

Speech by Dr. S.M. Nazmul Islam, Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture for the
Inaugural Session of the 6th Meeting of the Asian Cotton Research & Development
Network of ICAC, Dhaka, Bangladesh
June 18, 2014

Bismillahir Rahmanir Rahim,
Honorable Chief guest, Minister, MOA, Begum Matia Chauduri,
Executive Chairman, Bangladesh Agriculture Research Council, Dr. Md. Kamal Uddin,
Executive Director, Cotton Development Board, Bangladesh, Mr. Md. Abdul Latif,
Dr. Abid Mahmood, Chairman, Asian Cotton Research and Development Network, Pakistan
Dr. M. Rafiq Chaudhry, International Cotton Advisory Committee, USA
Distinguished Cotton Scientists of different countries of the world,
Distinguished guests, Ladies and Gentlemen
Assalamu Alaikum & Good morning.

It is a great pleasure to be with you this morning to participate in the inaugural session of the 6th Meeting of the Asian Cotton Research & Development Network organized by ICAC and Cotton Development Board, Bangladesh.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

During the last three decades Textiles has come out as the major manufacturing sub-sector with spectacular growth. The Textile Sector meets almost 95% domestic requirement of yarns & Fabrics. Besides it largely fulfils the demand of our export oriented RMG Manufacturers both in the knit & woven categories. But our production of raw cotton is very low. We import most of the raw cotton from different countries such as Uzbekistan, India, USA, and some African countries.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The cultivation of cotton (*Gossypium Spp.*) and its manufactures into textile has been practiced in the region since prehistoric time. The finest cotton fabric- Moslin once produced in medieval Bengal was famous throughout the world. The cotton for producing Moslin was grown on high lands around the capital Dhaka where most Moslin handlooms were located. However, the production and trading of Moslin gradually declined during the British rule ultimately resulting to closure of the industry by early nineteenth century. Later on, the British Government

attempted revival of cotton production in India and introduced American variety of cotton (*Gossypium hirsutum*) but the farmers did not accept cotton as a commercial crop in Bengal.

Prior to the independence, raw cotton requirement of our textile industry was met from the then Pakistan. After the independence supply of raw cotton from Pakistan stopped, the textile industries of Bangladesh faced serious crisis situation. Under these circumstances, Cotton Development Board was established through a resolution in 1972, under the Ministry of Agriculture, Government of Bangladesh to boost up cotton production.

In Bangladesh, now Garments Industries contributes about 40% of total industrial income and 13% of Gross National Income (GNP). The Garments industry has been flourishing in Bangladesh due to low labour costs and quota free export to the European market. Readymade garments (RMG) accounts for about 78% of the total export earnings.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In Bangladesh, two types of cotton, namely the upland cotton (*Gossypium hirsutum*) and Hill Cotton (*Gossypium arboreum*) are grown. Upland cotton cultivation was commercially started in 1974-75. Since then its area and production has been gradually increased up to middle ninety's. After that, production of cotton in Bangladesh has been gradually decreased by various reasons. Among the reasons low price of cotton, lack of short duration & high yielding varieties and severe competition with other high value crops in limited land are important. To overcome this declining situation CDB was introduced upland hybrid cotton varieties from china in the year 2008 with the collaboration of private seed companies. The average yield in farmers level of hybrid cotton is 3.0-3.5 tons per hectare. Due to high yield and good price, cotton is now a very profitable crop to the farmers.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We want to introduce Bt cotton and hybrid cotton in Bangladesh within a short time. Cotton research activities of Bangladesh are inadequate and this is mainly because of shortage of qualified and experienced researchers. I think ICAC can help us in research activities and other inter governmental linkage.

One more, I welcome you all to this conference and I wish you fruitful deliberations.