

PHOTO: ZAHEDUL I KHAN

Jamdani Weaving
More than Meets the Eye

UNESCO hails the traditional art of Jamdani Weaving, an element of the cultural heritage of Bangladesh

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Lest one fear the end of Bangladesh's centuries old weaving panache, UNESCO officials in December enshrined the "Traditional Art of Jamdani Weaving" as part of the "Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity," alongside Italian "Celebrations of big shoulder-borne processional structures" and "Turkish Coffee Culture and Tradition", among others. "The inscription of Jamdani will ensure the visibility and awareness of the socio-cultural significance of this intangible heritage which is expressed in a body of knowledge, practices and traditional craftsmanship," says Shamsuzzaman Khan. "It will encourage dialogue among various stakeholders, thus increasing cooperation among practitioners and consciousness among the civil society. It will also promote womens empowerment and cultural diversity because weavers, consumers, entrepreneurs, organisatiions and suppliers of raw materials will be motivated to work together for the development and enrichment of this tradition." Khan, eminent folklorist and Director General of Bangla Academy led a three-member Bangladesh team to the Eighth Session of the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage at Baku, Azerbaijan from 2-7 December 2013. The committee consists of representatives from 24 countries.

The Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity is made up of those elements of a culture that help demonstrate the diversity of a particular heritage and raise awareness about its importance. The Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage was introduced in 2003 to defend and incorporate intangible culture such as folklore, oral traditions, language, music, crafts, knowledge and rituals into the heritage agenda. The Intangible Cultural Heritage list not only represents inherited traditions from the past, but also contemporary rural