

GI Act emphasised to protect ownership of local products

Published : Sunday, 20 January 2013

FEReport

Speakers at a discussion meeting emphasised the need for enactment of Geographical Indication (GI) Act to protect ownership of local products that are traditionally characterised by their geographical origin.

The government last year prepared the draft of the law but due to some bureaucratic tangles it is yet to be passed in the parliament.

Geographical indication (GI) refers to goods - natural, agricultural or manufactured - that have a specific geographical origin and possess qualities, reputation or characteristics that are essentially attributable to that origin.

The 'discussion on "Geographical Indication and the law in Bangladesh" was organised by Banglacraft at the BRAC University in the city.

Professor Md Ali Ashraf MP, former deputy speaker was present as chief guest where president of Banglacraft, S.U. Haider, Director of law of BRAC University, Dr Shahdeen Malik, representative of National Craft Council, Shahid Hussain Shamim, professor of BRAC University, Mahua Zahur spoke, among others.

Former president of Banglacraft, Maleka Khan presided over the discussion.

S.U. Haider said that the association has long been dealing with the underprivileged people in remote corners of the country. So to protect their creations and achievements, the government should come forward for their global protection.

"Enactment of GI Law is necessary to ensure entitlement of the country's traditional products and protect the reputation of those against piracy," Haider said.

"Many of these products have acquired valuable reputations which, if not adequately protected, may be misrepresented by dishonest commercial operators," he added.

Mr Haider also said that the abuse of geographical indications by unauthorised parties (countries) is detrimental to consumers and legitimate producers.

The Banglacraft president, however, urged the government to place the draft law to the next parliament session for the greater interest of the nation.

Mahua Zahur in a presentation said that the Section 22, 23 and 24 of World Trade Organisation (WTO)'s Trade Related Aspect of Intellectual Property Right (TRAIIPR) have given countries right to protect and patent famous, exceptional and extraordinary products of their own under the GI Act, 1999 (GIA) of the organization.

"The need for national legislation in order to protect the country's ownership on products under the GI treatise has

been felt for long and this is our responsibility to save our own right," she added.

"In the absence of actions under a GI Act in Bangladesh, neighbouring India has already registered these products as its GI products."

"Only after having the law, we will be able to protect all our GI," Zahur said.

Maleka Khan in her speech said through the application of the GI process, local businessmen can establish brand and can be benefit from the goodwill of those products.

Md Ali Ashraf, however, assured his highest cooperation to enact the law as soon as possible and said GI gives the product a collective right owned by a concerned community.

"With the changing global situation enactment of such a law has become prime demand for the sustainability of any country's sovereignty," Ashraf added.

Speakers said, Bangladesh is going to lose its rights on some traditional products such as Jamdani Sari, Nakshikatha and Fazli Mango as neighboring India has already got entitlement of these products as her own traditional products under GI act.

India has registered Jamdani as Upada Jamdani Sari from Andhra Pradesh.

GI in the first place is related to the place of origin of the goods. Agricultural products typically have qualities that derive from their place of production and are influenced by specific local factors, such as climate and soil.

Similarly, manufactured products may also have characteristics that can be traced to a particular territorial origin. Thus geographical indication points to a specific place or region of production that determines the characteristic qualities of the product which originates from that place.