

## Cargo complex at Sylhet Airport to boost region's export

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A Monitor Report

Date: 16 October, 2022

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Sylhet : Export operations of food and other products from Sylhet, such as different types of citrus and rattan furniture goods, are often carried out through Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport in the capital as the required facilities at the Osmani International Airport in Sylhet were not put in place.

However, as an export cargo complex has finally been set up at the airport, the days of wait, extra efforts and expenses, and the drop in the quality of goods are over.

The facility was established between February 2020 and August 2021 by the airport authority in association with Biman Bangladesh Airlines at a cost of around BDT 30 crore. Later, BDT 14 crore was spent on installing explosive detection scanners in the facility, which was validated by the European Union in April this year.

Currently, no cargo flights are operated from Sylhet although each Biman flight is capable of carrying 12 tonnes to 18 tonnes of goods, said Md Hafiz Ahmed, director of Osmani International Airport, according to reports.

Even though the export cargo complex is all set to facilitate shipments, one hurdle remains in sending perishable items abroad: agricultural produce needs to be packed in a warehouse of the Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE) and must be certified after testing at a laboratory operated by the same authority.

However, such a facility is only available at Shyampur in Dhaka. As such, Sylhet-based businesses have long been urging the authorities to establish the facility in the region. The SCCI has sent several letters to the agriculture, commerce and foreign ministries to press home its demand since January last year. It also organised a seminar in this regard on February 15, where Agriculture Minister Mohammad AbdurRazzaque was present. At the event, the minister assured the association of taking the necessary steps to establish such facilities in the northeastern divisional city.

On September 6, the SCCI handed over a letter to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina mentioning 17 demands, including that for a warehouse and a certification laboratory.