

C.133/01265

2009.09.07

Shri Manmohan Singh
Hon'ble Prime Minister
Government of India
New Delhi

Respected Prime Minister,

Memorandum regarding Indo-Bangla trade with reference also to Nepal and Bhutan

Greetings from CUTS!

2. CUTS International (<http://www.cuts-international.org/>) organised a Stakeholder Consultation on Indo-Bangla Trade on August 9, 2009 in Agartala, Tripura. This was in association with *Friedrich Ebert Stiftung* (FES), India and was targeted at building the momentum generated by the Joint Tripura-Bangla Task Force on Trade set up earlier this year.

3. Attached, please find a memorandum which emerged from the deliberations among the distinguished delegates from India and Bangladesh who attended the conference. The delegates included various heads of chambers of commerce as well as high profile representatives of civil society organisations and think tanks from both Bangladesh and India.

4. To build on the progress made by the consultations it was decided to form a *Sub-Regional Independent Task Force on Connectivity and Cooperation*, comprising representatives of civil society and business chambers from Bangladesh, India, Bhutan and Nepal. It was decided that there would be four (4) convenors of this task force, one from each country.

5. I am sending you this memorandum in my capacity as convenor of the mentioned task force from the Indian side. This is following the approval of my candidature through proposal and subsequent consensus.

6. We, the endorsers of this Memorandum (see list of endorsers below memorandum), request you to give the recommendations made therein due and urgent consideration so that international trade involving Nepal, Bhutan, India and Bangladesh can attain its full potential.

Awaiting your valued response, I remain,

With warm regards,

Yours sincerely,

Sudhartha Mitra

Convenor (India), *Sub-Regional Independent Task Force on Connectivity and Cooperation* and
Head, *CUTS Centre for International Trade, Economics & Environment (CUTS CITEE)*

Encl: (1) List of government officials to whom copies of this letter and attached memorandum are being sent

Encl: (2) Memorandum from *Sub-Regional Independent Task Force on Connectivity and Cooperation*

Contd.....2/-

List of Government Officials

1. Shri T. K. A. Nair (IAS), Principal Secretary to PM, Prime Minister's Office (PMO), South Block, Raisina Hill, New Delhi-110 011
2. Shri S. M. Krishna, Cabinet Minister, Ministry of External Affairs, Room No. 169, South Block, New Delhi-110 011
3. Shri Shashi Tharoor, Minister of State, Ministry of External Affairs, Room No. 236C, South Block, New Delhi-110 011
4. Smt. Nirupama Rao (IFS), Foreign Secretary, Ministry of External Affairs, South Block, New Delhi-110 011
5. Shri Anand Sharma, Cabinet Minister, Ministry of Commerce & Industry, Room No. 46, Udyog Bhawan, New Delhi-110 107
6. Dr. Rahul Khullar (IAS), Secretary, Department of Commerce, Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Udyog Bhawan, New Delhi-110 107
7. Shri Jyotiraditya Scindia, Minister of State, Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Room No: 39, Udyog Bhawan, New Delhi- 110 107
8. Shri Manik Sarkar, Hon'ble Chief Minister of Tripura, Government of Tripura, Agartala, Tripura
9. Shri A.K. Mangotra, Principal Secretary to Chief Minister, Government of Tripura, Agartala, Tripura
10. Shri Pinak Ranjan Chakravarthy, High Commissioner, High Commission of India, Bangladesh, House No.2, Road No.142, Gulshan-1, Dhaka, Bangladesh.
11. Mrs. Mukta D. Tomar, Deputy High Commissioner, High Commission of India, Bangladesh, House No.2, Road No.142, Gulshan-1, Dhaka, Bangladesh
12. Jitendra Chowdhury, Commerce Minister, Tripura and Director, Industries & Commerce, Government of Tripura, Shilpodyog Bhavan, Pandit Nehru Complex, PO- Kunjaban, Agartala-799006 (Tripura)
13. Shri Sudip Roy, Principal Secretary, Industries & Commerce, Director, Industries & Commerce, Government of Tripura, Shilpodyog Bhavan, Pandit Nehru Complex, PO- Kunjaban, Agartala-799006 (Tripura)

Contd.....3/-

MEMORANDUM

Transpired from the *Agartala Stakeholder Consultation on Indo-Bangla Trade*

Organised by CUTS International in association with FES, India

On August 9, 2009 in Agartala

1. There is an immense potential for sub-regional cooperation in trade and investment between North East India and Bangladesh which needs to be effectively exploited and efficiently materialised.
2. Both Bangladesh and India can gain from connectivity/transshipment/transit which needs to be implemented on a reciprocal basis and should involve and benefit all other neighbouring countries i.e. Nepal and Bhutan. In this regard, a joint private logistical venture involving India and Bangladesh could be facilitated by business associations with the prior approval of the governments of Bangladesh and India.
3. The facilitation of efficient connectivity/transshipment/transit and logistical movements would require extensive upgradation of facilities at Land Customs Stations and approach roads on the border between North East India and Bangladesh.
4. Joint initiatives for capacity building of customs and immigration officials should be undertaken by the government agencies of Bangladesh and India. These initiatives should also aim to enhance efficiency and knowledge on issues such as HS codes, certification and documentation.
5. The port of *Mongla* in Bangladesh needs to be promoted as a potential source of maritime connectivity for all countries in the sub-region (Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Bhutan). Similarly, ports in *Ashuganj* and *Sherpur* should be promoted as sources of riverine connectivity.
6. People to people and business interaction between Bangladesh and North Eastern India needs to be encouraged. It is therefore essential to establish direct air connection between Dhaka and Guwahati and bus connection on the Dhaka-Sylhet-Shillong route. The proposed private airline connecting all the capital cities of North Eastern States which is being supported by the North Eastern Council should be extended to Dhaka and Paro to facilitate easy passenger travel from North East India to Bangladesh and Bhutan.
7. This consultation meeting has identified an urgent need for engaging civil society and private sector stakeholders in facilitating trade, investment and road and rail connectivity. A decision to form a ‘Sub-Regional Independent Task Force on Connectivity and Cooperation’, comprising representatives of civil society and trade bodies from Bangladesh, India, Bhutan and Nepal has been taken in this meeting. There will be four convenors of this task force, one from each country.
8. The Task Force will undertake advocacy initiatives and conduct necessary consultations to suggest ways and means to the policy makers in this region for the removal of trade barriers. The participants from Bangladesh and North East India in the Agartala meeting would act as the nucleus of this Task Force. CUTS International would coordinate the setting up of this task force by seeking representation from Bhutan and Nepal and would be assisted by the Bangladesh Enterprise Institute, Dhaka.

(See list of endorsers on next page)

Contd.....4/-

List of Endorsers

1. Pradeep S Mehta, Secretary General, CUTS International, Jaipur, Rajasthan
2. Farooq Sobhan, President, Bangladesh Enterprise Institute (BEI), Dhaka, Bangladesh
3. Anil Saraf, Director, Federation of Industries & Commerce of North Eastern Region (FINER), Guwahati, Assam.
4. Matlub Ahmad, President, Indo-Bangla Chamber of Commerce, Dhaka, Bangladesh
5. M.L Debnath, President, Tripura Chamber of Commerce, Agartala, Tripura
6. M. Rahmatullah, Transport Policy Advisor, Bangladesh Planning Commission
7. Siddhartha Mitra, Convenor (India), Sub-Regional Independent Task Force on Connectivity and Cooperation and Head, CUTS Centre for International Trade, Economics & Environment (CUTS CITEE), Jaipur, Rajasthan
8. Selima Ahmad, President, Bangladesh Women Chamber of Commerce, Dhaka, Bangladesh
9. Shahab Enam Khan, Assistant Professor, Jahangirnagar, University, Dhaka
10. Keya Ghosh, Advisor, CUTS Calcutta Resource Centre, Calcutta, West Bengal
11. Bipul Chatterjee, Director, CUTS Institute for Regulation and Competition (CIRC), New Delhi
12. Sanjib Deb, Chief of Bureau, NE Bangla, Agartala, Tripura
13. Parvez Karim Abbasi, Senior Research Fellow, BEI
14. Asif Anwar, Sr. Research Associate, Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), Dhaka, Bangladesh
15. Randeep Bhasin, Vice President, Strategic Planning and Business Support, Dharampal Premchand Ltd., Noida, Uttar Pradesh
16. Syed Sajjid Ali, Correspondent, The Hindustan Times, Tripura, Agartala
17. Amrit Lal Saha, Consumer's Protection Association, Agartala, Tripura
18. Biswendu Bhattacharjee, United News of India, Agartala, Tripura
19. Anutosh Biswas, Programme Officer, CUTS International, Jaipur, Rajasthan
20. Arnab Ganguly, Research Associate, CUTS Calcutta Resource Centre, Calcutta, West Bengal