

# Chapter 4

## The Chamber Now: Functions





## THE CHAMBER NOW: FUNCTIONS

### 4.1 Introduction

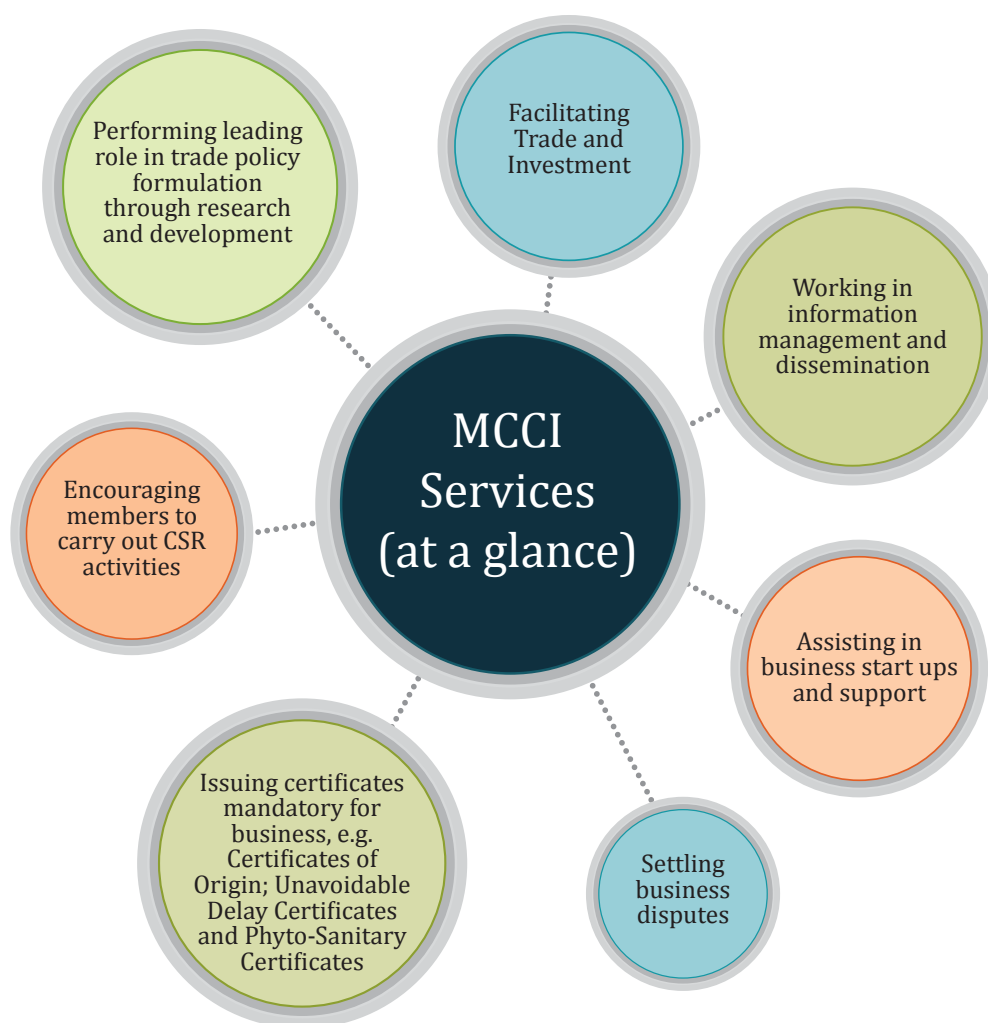
The Chamber renders expert services in specialized areas such as economic policy reform, taxation, trade practices, custom and tariff, and offers advice on important policy instruments. It performs a set of functions which include initiating dialogue with the government on the likely impact of existing and envisaged government policies on the business community; providing effective representations of Chamber members to the government or other authorities on problems faced by businesses; supplying information related to the promotion of trade, investment and technology transfer; disseminating information concerning rules and regulations endorsed by the government and other competent authorities that have a bearing on business; enhancing the capacities of members and their areas of business; and promoting interaction among members. The Chamber strives to create a business-friendly environment and a favourable investment climate in Bangladesh through its operations. The Chamber has been performing the following activities in its 110 years history:

- a) Organizing trade delegations, seminars, symposia and trade fairs, as well as receiving business delegations from abroad;
- b) Cooperating with other chambers of commerce and industry in other countries as well as at home for promotion of bilateral trade and investment;
- c) Undertaking arbitration to settle disputes arising from business transactions that affect its members;
- d) Organizing meetings, seminars, conferences and discussions, and conducting regular training courses and workshops on entrepreneurship for its members;
- e) Maintaining liaison with its members and foreign companies and helping overseas business visitors in order to promote trade and commerce with its members.

It can thus be stated that the Chamber has been performing varied but important functions from its inception to facilitate business transactions and to promote trade and commerce.

Initially, and in its Narayanganj phase, the Chamber's activities were mainly related to jute trading and industries. Being the most important centre of jute and other industries, Narayanganj was then famous and received special attention of British merchants. Hence, the functions and activities of the Chamber were at first based on the need of these overseas businessmen. The functions of the Chamber relating to these needs continued till 1947.

Some new dimensions were added to the activities of the Chamber after the second partition of Bengal in 1947. Gradually the functions of the Chamber diversified even more in course of time. Indeed, by now, the Chamber has become one of the leading voices of the business community of Bangladesh. Its organizational set-up, dynamism and efficient leadership have made the Chamber a very active and proactive organization.



The major functions of the MCCI may broadly be divided into three categories: (a) offering services to members; (b) formulating views on matters of policy and communicating these views to the appropriate authorities; and (c) representing the business community outside the country. In addition to these three categories, the Chamber conducts other traditional and non-traditional activities. All these functions have, of course, not been practiced consistently throughout the 110 years history of the Chamber, but a few have been carried out over the years, albeit modified from time to time. Inevitably, some activities or functions were carried out only in a particular phase and when needed. What must be remembered here is that since the Metropolitan Chamber is a non-profit, service-oriented organization, its functions or activities are aimed at serving society and the nation in general and the business community in particular and is moulded accordingly.

This chapter will deal with the multidimensional functions of the Metropolitan Chamber under the following headlines: Reviews; International Connections; Representations; Publications and Research Cell; Annual General Meetings (AGM) and Communication. Because of the paucity of sources and research in the area, the functions in the first phase (NCC Phase) of the Chamber (1904-50) could not be fully reconstructed. Adequate information about Chamber functions is available only from 1950 Annual Reports, Chamber News and the minutes of DNCC, DNCCI, NCCI and MCCI, Dhaka. The functions of the Chamber from 1950 onwards have therefore been written mostly in light of these records.

## **4.2 Reviews**

Policy advocacy and conducting reviews are two of the foremost functions of the Metropolitan Chamber. As a proactive body of business, the MCCI has contributed to economic policy through such functions throughout its existence. MCCI anticipates future needs of members, responds to these challenges, and prepares its stakeholders to benefit from these changes and opportunities. Through its linkages with partner chambers, it helps in making the voice of the Bangladeshi business community heard across the country and in lands beyond.

From 1904, the Chamber has taken an active interest not only in areas of direct concern for trade and industry, but also in relevant spheres of the public life of the region. Governments have often referred many important questions about trade and commerce to the Chamber for its opinion. In its early days, the Chamber used to even review Government Acts and Policies e.g. the Company Act 1913, Scheme for the Registration of Property in British India Belonging to Enemies, 1916 etc. Reviews on national budgets, economic decisions taken by the government and its regulations, notifications, circulars, acts,

export-import policies, jute and tea policies, and other significant issues have been core areas of the Chamber's functions. At present, the Research Cell of the Chamber is taking an active part in review matters. In many of these issues the Chamber makes comments before and after policy proposals or the tabling of the National Budget.

The Research Cell has played an important role in reviewing issues relating to trade and commerce or policy matters over the years. Extensive research carried out by commissioned experts on relevant issues make reviews useful to all. A sub-committee is often formed to work on relevant issues under the professional guidance of a leading economist or an academic of the country. For the purpose of review, the Chamber sends representations to various legislative and consultative councils, and also participates in various boards, panels and commissions. At times the Chamber has welcomed policies taken by the Government but at times too it has opposed them, while giving constructive suggestions or recommendations on them.

In many ways, reviewing has been one of the most significant functions of the Chamber. Of course, the review mode has changed in the course of time and with the demand of each era. But perhaps the Chamber's changing review activities and function can be best understood if narrated historically.

***NCC Phase (1904-1950):*** Various acts and policies initiated by the Government of India and the Bengal Government were reviewed regularly in this phase. From archival records, it is evident that there was regular communication between the Chamber and the Commerce, Finance, and Labour Departments of the Bengal Government as well as the Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam. The Honorary Secretary of the Chamber maintained correspondence with these Departments. In this phase, the Narayanganj Chamber of Commerce (NCC) reviewed several Government acts, bills and policies. Some NCC-reviewed acts, bills and rules of government were: Bill to Amend the Indian Company Act, 1913; United Kingdom Registration of Business Names Act, 1916; Proposal Amendment of Section 91B of the Indian Companies Act 1913; Trading License 1915; Tariff Policy of the Government of India Trade after the War; Free Trade System; Protection, Imperial Preference, etc; Cotton Ginning and Cotton Pressing Factories Bill; Indian Trade Unions Bill 1924; Periods of Wage Payment Bill 1925; Revision of the Indian Petroleum Act, 1899 (VIII of 1899); Indian Religious Pictures Trade Marks (Prevention) Bill, 1930; The Draft Indian Partnership Bill; The Indian Partnership Bill, 1931; The Indian Petroleum Bill; Bengal Factories Rules, 1935; Indian Electricity Rules, 1922; Proposed extension of the Provisions of the Factories Act to Smaller Factories using Power Machinery; The Bengal

Maternity Bill, 1937; The Bengal Boiler Attendants' Rules, 1939; The Draft Revised Explosives Rules; The Bengal Shops and Establishments Bill, 1939.<sup>162</sup>

The above-mentioned documents are but a few examples that have been collected from the archives of Bangladesh and India on which the NCC Committee carried out research and got back to the Bengal or India government with its opinions. The Honorary Secretary of the Chamber, on behalf of the Chamber Committee, was authorized to send letters with signatures and dates in these matters. The jute business was vital to the Bengal Government of the period. In 1917, the Chamber was asked to review adulteration of jute with a view to eliciting suggestions for a remedy to this practice. The Chamber responded by a noting that it occurred previous to its sale probably because of the *raiyat* and that the jute was often watered and observed but that there was no adulteration of the exported jute.<sup>163</sup> In 1919, the Chamber Committee carefully studied the Government's proposed Bill of United Kingdom Registration of Business Names Act 1916 and concurred with the terms but suggested some modifications to them.<sup>164</sup> The Chamber reviewed 'the collection of commercial and industrial intelligence in connection with the recommendations of the Indian Industrial Commission' in 1920. The Chamber Committee was in favour of treating commercial intelligence as an imperial rather than provincial affair and commented on the disassociation of commercial from industrial intelligence. The Committee also approved of the suggested reorganization of the staff of the Commercial Intelligence Department.<sup>165</sup>

In a review conducted in June 1920, the Chamber welcomed the Government's nomination of representatives and delegates of employers for the International Labour Conference and Commissions of Enquiry under articles 389 and 412 of the Peace Treaty. The Chamber Committee was in favour of the proposal to invite the Employers' Associations to come up with a mechanism whereby a nominated representative of all interests concerned could be selected in the future.<sup>166</sup> In a meeting held on July 1920, the Chamber Committee vehemently criticized the recommendations of the International

<sup>162</sup> Files of the Government of Bengal, Department of Commerce; Commerce and Labour; Commerce, Labour and Industries preserved in the Wooden Bundle in Bangladesh National Archives.

<sup>163</sup> 'A' *Proceedings*, GOB, Commerce Dept., 'Proposal to Suppress the Adulteration of Indian Produce before Export', BNA, March 1918, File No. 10-A/1, No. 14.

<sup>164</sup> 'A' *Proceedings*, GOB, Commerce Dept., 'United Kingdom Registration of Business Names Act, 1916', BNA, October 1919, File No. 1-A/1 (10).

<sup>165</sup> 'A' *Proceedings*, GOB, Commerce Dept., 'Collection of Commercial and Industrial Intelligence in Connection with the Recommendations of the Indian Industrial Commission', BNA, April 1920, File No. 2-1/3, Nos. 9-10.

<sup>166</sup> 'A' *Proceedings*, GOB, Commerce Dept., 'Nomination of Representatives and Delegates of Employers for International Labour Conferences and Commissions of Enquiry under Articles 389 and 412 of the Peace Treaty', BNA, April 1921, File No. 8-L/9, No. 76.

Labour Conference. The Committee felt that the proposed changes would not be acceptable to the labourers employed in jute baling. The Committee opined that the restriction of hours in jute baling concerns was undesirable since it would reduce output.<sup>167</sup>

The Chamber's review on the Indian Fiscal Commission in this phase, is worth mentioning. It reviewed the Tariff Policy of the government of India adopted after the War, the free trade system, protection etc. Committee members unanimously favored imperial preferences.<sup>168</sup> Constructive criticism of the Government was evident in Chamber reviews undertaken during the NCC era. On the Periods of Wage Payment Bill, the Chamber Committee took into consideration the overall situation of the workers and objected to the application of piecemeal legislation that affected labourers employed by them.<sup>169</sup> For its review of the 'Proposed Legislation for the Investigation and Settlement of Trade Disputes', the Chamber Committee opined that such legislation would be detrimental to both employees and employers. It questioned the feasibility of the Government proposal.<sup>170</sup>

The Chamber's review on the Indian Trade Unions Bill 1924, is another important work the Chamber Committee carried out in this phase. The Chamber Committee in its review noted, that there was no indication of any desire by labourers to form a Union. It conceded that while during strikes in mills and factory areas, there were persons who claimed to represent workers, in reality they were political agitators with no genuine connection to the workers and had no true regard for them. The Chamber opined that the introduction of such a Bill would merely encourage the formation of organizations which neither the workers nor employees needed or desired at that time.<sup>171</sup>

On 'Indian Religious Pictures Trade Marks (Prevention) Bill, 1930' the Chamber's comment was quite significant. The Chamber opposed the Bill, considering it unnecessary and detrimental to the trade bodies who had been using such trademarks over the years. It also pointed out that the proposal embodied in the Bill was impractical, unnecessary and not reflective of public opinion.<sup>172</sup> In 1935, the Chamber Committee reviewed the "Sickness

<sup>167</sup> *A' Proceedings*, GOB, Commerce Dept., 'International Labour Conference held at Washington in October, 1919', BNA, April 1921, File No. 8-L/8, No. 7.

<sup>168</sup> *A' Proceedings*, GOB, Commerce Dept., 'Tariff Policy of the Government of India Trade after the War, Free Trade System, Protection, Imperial Preference, etc.', BNA, May 1922, File No. 8-F/1, No. 24.

<sup>169</sup> *A' Proceedings*, Commerce Dept., 'Periods of Wage Payment Bill', BNA, June 1925, File No. 1-A/22 (7), No. 9.

<sup>170</sup> *A' Proceedings*, GOB, Commerce Dept., 'Proposed Legislation for the Investigation and Settlement of Trade Disputes', BNA, January 1925, File No. 1-A/13 (26), No. 208.

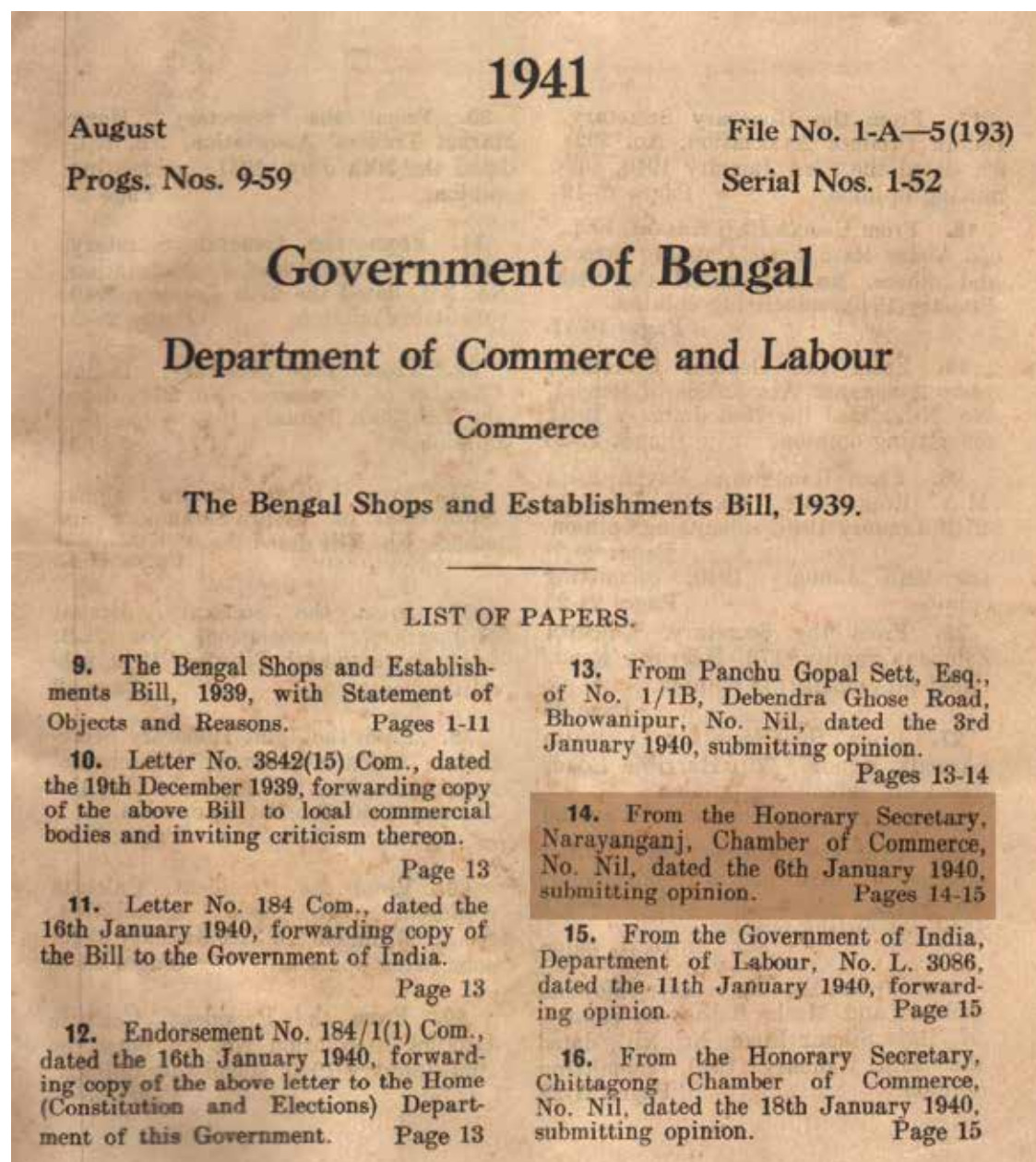
<sup>171</sup> *A' Proceedings*, GOB, Commerce Dept., 'Cotton Ginning and Cotton Pressing Factories Bill', BNA, January 1925, File No. 1-A/18 (6), No. 40.

<sup>172</sup> *A' Proceedings*, GOB, Commerce Dept., 'Indian Religious Pictures Trade Marks (Prevention) Bill, 1930', BNA, June 1930, File No. 1-A/8 (14), No. 24.



Insurance Scheme" and remarked that such a scheme was feasible. It opined that it had no objection to an enquiry into the merits of the proposed scheme.<sup>173</sup> The Chamber opposed the Bill of 'Holidays with Pay' as members already had a system in vogue by then by which adequate provision had been made for their employees.<sup>174</sup>

Archival Document: List of Papers between Govt. of Bengal and Other Associations, 1941

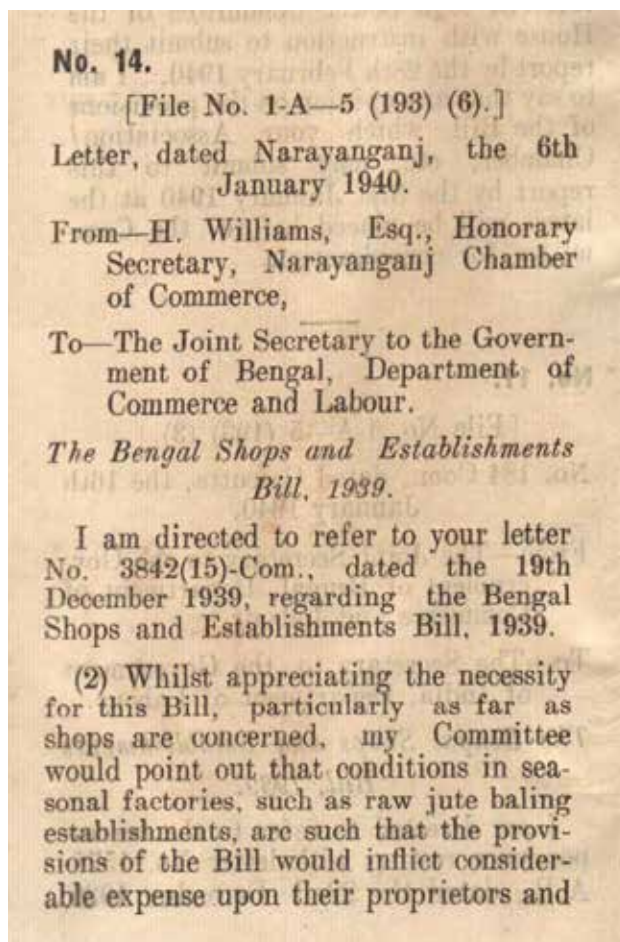


<sup>173</sup> 'A' Proceedings, GOB, Commerce Dept., 'Sickness Insurance', BNA, December 1935, File No. 1-I/5 (5), No. 130.

<sup>174</sup> 'A' Proceedings, GOB, Commerce Dept., 'Holidays with Pay', BNA, April 1935, File No. 2-H/3 (5), No. 9.



## Review on a Bill by the NCC, 1940



At times the Chamber reflected on comments made by the Bengal Chamber of Commerce (BCC) in a manner that reflected the good terms existing between NCC and BCC. The Chambers review on 'The Draft Revised Explosives Rules' was an example of its stand on review matters. In replying to this notification the Chamber offered no comments but supported the recommendations already made by the Bengal Chamber of Commerce.<sup>175</sup>

The Chamber's review on the 'Bengal Shops and Establishments Bill, 1939' was also very important for the trade and commerce of Bengal. The Bill was welcomed by the Chamber Committee but they were concerned that proprietors' and staff' working hours that had been spelled out by the legislative body and urged the Government to modify the Bill.<sup>176</sup>

**DNCC Phase (1950-52):** In this phase, the Chamber continued conducting reviews on issues similar to the ones undertaken in the NCC phase. In the early 1950s, the Chamber thus offered its views on important Acts and Bills. In 1950, it offered suggestions on housing schemes for industrial workers. The Chamber recommended designs for single, double and three storey buildings, laying down of a minimum space, proper town planning schemes, and prioritizing brick supply. It added that buildings needed to be properly utilized by workers but encouraged industrialists to erect workers quarters with the government's help so that it could meet the total cost of concrete buildings.<sup>177</sup>

<sup>175</sup> 'A' Proceedings, GOB, Commerce and Labour Dept., 'The Draft Revised Explosives Rules', BNA, November 1940, File No. 1-R/55 (4), No. 32.

<sup>176</sup> 'A' Proceedings, GOB, Commerce and Labour Dept., 'The Bengal Shops and Establishments Bill, 1939', BNA, August 1941, File No. 1-A/5 (193), No. 14.

<sup>177</sup> Minutes of the DNCC, 17 January, 1950, P. 11.

The Chamber was asked by the Government to review the Factories Act, 1934. The Chamber Committee forwarded its recommendations after reviewing the Act.<sup>178</sup> It commented on the Shops and Establishment Bill and also suggested that some changes be made to it and the Industrial Dispute Act, 1947.<sup>179</sup> In the same year, it gave its opinion on important aspects of the East Bengal (Smuggling of Food Grains) Act, 1950. A draft resolution was submitted by the Chamber Sub-Committee on the Act. It noted its misgivings about the very wide powers given to local officers under the Act, particularly in regard to detention and confiscation through which smuggled or suspected food grains could be discovered. It also criticized the wastage of coal and disruptions in river transport. It was of the opinion that the Government should issue clear instructions to the officers concerned so that suspected goods could be removed promptly from the vessels of carrying companies on issue of a clear receipt, and so that vessels could be allowed to proceed forthwith, unless the detection of smuggled goods on board made it evident that the offence was committed with the knowledge of the owners.<sup>180</sup>

In the ASSOCHAP (Associate Chamber of Commerce of Pakistan) Conference, the Chamber suggested a model Provident Fund Rules. The Chamber participated on the questionnaire relating to the Sales Tax and forwarded the Chambers Sub-Committee's views on it to the concerned authority. The Chamber also commented on the Arbitration Rules and the Town Improvement Bill, 1951. In 1951, the Chamber recommended that all government notifications should be issued simultaneously in East and West Pakistan.<sup>181</sup>

**DNCCI Phase (1952-1959):** Reviews, as a major function of the Chamber, continued in its DNCCI phase. In 1953, the Chambers Customs and Communications Sub-Committee drafted a procedure for use by the Collector of Land Customs in booking jute to Chalna port. A proposal was sent to the Pakistan Jute Association to formulate a completely new export procedure to be submitted to the Government of Pakistan.<sup>182</sup>

Chamber members became much more preoccupied with import-export policies in this phase. They took to making comments on government policies in earnest. A Chamber Member's remarks and objections on the Government's new Barter Scheme (Import – Export Policy) was an issue that was reviewed by the Chamber Committee.<sup>183</sup> The Chamber reviewed the new import policy announced by the Pakistan Government which made no

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<sup>178</sup> *Minutes of the DNCC*, 25 July, 1950, P. 37.

<sup>179</sup> *Minutes of the DNCC*, 16 April, 1951, P. 66.

<sup>180</sup> *Minutes of the DNCC*, 7 March, 1951, P. 61.

<sup>181</sup> *Minutes of the DNCC*, 3 January, 17 January, 1 February and 17 February 1951, p. 52, 53, 56, 58.

<sup>182</sup> *Minutes of the DNCCI*, 3 February, 1953, pp. 185-86.

<sup>183</sup> *Minutes of the DNCCI*, 24 February, 1953, p. 189.

provisions for imports for the industrial undertakings underway. It was recommended by the Chamber that provisions be made for newcomers to industrial fields who were not registered under the Factories Act.<sup>184</sup> The Chamber supported a Public Notice [No. 8(53)/1, dated 1 March 1953] issued by the Chittagong Chamber on the addition of certain items to the licencable list or items or articles in the import requirements drawn up for the country.<sup>185</sup> The Chamber's interactions with the Chittagong Chamber of Commerce are evident in this instance.

Jute never lost its position as the major concern of the Chamber in this phase. The Chamber reviewed the East Bengal Jute Dealers Registration Act. It believed that the Act should be discussed at length by the Minister and Secretary of the Commerce, Labour and Industries Department with a deputation of the Chamber and the Pakistan Jute Association.<sup>186</sup> The Chamber dealt with the issue successfully.

At this stage, the Chamber reacted to a move by Secretary of the Commerce, Labour and Industries Department to shift the office of the Deputy Chief Controller Imports and Exports from Chittagong to Dhaka. The Chamber opposed this move. It was later agreed that no change would be made in the location of the office.<sup>187</sup>

In 1957, the Chamber, along with the Chittagong Chamber of Commerce, opposed the East Pakistan Development of Industries Control and Regulation Bill, as it would hamper the interests of the business community and recommended removal of some portions of the Act. The Chamber also participated in the award process of the Minimum Wage Board in 1957.<sup>188</sup>

**NCCI Phase (1959-1979):** The Chamber entered into another important phase in 1959, when its review-related function gathered momentum. As this phase offered multidimensional political experiences to the people of the land, the Chamber passed through a challenging time. The outlook, objectives, missions and vision of the Chamber changed completely in this phase. The Chamber gradually transformed itself into an organization of business concerns that bore the definite stamp of the land and its people. It tried to serve the nation faithfully after independence and began to play a significant role in

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<sup>184</sup> *Minutes* of the DNCCI, 9 March, 1953, p. 193.

<sup>185</sup> *Minutes* of the DNCCI, 24 March, 1953, pp. 195-96.

<sup>186</sup> *Minutes* of the DNCCI, 18 August, 1953, pp. 223-24.

<sup>187</sup> *Minutes* of the DNCCI, 1 October, 1953, pp. 229-30.

<sup>188</sup> Mr AA Kahlon, President of the Chamber at this time, in his opening address in the 53<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting (AGM) held on 4 March, 1958 at the Chamber Building in Dhaka mentioned the issue to Mr AK Fazlul Haq, Governor of East Pakistan. See *Annual Report* of the DNCCI, 1958, p. 9.

national business policies. It also employed leading economists to review policy matters methodically. The reviews and suggestions prepared by the Chamber were well received in Bangladesh and lands beyond. The Chamber increasingly participated in policy making at the national level and came up with suggestions and recommendations that were appreciated by relevant bodies.

In this phase, the Chamber circulated all the notifications, circulars, rules and acts, and ordinances as forwarded by the government, Employers' Associations and local Government bodies to its members. In the initial years of this phase the Pakistan government had to adopt many acts and ordinances with amendments as and where required and framed new laws for the country. The Chamber offered suggestions and recommendations after reviewing some of them. In the sixties, the Chamber commented on the East Pakistan Labour Statistics Rules, 1962; Draft Regulation of Social Security, 1962; and East Pakistan Finance Act, 1957. In 1962, the Chamber supported the East Pakistan Employers' Association in its bid to amend the labour law of the country. The Chamber also suggested amendments to the constitution of the Federation and participated in the Government's Economic Policy Coordination Commission in 1966.<sup>189</sup> In the 1960s, the Chamber Committee started reviewing various guidelines prepared by the Securities and Exchange Commission for issue of capital to public limited companies. The Committee submitted its detailed comments to the Securities and Exchange Commission and played an important role in the reformulation of the Commission's policies.

A new form of review was added to the list of the Chamber's review function in the middle of the nineteen sixties. In order to place the viewpoints of member-firms before the Government prior to the preparation of the budget for 1966-67, the Chamber urged the Ministry of Finance to consider its suggestions and recommendations on taxation.<sup>190</sup> It became normal practice for the Chamber in the following years to offer such suggestions and recommendations.

After the emergence of Bangladesh in 1971, the Government aimed to introduce new industrial investment policies for the country and asked the Chamber to come up with its comments and suggestions. The Narayanganj Chamber of Commerce and Industry welcomed this invitation to offer policy reviews and began to work together with the government for the economic progress and development of the country.

An emergency meeting of the Chamber Committee was held on 29 March 1972 on the new government's decision to nationalize major industries and control the foreign trade of

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<sup>189</sup> *Minutes of the NCCI*, 3 May 1962, p. 530; 28 June 1962, p. 537.

<sup>190</sup> *Annual Report of the NCCI*, 1966, p. 13.

the Country. The Chamber considered the implications of the decision taken by the government and decided to cooperate with it in helping the government to run nationalized units successfully. The Chamber also decided to issue a public statement on nationalization.<sup>191</sup>

In a subsequent meeting the Chamber Committee again reviewed the prevailing position in trade and industry following the nationalization of major industries. There were detailed discussions on production and marketing, including foreign sales, and the labour situation in respect of nationalized industries, which represented 85% of the total investment in the country, and also in respect of the remaining units that were not nationalized. The meeting felt that the government should remove all uncertainties by announcing its Industrial and Labour Policies and also formulate its long-term objectives vis-à-vis the private sector, particularly with regard to foreign investment. However, the Chamber appreciated the Government's concern to bring about conditions conducive to the quick development of the country, though it felt that conditions then prevailing appeared to pose formidable problems for the reconstruction and development of the economy of the country.<sup>192</sup>

The Chamber's views and comments on suggestions made by different trade organizations for amendments to the Trade Organisations Ordinance, 1961 were important review undertakings of the Chamber in this phase.<sup>193</sup> In 1977, the NCCI made some valuable recommendations on Company Laws at the suggestion of the Company Law Reform Committee. Suggestions and recommendations on the National Budget, Import and Export Policies continued on a regular basis in this phase.<sup>194</sup>

**MCCI, Dhaka First Phase (1979-1999):** With the change of the name from NCCI to MCCI, the jurisdiction and activities of the Chamber increased manifold. Reviews became an even more crucial function of the Chamber in this phase. Under the guidance of able economists, the Economic Research Cell of the Chamber started playing an active role in the commercial sphere of Bangladesh. This research cell compiled a number of papers which were appreciated by the government and international agencies as well as its own members. In this phase, Bangladesh experienced military rule from 1976 to 1991 and parliamentary democracy from 1991 onwards. Regardless of the political situation, MCCI worked to serve the people, contribute to the economy of Bangladesh, and help the country in attaining economic health. The review activities contributed significantly to these goals.

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<sup>191</sup> *Minutes of the NCCI*, 29 March 1972, p. 1133.

<sup>192</sup> *Minutes of the NCCI*, 11 April 1972, p. 1137.

<sup>193</sup> *Annual Report of the NCCI*, 1975, p. 19; *Annual Report of the MCCI*, Dacca 1980, p. 38.

<sup>194</sup> *Annual Report of the NCCI*, 1975, pp. 19-21; *Annual Report of the NCCI*, 1979, p. 40.





Budget Review for 1996-97. Chief Guest: Mr SAMS Kibria, Minister for Finance

The Chamber reviewed most government and semi-government policies affecting economic sectors. It made detailed proposals on various issues relating to trade and industry and also on the National Budget, Five Year Plan, Investment Policy, Industrial Policy, Energy Policy, Import-Export Policy, Bank Rate Policy, Monetary and Fiscal Policy, Industrial Policy, and various acts and ordinances. In this phase, the Chamber also opined on international economic issues pertinent to Bangladesh. The Chamber's review on the situation arising from the currency turmoil in Europe in the 1990s undertaken to protect the country's foreign trade is one such example.<sup>195</sup>

The Government published three gazette notifications on (i) The Insurance (Amendment) Ordinance, 1984; (ii) The Insurance Corporation (Amendment) Ordinance, 1984; and (iii) Draft Amendments to the Insurance Rules, 1985, laying down terms and conditions for sanctioning new insurance companies in the private sector. The Chamber reviewed these and submitted representations to the Government. The MCCI pointed out in detail, how the terms and conditions could hamper the workings of new insurance companies in the private sector.<sup>196</sup>

The MCCI was requested by the Ministry of Commerce to review the Trade Organisations Ordinance and suggest amendments. The Chamber Committee submitted its report to the Ministry of Commerce in 1987. The Chamber was of the view that there should not be any compulsion to join any body and an importer should be free to become member of any trade body which could render requisite services to it.<sup>197</sup>

<sup>195</sup> *Annual Report of the MCCI, Dhaka 1992*, p. 8.

<sup>196</sup> *Annual Report of the MCCI, Dhaka 1985*, p. 22.

<sup>197</sup> *Annual Report of the MCCI, Dhaka 1987*, p. 25.

The Government was very concerned about industrial development in the 1980s and frequently requested suggestions from the Chamber. The Ministry of Industries requested the Chamber to help it in preparing feasibility reports on industries where foreign investors would be likely to invest. The Committee agreed that all possible help would be extended to the Ministry of Industries in such cases.<sup>198</sup>

The Chamber continued to review the Government's five year plans during this phase. The Chamber Committee considered and finalized two papers on the Second Five-Year plan entitled 'Analysis of 2nd Five-Year Plan, Few Comments and Suggestions' and 'Role of Private Sector in the Second Five-Year Plan'. These papers were forwarded to the Planning Commission and the Ministry of Industries with suggested action programs on how the private sector should be assisted in performing the role envisaged for it in the Plan.<sup>199</sup> The Chamber Committee finalized another comprehensive paper entitled 'Role of the Private Sector Economy in Bangladesh' which was later followed up by meetings held at the Planning Commission.<sup>200</sup>

In this phase, the Chamber played a key role in the denationalization of Bangladeshi industries. The Chamber's review of the impact of nationalization of industries in the country is noteworthy. The Chamber Committee evaluated the overall impact of nationalization and finalized a paper entitled 'Nationalisation of Industries in Bangladesh – A Review of the Experiment: A Case for Denationalisation' which demonstrated how the economy had to suffer on account of large scale nationalization of industries, and also pointed out how the main objectives of nationalization still remains unfulfilled. The review showed how labour productivity of the nationalized industries had deteriorated and recommended gradual denationalization of jute and textile mills in keeping with the Government's desire to follow a mixed economy in the country.<sup>201</sup>

The Chamber carried out a review of the Banking sector and assessed the Bank Rate of various banks in this phase. Some examples can be given here of the reviews undertaken. In May, 1981 the Committee reviewed the situation created by the employees of the nationalized commercial banks and expressed its concern over its impact on the national economy.<sup>202</sup> The Chamber reviewed the Bank Company Ordinance 1991<sup>203</sup> and the Bankruptcy Act.<sup>204</sup> In 1994, the Chamber's proposal on the Bankruptcy Act was considered

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<sup>198</sup> *Annual Report of the MCCI, Dhaka 1980, p. 38.*

<sup>199</sup> *Annual Report of the MCCI, Dhaka 1980, p. 36, 37.*

<sup>200</sup> *Annual Report of the MCCI, Dhaka 1980, p. 36.*

<sup>201</sup> *Annual Report of the MCCI, Dhaka 1982, pp. 24-25.*

<sup>202</sup> *Annual Report of the MCCI, Dhaka 1981, p. 37.*

<sup>203</sup> *Annual Report of the MCCI, Dhaka 1991, p. 31.*

<sup>204</sup> *Annual Report of the MCCI, Dhaka 1994, p. 34.*

by the government and its recommendations were reflected in the aforementioned Act. In the wake of the government announcement on the devaluation of the Taka in November 1997, the Chamber Committee expressed concern at the enhancement of the bank rate, particularly when there was a need to support the manufacturing sector to establish its competitive capabilities.<sup>205</sup> As requested by the government, the Chamber gave its suggestions on the reduction of the bank rate. The Government subsequently reduced the Bank rate by 1%<sup>206</sup>, which can be seen as a notable consequence of the Chamber review process.

The 1990s was a significant period in the history of Bangladesh as well as the Chamber. The Chamber welcomed the 12th Amendment Bill 1991 passed to establish parliamentary democracy, reviewed the situation, and issued a press release hailing the event as a 'landmark in the journey to parliamentary democracy'. The Chamber Committee commented that democracy is a reflection of collective wisdom and the wish of the people for their economic welfare and better governance.<sup>207</sup>

The Chamber reviewed some nationally important agendas in 1991. In this year, the MCCI submitted proposed amendments to the Companies Act and the Excise Act, 1944 to the 12 member Corporate Laws Committee. Moreover, the Committee finalized MCCI's proposal on amendments to the Banking Companies Ordinance, 1962. The Metropolitan Chamber also came up with recommendations on the draft Industrial Policy, 1991 announced that year. The Chamber termed it as a 'major step in the right direction'. In 1992, the Chamber took an active part in the deliberations of the Review Committee which was constituted by the government for the merger of the Capital Issues (continuance of control) Act, 1947 with the Securities Exchange Ordinance, 1969.<sup>208</sup>

In May 1992, the Chamber, in collaboration with the National Press Club, organized a two-day seminar entitled 'Policy Options for Economic Breakthrough'. As a consequence of this seminar, the Chamber decided to redouble its efforts to define the shape and complexion of the government's 'market friendly role'. The Chamber President suggested that the government must ensure macro-economic stabilization before trade liberalization.<sup>209</sup>

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<sup>205</sup> *Annual Report of the MCCI, Dhaka: 1998, p. 30.*

<sup>206</sup> *Annual Report of the MCCI, Dhaka: 1999, p. 31.*

<sup>207</sup> *Annual Report of the MCCI, Dhaka: 1992, p. 31, 44.*

<sup>208</sup> *Annual Report of the MCCI, Dhaka: 1992, pp. 31-37.*

<sup>209</sup> *Annual Report of the MCCI, Dhaka: 1992, pp. 6-7.*

In this phase, the Chamber's contribution to the amendments of the Companies Act was noteworthy. In 1993, the Chamber Committee examined the final version of the proposed Act and came up with several amendments to it which were then handed over to the Commerce Minister.<sup>210</sup> In the following year, the Committee reviewed the final draft of the new Companies Act in the light of proposals submitted earlier by the Chamber before the Review and Expert Committee appointed by the government. It was evident from the finalized Act that of the Chamber's proposals, the government had accepted six, while one proposal about preparation of Balance Sheets and Profit and Loss Accounts by the branches of foreign companies was partially accepted.<sup>211</sup> MCCI also assessed the Trade Organizations Rules, 1994 and expressed its concern over several provisions of the new rules.<sup>212</sup>

In 1994, the Chamber Committee contributed to a draft Bankruptcy Act. After the draft was finalized, the Committee found that a number of proposals made by it were reflected in the final version.<sup>213</sup> Similarly, the Chamber contributed to the enactment of a law for consumers' protection and found some of its proposals incorporated in the Consumer Protection Act, 1995.<sup>214</sup>

During this phase, the Chamber for the first time expressed its concern on environmental issues and began reviewing issues relating to the environment. The Chamber Committee reviewed the proposed action plan of the Ministry of Environment and decided to point out to the government the practical implications of some of the environmental requirements. The Committee felt that while environmental standards ought to be complied with, such compliance should be sought through awareness programs instead of being enforced through punitive legal provisions.<sup>215</sup>

In a country affected by recurring natural calamities the MCCI was always concerned about the economic loss incurred due to floods, cyclones and other natural disasters. After the devastating flood of 1999, the Chamber obtained from its member-firms detailed figures on damage caused by the recent floods to their establishments. It then wrote to the Government seeking policy formulations as well as support for its affected members to

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<sup>210</sup> *Annual Report of the MCCI, Dhaka 1993*, p. 32.

<sup>211</sup> *Annual Report of the MCCI, Dhaka: 1994*, p. 33.

<sup>212</sup> *Annual Report of the MCCI, Dhaka: 1994*, p. 37.

<sup>213</sup> *Annual Report of the MCCI, Dhaka: 1994*, p. 34.

<sup>214</sup> *Annual Report of the MCCI, Dhaka: 1995*, p. 30; *Annual Report of the MCCI, Dhaka: 1996*, p. 33; *Annual Report of the MCCI, Dhaka: 1997*, p. 32.

<sup>215</sup> *Annual Report of the MCCI, Dhaka: 1996*, p. 33.

help them overcome dislocations caused by the flood. Several proposals were made by the Chamber to deal with the critical situation.<sup>216</sup>

In the context of bilateral trade, particularly with India, the Chamber played a key role on many issues. The Chamber Committee prepared a comprehensive paper to be submitted to the government on the issue of transit facilities to be extended to India through allowing it to use Bangladesh port services.<sup>217</sup> The Chamber gave its comments on a public notice issued by the Government of India, offering duty concessions on imports from Bangladesh and other SAARC countries. As requested by the Ministry of Commerce, the Chamber came up with comments on duty exemptions given by India on items to be imported from Bangladesh and other SAARC countries.<sup>218</sup>

The Chamber Committee reviewed the government's proposed Telecommunication Policy and offered detailed comments on it.<sup>219</sup> The Committee reviewed the draft Industrial Policy of the government and gave suggestions on incorporating appropriate Statutory Regulatory Orders (SROs) and other rules and orders necessary to give effect to the various provisions of the proposed policy, such as tax incentives, tariff concessions, interest rates for bank credit facilities, enforceability of Board of Investment decisions etc.<sup>220</sup> The Chamber gave its comments on the Draft National Energy Conservation Law to the Energy Ministry, emphasizing on promotional efforts and fiscal incentives needed to attract consumers.<sup>221</sup>

The Chamber's suggestion on the Pre-Shipment Inspection (PSI) system was also an important contribution of the Chamber during this phase of its existence. The Pre-Shipment Inspection (PSI) system had been facing an uncertain future as the government was considering dropping the scheme. After a review the Chamber Committee opined that the PSI system could be beneficial for revenue, would limit corruption, and save importers from harassments, and therefore ought to continue, albeit with proper checks and balances.<sup>222</sup> The Chamber Prepared its comments for the Pre Shipment Inspection (PSI) Scheme which was due to be reintroduced by the Government. The Chamber later on Handed over the Comments to the Chairman of NBR.<sup>223</sup> The Chamber conducted a meeting with the National Board of Revenue on the PSI system.<sup>224</sup> In the end, the system continued

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<sup>216</sup> *Annual Report of the MCCI, Dhaka: 1999, p. 29.*

<sup>217</sup> *Annual Report of the MCCI, Dhaka: 1997, p. 32.*

<sup>218</sup> *Annual Report of the MCCI, Dhaka: 1999, p. 29.*

<sup>219</sup> *Annual Report of the MCCI, Dhaka: 1997, p. 32.*

<sup>220</sup> *Annual Report of the MCCI, Dhaka: 1998, p. 35.*

<sup>221</sup> *Annual Report of the MCCI, Dhaka: 1998, p. 36.*

<sup>222</sup> *Annual Report of the MCCI, Dhaka: 1997, p. 7.*

<sup>223</sup> *Annual Report of the MCCI, Dhaka: 1999, p. 32.*

<sup>224</sup> *Annual Report of the MCCI, Dhaka: 2000, p. 27.*



and it can be said that the Chamber thereby played its part in facilitating trade and commerce of the country.

The Chamber's review on the National Energy Conservation Law was an important act of its MCCI phase. After reviewing the draft of the National Energy Conservation Law formulated by the Energy Ministry, the Chamber emphasized the point that promotional efforts and fiscal incentives to consumers were more effective as energy conservation measures than the punitive legal provisions proposed in the draft law. The Chamber suggested that the implementation of the proposed law would only strengthen the hands of corrupt officials and would lead to further harassment of consumers and more system loss.<sup>225</sup>

Because of instances of political turmoil, the Chamber felt that, it had to express its concern on its effect on the economy. The Chamber reviewed the political situation regularly in Committee meetings and articulated its unhappiness at the unsettled situation through press releases. As decided by the Committee, several press-releases were issued jointly with other trade bodies on the tense situation. Highlighting the dislocations which were caused by hartals, it urged a dialogue between the major political parties to find a solution to the conflict.<sup>226</sup> In addition to reacting to hartals, the Chamber issued public statements during this phase on other important national issues. Reviewing the law and order situation had become a regular job of the Chamber along with the review of the economic situation by this time.<sup>227</sup> The Chamber Committee assessed the law and order situation periodically and based on its reviews the Committee issued press releases urging the Government to take strong action against such activities for the sake of the country's economy. Along with FBCCI, the Chamber included other trade bodies to arrive at a broad consensus for mobilizing public opinion against the restive situation. Some of these statements are included in the Appendices Section of this book. (See Appendix 22)

**MCCI, Dhaka Millennium Phase (2000-Present):** In the Millennium Phase of the Chamber, it began to conduct even more reviews and their nature became multi-dimensional. Bangladesh had by then successfully entered the world of information and communication technology. In fact, by now, the country has become significantly digitised and connected with the people and other countries of the world. The use of computers, internet, television, and mobile sets etc. had increased substantially and trade and commercial activities of Bangladesh had also become global. The country's ongoing economic growth and

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<sup>225</sup> *Annual Report of the MCCI, Dhaka: 1998, p. 36.*

<sup>226</sup> *Annual Report of the MCCI, Dhaka: 2000, p. 25.*

<sup>227</sup> *Annual Report of the MCCI, Dhaka: 1993, p. 30.*

development was certainly the result of policies adopted by the government and entrepreneurs but the Metropolitan Chamber played its part in upholding the process. The Chamber's review-related activities accelerated in this phase. Besides regular reviews, the Chamber had now begun focusing on issues that made review activities look 'epoch-making'. Macro-economic performance trends and forecasts; socio-economic achievements; position of Bangladesh in various global rankings; international recognitions; key policy agenda of the current government; economic and investment opportunities; potential growth sectors; the government's pledge of Vision 2021; challenges in the path of the transformation of the economy; and "Vision 2050" are some important and interesting matters that have been taken up for review by the Chamber in recent times.

The Chamber, in this phase, continued to review traditional matters as well as matters unique to the era. MCCI actively reviewed draft laws and amendment proposals. Significant reviews undertaken by the Chamber included: National Energy Preservation Act, 2000; Law on the Formation of the Energy Regulatory Commission 2003; Amendments to the Companies Act, 2004; the Draft Industrial Policy 2004; Industrial Policy Order 2004; Repeal of the Bangladesh Flag Vessels (Protection) Ordinance, 1982; the Consumer Protection Ordinance, 2008; Industrial Policy 2009; the Draft Law on Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR); VAT and Customs; Draft Direct Tax Act, 2011; Draft VAT Act, 2011; Draft Direct Sales Act, 2011; the Companies Act, 1994; the Trade Organisations Ordinance, 1991; the Societies Registration Act, 1860; Draft Financial Reporting Act, 2010; Draft Companies Act, 2011; Draft Trade Organisation Act 2011; Draft Direct Sales Act–Multilevel Marketing; the South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA) and Bangladesh Government's Trade Agreement; Draft Competition Act; Strengthening of TCB; Comprehensive Trade Policy; Expediting Regional Trade and Market Access to India; Draft Coal Policy, Coal Extraction; and Most Effective Utilization of Coal.

The Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Dhaka (MCCI) reviewed the Draft Coal Policy, the government had adopted previously. The Chamber arranged a discussion session titled, 'The Draft Coal Policy, Coal Extraction and Most Effective Utilization of Coal Resources for Industrial Development' featuring experts on coal, economists, researchers, academics, and business leaders on Thursday, 23 February, 2012 at the Chamber Conference Hall. The objective of the discussion session was to exchange ideas and views on the draft coal policy between the business community, academia, media, researchers, and members of the National Committee of the Draft Coal Policy of the

Government. A lively debate ensued in the session on whether Bangladesh should pursue open pit coal mining or underground mining to extract its coal. The Chamber suggested that the ownership of coal should remain with the people of Bangladesh and coal should not be exported anywhere.<sup>228</sup>

The Chamber Committee reviewed the National Energy Preservation Act, 2000, enacted by the Government, under which officials of the Energy Cell of the Ministry of Energy were authorized to enter any factory premise to ensure that consumption of electricity was following sanctioned loads and terms. Considering the possibility of the misuse of the Act and its consequent adverse effect on industry, the Chamber asked the Government not to go ahead with the move and held discussions with the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources and also issued a press-release on the subject.<sup>229</sup>

The Chamber's recommendation to the National Committee on Exports was an outcome of the review undertaken by the Chamber. The 8th meeting of the National Committee on Export, headed by the Prime Minister, was held on 22 March, 2001. As requested by the Ministry of Commerce, the Chamber sent a detailed proposal giving suggestions for liberalizing fiscal concessions and monetary facilities for export-oriented industries, promoting regional trade, and improving the capacities of export-oriented industries, such as frozen food, tea, leather, leather goods, garments and agro-processing industries.<sup>230</sup>

Among reviews conducted by the Chamber, those on the economic situation prevailing in the country have become a regular undertaking of the organization in recent years. The Chamber Committee reviews the economic situation every three months. The Chamber looks at major indicators of the economy and representations are made to concerned ministries of the Government, some of which are then followed up through meetings and discussions. In particular, the Committee reviews situations relating to trade, commerce and industry. Based on these reviews, meetings are held in the Ministries of Commerce, Industries and Planning as well as international development institutions. Reviews based on comparative data highlight different aspects of the country's economic performance. Most of these reviews are picked up by the press and commented upon editorially in a few papers. Discussions are held with the Ministry of Industries and the Ministry of Commerce on these reports and measures are often taken by the Government to tackle some of the problems in the light of Chamber reports. Relevant portions of these reports are also raised at the meetings of the Consultative Committee for the Ministry of

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<sup>228</sup> [http://www.mccibd.org/chamber\\_events.php](http://www.mccibd.org/chamber_events.php)

<sup>229</sup> *Annual Report* of the MCCI, Dhaka: 2001, p. 31.

<sup>230</sup> *Ibid.*

Industries and the Export Promotion Council. In all these meetings, the Chamber submits detailed comments on the prevailing situation and offers comprehensive remedial proposals. The reviews help the Chamber to remain in the forefront on discussions and interactions with the Government, think-tanks, civil society organizations and others, including the press. Not surprisingly, all financial institutions, both governmental and non-governmental, and even the relevant section of the public, look forward to the quarterly economic review of the Chamber to understand the real economic scenario of the country.

Reviewing the National Budget has become a regular matter of the Chamber for a long time now. In the current phase, Budget reviews have become more effective and research-based. The Chamber organizes discussions on the National Budget before and after the budget proposal is announced. In recent years, the Chamber, in collaboration with Maasranga Television, has been organizing a live TV program on Budget reviews. The MCCI and the Policy Research Institute (PRI) also jointly organize Budget discussions these days. The review discussion focuses on important aspects of macroeconomic growth, major



Budget Reviews for 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 by MCCI, Dhaka at Maasranga Television  
Chief Guest: Mr AMA Muhith, Minister for Finance

sectoral allocations, ADP allocation, revenue collection targets, taxation, safety nets, social welfare programs, the politics of the budget etc. Major recommendations made during budget discussions include: Limit Bank Borrowing, Modernization of Revenue Administration, Removal of New Tax on Life Insurance Policy, Reduction of AIT on Exports at Source, Capacity Building for Effective and Transparent ADP Implementation, Concession for Undisclosed Income, Increase in Agriculture Subsidy, and Restraining Rising Trends in Para-Tariffs etc.

In post-budget discussion sessions, the views of major business sectors are articulated by their representatives. Renowned economists are usually invited to these sessions. Sectoral representatives hold discussions focusing on trade and industry in the perspective of the proposed national budget. In these discussions the Chamber attempts to scrutinize the budget through critical and constructive analyses. It welcomes a budget if it reflects business concerns. It critiques it in post-budget discussions in case of its failure to meet the challenges of economic development. In this regard the Chamber's post-budget (2006-07 and 2007-08) reviews are worth-mentioning. MCCI was deeply disappointed over the provision of the budget allowing continuation of whitening of black money. Retention of the scheme in the budget was contrary to the expectations of the Chamber. The Chamber was also dismayed by the retention of a provision in the budget with regard to tax governance. The Chamber opined that tariff changes in the budget would hurt the country's industrial sector.<sup>231</sup>

Highlighting the budget reviews of the Chamber, one of its former Presidents, Mr M Anis Ud Dowla, observed, 'the Government seeks the Chamber's suggestions and proposals for preparing the National Budget. As the MCCI is a research-based organization and is established not on the basis of gaining interest, it works for the broader national interest'.<sup>232</sup>

In this phase, the Chamber frequently urged the government as well as the opposition to keep businesses interests out of any political program. Reviewing the economic situation of the country, the Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry suggested on one occasion that the government should allow large political gatherings only 'during the weekend' in a bid to ensure smooth traffic in the city. It urges the government to think about introducing such a policy in order to keep public life and the flow of business uninterrupted. The Chamber also requested the government as well as all political parties to shun confrontational politics for the sake of economic growth, poverty reduction and employment creation. The chamber also urged the government to keep its borrowing from banks to a minimum and within the amount projected in the budget. The Chamber urged

<sup>231</sup> *Annual Report* of the MCCI, Dhaka: 2006, p. 125; *Annual Report* of the MCCI, Dhaka: 2007, p. 43.

<sup>232</sup> 'Interview' of Mr M Anis Ud Dowla, Former President of the MCCI, Dhaka, 11 May 2014.



the government to maintain a balanced monetary policy, to keep room for special provisions for the productive sectors, and to make credit readily available for the private sector to help boost production in fields and factories, and to assist in brining prices down. The Chamber also advised the government to revise weekly workdays from the existing Sunday-Thursday routine to Monday-Friday in order to keep pace with international markets. MCCI has always advocated improved management in the banking sector and in capital markets. The Chamber also called upon the government to adopt adequate rules for public-private partnership projects without delay so that it could attract private investment from domestic sources.<sup>233</sup>

### 4.3 International Connections

Contacts and communication between the Metropolitan Chamber and the external world from 1904 to date have been immensely facilitated by the location of the Chamber, its efficiency and commitment, and its years of responsible service to the people in general and trade and commerce in particular. As the Chamber is located in a 'transition zone' between South Asia and mainland Southeast Asia and is close to the Bay of Bengal, it attracts the attention of business people all over the world.<sup>233a</sup> Enjoying this strategic location, the Chamber has ventured into lands beyond its geographical jurisdiction from the beginning of the 20th century.

Hence, in this sub-section, we would like to discuss how the Chamber maintains its connections with the outside world. The Chamber always has had effective links with trade bodies from all over the world. Thus it has been playing a vital role in bilateral relationships and representation of Bangladesh to the outside world. The Chamber maintains regular links with foreign delegates, ambassadors, high commissioners, ministers and economists, trade bodies, organizations and leading personalities from politics, society and economic sectors around the globe to secure and expand the trade and business interests of Bangladesh.

The promotion of foreign trade has become one of the most important functions of the Chamber. It has been signing protocols and memorandums of understanding with foreign chambers of commerce for promoting international trade and commerce. The Chamber regularly networks with other chambers of commerce of the world through exchange of delegations, visits and correspondence and receiving international agencies, organizations, associations and government and non-government delegations. From 1979, the Chamber's 'International Relations' sub-committee has been working actively to foster the Chamber's international connections.

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<sup>233</sup> *Daily Star*, Thursday, 23 January, 2014.

<sup>233a</sup> Aksadul Alam, 'Bengal: The Gateway of Contacts and Communications between India and Southeast Asia - Early Phase', *Dhaka University Studies*, 2012.

**NCC Phase (1904-1950):** During this phase, the Chamber was completely dominated by foreign merchants and entrepreneurs who constituted its members then. They fixed its vision and mission with the aim of maximizing profit out of the business from the region instead of exploring trade links with the wider world. The early documents, though scanty, indicate that the Chamber had close connections with the Bengal Chamber of Commerce and Industry (BCCI) at its inception. This association provided at least a little scope to NCC to meet a few foreign delegations and business personnel.

After 1947, NCC went under the jurisdiction of the East Bengal provincial government. At this stage, Chamber representatives as well as Chamber Committee Members became proactive regarding the Chamber's global connections and foreign affairs. The Government of Pakistan also made Chamber members part of its representative bodies in international conferences. The Chamber's affiliation with the International Labour Organization at this stage is particularly noteworthy. This is reflected in the Minutes of Chamber Committee proceedings. The 33rd ILO Conference, held in May 1950 in Geneva was a high profile international conference where a Chamber representative was called upon to participate.<sup>234</sup> However, in this phase, no foreign trade missions or business delegates were seen to visit the Chamber.

On the basis of the information found in the Chamber's Annual Reports and Minutes, it can be assumed that this was the embryonic phase of the Chamber's international connectivity. A comprehensive picture of the international affairs of the Narayanganj Chamber of Commerce is however yet to be retrieved from the archival materials which no doubt exist somewhere.

**DNCC Phase (1950-1952):** Since the 1950s, the Chamber started forging connections with the wider world. The Chamber Committee began visiting other Chambers outside the region from time to time to create business friendly environments for the Chamber across the world and to discover new fields of trade and commerce for its members. In 1951, when the Congress of the Federation of Chambers of Commerce of the British Empire was held in London the Federation asked DNCC to participate in discussions.<sup>235</sup>

The 17th Congress of the Federation of Chambers of Commerce of the British Empire was held in June 1951 in London. Two Chamber members were then invited to attend the event as delegates. This was no doubt the result of a determined endeavor on the part of the Dacca-Narayanganj Chamber of Commerce.<sup>236</sup>

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<sup>234</sup> *Minutes of the DNCC*, 4 April 1950, p. 21.

<sup>235</sup> *Minutes of the DNCC*, 8 August 1950, p. 38.

<sup>236</sup> *Minutes of the DNCC*, 19 December 1950, p. 49.

The Chamber continued sending its representatives to ILO conferences in these years. When the Chamber received a request to put forward the name of a delegate for the Fourth Session of the Inland Transport Committee of the ILO to be held in Geneva, the name of Mr AA Kahlon was forwarded.<sup>237</sup> But because of 'technical' difficulties posed by the Pakistan Government, it was not possible for him to attend the conference.<sup>238</sup> Though the Chamber was not represented in the event, the recognition of ILO was of significance as a token of the Chamber's growing international standing.

In 1952, the ILO once again requested the Chamber to nominate four delegates or advisors to the International Labour Conference in Geneva in June of that year. The names of Mr AR Faridi and Mr SE Masood were approved by the Chamber Committee but once again these Chamber representatives failed to join the conference because of the Pakistan Government's attitude.<sup>239</sup> In the same year though, the Pakistan Government asked for applications from one or two candidates of the Chamber for training under the ILO Program of Fellowship.<sup>240</sup>

During this phase, distinguished visitors including High Commissioners of different countries visited the Chamber to discuss issues relating to the development of trade and commerce. The High Commissioner of India visited the Chamber's office in Narayanganj in July 1952.<sup>241</sup> The ILO Survey Commission visited the Chamber office in November 1952.<sup>242</sup> In December 1952, the High Commissioner for UK, Sir Gilbert Laithwaite, met the Chamber Committee.<sup>243</sup>

The DNCC phase was the shortest in its history. But it was in this phase that the Chamber started gaining international recognition from organizations such as ILO and began hosting visits of the High Commissioner of India and other countries.

**DNCCI Phase (1952-1959):** The Chamber's connections with the wider world increased substantially during this phase. Visits by distinguished visitors as well as meetings of overseas visitors with the Chamber Committee became a regular phenomenon in this period. Invitations from various trade bodies from foreign countries, meetings with international trade missions, trade delegations and prominent figures of foreign countries continued on a regular basis at this time.

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<sup>237</sup> *Minutes of the DNCC*, 16 November 1951, p. 92.

<sup>238</sup> *Minutes of the DNCC*, 7 December 1951, p. 94.

<sup>239</sup> *Minutes of the DNCC*, 25 April 1952, p. 114.

<sup>240</sup> *Minutes of the DNCC*, 15 April 1952, p. 119.

<sup>241</sup> *Minutes of the DNCCI*, 12 June 1952, p. 127.

<sup>242</sup> *Minutes of the DNCCI*, 11 November 1952, p. 168.

<sup>243</sup> *Minutes of the DNCCI*, 25 November 1952, p. 174.

The Chamber was requested to send delegates and attend the 18th Congress of the Federation of Chambers of Commerce of the British Empire held in Montreal, Canada in 1953.<sup>244</sup> In 1955, the Chamber felicitated the British High Commissioner in Pakistan and acknowledging this gesture, the High Commissioner conveyed to the Chamber President and Committee his warm appreciation.<sup>245</sup>

When the Acting Trade Commissioner of the United Kingdom visited East Pakistan in September 1953, the Chamber decided to invite him to its office.<sup>246</sup> In the same year when the American Ambassador visited East Bengal he was invited to the Chamber.<sup>247</sup>

In 1954, for the first time, the Chamber came to an agreement with the London Chamber of Commerce in response to the latter's request to it to become an examining authority in this part of the world. The Chamber accepted the request and a supervisory committee was set up to deal with the matter. From this time onwards, the Chamber has been conducting examinations which forged a special relationship between DNCCI and the London Chamber.<sup>248</sup> The Permanent Secretary to the United Kingdom Board of Trade, Sir Frank Lee, visited the Chamber in 1954 and met Committee members and discussed issues of mutual interest.<sup>249</sup>

During this phase, the Chamber Committee arranged meetings of its members with an United States Trade Mission. Only one foreign delegate visited the Chamber in 1955, but in the following years the number of such visiting delegates increased remarkably. In 1957, the Chamber hosted a numbers of visitors from countries across the world. Among its visitors were Mr M Haas, French Trade Counselor in Pakistan, and Mr Hernan Romero, an ILO expert on social security.<sup>250</sup> In the last year of this phase, important international figures in the field of trade and commerce met the Chamber Committee, effectively enhancing Chamber networking across the world. Among them were: Mr HM Curry, Chief of the Economic Division of the American Embassy, Karachi; Mr Eugene Braderman, Director of International Trade (Far Eastern Division), US Department of Commerce; Mr RF Kinsey and Mr DN Twyford of the Export Credit Guarantee Corporation, UK; members of the World Bank's Economic Mission, headed by Mr G Neil Perry; and Mr DGA Bentliffe, UK

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<sup>244</sup> *Minutes of the DNCCI*, 19 June 1953, p. 212.

<sup>245</sup> *Minutes of the DNCCI*, 12 July 1955, p. 82.

<sup>246</sup> *Minutes of the DNCCI*, 8 September 1953, p. 227.

<sup>247</sup> *Minutes of the DNCCI*, 12 November 1953, p. 241.

<sup>248</sup> *Annual Report of the DNCCI*: 1954, p. 12.

<sup>249</sup> *Annual Report of the DNCCI*: 1954, p. 97.

<sup>250</sup> *Annual Report of the DNCCI*: 1957, p. 32, 33.

Trade Commissioner.<sup>251</sup> In addition, the Senior Trade Commissioner of the United Kingdom and the UK High Commissioner also visited the Chamber this year.<sup>252</sup>

In this phase, the Chamber's international connections developed significantly and meetings and negotiations between the Chamber and trade bodies or the representatives of trade bodies from the United States and United Kingdom increased.

**NCCI Phase (1959-1979):** This was an even more significant phase in the history of the Chamber's developing international connections. In particular, after the independence of Bangladesh in 1971 the Chamber's international connections flourished. The Chamber's association with international trade bodies continued in the nineteen sixties as it had done in its last phase but at this time the Chamber hosted visits from trade bodies from Japan, France, Germany, Ceylon, Spain and Italy in addition to USA and UK.

A number of meetings were held in the Chamber's office with members of the Burmese Trade Mission, Australian Trade Commissioner, members of the Yugoslav Economic Mission, Commercial Attaché of American Embassy, Karachi, and a visiting ILO expert during 1960-61.<sup>253</sup> A Burmese Trade Mission again visited the Chamber in 1962.

The Director of the US Investment Development Mission thanked and appreciated the Chamber President for its whole-hearted support and cooperation in making its visit a success. The Chamber's contributions in the receptions arranged for the visits of the King and Queen of Malaya<sup>254</sup> and the Crown Prince and Princess of Japan and King and Queen of Thailand was appreciated by the Pakistan government.<sup>255</sup>

In this phase the Chamber was asked to nominate a representative by the Commission on Asian and Far Eastern Affairs for its 18th Session in Tokyo in March 1962. However, the Chamber was not able to send its representatives to Tokyo because of the Government's apathy to the Chamber.<sup>256</sup> This was also the case with the Chicago International Trade Fair held in July-August, 1962 where Chamber representatives were once again invited.<sup>257</sup>

The Chamber received a letter from a mission of French bankers and industrialists in response to the cordiality shown by it. The letter also welcomed Chamber members to visit

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<sup>251</sup> *Annual Report of the DNCCI: 1958*, pp. 33-34.

<sup>252</sup> *Annual Report of the NCCI: 1959*, p. 28.

<sup>253</sup> *Annual Report of the NCCI: 1961*, p. 69.

<sup>254</sup> *Minutes of the NCCI*, 11 January 1962, pp. 508-09.

<sup>255</sup> *Minutes of the NCCI*, 8 February 1962, p. 515; 12 April 1962, p. 524.

<sup>256</sup> *Minutes of the NCCI*, 8 February 1962, p. 515.

<sup>257</sup> *Minutes of the NCCI*, 12 April 1962, p. 526.



Paris in 1962,<sup>258</sup> though the Chamber could not avail the invitation. A French Trade Mission visited the Chamber once again in this phase in 1966.<sup>259</sup>

A joint meeting of the Narayanganj Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Pakistan Jute Association was held with the Italian Trade Delegation at the Chamber Assembly Hall in July 1964. The event was a great success and, as a consequence, the relationship with Italy developed visibly and trade between Italy and Pakistan increased substantially.<sup>260</sup>

1968 was especially significant for the Chamber for its international connections. A number of trade delegations from Europe, America and East Asia had meetings with NCCI this year. Trade delegations and economic missions from China, Italy, Germany, Spain, Britain and USA came here at this time and discussed various aspects of trade and commerce with Chamber members.<sup>261</sup>

On the basis of the Chamber's Annual Reports and Minutes, it may be concluded that the years between 1969 and 1972 were barren ones for the Chamber's international connectivity, as there is no noteworthy event mentioned in the Annual Reports or Minutes. This could be because of the mass upsurge of the period, the Bangladesh Liberation Movement, and the condition of the country immediately after independence. Clearly, the Chamber could not maintain its global links during this time. The one exception to this was in the year after the independence, when the Bharat Chamber of Commerce, Calcutta, offered its help to promote trade and economic collaboration with Bangladesh and extended an invitation to a Trade and Industrial Delegation from NCCI to explore the possibilities of collaboration.<sup>262</sup>

The Chamber's international connections through regular visits and meetings between the NCCI and foreign trade bodies continued in this phase. At the request of the Export Promotion Bureau, for example, the Chamber decided to meet the visiting Chief Executive of London Import Opportunities Office in 1976.<sup>263</sup> A trade delegation from Pakistan met Chamber members and discussed issues related to export and import facilities in July, 1976.<sup>264</sup> In 1977, a Japanese trade delegation visited the Chamber.<sup>265</sup>

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<sup>258</sup> *Minutes of the NCCI*, 24 May 1962, p. 538.

<sup>259</sup> *Annual Report of the NCCI*: 1966, p. 12.

<sup>260</sup> *Annual Report of the NCCI*: 1964, p. 112-14.

<sup>261</sup> *Annual Report of the NCCI*: 1968, p. 11.

<sup>262</sup> *Minutes of the NCCI*: 4 February 1972, p. 1122.

<sup>263</sup> *Minutes of the NCCI*: 29 January 1976, p. 1304.

<sup>264</sup> *Minutes of the NCCI*: 13 June 1976, p. 1325.

<sup>265</sup> *Minutes of the NCCI*: 12 April 1977, p. 1387.



Former President of the MCCI Mr M Anis Ud Dowla is seen exchanging greetings with the late Indian Prime Minister Mrs. Indira Gandhi, New Delhi, India in 1977.

The Government of Bangladesh requested the Chamber to meet a delegation from China and another one from the Muslim World Economic Council of Indonesia in the same year.<sup>266</sup> Also in 1976, the NCCI Committee met a Review Mission from the International Trade Centre, and a National Bank of Paris Representative.<sup>267</sup> In 1978-79, the Chamber kept up the pace of such appointments. It conducted high level meetings with the Economic Mission of Italian traders and industrialists, a 10 Member Nepalese Trade Delegation, a Joint Mission from Investment Promotion Services, Switzerland, a 16 Member Trade Delegation from Singapore, a 16 Member General Trade Delegation from Pakistan, the IMF Director Mr Stephenson, the Vice President of US Overseas Private Investment Corporation Mr Robert S Smith, a 12 Member Business Delegation from Republic of Korea, the British Executive Service Director Mr EJ Westnedge, the UNCTAD GSP Project Director Mr H Cabillos, the UNCTAD GSP Project Associate Director, a Trade Mission of the Indian Engineering Industry and so on.<sup>268</sup> The Chamber Committee also met Sir Cyrill Pitts, President,

<sup>266</sup> *Minutes of the NCCI: 1 March 1977*, p. 1383.

<sup>267</sup> *Annual Report of the NCCI: 1978*, p. 33.

<sup>268</sup> *Annual Report of the NCCI: 1978*, p. 33; *Annual Report of the NCCI: 1979*, pp. 29-30; *Annual Report of the MCCI: Dacca*, p. 30.

India-Pakistan-Bangladesh Association and South Asia Trade Committee of Confederation of British Industry on February, 1979 and discussed the possibilities of more British investments in Bangladesh.<sup>269</sup>

In this phase, the Chamber Secretary Mr CK Hyder was invited by the Government of the United States to visit that country.<sup>270</sup> The President of the Chamber was included in a Government delegation to the Canton Trade Fair.<sup>271</sup> Later that year, Chamber Committee members accompanied a government delegation to Malaysia, Singapore, Hong Kong, and Japan to invite foreign investors to Bangladesh.<sup>272</sup>

In April 1977, the Secretary of the Chamber attended a conference of the International Labour Organization in Geneva. The Secretary then visited the International Chamber of Commerce in Paris and the London Chamber of Commerce to acquaint himself with their activities at the suggestion of the Chamber Committee.<sup>273</sup>

The Chamber's Sub-Committee on International Relations was formed in 1978 to further promote its international connections. In the last year of this phase, the Chamber commissioned a comprehensive paper to assess the merits and demerits of a common market amongst South Asian countries. The Chamber Economic Research Cell played a key role in that initiative.<sup>274</sup> In this way the Chamber contributed in the planning stage to the making of a South Asian regional forum.

**MCCI, Dhaka: First Phase (1979-1999):** The Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MCCI) has always wanted to connect with the wider world. The Sub-Committee on International Relations organized regular meetings with foreign trade delegations of different countries in and outside Bangladesh in this phase. The Chamber also formed Sub-Committees on Foreign Investment and International Trade Fair and Tariff for this purpose. These committees began to play effective roles in connecting the Chamber and Bangladesh business to the wider economic world.

At the beginning of this phase, the Chamber held meetings with the Consul General for Bangladesh in Istanbul and the CBI Director of Netherlands and discussed the possibilities of trade and commerce between Bangladesh and these two countries.<sup>275</sup> Over the next few

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<sup>269</sup> *Annual Report of the NCCI: 1979*, p. 39.

<sup>270</sup> *Minutes of the NCCI*, 29 January 1976, p. 1304.

<sup>271</sup> *Minutes of the NCCI*, 26 April 1976, p. 1315.

<sup>272</sup> *Minutes of the NCCI*, 15 July 1976, p. 1330.

<sup>273</sup> *Minutes of the NCCI*, 12 April 1977, pp. 1396-97.

<sup>274</sup> *Annual Report of the NCCI: 1978*, p. 47.

<sup>275</sup> *Annual Report of the MCCI: Dacca, 1980*, pp. 30-31.



Mr P Blaker, MP, Hon'ble British Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs speaking at a meeting held in 1981 with the business community held at the Conference Hall of MCCI

years the Chamber's activities increased manifold. Chamber members met a Review Mission of the International Trade Centre, Geneva, the Swedish International Development Agency, an 8 Members delegation from the Federation of Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and another one from the British Executive Service Overseas, representatives from England and South Asian Trade Association- London, a team led by the World Bank's Divisional Chief for Industrial Development and Finance for South Asia, the British Minister for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, a delegation of the Association of Indian Engineering Industry, the World Bank's Mission on Development and Finance Division of South Asia Projects Department, the President of Fuji Economic Planning Corporation of Japan, a World Bank team, representatives from the Indian Institute of Foreign Trade, and an Advisor to the Belgian Federation of Industry.<sup>276</sup>

The Chamber also arranged several meetings and held negotiations with a large number of foreign delegates in this phase. These meetings had important consequence for the economic development of the country. Some of the important meetings held at this juncture included meetings with the International Finance Corporation (IFC), the US Centre for Entrepreneurial Management, the Chamber of Commerce Malaya, a Canadian Business team, the Bangladesh Japan Joint Committee for Commercial and Economic Cooperation, a delegation from PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry, India, a 13 member delegation from the Federation of Pakistan Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the World Bank and Asian Development Bank Team on Investment Financing, a delegation from the Malaysian Overseas Investment Corporation, a British Trade mission, a delegation from the Arab Chamber of Commerce, a high-powered team from IMF, the Commonwealth Development Corporation, the Minister for Science and Technology of the Republic of

<sup>276</sup> *Annual Report of the MCCI: Dacca, 1981, pp. 28-29; Annual Report of the MCCI: Dacca, 1982, p. 19.*

Korea, a delegation of Japan Industrial Development Organization, the Korean Trade and Investment Delegation, an EEC Investors mission, a China Trade and Investment delegation and a Turkish Trade delegation.<sup>277</sup>

The Chamber arranged a luncheon meeting with a visiting Investment Mission of the Singapore Trade Development Board and Singapore Confederation of Industry at the request of the Board of Investment in November, 1997 where they discussed the possibilities of investment and joint venture investments from Singapore.<sup>278</sup> The Chamber held a meeting with the South Asian Group of Eminent Persons in February, 1998. The group recognized the importance of the Chamber and looked forward to more involvement and cooperation from the Chamber in the future while finalizing the formation and location of the “Think Tank” for forging closer economic cooperation within SAARC countries.<sup>279</sup>

Chamber representatives visited numerous countries in this phase, either as part of government delegations or as part of its teams. A high-powered 10 member delegation representing both the public and private sectors led by the Chamber President visited Delhi, in November 1981. This delegation visited the Indian Industrial Trade Fair and discussed the issue of developing bilateral trade relationships between the trade and commerce sectors of India and Bangladesh.<sup>280</sup>



Mr Syed Manzur Elahi (4<sup>th</sup> from left), President of MCCI, welcoming the Indian Investment Delegation from the Confederation of Engineering Industry, India in its Conference Hall on 7 January, 1990

<sup>277</sup> *Annual Report of the MCCI: Dacca, 1983, p. 18; Annual Report of the MCCI: Dacca, 1984, p. 25; Annual Report of the MCCI: Dacca, 1985, p. 19; Bangladesh Malaysia Joint Colloquium Annual Report of the MCCI: Dhaka, 1987, p. 22; Annual Report of the MCCI: Dhaka, 1988, p. 22; Annual Report of the MCCI: Dhaka, 1989, p. 26; Annual Report of the MCCI: Dhaka, 1990, p. 40, 44; Annual Report of the MCCI: Dhaka, 1996, p. 25.*

<sup>278</sup> *Annual Report of the MCCI: Dhaka, 1998, p. 33.*

<sup>279</sup> *Annual Report of the MCCI: Dhaka, 1998, p. 36.*

<sup>280</sup> *Annual Report of the MCCI: Dacca, 1982, p. 26.*



In 1987, the Committee sent a Trade Delegation to Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia and Australia to explore possibilities of further expansion of trade with these countries. This visit proved to be of importance since it provided opportunities to hold discussions on various issues relating to bilateral trade relationships which were very fruitful both in the short and long term.<sup>281</sup> In 1989, a Delegation team led by the Chamber's President went to West Germany, Sweden, the UK and Belgium. This visit helped establish institutional contacts with the Confederation of British Industry, the Confederation of the German Chamber of Commerce, the German Employers' Federation and the Stockholm Chamber of Commerce. The Chamber's image was no doubt uplifted through the address of the Chamber President at a seminar organized by the Confederation of British Industry of Bangladesh that year.<sup>282</sup>

A Chamber delegation went to New Delhi in 1989. Another one left Dhaka to join the 8th Engineering Trade Fair sponsored by the US Chamber of Commerce and Industry. Led by the President, a delegation met the Bengal Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Calcutta, the Confederation of Indian Chamber of Commerce, and the Punjab-Haryana and Haryana-Delhi Chamber of Commerce. It also held discussions with the Confederation of Indian Engineering Industry. After the visit, a report was submitted to the Ministry as to how bilateral trade between Bangladesh and India could be improved.<sup>283</sup>

Represented by its President and the Secretary General, the Chamber Committee participated in the Bangladesh Festival in London in July, 1994. A stall set up by the Chamber displayed important products of some of the member-firms. The Chamber attended a number of international conferences and meetings at the request of different ministries and boards.

At the request of the Board of Investment, the President and the Vice-President went as part of a delegation led by the Minister for Finance to participate at the seminar on 'Bangladesh Investment Climate and Trade Opportunities' in Rome from January 30 – February 1, 1995.<sup>284</sup> At the request of the Ministry of Commerce, a member of the Committee attended the 6th Bangladesh-Pakistan Joint Economic Commission in Islamabad in July, 1995.<sup>285</sup> The Chamber organized an Investment Seminar jointly with US Foreign Commercial Service, Singapore. Chamber members participated in the 32nd World Congress of the ICC in Shanghai in April, 1997.<sup>286</sup> MCCI organized an Investment Seminar in

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<sup>281</sup> Annual Report of the MCCI: Dhaka, 1987, p. 27.

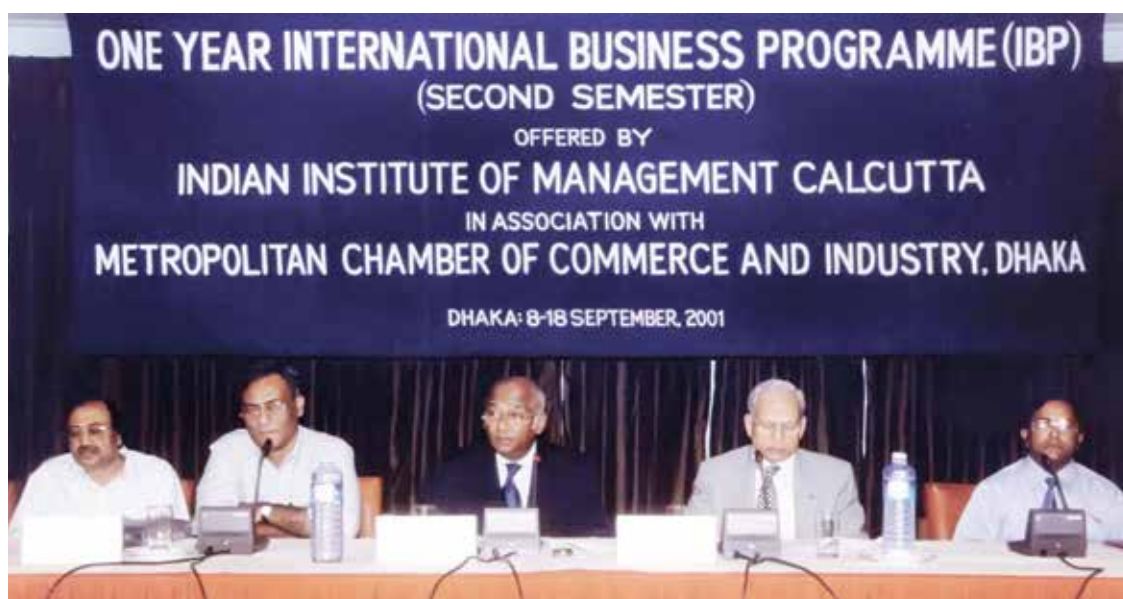
<sup>282</sup> Annual Report of the MCCI: Dhaka, 1989, p. 37.

<sup>283</sup> Annual Report of the MCCI: Dhaka, 1989, pp. 37-38.

<sup>284</sup> Annual Report of the MCCI: Dhaka, 1995, p. 32.

<sup>285</sup> Annual Report of the MCCI: Dhaka, 1995, p. 36.

<sup>286</sup> Annual Report of the MCCI: Dhaka, 1997, pp. 33-35.



Celebrating One Year International Business Programme (IBP) in Dhaka, September, 2001

Singapore, jointly with the Singapore Confederation of Industries and Singapore Trade Development Board in 1999 in a bid to impress the businessmen of Singapore on investment opportunities in Bangladesh. The Committee met Dr Joseph Stiglitz, Chief Economist and Senior Vice-President of the World Bank, Washington, the Country Director and other senior officials of the World Bank Resident Mission in Bangladesh in 1997. They discussed the overall economic situation in the country.<sup>287</sup> The Chamber Secretary-General attended the 3rd WTO Ministerial Conference in December 1999, in Seattle, USA.<sup>288</sup>

During this phase, the Chamber developed its relationships with international development organizations, trade delegations and trade missions of different countries. Important discussions and agreements took place between the Chamber and many prominent international bodies. Developing international ties had become even more central to the Chamber's work in the millennium phase of the Chamber's history.

**MCCI, Dhaka: Millennium Phase (2000-Present):** The Metropolitan Chamber entered its new Millennium phase with substantial structural capacity and a wealth of experience gained from what was by then a 75 year history. In the fast globalizing world, the Chamber has been able to keep pace with the demands of the time. To face the challenges of global trade and commerce and of course, the needs of member-firms, the Chamber has

<sup>287</sup> *Annual Report of the MCCI: Dhaka, 1999*, pp. 31-33.

<sup>288</sup> *Annual Report of the MCCI: Dhaka, 2000*, p. 27.

transformed its vision and mission statement in this phase. In regard to its wider world connections, the Chamber has been working persistently to achieve its goals.

Several trade delegations visited the Chamber at the beginning of the phase. Many Memorandums of Understanding (MoU) were signed at this time. In 2000, a trade delegation from Singapore visited Bangladesh; the Chamber penned a MoU with them and provided host facilities. A Sri Lankan Trade Delegation also visited the Chamber the same year.<sup>289</sup>

In this phase, a number of Trade Missions, delegations and representatives of Multilateral Development Organizations visited the Chamber. The Chamber received business delegations from neighboring and other countries and its members visited numerous countries and participated in many international conferences related to trade and commerce. At the beginning of the millennium, the Chamber President, along with the Secretary-General, was a part of the Bangladesh Delegation of the 4th WTO Ministerial Meeting in Doha, Qatar in November 2001.<sup>290</sup> The Chamber became a member of the South Asian Alliance for Responsive Business (SARB), a business bodies' forum created to promote socially responsible business practices in the South Asian sub-region, considering this to be an integral part of corporate social responsibility.<sup>291</sup>

The Chamber held a meeting with Mr Nicholas Stern, Chief Economist and Senior Vice-President of the World Bank, Washington DC in the Chamber Office on 8 January 2002. Mr Abdul Razak Dawood, Minister of Commerce, Industries and Production of Pakistan, visited the Chamber and spoke to members of MCCI on 29 January. The Chamber hosted a luncheon meeting in honour of Mr David Kilgour, MP, Secretary of State for Asia Pacific, Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, Government of Canada on 1 April, and on 27 August an event in honour of Rt Hon Donald C Mckinnon, Commonwealth Secretary General, at the MCCI office. The Chamber held a discussion meeting on 4 September with the visiting President of the Japanese Commerce and Industry Association and a JETRO Representative at the MCCI office.

In 2003, a Mission of the Asian Development Bank met members of MCCI on 20 July. Dr Joseph E Stiglitz, Nobel Laureate and Professor of Finance and Economics, Columbia Business School, USA addressed members of MCCI, Dhaka at the Chamber office on 13 August in the same year. The Ambassador of USA in Bangladesh, Mr Harry K Thomas, visited MCCI on 24 September. Lord Swaraj Paul, a member of the British House of Lords,

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<sup>289</sup> Annual Report of the MCCI: Dhaka, 2000, p. 26.

<sup>290</sup> Annual Report of the MCCI: Dhaka, 2002, p. 31.

<sup>291</sup> Annual Report of the MCCI: Dhaka, 2004, p. 37.

held a meeting with members of the Chamber on 8 October 2003. The British High Commissioner and the Deputy High Commissioner were present at the meeting. The Chamber held a meeting on 20 October with Mr Guy Gagnon, Director, Asia Bureau, Industrial Cooperation Programme, Canadian Partnership Branch and Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), at the MCCI office.

The Australian High Commissioner, Ms. Lorraine Barker, met the Chamber Committee in March 2004 and discussed the possibilities of enhancing trade between Bangladesh and Australia.<sup>292</sup> The Chamber held a discussion and dinner meeting on 24 June, 2004 with the Singapore Prime Minister, Mr Goh Chok Tong at a city hotel. In the same year, the Chamber held a meeting on 11 October with the visiting Organisation Development Adviser of the Confederation of Danish Industries at the MCCI office. In 2004, the Chamber signed a MoU with two Australian trade bodies, viz., Australian Business Limited and State Chamber of Commerce (New South Wales) as well as the Confederation of Nepalese Industries.<sup>293</sup> A delegation led by the Minister for Finance and Planning of Bangladesh, attended the World Economic Forum's Summit in New Delhi in December 2004 and the Chamber was an integral part of this delegation.<sup>294</sup>

In 2005, an 11-member Chinese Government Economic and Trade Delegation headed by Mr Wang Chao, the first Vice-Governor of Dehong Dai and Jingpo Autonomous Prefecture, Yunnan Province, China visited the Chamber on 8 June. The delegation discussed matters relating to trade between Bangladesh and China. In the same year a 10-member delegation from the Chamber visited Yunnan Province, People's Republic of China from 10 to 17 December at the invitation of the Vice Governor, Dehong Prefecture, Yunnan Province.

A German Business Mission visited and exchanged views with members of the Chamber on 22 May 2006. The visit was organized by the German Asia-Pacific Business Association and was sponsored by the Federal Ministry of Economics & Technology, Germany. The team expressed interest in investing in textile and other sectors in Bangladesh. The MCCI delegation held meetings in March with the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) and discussed issues relating to the workings of the South Asian Free Trade Agreement (SAFTA) that went into effect from 1 July 2006.

A delegation was sent to the People's Republic of China at the invitation of the Governor of the Yunnan Province of China on December, 2005. Its members talked about

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<sup>292</sup> *Annual Report of the MCCI: Dhaka, 2004*, p. 34.

<sup>293</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>294</sup> *Annual Report of the MCCI: Dhaka, 2005*, p. 30.

border trade and bilateral issues, attended the China-Myanmar Border Trade Fair, and signed two MoUs with the Yunnan Provincial Chamber of Commerce and Yunnan Fujian Chamber of Commerce. Another delegation was sent to Sri Lanka in the same year; it discussed bilateral issues and learnt about the Sri Lankan experience of their Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with India. This delegation also discussed the feasibility of using Colombo Port since Singapore Port was becoming more and more expensive.<sup>295</sup> The Chamber's former President, Mr M Anis Ud Dowla, and the Secretary-General, Mr CK Hyder participated at the 7th International Conference on Corporate Governance held in London in May 2006.<sup>296</sup>

Another significant event relating to the international connections of the Chamber took place in 2007. An eight-member MCCI delegation headed by its President attended the Second SAARC Business Conclave held at Bombay, India, on 17-18 February at the invitation of the Federation of Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry. The Conclave was organized to project the strategic outlook and contemporary mindset of SAARC member countries on development issues from a regional as well as a global perspective. The Chamber Delegation called on the Governor, Reserve Bank of India, and Chairman, Bombay Stock Exchange, on 19 February. The delegation was received warmly at both institutions. They exchanged views on bilateral cooperation and discussed issues of mutual benefit.<sup>297</sup>

A 17-member Thai Board of Investment Delegation visited the Chamber on 28 March 2007. The delegation was led by Mr Vittaya Praisuwan, the Executive Investment Adviser, Thailand Board of Investment. The Thai delegation showed keen interest in Bangladesh's investment climate. Its members indicated that Thai investors would look forward to utilizing investment opportunities in Bangladesh in the near future.

A team of experts from the World Bank visited the Chamber on 14 June, 2004 to hold a pre-consultation meeting with leaders of the private sector to get their views. A German business delegation led by Mr Peter Clasen from the OAV (German Asia-Pacific Business Association), along with officials of the German Embassy in Bangladesh, visited the Chamber on 27 October. The discussion stressed the importance of Germany as a major trading partner of Bangladesh and underscored the need for German investment, particularly in conventional and renewable power generation.<sup>298</sup> Delegations from Thailand, the Africa Center for Economic Transformation (ACET) and the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), also visited the Chamber during this phase.<sup>299</sup>

<sup>295</sup> *Annual Report of the MCCI: Dhaka, 2006*, pp. 24-25.

<sup>296</sup> [http://www.mccibd.org/chamber\\_events.php](http://www.mccibd.org/chamber_events.php)

<sup>297</sup> *Annual Report of the MCCI: Dhaka, 2007*, p. 31.

<sup>298</sup> *Annual Report of the MCCI: Dhaka, 2010*, p. 25.

<sup>299</sup> *Annual Report of the MCCI: Dhaka, 2010*, pp. 31-32.



The Chamber participated in an event titled 'South Europe Meets South Asia' in February 2009. This was a technical and business match-making collaboration for IT and IT-enabled services and the Processed Food Sectors. The event was held in Colombo under the auspices of the Ceylon Chamber of Commerce.<sup>300</sup>

The Chamber participated in an Investment Seminar on Bangladesh held in Singapore in February, 2010. Ms. Nihad Kabir, the Vice-President of the Chamber, was invited by the Bangladesh Investment Climate Fund (BICF) to attend the Public Private Dialogue Global Workshop in Vienna. Ms. Kabir was able to make various suggestions on policy issues, capacity building and good governance at the workshop.<sup>301</sup> A 27-member business mission from Thailand visited the Chamber on September, 2010. Its members discussed bilateral relationships, transfer of Thai technology to Bangladesh, and investments in the agro sectors of Bangladesh.<sup>302</sup> The Chamber President, Mr M Anis Ud Dowla, participated at the regional conference, "Integrating BIMSTEC 2010" in Assam, India in November 2010.<sup>303</sup>

A delegation of business leaders from CII paid a courtesy visit to the Chamber in May, 2011. The Chamber President, Mr Amjad Khan Chowdhury, attended the 1st meeting of the South Asia Forum in New Delhi on September, 2011. He was the only representative from the private sector of Bangladesh in the 13-member delegation. Chamber Vice-President Ms. Nihad Kabir was a speaker at a seminar titled 'Emerging Business Opportunities in Bangladesh' held in Singapore, in March 2012.<sup>304</sup> In April and May of the same year,



A high-powered delegation from the Republic of Singapore headed by Mr Zulkifli Masagos, Hon'ble Minister of State for Foreign and Home Affairs, visited the Chamber on 4 September, 2012

<sup>300</sup> *Annual Report of the MCCI: Dhaka, 2009, p. 33.*

<sup>301</sup> *Annual Report of the MCCI: Dhaka, 2011, p. 38.*

<sup>302</sup> *Annual Report of the MCCI: Dhaka, 2011, p. 25.*

<sup>303</sup> *Annual Report of the MCCI: Dhaka, 2011, p. 27.*

<sup>304</sup> *Annual Report of the MCCI: Dhaka, 2012, p. 29.*



delegations from the Chamber visited Myanmar and Vietnam respectively. The delegation discussed bilateral trade and cooperation in business matters between Bangladesh and the two countries.<sup>305</sup> In 2012, a four member team led by Mr Badal Rag from the Times of India visited the Chamber and proposed to set up a forum partnering with media and business communities from both countries.<sup>306</sup>



A German(OAV) delegation led by Mr Peter Clasen visited the Chamber on 19 May 2014 and exchanged views with the Business Community.

A business delegation led by the Czech Minister of Industry and Trade, Mr Martin Kuba visited the Chamber and held meetings and took part in a business seminar on 11 March 2013. The Czech delegation consisted of two ministers and 60 members from different sectors. Its members were keen to establish business ties with Bangladesh. In this connection, MCCI's Vice-President Barrister Ms. Nihad Kabir made a presentation on behalf of the Chamber to the Czech Business Delegation highlighting Bangladesh as a potential destination for Czech investment which was well-appreciated by the visitors.<sup>307</sup>

The Country Representative in Bangladesh for the Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO), Mr Kei Kawano, along with his colleagues, paid a courtesy visit to the Chamber on 8 July 2013. Mr Kawano was keen to promote Japanese investment in Bangladesh and explained the information gaps that existed among potential Japanese investors. MCCI assured all possible cooperation to JETRO and potential Japanese investors so that they could invest in Bangladesh. MCCI declared its intention to work together with JETRO in the future and its keenness to establish a long term working relationship with the organization.<sup>308</sup>

<sup>305</sup> *Annual Report of the MCCI: Dhaka, 2011, p. 34.*

<sup>306</sup> *Annual Report of the MCCI: Dhaka, 2012, p. 27.*

<sup>307</sup> [http://www.mccibd.org/chamber\\_events.php](http://www.mccibd.org/chamber_events.php)

<sup>308</sup> [http://www.mccibd.org/chamber\\_events.php](http://www.mccibd.org/chamber_events.php)

At the request of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Chamber organized a meeting with private sector representatives of the USA under the Bangladesh-USA Partnership Dialogue (Foreign Secretary Level) held at the Chamber Building on 27 May 2013. The US team consisted primarily of US citizens who were from the Bangladeshi diaspora in USA. The Bangladesh side was led by the Chamber President, Mrs. Rokia A Rahman, and the discussion was moderated by Vice-President Mr Kamran T Rahman. The US Ambassador, Mr Dan W Mozena, joined the discussion along with senior Embassy officials. The US team suggested that such interactions should take place on a regular basis. They expected that a team from the Bangladesh business community should visit the USA soon and interact with different trade and affiliated bodies in USA. They expressed their keenness to facilitate and support such a visit. The issue of the macroeconomic situation of Bangladesh, regulatory measures, tariff policies, investment in Bangladesh and prospects of IT and IT services in Bangladesh were emphasized in the meeting.<sup>309</sup> Also at the request of the Ministry of Women's and Children Affairs, the MCCI organized a panel discussion on 'Development of Women Entrepreneurship' that was followed by a dinner at the Ruposhi Bangla Hotel on 18 June 2013, in honour of visiting ministers and delegates of the 10th Commonwealth Women's Affairs Ministers.<sup>310</sup>

A delegation from MCCI led by its President visited Bhutan during June 17-20, 2013. Its members were well received and had meetings with representatives of the Ministry of Economic Affairs and the Bhutan Chamber of Commerce and Industry. Mr Sonam P Wangdi, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Economic Affairs, briefed the delegation on the economy of Bhutan and investment opportunities for foreign and local investors in the country. Thereafter, Mr Phub Tshering, the Secretary-General of the Bhutan Chamber of Commerce and Industry received the delegation at its premises. The Chamber delegation had detailed interaction and meetings with the business community of Bhutan during their visit.<sup>311</sup>

The Chamber organized a number of international seminars, symposiums and conferences for the enhancement of the country's trade and commerce during this phase. The Metropolitan Chamber also provided financial and logistic support to the International Chamber of Commerce - Bangladesh (ICC-Bangladesh) to help it organize the ICC Asia Conference in Dhaka in November, 2000.<sup>312</sup> The Chamber co-sponsored with Save the Children, UK, a discussion program of business leaders, NGO heads and donor representatives on the eve of the visit of Her Royal Highness, Princess Anne, in

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<sup>309</sup> [http://www.mccibd.org/chamber\\_events.php](http://www.mccibd.org/chamber_events.php)

<sup>310</sup> [http://www.mccibd.org/chamber\\_events.php](http://www.mccibd.org/chamber_events.php)

<sup>311</sup> [http://www.mccibd.org/chamber\\_events.php](http://www.mccibd.org/chamber_events.php)

<sup>312</sup> *Annual Report of the MCCI: Dhaka, 2001, p. 29.*

November, 2000.<sup>313</sup> In 2001, the Chamber collaborated with the Center for Policy Dialogue (CPD) on a study on Global Competition whose outcome was published by the World Economic Forum, Geneva.<sup>314</sup> Jointly with Singapore Manufacturers' Federation, Singapore Enterprises Ltd., Bangladesh High Commission in Singapore and the Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corporation Limited, the Chamber organized an Investors' Conference in Singapore in May, 2004. Prominent Singapore entrepreneurs were present at the event.<sup>315</sup>

As mentioned earlier, NCC was dominated by British businessmen in its NCC phase. Their focus was maximizing business interests through the Chamber. However, any kind of worldwide networking and developing connections for the development of 'East Bengal' was absent in their agenda at the time. In the DNCC phase, the Chamber worked in tandem with the Pakistan Government. International activities of the Chamber were at times hampered by it in this phase, since the Chamber had to cope with the government's 'biased' decisions. In the DNCC phase, the Chamber was forced to cancel its nomination for representatives to attend the conference of the International Labour Organization.<sup>316</sup> During the DNCCI phase, the Chamber wanted to meet the Indian High Level Trade Delegation which was visiting Pakistan in an effort to reach a trade agreement in 1955. The Indian Delegation was accompanied by two representatives of the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry. But the Government of Pakistan did not allow DNCCI members to meet the Indian delegation. The Chamber did not even get permission to send its representatives. As a result, the Chamber failed to contribute to the important agreement signed between India and Pakistan. Such non-cooperation from the Pakistan Government towards the Chamber in East Bengal is in evidence throughout the DNCCI phase. Similar obstacles were also posed by the government on other occasions, in the first part of the NCCI phase relating to international networking. The Chamber had to overcome many obstacles, including non-cooperation of the Central Government, until 1971. The Chamber's international connections became easier and highly functional only in independent Bangladesh. In the MCCI, Dhaka phase, and even more obviously during this new millennium, the international associations of the Chamber have increased manifold.

Mr Farooq Ahmed, the current MCCI Secretary-General of the Chamber, opines on its international connections – 'MCCI is one of the 28 partners of SAARC Trade Promotion Network and the only private sector Liaison Center in the network of Enterprise Outreach Service (EOS) of the World Bank Group in Bangladesh. Members of the Chamber have

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<sup>313</sup> *Annual Report of the MCCI: Dhaka, 2001, p. 30.*

<sup>314</sup> *Annual Report of the MCCI: Dhaka, 2001, p. 33.*

<sup>315</sup> *Annual Report of the MCCI: Dhaka, 2004, p. 34.*

<sup>316</sup> *Minutes of the DNCC, 7 December 1951, p. 94.*

access to this network and can connect with private sectors around the world through it. The Chamber also maintains links with other important trade bodies in the region which is of great support to its members'.<sup>317</sup>

The Chamber has a reputation of working with development partners such as the World Bank (WB), International Finance Corporation (IFC), Asian Development Bank (ADB), Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO), and Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). Currently, the Chamber has undertaken a joint study with Nepal entitled, 'Analysis of Prevailing Non-Tariff Measures (NTMs) in SAARC' to identify non-tariff measures within SAARC. It is taking part in another study with the Institute of Development Economics of Japan External Trade Organization (IDE-JETRO), entitled 'Current State of Industrial Sub-Sectors in Bangladesh' to address the status of the industrial sub-sectors of Bangladesh. These studies are expected to lead to adoption of guidelines to identify and remove trade barriers amongst SAARC countries and provide for a course of action in generating employment.<sup>318</sup>

The Chamber has thus been having regular and continuous interactions with the wider world. In the process, the Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industries has achieved eminence not only in Bangladesh but also beyond its geographical territory. The Chamber has consistently been engaged in policy formulation, review and global networking in upholding the interests of its members as well the nation.

#### 4.4 Representations

The Chamber has been representing the interests of its members to various important government, semi-government and autonomous bodies since 1904. Through nomination and representation in various bodies, the Chamber has been able to represent the views of its members on trade and commerce. Examples of such representations are (a) Eastern Bengal Labour Advisory Board from 1952 to 1963; Bangladesh Shipping Corporation in 1981 and (b) Non-government bodies such as the Bengal Chamber of Commerce and Industry and Narayanganj Education Society.

The Chamber has in its membership roll most of the leading commercial and industrial organizations of Bangladesh, including public sector corporations and multinational companies. It holds a unique position because of its affiliation with prestigious and recognized commercial and industrial organizations. At present, many established organizations in the private and public sectors representing manufacturing, banking, non-banking financial institutions, insurance companies, IT and IT enabled

<sup>317</sup> Farooq Ahmed, 'Know Your Chamber', *Chamber News*, 14 August 2013, p. 6.

<sup>318</sup> Farooq Ahmed, *Chamber News*, 14 August 2013, p. 5.

technology-related services and health and media services, are members of the Chamber.<sup>319</sup> The Chamber's Committee consists of leading businessmen and professionals from both the public and private sectors.

The Chamber provides its services to public and private sectors by sending representatives to national and international bodies. Currently, it is represented in sixteen advisory committees of the Government, viz. National Committee of Export headed by the Prime Minister; Consultative Committee for Ministry of Commerce; National Council for Industrial Development (NCID); Consultative Committee for the National Board of Revenue; National Export Council; Transport Consultative Committee for the Ministry of Communications; Consultative Committee for the Ministry of Jute; Advisory Committee for the Ministry of Textiles; Chittagong Port Advisory Committee; Custom House Advisory Committee, Chittagong; National Consultative Committee on Power; Standing Committee on Export Credit; Bangladesh Institute of Management; Council of Bangladesh Standards & Testing Institution; ICD (Inland Container Depot) Advisory Committee Dhaka and the Advisory Committee for Securities and Exchange Commission. In addition to advisory support in policy formulation, the Chamber provides many essential services to the business community through its expert and experienced members.

The Chamber is regularly invited to send representatives to national and international bodies, both in the public and private sector.

A list of Chamber representatives (Phase Wise) to various committees and organizations from the very inception is included in an appendix (See Appendix 11). This list was prepared on the basis of the information available in Chamber documents such as *Minute Books*, *Annual Reports* and *Chamber News*.

**Representations (Historical Outline):** From the book written by CWE Cotton<sup>320</sup> and from Thacker's *Directory*<sup>321</sup> it can be seen that representation was an integral part and major function of the Chamber during its first phase, i.e. from 1904 to 1950. During this period, the Chamber was represented in the East Bengal Board of Industries (JWE Berry, 1950),<sup>322</sup> the Federation of Chambers of Commerce of the British Empire (Hamer & Bodly, 1950)<sup>323</sup> and ASSOCHAP (Guthrie & MM Ispahani, 1950).<sup>324</sup> NCC usually followed the policies of the

<sup>319</sup> <http://www.mccibd.org/pages/representative-character.php>

<sup>320</sup> Cotton, CWE, *Handbook of Commercial Information for India*, 3rd edition, New Delhi: Government of India, 1937.

<sup>321</sup> *Thacker's Indian Directory*, A Directory of the Chief Industries of India (The Fiftieth Issue of The Bengal Directory), Calcutta: Thacker, Spink & Co., 1905-07, 1912.

<sup>322</sup> *Minutes of the DNCC*, 19 December 1950, p. 48.

<sup>323</sup> *Minutes of the DNCC*, 19 December 1950, p. 49.

<sup>324</sup> *Minutes of the DNCC*, 19 December 1950, p. 48.

Bengal Chamber of Commerce (BCC) situated in Kolkata. In addition to the Bengal Chamber of Commerce, the Narayanganj Chamber of Commerce also sent representatives to government bodies through their nominations to boards, committees and councils.

In the second phase (1950-52), the Chamber continued to have representation in government and non-government bodies, advisory committees and councils. The Chamber representation to Employers Association (MM Ispahani, 1951),<sup>325</sup> East Bengal Board of Industries (JWE Berry, 1952),<sup>326</sup> Foreign Trade Development Council (A Jalil, 1951),<sup>327</sup> Jute Brokers Association (1951),<sup>328</sup> and Narayanganj Municipality (1952)<sup>329</sup> are some examples.

The DNCCI Phase (1952-59) saw the Chamber make nearly 35 representations to various committees or organizations.<sup>330</sup> In this phase, most importantly, the Chamber offered representations in educational institutions as well as government and non-government bodies and committees such as the Board of Governors, Viqarunnissa Noon School (MM Ispahani, 1956, 1957),<sup>331</sup> Court of the University of Dhaka (MM Ispahani, 1956, AA Kahlon, 1957),<sup>332</sup> and the Government College of Commerce, Chittagong (MM Ispahani, 1953).<sup>333</sup>

In the NCCI Phase (1959-79), the Chamber was represented in 90 committees or organizations of government, semi- government and autonomous institutions.<sup>334</sup> From this number, it can be easily seen how the Chamber became the biggest representative trade organization of the country. From this phase onwards its representational function became an integral part of the Chamber's work. Along with public ones, the Chamber got involved in numerous bodies, councils and committees of non- government and autonomous institutions. Some new and noteworthy representations in this phase were in the Central Advisory Council for the Ministry of Commerce (YA Bawany, 1965, M Ilahi & Rashid Ahmed, 1969, M Ilahi, 1968),<sup>335</sup> Advisory Council for Ministry of Commerce &

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<sup>325</sup> *Minutes of the DNCC*, 1 February 1951, p. 29.

<sup>326</sup> *Minutes of the DNCC*, 8 February 1952, p. 102.

<sup>327</sup> *Minutes of the DNCC*, 18 April 1951, p. 68.

<sup>328</sup> *Minutes of the DNCC*, 22 September 1951, p. 86.

<sup>329</sup> *Minutes of the DNCC*, 8 February 1952, p. 147.

<sup>330</sup> For detail see Appendix.

<sup>331</sup> *Annual Report of the DNCCI*: 1956, p. 49; *Annual Report of the DNCCI*: 1957, p. 21.

<sup>332</sup> *Annual Report of the DNCCI*: 1956, p. 49; *Annual Report of the DNCCI*: 1957, p. 21.

<sup>333</sup> *Minutes of the DNCCI*, 1953, p. 218.

<sup>334</sup> For detail see Appendix.

<sup>335</sup> *Annual Report of the NCCI*: 1965, p. 29; *Annual Report of the NCCI*: 1969, p. 26; *Annual Report of the NCCI*: 1968, p. 10.



Foreign Trade (FK Ghuznavi, 1968, 1975),<sup>336</sup> Dacca-Narayanganj Electricity Advisory Committee (M Ilahi, 1963, 1969),<sup>337</sup> Import Advisory Committee of the Chief Controller of Imports & Exports (M Anis Ud Dowla, 1975),<sup>338</sup> Management Board for Abandoned Properties for Dacca City and Adjoining Areas (M Anis Ud Dowla, 1975),<sup>339</sup> Narayanganj Town Development Committee (MA Sattar, 1977),<sup>340</sup> Bangladesh Industrial Facilities Board (ASF Rahman, 1979),<sup>341</sup> and the District Committee for Organizing Cottage and Small Industries (Mohsen Ali, 1977, ASF Rahman, 1979).<sup>342</sup>

In 1979, the Chamber was renamed the Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Dhaka (MCCI, Dhaka). The MCCI phase is divided into two parts. In the first part of this phase (1979-1999), the Chamber continued to help build up a strong economic base for the country and was represented in important public bodies as well as autonomous committees and organizations. At least 65 such representations were made<sup>343</sup> by the Chamber and it worked successfully to give suggestions and offer its views in these bodies, committees and organizations. Some selected important examples of representations of this phase are as follows: Advisory Committee to the Commissioners of Taxes (K Kamrul Hoda, 1979; KA Huque, 1985, 1990, 1997, 1999),<sup>344</sup> Advisory Committee for Securities and Exchange Commission (Samson H Chowdhury, 1997; Mahbub Jamil, 1999),<sup>345</sup> Bangladesh Bank's Co-ordinations Committee (SH Kabir, 1979; Rashid-ul Hasan, 1985; AKM Ghaffar, 1990),<sup>346</sup> Consultative Committee for the National Board of Revenue (MR Siddiqi, 1985; Syed Manzur Elahi, 1990; Samson H Chowdhury, 1997; Mahbub Jamil, 1999),<sup>347</sup> Training & Employment of Advisory Committee of Dacca Polytechnic Institute (FK Ghuznavi, 1978-79),<sup>348</sup> Institute of Business Administration, Dhaka University (M Anis Ud Dowla, 1982; SH Kabir, MR Siddiqi, 1978-79),<sup>349</sup> Inter-Ministerial Committee on Labour

<sup>336</sup> *Annual Report of the NCCI: 1968*, p. 10; *Annual Report of the NCCI: 1975*, p. 17.

<sup>337</sup> *Annual Report of the NCCI: 1969*, p. 27; *Annual Report of the NCCI: 1963*, p. 23.

<sup>338</sup> *Annual Report of the NCCI: 1975*, p. 17.

<sup>339</sup> *Annual Report of the NCCI: 1975*, p. 17.

<sup>340</sup> *Minutes of the NCCI*, 30 June, 1977, p. 1413.

<sup>341</sup> *Annual Report of the NCCI: AR-1979*, p. 32.

<sup>342</sup> *Minutes of the NCCI*, 1977, p. 1404; *Annual Report of the NCCI: 1979*, p. 31.

<sup>343</sup> For detail see Appendix.

<sup>344</sup> *Annual Report of the NCCI: 1978-79*, p. 31; *Annual Report of the MCCI: Dacca*, 1985, p. 18; *Annual Report of the MCCI: Dhaka*, 1990, p. 30; *Annual Report of the MCCI: Dhaka*, 1997, p. 26; *Annual Report of the MCCI: Dhaka*, 1999, p. 24.

<sup>345</sup> *Annual Report of the MCCI: Dhaka*, 1997, p. 27; *Annual Report of the MCCI: Dhaka*, 1999, p. 25.

<sup>346</sup> *Annual Report of the NCCI: 1978-79*, p. 31; *Annual Report of the MCCI: Dacca*, 1985, p. 18; *Annual Report of the MCCI: Dhaka*, 1990, p. 30.

<sup>347</sup> *Annual Report of the MCCI: Dacca*, 1985, p. 17; *Annual Report of the MCCI: Dhaka*, 1990, p. 29; *Annual Report of the MCCI: Dhaka*, 1997, p. 25; *Annual Report of the MCCI: Dhaka*, 1999, p. 23.

<sup>348</sup> *Annual Report of the NCCI: 1978-79*, p. 33.

<sup>349</sup> *Annual Report of the MCCI: Dacca*, 1982, p. 18; *Annual Report of the NCCI: 1978-79*, p. 33.

(FK Ghuznavi, 1979, 1985; Laila Rahman Kabir, 1997, 1999),<sup>350</sup> and National Consultative Committee on Power (M Anis Ud Dowla, 1979; Syed Manzur Elahi, 1985; SA Azim, 1990; Azimur Rahman, 1997).<sup>351</sup>

In the new millennium the Chamber's representational functions have become even more important than in earlier years. It now has more representations in public bodies, advisory committees, advisory boards and advisory councils; consultative committees of various ministries; trade organizations; financial institutions; various commissions and enquiries; urbanization and town development bodies; ports and ICD; the health sector; educational and other institutions. Some selected important representations of this current phase have been as follows: Advisory Committee for the Ministry of Textiles (MA Awal, 2002, Abdul Hafiz Chowdhury, 2008, Kutubuddin Ahmed, 2008, 2013),<sup>352</sup> Advisory Committee for Securities and Exchange Commission (Abdul Hafiz Chowdhury, 2002, 2004, 2008, Anis Ud Dowla, 2010, Nihad Kabir, 2013),<sup>353</sup> Consultative Committee to the Ministry of Commerce (Tapan Chowdhury, 2002, Kutubuddin Ahmed, 2004, Latifur Rahman, 2008, Anis Ud Dowla, 2010, Rokia Afzal Rahman, 2013),<sup>354</sup> Jute & Textile Council of the Bangladesh Standards and Testing Institution (AK Shamsuddin, 2002, Kamran T Rahman, 2008, 2010),<sup>355</sup> National Committee on Exports (Tapan Chowdhury, 2002, Kutubuddin Ahmed, 2004, Latifur Rahman, 2008, Anis Ud Dowla, 2010, Rokia Afzal Rahman, 2013),<sup>356</sup> National Council for Industrial Development, NCID (Tapan Chowdhury, 2002, Kutubuddin Ahmed, 2004, Latifur Rahman, 2008, Anis Ud Dowla, 2010, Rokia Afzal Rahman, 2013).<sup>357</sup>

<sup>350</sup> *Annual Report of the NCCI: 1978-79*, p. 31; *Annual Report of the MCCI: Dacca, 1985*, p. 18; *Annual Report of the MCCI: Dhaka, 1997*, p. 26; *Annual Report of the MCCI: Dhaka, 1999*, p. 24.

<sup>351</sup> *Annual Report of the NCCI, 1978-79*, p. 31; *Annual Report of the MCCI: Dacca, 1985*, p. 18; *Annual Report of the MCCI: Dhaka, 1990*, p. 30; *Annual Report of the MCCI: Dhaka, 1997*, p. 26.

<sup>352</sup> *Annual Report of the MCCI: Dhaka, 2002*, p. 23; *Annual Report of the MCCI: Dhaka, 2008*, p. 32; *Annual Report of the MCCI: Dhaka, 2013*, p. 19.

<sup>353</sup> *Annual Report of the MCCI: Dhaka, 2002*, p. 24; *Annual Report of the MCCI: Dhaka, 2004*, p. 25; *Annual Report of the MCCI: Dhaka, 2008*, p. 32; *Annual Report of the MCCI: Dhaka, 2010*, p. 21; *Annual Report of the MCCI: Dhaka, 2013*, p. 19.

<sup>354</sup> *Annual Report of the MCCI: Dhaka, 2002*, p. 22; *Annual Report of the MCCI: Dhaka, 2004*, p. 23; *Annual Report of the MCCI: Dhaka, 2008*, p. 31; *Annual Report of the MCCI: Dhaka, 2010*, p. 20; *Annual Report of the MCCI: Dhaka, 2013*, p. 18.

<sup>355</sup> *Annual Report of the MCCI: Dhaka, 2002*, p. 23; *Annual Report of the MCCI: Dhaka, 2008*, p. 32; *Annual Report of the MCCI: Dhaka, 2010*, p. 21.

<sup>356</sup> *Annual Report of the MCCI: Dhaka, 2002*, p. 22; *Annual Report of the MCCI: Dhaka, 2004*, p. 23; *Annual Report of the MCCI: Dhaka, 2008*, p. 31; *Annual Report of the MCCI: Dhaka, 2010*, p. 20; *Annual Report of the MCCI: Dhaka, 2013*, p. 18.

<sup>357</sup> *Annual Report of the MCCI: Dhaka, 2002*, p. 22; *Annual Report of the MCCI: Dhaka, 2004*, p. 23; *Annual Report of the MCCI: Dhaka, 2008*, p. 31; *Annual Report of the MCCI: Dhaka, 2010*, p. 20; *Annual Report of the MCCI: Dhaka, 2013*, p. 18.

As was mentioned earlier, almost all leading industrial organizations in the private and public sectors are at present members of the Chamber and Chamber representatives have been playing significant roles in decision and policy-making in almost all public and private bodies, committees and councils of Bangladesh. In serving business responsibly in its 110 years history, the Metropolitan Chamber has given representations to over a hundred government, non-government, semi-government and autonomous committees and organizations.

***Representations in Public Bodies:*** The Chamber's representations to public advisory committees, advisory boards and advisory councils have been regular features in the post-partition phase of the Chamber's existence. Chamber members have been nominated

Representations in Public Bodies (Selective)
Advisory Committee of Customs and Excise
Advisory Committee for Ministry of Textiles
Bangladesh Industrial Facilities Board
Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA)
Bangladesh Shipping Corporation
Bangladesh Tea Board
Chittagong Port Advisory Committee
Consultative Committee for the National Board of Revenue
Custom House Advisory Committee (Chittagong)
Custom House Advisory Board (Dhaka)
East Bengal Labour Advisory Board
East Bengal Regional Employment Advisory Committee
East Pakistan Railway Advisory Board
Export Promotion Council
Foreign Trade Development Council
Import Advisory Committee
National Advisory Council for Small Industries
National Council for Industrial Development
National Committee for Development of Small & Cottage Industry
National Council of Shippers
Palli Daridra Bimochan Foundation
Research Advisory Committee
Standing Committee on Income Tax

to such bodies regularly and have worked there conscientiously. For example, its representations to the East Bengal Board of Industries and the East Bengal Labour Advisory Board continued till the middle of the 1950s. In addition, the Chamber also had representations in the Narayanganj Municipality; Associated Chamber of Commerce of Pakistan; Pakistan Tea Board and Pakistan Tea Licensing Committee. In 1953, two of the Chamber representatives were nominated for the Regional Employment Advisory Committee for East Bengal. In the same year the then President of the Chamber, Mr A Jalil, became a member of the Executive Committee of the Governor's Refugee Relief Fund.<sup>358</sup> In the Pakistan Tea Board, the former Chamber President Mr MM Ispahani was active for a couple of years as a member of the Tea Board.<sup>359</sup> Mr DS Jamal was re-nominated as the Chamber's representative on the East Bengal Railway Advisory Committee after completing his two years in 1955.<sup>360</sup> In a meeting held on 13 September 1977, the Chamber's representatives on the Panel of Advisers for Private Sector Industries constituted by the Planning Commission were chosen. Mr M Anis Ud Dowla and Mr Zeaul Huq were selected for two years to represent NCCI in the committee.<sup>361</sup>

**Representations in Educational Institutions:** Chamber members were represented in various educational and professional institutions of government, semi- government, or

Representations in Educational Institutions (Selective)
Bangladesh Council of Scientific Industrial Research
Bangladesh Management Development Centre
Chittagong Government College of Commerce
Commerce Faculty of Dacca University
Institute of Business Administration – Dhaka University
Institute of Development Studies
Narayanganj Education Society
Pakistan Council of Scientific & Industrial Research Laboratories, Rajshahi
Research Advisory Committee
Training & Employment of Advisory Committee of Dacca Polytechnic Institute
The Board of Education
Trade Union Worker's Training Institute
Viqarunnissa Noon School Governing Body

<sup>358</sup> *Annual Report* of the DNCCI, 1954, p. 28.

<sup>359</sup> *Annual Report* of the DNCCI, 1954, p. 29.

<sup>360</sup> *Minutes* of the DNCCI, 26 July 1955, p. 86.

<sup>361</sup> *Minutes* of the NCCI, 13 September 1977, p. 1425.

autonomous bodies. In 1956 and 1957, the Chamber nominated Mr MM Ispahani and Mr AA Kahlon to the Court of the University of Dhaka.<sup>362</sup> In 1977, the Dean of the Faculty of Commerce, University of Dhaka, informed the Chamber that Mr Rashid Ahmed had completed his two years tenure and a replacement would be considered on expiry of the term.<sup>363</sup> This is evidence of the Chamber's continued representation in the Commerce Faculty of the University of Dhaka in that period.

***Representations in Consultative Committees of Ministries:*** Representations to consultative committees of various ministries constitute an important activity of the Chamber. Since its NCCI phase (1959-1979), the Chamber has been working with numerous ministerial committees. The Ministry of Commerce, Commerce and Foreign Trade, Commerce and Industry, Communication and Textile are where the Chamber is represented most actively on a regular basis. Mr M Ahad and Mr MH Adamjee represented it in an Advisory Council of the Ministry of Commerce in 1963.<sup>364</sup> Mr FK Ghuznavi represented the Chamber in the Advisory Council for Ministry of Commerce and Foreign Trade in 1968 and 1975.<sup>365</sup> The Chamber was represented in the Advisory Council for Ministry of Commerce (Central) by Mr YA Bawany, Mr M Ilahi and Mr Rashid Ahmed in the 1960s.<sup>366</sup> In the MCCI phase, representations in the ministries became even more significant. Mr Mostaque Ahmed Siddique and Mr MA Awal represented the Chamber in the Advisory Committee for the Ministry of Textiles in 1997 and 1999.<sup>367</sup> Consultative Committee to the Ministry of Jute & Textiles, Consultative Committee to the Ministry of Industries, Consultative Committee to the Ministry of Commerce, Consultative Committee to the Ministry of Communications are a few bodies in this phase where Mr Syed Mohsen Ali, Mr SH Kabir, Mr Syed Manzur Elahi, Mr Samson H Chowdhury, Mr Mahbub Jamil, Mr MA Sattar MP, and Mr MH Khan represented the Chamber and contributed significantly to proceedings.<sup>368</sup>

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<sup>362</sup> *Annual Report of the DNCCI*, 1956, p. 49; *Annual Report of the DNCCI*, 1957, p. 21.

<sup>363</sup> *Minutes of the NCCI*, 8 June 1977, p. 1409.

<sup>364</sup> *Annual Report of the NCCI*, 1963, p. 23.

<sup>365</sup> *Annual Report of the NCCI*, 1968, p. 10; *Annual Report of the NCCI*, 1975, p. 17.

<sup>366</sup> *Annual Report of the NCCI*, 1965, p. 29; *Annual Report of the NCCI*, 1969, p. 26; *Annual Report of the NCCI*, 1968, p. 10.

<sup>367</sup> *Annual Report of the MCCI: Dhaka*, 1997, p. 26; *Annual Report of the MCCI: Dhaka*, 1999, p. 23.

<sup>368</sup> *Annual Report of the NCCI*, 1978-79, p. 31, 32; *Annual Report of the MCCI: Dacca*, 1985, p. 17; *Annual Report of the MCCI: Dhaka*, 1990, p. 29; *Annual Report of the MCCI: Dhaka*, 1997, p. 25; *Annual Report of the MCCI: Dhaka*, 1999, p. 23.

Representations in Consultative Committees on Various Ministries (Selective)
Consultative Committee to the Ministry of Industries
Consultative Committee to the Ministry of Communications
Tripartite Consultative Committee of ILO
Consultative Committee to the Ministry of Textiles
Consultative Committee to the Ministry of Jute
Consultative Committee to the Ministry of Jute & Textiles
Consultative Committee for the Jute Division
National Consultative Committee on Power
Consultative Committee for the National Board of Revenue
Consultative Committee to the Ministry of Industries
Consultative Committee to the Ministry of Commerce
Consultative Committee for the Ministry of Industries and Commerce
Consultative Committee on Remittances and Problems of Wage Earners

**Representations in Trade Organizations/Associations:** The Chamber became a member of the Associated Chamber of Commerce of India (ASSOCHAM) sometime in 1930s and continued to be a member till 1947. It received membership in the Associated Chamber of Commerce of Pakistan (ASSOCHAP) in 1960s. The Chamber sent representatives to the Federation of Chambers of Commerce of the British Empire in 1950,<sup>369</sup> to the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry in 1968,<sup>370</sup> and to the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI) in 1975.<sup>371</sup> The MCCI, Dhaka, is still a member of FBCCI and the two organizations have been working together for the betterment of trade and commerce in Bangladesh. The Chamber's members were represented in the Pakistan National Committee of International Chamber of Commerce,<sup>372</sup> as well as the Federation of Chambers of Commerce of Pakistan. In addition, the Chamber was represented in many other trade organizations and associations. In the 1950s the

<sup>369</sup> Hamer & Bodly (representatives), Federation of Chambers of Commerce of the British Empire; *Minutes of the DNCC*, 19 December, 1950, p. 49.

<sup>370</sup> M Ilahi & SM Doja (representing industry), *Annual Report of the NCCI*, 1968, p. 9.

<sup>371</sup> FK Ghuznavi (General Committee), *Annual Report of the NCCI*, 1975, p. 17.

<sup>372</sup> *Minutes of the DNCCI*, 1955, p. 86.



Chamber sent representatives to the Jute Brokers Association<sup>373</sup> and the East Bengal Jute Dealers Association. The Chamber had representations in export and import-related organizations such as the National Export Council, the Export Promotion Council etc. Given below is a list of some organizations where the Chamber was represented.

Representations in Trade Organizations/Associations (Selective)
Asian and Far Eastern Affairs of the International Chamber of Commerce (CAFEA)
Associated Chamber of Commerce of India (ASSOCHAM)
Associated Chamber of Commerce of Pakistan (ASSOCHAP)
Bangladesh Jute Press Owners Association
Chief Controller of Import and Export
East Bengal Jute Dealers Association
Bangladesh Employers' Association
Employers' Association of East Pakistan
Export Promotion Council
Federation of Chambers of Commerce of the British Empire (FCCBE)
Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI)
Federation of Chambers of Commerce of Pakistan (FCCP)
Foreign Trade Development Council
Jute Brokers Association
National Committee on Export
National Export Council
National Council for Shippers
Pakistan Jute Mills Association
Pakistan Economic Association
Standing Committee of Export Credit
Task Force on Export

**Representations in Financial Institutions:** The Chamber has also been represented in various financial institutions such as stock exchanges, banks and insurance companies. In its DNCC phase, Chamber representatives played active roles in the Pakistan Insurance Corporation (1951). In the MCCI, Dhaka phase, Mr Samson H Chowdhury (1997) and

<sup>373</sup> Jute Brokers Association; *Minutes of the DNCC*, 22 September, 1951, p- 86.

Mahbub Jamil (1999) were actively engaged in working with the Advisory Committee for the Securities and Exchange Commission.<sup>374</sup> Mr SH Kabir (1978-79), Mr Rashid Ul Hasan (1985), and AKM Ghaffar (1990) represented the Chamber in Bangladesh Bank's Co-ordinations Committee.<sup>375</sup>

<b>Representations in Financial Institutions (Selective)</b>
Advisory Committee for Securities and Exchange Commission
Bangladesh Bank's Co-ordination Committee
Board of Directors of Dhaka Stock Exchange Ltd
Council of the Dhaka Stock Exchange
Insurance Advisory Committee
Pakistan Insurance Corporation
Sadharan Bima Corporation
State Bank of Pakistan Coordination Committee

**Representations in Commissions and Enquiries:** The Chamber's representations in committees of various commissions and enquiries formed by the government have also been important in terms of its representational functions. The earliest representations of the Chamber on Commissions and Enquiry Committees are Land Reforms Commission (1940), Economic Appraisal and Development Enquiry Committee (1952), Commodity Price Commission (1952) etc. Other such bodies where the Chamber has been represented are listed below:

<b>Representations in Various Commissions and Enquiries (Selective)</b>
Commodity Price Commission
Credit Enquiry Commission
Jute Enquiry Commission
Law Reform Committee
Land Reform Commission
Law Reform Committee
Maritime Commission
Planning Commission Advisory Panel
Sugar Commission
Textile Enquiry Commission
Taxation Enquiry Committee

<sup>374</sup> Samson H Chowdhury; *Annual Report of the MCCI*: Dhaka, 1997, p. 27; Mahbub Jamil; *Annual Report of the MCCI*: Dhaka, 1999, p. 25.

<sup>375</sup> *Annual Report of the NCCI*, 1978-79, p. 31; *Annual Report of the MCCI*: Dacca, 1985, p. 18; *Annual Report of the MCCI*: Dhaka, 1990, p. 30.

**Representations in Urbanization and Town Development Bodies:** The Chamber has nominated its members to different committees constituted for Narayanganj and Dhaka Improvement Trust and development bodies. They have played an important role in town development. One of the earliest example of representations in such bodies is to be found in the workings of the Narayanganj Municipality.<sup>376</sup>

Representations in Urbanization and Town Development Bodies (Selective)
Dacca-Narayanganj Electricity Advisory Committee
Dacca Traffic Committee
Dhaka Improvement Trust (DIT)
Dhaka-Narayanganj Traffic Committee
Dhaka City Traffic Committee
Narayanganj Municipal Committee
Narayanganj Town Development Committee
Provincial Transports Authority

**Representations in Ports and ICD:** The Chamber's participation and representation in committees on Ports and ICD (Internal Container Depot) formed by the government have also been very important in terms of its representational functions. The Chamber contributed actively to such bodies by nominating members for representation of its interests in them. Some of the earliest representations have been in bodies such as the Chittagong Port Authority (1959),<sup>377</sup> Chalna Anchorage Advisory Committee (1959)<sup>378</sup> and Chittagong Port Advisory Committee (1984)<sup>379</sup>. The Chamber has been regularly represented in these bodies since then.

Representations in Ports and ICD (Selective)
Chittagong Port Advisory Committee
Chittagong Port Authority
Chalna Anchorage Advisory Committee
Chalna Port Authority
ICD (Internal Container Depot) Advisory Committee, Dhaka
ICD (Internal Container Depot) Advisory Committee, Chittagong

<sup>376</sup> Minutes of the DNCC, 8 February, 1952, p. 147.

<sup>377</sup> MM Ispahani; *Annual Report of the NCCI*, 1960, p. 64.

<sup>378</sup> NA Mecklai; *Annual Report of the NCCI*, 1960, p. 65.

<sup>379</sup> Iftekharul Alam; *Annual Report of the MCCI: Dacca*, 1984, p. 23.

**Representations in Health Sector:** The Chamber had contributed significantly to the health sector of the region in general and Bangladesh in particular through its representatives in these bodies, councils or committees of the health sector and hospitals. In the NCC and DNCC phase, the Chamber nominated two members to the Managing Committee of the Victoria Hospital of Narayanganj in 1951.<sup>380</sup> In 1952, the DNCC nominated Mr EG Stevenson and Mr CEC Guthrie to the 'Poor Patient Fund' of the Victoria Hospital Committee.<sup>381</sup>

Representations in Health Sector (Selective)
Araggya Niketan, Dhaka
Health Exhibition Committee
Holy Family Hospital Scheme Sub-committee
Narayanganj Victoria Hospital Committee
Public Health Day and Dacca Cleanup Campaign

**Representations in Various Government and Other Committees:** Representations of the Chamber in government and others non-government and semi-government committees have also been very important for it. Some examples of such representations are given below:

Representations in Various Government and Other Committees (Selective)
Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority
Customs House Advisory Committee, Chittagong
Customs House Advisory Committee, Dhaka
Dacca District Trade Advisory Committee
District Committee for Organizing Cottage and Small Industries
Inland Transport Committee of the ILO
Management Board on Abandoned Industries
Minimum Wage Board Committee
Remittances and Problems of Wage Earners
River Police Committee of East Pakistan
Trade Union Workers Training Scheme

<sup>380</sup> *Minutes of the DNCC*, 2 May 1951, p. 70.

<sup>381</sup> *Minutes of the DNCC*, 25 April, 1952, p. 115.

The above list clearly indicates the contribution the Chamber has made to the eastern part of Bengal as a whole and to Bangladesh in particular. Representations in these sectors have facilitated regular dialogue with government, provided scope for advocacy, and allowed it to offer feedback on policies and legislation affecting business practices as well as to serve on statutory boards and government committees to help formulate policy guidelines and set standards that have contributed to the business climate and enhanced members' competitiveness.

#### 4.5 Publications

The Chamber has been publishing journals which are quite distinctive and have been well-appreciated at home and abroad. Circulars and bulletins issued at periodic intervals are supplied to members by the Chamber free of charge. Providing details of government and semi-governments notifications; reporting on the impact of legislation; judicial decisions in respect of business matters of general interest or significance; publicizing trade inquiries and trade and business opportunities; providing information about new technologies and opportunities for technology transfer, areas of collaboration, investment trends, economic indicators, comparative data and analysis of such data, important events within the country and overseas, trade fairs and exhibition of special importance, visiting missions and dignitaries; reporting on important activities involving members and other similar information have made these publications useful and desirable.

Publications are an essential function of the Chamber and a service it offers to its members and the nation. Through its publications, the Chamber attempts to collect and disseminate information on business, including export, import, investment and tax regulations. The Chamber usually collects government circulars, notices, and statistical data from government and other bodies and disseminates information relating to trade, commerce and industry among members. It also prepares 'Position Papers' on various issues and circulates the Chamber's decisions to its members, the society and the nation. As such, its publications have been playing a significant role in the growth and development of trade and commerce in the land. The Chamber has various publications and they are published regularly. Some publications of the Chamber are *Chamber News*, *Annual Report*, *the Summary of Taxation Rules*, *Quarterly Review*, *Tax News*, *Chamber Bulletin*, *Telephone Directory* and the *Diamond Jubilee Celebration Volume*. In the millennium phase (2000 onwards), the Chamber entered the digital world and information about it is available on the website of MCCI.<sup>382</sup>

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<sup>382</sup> <http://www.mccibd.org>



### Official Website of the MCCI, Dhaka



**Research Cell and Preparation of Position Papers:** Some major functions of the cell are: collecting data on trade and commerce ; maintaining a data-base and evaluating economic growth; compiling and analyzing monthly figures of production in major industries, cost of living index, monthly figures on import and export, and analyzing trends, policy reviews and evaluation; examining the budget of the country; preparing the Chamber's budget proposals, and compiling and publishing periodicals.

The Chamber usually offers its views and ideas on different issues relating to trade, investment and macroeconomic policies based on its research counterparts. Research and analytical studies are key tools in coming up with information necessary to provide policy and advocacy support to the government and to members. MCCI has the capacity to conduct qualitative and quantitative research. From time to time, the Chamber conducts joint studies and organizes events such as seminars and conferences with government and leading research organizations at home and abroad.<sup>383</sup> Its regular publications reflect the views and particular position of the Chamber on any number of issues.

For preparing position papers professionally, the research cell of the Chamber makes use of the best and most recent data relating to the issue at hand and presents an analysis of the relevant data. The analysis provided often indicates how business interests are being hurt by existing or proposed regulatory and tax structures and what measures should be adopted to relieve the business community in order to promote business development. The papers are the basis of the Chamber's lobbying activities and position on issues disseminated through publications in the periodicals of the Chamber.

### Regular Publications

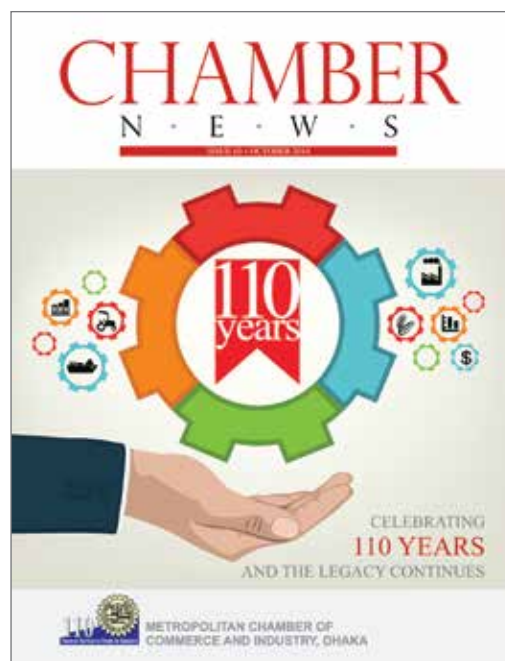
**Annual Report:** The earliest and foremost publication of the Chamber is its Annual Report. This has been in regular publication since 1904. Due to political turmoil in Bengal (1903-08), the First and Second World War (1914-19, 1939-45), the Great Economic Depression (1930s), the Great Bengal Famine (1943), Partition of India (1947), Natural calamities and the War of Independence (1971), very few of these reports survive. However, Annual Reports published since 1954 are still available. These have become valuable records of the economic development of the region.



<sup>383</sup> CK Hyder, 'Narayanganj Chamber – 75 Years of Rare Service', *Annual Report of 1978-79*, Diamond Jubilee Year (1904 – 1979), Dhaka: 1979, pp. 104-10; *Daily Ittefaq*, 20 June, 1979, p. 9.

All Reports contain important statistical data covering different aspects of the Country's economic activities, along with other valuable information.

**Chamber News** is a monthly publication. It contains mainly information on recent national and international economic events, news about Chamber members, country profiles, Chamber matters, updates on new products, statistical overviews of different aspects, articles, news briefs on national and international business, trade enquiries and business proposals, review-related matters etc. Chamber News was first published in 1977. From 1978, this monthly News has been published with the help of advertisements provided by member-firms. In the millennium phase, digital technologies have been adapted in the make-up and get-up process and *Chamber News* has now got an attractive look. This publication has earned both national and international reputation as one of the leading economic magazines of the region. This in-house magazine is distributed primarily to its members but because of its high quality and acceptability, it is also distributed amongst government departments,

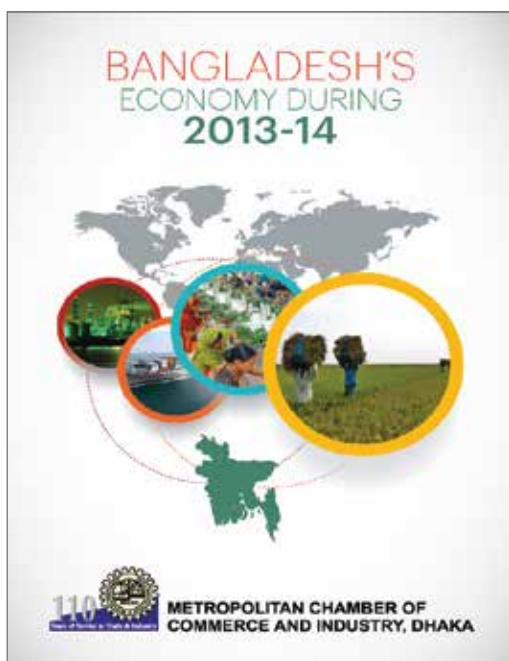


diplomatic missions, Bangladesh missions abroad, international economic agencies and research institutions at home and abroad.



**Quarterly Review:** This is an important quarterly publication of the Chamber that focuses on the economic situation of Bangladesh and highlights performances in different macro economic sectors connected with trade and industry. It publishes interviews of leading entrepreneurs and is aimed at building confidence among businessmen and members of the Chamber. The *Quarterly Review* has earned recognition as a quality business magazine.

**Bangladesh Economy:** The Chamber's Research Cell prepares a booklet named *Bangladesh Economy* for its members as well as general readers. Every aspect of the Bangladesh economy as well as the economic performance of the Country in a fiscal year is covered in



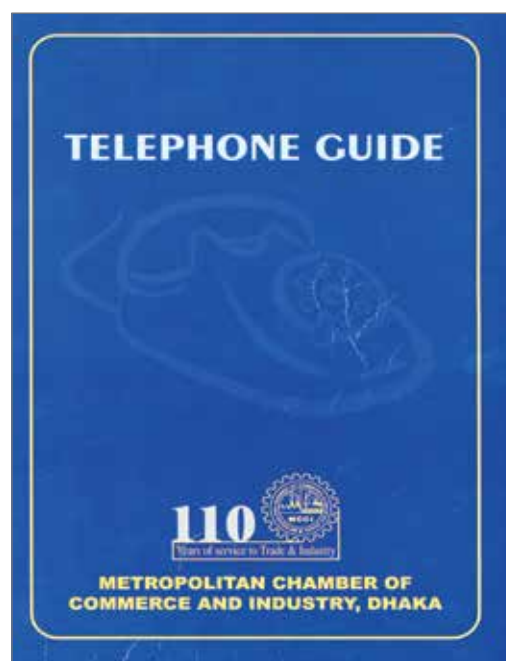
it. Business growth, agriculture, industry, services, investment and saving, monetary development, export-import, balance of payments, remittance, foreign aid, foreign direct investment, foreign exchange reserves, the National Budget and new investments are some of the topics featured in *Bangladesh Economy*.

**Summary of Taxation Rules:** This is a yearly publication of the Chamber. It is published after the announcement of the Government's Annual Budget. Through the *Summary of Taxation Rules*, the Chamber attempts to explain the requirements of the laws in the field of income tax, customs and excise duties

and other taxes mentioned in the Budget.

**Telephone Directory:** Another yearly publication of the Chamber is *Telephone Guide*. This useful publication of the Chamber compiles telephone numbers of important government officials, diplomatic missions, financial institutions, trade bodies, stock exchange etc. In this Guide, telephone numbers of members of the Chamber Committee, Chamber Secretariat and Bangladesh Employers Federation are included. Important phone numbers of semi-government, non-government departments and leading autonomous organizations are also included in this directory.

**Major Economic Indicators of Bangladesh** is prepared by the Economic Research Cell of MCCI. Population and mainly macroeconomic







The Release of the Publication: Global Economic Prospects - 2005

aspects, including details of GDP, growth, per capita GDP, agriculture, industry etc. of Bangladesh are included in the publication. The major economic indicators of Bangladesh are updated annually through this publication.

### Occasional Publications

The Diamond Jubilee Publication was brought out in 1979 to commemorate 75 years of the Chamber. On that occasion, the Chamber published not only the Annual Report of 1978-79 as its Diamond Jubilee Year, 1904-1979, but also a particular section separately titled Chamber's Diamond Jubilee Celebration, 1904-1979. In 1987, the Chamber published "Industry in Bangladesh" jointly with the Ministry of Industries, Government of Bangladesh, and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO).<sup>384</sup>

### Contact with the Media

The Metropolitan Chamber maintains close contact with the press and electronic media in order to:

- Disseminate information to the public;
- Create public opinion against any changes in government policy which adversely affects the interests of the business community;
- Publicize the activities of the Chamber;
- Provide instant reaction to a public policy or decision;
- Provide publicity for any offer of training programs, workshops, seminars and for trade delegations;
- Circulate news on changes in the chamber e.g. new office bearers;
- Create public opinion against political activity that disrupts business and commerce.

<sup>384</sup> *Annual Report of the MCCI: Dhaka, 1987, p. 25.*

Initially the Chamber would issue press releases irregularly to articulate its concerns on the proposed budget by the government. But from the phase of MCCI, Dhaka (1979-99), it started issuing press releases on a regular basis to articulate its concerns not only on the proposed budget but also on significant events relating to politics and the economy of the country. To create a better socio-political environment, the Chamber urged political parties to lower the frequency of *hartals* and strikes. The Chamber, along with, other leading trade bodies of the country, jointly issued press releases to condemn *hartals* and urged exploring alternate means of expressing political differences.

In the Millennium phase, the Chamber continues to issue public statements and press releases to articulate its concerns and convey its stand-point to the public on nationally and internationally important issues. In this phase, the Chamber has also begun to issue joint statements with BGMEA, DCCI, CCCI, FICCI, BTMA, FBCCI and other important trade bodies in Bangladesh so that the voice raised by the businessmen is united, powerful and more effective than before. Some selected press releases are reproduced from the *Annual Reports* of the Chamber in the Appendices Section. See appendix 22.

#### 4.6 Communication Development

The Chamber operated a courier service from Dhaka to Chittagong and Khulna, from the early 1950s. Urgent commercial mail and important documents were collected from member-firms and dispatched by air through this service. The Chamber introduced its courier service at the beginning of its DNCC phase.<sup>385</sup> Subsequently, the Chamber operated its courier service from Dhaka to other parts of the country as well.<sup>386</sup> With the advent of private courier services, the Chamber discontinued its courier service in 1989.

The Chamber also offered Telex Service to member-firms at an earlier period. This service helped disseminate urgent messages, like international tenders. It was available for member-firms.<sup>387</sup>

During the DNCCI and NCCI phases, the Chamber gave great emphasis on the communication sector. It dealt with frequent complaints regarding communication, including posts and telegraph, teleprinter services, postal deliveries, communications between East and West Pakistan, local telephone charges, railway transport, inland water transport and so on.<sup>388</sup> For inter-wing shipping communication, the Chamber worked to ease problems relating to coastal shipping.<sup>389</sup>

<sup>385</sup> *Annual Report of the DNCCI*, 1954, p.8.

<sup>386</sup> CK Hyder, 'Narayanganj Chamber - 75 Years of Rare Service', *Annual Report of the NCCI*, 1978-79, pp. 104-110; *Daily Ittefaq*, 20 June 1979, p. 9.

<sup>387</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>388</sup> *Annual Report of the DNCCI*, 1956, pp. 57-66.

<sup>389</sup> *Annual Report of the DNCCI*, 1957, pp. 33-36; *Annual Report of the DNCCI*, 1958, pp. 29-30; *Annual Report of the DNCCI*, 1959, pp. 26-27.



For the Teleprinter service, endeavor was made from 1955 onwards for the installation of a teleprinter in the Chamber for use of members.<sup>390</sup> The Chamber worked hard to increase the Trunk Calls circuits between Dacca and Khulna via Kushtia.<sup>391</sup>

The Chamber used to assist individual members with telephone service in the 1960s.<sup>392</sup> At that time, the Chamber was greatly concerned about the condition of the Dacca-Narayanganj Road. It eventually contributed to the reconstruction of the road.<sup>393</sup>

Because of technological developments in communication and other developments, the Chamber now does not need to offer these services.

#### 4.7 Annual General Meeting (AGM)

The Chamber organizes its Annual General Meeting (AGM) every December or at another convenient time.

List the Chief Guests in the AGMs (1951-1972)	
1951 <b>Sir Frederick Bourne</b> Governor of East Bengal	1959 <b>Zakir Hossain</b> Governor of East Pakistan
1953 <b>Ghulam Mohammed</b> Governor General of Pakistan	1960 <b>Lt General Azam Khan</b> Governor of East Pakistan
1954 <b>Iskender Ali Mirza</b> <i>Governor of East Bengal</i>	1963-66 <b>Abdul Monem Khan</b> Governor of East Pakistan
1956 <b>AK Fazlul Haque</b> Governor of Bengal	1969 <b>Vice Admiral SM Ahsan</b> Governor of East Pakistan
1958 <b>AK Fazlul Haque</b> Governor of East Pakistan	1972 <b>MR Siddiqi</b> Minister for Trade and Commerce Govt. of Bangladesh

During the pre-liberation period of Bangladesh, the Chief Minister or Governor of East Bengal, East Pakistan's Governor, and sometimes the Governor-General of Pakistan, would grace AGMs as the chief guest, which were followed by dinner. During the NCCI phase, Chamber's AGMs were graced by the Governor-General of Pakistan or the Chief Minister of

<sup>390</sup> *Annual Report of the DNCCI, 1958, p. 30; Annual Report of the DNCCI, 1959, p. 27.*

<sup>391</sup> *Annual Report of the DNCCI, 1958, p. 31.*

<sup>392</sup> *Annual Report of the NCCI, 1961, pp. 22-23.*

<sup>393</sup> *Annual Report of the NCCI, 1963, pp. 11-12.*

East Bengal or the Governor of East Pakistan. In 1953, the Governor General of Pakistan Ghulam Muhammed was present as a Chief Guest at the AGM of the Chamber. He accepted the invitation to open the new Chamber Building.<sup>394</sup> AK Fazlul Haq, Governor of East Bengal, addressed the Chamber as the Chief Guest in 1956.<sup>394a</sup> A large number of dignitaries were also invited to be present at the AGM session in this phase. Among them were Mr G David (Deputy High Commissioner of UK in East Pakistan) and Mr Goro Tsukamoto (Consul for Japan in East Pakistan) who were present in 1956.<sup>395</sup> In this phase, Prime Minister of Pakistan, HS Suhrawardy, was invited as the Chief Guest but was unable to accept the invitation due to other preoccupations.<sup>396</sup>



Mr SH Kabir, newly elected President of the MCCI, Dacca  
addressing the members at its AGM on 28 December, 1983

In the first part of its NCCI phase, governors of East Pakistan would be regularly present at AGMs. Mr Zakir Hossain, the Governor of East Pakistan, addressed the Chamber in 1959 and Mr Azam Khan, Governor of East Pakistan in 1960. Mr Abdul Monem Khan attended the Chamber AGM on four occasions in the 1960s.<sup>397</sup> During this phase distinguished guests from Diplomatic Corps, government departments, and trade and industry would attend the session. In the Presidential Address the President would talk about the overall situation of the country, especially economic challenges that were to be

<sup>394</sup> *Minutes of the DNCCI*, 20 January, 1953, p. 184.

<sup>394a</sup> Mr AK Fazlul Haq, Governor of East Bengal, delivered his first speech as the Chief Guest in the 51st Annual General Meeting of DNCCI held on 6 April, 1956. This speech has been compiled in the *Annual Report of 1956*, PP. 19-33. Mr Haq delivered a speech again as the Chief Guest in the 53rd Annual General Meeting of DNCCI held on 4 March, 1958. This second speech was published in the *Annual Report of the Chamber of 1958*, PP. 16-20. See Appendix 15.

<sup>395</sup> *Annual Report of the DNCCI*, 1956, p. 1.

<sup>396</sup> *Annual Report of the DNCCI*, 1957, p. 3.

<sup>397</sup> *Annual Report of the NCCI*, 1963-66.

overcome. It also covered a wide range of subjects, both national and international. The Governor in his address discuss issues raised by the Chamber President.<sup>398</sup>

In independent Bangladesh, the Chamber came out of its practice of inviting a Chief Guest at the main session of the Annual General Meeting. Instead, the Chief Guest would now be invited only to its dinner or luncheon sessions. In 1972, Mr AR Siddiqi, Minister for Trade and Commerce, was the first such Chief Guest in independent Bangladesh.<sup>399</sup> In a meeting held in 1974, the Chamber Committee decided that no Chief Guest would henceforth be invited to the AGM of the Chamber.<sup>400</sup>



A partial view of an AGM of MCCI

<sup>398</sup> No dignitary names are found in *Annual Reports* during this phase.

<sup>399</sup> *Minutes* of the NCCI, 1972, p. 1125.

<sup>400</sup> *Minutes* of the NCCI, 10 January, 1974, p. 1214.

Ms Rokia Rahman, President of MCCI,  
addressing the 109th Annual General Meeting in 2013.

