

# Bangladesh-Canada trade to reach a new high: Envoy

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Trade between Bangladesh and Canada is expected to cross the billion-dollar mark this year, said Robert McDougall, Canadian high commissioner in Bangladesh, yesterday.

Currently, trade between the countries stands at nearly \$900 million. The projection was made in a paper read out by the high commissioner at a monthly luncheon meeting of the Foreign Investors' Chamber of Commerce and Industry (Ficci) at Sonargaon Hotel in Dhaka.

Speaking as chief guest, the diplomat said Canada and Bangladesh share bright prospects for cooperation in technology and energy security issues.

"In this regard, we are particularly focusing on expansion in a number of areas, including diversification of our exports and activities in business collaboration," McDougall said.

The high commissioner said Canada's thrust areas for investment in Bangladesh would be IT for a digital Bangladesh, CNG distribution, communications system development and power generation.

"We are also looking to enhance commercial opportunities for trade and project financing," he said.



Robert McDougall, Canadian high commissioner to Bangladesh, speaks at Ficci's monthly luncheon meeting in Dhaka yesterday.

"Grains, pulses and oil-seeds delegations" will visit Dhaka and Chittagong next week to find business in these areas, he said.

The two-way trade between the two commonwealth countries was \$897 million in 2007, of which Bangladesh's exports were \$542 million and Canada's exports were \$355 million. Two-way trade figures for 2005 were \$600 million and \$400 million in 2003.

The Canadian government's decision to allow Bangladesh duty-free access in 2003 has driven phenomenal growth in businesses between the two countries.

McDougall asked Bangladesh to diversify its products and markets to stay in the intensely globalised world.

Current trade patterns show heavy dependence on

readymade garments (almost 95 percent) among Bangladeshi exports, with smaller quantities of seafood and handicrafts.

On the other hand, Canadian exports shows 65 percent dependence on bulk foodstuffs, especially wheat, canola and pulses.

The high commissioner claimed that Canada's assistance programme to Bangladesh is the highest in the world, amounting to more than \$80 million a year.

In response to a query, McDougall said Canada is the prime destination for immigration from Bangladesh and interest in travelling and migrating to Canada is fast expanding. Last year, over 3,000 visas for various purposes were approved, he added.

Ficci Vice President Steven Wilson chaired the meeting.

## Enhanced Qatar-Bangla trade ties stressed

UNB, Dhaka

President Iajuddin Ahmed yesterday said Qatar government can benefit further by recruiting more skilled and semi-skilled workforces from Bangladesh.

He also emphasised increasing trade between Bangladesh and Qatar as there are potentials for enhancing trade between the two countries.

The President made this remarks when the new Qatar Ambassador to Bangladesh Abdul Rahman Yousuf A-Rahman Al Mullah presented his credentials to him at Banghabhan.

The President apprised the envoy of Bangladesh's effort to train workers to suit the requirement of Qatar specially infrastructure building.

He also sought the abassador's cooperation in importing more Bangladeshi world-class products, including pharmaceuticals, readymade garments, melamine, ceramic and leather products at a competitive price.

The newly appointed abassador apprised the President that about 70,000 Bangladeshi workers have been contributing in Qatar's socio-economic development.

He also assured the President of providing his all out cooperation in recruiting more workforces from Bangladesh.

# Examine the benefits from transit before signing deal

## Speakers urge govt at seminar

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The government should at first analyse the benefits the country may get from allowing transit to India before signing any deal, speakers said at a seminar in Dhaka yesterday.

They said the government should be well prepared for multilateral talks and strengthen its bargaining capacity while going for any negotiation.

The seminar on 'Strengthening Cooperation between Bangladesh and India: Connectivity through Trade, Transit and Other Issues' was organised by Bangladesh Unnayan Parishad (BUP).

Brig Gen (ret'd) Shahedul Anam, defence and strategic affairs editor of The Daily Star, said the government should take better preparation and strengthen bargaining power considering the geopolitical reality that gives privilege to Bangladesh before going for any multilateral or bilateral talks.

"Whenever the government goes for any negotiation, it must remember that the geopolitical location of the country makes it important in South Asian politics and strategies that we have to exploit on the discussion table," he said.

"The main thing is ensuring and upholding the national interest prior to allowing transit to India, and the government should inform the countrymen what they might get from it," Shahedul Anam added.

He said the government should consider the national security along with national interests on priority basis before going for any new talks or treaties.

"In addition, the government must have an opportunity

cost analysis before allowing transit to India," he said, adding that the government should have plan on removing non-tariff barriers and setting free products from the negative list of India.

CM Shafi Sami, former foreign secretary, said the government should consider the economic development of the country that might be gained from allowing transit to India.

"Both the countries should join hands to eliminate mistrust over bilateral relation that creates barriers to implementing many treaties that would help us to further strengthen the economic situation of the country," he said.

The government should have specific visions from allowing transit to India, such as attracting new investments and encouraging joint ventures from Indian side, he added.

Mir Nasir Hossain, former FBCCI president, said the government should work hard to reduce trade deficit between India and Bangladesh.

In fiscal year 2007-08 India exported goods worth \$3.375 billion to Bangladesh and imported \$358.08 million worth products, the seminar was told.

Informal trade between the two countries will be much more, Nasir said.

Rashed Khan Menon, president of Bangladesh Workers Party, said both the countries should open talks to resolve mistrust and suspicious relation and work together for mutual development.

Quazi Kholiqzaman Ahmad, president BUP, and Prof Ashraf Uddin Chowdhury, senior vice president of Bangladesh Economic Association, also spoke at the seminar.

## US Treasury to prop up housing under revamped bank bailout

AFP, Washington

President Barack Obama's administration will Tuesday unveil a new plan for the frozen banking sector including at least 50 billion dollars to shore up the housing market, a top aide said Sunday.

National Economic Council director Larry Summers said the plan to be announced by Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner would provide "support for banks so that they remain stable, are in a position to lend."

"There will be support for the credit markets more generally," he told ABC television.

"And absolutely critically, there will be support and pressure that assures that these needless foreclosures are avoided and that government is acting aggressively to contain the damage in the housing markets."

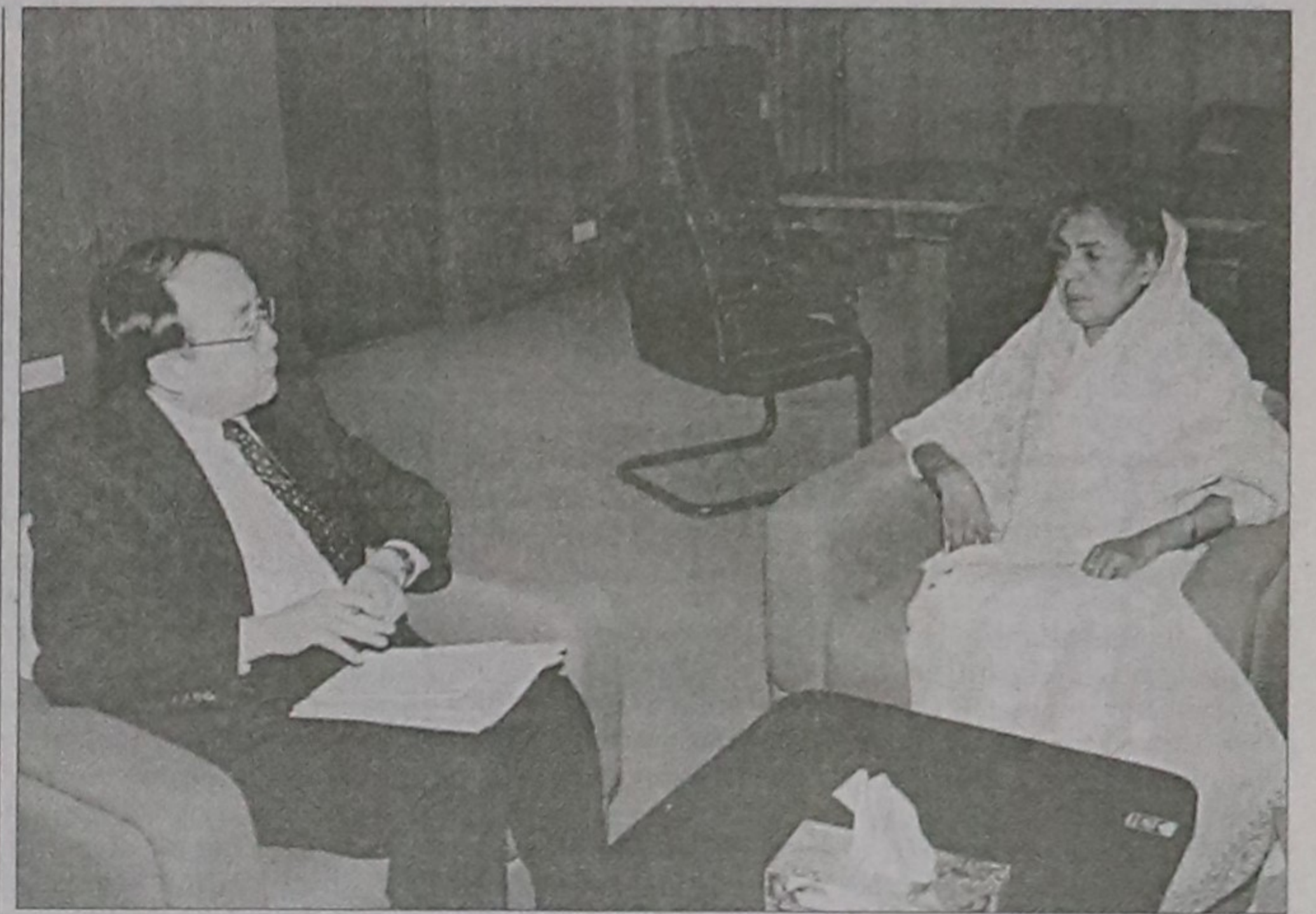
Geithner was initially reported to be planning to roll out his new measures, revamping the second half of a 700-billion-dollar financial bailout called the Troubled Asset Relief Program (TARP), on Monday.

Asked about indications that Geithner would instead make his announcement Tuesday, Summers said: "Yes, I think there's a desire to keep the focus right now on the economic recovery program, which is so very, very important."

With the Senate battling to seal an enormous stimulus plan demanded by Obama, the president was Monday to lobby for the bill in Indiana before giving a prime-time news conference in the evening.

Summers declined to get into details of the new TARP relief ahead of Geithner's announcement, but said a large chunk of it would go to housing.

"The president's made clear that he's very committed to (preventing) foreclosures. I expect that it will be 50 billion dollars or more that will be directed at providing support for the housing sector of our economy," he said.



World Bank's Country Director Xian Zhu calls on Agriculture Minister Matia Chowdhury at her office yesterday.

## Norway unveils 11.4b euro package

AFP, Oslo

The Norwegian government unveiled Sunday an 11.4-billion-euro (14.7-billion-dollar) lending package aimed at helping companies and individuals struggling with the global economic crisis.

Norway's centre-left government proposed the creation of two funds, each worth 50 billion kroner (5.7 billion euros).

The first is aimed at increasing banks' core capital and the second is aimed at providing credit directly to companies struggling to obtain funds on the market.

"We are doing this to boost employment, strengthen the Norwegian economy and help create jobs," Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg told reporters.

The package comes on top of a 20-billion-kroner economic stimulus package announced last month, and a 350-billion-kroner bank rescue and loan guarantee package launched in October.

The latter package helped strengthen the banks and they are now no longer in danger of collapse, but they have adopted a more restrictive lending policy in recent months.

A 50-billion-kroner core capital boost corresponds to an additional lending capacity of 400 to 500 billion kroner, the government said.

Any bank taking up the state on its offer must agree to freeze the wages and bonuses of executives earning an annual salary of more than 1.5 million kroner, for 2009 and 2010, as well as a restrictive dividend policy.

"We are putting the community's resources at their disposal and are therefore making demands that they limit the salaries and bonuses of top management," Finance Minister Kristin Halvorsen said.

"The money must be used to increase lending, not salaries," she said.

Amid pressure from public opinion, the heads of Norway's main financial institutions have already agreed to freeze their salaries this year.

The second fund will buy bonds from companies, enabling companies to turn to the state if they are unable to obtain bank financing.

Norway is the world's fifth biggest exporter of oil and third biggest gas exporter, but despite its wealth from those revenues it still risks entering a recession.

## Ctg Port to get radiation scanner soon

### US team due tomorrow for physical study

UNB, Dhaka

Chittagong Port, the key gateway to the country's economy, is set to introduce scanning of shipping containers for nuclear or radiological materials to strengthen the port's global supply chain security.

Under the new arrangement, 'radiation detection equipment' will thoroughly scan all the shipping containers, both incoming and outgoing, before allowing those to depart for global markets especially in the United States or entering the Bangladesh market.

The Chittagong Port Authority (CPA) is going to set up the 'radiation detection equipment' within the port area, the first-ever venture in the country to ensure radiation-free departure and arrival of goods.

Initial works have already begun to install the 'radiation detection equipment' inside the port with the fullest financial and technological support from the US government.

In physics, radiation describes any process in which energy emitted by one body travels through a medium or through space,

ultimately to be absorbed by another body.

A three-member high-powered team of National Nuclear Security Administration (NASA) under the US Department of Energy reached Dhaka yesterday and met with Shipping Minister Dr Afsarul Amin at the Shipping Ministry.

CPA Chairman Commodore R U Ahmed, Project Director Aurnun Kumar Bhattacharjee and representatives of US Embassy and other senior officials of the shipping ministry were present in the meeting.

The visiting US team will go to Chittagong tomorrow and carry out physical study to select a suitable site for the radiation testing zone in the Chittagong port.

"They (the US team) are expected to reach Chittagong port Tuesday and likely to stay three days to carry out the feasibility study," the CPA chairman told the news agency over telephone last evening.

A memorandum of understanding (MoU) regarding the 'Radiation Detection Equipment project' was signed between the Bangladesh and US governments in November, 2008.



GL Pieris, Sri Lankan minister for export development and international trade, visits the Sri Lanka-Bangladesh friendship pavilion at the DITF 2009 recently.

## Draft industrial policy in 3 months

UNB, Dhaka

Industries Minister Dilip Barua yesterday urged the local entrepreneurs to come forward to set up knowledge-based and labour intensive industries for industrial growth.

"Local entrepreneurs are to come forward and invest for the desired industrial growth," he told the leaders of Corrugated Carton Accessories Manufacturers and Exporters Association who met him at his office in the afternoon.

Barua said a draft 'indus-

trial policy' is in the making and will be announced in three months. The policy will attach priority to the knowledge based and labour intensive small and medium industries with incentives to the entrepreneurs.

The draft policy will encourage Bangladesh expatriates, local and foreign entrepreneurs to invest more for rapid industrial growth and generate employment opportunities, he added.

The minister urged the entrepreneurs to concen-

trate on producing quality products to compete in the world market.

The BCCMEA leaders Satiullah Chowdhury, Mir Mahmud Ali, Nazim uddin Chowdhury, Saleh Ahmed Babu and ASM Julfikar Haider were among others who met the minister.

They informed the minister that corrugated carton accessories manufacturers fetch foreign currency worth Tk 7,000 crore every year by exporting their products. They urged the minister to set up a packaging institute in the country.

**TV Talkshow**

# CSR

Corporate Social Responsibility

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**Today's Topic**

## Importance of CSR

Panelists : **Farooq Sobhan**  
President, Bangladesh Enterprise Institute (BEI)

**M.A Momen**  
Former President  
Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry

Planning : **Hasibur Rahman**  
Executive Director, MRDI

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