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Модератор:

Абдул Матлуб Ахмед, Президент Федерации торгово-промышленных палат Бангладеш

Выступающие:

Абул Маал Абдул Мухит, Министр финансов Народной Республики Бангладеш

Х. К. Кабир, Президент, Торгово-промышленная палата Бангладеш - СНГ

Екатерина Лебедева, Вице-президент, Санкт-Петербургская торгово-промышленная палата

Хафизур Рахман Хан, Президент, Международный бизнес форум Бангладеш

Участники дискуссии:

Дилип Кумар Агарвала, Председатель совета директоров, Diamond World Ltd

Мохаммад Шафикур Рахман, Председатель, Департамент текстильной разработки, Ассоциация инженеров Бангладеш

Abdul Matlub Ahmed:

Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. We are at SPIEF 2016 in St. Petersburg. Today this is a special session on Bangladesh. The theme of today's discussion is RUSSIA – BANGLADESH: AN ERA OF NEW OPPORTUNITIES.

Ladies and gentlemen, I am extremely happy to inform you that we have His Excellency Mr. Abul Maal Abdul Muhith, the Honourable Minister of Finance of Bangladesh. We have with us Ms. Ekaterina Lebedeva, Vice President of the St. Petersburg Chamber of Commerce and Industry. And this St. Petersburg Chamber of Commerce and Industry already has an MOU with the CIS–Bangladesh Chamber of Commerce and Industry. We have with us Mr. H.K. Kabir, he is the President of CIS–Bangladesh Chamber of Commerce and Industry. And we have Hafizur Rahman Khan, President of International Business Forum of Bangladesh (IBFB). We also have participants from Bangladesh and Russia. We have some frontline discussions.

Friends, Bangladesh and Russia have a long history of friendship and goodwill. We can find that Russia, especially St. Petersburg, has advanced a lot in technology, in shipbuilding, in tourism, and in many other sectors. We are also proud to inform you that under the leadership of Her Excellency Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and under the leadership of the Finance Minister Bangladesh has grown more than 6% for the last decades, and is approaching 7% GDP per year. This has happened because of the Government policy of private sector-led growth, export-led growth and now supporting domestic industries and domestic markets. Honourable Prime Minister and the Government of Bangladesh is indebted to Russia because of the immense help during the liberation of Bangladesh. Time has come for us to renew the economic relationship between Russia and Bangladesh, especially St. Petersburg and Bangladesh. So, I would like to start the dialogue, and the first speaker will be H. K. Kabir, President of CIS–Bangladesh Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

H. K. Kabir:

Good afternoon. Thank you, honourable moderator of the session, Mr. Abdul Matlub Ahmed, President of FBCCI. I honestly request that chief of the panelists,

His Excellency Abul Maal Abdul Muhith, honourable Minister of Finance of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, honourable Vice-President of the St. Petersburg Chamber of Commerce and Industry, to accept my greetings on behalf of the CIS-BCCI. I would like to thank all the members and participants of this session. Finally, we are very thankful to the organizers of SPIEF for organizing the massive international economic forum. We all from Bangladeshi delegation are very happy to be here. Why are we here? We have found many reasons in common interests, values and views. We strongly believe that today will be a historical session for us. SPIEF is a great platform to introduce Bangladesh to Russia and other global partners from a 360-degree perspective. Once we believe that, as a South-Asian regional partner we will make a platform for bilateral trade, investment, and economic cooperation we can show our interest everywhere. Bangladesh is now one of the top global investment targets. It makes a lot of efforts to improve economic ties with other countries. We are here to explore common interests in trade, investment and economy between Russia and Bangladesh because this zone is very important for us. We think this zone can be a platform for export destinations in other countries. We are the top largest garments and textile exporter in the world. So, last year there was a 1.5 billion dollar rise in this trade's volume. And there are great perspectives in the future. We are convinced to share values and a common view of the business partner of other countries within the framework of SPIEF. These values will be a new opportunity for the profitable and true relationship between Moscow and Dhaka. Trade and economic relations between Bangladesh and other countries of the world are extraordinary. We observe that Russia is focusing on the Asian market because this market is very promising and fast growing. We won this point to our favour. Our Government is very open to welcome foreign investment in Bangladesh. We strongly believe that Bangladesh could be a special economic zone for the Russian Federation. This is the time to set off our action plan because we want to achieve all mutual goals with some interest and value and views. We need to coordinate actions between us to build up a mutual relationship we have. We know the development of bilateral trade and investment between Russia and Bangladesh will be priority for the Business Committee of

Bangladesh. Regarding this issue, we have finished some recommendations to resolve the barriers. The recommendations are complete in an agreement of joint intergovernmental commissions to establish small banking channels, to develop reasonable connections and communication, to establish a central warehouse, so that we can control the export and import, and also some other materials of economic and professional activities and services in order to set up mutual trade and investment. I think we would like to offer the business community protection of their rights as well. We are very lucky, our Honourable Minister and the Vice-President of the St. Petersburg Chamber of Commerce, to be here today. We hope to establish a friendly business platform for us as the key decision makers to resolve all the barriers of mutual business interests. Thank you very much.

Abdul Matlub Ahmed:

Thank you, Mr. Kabir. We are grateful for all the efforts to bring the Bangladeshi delegation to St. Petersburg. And we are quite a number of people who have come to St. Petersburg. For many of us, it is our first time in St. Petersburg, and maybe, in Russia.

We have with us the Honourable Minister of Finance of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, who would like to give a keynote speech on our agenda today. I would request His Excellency, Mr. Abul Maal Abdul Muhith to kindly say the speech now. Thank you so much.

Abul Maal Abdul Muhith:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Good afternoon to all of you and personal best wishes for you. I have come to Russia after almost four decades – my last visit was in 1974. Of course, I visited some of the CIS countries as they emerged, quite a few of them, but I did not return to Russia after 1974. I have been here for these three days, and what I have witnessed is dramatic changes in the living conditions in Russia compared to what they were in my last visit. Another important feature to note, which is, of course, not very new, is the influence of globalization on all countries, including Russia. We have a highly globalized world today. If I use some product, I will not be able to say where it is from. In the

old days I could say, "This is from Russia, this is from Germany", and so on. But in this globalized world a product may be coming from France, but if you look at it, you will find that there are contents from all these countries. This is wonderful for Bangladesh, I should say. Because what we have found in our experience is that we are quite good at value addition. We take a product from one country and we add value to it in a very substantive manner. We are, for example, one of the most important exporters of garments in the world. We do not produce any cotton, we did not have much of a textile industry, but we started teaching and we started stitching, and that is how this industry grew. Now we have a completely composite sort of position. We are producing fabrics, we are producing clothes, and we are making garments. It is the same story with leather. We produce some leather not of good quality but we know how to turn it into good quality and trying to do that. Then if our raw leather starts getting exported, it will develop and then we will import leather parts and add value to it. That is becoming a very important industry for us. We have something of our own, very recent, but very sophisticated and modern — that is pharmaceuticals. We have set up a modern pharmaceutical industry and our products go to 120 countries of the world. Trade as an element of the gross domestic product is only 40%. Our target is to reach 60% of the gross domestic product in trade because trade is a very important source of growth. Yes, our first emphasis was on expansion of domestic market. But then for this domestic market to grow fast, you need to enter the global market. And that is what we have been quite successfully doing in the last few years, when global trade has not been so good. And it is really dangerous at the moment because growth in output, which is always lower than growth in trade, has become faster than the growth in trade. This is not healthy for the global economy, and I hope that this position is only temporary and we shall very soon get out of it. And again, trade will become the most important element for the growth of the world economy. Our growth has been pretty good. In the last six or seven years trade growth has been very slow and low. But our trade growth in the last seven years has been almost always two digits. This year it was less than two digits, but we are approaching two digits now, and the growth by the end of this fiscal year will be around 10%, if not 11. And there are

other entrepreneurs and business communities that have shown great expertise in penetrating into this market. We are, of course, the grain country and a good importer. Our import is roughly 45 billion dollars a year, and the export is 32 billion dollars a year. And this constitutes roughly 40% of the gross domestic product.

What else? We are basically an agricultural country. And this is something interesting everyone should remember, because even when a country is industrialized, the core element is agriculture. The best example is Denmark, and we have something like Denmark. Denmark is an agricultural country, it has grown on agriculture. But it is a very industrialized country, but even now the core is the agriculture. And that is also in Bangladesh. Our agricultural export is just probably 7 or 8 per cent of the total export market. But it is basically an agricultural country, it continues to be so. In agriculture with new technology we have grown very fast, indeed. For example, let us take the issue of food grains. We used to produce 11 million tons of food grains some forty years ago. And you know — I should have said that at the beginning — we are a large population in a very small area. Only 147,000 square kilometers of land and 155 million people, so it is very densely populated. The density of population is little more than a thousand. And the next country with high density is India. And if you take a country in Europe, the density would be probably not more than about 400 people — let us not take Russia, it is very different from the rest of Europe, which is highly crowded. In the small land area with hardly any mineral resources we are a country which is steadily maintaining a growth rate of 6% for the last two decades. And right now this year we are having a growth rate of 7%. This is my point. We bring in various products in various places and then we add value and sent them to the world. This is what we do to develop the economy of the country.

What else should I speak about? We have the greatest deficit in infrastructure development. But that is where we are not alone. The whole of Asia, which has been growing very fast this century, has this problem of infrastructure deficit. And in this development of infrastructure the private sector has become a very important partner of all the governments. This private–public partnership in

infrastructure development has really changed the scenario in many countries. And this is what we are waiting and asking for.

I should make the last point. Bangladesh is a very growing market. At the moment this is a market of about 60 million people. And this market is growing all the time. This can develop into a market of 120 million people in a very short space. And that is why it is a wonderful place for investment. And as far as investment is concerned, the provisions are very favourable, and I think it is ranked as one of the finest countries for investment opportunities. Yes, we have problems, problems with bureaucracy. Procedures take time, but we are trying our best to eliminate bottlenecks – bottlenecks of time taking during decisions, bottlenecks of coordination affect various elements of investment. I believe that almost every year we make progress in the evolution, which is made by the World Bank on business opportunities in various countries.

Well, I think I should stop here at this moment and let people from the floor and other people from the stage to continue the discussion. Thank you.

Abdul Matlub Ahmed:

Thank you, Honourable Minister, for your wonderful insight into the prospects of investments in Bangladesh and the great opportunities that lie there for the Russian investors.

I would now like to have the pleasure of requesting Ms. Ekaterina Lebedeva, the honourable Vice-President of the St. Petersburg Chamber of Commerce and Industry. She speaks beautiful English. I do not know whether she is going to speak it or not, but it is her option.

Е. Лебедева:

Спасибо большое, я все-таки буду говорить по-русски, потому что у нас двусторонний форум, и позвольте мне говорить на русском.

Прежде всего, хочу вас поприветствовать в Санкт-Петербурге, уважаемый господин министр, уважаемая делегация из Бангладеш, и хочу поблагодарить за то, что вы проявили интерес к Петербургскому экономическому форуму и к сотрудничеству с Россией. Я хочу вас

поприветствовать от имени системы Торгово-промышленных палат Российской Федерации. В систему входят Палата России и 181 региональная палата. Я представляю Санкт-Петербургскую торгово-промышленную палату, и, как уже было сказано ранее, в прошлом году мы подписали меморандум о сотрудничестве с Бангладешской торгово-промышленной палатой по сотрудничеству со странами СНГ. Надо сказать, что теперь нам предстоит очень много работы по налаживанию деловых контактов между нашими предпринимателями.

Я хочу остановиться на том, что в прошлом году, когда я готовилась к этой сессии, я посмотрела статистику, и тогда наш товарооборот достиг рекордной отметки 1 млрд 400 млн долларов — в источниках называлась эта цифра. Но сейчас мы должны задать себе вопрос, устраивает ли она нас и хотим ли мы остаться на том же уровне, или же мы хотим увеличить эту цифру не только количественно, но и качественно? Поэтому очень важно, наверное, то, что мы все-таки недостаточно много знаем друг о друге, недостаточно знаем не в плане того, что Бангладеш — это очень интересная страна, а Россия — огромная страна с огромными возможностями, но мы не знаем и о тех деловых, инвестиционных возможностях, которые можем предложить друг другу.

По той же статистике, из России импортировали в Бангладеш машинно-техническую продукцию, были удобрения, а основной статьей экспорта из Бангладеш были, естественно, одежда, обувь. Поэтому нам нужно задать себе вопрос, хотим ли мы продолжать работу, оставить эти статьи экспорта и импорта или же мы хотим выйти на новый качественный уровень?

Уже многие крупные компании работают в Бангладеш, реализуются проекты по строительству атомной электростанции, но, мне кажется, также важно выстраивать связи между средними предпринимателями — теми предпринимателями, которые производят какую-то продукцию и хотят представить ее на нашем рынке. И вот здесь, наверное, очень важно именно сотрудничество деловых ассоциаций, торгово-промышленных палат, потому что средний бизнес ограничен в ресурсах. Он ограничен в информационных ресурсах, материальных ресурсах, и наша задача —

помочь бизнесу Бангладеш и России узнать друг о друге и о тех возможностях, которые мы можем предложить. Если говорить про наших предпринимателей, то, конечно же, это тоже должна быть двухсторонняя дорога. Сейчас очень активно идет поддержка несырьевого экспорта, и многие компании, российские в том числе, задумались о том, что они хотят выйти на новые перспективные рынки. А новые перспективные рынки — это не только торговля, но и, возможно, инвестиции. Поэтому здесь нам нужно быть в постоянном диалоге и смотреть, что мы хотим, какие мы хотим решить проблемы, какая продукция может быть востребована, какие технологии с нашей стороны могут быть востребованы. В Петербурге у нас активно развивается, например, фармацевтический кластер, машиностроение. Я думаю, другие регионы также могут предложить свою конкурентоспособную продукцию. Поэтому здесь, как мне кажется, нужно проводить больше встреч именно на уровне предпринимателей и узнавать друг друга, узнавать возможности, устанавливать деловые контакты.

Я очень надеюсь, что это наша первая встреча, но не последняя. Нам предстоит действительно очень много работы, и я очень надеюсь, что и предприниматели из Бангладеш посетят Санкт-Петербург и другие регионы России, и наши делегации будут более активно участвовать в тех выставках и мероприятиях, которые проходят в Бангладеш. Очень важно быть в постоянном диалоге, мир меняется очень быстро, и чтобы мы достигли того качественного уровня и решили те задачи, которые мы сегодня на этой сессии поставим, нам нужно очень много работать, трудиться и быть в постоянном контакте. Спасибо.

Abdul Matlub Ahmed:

Thank you very much for your wonderful insight into the opportunities that Russia and Bangladesh have together. And I do believe that your suggestions will go a long way in expanding our investment relationship.

We have one more speaker. He is Mr. Hafizur Rahman Khan, the President of the International Business Forum of Bangladesh (IBFB).

Hafizur Rahman Khan:

Thank you very much. Honourable Minister and other speakers and participants, good afternoon. We have already discussed a lot of things regarding the relationship between Russia and Bangladesh. There is something I want to repeat again. This relationship started in 1971, from our liberation war. All of us remember the way Russia supported us at that time. And the whole Bangladeshi nation always respects all the Russian people because of this. After that the relationship somehow cooled down a little bit. And as our Finance Minister always mentions, we want to rebuild our relationship. We have to be more active to rebuild it. Within this period both the Bangladesh side and the Russian side had huge changes. The other speakers have already mentioned some of these changes, but I want to mention a few points again. Bangladesh has 160 million people, it is a huge population. And if you see the income of Bangladeshi people in the last ten years, it has increased from USD 40 to USD 500. The purchasing power of the Bangladeshi people is increasing. So, the huge population with the very reasonable purchasing power is creating a huge demand for products. Our GDP growth, as our moderator has already mentioned, is now almost 7%. We always convey our thanks that it has happened under the leadership of our Finance Minister. He continuously increases the budget size and collects the value from the local recourses. And the infrastructure development work is going on. This is the way Bangladesh is progressing. Russia over the last ten years under the leadership of Putin is growing. I think this is the proper time to give proper attention to rebuilding the relationship between Bangladesh and Russia. In the present world a business relationship is the most effective one for building a relationship of two nations. So, how can we develop the economic relationship that other speakers have already mentioned? We have a few ways. One is that businessmen can import Russian products to Bangladesh – I mentioned that we have the ability to consume that. And second, Russian people also can import Bangladeshi products – we are number two in the garments manufacturing in the world. Yesterday I saw in the shopping malls that the garments are all made in Bangladesh. We are very glad to see that, but unfortunately I came to know that it is not coming directly from Bangladesh to here. It is coming through third

countries. We must make some arrangement to overcome this type of barrier so that the Bangladeshi products can easily come to Russia. We heard that there is some banking problem, and to overcome the banking problems we need to take some steps. The third point is that Russia can invest in Bangladesh. The Finance Minister has already mentioned that with the development of infrastructure and electricity, there is a huge opportunity, the huge development that is going on in Bangladesh. I want to mention that it can be done under the private-public partnership, so businessmen from Russia can show their interest. Another thing I want to inform you about is that the young entrepreneur group in Bangladesh has quickly developed recently, and in our total population 40% of the people are young, so in the future we have a huge opportunity for doing business together. IBFB mostly does the research job for development of the business community and tries to find the problems which we are facing. We are ready to work together with the CIS-Bangladesh Chamber. We are ready to help, to identify the problems and to try to find the solutions to propose to both the governments. I forgot to say. At the moment we have what is called the demographic dividend. We have large young population who are interested and who can be used, talented people. But this dividend is only up to 2043. Just another interesting thing – about 27 years. That is all that we have in store. And this is the period when the dividend has to be cashed. Thank you very much.

Abdul Matlub Ahmed:

Thank you for your wonderful thoughts. Ladies and gentlemen, as you know, our Honourable Ambassador Extraordinary to the Russian Federation could not be here, he has gone to Bangladesh for an urgent meeting, and therefore the way that we will continue the rest of the session is we have two front-row participants. They will speak and then I will leave the floor open for questions and answers. And then we have a small talking for the honourable guests and the chief speakers, and, of course, an announcement of an agreement. The first front-row participant, Mr. Dilip Kumar Agarwala, Chairman of the Board of Directors, Diamond World Ltd.

Dilip Kumar Agarwala:

I will take one minute. Honourable Moderator Abdul Matlub Ahmed, Honourable President of CIS-Bangladesh Chamber, and Honourable Minister of Finance of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, good afternoon. Bangladesh is a huge opportunity. You know that Bangladesh is a milestone in R&D sector in the world. We can create another milestone in the jewellery sector. We have very cheap manpower, our government is very business-friendly. I am proud to invite you to visit Bangladesh, as well as its diamond sector, and invest into it. From Bangladesh side and a the Director of Diamond World Ltd. we assure you to give you 100% support and feedback on every step of our investment. Thank you.

Abdul Matlub Ahmed:

Thank you, Mr. Dilip Kumar Agarwala. He is one of the largest gold and diamond jewellery manufacturers in Bangladesh. He has some catalogues, if anybody wants. And he is the one who will be signing an agreement on gold and diamond export to St. Petersburg.

Mr. Mohammad Shafiqur Rahman, the last front-row participant, the Chairman of the Textile Engineering Division, The Institution of Engineers, Bangladesh.

Mohammad Shafiqur Rahman:

Ladies and gentlemen, good afternoon. I am engineer Shafiqur Rahman, Chairman of the Textile Engineering Division, The Institution of Engineers, Bangladesh and the Managing Director of HAMS Group. First of all, I would like to thank CIS-BCCI and SPIEF. I am glad and delighted to be here. I am thankful to the Honourable Finance Minister of the People's Republic of Bangladesh Mr. Abul Maal Abdul Muhith, President of FBCCI Mr. Abdul Matlub Ahmed and President of CIS-BCCI Mr. H. K. Kabir. On this occasion I would like to remember with honour of our great leader Sheikh Mujibur Rahman who built the historical friendship with Russia in the last century. I would like to say a few words on the topic of today's session. Russia has been the best friend of Bangladesh since 1971, from our liberation. After that our relationship became cold, but Bangladesh under the leadership of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and his daughter,

the Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina Wajed now wants to build up our relationship with Russia. After 1975, the economic relationship was not good, but the Russian market is very big in terms of export and import. We import fertilizers, cotton, food grains, especially wheat, agricultural machines from Russia, and recently we bought a big nuclear power plant. Now I would especially like to pay attention to garments. Mr. Hafizur Rahman Khan has already explained this story. We see that 80% of garments in apparel shops are made in Bangladesh. We are happy about that, but at the same time we are now thinking about how to export garments directly. Even then I would also buy some T-shirt from Marks & Spenser, so we are requesting you to come to Bangladesh and import garments from it. One of the speakers has said that Bangladesh is now the second largest garments manufacturer in the world, and now we are trying to be first. Within five years, we have been trying to be first exporters. So, this is the high time to come to invest, and we invite you to come to Bangladesh for investments. Our Honourable Prime Minister and great leader Sheikh Hasina Wajed has already declared that by 2021 we will export 50 billion. Now we export 26 billion garments, but for 2021 the export target is 50 billion. But we can expand this market, especially for Russia, so it will be more than that. So again, we are expecting the relationship between Russia and Bangladesh in the next few years will be nice. Almost all of the speakers talked about problems we have. The hardest barrier is the banking sector. If the policy is positive, then we will be able to export many things in this area.

Honourable Minister, you are a very dynamic and successful leader. Through your leadership we must receive this opportunity very shortly. Again, I want to thank Honourable Minister, President of FBCCI, President of CIS-BCCI, and all the participants. I hope this economic forum will be successful and we will get best results from this very soon.

Abdul Matlub Ahmed:

Thank you very much. Now we have the floor open for any questions that you would like to ask the Honourable Minister or other speakers. I would request the Russian counterparts to ask their questions first.

А. Сухарев:

Сухарев Александр Евгеньевич. Я хотел бы задать вопрос Екатерине Лебедевой. Какой первый шаг должен быть сделан для развития внешнеэкономической деятельности между Бангладешем и Россией? Что может сделать сейчас Бангладеш или же Россия? Спасибо.

Е. Лебедева:

Спасибо большое за вопрос. Шаги уже делаются. Насколько я знаю, была создана или находится в процессе создания межправительственная комиссия по научно-техническому и экономическому сотрудничеству. Это будет очень эффективный механизм для продвижения совместных проектов. Но, если говорить о конкретных действиях, мы в торгово-промышленных палатах привыкли к практической деятельности, поэтому, как мне кажется, начать нужно со взаимного обмена делегациями, участия в выставках. Должны приехать предприниматели, за столом должны сидеть российские предприниматели, и только из таких двусторонних встреч мы можем получить какой-то результат. Мы можем встречаться, мы можем делать презентации, но пока два предпринимателя не сядут за стол переговоров и не поймут, что они хотят делать бизнес вместе, к сожалению, результата не будет. Это не делается каким-то волевым политическим решением, хотя, конечно, это тоже очень важно, нужна именно взаимная заинтересованность и взаимные контакты.

Что касается нас, мы подписали соглашение с Палатой Бангладеш. Я очень надеюсь, что они привезут нам делегацию, и они нас регулярно информируют о тех мероприятиях, которые проходят в Бангладеш. Мы уже смотрим, что интересно именно нашим предпринимателям, предпринимателям Петербурга, поэтому я очень надеюсь, что следующим шагом станет либо визит нашей делегации в Бангладеш, либо какая-то презентация уже экономических возможностей для наших предпринимателей, для наших экспортеров, где не в таком узком формате — все-таки время у нас здесь ограничено, — будут представлены

конкретные предложения по сотрудничеству, какие-то экономические показатели, потому что предпринимателям нужно дать информацию.

Насколько я понимаю, основным преимуществом Бангладеш является то, что они могут производить высокую добавленную стоимость, то есть те компании, которые хотят выйти на глобальный рынок, могут использовать это как площадку для каких-то процессов. По отраслям я могу отвечать только за город Санкт-Петербург, не за Россию, потому что каждый регион обладает своим потенциалом. В Петербурге у нас активно развивается фармацевтический кластер, машиностроение, новые технологии, поэтому это те отрасли, которые мы, наверное, можем предлагать. Есть еще масса других регионов, у которых есть также сильные отрасли, но здесь нужно, как я уже говорила, строить отношения на взаимном интересе. То есть посмотреть, какие проблемы стоят перед Бангладеш, нужны ли им новые технологии, нужны ли им технологии водоочистки, нужны ли им новые медицинские технологии, то есть, именно здесь мы и должны найти какое-то поле для сотрудничества.

Abdul Matlub Ahmed:

Thank you very much. Very interesting, but I want the Honourable Minister to put a few word here if he wants.

Abul Maal Abdul Muhith:

What I could mention is that one of the problems that we diagnosed was the absence of banking links. Our Central Bank is already in discussion with your Central Bank in order to develop this area, and we expect some quick results. Maybe within the next six months it will be possible to have some banking channels for various transactions completed. What else? For our commodities to come into your country we need some kind of clearance that you have given to quite a number of other countries, Asia as well. This is the area where you have to work with them in order to get this kind of preferences.

Abdul Matlub Ahmed:

Thank you Your Excellency.

В. Банников:

Банников Владимир, эксперт в области международной бизнес-коммуникации, частный инвестор.

Я думаю, что сегодня представителям России, сидящим в зале, было бы полезно получить информацию об условиях бизнеса в Бангладеш: налоговая система, возможности экспорта, прибыли. Я с удовольствием воспользовался бы этой информацией и смог бы распространить ее по своим каналам, потому что у нас есть бизнес в России, в Европе, мы с удовольствием можем обеспечить продвижение качественной продукции из Бангладеш в Россию и Европу и представить российские технологии переработки сельскохозяйственного сырья с целью выпуска продукции, полезной для здоровья, так называемых healthy food products. Это то, что сейчас очень востребовано и в России, и в Европе. Поэтому был бы рад, если бы кто-то из уважаемых партнеров из Бангладеш смог предоставить такую информацию. Спасибо.

Abdul Matlub Ahmed:

After the session is over, you can have B2B discussion with our partners.

Abul Maal Abdul Muhith:

I can say something. If you invest, you can send your profit back home with no problem. If you want to withdraw, you can take your capital out.

Abdul Matlub Ahmed:

I am certain that some members of our delegation would like to speak to you on these issues.

Question from the audience:

Good afternoon, I am Md. Lokman Hossain Akash, Senior Vice-President of CIS-Bangladesh Chamber of Commerce and Industry. Respected Minister and Moderator, I would like to draw the attention of Mrs. Ekaterina Lebedeva, who is Vice President of the St. Petersburg Chamber of Commerce and Industry, that one very important thing is that we are exporting all our imported brands worldwide, especially textiles – in American and European brands. If we look at the data, we export 5 or more billion to Germany. And Russia also imports vast volumes of apparel from Germany and some other countries. Surplus in the market. We have seen lots of apparel with *Made in Bangladesh* tags there. But unfortunately, according to your data, we export only less than 200 million dollars. So, there is a big amount that you import from other countries, but not directly from Bangladesh. But you pay more. That is why I am requesting you for a direct contact, we would like to supply your parties, and we can assure the best quality with the best price. In this regard, the St. Petersburg Chamber of Commerce and Industry can play a vital role with our Chamber and our Federation, so from this session we can start our own B2B meeting, and if you help more importers or retailers, you can give their contact numbers. This will be a very good session if we just continue this one. Thank you.

Abdul Matlub Ahmed:

Thank you. Ekaterina, would you like to respond?

Е. Лебедева:

Во-первых, я так понимаю, что все-таки та одежда, которая идет к нам, идет под международными брендами, и, соответственно, очень большой рекламный бюджет вкладывается в продвижение этих марок. Может быть, имеет смысл продвигать марку *Made in Bangladesh*? И как ответ на такое продвижение продукции, как мы знаем, очень эффективно также создание торговых домов, когда несколько предпринимателей объединяются, потому что под единым брендом легче продвигать свою продукцию, нежели вы будете выходить на рынок отдельно. Во-первых, вы по окончании встречи

передайте мне, пожалуйста, каталоги и информацию, и посмотрим, чем мы можем вам помочь.

Abdul Matlub Ahmed:

Thank you.

Ю. Белоусов:

Большое спасибо. Меня зовут Юрий Белоусов, компания «Информационные системы».

Я хотел бы узнать, как вы смотрите на развитие и поддержание в вашей стране IT-сектора. Планируются ли какие-то преференции для этого бизнеса, например, открытие представительств и филиалов либо полный перевод? IT-сектор — это такой сектор, который невозможно удержать. Можно сделать какие-то преференции и получить достаточно серьезный и привлекательный ресурс.

Abdul Matlub Ahmed:

Thank you, Yuri. The Honourable Minister will respond to this one.

Abul Maal Abdul Muhith:

ICT – Information and communications technology – is quite an important sector to us, although we invited ICT pretty late. But right now we are exporting ICT products and services – mostly software, that is about a hundred million. And it is growing at the rate of 24–25% per year. The growth in the ICT export sector is 25% per year. ICT brands have their offices in Bangladesh. So, Bangladesh is quite closely connected with the ICT.

Abdul Matlub Ahmed:

Thank you very much. I think we are coming to an end of the questions and answers. Now we have a small token, a gold coin, which was minted by the Bangladeshi company that is going to hand it over to our Honourable Minister and to the Vice President. On one side of the gold coin is the Father of the

Nation, and on the other side is the Bangladesh map. So, the Honourable Minister is going to present this gold coin to the Honourable Vice President of the St. Petersburg Chamber of Commerce and Industry. He is the producer. The size of the coin looks small but it is very interesting because there is the motive of the Father of the Nation on one side. And there is one more thing – here is a catalogue of the company and you can get very nice diamond sets and all that very cheap and very popular.

Next one will be offered to the Honourable chief speaker, Finance Minister will receive one gold coin with Sheikh Mujibur's motive on it.

Thank you very much. We have just another thing — we have two agreements, which you have to work on, on behalf of the Russians because they could not come in. This is about export of gold and jewellery to Russia. They came in the morning, they discussed it and signed it, they were waiting outside the gate but could not come in because of the security passes. So, you now have the duty to exchange the signatures on behalf of the Russian company in front of our Honourable Minister.

This is the signature of export of Bangladesh gold and jewellery into Russia. The other proposition is taking Russian rough diamonds to Bangladesh, cut them out in Bangladesh and bring them back to Russia and their market. So, I thank the Russians, all the signings have been done. So now we are on our way forward. Thank you, ladies and gentlemen. We are coming to the end of our programme, but I must tell you that when we came to Russia, we had to change planes once or two times. I believe that time has come for us to have a direct flight from Bangladesh to Moscow. This is one of the requests from the Federation of Bangladesh Chamber of Commerce and Industries to the St. Petersburg Chamber of Commerce and Industry. Please organize direct flights. Number two: our Honourable Finance Minister has already mentioned that a direct banking channel has to start. He is working on it, and I do hope that it will be solved very soon. We have already heard about the direct shipments – how the Russians are losing money, how the Russian consumers could get the same shirts cheaper if they could import directly from Bangladesh. I believe that Russia will take care of this. Lastly, we mentioned here that the private sector of Bangladesh is very

active with their mega-products. The government of Bangladesh wants the private sector to grow, and therefore we are seeking Russian investments, both governmental and private, in infrastructure, with the Bangladeshi private enterprises. We feel that “Russia-Bangladesh: an era of new opportunities” have come. We already see the first steps, and we do look forward to much better days ahead. Thank you very much. Let Russia–Bangladesh good relationship live long.