50TH ANNIVERSARY OF BANGLADESH-RUSSIA DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS

The prospects of Bangladesh-Russia cooperation



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N January 25, 2022, the People's Republic of Bangladesh and the Russian Federation celebrate a remarkable date: on this day 50 years ago, less than a year after the declaration of Bangladesh's independence, our countries established diplomatic relations.

The recognition of Bangladesh by the Soviet Union made direct bilateral political dialogue possible. In March 1972, the founder and the first president of Bangladesh, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, paid a visit to Moscow, where he met with Secretary General of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union Leonid Brezhnev. Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet Nikolai Podgorny, Chairman of the Council of Ministers Alexei Kosygin, and other officials. During the trip, the intergovernmental agreements were concluded on economic and technical cooperation, on providing free assistance for restoring navigation in the seaports of Bangladesh, and on air services, trade, agreements on the USSR trade representation in Bangladesh, as well as on cultural and scientific cooperation. Some of the treaties signed then are still in force.

Upon the request of the Bangladesh government, in April 1972, the Special Expedition 12 of the Soviet Navy was sent to the Bay of Bengal. It was entrusted with the task of clearing the port of Chittagong from mines and sunken ships left there after the Liberation War ended in December 1971. In spite of the extraordinary technical complexity, it was accomplished, enabling the local authorities to promptly ensure the vital supplies of food and other necessary goods to the war-torn country. Unfortunately, it was not without the losses: on July 13, 1973, a senior sailor of the floating workshop PM-156 of the Kamchatka flotilla, Yury Redkin, was killed in the line of duty. He was buried in Chittagong with military honours in the territory of the Naval Academy

It is gratifying that after half a century, the Bangladeshi friends continue to cherish the memory of the feat of the Soviet sailors. Such a delicate attitude towards our common history deserves respect.

In 1971-1975, the USSR provided Bangladesh with significant economic assistance. In particular, the Soviet specialists participated in the construction of Ghorashal TPP, which still remains one

On December 29, 1991, Bangladesh recognised the Russian Federation as the successor state of the USSR. A new impetus to the bilateral cooperation was given by the advent of the Awami League government in Dhaka in 2009, headed by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, who followed her father Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's policy for cooperation with Russia.

In 2010, on the sidelines of the International Tiger Conservation Forum, a meeting was held between Sheikh Hasina and Vladimir Putin, then the chairman of the Government of the Russian Federation. In 2013, the prime minister paid an official visit to Moscow. In 2016, she met Dmitry Medvedev, chairman of the Government of the Russian Federation, during the summit of the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) in Ulaanbaatar. These contacts outlined key directions of our bilateral cooperation for years ahead.

The heads of our foreign ministries have conducted a number of meetings as well. The recent talks between Sergey Lavrov and Dr AK Abdul Momen, minister of foreign affairs of Bangladesh, were held in July 2021 in Tashkent, on the sidelines of the international conference "Central and South Asia: Regional Connectivity, Challenges and Opportunities." The two ministries also have the mechanisms of bilateral consultations on international issues and counterterrorism.

The contacts have been established between our supreme legislative bodies. The participation of Dr Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury in the 2nd International Forum of "Development of Parliamentarism" in June-July 2019 and the 3rd Eurasian Women's Forum in October 2021 are the most notable recent events in this area. Since November, a parliamentary friendship group on relations with the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation has been functioning in the parliament of Bangladesh.

Our countries share commitment to the fundamental principles of international cooperation set forth in the UN Charter. Proximity and often similarity of the approaches towards the topical issues of global and regional agenda ensure successful coordination of our efforts within the UN and other multilateral structures. For instance, Bangladesh and Russia are jointly opposing glorification of Nazism, placement of arms in outer space, and use of ICTs for criminal purposes.

The Rosatom State Corporation is significantly contributing to the development of the Bangladeshi energy sector. It is taking part in implementing the largest joint project—construction of the Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant (NPP) in Pabna, which is financed through the state



Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in a meeting with Russian **President Vladimir Putin during her** visit to Moscow in January 2013.

SOURCE: KREMLIN.RU

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credit extended by Russia. Last October saw installation of the reactor pressure vessel of the plant's Unit 1. In general, two units with the total capacity of 2,400 megawatt are to be put into operation. The existing experience of cooperation in peaceful use of atomic energy may serve as a basis for further collaboration, if the Bangladeshi side decides to start construction of the second NPP.

The bilateral trade turnover is growing steadily. In 2020, despite the negative impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, it reached USD 2.4 billion. Statistical data for the first half of 2021 gives hope that this mark can be exceeded. The supplies of wheat (in 2021, 400,000 tonnes) and fertilisers (180,000 tonnes), metals, machinery and equipment constitute the basis of our exports, while garments, knitwear and seafood are the major items of the Bangladeshi imports.

The Intergovernmental Commission on Trade, Economic, Scientific and Technical Cooperation, established in 2017, streamlined our economic ties.

Russian-made military hardware is in service with the Bangladesh Army and the Bangladesh Air Force. Our partners have procured the Yak-130 combat training aircraft, the Mi-17 and the Mi-171 helicopters, the BTR-80 armoured personnel carriers, the MiG-29 fighter aircrafts and other special equipment.

More than 6,000 citizens of Bangladesh have graduated from Soviet and Russian universities. Now, they are employed in almost all spheres of their country's economic and social life, and hold senior positions in government agencies, private companies and cultural associations. Our bilateral cooperation in education is still valid today, especially due to the ongoing training of qualified personnel for exploitation of the Rooppur NPP. In 2021, Russia provided 70 scholarships under its government quota for Bangladeshi

The Peoples' Friendship University of Russia, also known as RUDN University, is a traditional partner of foreign educational organisations. In March 2021, RUDN University and the University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh (ULAB) signed a memorandum of understanding aimed at promoting cooperation in humanities and natural and social sciences. The negotiations between the Tyumen State University and the Institute of Modern Languages of Dhaka University on cooperation in teaching Russian as a foreign language through advanced educational methods have reached the final stage. It is worth mentioning that the Bangladeshi people are showing increasing interest towards learning Russian. For example, around 200 students annually attend the Russian language courses at the Russian House in

Bangladesh and Russia have similar positions on inter-faith dialogue and combating religious extremism, which is manifested in our cooperation under the auspices of the Group of Strategic Vision "Russia-Islamic world."

Cultural exchanges, more than anything else, promote affinity and better mutual understanding between our peoples. Unfortunately, over the last two years, the Covid-19 pandemic has hampered activities in this area. Nevertheless, this work is still underway. On November 4, 2021, the Embassy of Russia in Dhaka hosted a concert of the Moscow Cossack Choir timed to the National Unity Day, as well as the 50th anniversary of independence of Bangladesh and the 100th anniversary of the birth of its founder Sheikh Mujibur

The People's Republic of Bangladesh is an important partner of Russia in South Asia. Our relations are strong and their potential is immense. All conditions are in place to harness it to the full.

Time for RMG makers to think globally



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RMG NOTES

MOSTAFIZ UDDIN

HEN it comes to the geography of apparel production, the rules are changing, and this is something all Bangladeshi RMG manufacturers need to be aware of.

The first issue to consider is nearshoring. There are growing calls in some quarters for fashion retailers to shift production closer to their key markets in order to reduce the carbon emissions associated with moving clothing around the world.

Talk of nearshoring has been around for many years, but is yet to take off significantly, with the vast majority of clothing still being produced in Asia. Most recently, however, German apparel retailer C&A commenced the production of jeans in Germany. C&A sells around 12 million pairs of jeans annually, so if the business hits its 800,000 target after 2022, this would constitute 6.6 percent of total annual production.

Should we, as manufacturers, feel threatened by this? Yes and no. On the one hand, this is the kind of production we would like to see in Bangladesh. Although small by comparison to the huge volumes produced in our country, 800,000 is still a significant amount. It would also be a concern if other retailers followed suit.

On the other hand, C&A has stated very clearly that its German jeans production will be very bespoke, with a focus on sustainability and use of the latest cuttingedge production technology.

In fact, whenever a fashion retailer moves production closer to home, it is often with a focus on niche production and high added value. This way, the business is not so dependent on the economies of scale that can be gained by moving to low-cost countries in Asia.

However, reading the story about C&A also got me thinking about whether Bangladeshi garment-makers should be taking a more global view when it comes to apparel production.

Ours is a specialised industry, and therefore efforts to nearshore textile production have proven difficult in the past. When the likes of the US and UK sent production abroad, they decimated their respective textile industries and waved goodbye to a lot of skilled workers in the

As such, why don't we, as clothing producers, take our expertise abroad and produce closer to our main global markets? This offers us, as manufacturers, an excellent opportunity to leverage our brand as manufacturers and is also a great marketing exercise.

In fact, some of our competitors are already adopting this approach, opening up exciting new business opportunities in the process. Last year, Pakistani denim specialist Artistic Milliners, a vertically integrated producer with spinning, weaving, dyeing and garment manufacturing capabilities, purchased a garment factory in California under a new name, with a declared output capacity of 100,000 units per month. Meanwhile, the Vietnamese sustainable denim producer, Saitex, last year announced the opening of Saitex USA, a "factory of the future" which is said to be equipped with state-of-the-art manufacturing technology and energy and resource-efficient machinery. This is Saitex's first facility outside of its Vietnam

Will the manufacturers mentioned above establish more facilities abroad? And what can Bangladeshi RMG businesses learn from this? My hunch is that such facilities are branding and marketing exercises first and foremost—for now,

We have to remember that investments in foreign markets do constitute a high risk, given one has to adapt to local customs, the logistical costs of setting up and so on.

Perhaps a more pragmatic approach in the short term is to initially establish one-off "showcase" facilities, and then look at the possibility of setting up consortiums or "virtual supply chains." This way, manufacturers can join together across multiple locations to provide a single virtual manufacturer offering made up of different segments of the garment supply chain, all complementing each other. This

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can offer the opportunities of nearshoring without financial risk and uncertainty.

Is there an opportunity for Bangladeshi manufacturers to establish mutually beneficial connections with like-minded supply chain actors in other markets? Surely, we would have nothing to lose by taking initiative and making a few connections with similarly progressive

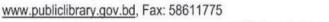
businesses. These partnerships also provide the benefits of vertical integration, economies of scale, and joint sales and marketing opportunities.

It's a win-win all round, which is why I think our own manufacturers need to adopt a more flexible, open and responsive approach when it comes to the geography of where clothing is made.



গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার

সংস্কৃতি বিষয়ক মন্ত্রণালয় গণগ্রন্থাগার অধিদপ্তর



নং-৪৩.২৬.০০০০.০০২.২৩.১৪৯.০৯.(অংশ-১).১৩৫ তারিখ: ২৩/১/২০২২ শহিদ দিবস ও আন্তর্জাতিক মাতৃভাষা দিবস ২০২২

শাহবাগ, ঢাকা-১০০০।

উপলক্ষে রচনা প্রতিযোগিতা। 'শহিদ দিবস ও আন্তর্জাতিক মাতৃভাষা দিবস ২০২২' উদযাপন উপলক্ষে গণগ্রস্থাগার অধিদপ্তরের সূফিয়া কামাল জাতীয়

াপ্যস্থাপার, ঢাকা এবং বিভাগীয়, জেলা ও উপজেলা সরকারি গণ্যস্থাগারসমূহে নিম্লেক্ড বিষয়ে রচনা প্রতিযোগিতা অনুষ্ঠিত হবে। এ উপলক্ষে আগ্রহী সকলকে যোগ্যতা অনুযায়ী প্রতিযোগিতায় অংশগ্রহণের জন্য আহবান জানানো যাচেছ রচনা প্রতিযোগিতাঃ ক্রমিক নম্বর রচনা প্রতিযোগিতার বিষয় শব্দসীমা

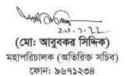
OF ANY COOKS THE SECOND STREET		36,000,00		
٥.	ক	পঞ্চম-অন্তম	আন্তর্জাতিক মাতৃভাষা দিবস	3000
۹.	খ	নবম-ছাদশ	সর্বস্তরে মাতৃভাষার প্রচলন	2500
٥.	જ	স্নাতক-স্নাতকোত্তর	অনুবাদ সাহিত্যে বাংলা ভাষা	2600
8.	घ	সর্বসাধারণ	বাংলা ভাষা প্রতিষ্ঠায় ভাষা শহিদদের অবদান	2200
e.	8	বিশেষ (প্রতিবন্ধী)	বাংলা ভাষা প্রতিষ্ঠায় জাতির পিতার অবদান	2000

সুফিয়া কামাল জাতীয় গণগ্রন্থাগার, ১০, কাজী নজরুল ইসলাম এডিনিউ, শাহবাগ, ঢাকায় এবং অন্যান্য বিভাগ, জেলা ও উপজেলার প্রতিযোগীকে সংশ্লিষ্ট বিভাগীয়, জেলা ও উপজেলা (কেবলমাত্র দেওয়ানগঞ্জ ও বকশীগঞ্জ উপজেলা, জেলা-জামালপুর এবং টুঙ্গিপাড়া উপজেলা, জেলা-গোপালগঞ্জ) সরকারি গণগ্রন্থাগারে জমা দিতে হবে। রচনা ১৫.০২.২০২২ খ্রি. তারিখের মধ্যে ভাকযোগে/সরাসরি পৌছাতে হবে।

রচনা A4 আকারের সাদা কাগজে স্বহস্তে প্রতি পাতার একদিকে লিখতে হবে, রচনার শব্দসংখ্যা নির্ধারিত সীমার মধ্যে

ছাত্রছাত্রীদের ক্ষেত্রে স্টুভেন্ট আইডি কার্ড/স্ব স্ব শিক্ষা প্রতিষ্ঠান প্রধান কর্তৃক প্রতায়নপত্র এবং অন্যান্য প্রতিযোগীর ক্ষেত্রে জাতীয় পরিচয়পত্রের ফটোকপি অথবা প্রথম শ্রেণীর কর্মকর্তা কর্তৃক প্রত্যয়নসহ রচনা জমা দিতে হবে।

রচনায় অবশ্যই জমাদানকারীর নাম, পিতা ও মাতার নাম, ঠিকানা, স্টুডেন্ট আইডি কার্ড এবং মোবাইল নমর উল্লেখ



জিড-১৪৫