

Negotiations Case Study
(CUTS Training Program, October 2007)

You are a director in the Commerce Ministry and have to undertake the following task: India and Bangladesh have decided that the Free Trade Area (FTA) negotiations, on-and-off for the past four years, should now move forward; Dhaka is unwilling, at this point, to include natural gas in this arrangement, since this is a sensitive political issue (some domestic elements would regard an agreement covering gas as a 'sell-out' to India).

The Commerce Ministry is initiating afresh the internal consultations and preparations for this FTA. Bilateral discussions are underway, through diplomatic channels, on the precise agenda, the dates for the first session of negotiations, and the rough road map it should follow. Your task is to initiate the preparatory work, so that the first session may be held in the next three months, before the incoming visit to of the Bangladesh Prime Minister taking place at the end of February 2008.

You have been told that this proposed FTA with Bangladesh will not have any direct connection with long-delayed SAFTA process, and that you should assume the FTA to be a *de novo* exercise. You are to prepare a draft proposal that will be finalized by the Commerce Secretary, as the basis for discussion at the meeting of the Committee of Secretaries taking place in four days time. You have been instructed that an inter-ministerial approach is essential this time, so that the activities proposed reflect a 'whole of government' approach (some of your colleagues claim in informal discussion that this is a novel idea that may not work, but you know that the Minister is keen on this method). Your draft proposal should cover the following points:

- What are the tasks to be handled in the next 3 months, before the first session of the FTA negotiations? Which ministry or agency will handle each of these tasks? The Commerce Ministry will coordinate the work.
- How will you involve thinktanks and research agencies in the preparatory process and what tasks will you give them?
- What timeline do you propose, between the first week of November 2007 and the end of January for all the preparatory tasks? It is assumed that the first session of the FTA negotiations will take place in mid-February 2008, just before the visit of the Bangladesh PM.

Your draft proposal should be comprehensive but not exceed two pages.
