



Chapter  
3

The Chamber Now: Organization





# 3

## THE CHAMBER NOW: ORGANIZATION

The Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Dhaka (MCCI) is the oldest and the preeminent trade organization of Bangladesh. Its membership roll encompasses leading commercial and industrial organizations of the country, including public sector corporations and local as well as multinational companies. Presently, almost all major enterprises of the manufacturing and service sectors are among its members. The Chamber offers a wide range of professional services to its members. For effective functioning, it has a full-fledged secretariat, which is widely acclaimed as one of the finest in Bangladesh. Although the Chamber was originally established more than a century ago to serve the interest of British businesses in Bengal, it has since evolved into a leading business chamber to preserve and uphold the interests of the Bangladeshi business community.

This chapter of the book elaborates on the organizational structure and the foundation of the Chamber, membership requirements, rights and privileges, subscriptions and other relevant matters. However, due to paucity of primary sources, it is difficult to depict an accurate picture of the early organizational structure of the Chamber. Early records (Annual Reports, Minutes) of this pioneer Chamber are not available in archives and hence reconstructing the Chamber's formative years has not been possible. The Chamber was reorganized, restyled and renamed in 1949 under Section 26 of the Indian Companies Act, 1913 and was subsequently adapted to meet Pakistan-period legal requirements. The journey of the Chamber, its functions, its organizational structures and its services to members, society at large and the nation can only be gleaned properly from the Annual Records and Minutes available from 1949 onwards.

Presently, the Metropolitan Chamber governance consists of office bearers led by the President and a Secretariat headed by the Secretary-General. The secretariat is manned by professional staff. The well-managed Secretariat gives the Chamber its reputation as a highly functioning and visible trade organization of the country and the region. The

Chamber's services, developed over a long period, are comprehensive and cover specialized areas such as taxation, import-export policy, tariff and non-tariff measures, investment policy, WTO matters, macro-economic surveys/studies and other national and international economic and commercial matters. It regularly provides necessary policy inputs and budget recommendations to the Government. The secretariat maintains all records diligently. In fact, MCCI has enhanced its organizational capacity and augmented its effectiveness over the course of its history. In the process, the Chamber inevitably encountered formidable barriers. But the Chamber has withstood the ravages of time successfully and has emerged as a composite body representing varied types and sizes of business. It has incorporated new elements and trends into its administrative machinery from the experience it has gathered for over a century.

In the course of the research undertaken to produce this book, some archival documents of MCCI were discovered in the Bangladesh National Archives, the National Archives of India (New Delhi) and the West Bengal Secretariat Archives. There are some indications of the nature of the early organizational structure of MCCI in these documents. It seems from these documents and other secondary sources that the Chamber began by following the organizational structure of the Bengal Chamber of Commerce, established in 1853, by British traders and entrepreneurs. Initially, the Honorary Secretary was a vital figure of the Chamber Committee. He would maintain links with the Bengal Government as well as the Government of India on behalf of the Chamber Committee. There were few member companies at that time and little secretarial work. At the time of the World War II, the Chamber passed through a difficult period. After end of the War, however, the Chamber overcame the adverse situation as some new companies and business firms joined it as members.

It can be stated on the basis of the sources available that initially the Chamber was led only by foreigners; native businessmen did not get access to it until 1947. But in a new political configuration, the Chamber was reorganized in 1949. Its mission and vision became much more region-oriented from this time onward and native businessmen finally started to become part of the Chamber. Nevertheless, it still had no office of its own and usually met in the Narayanganj Club Committee Room or in the Institute and thereafter in Dacca at the Secretary's residence.<sup>102</sup> From 1948 to 1950, the Chamber had a Secretariat, but no permanent staff.<sup>103</sup> In 1958 the Government of Pakistan decided, that the chambers and associations of trade and industry would have to be reorganized and published a Gazette of Pakistan Extra-ordinary to that effect on 18 November.<sup>104</sup> The Chamber

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<sup>102</sup> *Annual Report* of the NCCI, Dacca, 1978-79, p. 94.

<sup>103</sup> 'Interview' of CK Hyder, former Secretary-General of MCCI, Dhaka, 24 April 2014.

<sup>104</sup> *The Pakistan Observer*, 21 November, 1958.

Memorandums and Articles were amended in accordance with the Government notification. An Extraordinary General Meeting of the Chamber was held on 20 November and it was re-styled and re-organized once again through a special resolution.<sup>105</sup> The increasing participation of native businessmen in the Chamber Committee made it more functional and public-friendly. With every major political changeover in the region and due to changing government regulations, the Chamber has had to be re-structured several times in its 110 years history.

**Eligibility of Membership:** Without membership a chamber of commerce does not exist. Members are its lifeblood. When a chamber offers membership, it does not merely offer its services to members; it is also then sharing its goodwill and prestige with its members. In other words, the positive image of the Chamber and the past work it has done in the community has stood its members in good stead. MCCI has achieved a prominent place among the Chambers of Commerce in Bangladesh. Getting membership in the Metropolitan Chamber is a matter of great honour for companies.

Firms or individuals engaged in export and import or any other trade or owning factories that pay or are liable to pay taxes are eligible for membership of the Metropolitan Chamber. The Chamber consists of four classes of members,<sup>106</sup> namely,

1. Trade Group Members
2. Ordinary Members
3. Associate Members and
4. Town Association Members.

But in practice only Ordinary and Associate Members are found in the list and are actively involved in the Chamber.

Only groups which have been organized to represent specific trades or industries and have been licensed under the Trade Organizations Ordinance 1961 are eligible for Trade Group membership. However, groups who are not licensed under the above mentioned ordinance but whose constitutions are governed by the rules framed by the Chamber are eligible for Trade Group membership. In addition to the above mentioned groups, some branches or zonal offices of associations of trade or industry or of both, organized on an all-Bangladesh basis to represent specific trades or industries or both, are eligible for membership in the Trade Group category.<sup>107</sup> Presently though, there are no members in the MCCI from this category.

<sup>105</sup> *Memorandum and Articles of Association*, MCCI, Dhaka: 2013, p. 7.

<sup>106</sup> *Memorandum and Articles of Association*, MCCI, Article 3, Dhaka: 2013, p. 9.

<sup>107</sup> *Memorandum and Articles of Association*, MCCI, Article 4, Dhaka: 2013, p. 9.

As mentioned above, the Chamber consists mainly of Ordinary and Associate members. Ordinary members form the core of the chamber. They pay annual membership subscriptions and have voting rights. They can also stand for election to the Executive Committee of the Chamber. Associate membership is for firms who prefer not to become ordinary members. The annual subscription for this category of members is charged at a lower rate and they do not have any voting rights. As per the Memorandum of MCCI, all individuals, persons, firms, companies, corporations, banks, ship owners, industrial concerns, solicitors, accountants engaged in commerce, industry, agriculture, mining or manufacture are eligible for election as Ordinary and Associate members.<sup>108</sup>

**Rights and Privileges:** Members depend on the chamber for its services; to speak on their behalf; to come to their rescue when necessary; to join in innovative business programs; and to have a sense of fellowship. Members want the chamber to help them develop and grow, not merely in size but in status in the community; they want their chamber to help them in achieving what we may call the fulfillment of their ambitions. As an accredited organization, the Chamber is entitled to some rights and privileges. Its recommendations on various problems and issues concerning trade, commerce and industry of the country are received with due consideration by the government who also consult the Chamber in such matters. The Chamber also publishes reports and policy papers for its members. It is authorised to issue certificates of origin (CO) in accordance with the requirements of trade and commerce in general or of specific commodities or products in particular. Representatives of trade and industry in local bodies, standing committees, advisory councils, port development trusts, improvement trusts, railway advisory bodies etc. are normally nominated by the Chamber. It seeks affiliation with any organization abroad and send representatives to meetings or conference of similar bodies held in foreign countries.<sup>109</sup>

Chamber members have special rights and privileges according to the category they are in. They also receive copies of the Chamber's circulars, publications and other relevant documents.

In case of unresolved differences of opinion between various categories of members on matters on which the government has sought the advice of the Chamber, members of relevant groups have the right to have their viewpoints forwarded to it.<sup>110</sup>

<sup>108</sup> *Memorandum and Articles of Association*, MCCI, Article 5-6, Dhaka: 2013, pp. 9-10.

<sup>109</sup> *Annual Report of the NCCI*, Dacca: 1959, pp. 40-41.

<sup>110</sup> *Memorandum and Articles of Association*, MCCI, Article 13, Dhaka: 2013, p. 11.

**Subscription:** Member companies pay subscription fees as per the Memorandum of the Association. The annual subscription payable for each class of members is set within minimum and maximum limits. Within the above limits, the committee in office determines the exact amount of subscription payable by each class of members from time to time. Subscriptions become due and payable on the first day of January, but may be declared by the Committee to be payable quarterly, except in the case of Associate members. Members who are elected or who join after the first day of July in any year pay half of the annual subscription for that year.<sup>111</sup>

The annual subscription of member firms has increased in course of time. In 1959, the annual subscription was re-fixed at Rs 750 per annum for a Group Member, Rs 750 per annum for Ordinary Members and Rs 150 per annum for Associate Members.<sup>112</sup> A resolution revising the subscription to Tk 2500 for Ordinary Members and Tk 625 for Associate Members was passed to partly meet the recurring shortfall in the Secretariat account.<sup>113</sup>

Revision of member subscription is a continuous process and the Chamber does so with the changing economic condition of the country. The present Secretary-General of the Chamber, Mr Farooq Ahmed, noted in 2012 that the current rates of subscriptions, which were fixed in 1986, were no longer adequate and needed to be re-fixed. Some of the members present then suggested that the subscription rates be increased. Accordingly, an Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM) was held on 22 October 2012, to consider adopting special resolutions for enhancing the annual subscriptions. These were passed unanimously.<sup>114</sup> The revised fees are as follows:

<b>Annual Subscriptions (from 2012)<sup>115</sup></b>		
<b>Names</b>	<b>Minimum</b>	<b>Maximum</b>
Trade Group Members	Tk 1,00,000/-	Tk 2,00,000/-
Town Association Member	Tk 1,00,000/-	Tk 2,00,000/-
Ordinary Member	Tk 40,000/-	Tk 70,000/-
Associate Member	Tk 30,000/-	Tk 60,000/-

<sup>111</sup> *Memorandum and Articles of Association*, MCCI, Article 25-26, Dhaka: 2013, p. 14.

<sup>112</sup> *Annual Report* of the NCCI, Dacca: 1959, p. 48.

<sup>113</sup> *Annual Report* of the NCCI, Dacca: 1978, p. 4.

<sup>114</sup> *Annual Report* of the MCCI, Dhaka: 2012, p. 6.

<sup>115</sup> *Memorandum and Articles of Association*, MCCI, Article 24, Dhaka: 2013, p. 14.

**Expulsion:** The Committee may, at any time, through a majority of its total strength and at its discretion, suspend and/or expel from the Chamber any Ordinary or Associate member for any of the following reasons: (a) Non-fulfillment of contractual obligations and claims arising out of them; (b) Non-payment of any dues of the Chamber within the time prescribed by the Committee; and (c) For any activity which may, in the opinion of the Committee, harm or in any way be detrimental to the interest or general well-being of Bangladesh, the Committee and trade of the country, or the members of the Chamber. Before expulsion, the member in question shall be given notice of complaint or charge and the opportunity to reply to or meet the same. The Chamber Committee has powers to withdraw any suspension made under Article 27 of the Memorandum and Articles of Association of the MCCI, Dhaka.<sup>116</sup>

**Management Structure of the Chamber:** The Chamber Management System is supervised by office bearers with the support and assistance of the Secretariat. In 1904, the then NCC (now MCCI, Dhaka) Committee consisted of 16 members, including the President, Vice-President and Honorary Secretary.<sup>117</sup> In 1949, the re-organization of the NCC was initiated by some business firms operating in and around Narayanganj and Dhaka. They were desirous to form a trade association under the Companies Act 1913. As per the Memorandum and Articles of Association, 1949, they redesigned the organization and signed the Memorandum on the 9th May, 1949.<sup>118</sup> Because of scanty source materials the complete reconstruction of the pre-partition structure of the committee is not possible.

After it was restructured in 1949, the Chamber got a new look. The then office of the Chamber was in Narayanganj. In accordance with the Memorandum and Articles of Association of the period, the Management of the business of the Chamber was vested in a committee consisting of a President, a Vice-President and up to 24 Members. This Committee was represented by 12 Ordinary Members, 6 Associate Members, 3 Town Association Members and 3 Trade Group Members.<sup>119</sup> In course of time, the management system of the Chamber evolved due to the changing pattern of the work. Presently, the Chamber Committee consists of 13 members, elected in the Ordinary and Associate category. Their election to the Chamber Committee is confirmed during the Annual General Meeting. They are known subsequently as Office Bearers and consist of 13 members,

<sup>116</sup> *Memorandum and Articles of Association*, MCCI, Article 27, Dhaka: 2013, pp. 14-15.

<sup>117</sup> CWE Cotton, *Handbook of Commercial Information for India*, Third Edition, New Delhi: Government of India, 1937, p. 49.

<sup>118</sup> *Memorandum and Articles of Association*, MCCI, Dhaka: 2013, p. 5.

<sup>119</sup> *Memorandum and Articles of Association*, MCCI, Article 32, Dhaka: 2013, p. 16.

including the President and Vice President. The elected office bearers hold office for a term of three years but are eligible for re-election for another term of three years; on completion of which, one must retire for at least two consecutive years. Thereafter, the same individual becomes eligible for contesting in the election again. In order to maintain continuity and functional efficiency, a third of the members of the Chamber Committee retire every year and an equal number of members are elected in the same year for a term of three years. Thus, a balanced rotation is maintained. The Secretary till 1990 and the Secretary-General from 1991 onwards (when the post of the Secretary was upgraded to Secretary-General), is also the Chief Executive Officer. The Secretary-General has to coordinate all activities of the Chamber and the President is responsible for overseeing all its activities. Currently, among the 13 Committee Members, 12 are from the Ordinary category and one from the Associate Member category.



Major General Amjad Khan Chowdhury (Retd), President MCCI  
presiding over a seminar on 7 October 2012

**The President** is the de-facto head of the Chamber and sees to it that the Chamber fulfills its responsibilities to its members.<sup>120</sup>

The President presides over all meetings of the committee, all general meetings, all deputations and the annual general meetings; in addition, the President has a number of executive and administrative functions to discharge. Some other important activities of the President are as follows: to head the Chamber Committee and chair all meetings as the leader of the Chamber; to oversee the Chamber Committee's work plan for the term of office and to set targets and priorities for Committee members and the Secretariat; to appoint the Secretary-General and monitor the Secretariat's progress in meeting targets set by the Committee; to delegate authority and assign tasks to other Committee members and

<sup>120</sup> *Memorandum and Articles of Association, MCCI, Article 43-44, Dhaka: 2013, p. 22.*



the Secretariat; to receive visitors, sign documents, host dinners, and officiate at social, sports and other membership events organized by the Chamber. As a negotiator or Spokesperson of the Chamber, the President represents it in its dialogues with the Government; heads delegations attending regional and international meetings; speaks on behalf of the Chamber at press conferences and high level events and makes official announcements. The President has to cast the deciding vote in the event of an impasse in Committee meetings and chairs 'meet-the-members' sessions. If and when appropriate, the President reconciles differences between members and resolves trade disputes.

In an interview Mr M Anis Ud Dowla, former President of the MCCI, noted that as per the articles of association, the President is supposed to be elected by the Committee members. However, there is a good practice in MCCI that in most cases (but not all), the Committee members select the President through mutual consensus and thereafter, the election formalities are completed to fulfil the regulatory compliances. In some cases in the past, when there was more than one Presidential candidate, the outcome was decided through secret ballots. The election of the President is also confirmed during the Annual General Meeting. Mr Anis Ud Dowla observes that

“we are fortunate enough that all of our Presidents were always ready to give time and merit to contribute to the nation and this is the historical legacy of the Chamber. The Chamber President is an established and highly respected person in society and has never attempted to gain personal interest out of it.<sup>121</sup>”

The Chamber President is generally regarded as someone who has the stature as well as the ability to overcome the pressure coming from any corner of society. Professionalism, fairness, and community interest have characterized Chamber Presidents over the years.

The President always performs duties with the intention of serving society and the nation. Mr Anis Ud Dowla added in the interview that usually even government ministers have welcomed both the MCCI President and telephone calls from MCCI. Few Chambers have such access to the upper echelons of Government.<sup>122</sup> It has not been possible to retrieve all the names of former Presidents of the Chamber from existing documents. However, a list of MCCI presidents with names of their companies since 1947 is provided in the Appendices Section. See Appendix 6.

<sup>121</sup> 'Interview' of Mr Anis Ud Dowla, Former President of MCCI, Dhaka, 11 May, 2014.

<sup>122</sup> 'Interview' of Mr Anis Ud Dowla.



Former Presidents of MCCI, Dhaka

The reputation of the chamber depends largely on the attitude, activity, work ethic and vision of the President, the Vice-President, committee members and the Secretary General, all of whom work as a team. The Chamber President has been working more and more closely with senior officials in the public sector since in market economy partnership activities between public and private sector have been gaining momentum in recent decades.

**The Vice-President** in the absence of the President has the powers of the President.<sup>123</sup>

**The Chamber Committee** is vested with absolute powers to take all policy decisions for the Chamber. It has certain duties explicitly stated in the Articles of Association. These include admitting new members, appointing sub-committees and looking after the properties of the Chamber; arranging for the proper administration of the office of the Chamber, making by-laws or rules for regulation of chamber business, and deciding upon undertaking any new activity of the organization. This body has the power to make all decisions necessary for running the Chamber.

The Committee is elected for one year and its terms of reference are described elaborately in the Memorandum and Articles of Association of MCCI, Dhaka.<sup>124</sup> Initially, the then NCC (now MCCI, Dhaka) Committee was composed of 16 members, including the President, Vice-President and Honorary Secretary.<sup>125</sup> After 1949, the NCC was re-organized

<sup>123</sup> *Memorandum and Articles of Association*, MCCI, Article 45, Dhaka: 2013, p. 23.

<sup>124</sup> *Memorandum and Articles of Association*, MCCI, Article 46-53, Dhaka: 2013, pp. 8, 23-25.

<sup>125</sup> CWE Cotton, *Handbook of Commercial Information*, p. 49.

and consisted of 7 founding members. From 1954 to 1963, Chamber Committee members were restricted to 9. In 1964, it was increased to 10. From 1965 to 1966 the Committee consisted of 11 members and in 1967 it was run by 12 members. From 1968 the composition of the Chamber Committee members is 13. A list containing names of the committee members of the Chamber (year-wise) to date will be of interest to many, and is given in Appendix 7.

As per the Memorandum and the Articles of the Association, the Committee meets at such time as is deemed advisable, and make such regulations as they think proper to the summoning and holding of committee meetings and for transaction of business at such meetings. Records of their proceedings are kept open for inspection by members.<sup>126</sup> The Vice-President is ex-officio Chairman of the Committee in the absence of the President. If the Vice-President is absent, the Committee elects a Chairman.<sup>127</sup> One-third of the members of the Committee form a quorum for the transaction of business. Each Member of the Committee has one vote, and in the event of an equality of votes, the Chairman has a second or casting vote. No resolution duly passed at a meeting of the Committee can be amended, altered or rescinded at a subsequent meeting of the Committee held within 12 month of the date of which such resolution is adopted, unless two-thirds of the total numbers of members of the Committee vote for a change. This rule also states that the agenda containing the proposal should be duly circulated amongst members.<sup>128</sup>

An article (no. 51) of the Memorandum of MCCI states that a yearly report of the proceedings of the Committee is to be prepared, printed and circulated for the information of members at least fourteen days before the Annual General Meeting. Such a report is to be submitted to the AGM for confirmation and is to be confirmed or otherwise dealt with or disposed of as the meeting shall determine. The Committee has the power to appoint any Departmental Committees and Sub-committees of the members of the Committee, or of the Members of the Chamber, and to appoint any person as Secretary-General on such remuneration and subject to such terms and conditions as the Committee considers proper.<sup>129</sup>

The duties of the Chamber Committee can be broadly classified into 3 general categories: *Executive Duties* (Policy making, Target setting, Periodic review of policies and directions); *Constitutional Duties* (Admittance and termination of members, managing the business, funds and properties of the Chamber, appointment of committees and delegation

<sup>126</sup> *Memorandum and Articles of Association*, MCCI, Article 46, Dhaka: 2013, p. 23.

<sup>127</sup> *Memorandum and Articles of Association*, MCCI, Article 47, Dhaka: 2013, p. 23.

<sup>128</sup> *Memorandum and Articles of Association*, MCCI, Article 48-49, Dhaka: 2013, p. 23.

<sup>129</sup> *Memorandum and Articles of Association*, MCCI, Article 51-53, Dhaka: 2013, pp. 24-25.

of authority to them, introducing new bye-laws or amendments to the Constitution for expedient regulation of the Chamber's affairs provided that these are approved by a general meeting of the members at an AGM or EGM, entering into arrangements with other organisations on terms and conditions that are deemed advantageous to the Chamber, provided that the objectives of these arrangements are not inconsistent with the objectives of the Chamber); *Administrative Duties* (Ensuring that the Secretariat under the management of an appointed Secretary-General correctly interprets policies laid down by the Committee and meets targets set, providing leadership in activities and functions involving the general membership, representing the Chamber and its members in dialogues with government and other business organisations, serving on statutory boards or other public or private bodies whose terms of reference have relevance to the Chamber, and holding meetings with foreign business leaders at international conventions).

**The Sub-Committees** are an important part of the Chamber. The Metropolitan Chamber has a number of sub-committees. These committees directly or indirectly assist in managing and completing the overall functions of the chamber and are responsible for recommending and supplying reliable information and advice on different trade and industry-related issues. The sub-committees help by providing observations and analysis on economic and commercially important matters to the Chamber. In most cases, members of the Chamber Committee are conveners of the sub-committees. The conveners assemble for regular meetings to perform the functions of the respective committees. The President, the Vice President and other members of the Committee can attend sub-committee meetings, if needed. See Appendix 8 for names of members of subcommittees in 2014.

The number of sub-committees varies, depending on the needs and management of the Chamber. In 2014 the Metropolitan Chamber, for example, had thirteen (13) sub-committees, although this is not a fixed number. In fact, as the Table below indicates, there have been as many as 14 committees in some years.

A year-wise list of numbers of the sub-committees in Bangladesh era should be of interest to many, and is given below<sup>130</sup>:

Year	Numbers	Year	Numbers
1973	6	1986	12
1975	6	1987-88	13
1978	12	1989-99	14
1979	12	2000-04	14
1980-85	13	2005-14	13

<sup>130</sup> *Annual Reports* of the NCCI, Dacca (1973, 75, 78) and the MCCI, Dhaka (1979-2014).

The Chamber Committee has the power to appoint any departmental committee or sub-committee on a permanent or temporary basis.<sup>131</sup> With the evolution of the Chamber, the sub-committees have at times been changed and renamed. The sub-committees consist of prominent business leaders of the country, including the Chamber President, along with other committee members. The sub-committees function in a variety of areas such as Establishment, Finance & Membership, Commercial Legislations, Tariff & Taxation, Environment & Climate Change, Corporate Governance & CSR, Infrastructure, Export, FTA & WTO, International Trade & Fair, Investment, Industry and International Relations. The sub-committees reflect the Chamber's areas of interest and functions. The nature of Chamber sub-committees in the Colonial period, however, cannot be determined because of the absence of primary sources.

Since 1949, sub-committees on different issues have been regularly formed on the basis of the Chamber's requirements at certain periods of history. So the character of sub-committees depends on the nature of Chamber activities in different situations. For example, the sub-committee on Jute Fabric Shippers was active in the 1960s but this sub-committee disappeared in independent Bangladesh. However, some sub-committees have always been in existence. In the Bangladesh era, the sub-committees on Company Legislation, International Relations, Chamber Establishment, Commercial Legislation and Foreign Investment have been very important and active constituents of the Chamber.

With more intense global competition and liberalization of trade, the role of MCCI has changed considerably. At home and abroad, MCCI has had to operate much more efficiently and effectively than before in order to cope with new and demanding challenges of the era of globalization. Accordingly, new sub-committees have been functioning after the 1990s such as Customs and Shipping, Transport and Shipping, Tariff and Customs, International Trade and Tariff, Transport, Shipping and Other Infrastructure Services, FTA/ WTO, Investment, Corporate Governance and CSR, International Trade and Fair and Environment and Climate Change. These sub-committees have been formed in order to attract foreign investment, to cope with changes in world trade, to fulfill new millennium challenges and to meet new business goals. All these sub-committees have been playing significant roles in the activities of the MCCI and rendering valuable services to society and the nation. See Appendix 9 for the Chamber Sub-Committees of 110 Years of Services to Trade and Industry.

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<sup>131</sup> *Memorandum and Articles of Association*, MCCI, Article 53/a, Dhaka: 2013, p. 24.

**The Chamber Secretariat:** The Secretariat conducts the activities of the Chamber. To carry out its activities, the Chamber requires an efficient and professional secretariat. The Metropolitan Chamber has developed its own secretariat and can now claim to have one of the finest secretariats in Bangladesh and neighboring regions.

The MCCI's Secretariat is engaged in delivering both traditional and non-traditional services. The quality of activities of the Chamber has been proven by the degree of acceptance of the activities of its members. As an active and enterprising chamber, MCCI has initiated new programs to attract more members. The Secretariat's prime roles are to implement policies laid down by the Chamber Committee; to achieve targets set by the Committee; to provide periodic reports to the Committee on its progress; to pursue projects and activities that will enable the Chamber to attain its mission; to monitor trends and developments in commerce and industry and alert members accordingly; to provide secretarial support for committee meetings and keep proper record of proceedings; to make recommendations to the Committee and members on policies and activities that will enhance the effectiveness of the Chamber in rendering services to its members; and to handle the day-to-day operations of the Chamber.

The structure of the Secretariat had changed in the course of the Chamber's 110 years of existence. In 1904, the Secretariat of NCC was administered by an Honorary Secretary.<sup>132</sup> From available sources, scanty though they are, it can be inferred that some minor structural changes occurred in the Chamber Secretariat at around 1947. Secretariat functions were limited before 1947, because of circumstances such as the economic depression of the 1930s, the Second World War from 1939-45, and the political turmoils of the 1940s. The Chamber Secretariat obtained a regular and salaried Secretary after 1949 when the Chamber was re-styled and re-organized under the Company Act of 1913. As the volume of work increased in the 1950s, the Secretariat was strengthened and the Assistant Secretary post was re-designated as 'Deputy Secretary'. Two posts of Joints Secretaries were created for smooth functioning and boosting the activities of the Chamber.<sup>133</sup> Prior to 1991, the Secretary was the keyperson who worked as the CEO of the Chamber Secretariat.

<sup>132</sup> Letters of Correspondences (1914-1947) between the Govt. of Bengal (GOB) and the Narayanganj Chamber of Commerce (NCC), *A Proceedings*, GOB, Commerce Dept., Bangladesh National Archives (BNA).

<sup>133</sup> The post of Assistant Secretary of the Chamber was created on 14 March 1951, Deputy Secretary in 1954 and Join Secretary in 1958. This information is collected from the relevant *Annual Reports* and *Minutes* of the Chamber.

After 1991, the Secretariat consisted of full-time staff headed by a Secretary-General appointed by the Chamber Committee.<sup>134</sup> The post was redesignated and upgraded to Secretary-General in 1991. Previously, the designated secretaries were assisted by two Joint Secretaries. At present, the Secretary-General is assisted by two Secretaries, two Joint Secretaries, one Labour Adviser and one Economic Adviser. The size of the current Secretariat is much bigger than it was before. As the size and finances of the Chamber have expanded, some key positions have been created, including the positions of the Secretary-General, the Administrative and Finance Manager, Secretaries and Executive Officers. The Secretariat is the most important operating organ of the Chamber. It is currently manned by a team of over sixty professional employees headed by the Secretary-General who is also the CEO.

The effectiveness of the Secretariat, of course, depends not only on the professional capabilities of the staff, but also on the degree of independence it is given by the Committee to interpret and implement policies. The Chamber Committee usually does not pose any problems in the path of a favourable work environment and encourages independent decision-making to have work completed smoothly. The Chamber employs staff possessing specialized skills ensuing from training in information technology, market research, public relations and marketing.

The Chamber Secretariat, in course of time, has engaged staff specializing in exports, imports, industries, publications, economic research, arbitration etc. It has its own office, the Secretariat, office premises, conference and meeting hall-rooms to perform all of the functions effectively. The Chamber is financed through regular membership subscription and functions on a non-profit, basis.<sup>135</sup>

***Secretarial Services to Other Bodies/Associations:*** In addition to its regular activities, the Chamber has been offering secretarial services to Bangladesh Employers' Federation (BEF), the lone national level organization of employers in the country dealing with industrial relations, occupational safety and health, work place cooperation, skills development, labor law and other labor-related issues. Before 1998, the name of the Federation was Bangladesh Employers' Association. CK Hyder had acted as its Secretary from 1972-90 and as Secretary-General from 1991-2008; Farooq Ahmed became the Secretary-General from 2009, while in the East Pakistan Employers' Association, J Garcia and MZ Ahmed had acted as Secretaries.

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<sup>134</sup> *Memorandum and Articles of Association, MCCI, Article 53/f, Dhaka: 2013, p. 25.*

<sup>135</sup> Farooq Ahmed, 'Know Your Chamber', *Chamber News*, August 2013, pp. 5-6.

MCCI has also provided secretarial services to some important organizations such as East Bengal Jute Dealers Association (1950), East Bengal Hides and Skin Shippers Organisation (1950), the Pakistan Jute Association (1950), East Bengal Jute Balers Association (1951), Khulna Mercantile Association (1952), Hydrolic Press Association (1952), East Pakistan Stock Exchange Limited (1952), Pakistan Jute Mills Association (1953), East Pakistan Fabric Shippers' Association (1955), The Eastern Pakistan Jute Brokers' Association (1956), Insurance Association of Pakistan (1960), Pakistan River Transport Operator's Association (1964), and Shipyards' Association of Pakistan (1967).

The practice of providing secretarial services to the Employers' Association of East Pakistan continued in the DNCCI and NCCI era of the Chamber.<sup>136</sup> Secretarial services to the Shipyards' Association and Bangladesh River Transport Operators' Association were, however, discontinued for some time due to some internal problems of the Chamber after independence.<sup>137</sup> This service was discontinued thus in 1972.<sup>138</sup>

In 1974, the Chamber decided to offer secretarial services to the Bangladesh Tea Association. The then President of NCCI, Mr Sabethur Rahman, pointed out that the Chairman of the Tea Association was ready to come to a secretarial arrangement with the Chamber. The Committee thanked Mr Rahman and agreed to offer secretarial services for Tk 1000 per month.<sup>139</sup> This decision was taken in a Committee Meeting held on 8 March. However, in 1976, the Bangladesh Tea Association decided to discontinue this service. The Chamber approved this decision in a meeting held on 1 August, 1976.<sup>140</sup> The Chamber also provided its secretarial services to the Bangladesh Jute Press Owners' Association and allowed them to use the Chamber Assembly Hall. This decision was taken in the Chamber's Committee Meeting held on 9 September and 14 October, 1976.<sup>141</sup>

***Departments/Cells of the Chamber Secretariat:*** In its 110 years history, the MCCI Secretariat formed a good number of departments or cells to carry out its activities smoothly and effectively. These departments or cells have been playing significant roles in the development of trade, commerce and industry in the country and have provided support services to member-firms. Currently there are five (05) Departments or Cells

<sup>136</sup> *Annual Report* of the NCCI: Dacca, 1968, p. 9.

<sup>137</sup> *Minutes* of the NCCI: Dacca, Resolution No 7, July 26, 1972, P. 1144.

<sup>138</sup> *Minutes* of the NCCI: Dacca, Resolution No 7, July 26, 1972, P. 1149.

<sup>139</sup> *Minutes* of the NCCI: Dacca, Resolution No 5, March 8, 1974, pp. 1224-25.

<sup>140</sup> *Minutes* of the NCCI: Dacca, Resolution No 10, August 13, 1976, p. 1335.

<sup>141</sup> *Minutes* of the NCCI: Dacca, 1976, p. 1341, 1347.



active in the Chamber. These are: (1) Certificate of Origin (CO) Cell, (2) Research and Publication Cell, (3) Accounts Cell, (4) Dispatch Cell and (5) General Services Cell.<sup>142</sup> At present, Chamber activities are mainly managed and regulated by these departments or cells. The Secretary-General coordinates and supervises the work of all the departments or cells with the help of two secretaries.

From its inception in 1904, the Chamber has maintained its Secretariat to serve its members and to develop trade, commerce and industry in the region. In its early days, the Secretariat was small and only offered very particular services to its members and to the Commerce and Industry departments of the Bengal Government. In course of time the Secretariat gradually incorporated some new departments or cells and began performing many other activities relating to trade and commerce. Some departments/cells came into being on the basis of the category of work required and emerging situations. In its overall existence, the Metropolitan Chamber has had jurisdictions in areas such as Administration, Finance, Research and Training, Taxation, Arbitration, Pre-shipment and Quality Survey Cell, Library, Publications, CSR activities, Public Relation, Weighment and Measure, Staff Welfare activities and Cooperation Agreement etc. The Secretariat provides services to the Chamber Committee and Sub-Committees in holding AGMs; handles membership and services; maintains links with the Government, bilateral and multilateral donor agencies and other trade organizations; works in dispute settlement, policy making, monitoring of implementation of projects, coordinating of holding and attending conferences, seminars and exhibitions at home and abroad. MCCI Secretariat also arranges training courses, workshops, discussion meetings and press-meets. As a vital part of the secretarial job, members are kept posted on all important notifications/circulars issued by government and autonomous bodies concerning trade, commerce, industry, money, banking, finance and labour etc. through circulars issued by Secretariat departments or cells.

Through a particular Department/Cell of the Chamber Secretariat, it issues and amends Certificates of Origin (CO), in respect of shipment of goods. The Certificate of Origin (CO) is a mandatory document for export of various goods. Over the years, CO issued by the Chamber Cell has attained high level of trust and confidence among importers/buyers across the world. On request, it also legalizes export documents which are needed by buyers of most countries. The Certificate Department (well-known as CO Section in the Chamber) has been efficiently handling such assignments for decades.

The Research and Publication Cell<sup>143</sup> is a major and very important department of the Chamber Secretariat. Some major functions of this cell are: collecting data on trade and

<sup>142</sup> <http://www.mccibd.org/pages/secretariat.php>

<sup>143</sup> CK Hyder, 'Narayanganj Banik Samiti: Ek Biral Sebar 75 Bachhor' (in Bangla), *Dainik Ittefaq*, 20 June, 1979, p. 9.



Library



Publications of the MCCI, Dhaka

commerce of the country, maintaining a data-base and evaluating economic growth, compiling and updating analysis on industry, monthly production figures of major industries, cost of living index, monthly figures on imports and exports and analyzing trends, policy reviews and evaluations, analyzing the budget of the country, and preparing the Chamber's budget, compiling and publishing *Chamber News*, *Quarterly Economic Reviews*, *Quarterly Review*, *Tax News*, *Bangladesh Economy*, *Annual Report*, *Summary of Taxation Rules* in Bangladesh etc. Presently a research team works under the guidance of an Economic Adviser. A leading economist of the country guides this team with the help of senior officers who have postgraduate degrees in Economics, Management etc. This Cell acts as the 'Think Tank' of MCCI in preparing 'Position Papers' on different economic topics relevant to the Chamber's activities and the economic and trade situation of the country. All these papers are used to pinpoint and analyze problem areas of the country's economy.

The General Cell also renders services to member-firms on issues such as disseminating important information from various Government Gazettes, Notifications and Circulars etc. Some other activities undertaken by the General and Dispatch Cells were previously managed by different departments or cells. Taxation Cell, Arbitration, Pre-shipment Quality Survey, Industrial Relations Advisory Cell, Courier Services Section, Telex Service, Library – all were formerly cells or sections of the Chamber Secretariat.

The Accounts Cell is another important department that handles the accounts and finances of the Chamber.<sup>144</sup>

<sup>144</sup> *Annual Report of the NCCI, Dacca, 1978-79*, pp. 108-10; Farooq Ahmed, 'Know Your Chamber', *Chamber News*, August 2013, pp. 5-6.

The Dispatch Cell of the Chamber had introduced courier services in the early 1950s. It used to operate Courier Services from Dhaka to two other commercial centers – Chittagong and Khulna. Urgent commercial mail and important documents were collected from member-firms and dispatched to and from these areas by air to be delivered within a day. The Dispatch Cell also used to offer Telex Service. This service helped disseminate urgent messages such as international tenders for various countries. It was also available to member-firms to enable them to dispatch their messages.

The Taxation Cell is usually headed by a retired Commissioner of Income Tax. It prepares the Chamber's proposals for the Government budget, which include suggestions on Income Tax, Sales Tax, Custom Duty, Excise Duty, VAT etc. It provides services to member-firms on their day-to-day tax problems.

Earlier the Pre-Shipment Quality Survey Department used to carry out pre-shipment quality inspection surveys of tea, jute and jute goods.

Arbitration of the Commercial Cell was another important activity of the Chamber through which disputes vis-à-vis trade and commerce used to be settled after 1947. This was one of the most important responsibilities of the Chamber in settling commercial disputes.

The Chamber's Tribunal used to handle all disputes concerning raw jute and jute goods and other relevant problems. The Tribunal adjudicated disputes from the point of reference to the final award. The Tribunal enjoyed the complete trust and confidence of trade and industry, both within the country and outside.<sup>145</sup>

The Chamber has a library with a very good collection of rare books on commerce, industry, law, arbitration etc. It also stacks important and rare Gazette Notifications, Tax News, Chamber Bulletins, relevant journals, works on the Bangladesh economy and other commercially important documents, periodicals, and books which are often used even by government offices for reference purpose.



Library

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<sup>145</sup> *Annual Report of the NCCI, Dacca, 1978-79, p. 108.*

**Secretary and Secretary-General:** Ever since 1904, the Secretariat has been an important administrative organ of the Chamber. It was variously headed by an Honorary Secretary or a Secretary or a Secretary-General.

On the basis of archival documents, we have found the following eight names of Honorary Secretaries in the NCC Phase (1904-50):

AL Godden (1917) <sup>146</sup>
RN Story (1924) <sup>147</sup>
JH Kirkland (1930) <sup>148</sup>
H Williams (1940) <sup>149</sup>
Swarup Mukherjee (1947) <sup>150</sup>
Gillespi Allen (1948) <sup>151</sup>
Emorphopulas (1949) <sup>152</sup>
Jack Garcia (1950) <sup>153</sup>

The Chamber was re-designed, re-styled and re-organized in 1949 when the post of Honorary Secretary was re-designated to Secretary. This continued till the amendment of the Memorandum and Articles of Association on 31 December, 1990.<sup>154</sup>

<sup>146</sup> Letter titled 'Proposal to Suppress the Adulteration of Indian Produce before Export' signed by AL Godden, 'A' Proceedings, Government of Bengal (GOB), Commerce Dept., Bangladesh National Archives (BNA), March 1918, File No. 10-A/1, No. 14.

<sup>147</sup> Letter titled 'Cotton Ginning and Cotton Pressing Factories Bill' signed by RN Story, 'A' Proceedings, GOB, Commerce Dept., BNA, January 1925, File No. 1-A/18 (6), No. 40; Letter titled 'Periods of Wage Payment Bill' signed by RN Story, 'A' Proceedings, GOB, Commerce Dept., BNA, June 1925, File No. 1-A/22 (7), No. 9.

<sup>148</sup> Letter titled 'The Draft Indian Partnership Bill' signed by JH Kirkland, 'A' Proceedings, GOB, Commerce Dept., BNA, November 1930, File No. 1-A/5 (5), No. 19.

<sup>149</sup> Letter titled 'The Bengal Shops and Establishments Bill, 1939' signed by H Williams, 'A' Proceedings, GOB, Commerce and Labour Dept., BNA, August 1941, File No. 1-A/5 (193), No. 14.

<sup>150</sup> Name of Swarup Mukherjee has been mentioned in a Message on Diamond Jubilee Celebration by former President CEC Guthrie (1951) as Honorary Secretary for the period of 1947. See – the *Annual Report of NCCI, 1978-79*, p. 94.

<sup>151</sup> Name of Gillespi Allen has been mentioned in a Message on Diamond Jubilee Celebration by former President CEC Guthrie (1951) as Honorary Secretary for the period of 1947-48. See the *Annual Report of the NCCI, Dacca, 1978-79*, p. 94.

<sup>152</sup> Name of Emorphopulas has been mentioned in a Message on Diamond Jubilee Celebration by former President CEC Guthrie (1951) as Secretary for the period of 1949. See the *Annual Report of NCCI, Dacca, 1978-79*, p. 94.

<sup>153</sup> Name of Jack Garcia has been mentioned in a Message on Diamond Jubilee Celebration by former President CEC Guthrie (1951) as Secretary for the period of 1950. See the *Annual Report of NCCI, Dacca, 1978-79*, p. 94.

<sup>154</sup> *Memorandum and Articles of Association, MCCI: Dhaka, 2013*, p. 8.

Jack Garcia, MZ Ahmed and CK Hyder are some of the remarkable personalities who have served the Chamber as Secretary for a long period of time. The Chamber Secretariat passed through its DNCC (1950-52), DNCCI (1952-59), NCCI (1959-79) phases and the first few years of MCCI (1979 onwards) because of the hard-work and vision of these personalities. In 1991, the position of Chamber's Secretary was upgraded and re-designated as Secretary-General. CK Hyder graced the chair then and continued in this position till 2008. Farooq Ahmed joined the Chamber in 2004 as the Secretary and was promoted to Secretary-General in 2008. Because of the work-load and size of the Secretariat, a few new posts (Assistant Secretary, Deputy Secretary, Joint Secretary etc) were created over the years to assist the Secretary and Secretary-General. Since 2009, Absal Shaquib Quoreshi and Md Murshid Alam have been working in the Chamber Secretariat as Secretaries.<sup>155</sup>

Only a few chambers can afford to employ personnel with highly specialized skills but a team consisting of carefully selected and suitably qualified staff led by an able Secretary-General can certainly optimize the Chamber's effectiveness and help it in achieving its mission; MCCI, Dhaka is in this position. The Secretary-General is the chief operating officer and holds one of the most vital posts in the MCCI Secretariat. He is responsible and accountable to the Chamber Committee for:

- ✓ proper interpretation and implementation of policies laid down by the Committee.
- ✓ attainment of targets set.
- ✓ rendering regular progress reports to the Committee.
- ✓ recommending to the Committee such changes in policies and directions as are needed to ensure the effectiveness of the Chamber in promoting members' interest.
- ✓ managing the Chamber's funds and properties.
- ✓ submitting an annual budget for the Committee's approval and ensuring that expenditure falls within budgetary limits.
- ✓ planning a Secretariat Organization Structure that is effectively geared to function with maximum efficiency, and to deal with staff recruitment and termination, management, training and motivation.
- ✓ drawing up a work plan and coordinating Secretariat operations, particularly in the areas of membership growth, services and activities, and leading the Secretariat's efforts at revenue generation and fund raising.

<sup>155</sup> See Appendix 10 for year-wise and alphabetic list of Honorary Secretaries/ Assistant Secretaries/ Deputy Secretaries/ Joint Secretaries/ Secretaries/ Secretary-Generals.

As per the Memorandum and Articles of Association, the Secretary-General deals with the entire business affairs of the Chamber. He has charge of all correspondence and keeps an account of the funds of the Chamber and the funds connected with or in any way controlled by the Chamber. He issues, within 15 days, accurate minutes of all meetings of the Chamber and of the Committee, the Department Committees and Sub-Committees and of all Associations connected to the Chamber. He takes care of all belongings of the Chamber. With the advice of the President, he gives notice of all meetings of the Chamber, the Committee, the Departmental Committee and Sub-Committees of the Chamber, and of all Associations working with the Chamber. For meetings of the Chamber Committee, at least seven days' notice must be given for regular meetings, and at least twenty-four hours notice for emergency meetings. The Secretary-General duly notifies members or associate members of their election, countersigns all cheques signed by the President or any Chairman of an Association, Fund or Committee, and collects all dues from members, associate members of the Chamber or from any committee or any association working with the Chamber. He prepares the annual report of the Chamber under the guidance of the Committee.<sup>156</sup>

List of Names of Honorary Secretaries/Assistant Secretaries/  
Deputy Secretaries/Joint Secretaries/Secretaries/Secretary-Generals

<b>Honorary Secretary</b>	
AL Godden, 1917	
RN Story, 1924	
JH Kirkland, 1930	
H Williams, 1940	
Gillespi Allen, 1948	
Swarup Mukherjee, 1947	

  

<b>Assistant Secretary</b>	
M Ebraheem, 1956-58	JR Khan, 1963-64
AW Chalmers, 1958-61	CK Hyder, 1965-67
MH Kashani, 1959	

<sup>156</sup> *Memorandum and Articles of Association*, Article 54, MCCI: Dhaka, 2013, pp. 25-26.

Deputy Secretary	Joint Secretary
K Mohyuddin, 1954-56	KS Shahabuddin, 1958-59
KS Shahabuddin, 1957	MZ Ahmed, 1958-59
CK Hyder, 1968-70	CK Hyder, 1971

Secretary
Emorphopulas, 1949
Jack Garcia, 1950-57
MZ Ahmed, 1960-61, 1963-69
CK Hyder, 1972-90
Farhad Ahmed Chowdhury, 1997-2003
Farooq Ahmed, 2004-2008
Absal Shaquib Quoreshi, 2009 onwards
Md Murshid Alam, 2009 onwards

Secretary-General
CK Hyder, 1991-2008
Farooq Ahmed, 2009 onwards

***The contribution of CK Hyder:*** A former President of the Metropolitan Chamber, Mr Latifur Rahman, acknowledged the immense contribution of Mr CK Hyder. Mr Rahman said, “CK Hyder inaugurated an era in MCCI, through his invaluable inputs into the Chamber for 44 years. I repeat, he gave 44 years of remarkable, outstanding and uninterrupted service to the Chamber. He is a highly-rated professional and obviously a unique personality.”<sup>157</sup>

Mr CK Hyder joined NCCI in 1965 as an Assistant Secretary. He was promoted to Deputy Secretary in 1968. He became the Joint Secretary of

<sup>157</sup> ‘Interview’ of Mr Latifur Rahman, Former President of MCCI, Dhaka, 15 May, 2014.

NCCI at the time of the Liberation War of Bangladesh in 1971. From 1972 to 1990, he served the Chamber as its Secretary. He became the first Secretary-General of the Chamber in 1991 and remained in this position for the next 18 years. After retiring on 31 December 2008, he joined the Chamber Committee as an Adviser and continued in this position till 2011.

In the 104th Annual General Meeting held on 30 December 2008, the Chairman of the meeting, Mr Latifur Rahman, announced the changes that were to be made following the retirement of Mr CK Hyder. Mr Latifur Rahman, the Chairman of the AGM, declared that 'the MCCI is proud of the fact that it is managed by a professional Secretariat and persons like CK Hyder'.<sup>158</sup>

In his message, Mr Anis Ud Dowla, a stalwart of the Chamber for many years, wrote about his experience of working with Mr CK Hyder since 1965. In an interview, he credited Mr Hyder for naming the Chamber as the Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Dhaka, itself - a major milestone in the history of this Chamber.<sup>159</sup> Former President of MCCI, Mr Syed Manzur Elahi termed his Presidential period as a very 'difficult time' in 1989 when there was political turmoil in the Country and noted how he helped steer MCCI in this troubled period.<sup>160</sup>

Mr SH Kabir, a former President of the Chamber, also highly praised CK Hyder's contribution to MCCI and said that 'he is a person of high competence'.<sup>161</sup>

Mr Kamran T Rahman, the President of Bangladesh Employers' Federation (BEF) in 2008, appreciated Mr Hyder's contribution in the field of Industrial Relations, nationally, as well as internationally.

<sup>158</sup> Proceedings of the 104<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting of the MCCI, Dhaka held at the Chamber Conference Hall, Chamber Building (5<sup>th</sup> Floor) on 30 December, 2008. See, *Annual Report* of the MCCI, Dhaka, 2008, pp. 9-19.

<sup>159</sup> *Annual Report* of the MCCI, Dhaka, 2008, p. 15; 'Interview' of Mr Anis Ud Dowla, Former President of MCCI, Dhaka, 11 May, 2014.

<sup>160</sup> *Annual Report* of the MCCI, Dhaka, 2008, p. 16; 'Interview' of Mr Syed Manzur Elahi, Former President of MCCI, Dhaka, 10 April, 2014.

<sup>161</sup> *Annual Report* of the MCCI, Dhaka, 2008, p. 17.