

India-Bangladesh Business Forum

Address by

HE Sheikh Hasina

Prime Minister

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

New Delhi, 04 October 2019

Bismillahir Rahmanir Rahim

**Hon'ble Ministers of India and Bangladesh,
President of Confederation of Indian Industry (CII),
President of Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FICCI),
President of the Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India (ASSOCHAM),
President, Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce & Industries (FBCCI),
Distinguished guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen.**

Assalamu Alaikum and a very good morning.

I am delighted to be with you all. I always believe that, for any successful venture, political and business leaders must work together and share their ideas and thoughts to identify the priorities and challenges. Here again, I extend my sincere thanks to Indian Government as well as CII, FICCI and ASSOCHAM for making this opportunity for interactions.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Our relations with India have reached to the best ever stage, which Modiji himself has termed as a "Sonali Adhyay". We are confident that in the coming years, we would further lift our relations to new heights.

The Indo-Bangladesh cooperation began during the War of Liberation in 1971. The spirit of 1971 has always guided our relations. We recall with deep appreciation and gratitude, the support and cooperation that we had received from the Government and people of India during our Liberation War.

Despite profound geo-political changes and challenges, we have been able to strengthen and consolidate our relations, based on the principles of "**mutual benefit**" and "**a shared future**". Our cooperation has expanded in all areas, including security, energy, connectivity, trade & investment, defence, culture and people to people contact.

Excellencies,

Bangladesh has achieved remarkable economic progress in the last decade often recognized as "development model". Bangladesh is one of the fastest growing economies in the world. It is the second largest garment exporter, third largest inland fish producer,

fourth largest freshwater fish producer, fourth largest rice producer and eighth largest remittance earning country.

All these achievements partly fulfill the dream of our Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman to transform Bangladesh into "Sonar Bangla". If all these positive trends continue, we expect eventually to implement our Vision to make Bangladesh a developed country by 2041.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

During the last 10 years, our GDP growth averaged 7% reaching 8.1% last year and expecting to be 8.3% in the current fiscal. A few statistics would further highlight strength of our economy:

- (i) Inflation has been reduced to 5.4%
- (ii) Per capita income grew 3.5 times to around US\$ 2000 in 2019 from US\$ 543 in 2006;
- (iii) Foreign currency reserve raised to US\$ 33 billion;
- (iv) Our exports grew 3 times from 2005-06 to reach US\$ 40.53 billion in 2018-2019.

Dear Participants

A projection by Price Waterhouse Coopers tells us that Bangladesh will be the 29th largest economy in the world by 2030. A recent World Bank publication has included Bangladesh in the five fastest growing economies in the world. HSBC in its report of 2018 predicts that Bangladesh will be the 26th largest economy becoming one of the three fastest economies of the World by 2030. Asian Development Bank Outlook 2019 mentioned that Bangladesh is the fastest growing economy in the Asia Pacific region. It attributes this achievement to strong leadership, good governance, continued political stability and sound macroeconomic policy.

Our government follows "zero tolerance" policy to corruption and terrorism.

Bangladesh is a progressive, secular democracy with a homogenous population of 162 million. With a large population, young people mostly under the age of 25 are ready to be engaged at very competitive wages. Rapid urbanization fed by increasing consumption of electricity and burgeoning growth of middle class indicates the market potential in Bangladesh for investors.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Bangladesh has the most liberal investment policy in South Asia. It includes protection of foreign investment by law; generous tax holiday; concessionary duty on import of machinery; unrestricted exit policy; full repatriation of dividend and capital on exit, to name a few.

Foreign investment is protected by relevant acts of Parliament and bilateral investment treaties. We are in the process of establishing 100 Special Economic Zones. About a dozen of them are ready with four allotments to three countries. A number of high-tech parks are also ready for technology and innovative enterprises. Bangladesh has offered three Special Economic Zones for Indian investors at Mongla, Bheramara and Mirsarai. Substantial investment from Indian investors in these three Indian Economic Zones in Bangladesh would help broaden our exportable base.

We also want to see trade and investment together where Indian big investors can set up industries in Bangladesh and export the products to the north-eastern states of India and to the South-East Asian countries taking advantage of the improved connectivity between us.

Persistent growth of global FDI in Bangladesh since our government took over in 2009 reflects the increasing confidence of the foreign investment in Bangladesh. Strategic location of Bangladesh provides tremendous potential for being the economic hub of the region. With India on the west, China on the north and South-East Asia on the east, Bangladesh is in the middle of a combined market of 4 billion people.

The trade and investment between our two countries are increasing. The volume of bilateral trade has steadily grown during the past years. The balance of trade, however, is still largely in India's favor. The volume of trade between two countries is nearly 10 billion dollars. In 2018, Bangladesh was India's eighth largest export destination with 8.8 billion dollars export and our export to India also crossed 1 billion dollar mark for the first time last year. So, the progress is visible, but there is lot of scope for further deepening our relations in the area of trade and investment.

Distinguished entrepreneurs,

We know that most of the growing economies in the world have undertaken their primary trade and investment projects in their neighboring countries. In similar manner, Indian business leaders could play a very big role in furthering our economic prospects and together we would build "Sonar Bangla" or Golden Bangladesh, as dreamt by the Father of our Nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. That would also be the best tribute we can pay to our martyrs and freedom fighters.

In conclusion, I would say, currently Bangladesh and India are enjoying best of relations. The political leaderships are committed to ensuring the right kind of enabling environment for you. The platform is there and we are ready to provide every assistance to facilitate your endeavours. I would urge all of you to make best use of the platform and contribute to the economies of both the countries for the greater mutual benefits of our peoples. And thereby we could make our countries and the region as a whole more prosperous and free from hunger and poverty.

I thank you all.

Joi Bangla, Joi Bangabandhu
May Bangladesh Live Forever.
Long live Bangladesh-India Friendship.

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