



## Mohini Mill

# Bring back new life

**I**MAGINE a hundred-year old infrastructure with an impeccable reputation for producing some of the finest fabrics in the entire region totally abandoned. You do not have to travel far. The famous Mohini Mill in the heart of Kushtia is now a ghost town guarded by a platoon of armed ansars amid overgrown bushes engulfing the imperial image scattered over an area of 33 acres.

Decades of glorious existence of Mohini Mill where thousands of men and women worked day and night to produce the famous fabrics came to a halt in 1991 following miserable failures of successive governments to make a profit.

Its huge collection of imported tools and machinery are now fast rusting. Over the years an idle Mohini Mill has not only been subjected to rot, but also a great deal of thefts.

The Mohini Mill was set up in 1908 at the bank of Gorai River in Kushtia. A nobleman named Mohini Mohon Chakrabarty set up the mill on his own land with only 5 looms.

Mohini's humble beginning soon paid off. In 1912 the number of looms was increased to 203. Ten years later the mill had a formidable collection of 529 looms with 19,000 shuttles.

According to a record, up to 55,000 yards of fine fabrics were produced everyday during this period with an annual profit of up to 30 crore rupees.

The first ill fortune descended on Mohini Mill in 1965 when a war broke out between Pakistan and India. After the war, the Pakistani military regime branded Mohini Mill an enemy property and forced Mohini Mohon out of the country along with his family members. The regime then delegated the supervision of the mill on the then EPIDS (East Pakistan Industrial Development Service).

When the state mechanism took over, the Mohini Mill had 33 acres of land and about 2,000 employees. With a school named after Mohini Mohon the

mill boasted of a playground, a large pond, a market, a medical center, a temple and 284 single and double room quarters.

Following the independence of Bangladesh, Mohini Mill was nationalised and handed over to the BTMC (Bangladesh Textile Mills Corporation). Mismanagement and anarchy gripped the institution. The BTMC went into production by indiscriminately appointing 6000 men and women.

Within two years mismanagement bore its fruits by inflicting a staggering loss of Tk 12 crore. By 1978 the public exchequer was counting a loss of Tk 18 crore. At the same

it. Although it was then estimated that the cost of the Mohini Mill was Tk 50 crore, but it was sold to a private share holder company at Tk. only 25 crore.

The Mohini Mill was restarted with a new name --- Shah Makhdum Mill --- on January 31, 1985 with only 100 employees. But the private management failed to click and in 1987 the mill was shut down with 10-months salary unpaid to the employees.

After various attempts the mill was returned into production on 1989, but again closed down the following year. The private company simply abandoned the mill, having sold a large number of machine tools in connivance with a section of government officials.

In 1990 the government took the mill under its custody and decided to sell it again. A tender was floated in several dailies. But the Sonali Bank sought a court injunction on the sale as the private owner had defaulted with a loan of Tk 10 crore they had borrowed from the bank to start the mill back in 1985. The court issued a stay order on the sale.

In July 1992, in a meeting at Kushtia Circuit House the then minister Abdul Mannan promised to take all measures to restart the mill. On October 12, 1993 Prime Minister Khaleda Zia, in a public meeting at Kushtia Government College playground declared that the Mohini Mill would soon be started.

In 2002, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina announced in a meeting at Kushtia that all measures would be taken to restart the Mohini Mill and create employment opportunities for the Kushtia people.

The supreme leaders of the country have failed to live up to the promises, which the people of Kushtia and the region have never forgotten. Meanwhile, the ever promising Mohini Mill and its resources gather rust, dust and parasites.

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Photo: MORSHED ALI KHAN



time, corruption, misappropriation of funds and looting became rampant in and around the Mohini Mill.

In 1978 the government took another initiative to save the mill from falling apart. The government set up BMR project taking help from British government. This time the mill was producing 1500 bolls of cotton thread everyday. But incurred more loss.

In 1982 when losses started rocketing, the government laid off 3,000 employees and shut it down through liquidation. Then the government decided to sell

