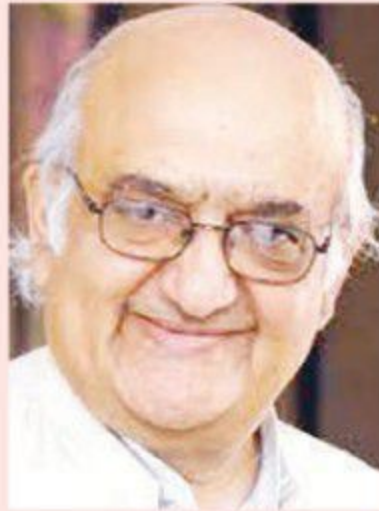


# India's pledges remain unfulfilled after 50yrs

**Staff Correspondent**

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India's pledges made after Bangladesh's independence to restructure the latter's economy and build capacity had not been implemented even after 50

years, Centre for Policy Dialogue Chairman Professor Rehman Sobhan said on Wednesday.

"India pledged to invest in the restructuring and capacity building of Bangladesh's economy when Pakistani businessmen left after 1972. But no progress has yet been made in materialising those promises as they remain in discussions

only," he told a virtual dialogue titled "50 Years of Bangladesh-India Partnership: Towards a Journey in the Next 50 Years".

He said Bangladesh had proposed that India invest in structural transformation and water sharing during the first bilateral trade talks in 1972.

Later in 1974, during a meeting between Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and the then Indian prime minister Indira Gandhi, India said its investors would help Bangladesh with restructuring and capacity building, he further said.

"But the initiatives have not materialised, and those have been under negotiations for the last 50 years, he added.

Economists and policymakers at the programme emphasised removing non-tariff barriers to improve bilateral trade and reap the benefits.

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“The Bangladesh-India relation is now complex, sensitive, and historic. Bilateral trade grew in the last five years as India offered us duty-free market access,” said State Minister for Foreign Affairs Shahriar Alam.

But non-tariff and para-tariff barriers were hindering bilateral trade and effective measures were needed to remove those, he said.

He also said these steps were very important not only for the development of Bangladesh but also the sub-continent.

“Bilateral trade is improving but not at the expected level. There are many non-tariff barriers, and those need to be addressed quickly to reap the benefits of duty-free market access,” said Selim Raihan, executive director of South Asian Network on Economic Modeling.

He said Indian investors could take advantage of duty-free market access by investing here to grab their domestic market as Bangladesh offers vast opportunities.

Bangladesh holds a very small position in India in terms of trade, and investors could take advantage of this, said the economist.

He added that Bangladesh had offered economic zones for Indian investors, but there was no visible progress

in this regard.

“Bangladesh has become a fast-growing economy within a short period,” said Prabir De, a professor at Research and Information System for Developing Countries in India.

The Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement could create new opportunities in improving bilateral trade, he added.

“The Bangladesh-India bilateral trade is in a good shape, and both countries are enjoying benefits. It is not true that one is getting benefits while the other is being deprived of,” said Indian High Commissioner to Bangladesh Vikram K Doraiswami.

“I understand the non-tariff barriers, but we need empirical evidence to resolve those,” he said.

He said there are fundamental problems in non-tariff barriers and those are mainly logistic.

“We have worked a lot to ease immigration clearance at customs points. Bangladesh needs to work further to improve the system,” he further said.

The ambassador also emphasised strengthening rail connectivity to improve bilateral trade.

“India is working on developing railways,” he added.

# Bangladesh moving ahead of India, Pakistan: BIDS

Staff Correspondent



Bangladesh fared better in various sectors, including production, women empowerment and urbanisation, compared to India and Pakistan in the last three decades, the Bangla-

desh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS) said on Wednesday.

BIDS revealed the information in Annual Development Conference-2021 at Lake Shore Hotel in Dhaka, where BIDS Director-General Binayak Sen unveiled a report titled 'Bangladesh in Comparative Perspective'. According to it, Bangladesh has overtaken Pakistan in terms of per capita income.

In the 1990s, the per capita income of Bangladesh was increasing at the rate of 2.54 per cent but now it is ris-

ing at 5.03 per cent. India's per capita income was growing at 3.26 per cent while it is increasing by 1.14 per cent at present, it stated.

Similarly, Pakistan's per capita income growth rate was 1.79 per cent in the 1990 decade. It has now come down to 0.6 per cent, the report noted. Bangladesh is doing better than India and Pakistan in the manufacturing sector, it said.

In the 1990 decade, Bangladesh's progress in the manufacturing sector was 13.24 per cent. Now it is 18.93 per cent. India and Pakistan are lagging in the manufacturing sector, the report said.

During that time, India's manufacturing growth was 16.6 per cent. Now it has come down to 12.96 per cent. Similarly, Pakistan is lagging in manufacturing. In the 1990s, Pakistan's growth in this sector was 15.46 per cent but now it has come down to 11.54 per cent, it added.

Meanwhile, the urbanisation rate of Bangladesh was 19.61 per cent. Now it has increased to 34.17 per cent. The rate of urbanisation in India was 25.55 per

cent. Now it stands at 34.92 per cent. But there is no such progress in the urbanisation of Pakistan. In the '90s, the urbanisation rate in Pakistan was 30.58 per cent. Now it stands at 37.17 per cent.

Bangladesh's women employment has also increased compared to India and Pakistan. In the 1990 decade, the employment rate of women in Bangladesh was 24.65 per cent. Now it has risen to 36.37 per cent. The rate was 30.27 per cent in India and fell to 20.79 per cent. On the other hand, the presence of women at the workplace in Pakistan was 14.4 per cent. Now it is 22.63 per cent.

Speaking as the programme's chief guest, Planning Minister MA Mannan said, "We are working for the rural development. We have paid more attention to rural road development, community clubs, haor development, women empowerment, and development projects for the poor. The prime minister has given me full freedom in this regard. Due to these reasons Bangladesh is moving forward at a fast pace."