

Sixth Ministerial Meet of the WTO in Hong Kong had started moving forward further the implementation of Doha Development Round and the process of trade liberalization. The principal negotiation issues were involved the implementation of Agreement on Agriculture, liberalization of service sectors and Non Agriculture Market access of developing and least develop countries to the developed countries.

The present negotiation issues are profoundly interlinked with the life and economy of our country. Realizing the importance of the issues which are interwoven with the life and livelihoods of the millions of workers and peasants, INCIDIN Bangladesh has accomplished comprehensive activities to ensure the rights of the poor people including workers and peasants in the world trade and to build awareness among the people both in the country and in Hong Kong. The accomplished activities can be divided in two ways

1. National Campaign Activity
2. International Campaign Activity

National Campaign Activity

Before the Ministerial Meeting in Hong Kong we conducted National campaigns in 27 Districts of the country. Six regional peasants' gatherings were held as a part of a comprehensive Agriculture Campaign titled 'our agriculture is our life'. Moreover, through facilitating Agriculture Consultations across the country we have published a position paper named 'Agrarian living beyond corporate cage' compiling the views, and opinions of the peasants. This position paper has reflected the problems and solutions of our peasantry as well as the concern of Bangladesh and its peasants.

The other negotiation issue of the meeting was Non Agriculture Market access. We exchange views with significant number of trade leaders who is working in ready made garments through several consultations. The deep apprehension of the workers was articulated regarding the duty free market access of our garments product to the developed countries and we published a booklet on Non Agriculture Market access to incorporate their concern in the continuous trade negotiation process.

We carried out a web campaign urging to uphold the interest of the least developed countries in the trade negotiation of Non Agriculture Market Access and at the same time preserve the interest of the least developed countries in the overall trade negotiation to save the livelihoods of the 20 millions workers. Renowned economists, politicians, social scientists of country and abroad 1500 people put their affirmative signature in this campaign.

On October 20, 2005 INCIDIN Bangladesh expressed the concern of Bangladesh on agriculture issues and detailed out the future activities in Agriculture through arranging a press conference. During this conference INCIDIN Bangladesh also emphasized on the inclusion of the peasants representative in the business delegation who took part in the negotiation in Hong Kong.

International Campaign Activities

A team of INCIDIN Bangladesh went to Hong Kong presenting the demand of Bangladesh in world trade and drawing attention on numerous negative effect of trade liberalization on the livelihoods of workers and peasants. The team was also involved in providing advocacy support and expressing solidarity with social movements and organizations of different countries in favor of Bangladesh. The team was consisted of Executive Director A. K. M. Mustaque Ali, Advocacy Chief Nasimul Ahasan and Policy Analyst Rafiquel Alam Khan. Different activities were accomplished during ministerial meet to raise the voice of the peasants and workers of Bangladesh in global trade forum. We are describing our day to day activities here chronologically.

First day –December, 13, 2005

A Two Kilometer long signature banner collected from the peasants and cross section of people of four region of the country was placed in Victoria Park of Hong Kong. Victoria Park was allocated for arranging meeting place of common people and all sorts of protest gatherings and rallies. From the very first date of the ministerial meeting protesters and representatives of numerous countries extended their support to the appeal by putting their signature on our banner.

Second day- December, 14, 2005

The representatives participated in the protest gathering and rally with Hong Kong Peoples alliance carrying Bangladesh flag, banner with peasants appeal and the banner demanding the duty free market access of the Bangladesh ready made garments.

Third day –December, 15, 2005

The ‘peasants paper’ which demand to make sure the livelihoods of peasants and food rights of the people and the ‘position paper’ concerning the life and livelihoods of the workers was submitted to the deputy director of World Trade Organization in convention center during ministerial meet. On behalf of INCIDIN Bangladesh Executive Director A. K. M. Mustaque Ali, Advocacy Chief Nasimul Ahasan and Policy Analyst Rafiquel Alam Khan submitted the papers.

Fourth day –December, 16, 2005

All participants and protesters of Bangladesh who came in Hong Kong declared this Day as Bangladesh Day since it is the glorious victory day of Bangladesh. A gathering was arranged in Victoria Park at 11a.m. to uphold the justified demand of the affected segments including the peasants, workers and women of Bangladesh. Along with representatives of students, NGOs, trade unions renowned personalities participated in the gathering. A rally marched in the streets of Hong Kong after finishing the gathering. The colorful Bangladeshi Flag attracted the city dwellers of Hong Kong and the people of other countries.

In the evening, along with Jubilee South and other 18 organizations of the different countries, INCIDIN Bangladesh was combined to arrange protest gathering in Sego square in protest of awful attitude of US and European Union in the World trade Organization meeting. In this gathering the proposition of 'Aid for trade' of the developed countries was highly rejected and in contrast the gathering demanded a world with fair trade.

Fifth day –December, 17, 2005 (Day of dreadful luck)

The representatives informed in the previous late night that the coordinator of negotiation group Pakistan opposing in hard manner in respect to the access of Bangladesh ready made garments in US market in Non Agriculture Market Access negotiation. US showed highly negative attitude regarding the duty free market access issues. Bangladesh business delegation failed to negotiate on particular issue though they try their level best. As a result, frustration, anger emerged among the protesters. INCIDIN Bangladesh with other organizations took initiative to arrange a protest rally and a good number of protesters participated in the protest gathering and rally. In Sego square Nasimul Ahasan of INCIDIN Bangladesh addressed in the gathering to protect the livelihoods of the 20 millions garments workers. In this day the protesters did get the proper information about the trajectory of the negotiation from the representative who was inside the convention center and they had to rely on the Bangladeshi media representatives who were staying in convention center. The representatives of different organizations did not participate in the protest gathering though they were requested incessantly.

Sixth day –December, 17, 2005 (mixed feelings from global solidarity)

In this day, we finally informed that we are not getting the duty free market access of our ready made garments and the negotiation of agriculture have also finished without any development and in terms of development of service sectors we are in much more stress from developed countries and their multinational companies. From morning Victoria square was chanted with slogans of protesters of different countries. The protesters of different countries participate in the protest rally and gathering. At evening of the December 18, protest rally turned the city into a inactive city which was one of the largest rally in hundred years.

What has happened in Hong Kong?

Six days long ministerial meeting has thrown away the last remaining of Doha development agenda into the dustbin. The latest text presented in Hong Kong has destroyed the least possibility of fair trade agenda for the poor people. The least developed countries got together in Hong Kong for-

- To prevent the developed countries dumping policies maneuvered against the agro product of the least developed countries, by using the rules and policies of world trade organizations
- To ensure sufficient policy space for developing and least developed countries which will protect the threatened agriculture, garments industry and service sectors

- To open new opportunity for the least developed countries in getting market access of their agro products and garments product in the developed world

But in reality it was contrasting scenario

Regarding NAMA (Non Agricultural Market Access) Developed world is stick to their prior position. Developed world on the one hand pushes the developing countries to open their market for the manufactured product of developed countries and on the other hand they want exclusive domination on the natural resources of the least developed countries. Swiss formula'- the policy of tariff reduction, to destroy the development sovereignty and industrialization of the least developed countries by creating pressure on them.

Regarding development: Today the development box is empty. 97% of the tariff line, USA offers to the least developed countries in duty free market is nothing but the hypocrisy of the following. The rest of the 3% will allow USA an extreme arbitrary power to save their market. And this 3% includes all garments, leather goods and sugar which are exported to developed countries.

Regarding cotton

US senator Saxby Chambliss made it clear in his position paper that USA do not consider cotton other than agro products. In the text in terms of cotton the promises existed as if now degraded as it should be.

Considering service sector

In spite of incessant protest, the service sector is going to open for the transnational companies of the rich countries and these companies will control water, electricity and infrastructure sectors.

Considering food aid

The food politics of the USA will not be controlled by the rules and policies of the world trade organization. The present declaration does not include the demand of the least developed countries of selling their food aid to third country for capital accumulation

Hong Kong Ministerial meet and the achievement of Bangladesh

- Identifying Bangladesh as a first category exporting competitive nation USA is going to cut down the preferential trade benefit
- Bangladesh is losing the main exporting market in near future
- The draft declaration has cut down the opportunity of tariff free market access of garment product
- The leather industry is losing its duty free market access in international market