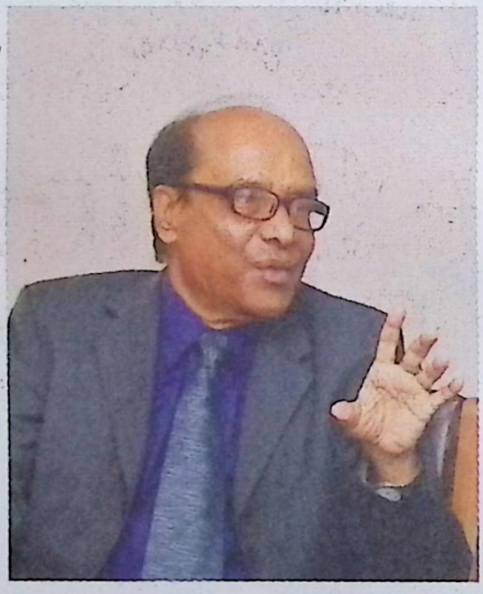
relief, it was accepted." Dr Mahmud who has a PhD in folklore from Indiana University is a researcher and consultant at Bangla Academy.

"I think it is a great achievement for Bangladesh. You know, India also laid a claim to Jamdani. At that time we did not have the GI law in this country," says Ruby Ghuznavi. "So we were anxious about the whole thing. Now with the passing of the GI law by the parliament on November 5, 2013 and this recognition by UNESCO, Jamdani has become one of *our* intangible cultural heritages in the eye of the world. National Crafts Council of Bangladesh and others worked for a long time with our government for passing the GI law. Now we will have to register it with WTO. Jointly with CPB National Crafts Council of Bangladesh is conducting extensive research in this context. We hope that many other crafts of Bangladesh will also be recognised by the international community in the same manner. But we will have to do all the research and other necessary groundwork for that." Rubi Ghuznavi is a founding member of National Crafts Council of Bangladesh and currently serves as an executive committee member of the body.

A geographical indication (GI) is a name or sign used on certain products which corresponds to a specific geographical location or a town, region, or country. The use of a GI may act as a certification that the product possesses certain qualities, is made according to traditional methods, or enjoys a certain reputation, due to its geographical origin.



Shamsuzzaman Khan led the three-member team to UNESCO.

Team Bangladesh was well prepared for the tough competition from India. "We submitted the nomination file long before India thus strengthening our case," says Shamsuzzaman Khan, who along with his team, in between sessions at the convention, met delegates from other countries to lobby for Jamdani Weaving. "On missions like these relevant experts instead of bureaucrats should represent the country abroad," says the world renowned folklorist.

Master weaver Anamul Haque who has 15 hand looms and has been producing Jamdani since 1988 cannot hide his excitement at the news. "I cannot put in words how happy we are. I hope this will trigger higher demand in the international market." Haque went to Japan earlier this year with a group of craftspeople and in forty days, from scratch, weaved a Jamdani that was sold at a price equivalent to BDT 100,000. Some of his works are being showcased in the national museum. Unfortunately, every weaver has not found this kind of success despite all their hard work and skilled craftsmanship.

"I am not only happy but hugely gratified that UNESCO has acknowledged the status of Bangladesh's Jamdani handloom fabric in the world heritage," says Perveen Ahmad, "Those of us who have witnessed this craft heritage go through many ups and downs over the last several decades have never given up our struggle nor our belief that Jamdani will someday surely get its place in the world culture. The main credit for this lies with the village weavers of Bangladesh who despite their lack of fair monetary gain, constraints of raw material supply, the exploitative middlemen, and unstable market have never given up their occupation. Few and small awards have come their way and patronage has sporadically come from craft activists through exhibitions and exposure abroad. But the weavers are not honoured as they should be." Perveen Ahmad is a writer, researcher and handicraft preservation activist who has written extensively for the preservation and promotion of traditional arts and crafts of Bangladesh.

Bibi Russell, fashion designer and former international model says, "Everyone should know about this great news. It will give us a lot of strength going forward. I am glad that earlier this year our parliament passed the GI law which is the first step toward giving such recognition to a particular product or heritage."

On December 4, when Shamsuzzaman Khan said at the convention that one of the members of the Bangladesh team would demonstrate what a Jamdani looks like, Shahida Khatun, wearing an elegant Jamdani sari walked around the conference room where 800 representatives and 700 observers from 108 countries gathered. "During the thunderous applause that lasted for about two minutes, words seem inadequate to describe how proud I felt of my country", says Shahida Khatun, a director of Bangla Academy.

The UNESCO recognition has given Bangladesh confidence. "Our goal now is to get *Nababarsha* and 21st February on the list," asserts Khan. ■