

# Bangladesh-Turkey businesses stress FTA

REFAYET ULLAH MIRDHA

**B**USINESSES of Bangladesh and Turkey have urged their governments to expedite efforts for signing a free trade agreement to boost bilateral trade.

The Turkish government imposed 17 percent duty on import of textile and garment items from Bangladesh in June 2012 to protect its domestic apparel industry. All Bangladeshi products, except garment items, enjoy zero-duty benefit in the Turkish market.

"We are working on the FTA. We sat with the officials of the Turkish economic ministry on August 26 and 27 in Turkey to fast track the process," said Monoj Kumar Roy, additional commerce secretary of Bangladesh.

"The ongoing negotiation for signing the deal should be continued, and it should be signed soon," Rizanur Meral, chairman of Confederation of Businessmen and Industrialists of Turkey (Tuskon), had told The Daily Star at the Turkey-World Trade Bridge-2014 in June.

Tuskon is a non-governmental and non-profit umbrella organisation, representing seven business federations, 202 business associations and more than 50,000 entrepreneurs of Turkey.

Bangladesh's Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina had announced during her Turkey visit in April 2012 that an FTA will be signed to utilise the business potential of the two countries.

"Bangladesh is a good destination for business. We should collaborate with Bangladesh," Meral said.



Bangladeshi and Turkish businessmen pose after a meeting at Ikitelli Organised Industrial Zone in Istanbul in June as part of Turkey-World Trade Bridge 2014.

He also said the Turkish businesspeople now want that all Bangladeshi products get duty-free access to their market.

"The FTA is a win-win situation. We have many things to sell to Bangladesh, and on the other hand, Bangladesh has also many things to sell to Turkey."

Yusuf Akgun, the board chairman of the Turkish Akgun Construction Company, said he is ready to help Bangladesh government develop an industrial zone.

Akgun is now developing an industrial zone in Ethiopia at a cost of around \$2 billion with a target to export goods worth \$15

billion from the zone. "My next target is to build up an industrial zone in Kazakhstan." He also developed the Ikitelli industrial zone in Istanbul in 1984.

Fatih Alparslan, general secretary to the Association of Development Industrialists and Businessmen of Turkey, said Bangladesh has a lot of business opportunities to explore in Turkey.

Alparslan said businesses in the Kayseri province in Turkey import leather and leather products paying high duty. "Bangladesh can easily grab this leather and leather goods market."

Bangladeshi businesspeople can also invest in industrial areas in Kayseri, which is also famous for furniture products, doors and natural marble stones, he said.

"Bangladesh and Turkey have been maintaining a friendly relation for a long time, but the economic relations have failed to reach the expected level," said Fikret Cicek, president of Turkey-Bangladesh Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

"We need to sign the FTA for better business between the two countries," said Cicek, who led a Bangladeshi business delegation to the Turkey-World Trade Bridge.

## NRBs call for an institution to handle investment queries

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

**A**six-month convention on non-resident Bangladeshis ended in Dhaka yesterday with a call for an institution to provide support for NRBs' investment in the country. Starting in March, the Centre for NRB organised 14 conferences with the theme -- NRB talent, investment and remittance for development -- in North America, Europe and the Middle East.

The suggestions and recommendations raised from the series of conferences by the NRBs will be placed before the government and the relevant authorities for implementation, MS Shekil Chowdhury, chairperson of the Centre for NRB, said at the concluding session at the capital's Sonargaon Hotel.

The NRBs' demand includes voting rights, improved airport services, legal support to protect assets in the home economy, simplification of passport renewal, vocational training centres, easier rules for investment and admission quota for NRBs' children.

Addressing the function, Shahriar Alam, state minister for foreign affairs, said the government plans to open at least five missions in the next six to nine months, two of which will be in Africa.

He urged the NRBs not to pander to any unlawful activity in the countries they reside. "It is creating a negative image for the country," he said.

Atiur Rahman, governor of Bangladesh

Bank, said the central bank is planning to launch 'BB Remittance Award' for the 20 best performing remitters and five bond purchasers this year to encourage NRBs to send money through proper channels.

There is always high demand for skilled workers abroad, he said. "In contrast, 55 percent of our migrant workers are unskilled and their wage rate remains low, due to which there is a downward impact on the earnings of the migrants."

However, there is considerable scope to improve their earning potential by further training them in vocational centres, Rahman said.

The governor said the central bank has established a separate department, 'financial integrity and customer services department' to handle complaints and suggestions by the customers or any other stakeholder at home and abroad to ensure smooth and hassle-free services.

Khondoker Golam Moazzem, additional research director of the Centre for Policy Dialogue, urged the Centre for NRB to set up a database of migrants, adding that it is needed to build confidence among the NRBs so that they are encouraged to invest in Bangladesh.

David Meale, deputy mission chief of the US Embassy; Atiqul Islam, president of Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association; Siddikur Rahman, former finance secretary; and Sohel Ahmed Chowdhury, former commerce secretary, also spoke.

## Pfizer, Ranbaxy win dismissal of lawsuit over generic Lipitor

REUTERS

**P**FIZER Inc and India's Ranbaxy Laboratories Ltd on Friday won dismissal of a US antitrust lawsuit accusing them of conspiring to delay sales of generic versions of the best-selling cholesterol drug Lipitor.

US District Judge Peter Sheridan in Trenton, New Jersey, ruled that the plaintiffs,

retailers and distribution companies that bought Lipitor directly from Pfizer, failed to plead their case with enough detail.

The lawsuit, filed in 2012, stems from a 2008 settlement of a patent lawsuit filed by Pfizer against Ranbaxy over Ranbaxy's plan to make generic Lipitor. Under the deal, Pfizer agreed to drop a claim for damages against Ranbaxy, and Ranbaxy agreed to stay out of the Lipitor market until November 2011.

## Larger Apple iPhones shipments delayed amid record orders



REUTERS/FILE

A new Apple iPhone 6 Plus is seen during an Apple event at the Flint Centre in Cupertino, California on September 9.

REUTERS

**C**USTOMERS may have to wait three to four weeks to get their hands on Apple Inc's iPhone 6 Plus, after a record number of orders for the company's latest smartphones strained available supply.

The new iPhone 6 goes on sale on Sept. 19 in the United States but the company began taking online orders on Thursday. While the larger 5.5-inch "Plus" models now display a wait time of up to a month, the 4.7-inch version remains available for delivery on Sept. 19, Apple's website showed.

Verizon Wireless, AT&T and Sprint Corp, also showed shipment delays of up to six weeks on their respective websites. Apple said the pace of orders has so far outstripped any of its previous iPhones.

"Response to iPhone 6 and iPhone 6 Plus has been incredible, with a record number of pre-orders overnight. Pre-orders are currently available online or through the Apple Store App," spokeswoman Trudy Muller said.

Apple routinely grapples with iPhone supply constraints, particularly in years that involve a smartphone re-design. The latest iPhones come with larger screens and some analysts had anticipated that production issues may keep a lid on initial runs.

Its suppliers had scrambled to get enough screens ready because the need to redesign a key component had disrupted panel production, supply chain sources told Reuters last month.

It was unclear whether the hiccup could

limit the number of phones available to consumers, the sources said at the time. Apple declined to comment on supply chain issues.

In addition, Chinese customers may also have to wait until the year-end before they can buy the iPhone 6. Apple is yet to set a release date for China, the world's biggest smartphone market.

The company unveiled its latest iPhones along with a watch and a mobile payments service on Tuesday.

AT&T's chief executive of mobile and business, Ralph de la Vega, told investors at a conference in New York that iPhone 6 orders have so far surpassed orders last year and the year before.

"It is such a great thing to wake up in the morning to know that you have hundreds of thousands of orders already before you even have a cup of coffee," said the executive.

Apple's iPhones tend to incite the kind of initial buying frenzy unknown to many other brands, partly because of the company's well-honed marketing tactics.

On secondary markets online, the rights to a pre-ordered iPhone 6 Plus are worth as much as double the unsubsidized sticker price. One eBay auction for an unlocked 128-gigabyte gold version of the 5.5-inch phone, for example, was bidding at \$1,625 on Friday afternoon, compared with a face value of \$949.

One post on the New York City edition of Craigslist sought \$10,000 the privilege to "be one of the first & few people to own this model and before the rest of the world."

## Alibaba plans to close IPO order book early

REUTERS

**A**LIBABA Group Holding Ltd plans to close its IPO order book early after it received enough orders to sell all the shares in the record-breaking offering, sources familiar with the matter said on Friday.

The company, which launched its IPO on Monday, is expected to price the deal on Sept. 18 and will start trading a day later.

US-based bookrunners are expected to stop taking orders from investors on Tuesday afternoon, a source familiar with the matter told Reuters.

Alibaba is expected to stop taking orders in Asia on Sept. 17, a day earlier than previously scheduled. Bloomberg first reported that Alibaba's books would close a day early for its IPO. A spokesman for Alibaba declined to comment.

Co-founder and executive chairman Jack Ma has spoken with investors all over the United States this week including stops in New York and Boston, presenting the company's growth strategies and addressing concerns over its corporate governance.

Banks running the sale have not decided if they will increase the price range or the number of shares on offer, the sources said. The Chinese e-commerce group had orders to sell shares at the higher end of the expected price range of \$60 to \$66 per share, Bloomberg said. Alibaba had received enough orders for the



REUTERS/FILE

Jack Ma, the founder and executive chairman of Alibaba Group Holding, leaves following the company's road show in New York on September 8.

offering to cover the entire deal within just two days of its launch, people familiar with the IPO told Reuters on Wednesday.

The IPO could raise \$21.1 billion at the top end of the expected price range, topping

Facebook Inc's \$16 billion listing in 2012 as the largest-ever technology IPO.

The company launched its IPO on Monday and is expected to price the deal on Sept. 18, and will start trading a day later.

## Citigroup's OneMain planning to go public by month-end

REUTERS

**C**ITIGROUP Inc is planning on taking its OneMain Financial Inc personal loan business public by September end, Bloomberg said citing people with knowledge of the matter.

OneMain, which is worth at least \$4 billion, is expected to start considering offers from potential buyers, the report said.

In May, Chief Executive Officer Mike Corbat said at an investor conference that Citigroup could dispose of the company through an outright sale to a private equity firm, a public stock offering, or a combination of the two, if prices are good.

OneMain makes subprime loans to individuals and is profitable but does not fit the company's strategy, Corbat had said.

Rival installment loans providers, SpringLeaf Holdings Inc is interested in acquiring OneMain, the report said, citing the people.

In recent months, Citigroup has held talks with suitors including SpringLeaf, but the talks have not translated into formal discussions, the people said.

Citigroup and SpringLeaf were not immediately available to comment.

## Chinese output growth slows to five-year low in August

AFP, Beijing

**C**HINA'S industrial production growth slowed sharply to 6.9 percent in August, its lowest level for more than five years, official data for the world's second-largest economy showed Saturday.

The figure, which measures output at factories, workshops and mines, marked an abrupt slowdown from the 9.0 percent year-on-year expansion recorded in July and was the worst since 5.7 percent in December 2008, during the global financial crisis.

It also fell far short of the 8.7 percent median increase in a survey of 15 economists by The Wall Street Journal.

The result and other data released Saturday are certain to compound growing concerns over the strength of China's economy -- a key driver of world commerce -- following recent indicators suggesting growth is weakening even after authorities took limited stimulatory measures.

Retail sales, a key indicator of consumer

spending, rose 11.9 percent in the same month on-year, the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) said -- also down from 12.2 percent in July.

Fixed asset investment, a measure of government spending on infrastructure, expanded 16.5 percent on-year in the first eight months of 2014. The figure is only released as a cumulative total.

It was below the 17.0 percent reading for the first seven months of the year, and also below the 16.9 percent forecast.

China's Communist government is targeting expansion of about 7.5 percent in gross domestic product (GDP) this year, the same as last year's objective, as it tries to steer the country's growth model towards consumer spending and away from the export-and-investment-fuelled double-digit economic expansion regime of the past.

China's GDP grew at a higher-than-expected 7.5 percent in the second quarter from 7.4 percent in the first three months of the year, which was the worst since a similar 7.4 percent result in July-September 2012.