

Jute mills run with run-down machinery

PRANABESH CHAKRABORTY

Most of the jute mills in Chittagong have lost their 40 to 50 percent production capacity due to the absence of modern machinery and maintenance of the existing ones. Bangladesh Jute Mills Corporation (BJMC) sources said to keep pace with normal production capacity, machines of the mills need balancing, modernisation, rehabilitation and expansion, BMRE as termed in the industry, after each 10 to 12 years. But

the BMRE could not be implemented in any of the jute mills in Chittagong till date after the independence, they added.

The situation has been prevailing in most of the 11 mills due to a deadlock situation in improving the condition, stoppages in production and negligence of those concerned.

The jute mills are Amin Jute Mills, Hafiz Jute Mills, Gul Ahmed Jute Mills, BDCF Jute Mills, MM Jute Mills, RR Jute Mills, Karnaphuli Jute Mills, Forad Jute Mills, DDF, Galfra Habib Limited and Mills Furnishing Limited.

Regional General Manager of BJMC, Chittagong ANM Jasim Uddin told The Daily Star that Adamji Jute Mills was closed according to the advice of World Bank during the BNP-led four-party alliance government.

Many equipment and important machineries of the mills were damaged for lack of proper maintenance and negligence, hampering production in the mills, he added.

Currently, instead of producing jute products, two of the mills are producing different machinery parts



Old and ramshackle machines at a jute mill.

PHOTO: ANURUP KANTI DAS



Most of the jute mills in Chittagong have lost their 40 to 50 percent production capacity

and another was leased out, sources at the BJMC office here said.

One high official on condition of anonymity said Karnaphuli, Furad and DDF jute mills were merged to form a single mill named KFD and leased out to Sad Musa and Fabrics, a

private company.

Engineer Mohammad Shahidullah, deputy general manager (maintenance) of BJMC, said the longevity of the machinery is 30 to 40 years. No BMRE was done after the independence.

"If the government would finance properly for BMRE, the mills could go for more production easily," he said.

Termining the sector profitable, he said 21 mills under BJMC in the country made a profit of Tk 14 crore last year despite economic depression in international markets though they had been running with their old machines.

He said most of the machines and machinery related parts were incapacitated in the mills.

Sixty percent of the machines of the mills are busy with regular production

while other parts or machinery are lying for repair. So the mills are able to achieve only 40 per cent of the production.

Hafiz Jute Mills established on 66 acres of land is one of the important jute mills of BJMC where around 4,000 workers work. Even with a huge infrastructure and skilled workers, it cannot achieve its target only due to absence of BMRE.

Hafiz Jute Mills Deputy Director Banij Uddin Miyan told The Daily Star that the workers used to work in three shifts in the mills which were reduced to two shifts as the machines are lying for repair.

The mills now run with the old machines and more than 40 percent of production capacity has decreased after the independence as the BMRE could not be done even once in the

mills, Banij added.

BJMC Deputy General Manager Engineer Md Shahidullah said, "BJMC is now at a break-even stage and sometimes are making profits."

"Forad is the factory under BJMC which produces which produces machinery for the mills," he said. "If the government allocates sufficient budget for BMRE, BJMC would be able to compete in the world market with its products and service."

Shahidullah said, "BJMC submitted a proposal of Tk 1,046 crore for BMRE to the jute and textile ministry through the parliamentary standing committee." He said, "It is an important sector which has potential to create jobs and it is possible to earn huge foreign currency for the country using the mills properly."

theweekthatwas

CCCI support for cold-hit people

Chittagong Chamber of Commerce Industry (CCCI) donated 5,000 pieces blankets to the prime minister's relief fund for cold-hit people..

CCCI President Murshed Murad Ibrahim in a statement said the whole country was undergoing severe cold weather. "The poor people of the country are passing their days in a measurable condition for lack of winter clothes", he added.

CCCI president urged the rich people to come forward for helping the poor.

Naziba gets 'Best Student Award 2012'

Naziba Ali of Mehediabag Centre of Chittagong clinched the "Best Student Award 2012" in National Mental Arithmetic Competition.

Aloha Bangladesh, an educational organisation working for building creative mind of children through arithmetic, organised the competition at Jatiya Chitrasahala Plaza of Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy on January 13.

A total of 633 selected competitors across the country took part in the competition.

Naziba solved all 70 mathematical problems in three minutes and 20 seconds.

Aloha founder Loh Mun Sung, Chairman Saiful Karim and Managing Director Ali Haider Chowdhury and The Independent Editor Mahbulul Alam distributed awards at the programme.

Workshop on Myanmar gastronomy held

Speakers at a workshop on Sunday said if the women get adequate support they would be able to prove their capability as chefs of international standard.

They were speaking at the workshop titled 'Cooking style of Myanmar' organised by Chittagong Women Chamber of Commerce and Industry at its auditorium.

Myanmar Chef Association President Oliver Esser spoke as chief guest at the workshop.

Chittagong Women Chamber President Monowara Hakim Ali presided over the programme.

Seminar on Galileo held

A seminar was held at Chittagong University on Tuesday marking the 370th death anniversary of legend scientist, mathematician and astronomer Galileo.

Biggan Andolon Mancha (BAM), an organisation working on science at CU, organised the event titled "Life of Galileo and his struggle" at CUCSU auditorium. Speakers said Galileo sacrificed his whole life for establishing truth and eliminating superstitions from the society.

They urged all to take science as a weapon for fighting against all religious bigotry.

Chittagong University Astronomical Association Moderator Sharif Mahmud Siddique, BAM central Coordinator Al Kaderi Joy and CU organiser Rajib Debnath spoke at the programme.

CU Coordinator Prosenjit Biswas presided over the programme.

Proper planning in health sector stressed

Chittagong City Corporation (CCC) Mayor M Manjur Alam underscored the need for proper planning, collective initiatives and good behaviour of health workers to improve the situation in the health sector of the port city as well as that of the country.

Mayor was addressing as chief guest a workshop organised by Social Marketing Company (SMC) at a local hotel on Monday.

Chittagong Divisional Health Director Dr Mohammad Abu Taher, director of Chittagong Divisional Family Planning Safiul Alam and representative of Endanger Health to Bangladesh Dr AJ Faisal were present as special guests at the inaugural ceremony.

Director of Social Marketing Company Limited Ali Reza Khan presided over the inaugural session.

A total of 245 non-graduate medical practitioners from different districts of Chittagong participated in the workshop. Among them, ten were awarded with crest for their extraordinary performance.



PHOTO: ANURUP KANTI DAS

The boats are anchored on the banks of the Halda river as a ban has been imposed on fishing. A fisherman, inset, takes a nap on his boat in the river.



Halda fishermen live in abject poverty

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

"I have a nine-member family, which is completely dependent on my fishing in the Halda river. Since 2007, the government has been planning to impose an embargo on fishing in the river that was fully implemented last year, thus creating a tough situation for the fishermen," said Abdus Sattar, 49, resident of Garduara of Raozan upazila in Chittagong, who has been fishing in the Halda river for last 30 years.

Sattar said, under the project titled "Restoration of the natural breeding habitats of the Halda river 1", the government allotted Tk 10,000 as loan to each fisherman for 15 months that was handed over to some of them in installments.

He said the monthly expenditure of his family is about Tk.9,000-10,000 whereas the government allotted the fishermen only Tk.10,000 as loan for 15 months.

Rakkhal Jalodas, 46, a fisherman of the same area, said he got Tk 2,800 as loan for six months, that is Tk 466 per month, which is too little amount to sustain a family.

After the embargo on fishing in Halda river, "People in this area, who depend on the river for their

livelihood, have fallen into deep crisis. As most of them do not have experience of other works, they have been passing their present days without any work," he added.

He said, now, they could not bear other expenditures of family like children's education cost and medical cost. Family expenditures created a lot of debt for them.

Most of the fishermen in the area made similar remarks about the loan.

The government sanctioned the loan programme without properly surveying on the fisherman of Halda river, they said adding that the government should set up alternative earning sources for them.

On condition of anonymity a group of fishermen said when they faced financial crisis they went for fishing in the river despite the embargo.

If the government did not raise the loan amount, the fishermen would keep fishing in the river. If the government allocated at least Tk 50,000 per head it would be worth doing something feasible, they added.

Pravati Devi, the project's director, condemned the complain saying that the loan amount may be

insufficient, but it's still better than having no help at all.

This is the first time that the government has allotted a fund for Halda, indicating the government's attempt for the river's better interest, she said.

She said the loan was distributed through an NGO named 'Nowzuan'. The loan project is a revolving project and will never stop. The current loan is scheduled to finish within June, 2013 after which the money will not go back to the government but will be kept at Upazila Nirbahi Officer's office.

Fishermen will get the loan service life long, she said adding that, the government allotted Tk 2 crore for loan under the project and, of this, they have distributed Tk 1.33 crore to 130 fishermen. Rest of the fishermen will get the loan in the next phase, she said.

She, however, said it is not possible to increase the loan amount in short time.

Mohammad Imam Hossain Chowdhury, chief executive of Nowzuan, suggested the government to cut short the duration of loan installments to the fisherman to ensure the best use of the loan money.



Artists of 'Proma', a leading cultural organisation in the port city, perform at a function at Shilpakala Academy on January 16, marking its 21st founding anniversary.

STAR PHOTO