discussion the minister apprised the managing director of OECF of the government programme and policy on the telecommunications sector. He emphasised that in view of the government goal of achieving higher economic growth, the importance of infrastructures particularly that of telecommunications, have increased. The government is drawing up plans to meet the increasing demand in this sector, he said.

**Talks on GSP with EU**

**Industrialist against 2-stage transformation**

A garment factory owner yesterday said negotiation with the European Union for availing GSP would be a disaster for the country's backward-linkage industry, reports BSS.

Mostafa Golam Quddus, who is contesting the ensuing BGMEA polls, said the government and the present BGMEA leaders had sought two-stage transformation of the rule of origin to enjoy duty exemption under the generalised system of preference (GSP) to export knitwear and sweater to the European markets.

"But two-stage transformation means there will be no backward-linkage industry in Bangladesh ... not a single backward-linkage industry would develop in the country if we go for the two-stage transformation," he told UNB.

Quddus said the three-stage transformation condition was imposed in 1986 by the European Commission, asking the exporting countries to manufacture items with locally produced materials — from yarn to garments.

And Bangladesh complied with the condition, he said, adding it was a right decision. It helped develop the country's spinning industry. The local textile mills we see today are the result of the decision,"

But the negotiation for two-stage transformation, under which yarn will not be required to be produced locally, would deal a severe blow to the local spinning sector, crippling the main backward-linkage industry, he apprehended.

## EC praises quality of Bangladesh cotton

European Community (EC) report on cotton development in Bangladesh has praised the quality of cotton produced here, reports BSS.

The report said, "The quality of Bangladeshi cotton is intrinsically good, it is better in length and above in grade."

It said only the lint cotton processed at the Cotton Development Board (CDB) ginneries is baled. The loose raw cotton is sold to local mills, where it is generally mixed with imported cotton for spinning.

The EC specialists said on average 650 kilograms of seed cotton per hectare could be produced here and without disrupting present cropping patterns, 40,000 hectares could be brought under cotton cultivation.

The European Commission recommended credit schemes for small-holders and construction of central baling facilities.

The Commission said, "A cotton ordinance is a must to help the Bangladesh Cotton Develop-

ment Board (CDB) in regulating the private ginning sector." It also asked for ensuring the standards of seed quality and securing adequate and pure cotton seed supply.

The report said yields of seed cotton were raised from 466 to 1,011 kilograms per hectare from 1988 to 1994 production year.

The production boost was due to improvement of physical and chemical status of the soil through green manuring and application of lime, deep ploughing and zig-zag harrowing, weed control, application of fertilisers and proper irrigation, the EC report said.

The report mentioned that two permanent ginneries were owned by the Bangladesh Textile Mills Corporation (BTMC). The Corporation is reluctant to operate them because they do not intend to be involved in purchasing and transporting seed cotton and also because of

availability of sufficient imported lint cotton to run their mills.

EC was running ginning centres at Pargan, Sherpur, Jilchorgachame, Meherpur and Sripur from 1977.

The EC report cautioned that the "poor standards of ginning (separating cotton from seeds and cotton seed oil extraction)" being practised by the private sector must be checked by introducing some form of regulatory control.

They said this control will ensure better price for the cotton growers and will improve the quality of lint cotton and cotton seed oil.

These regulations will take the form of a "cotton ordinance" under which Cotton Development Board (CDB) will issue licences for ginning, the EC report said.

The CDB gin inspectors will inspect the ginneries, EC suggested.



Ko Hyo Keun, Vice President of Hanjin Shipping, is seen with the award recipients for supporting Hanjin Shipping on the occasion of Regensea Evening '97. Saber H. Chowdhury (fifth from left), MP and Managing Director of Regensea Lines Ltd, is also seen.

### Tofael asks management

## Improve efficiency of state-owned enterprises

The management of the state-owned enterprises (SOEs) should improve their overall efficiency so that the quality of the products could be improved substantially for their existence, reports BSS.

This was stated by Commerce and Industries Minister Tofael Ahmed at a high-level meeting held in the conference

room of the Industries Ministry on Saturday. The meeting reviewed the problems faced by the country's sugar industries.

The meeting was attended by Chairman of the Bangladesh Sugar and Food Industries Corporation (BSFIC) A K Munshi, chief executives of 15 sugar mills and directors of the BSFIC.

### Dr. Alamgir tells JS

## Tk540cr plan taken up for modern airport in Ctg

Replying to a supplementary from Nizam, the State Minister said not only the road connecting Chittagong Airport with Chittagong town, but all necessary facilities would be developed.

Dr. Alamgir said Barisal Airport had been built for the operation of STOL (Short Take Off and Landing) type aircraft. The runway in this airport has been made accordingly, he added.

The government is examining the construction of an airport at Khan Jahania near Khulna town, he said adding that land had been acquired near Mongla for future plan of constructing an airport.

### Dr. Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir, State Minister for Civil Aviation and Tourism, yesterday informed the Jatiya Sangsad that a plan with an estimated expenditure of Taka 540 crore had been taken up for the construction of a modern airport in Chittagong, reports BSS.

There is no plan to construct new runway at Chittagong Airport, Dr. Alamgir said in reply to a question from Sarwar Nizam (BNP-Chittagong).

The minister, however, said a plan for strengthening of the existing runway for the use of DC-10 aircraft was under implementation in 1998.

The government is examining the construction of an airport at Khan Jahania near Khulna town, he said adding that land had been acquired near Mongla for future plan of constructing an airport.

A high-powered committee was formed in the meeting with the additional secretary of the Industries Ministry to identify the problems encountered by the sugar industries and to recommend measures for their solution to make the mills viable and profitable.

The minister said the SOEs should reduce the overhead expenditure and increase the overall efficiency for attaining progress in the era of liberalisation and globalisation of trade.

"If this trend continues there will be no way to pay even the salaries of the employees in future," he added.

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