

Chapter 5

The Chamber and the Nation





THE CHAMBER AND THE NATION

The activities of the Metropolitan Chamber are evidence of its concern not only for the interest and well-being of its members, but also for the social and humanitarian causes, benefitting the nation over the decades. Since its inception, the Chamber has stood by the people of Bangladesh and has contributed to the establishment of sectors such as education, health and environment.

Encouraging members to take part in social and humanitarian services is one of the primary objectives of MCCI. Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has always been an important focus of the Chamber. In fact, a sub-committee, named 'Corporate Governance and CSR', has been working actively to this end from 2010. This sub-committee was formed to serve the nation in all possible ways and was not confined to trade and business-related activities. Over the years, the Chamber has rendered many services to the nation by contributing financially as well as helping otherwise as part of its social and humanitarian commitment to the nation. CSR has become an integral part of the Chamber's mission.

The Metropolitan Chamber has been playing a leading role primarily to help in the economic progress of the country. But, it is aware that such progress depends on taking comprehensive and sustainable initiatives elsewhere and these involve making contributions to the nation on social and humanitarian fronts. The Chamber has contributed immensely to public sectors such as, education and health and has earned a solid reputation thereby. It has taken some notable initiatives on environmental issues and these are going to be highlighted in this chapter along with the Chamber's involvement in other CSR issues.

5.1 Education Sector

As a part of the benevolent work and social responsibility that it sees as integral to its mission, the Metropolitan Chamber has contributed significantly to the education sector of the eastern part of Bengal and Bangladesh over the decades. However, because of the paucity of sources, the complete picture of Chamber's philanthropic activities in its NCC phase (1904-1950) could not be fully presented.

It can be inferred though, that the Chamber had some sort of connection to the establishment of Narayanganj High School (1885) and Morgan Girls School (1910) in its first phase. In fact, these two educational institutions were established with the financial help of some merchants of Narayanganj who were believed to be actively involved in the formation of the Narayanganj Chamber of Commerce. Narayanganj High School was an English medium school. It became a middle school in 1876 and finally a high school in 1885. The school was located on the bank of the Sitalakhya near Netaiganj from 1885 to 1907. After 1907, this school received donations from NCC on many occasions and gradually became a reputed institution of the area. From 1922 to 1948 the reputation of this institution spread far and wide.

In 1937, when Narayanganj Women's College was established, local merchants were approached for financial assistance. Mr RP Saha, the eminent philanthropist and merchant of Narayanganj, made a significant contribution to the college. In the 1940s, this college became Tolaram Women College. Madanlal Saragi, son of Tolaram Saragi, donated a sum of Rs 25 thousand to the College for its development. Tolaram Company was a Marwari firm in Narayanganj and a prominent member of the Narayanganj Chamber of Commerce. Not only Mr Tolaram, but other merchants of the city associated with NCC, also extended their help to the college on various occasions.

5.1.1 Viqarunnisa Noon School: In 1952, Viqarunnisa Noon School was established in Dhaka by Lady Noon, the wife of Mr Feroj Khan Noon, Governor of East Bengal. The Chamber had an important role to play in establishing the school, though economically the Chamber was going through a difficult time.⁴⁰¹ The school began functioning in Bailey Road, initially as a preparatory school. In 1952, Viqarunnisa Noon appealed to well-to-do people including the Chamber of Commerce for financial help. Mr AR Faridi, the Chamber President at the time, received a letter of appeal for funds of a school which was to be built along the lines of an English Public School to accommodate approximately 700 pupils to be instructed with the help of well-qualified staff.

⁴⁰¹ *Minutes of the DNCC, 29 May, 1952, p 123.*

In June 1952, the Chamber received a letter from the District Magistrate of Dacca mentioning the donation of Rs 10,000 by the Burmah Oil Co. Ltd. towards the school. Meanwhile, MM Ispahani and AD Boldy agreed to organize a proper campaign to collect funds for the school.⁴⁰²

In January and February, 1953, the Chamber circulated an appeal to its members and collected Rs 28,500. This sum was donated to the school fund.⁴⁰³ The Chamber continued its efforts to come up with a substantial donation. Subsequently, Lady Noon corresponded once more with the Chamber. Members of the Chamber and affiliated Associations contributed Rs 61,750/- to Viqarun Nisa Girls School.⁴⁰⁴ In 1953, the Chamber President Mr RWN Ferguson was appointed as a member of the Governing Body of the School.⁴⁰⁵ Later, Mr MM Ispahani was also nominated to the Governing Body of the school.

5.1.2 Udayan Bidyalay: Presently known as Udayan Higher Secondary School Dhaka, this private higher secondary school was established in 1955 by the University of Dhaka. It is a co-educational institution and currently one of the most well-known schools of Dhaka. In a Committee meeting held on 27 November, 1973, the Chamber changed its earlier decision to make a monthly donation of Tk 250 to the school. Udayan School Authorities had requested the Chamber Committee to consider donating a lump sum so that the money might be utilized towards the extension of the school building which was needed to meet the great rush of students following liberation. The Committee decided that member-firms be requested to contribute at the following rates: Ordinary Member Tk 500 and Associate Member Tk 125.⁴⁰⁶

The Chamber made further donations to this school afterwards. In a meeting held on 15 February, 1974, the Chamber Committee noted that it had made a total donation of Tk 11,500. The Chamber President mentioned in a meeting that the authorities of the Udayan School had again approached him to consider giving some more financial assistance to help them complete the school building. The Committee then decided to donate Tk 10,000 more to Udayan School.⁴⁰⁷ In 1975, the Chamber again donated Tk 10,000 to the institution.⁴⁰⁸

⁴⁰² *Minutes of the DNCC*, 29 May, 1952, p. 123.

⁴⁰³ *Minutes of the DNCCI*, 9 March, 1953, p. 192.

⁴⁰⁴ *Minutes of the DNCCI*, 14 April, 1953, p. 198.

⁴⁰⁵ *Ibid.* The DNCCI made a total amount of Rs 58000 till April, 1953. Another cheque for Rs 1250 was issued to Begum Noon till 31 July 1954. See, *Annual Report of the DNCCI*, 1954, p. 56; *Minutes of the DNCCI*, 3 February 1953, p. 186; *Minutes of the DNCCI*, 18 August 1953, p. 224.

⁴⁰⁶ *Minutes of the NCCI*, 15 February, 1974, p. 1217.

⁴⁰⁷ *Minutes of the NCCI*, 18 December 1974, p. 1248.

⁴⁰⁸ *Annual Report of the NCCI*, 1975, p. 18.

5.1.3 The Narayanganj Education Society: The Narayanganj Education Society was formed in 1956 under the Society Registration Act, 1860. The aim of the Society was to promote quality education among the people of Narayanganj regardless of caste, creed and religion. The first Executive Committee, consisting of 12 members, included Mr Hanif Adamjee of Adamjee Jute Mills Ltd, Mr Ahmad Dada, Mr AKI Abrehani of R Sim & Co. Ltd., Mr SL Husain, a banker, Mr JA Hume of Pakbay Co. Ltd., Mr GL Jain, a businessman, Dr AWF Rahman, a medical practitioner, Mr AKK Haque of Muslim Commercial Bank Ltd., Mr AG Jiwani of Bawa Jute Mills, Mr AK Chatarjee, a legal practitioner and Mr HA Ghani, a businessman. Most of them were members of DNCCI. When the Society appealed to the Chamber for donations the Chamber forwarded the appeal to its member-firms so that they could contribute.⁴⁰⁹

In 1960, the Chamber offered to donate its Henderson Road land to the Education Society for the construction of a school building. However this was not possible due to legal complications.⁴¹⁰

5.1.4 Polytechnic Education in East Bengal: In 1953, the East Bengal Government appealed to the Chamber for a donation of Rs 7,20,000 for the development of the newly established Polytechnic at Tejgaon (Dacca) in East Bengal.⁴¹¹ The Chamber circulated this request to its member-firms. In 1954, Mr A Khalilee, Secretary-Commerce, Labour Industries, inquired about the progress of the donation scheme⁴¹² and a sub-committee recommended a guideline for contributions. In the end, the Chamber managed to collect a good amount, which was then handed over to the Project Authority. The fund provided by the DNCCI was mainly used for the scholarships of Polytechnic students. In 1955, the Chamber received a reminder letter to provide a Stipend Fund for students of the Institute. The Chamber provided as many scholarships to the Polytechnic students as it could for three more years.⁴¹³

⁴⁰⁹ *Annual Report* of the DNCCI, 1958, p. 33.

⁴¹⁰ *Annual Report* of the DNCCI, 1958, p. 33; *Minutes* of the NCCI, 12 June, 1970, p. 949.

⁴¹¹ *Minutes* of the DNCCI, 28 July, 1953, p. 219; *Minutes* of the DNCCI, 10 September, 1953, p. 226; *Annual Report* of the DNCCI, 1954, p. 55.

⁴¹² *Minutes* of the DNCCI, 5 January, 1954, p. 251.

⁴¹³ *Minutes* of the DNCCI, 8 March, 1955, p. 61; *Minutes* of the DNCCI, 5 April, 1955, p. 66.

5.1.5 Chittagong Public School: In 1953, an appeal to the Chamber was made by Mr MM Ispahani to lend support to the construction and running of a public school being set up in Chittagong.⁴¹⁴ Mr Ispahani, then Director of PIDC, suggested that jute press house owners and shippers could each contribute half an anna per bale on all pucca bales handled by them. The Chamber agreed in principle to help the Ispahani School but considered giving one anna per jute bale too high an amount.⁴¹⁵ The Chamber, however, circulated the request and in the end a good sum was collected for this purpose.

5.1.6 Institute of Business Administration, University of Dhaka: University of Dhaka, with the help of the Ford Foundation, set up the Institute of Business Administration. Dr Olescanin, the first Adviser of this Institute, invited the Committee members of NCCI and



Institute of Business Administration, University of Dhaka

they met him under the leadership of Mr YA Bawani, the then President of the Chamber. A two year course was started in that year with 35 students. The idea was to provide students with an education which would be different from traditional business education. Students would now be trained to hold senior positions in business and handle day to day as well as long-term financial and marketing problems. The Government provided a set up fund

⁴¹⁴ *Minutes of the DNCCI*, 13 October, 1953, p. 234.

⁴¹⁵ *Minutes of the DNCCI*, 1 October, 1953, p. 230; *Minutes of the DNCCI*, 27 October, 1953, p. 237.

of Rs 30,000. NCCI took great interest in this project and was of the view that this would go a long way towards fulfilling the genuine need for trained senior executives in the province. The Chamber assured the Adviser, that it would do everything possible to make the Institute a success. After independence, MCCI continued to nominate members to IBA. MR Siddiqui (1979-80 and 1986-89), M Anis Ud Dowla (1982) and SH Kabir (1983-85) were thus nominated to its Academic Board.⁴¹⁶

5.1.7 Narayanganj Chamber Benevolent and Scholarship Fund: The deed of the 'Narayanganj Chamber Benevolent and Scholarship Fund' was registered in 1979. Subsequently, the Fund was approved by the National Board of Revenue and it came into existence after the necessary formalities were completed, on 3 July, 1979.⁴¹⁷

5.1.8 Jamiat-ul-Falah: The Committee considered a request for donation to the Jamiat-ul-Falah, a philanthropic organization entrusted with the setting up of an Islamic Research Centre, Welfare Complex and a mosque in Chittagong. The Committee considered the request and decided that Chamber members should donate generously to the Fund. The Chamber approached a number of selected member-firms and arranged for a substantial donation to the Fund.⁴¹⁸

5.1.9 Eighth Pakistan Science Conference: The Chamber received an appeal from the "8th Pakistan Science Conference" for a donation to meet the costs of the conference, which was to be attended by distinguished scientists from abroad. The Committee considered that this was a cause worthy of support and a circular was issued to members recommending that they should contribute. In the Committee's view, a donation of Rs 100 was considered reasonable and a recommendation to members was made accordingly.⁴¹⁹ In 1968 and 1970, the Chamber contributed towards the expenses of the "All Pakistan Science Conference."⁴²⁰

The Chamber worked assiduously with schools, colleges, institutes, training companies, madrashas and other educational bodies (government and non-government) and assisted them in various ways. In January 1965, the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Pakistan (Dacca Region) asked the Chamber to contribute for the

⁴¹⁶ *Annual Report of the MCCI: Dacca, 1980, p. 33; Annual Report of the MCCI: Dacca, 1982, p. 18; Annual Report of the MCCI: Dacca, 1983, p. 17; Annual Report of the MCCI: Dacca, 1984, p. 24; Annual Report of the MCCI: Dhaka, 1985, p. 18; 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. 27.*

⁴¹⁷ *Annual Report of the MCCI: Dacca, 1979, p. 39.*

⁴¹⁸ *Annual Report of the MCCI: Dacca, 1980, pp. 42-43.*

⁴¹⁹ *Minutes of the DNCCI, 1955, p.108.*

⁴²⁰ *Annual Report of the NCCI, 1968, p. 10; Minutes of the NCCI, 1970, 16 January, p. 227.*

construction of their building.⁴²¹ The Chamber agreed to do so and asked its member to donate a sum of Rs 100 each to this Institute. Apart from the above mentioned educational institutes, the Chamber extended its generous help to set up the Narayanganj HE School (1953), Trade Union Workers Training Institute (1955), Dacca Law College (1957), University Officers Training Corps. (UOTC) (1958), St. Joseph's School, Dacca (1959), Narayanganj Senior Islamia Madrasha (1960), East Regional Laboratory Science High School (1968), and Narayanganj English Preparatory School (1968). Donations were made to St. Joseph's School (1959) and Udayan School, Dacca (1957) for construction of their buildings and expansion of rooms. The Chamber also came forward to provide financial help for the East-Pakistan Educational Week and Pakistan History and Museum Conference (1953), and for an excursion tour undertaken by Tolaram College students to travel to West Pakistan in 1970.⁴²² The Chamber also extended its help to Mr Harun-ur Rashid, a lecturer of the University of Chittagong for working on his PhD in Japan in 1977.⁴²³

5.2 Health Sector

As a part of its benevolent work and social responsibility, the Metropolitan Chamber has always contributed handsomely to the health sector in this region. The Chamber made a noteworthy contribution to Victoria Hospital in Narayanganj in 1950s and Holy Family Hospital in Dhaka in the 1950s and 60s.

5.2.1 Victoria Hospital: Victoria Hospital was the first hospital set up in Narayanganj. It was established in 1885 by the municipality with financial contributions from Harakanta Banerjee.⁴²⁴ Subsequently, it was handed over to the municipality. In 1939, the Chamber Committee extended its help for development of the Hospital. The Chamber received an appeal for donations for the maintenance and upkeep of the institution which was run on voluntary subscription.⁴²⁵ The donation made to Victoria Hospital was one of the much appreciated initiatives undertaken by the Chamber in the 1950s.⁴²⁶

The Honorary Secretary of Victoria Hospital requested Narayanganj Chamber to provide financial help to it in 1950 and the Chamber did so. At the request of the Hospital Committee, member-firms of the Chamber contributed to the Victoria Hospital's 'Poor Patient Fund'⁴²⁷ for a long time. To increase its assistance, the Chamber made an appeal to

⁴²¹ *Annual Report of the NCCI, 1965, p. 30.*

⁴²² *Minutes of the NCCI, 1970, 20 July, p. 956.*

⁴²³ *Minutes of the NCCI, 1977, 16 August, p. 1419.*

⁴²⁴ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Narayanganj>

⁴²⁵ *Minutes of the NCC, 1950, 31 January, p. 13; Minutes of the DNCC, 1951, 20 March, p. 64.*

⁴²⁶ *Minutes of the NCC, 1950, 31 January, p. 13.*

⁴²⁷ *Minutes of the DNCCI, 1953, 28 April, p. 202; Minutes of the DNCCI, 1955, 8 March, p. 61; Minutes of the DNCCI, 1955, p. 91.*

its member-firms for voluntary subscriptions. A Women's organization also approached the Chamber for donation to the female ward of Victoria Hospital.⁴²⁸ The Chamber referred its appeal to members. In a meeting held on 1 May 1951, the Chamber received a proposal from the Sub-Divisional Officer, Narayanganj to send a representative to the Hospital Committee so that member-firms could continue their donations to the Hospital. The Chamber Committee accepted the offer and pointed out that most member-firms were donating money to the Hospital on a regular basis.⁴²⁹

In 1952, DNCC nominated Capt. EG Stevenson of Bangla-Assam Steamship Co. Ltd. and Mr CEC Guthrie of IGN & RSN Co. Ltd. to the 'Poor Patient Fund' of the 'Victoria Hospital Committee'.⁴³⁰ As per records, though Victoria Hospital was under the management of the Municipality, the management of this fund was under the disposal of the Hospital Committee. In 1956, the Chamber Committee decided that the balance of the fund would be donated to Holy Family Hospital on certain terms and conditions. In 1959, the SDO of Narayanganj again requested the Chamber to continue contributing to Victoria Hospital.

5.2.2 Dacca Ladies Club Poor Patients Fund: In response to a request from Dacca Ladies Club, in 1953, the Chamber contributed Rs 150 from its own fund and requested the Pakistan Jute Association to consider donating a similar amount for the Club's "Poor Patients Fund".⁴³¹

5.2.3 Holy Family Hospital Scheme: In March 1953, the Chamber President Mr RWN Ferguson was approached by the sisters of Holy Family Hospital to contribute to the Holy Family Hospital Scheme. In response, the Chamber initiated a scheme for medical treatment of Chamber employees based on donations made to Holy Family Hospital.⁴³² In order to implement the scheme, an Adhoc Committee was formed consisting of Mr AD Boldy and Mr AB Baike of the Chamber. In June 1953, the Chamber issued a circular in regard to donation policy and a sub-committee was assigned to draw up recommendations on donations and the medical scheme. Mr MM Ispahani, Mr Ferguson and Mr Boldy were members of the Sub Committee.⁴³³

DNCCI gave donations for the development of Holy Family Hospital in return for treatment facilities for Chamber staff. In 1956, the balance of the 'Poor Patient Fund' was handed over to Holy Family Hospital on condition that a certain number of beds would be

⁴²⁸ *Annual Report of the DNCC, 1951, p. 64.*

⁴²⁹ *Minutes of the DNCC, 1951, 1 May, p. 70.*

⁴³⁰ *Minutes of the DNCC, 1952, 25 April, p. 115.*

⁴³¹ *Minutes of the DNCCI, 1953, 1 October, p. 231.*

⁴³² *Minutes of the DNCCI, 1953, 7 December, p. 244.*

⁴³³ *Minutes of the DNCCI, 1953, 12 May, p. 206; Minutes of the DNCCI, 1953, 27 October, p. 237.*



Holy Family Red Crescent Hospital, Dhaka

reserved in the maternity wards for poor patients from Narayanganj who would be screened by the Fund managers and sent to Holy Family Hospital for free treatment through a Screening Committee.⁴³⁴ However, this idea was ultimately dropped as some donors balked at this system and since the government did not approve the transfer of the 'Poor Patient's Fund' to this hospital. In 1958, the Chamber Secretariat arranged for treatment of some of daily patients without prior appointment in the Hospital.⁴³⁵

In 1959, the Hospital Contact Committee of the Chamber consisted of Mrs. Conventry, Mr Naser-ud-Deen Khan and Mr Heald, who continued to meet once every month with the Holy Family Hospital authorities when matters raised by members of the scheme were discussed and reasons for complaints investigated. The Chamber tried to solve all problems through regular coordination with the Hospital administration, doctors and patients.⁴³⁶

In 1962, a few member-firms complained about the services. The Chamber took note of the matter and discussed the issue in detail with the Hospital authority.⁴³⁷ In 1965, when Holy Family Hospital raised its fees, NCCI agreed to pay according to the revised rate. This arrangement with Holy Family Hospital continued till the 1960s.

⁴³⁴ *Annual Report of the DNCCI, 1956, pp. 47-48.*

⁴³⁵ *Annual Report of the DNCCI, 1958, p. 33.*

⁴³⁶ *Annual Report of the DNCCI, 1959, p. 28.*

⁴³⁷ *Minutes of the NCCI, 1962, 10 September, p. 550.*

5.2.4 Dacca Shishu Hospital: After liberation, the Chamber gave donations to the Shisu (Children) Hospital Project, Dacca in 1977. In a meeting held on 12 April 1977 with hospital authorities the Chamber supported the cause, noting that Shishu Hospital was a unique project and that member-firms of the Chamber would surely give it spontaneous support.⁴³⁸

5.2.5 Others: Apart from these medical schemes, the Chamber extended its support to many other health care programs and medical institutions. In the 1950s, for example, the Chamber made donations to the “Women’s Small Pox Prevention Committee”. The Chamber donated to the program for prevention of Blindness in East Bengal; it also donated to the Public Health Day observance events in 1958 and the Malaria Eradication Program. Upon a request of Dr Mohammed Ibrahim for construction of the Diabetic Clinic at Segunbagicha, NCCI and its member-firms regularly contributed to the Diabetic Association of Pakistan from 1963 to 1965.⁴³⁹ In 1966, the Chamber gave donations to the fund set up for Disabled Air Force Personnel, injured during the 1965 war.

Apart from the Chamber making donations to health-related projects, member-firms donated to the Health sector on their own. For instance, Mr MM Ispahani of the Ispahani Group established the Ispahani Eye Hospital at Dhaka while Mr RP Saha of Kumudini Welfare Trust of Bengal established the biggest private sector hospital in the country in the 1960s, namely Kumudini Hospital at Mirzapur, Tangail.

5.3 Environment Sector

Presently, the Chamber has been making a significant contribution to the environmental sector of Bangladesh. MCCI promoted ‘Environmental Management Program’ with the World Bank in 2000; it has taken a part in the campaign launched by the *Daily Star* for ‘clean rivers’ in 2009; and most importantly, it has introduced an Award on the Environment in 2009.

5.3.1 Environmental Management Program: In response to a proposal from the World Bank’s Dhaka office, the Chamber Committee agreed to join its Environmental Management Programme for the industrial sector. Under this program, 20 member-organizations of the Chamber were selected, whose employees were given training on Environmental Management Systems by World Bank experts.⁴⁴⁰

⁴³⁸ *Minutes of the NCCI, 1977, 12 April, p. 1395.*

⁴³⁹ *Annual Report of the NCCI, 1965, p. 30; Annual Report of the NCCI, 1968, p. 10.*

⁴⁴⁰ *Annual Report of the MCCI: Dhaka, 2000, p. 25.*

5.3.2 Discussion on 'Climate Change and Business opportunities': The chamber is concerned about the impact of climate change and is aware that it is a critical issue for many countries, including Bangladesh. It thus organized a discussion meeting on 25 August 2010 entitled 'Climate Change and Business opportunities' where some members took part and exchanged views on the issue. Dr Aynun Nishat, Vice-Chancellor of BRAC University, and an eminent environmentalist, apprised members of the latest developments on the issue.⁴⁴¹

5.3.3 Environmental Initiatives to Prevent Water Pollution: The Chamber associated itself with the campaign launched by *Daily Star* for clean rivers (Buriganga, Sitalakhya, and Turag) as part of its Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). The committee noted that nearly 7500 industrial units have been polluting the three rivers around Dhaka city by



The Chamber President, Mr Abdul Hafiz Choudhury, FCA, presenting a crest to Mr Mahfuz Anam, expressing MCCI's solidarity with the 'Clean River' Campaign

discharging toxic waste, mainly, textile dyes, printing and washing chemicals and effluent waste of tanneries. The Committee felt, that MCCI's association with the campaign would make the business community more sensitive to the issue of environmental degradation and induce business enterprises to introduce effluent treatment measures. Accordingly, a delegation from the Chamber called on the editor of the *Daily Star* on June 06, 2009, to articulate the chamber's desire to support the campaign to mitigate the consequences of polluted river water.⁴⁴² The editor and publisher of *Daily Star* Mr Mahfuz Anam expressed gratitude for MCCI's support in favour of the campaign launched by *Daily Star* for clear rivers. The committee also recognized the need for sending invitations to other leading trade bodies to join with MCCI in expressing the business community's solidarity with the campaign for clean rivers.⁴⁴³

⁴⁴¹ *Annual Report of the MCCI: Dhaka, 2009-10, p. 6.*

⁴⁴² *Annual Report of the MCCI: Dhaka, 2009, p. 41.*

⁴⁴³ *Annual Report of the MCCI: Dhaka, 2009, p. 39.*

As part its drive to support the *Daily Star's* Clean Rivers Campaign, the Chamber organized a meeting with the heads of some major trade bodies and associations at the Chamber Building on 15 July 2009 to discuss the issue of environment pollution, particularly the pollution of the three rivers encircling Dhaka City and the role and responsibilities of the business community in this matter. As a follow up to the solidarity expressed for the clean rivers campaign, the Committee decided to invite Mr Saber Hossain Chowdhury, MP, Chairman of the Sub-Committee on Environment for the Parliamentary Standing Committee of the Ministry of Forest and Environment.⁴⁴⁴



MCCI's Award Giving Ceremony, June 2, 2010

5.3.4 Introducing Award on Environment: The Chamber continued its support towards environment protection and the clean river campaign initiated by the *Daily Star* in 2009. The Chamber Committee decided to grant three awards; two to deserving journalists in the print and electronic media for outstanding investigative reporting on the clear river campaign and one to an enterprise for having taken a commendable program on setting up an effective effluent treatment plant (ETP). A 5-member committee was set up for selecting deserving candidates.⁴⁴⁵ The award comprised a cash grant of Tk 1 lac; on annual subscription to international magazines, reports and publications on environmental issues for a value of up to Tk 50 thousands to deserving journalists and conductors of TV programs, and a certificate with a crest to the deserving enterprise. The first Award Selection Committee was headed by Dr Akbar Ali Khan, former Adviser to the Caretaker

⁴⁴⁴ *Annual Report* of the MCCI: Dhaka, 2009, p. 41.

⁴⁴⁵ *Annual Report* of the MCCI: Dhaka, 2009-10, p. 23.

Government. After a vigorous selection process, it selected Mr Pinaki Roy of the *Daily Star* as the best investigative journalist, Mr SM Babu of ATN Bangla as the best investigative conductor of TV program on environmental pollution, and Echotex Limited as the best enterprise for exemplary initiative undertaken for effluent treatment in 2009.⁴⁴⁶ The Award Selection Committee invited nominations of newspaper reports, TV programs, TV feature films and commendable initiatives for different treatment and control of effluent discharge through newspaper advertisements and by issuing letters to TV channels, press clubs, editors of newspapers, trade bodies and associations and entrepreneurs. The first award giving ceremony was held on 2 June, 2010. As per the announcement made by MCCI, Mr Pinaki Roy and Mr SM Babu received Taka one lac each, annual subscriptions of international magazines, reports and publications up to Taka fifty thousand, and an MCCI plaque. Echotex Limited also received an MCCI plaque as a special award.⁴⁴⁷

5.3.5 Roundtable on Environment and River Pollution: The Chamber organised a roundtable discussion among members of the business community, civil society, media, and policy makers at the Chamber's Conference Hall on 26 July, 2009. Mr Saber Hossain Chowdhury, Hon'ble Member of the Parliament and Chairman of the Environment Sub-Committee of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Environment and Forests, was present in the session as the Chief Guest. Other members of Parliament, presidents and chairmen of leading trade bodies, the editor of the *Daily Star*, members of the business community, media professionals and past presidents of the Chamber were present and took part in the discussion that focused on the respective roles and responsibilities of the business community and the government in mitigating environmental challenges. The Chamber expressed its commitment to spontaneously support any national program on environmental issues, particularly for saving rivers based on the historic 11-point directive of the High Court issued on 25 June, 2009. The role of the media, particularly, that of *Daily Star*, was praised, for developing public awareness on the environment. The Honourable members of Parliament present commended the role of the Chamber, and thanked it for organizing such an event.⁴⁴⁸

⁴⁴⁶ *Annual Report of the MCCI: Dhaka, 2010, pp. 23-24.*

⁴⁴⁷ *Annual Report of the MCCI: Dhaka, 2010. p. 35.*

⁴⁴⁸ <http://www.mccibd.org/>

5.4 Other Services to the Nation (Selective)

- *Road Repairs (1952)*: Mr Baikie drew the attention of the Chamber Committee to the shocking condition of roads in Narayanganj and Dacca. The Chamber wrote to the Local-Self Government Department, Government of East Bengal, to take necessary actions for immediate repair of roads.⁴⁴⁹
- *Food Supplies (1955)*: There appeared to be a shortage of rice in Dacca and Narayanganj, causing a steep rise in prices. A large number of 'fair price' shops had been opened at Dacca, but it appeared that there was a shortage of supplies in Narayanganj. The Chamber urged the government to give priority to food supplies to industrial areas and to open more 'fair price' shops in Narayanganj.⁴⁵⁰
- *Chief Minister's Flood Relief Fund (1955)*: Mr Ispahani advised members that he had recently been reminded by the Chief Secretary about the Chief Ministers' Flood Relief Fund. 'The Chief Secretary was somehow under the impression that the Chamber was not doing its best in contributing to the relief work'. The amount hitherto received by the Chamber amounted to nearly Rs 8,000. It circulated a reminder to member-firms to come forward and do their best in the situation.⁴⁵¹
- *Double Tract Road (1962)*: The Chamber took the initiative to help build a double tract road in Narayanganj as the only road in the city was getting more and more congested every day.⁴⁵²
- *Henderson Road (1970)*: The Chamber decided to assist in repair work of Henderson Road in Narayanganj.⁴⁵³
- *Donations to the East Pakistan Relief Fund (1970)*: The Committee noted that total donations to the Presidents' East Pakistan Relief Fund amounted to Rs 27,700. It was agreed that as soon as this amount exceed Rs 30,000, a cheque would be handed over to the Governor.⁴⁵⁴
- *Donation to the Prime Minister's Relief Fund (1974)*: The President appealed to member-firms for donations to the Prime Minister's Relief Fund to help provide succor to the flood-stricken people. The minimum and maximum donations

⁴⁴⁹ *Minutes of the DNCCI, 1952, 5 August, p. 144.*

⁴⁵⁰ *Minutes of the DNCCI, 1955, 15 November, p. 106.*

⁴⁵¹ *Minutes of the DNCCI, 1955, 2 September, p. 91.*

⁴⁵² *Minutes of the NCCI, 1962, 11 October, p. 553.*

⁴⁵³ *Minutes of the NCCI, 1970, p. 949.*

⁴⁵⁴ *Minutes of the NCCI, 1970, 28 August, p. 961.*

recommended to member-firms were Tk 1000 and Tk 5000. The President informed them that in response to his appeal, a total donation of Tk 64,000 had been received by 5 August, 1974 which, along with a donation of Tk 6,000 from the Chamber, he handed over to the Prime Minister on the same day. The committee was informed that subsequently two cheques for Tk 5,000 each were received which were then forwarded to the Prime Minister.⁴⁵⁵

- *Donation to the Prime Minister's Relief Fund (1975)*: In accordance with its past practice the Chamber Committee considered an appeal for donation to the Prime Minister's Relief Fund to help provide succor to flood-stricken people. On the recommendation of the chamber, donations from member totalling Tk 69,000 was received. With the Chamber's own donation of Tk 6,000, a total sum of Tk 75,000 was donated to the Prime Minister's Relief Fund.⁴⁵⁶
- *Flood in the Country: Donation to President's Relief Fund (1980)*: The Chamber Committee discussed the situation arising from the floods in the country in August, 1980 and in response donations were received and cheques for a total of Tk 2,10,000 were handed over to the Hon'ble Vice-President. The committee also decided that member-firms, who had been approached for flood relief by their workers actually affected by the floods, should consider giving them one month's salary recoverable in six monthly installments.⁴⁵⁷
- *Donation to the Presidents' Relief and Welfare-Fund (1984)*: The committee considered an appeal for donation to the President' Relief and Welfare-Fund in view of widespread damage to crops and properties caused by the devastating flood in May-June, 1984, and decided that an appeal be made to all members of the Chamber to pay at least a sum of Tk 5,000 to the fund. In response to the appeal, a total of Tk 3,35,500 was received and handed over to the President's Secretariat.⁴⁵⁸
- *Donation to the Presidents' Relief & Welfare Fund (1988)*: In response to an appeal made by the President of the Chamber, donations were received from some member-firms and a total of Tk 7,83,626 (inclusive of chamber's donation of Tk 2,50,000) was handed over to the President of the country.⁴⁵⁹

⁴⁵⁵ *Minutes of the NCCI, 1974, 20 August, p. 1240.*

⁴⁵⁶ *Annual Report of the NCCI, 1975, pp. 17-18.*

⁴⁵⁷ *Annual Report of the MCCI: Dacca, 1981, p. 32.*

⁴⁵⁸ *Annual Report of the MCCI: Dacca, 1984, p. 42.*

⁴⁵⁹ *Annual Report of the MCCI: Dhaka, 1988, p. 26.*

- *Donations to the Prime Minister's Relief Fund (1991)*: The Chamber decided to issue an appeal for generous donations to the Prime Minister's Relief Fund for the cyclone and tornado damage suffered by mills and factories in Chittagong and the colossal loss of lives and properties in the coastal areas experienced on 29 April in 1991. There was a good response to the appeal and cheques amounting to Tk 21 lakhs were handed over to the Prime Minister.⁴⁶⁰
- *Donation of Winter Clothes to Prime Minister's Relief Fund (1998)*: To mitigate the sufferings of the poor who were badly affected by the cold winter that the country had experienced, the Chamber donated a sizable quantity of winter clothing to the Prime Minister's Relief Fund.⁴⁶¹
- *Contributions to the Prime Minister's Relief Fund (1999)*: As decided by the Chamber Committee, the Chamber contributed relief goods worth Tk 5 lacs from its own fund and also raised another Tk 11 lacs as contributions from member-firms and donated the amount to the Prime Minister's Relief Fund for distribution to flood-affected people.⁴⁶²
- *Donation to the Liberation War Museum (2001)*: The Chamber contributed an amount of Tk 5 lac toward the creation of an 'Endowment Fund' for the Liberation War Museum.⁴⁶³
- *Donation to the Prime Minister's Relief Fund (2005)*: As decided by the Committee, an appeal was made to member-firms for donations through the Chamber to the Prime Minister's Relief Fund to provide relief to flood-affected people. A sum of Tk 13 lac was received from 22 member-firms Tk 5 lacs from the Chamber's own funds who added and the total amount was handed over to the Prime Minister on 2 August, 2004.⁴⁶⁴
- *Beautification and Maintenance of Road Island (2005)*: The Chamber was asked by the Government to take up the work of beautification and maintenance of the traffic island from Bijoy Sarani to Farm Gate Police Box as part of the beautification programme of Dhaka City Corporation (DCC). The Chamber took up the work and six member-firms, viz. Apex Tannery Ltd., Advanced Chemical Industries Ltd., Renata Limited, Square Pharmaceuticals Ltd., Transcom Limited

⁴⁶⁰ *Annual Report* of the MCCI: Dhaka, 1991, pp. 36-37.

⁴⁶¹ *Annual Report* of the MCCI: Dhaka, 1998, p. 35.

⁴⁶² *Annual Report* of the MCCI: Dhaka, 1999, p. 29.

⁴⁶³ *Annual Report* of the MCCI: Dhaka, 2001, p. 34.

⁴⁶⁴ *Annual Report* of the MCCI: Dhaka, 2005, p. 28.

and Reliance Insurance Ltd contributed Tk 3 lac each and Nestle Bangladesh Ltd contributed Tk 1 lac to meet the expenditure incurred in the project.⁴⁶⁵

- *Donations to the Chief Adviser's Relief and Welfare Fund (2008)*: The Chamber appealed to its members for generous donations to the Chief Adviser's Relief and Welfare Fund to provide urgent relief and succor to the flood and 'Sidr'-affected people in the northern and south-western regions of the country. The member's contributions were handed over to the Chief Adviser to the Government of Bangladesh.⁴⁶⁶

5.5 Donations/ Contributions as CSR at a Glance (Selected)

Some examples of the Chamber's contributions to Government-sponsored programs and charitable, cultural and sports organizations are as follows:

- During the first phase of the Chamber (NCC, 1904-1950), Dacca Club (1911), Dacca Museum (1913) and Narayanganj Club were supported either by the Chamber itself, or by its members, who were active members of these clubs.
- 1943: The government opened a 'Gruel Kitchen' for feeding famine-stricken people. The Narayanganj Chamber came forward to help distressed people and approached member-firms to do their best for the sufferers. As a result, mill owners opened ration-shops.
- 1950: The Chamber donated enthusiastically to the Government Refugee Fund. The Chamber also nominated MM Ispahani (1955), WR Longwill (1955), JM Diza (1956), M Naser-ud-din Khan (1957) to the Government Refugee Relief Committee.
- 1952: Donations were made to the Pakistan Hockey Team. Each member of the Chamber contributed Rs 100.
- 1953: A donation was made to the Lawn Tennis Association.
- 1953: The Chamber presented a large bore rifle as prize at the Shooting Championship of the Quaid-e-Azam Rifle Club.
- 1954: Rs 250 was contributed to the Sir Stafford Cripps Memorial Trust by each member-firm of the Chamber upon the request of the Governor-General.
- 1954: Donation was made to the Bengal Combined Forces Flag Day.

⁴⁶⁵ *Annual Report of the MCCI: Dhaka, 2005, p. 31.*

⁴⁶⁶ *Annual Report of the MCCI: Dhaka, 2008, p. 45.*

- 1954: The Chamber participated in the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II.
- 1955: DNCCI contributed to the 6th Pakistan Economic Association Conference held in Chittagong.
- 1955: A donation was made to the Sir Stafford Cripps Memorial Trust.
- 1955: The Chamber and its members donated Rs 25,735 to the Chief Minister's Flood Relief Fund.
- 1955: The Chamber contributed Rs 10,000 to the Union Training Scheme.
- 1956: The Chamber donated to the Soldiers, Sailors and Airmen's Fund on the occasion of Combined Forces Flag Day.
- 1956: The DNCCI participated, hosted and shared the cost, along with the Chittagong Chamber and other Trade organizations of hosting a dinner party for the Prime Minister of Pakistan.
- 1956: The Chamber received an appeal to donate money to the National Relief Association of Pakistan and requested member-firms to contribute to it.
- 1956: A donation was made to the Pakistan Conference for Social Work.
- 1957: The Chamber contributed to the celebration of Universal Children Day.
- 1957: The Chamber circulated a request to its members for donating money to Sir Salimullah Muslim Orphanage.
- 1957: AK Fazlul Haque, Governor of East Pakistan, made an appeal for donation to the Governor's Relief Fund to help distressed people. The Chamber responded positively and came up with a huge contribution.
- 1958: The DNCCI made a donation to the EP Sports Federation.
- 1958: The Chamber took up a cleanup program named the Dacca Cleanup Campaign.
- 1958: Chief Minister Aaur Rahman Khan approached the Chamber for funds for the victims of famine and epidemics in some parts of East Pakistan. In response, the Chamber donated a sizeable amount to the Governor's Wife's Relief Fund.
- 1959: The Chamber made donations to the Horse and Cattle Show in Dhaka.
- 1961: NCCI donated money to the Businessmen Seminar held in Dacca.
- 1969: In accordance with past practice, the Chamber Committee considered various appeals and made donations to the Governor's Cyclone Relief Fund; the Defence of Pakistan Day; and the 5th Pakistan Boy Scouts National Jamboree Fund.

- 1970: A severe cyclone devastated the country on 12 November. The Chamber Committee appealed to member-firms to donate to the President's East Pakistan Relief Fund. Apart from individual contributions the Chamber handed over Rs 25,000 to the Military Secretary to the Governor.
- 1970: A donation was made to All Pakistan's Science Conference.
- 1977: A donation was made to the Press Institute of Bangladesh.
- 1999: Contributions were made by the Chamber to the Prime Minister's Relief Fund.
- 2004: The Chamber organizes donations to flood-affected people.
- 2007: MCCI, Dhaka made donations to the Chief Adviser's Relief and Welfare Fund.
- 2014: The Chamber, jointly with the Rangpur Chamber of Commerce and Industry, distributed blankets among the poor and vulnerable people of Rangpur.