

# Anwar, Nizami

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state minister from Rezaul Karim.

When Anwar took charge of the ministry in October 2001, he faced a number of challenges for coping with the changing world economic scenario. Among them the major ones were formulation of a fresh industrial policy, improving fertiliser supply and distribution network, setting up export processing zones (EPZs) on Adampur Jute Mills premises and in Chittagong Steel Mills area, and shifting Hazaribagh tannery plants to the suburban Savar.

He also was expected to better the sugar production situation and increase the industrial sector's contribution to the GDP.

Apparently due to his failure to improve the overall industrial situation, the alliance government replaced him and his partner with Nizami and Pintoo, counting on a better performance.

## NEW INDUSTRIAL POLICY REMAINS ON PAPER ONLY

Carrying out a major task of his ministry, Nizami introduced a new industrial policy in 2004, but experts said the policy is nothing but a refurbished version of the old one.

"The new policy has not set any provision by which the almost stunted industrial sector can grow faster than before," an entrepreneur said, claiming, "It's the old wine in a new bottle."

The newly adopted policy has co-opted 17 new industries on the list of thrust sectors that will enjoy certain privileges, such as cash incentives for export, tax rebates, concessions in utility tariffs and reduced interest rates on loans.

Readymade garments, light engineering, pharmaceuticals, optical frame, cold roll coil, herbal medicine, furniture and handicrafts are among the new entrants that have raised the number of thrust sectors to 33 from the previous 16.

But after adoption of the policy, no significant steps have been seen to translate it into reality, an RMG exporter said.

## NO REMEDY FOR SICK INDUSTRIES

Other than preparing a list of around 2,000 sick industries in different sectors with the help of the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry, Industries Minister Nizami did not take any initiative to salvage them.

The industries became sick due to lack of financing and the impact of the changed market scenario. The entrepreneurs of the industries at various occasions appealed to the government to waive the interests on their previously taken loans and to provide fresh bank loans at a low interest rate, but their requests went in vain.

## PROTRACTED EPZ PROCESS AT ADAMJEE, CTG STEEL

In early 2003, Nizami initiated a step to turn the loss-incurring Adampur Jute Mills, which lied with the jute ministry, and Chittagong Steel Mills Limited into EPZs, placing them under Bangladesh Small and Cottage Industries Corporation. The corporation led by Nizami worked for some two years, but failed to accomplish the task, which then was shifted to Bangladesh Export Processing Zones Authority (Bepza).

Nizami also seemed little concerned with rehabilitation of around 25,000 workers of Adampur Jute Mills after it was declared closed in June 30, 2002. No significant rehabilitation efforts have so far been taken for the axed workers.

## FERTILISER CRISIS CONTINUE

Localised crises of fertiliser dogged both Anwar and Nizami through out the last four year due to a faulty distribution and marketing network. A huge quantity of

# Saifur

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fertiliser has been being smuggled into India and Myanmar owing to the fault and the price differences between the neighbouring countries.

Every year the government had to provide subsidy of around Tk 15,200 a tonne of imported urea fertiliser. The country consumes around 26 lakh tonne urea annually, while the six state-owned fertiliser factories, one even 50-year old, can produce 18 lakh tonne. But Nizami is yet to formulate any policy to bring private sector into urea fertiliser production to meet the 8-lakh tonne shortfall.

## SUGAR SECTOR FACES RUIN

Over the two and a half years of Nizami in charge of industries, the sugar sector has come to the verge of ruin.

The country's industrial and household demand for sugar is around 42 lakh tonne a year. In comparison, the state-owned mills in fiscal year 2004-05 produced only 14.14 lakh tonnes of sugar against a target of 22.27 lakh.

Due to the absence of an appropriate policy and support, farmers have been reluctant to sell sugarcane to government factories, forcing them to remain idle for long periods.

Nizami has liberalised and relaxed duties on sugar import to keep sugar price stabilised. But no significant initiative has been undertaken to install new sugar factories or improve sugar farming in the country.

## OTHER SHORTCOMINGS

As the industries minister, Nizami also has failed to relocate the environmentally hazardous tannery industries from the densely populated Hazaribagh in the city to Savar in the last three years.

Though the country has witnessed substantial investment in some basic industries like cement, glass, steel and pharmaceuticals but Nizami was blamed for not undertaking any initiative to sustain the booming industries in a nascent economy like Bangladesh.

Neither Anwar nor Nizami did create any special package or policy support to protect any industry from the possible negative impacts of the open market competition.

Though Nizami claimed to the press that the contribution of the industrial sector to the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) reached 16.58 percent in FY2004-05 from 15.59 percent in FY2000-01, some senior economists alleged the contribution was less than what he had claimed.

He also expressed the view that, in a rapidly globalising world, the cost of non-cooperation would be colossal.

He however said in the regional context, South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (Saarc) is yet to emerge as a vibrant force to be reckoned with.

He regretted the frequent postponement of the Saarc summits and non-implementation of major decisions made in the previous summits.

He suggested that overburdening of the Saarc agenda with new areas of cooperation without realising tangible cooperation in already agreed ones has to be avoided.

Besides, contrary to the government's commitment to make the capital market vibrant, Nizami has not initiated any step to offload the government stakes in around two dozen of profitable industries into the private sector.

Neither was he prompt in bringing the necessary changes in the intellectual property rights to comply with the international demands.

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