

FICCI Monthly Bulletin

March 2024





INSEE
CEMENT "Build for Life"

BUILD
YOUR
Dreams
WITH OUR
STRENGTH



ABOUT FICCI

Foreign Investors' Chamber of Commerce & Industry (FICCI), the apex chamber of multinational companies, has been working as the development frontier of Bangladesh by creating significant footprints in economic growth since its journey started in 1963. As a leading chamber, FICCI represents Foreign Investors from Thirty-five (35) countries across the globe in Twenty-one (21) sectors in Bangladesh. In its six decades of excellent journey, around 210 member companies of this chamber are contributing around 30% internal revenue of the government and representing more than 90% inward FDI in Bangladesh. FICCI's member companies are aligned with the government's goal and contributing more for the community and society which eventually support the country to attain the vision of "Smart Bangladesh."

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From the desk of Editor

I am delighted to share the March Edition of FICCI Monthly Bulletin. This publication acts as a compass, guiding us through the intricate landscape of business, investment, and corporate leadership.

We get a trio of significant days that stand as pillars of our collective consciousness in the month of March. Bangladesh's Independence Day on 26 March, International Women's Day on 8 March, and World Water Day on 22 March, each play a pivotal role in shaping our society's narrative, driving progress, and fostering unity.

March 26 stands as a landmark day in our country's chronicle, marking the 53rd year of independence. It is a day that honors the resilience and determination of the Bangladeshi people, who fought valiantly for their right to self-determination. As a chamber, we draw inspiration from this spirit, channeling it into our endeavors to contribute to the nation's prosperity.

International Women's Day is a global celebration of the social, economic, cultural, and political achievements of women. This year's theme, #InspireInclusion, resonates deeply with our commitment to diversity and equality in the workplace. We recognize the invaluable contributions of women in business and reaffirm our pledge to create an environment where every individual can thrive.

World Water Day brings to light the critical importance of freshwater and advocates for the sustainable management of water resources. This year the theme is 'Leveraging Water for Peace,' reminding us of the role water plays in fostering cooperation and harmony. As a chamber of multi-national companies, we are reminded of our responsibility to adopt practices that ensure the conservation and equitable distribution of this vital resource.

These special days remind us of our shared history, the ongoing struggle for equality, and the preciousness of our natural resources. We have endeavored to emphasize the theme of these days within the content of this bulletin.



T. I. M. Nurul Kabir

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Zaved Akhtar
President, FICCI and
Chairman & MD, Unilever Bangladesh Ltd.



MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Fellow Members, Colleagues and Stakeholders,

Ramadan Kareem! Welcome to the 2nd edition of the FICCI Monthly Bulletin, an initiative that has been taken by the newly elected board to build a platform that fosters greater communication within FICCI Members, FICCI Secretariat, Business Community, and the Stakeholders that we all work with. This month not only we celebrate our independence but also celebrate the 104th birth anniversary of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the Father of the Nation.

As a business chamber, our vision is to support & promote policies that fosters and facilitates trade, commerce and industrialization of Bangladesh and facilitate technology & knowledge transfer for sustainable investment. By promoting engagement amongst member companies, we are trying to reflect this vision and unlock the opportunities and remove barriers. Our quest will always be to try to implement innovative networking initiatives aimed at enhancing connections, fostering collaboration, and creating a more inclusive environment within our chamber, industry and the stakeholders. In addition to our regular activities, this year we have introduced monthly events such as Luncheon Meeting, Leaders Talk, and this News Bulletin.

The key objective of this bulletin is to enhance communication and to showcase FICCI and its members by highlighting their ongoing initiatives and activities. We would like to inspire our member companies while fostering trust and confidence amongst all stakeholders.

I would like to extend my gratitude to all the industry leaders and experts for their outstanding contributions, which significantly enhanced the bulletin. I appreciate the patrons and sponsors of this monthly bulletin for their valuable assistance and support. I express my gratitude to the FICCI Advisers for their guidance and Secretariat for their efforts in ensuring the timely publishing of the bulletin.

As we move forward, I eagerly anticipate the continued support, comments, and invaluable input from our esteemed member companies to enhance our upcoming bulletins.

With Thanks and Regards,

Zaved Akhtar
President, FICCI

FDI Critical Prerequisite for Bangladesh to Leap into a Middle-Income Country
Speakers say in FICCI Luncheon Meeting



Bangladesh has experienced impressive economic development over the past two decades, largely fueled by the emergence of a global Ready-Made Garments (RMG) sector. This growth has brought large dividends in terms of job and income opportunities and reduction of extreme poverty. Edimon Ginting, Country Director of Asian Development Bank Bangladesh has made this statement while presenting a keynote presentation on “Enhancing Investment Policy Framework to Catalyze Private Investment in Bangladesh” at monthly luncheon meeting of Foreign Investors’ Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) today at a hotel in capital.



Lokman Hossain Miah, Executive Chairman of Bangladesh Investment Development Authority (BIDA) graced the event as the chief guest. Myung-Ho Lee, President of Japan Bangladesh Chamber of Commerce and Industry (JBCCI) and Dr. M. Masrur Reaz, Chairman and Founder of Policy Exchange Bangladesh participated at the discussion as the panelists. The session was moderated by Mahbub Ur Rahman, Director of FICCI Board and CEO of The Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation Ltd.



In his keynote presentation Edimon mentioned, “In 2022 manufacturing activity grew from 5.5 percent of GDP at independence to 22 percent, expanding particularly over the last decade. Growth was driven particularly by the export oriented RMG sector, employing directly more than 4 million people. RMG accounted for 12 percent of the GDP and 84 percent of exports in the same year.”

He described some challenges related to impending LDC graduation such as loss of preferential market access in export destination markets, loss of LDC-exemption under the WTO agreement on subsidies and countervailing measures, loss of special and differential treatment under the Trade-Related Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) agreement and Access to development assistance financing should remain broadly intact or may evolve to slightly less favorable terms.

Edimon stated that, despite the progress, Bangladesh still faces several challenges to do business which affect domestic and foreign investment. There is a need for significant liberalization of different verticals to attract investments while simplifying acquisition of lands, protection of Intellectual Property Rights and simplifying and making tax regime competitive.



Panel speakers Myung-ho Lee, Board of Director and Chairman, Investment Climate Committee, FICCI and President, JBCCI stated the need for Investment Protection and Double Taxation Avoidance Treaty and EPA to accelerate Japanese investment while Masrur Reaz, Chairman and CEO, Policy Exchange Bangladesh reiterated the need for moving competitiveness-based value proposition while we engage on the strategic levers for FDI/investment promotion and improve investment policy framework.



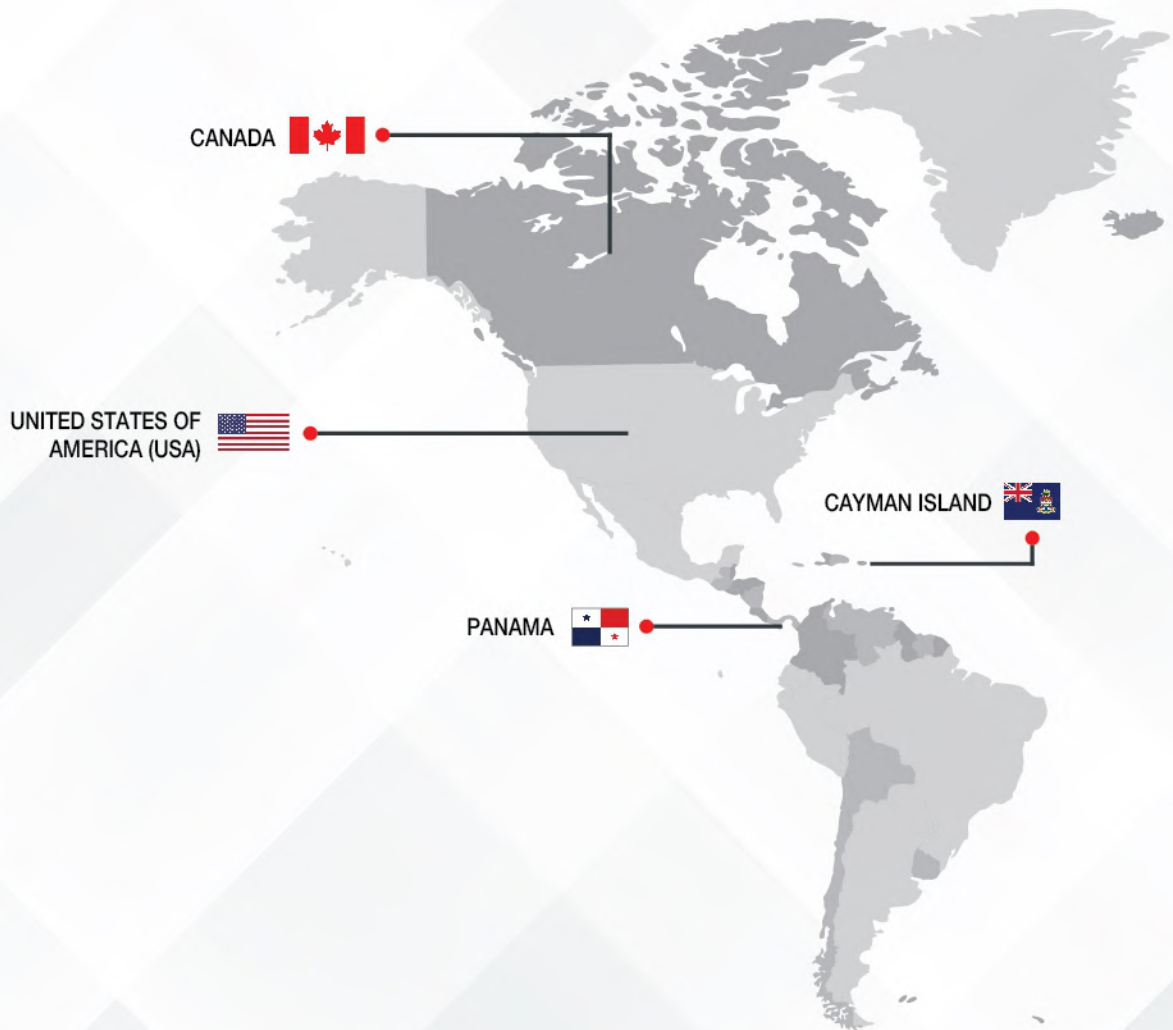
FICCI President Zaved Akhtar said, "The tale of our country's development has been significantly driven by the trade and increase in private investment. After achieving high GDP rates around 6 percent over last two decades and remarkable progress in poverty reduction and human development, the nation now is at a crossroads where need to ensure disruptive investments to realize the aspiration of achieving a high-income status by 2041."

"To achieve the Vision 2041, private investment as well as revenue collection will need to be boosted for vital resource allocation in crucial sectors while we simplify and transform our tax and regulatory regime to build overall credibility and predictability of the country while build capability of human capital by leveraging digitization and facilitate strong investor after care. Only then FDI can play a pivotal role in this regard," he added.



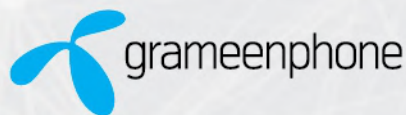
Among other dignitaries Park Young Sik, Ambassador of Embassy of the Republic of Korea; Antonio Alessandro, Ambassador of Embassy of Italy; Dr. Lilly Nicholls, High Commissioner of High Commission of Canada; Haji Haris Bin Othman, High Commissioner of High Commission of Brunei Darussalam; Rozaimee Abdullah, First Secretary of High Commission of Brunei Darussalam, Clinton Pobke, Deputy High Commissioner of Australian High Commission; Mohsina Yasmin, Executive Member of BIDA; Debra Boyce, Sr. Trade Commissioner of High Commission of Canada; Sakib MMI Chowdhury, Trade Advisor of Royal Danish Embassy; John Fay, Commercial Counselor, U.S. Commercial Service, Embassy of the United States of America; Samsoo Kim, Trade Representative of KOTRA; Yuji Ando, Representative of JETRO; Dan Pasha, Director of Trade and Investment of British High Commission; Jahangir Saadat, President of KEPZ, and a good number of representatives of stakeholders, High officials of FICCI member companies, FICCI Board of Directors and Advisors showed up at the meeting.

FICCI
IS PROUDLY
REPRESENTING
INVESTMENT FROM
35 COUNTRIES





SUSTAINABILITY FOR A CONNECTED FUTURE



Mr. Yasir Azman
Vice President & CEO
Grameenphone Ltd.



In today's world, sustainability and business are inseparable. Sustainability is not just a buzzword, it is a commitment to creating a better world. It is not just a choice but an imperative for long-term business goals. I firmly believe sustainability encompasses a holistic approach, addressing our socio-economic development, environmental responsibility, and brings in operational efficiency and innovations.

In line with our core principles, Grameenphone is deeply committed to conducting business in a responsible manner that generates value for our customers, employees, owners, and society. We go beyond connectivity, dedicated to empowering lives and creating a positive impact. We collaborated with civil society partners, to provide digital literacy and safe internet training to 2.6 million children, specially girls including marginalized populations. Taking a youth-first approach, we empower young people, upskilling and reskilling them through various initiatives with the goal to foster economic opportunities and entrepreneurship, helping them to thrive in the digital era and become a driving force in Bangladesh's socio-economic progress. In addition, Grameenphone nurtures an inclusive, equitable and diverse workforce and continues to uphold its commitment to high standards of corporate governance throughout our value chain.



Grameenphone, being an enabler of the Smart Bangladesh vision believes in the indomitable spirit and resilience of the country's demographic dividend. We are leading various initiatives, including FutureNation, Grameenphone Academy, GP Accelerator, Platform SHE, and more. These platforms have been carefully curated and designed to align with the national needs and priorities of Bangladesh, striving to develop the potential of the youth population to turn them into future drivers of economic growth.

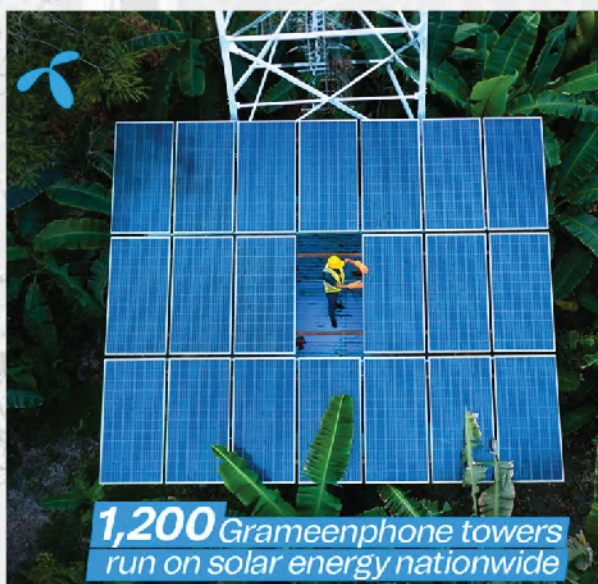
Grameenphone Academy, in just 15 months, has engaged with over 160 institutions nationwide, offering online and physical upskill training sessions. We have enrolled more than 72,000 students, with over 35,000 certifications earned. Through our FutureNation program, in partnership with UNDP and BIDA, our tech platform futurenation.gov.bd is live providing self-assessment, cv builder tools, learning resources, and job connections, aiming to empower 1 million youth. GP Accelerator's "Jelay Jelay Smart Uddyokta" initiative is gearing to provide entrepreneurship training in 20 districts.

Additionally, we have partnered with Plan International Bangladesh and trained 150,000 marginalized children, with a goal of reaching 2.3 million people from these communities to promote digital literacy and online safety awareness. We're also collaborating with Unicef to integrate online safety content into the national curriculum, targeting five million people in 2024.



However, as the priorities of sustainability for business are evolving on the global front, Grameenphone is steering the direction to be a catalyst for change within greater impact areas such as Climate. We are actively shaping the company's sustainability agenda to align with global goals and are committed to achieving international climate targets. The growing conversation among youth about climate responsibility and action has further strengthened Grameenphone's dedication to addressing climate issues.

Grameenphone is actively pursuing an ambitious target aligned with the Science Based Targets Initiative (SBTi) standards, which are in line with the Paris Agreement goal. Our primary objective is to achieve a significant 50% reduction in CO₂ emissions by 2030, from the 2019 baseline.



In 2023, we prioritized raising awareness and acting against climate change. We participated in the Global Youth Climate Summit in Khulna and hosted a round table discussion on the Green Energy Ecosystem. We collaborated with organizations like Climate Parliament and USAID and sponsored the Regional Climate Summit. Grameenphone has also deployed 1194 solar panel-supported towers for green connectivity. But to create impact at scale we need to access renewable energy as a long term decarbonization pathway. We have been actively promoting awareness about Grameenphone's climate ambitions, the importance of adopting renewable energy through Corporate Power Purchase Agreements (CPPA) and advocating for supportive government policies. Moving into 2024, we aim to strengthen our advocacy and collaboration for the implementation of CPPA policies to achieve our ambitious climate targets. Bloomberg has recognized Grameenphone as Bangladesh's leading corporation for sustainable development initiatives, but I believe we have a long journey ahead.

In my opinion, every action matters and every step counts. By focusing on the "5 Ps" of sustainability – People, Planet, Prosperity, Peace, and Partnerships – we can make a significant difference. Looking ahead, our commitment to sustainability remains unwavering. Sustainable business practices are not just a means to an end but a fundamental way of work and shift in mindset. The journey towards a sustainable future is an ongoing one that surely requires collaboration. Together, we can build a resilient and future-fit Bangladesh, where every individual can thrive and contribute towards a safe, green, and better tomorrow.



Stronger and Better with Inclusion



Mr. Zaved Akhtar
Managing Director & CEO
Unilever Bangladesh Ltd.

While growing up, BTV, the only television channel in the country, used to air an awareness film featuring Kangalini Sufia regarding gender pay gap. While the jingle became a hit, the key communication did not become a topic of discussion as expected. After nearly thirty years, recent reports, like the one from the World Bank Group on the global gender gap, shows that Bangladesh is still not making much progress in areas like mobility, workplace equality, pay, marriage, parenthood, entrepreneurship, assets, and pensions. In fact, we are not even at par with regional standards and the metrics have not improved since the last reporting period. I found it quite disheartening, as we all know that the majority of the labour force employed in our RMG industry, are female, and we are not giving them what they deserve, let alone recognising their contribution. Maybe, we are yet to change our mindset and rethink our position because 'not remembering' about the special needs of women is deep rooted. I recall, when Unilever shifted its Corporate Office from Chattogram to ZN Tower in Dhaka, we encountered a significant oversight in the building's original design; there was only one female washroom across the five floors that we occupied. During the construction of the building, this concern was overlooked and later, we had to reconfigure the entire building for a more suitable layout.

Inclusion is not just a 'good-to-have' for organisations - it is essential for sustainable business growth. According to research, inclusion in any organisation results in better-performing, more innovative teams which are 70% more likely to bring better results. So, if you are thinking of growth, think of inclusion as a strategy, which I have also experienced firsthand.



I started my career in field sales, and I remember that there was a prevalent perception that females are not fit for field roles, which was a problem because without the right understanding of the retail environment, it becomes difficult to perform as leaders, especially in Sales and Marketing functions. So essentially, the perception was not only reserving these roles for males, but also creating a glass-ceiling for women in leadership roles. Even after breaking the barriers of stereotyping, things were very difficult in the beginning. When women initially started working in the field roles, the industry faced challenges in retaining them due to the lack of availability of necessities, like female washroom facilities in the retail environment. However, with relentless strides, once the amenities were ensured, the result was inspiring because within a few years, we were able to attract more female talents who began to voice their needs in our conversations. The glass ceiling was broken and today, many females are thriving in field leadership roles.

However, even for the most progressive organisations in Bangladesh, the journey towards inclusion is far from complete. Throughout my career, I have encountered numerous instances where exceptionally talented females were held back by their responsibilities at home. It is disheartening to witness such talents and ambitions being curtailed, not by a lack of capability, but by societal expectations and structural limitations. This reality paints a vivid picture of the imbalance still present in our professional landscapes. We need to be active allies, with progressive policies that empower women to balance their professional and personal lives. However, I feel optimistic when I see initiatives to structurally create opportunities for women with career breaks or cross-industry collaboration to set inclusion standards.

But our commitment must be unwavering until true parity is achieved, and women are offered fair opportunities. It is not just about meeting a specific inclusion percentage and then considering the job done. There are countless major and minor actions still needed to make women feel fully included. Often, even a small adjustment can have a transformative impact on someone's life.

We, as a community, need to constantly challenge traditional norms to create fair opportunities, for not just women, but everyone. From incorporating women and disability-friendly facilities, to integrating transgender individuals and People with Disabilities (PwD) into our operations, we can break stereotypes and rethink the status quo, and this, in return, will give us superior performance. Ensuring inclusion will not only help business organisations, but also will positively impact the economic. According to World Bank Group Chief Economist, Indermit Gill, inclusion can boost GDP by 20%. So, Inclusion is essential to transform our country to a high-income nation by 2041, and to grow as a nation.



We still have 267 years to go before women achieve parity with men in economic participation and opportunity. Occasions like International Women's Day are important because this helps us to initiate conversations and renew our commitments on inclusion. Above all, it helps us change our mindset.

It will only make us, as individuals, as businesses and as a nation, stronger, if we #InspireInclusion.



Honorable State Minister, Nasrul Hamid MP visits Chevron Bangladesh's Bibiyana Gas Plant



The State Minister for Power, Energy and Minerals Resources, Mr. Nasrul Hamid MP recently visited Chevron Bangladesh operated Bibiyana Gas Plant. Chevron Bangladesh Managing Director and President, Eric M Walker greeted him along with Muhammad Imrul Kabir, Director Corporate Affairs and Carl Bourque, the Bibiyana Gas Plant Superintendent.

During his visit, the honorable state minister inaugurated the Bibiyana Optimization Project by unveiling a stone plaque. Bibiyana Turbo Expander project includes Turbo Expander and Booster Compressor. The Turbo Expander lowers the plant pressure, optimizes gas production and adds to the condensate production. The Booster Compressor slows down the decline of the gas reserve of the field.

Bibiyana Optimization project is a testament to the strong partnership between the government of Bangladesh, Petrobangla, and Chevron Bangladesh, and aims to enhance the production capacity and efficiency of the Bibiyana gas field, the highest producing gas field in the country.

Later he visited the Bibiyana gas plant process plant. The state minister expressed his gratitude for remarkable achievements of Chevron Bangladesh and ongoing endeavors in Bangladesh and highlighted the company's promising potential and opportunities in the country's energy sector using the leading media outlets of the nation.

The minister was accompanied by Ms Amatul Kibria Keya Chowdhury, MP, Habiganj-1, Mr. Zanendra Nath Sarker, Chairman Petrobangla, and Ms. Zilufa Sultana, District Commissioner of Habiganj and other high officials of Petrobangla, BAPEX and Power, Energy and Mineral resources division.



COCA-COLA BANGLADESH BEVERAGES QUEST FOR WATER STEWARDSHIP

AS THE GLOBE OBSERVES WORLD WATER DAY 2024 UNDER THE THEME "WATER FOR PEACE," COCA-COLA BANGLADESH BEVERAGES PROUDLY ALIGNS ITS PURPOSE WITH THE GLOBAL CALL FOR HARMONY THROUGH SUSTAINABLE WATER MANAGEMENT. WE ARE DEDICATED TO ADDRESSING THE ISSUE AND BUILDING A COMMUNITY ON SAFE DRINKING WATER. OUR COMMITMENT IS TO REFRESH THE WORLD AND MAKE A DIFFERENCE BY BUILDING A MORE SUSTAINABLE FUTURE FOR OUR BUSINESS AND FOR THE PLANET.

WATER CONSERVATION: RAINWATER HARVESTING AND GROUNDWATER RECHARGE



Our journey in water stewardship unfolds through innovative projects, specifically designed to address the pressing water challenges in Bangladesh—a country grappling with the threats of river pollution and groundwater depletion. Since the inception of our Bhaluka Manufacturing plant, our Rainwater Harvesting and Groundwater Recharge project has been operational. On a yearly basis, we replenish 25,000 kiloliters of water through the rainwater harvesting project in our factory. By replenishing the vital source of life, we take a significant step towards reducing water scarcity, showcasing how environmental stewardship can bridge the gaps.

JOLODHI: A BEACON OF HOPE

"Jolodhi," our safe water for community project, embarks on a mission to ensure access to clean and safe drinking water through Water Filtration systems for more than 10,000 people in rural community schools at free of cost. Amidst a nation where water scarcity and contamination loom large, Jolodhi stands as a witness to our belief in water as a fundamental human right. Through this project we are achieving SDG goal 6 "Clean Water and Sanitation". Jolodhi embodies our commitment to merge corporate responsibility with global themes, fostering meaningful change. This initiative demonstrates the unity in water conservation efforts, steering us towards a sustainable future.



SUSTAINABLE PACKAGING

We advocate for the 3R's - Reduce, Reuse, Recycle - by reducing 40% plastic use in all our packaging and utilizing PET bottles made from recycled plastic. Almost 100% of our packaging is recyclable and, they all can play a role in a circular economy. In 2023, we collected 5,000 MT of PET bottles from the marketplace and recycled them as a fibre for textile industries. Our commitment to quality and environmental management, embodies our mission to reduce pollution and promote recycling - thus preventing our packaging from contaminating surface water bodies. This initiative highlights our role in preventing the pollution that threatens Bangladesh's rivers and biodiversity.

Grameenphone's Journey of Inclusion and Diversity

Equal opportunities and women's active participation is the driver to economic progress. Recently, Grameenphone celebrated International Women's Day 2024 with a focus on the theme of "Inspire Inclusion." The event served as a platform to showcase the various initiatives undertaken by Grameenphone, both internally and externally and its commitment to a holistic approach to women's empowerment.

The event shed light on Grameenphone's initiatives aimed at bridging the gender gap and promoting equality. Grameenphone's dedication to empowerment is evident in their impactful initiatives and partnerships empowering women, marginalized communities, and youth, by leveraging smart connectivity to foster inclusivity.



Yasir Azman, CEO, Grameenphone emphasized the company's commitment with GSMA Connected Women Initiative, which aims to reach 32% female mobile internet users by 2026 and empower 2 million people from marginal communities, 60% of whom would be women.

The company believes that gender should never be a barrier to success, and they strive to create awareness and positivity and help break down barriers so that women can move forward and take up leadership roles in different capacities including regional leadership roles. The company also employs a structured approach, emphasizing agile planning, extensive female recruitment, and targeted skill-building programs, particularly for nurturing the female talents acquired. The event also included with commitment from all CXOs to invest their time in developing the female employees of Grameenphone.

Promoting financial inclusion and empowering women in digital technologies are vital for national development and inline the following programs were showcased. Grameenphone's 'Internet-er Duniya Shobar' project focuses on raising awareness, enhancing women's digital capabilities, and providing internet training in 2000 unions. This initiative aims to enable women to safely engage in the digital realm and contribute to their overall empowerment and progress. Grameenphone's partnership with Plan International Bangladesh on the International Day of the Girl Child stands as a testament to their dedication to empowering girls and young women. It was a remarkable occasion where a young girl took on the symbolic role of Grameenphone's CEO for a day to celebrate the limitless potential of every girl and work together to create a world where they can thrive, lead, and inspire.

Platform SHE 5.0, Grameenphone's flagship mentorship program was also launched at the International Women's Day event. The platform addresses the lack of access to mentors for professional guidance among young women in Bangladesh, particularly those outside Dhaka. This program bridges that gap by connecting undergraduate female students in their 3rd and 4th years with mentors from Grameenphone, who offer valuable guidance in their careers and in achieving personal goals. With a focus on inclusivity, The program is designed to create a nurturing and empowering environment where young women can thrive and transform their aspirations into reality, while also enabling mentors to enhance their leadership skills.



Since its launch in 2019, Platform SHE has conducted a 6-month mentorship journey and facilitated workshops for personal and professional development. Graduates of Platform SHE have secured employment at prestigious organizations. The program has received recognition, including the FICCI Special Mention Award as the 'Star DEI Team of the Year' for Grameenphone in 2023. In 2024, the program has included male mentors for better adaptation to changing work culture and inclusivity, as well as mentors from Circle teams to develop leadership skills among talents in the circles. Additionally, there are opportunities for cross-industry leadership meetings to provide mentees with comprehensive industry insights.

Grameenphone will continue to make significant strides in promoting gender equality and supporting the professional growth of women in Bangladesh. Let us together, empower the leaders of tomorrow, and enable them to rewrite the future. Let's support and amplify their voices, because when girls lead, the world flourishes.





HSBC #InvestInWomen on International Women's Day at HSBC

From championing powerful women to empowering women from marginalised communities, HSBC Bangladesh demonstrates their take on "Inspiring Inclusion" as they "Invest in Women" this International Women's Day with a series of enlightening events.



The day started with the graduation ceremony of 2,400 girls under EDGE initiative celebrating their limitless potential. Partnered with the British Council, this initiative helps bridge the gender gap in the educational sector and equipped young women with the essential skills they need to thrive in today's digital world. Honorable State Minister for Cultural Affairs **Naheed Ezaher Khan, MP**, **Matt Cannell**, Deputy British High Commissioner to Bangladesh, **David Knox**, Director Programmes Bangladesh, the British Council, and **Mahbub ur Rahman**, Chief Executive Officer, HSBC Bangladesh were present to witness the momentous occasion.

Staff of HSBC Bangladesh had the honour of hearing directly from the experiences of 5 Executive Committee members to raise awareness on topics that impact women in the workforce like Micro-aggression, Digital Safety for Women, Financial Wellbeing for Women, Planning and Organising Skills for Women, and Psychological Safety at Work. On top of that, a memorable celebration at the management office of HSBC, orchestrated by its key employee resource groups, Balance, featured inspiring conversations with **Gayle Martin** from The World Bank and **Amira Al Muktadir** from Unilever. Their insights and experiences served as a beacon of motivation for everyone present at HSBC as they continue to champion diversity and inclusion.





Last but not least was the celebration of vibrant colors of Spring 'Boshonto' and the resilience of women around the world with customers and friends at the Alliance Francaise de Dhaka Gulshan. The evening was filled with enriching dialogue and camaraderie among senior industry leaders, including French Ambassador **H.E. Marie Masdupuy**, eminent law professional **Anita Ghazi Rahman**, the resilient entrepreneur **Shirajum Munira** from "Sutar Kabbo" (tales of the thread) and **Shaulee Kamal Khan**, HSBC General Counsel. The panel discussion delved into pressing issues facing women today, sparking thought-provoking conversations and actionable insights. The soulful rendition of Tagore spring songs by the brilliant and international Tagore exponent **Adity Mohsin** ended the evening on a high note.



These events exemplify HSBC's commitment to providing equal opportunities for growth, development, and leadership, regardless of gender. Beyond embodying the International Women's Day theme, HSBC highlights how investing in women and channelling the mindset of inclusivity at the workplace is fundamental to cultivate thriving, equitable economies and a prosperous world that will sustain for generations to come.



THREADS OF COMPASSION: SGS BANGLADESH'S ENDEAVOUR TO BRING WARMTH TO THE CHILDREN'S OF BANIACHONG

Baniachong, Habiganj - the largest village in Asia, a place where the warmth of human compassion shines brighter than the frosty chill that blankets its landscapes. In the heart of Bangladesh's mist-laden hills lies a village where resilience meets biting cold, where the seasons dance with capricious abandon.

SGS Bangladesh Limited from its social responsibility perspective, provided blankets to more than 250 school students of Kagapasha Government Primary School located in the remote village of Baniachong, Habiganj, Sylhet On 27th January 2024.

In this remote corner of the country, amidst rolling hills and dense fog, lies Kagapasha Government Primary School, a beacon of hope for the children who call it their second home. But as the chilly winter descends, the students of Kagapasha find themselves facing a bitter battle against the cold, their tiny shoulders shivering under threadbare layers.

As they arrive at the school, they're greeted by eager faces, their eyes alight with anticipation. The Head Teacher, Mahfuj Khan, stands at the entrance, a warm smile spreading across his face as he welcomes the SGS team with open arms. Nearby, community leader Abu Hasib Khan Chowdhury Pabel stands tall, his presence a testament to the unity between SGS and the local community.



Arrival of the SGS Bangladesh Management Team at the School

Abdur Rashid, Country Manager of SGS Bangladesh with a twinkle in his eye and a smile that could thaw the frostiest of hearts, spoke of their mission with fervent passion. "The worldwide climate change has brought untold suffering to millions," he mused "At SGS, we have always taken pride in giving back to the communities, and this is a modest step in our efforts to support the overlooked areas, filling their young hearts with joy throughout the difficult winter months. This year, we increased our efforts to reach out to overlooked people in need. This is a delightful possibility for me and my fellow colleagues, who are deeply committed to this program and are working closely with the community leaders to ensure its success."



Speech by Mr. Abdur Rashid, Country Manager of SGS Bangladesh Limited

And bring joy they did. As the blankets were distributed, each one a beacon of warmth in a sea of cold, the students' faces lit up with radiant smiles. But the impact went beyond mere warmth—it forged bonds, bridged gaps, and ignited a flame of hope that would burn long after the fog had lifted.

With the distribution underway, each blanket becomes more than just a piece of fabric—it's a symbol of hope, a beacon of warmth in the cold winter night. The students wrap themselves snugly, their faces aglow with gratitude as they feel the warmth seep into their bones.



Distribution of blankets among the young students

The Head Teacher of the School said that - "Selecting Kagapasha Government Primary School students for blanket distribution is a prudent choice. Given that many donation efforts are concentrated in the northern regions of our country, the needy population in rural places like Baniachong often goes unnoticed."

But the story doesn't end here. As the blankets find their way into the hands of the students, a bond is forged—one that transcends mere fabric and stitches. It's a bond of compassion, of empathy, of solidarity in the face of adversity.

This project not only allowed the SGS Management Team to interact with the local community, but it also established long-lasting relationships. The community enthusiastically supported the event, praising the committed efforts of SGS Bangladesh Limited.



A moment of the students with a few SGS Management staffs



"Inspire inclusion" is not only a theme or thought but a mindset of how we can practice it every day.

"Inspire inclusion" is not only a theme or thought but a mindset of how we can practice it every day. This Women's Day, Syngenta Bangladesh Limited dedicated **three days** of celebration, arranging various programs fostering that mindset.

On **Day 1**, we had the opportunity to have the presence of senior Govt. level official **Tazina Sarwar** who had broken all her barriers to her professional journey. She ignited her spark throughout her career by raising her voice for what's right and her fierce perseverance to bring a change in the society. All the female colleagues also had the privilege of attending an awareness session on 'Breast Cancer' with a seasoned oncologist from a reputed private hospital.



Day 2 started with "Celebrating Her" with Life & Yoga session. Along with our instructor **Anika Rabbani**, all our female colleagues enjoyed the session in person and experienced the power of self-awareness and tranquility. The day became even more colorful with our leaders in "CLT Talk show". It was truly inspiring learning how our leaders interpret inclusion, and they wish to plant the seeds of progressive mindset within the organization.



We opened the **Day 3 final day** with an Inclusive Leadership session with **Anita Gogoi** and **Sheridan Mew** and shared their leadership journey, stories, source of inspiration and what keeps them inspiring and breaking the glass ceiling of corporate world. The celebration came to a closer with yet another exciting spin of a debate competition and debaters battling around women empowerment & gender equality. The celebration glory re-ignited with an unconventional speaker **Sadia Islam**, a professional boxer and her grappling journey which left all spellbound and inspired.



As an organization, we continuously pledge to promote a culture which welcome unique perspective and support each other to thrive.

#IWD2024 #inspireinclusion #SyngentaBangladesh





STS Group spearheading impactful changes in Bangladesh's educational landscape.

Embarking on a journey to spearhead impactful changes in the education sector back in 1997, STS Group has been relentlessly working towards creating an ambience conducive to imparting international standard education. Driven by an inspiration sourced from global trends and the urge to ensure the highest standard of academic excellence in Bangladesh, STS Group has always been at the forefront of adopting and integrating changes for the greater welfare of the learners and the education sector at large.

With such a mission in mind, the group has been providing quality education to the knowledge seekers through its concerns - International School Dhaka (ISD) & DPS STS School Dhaka. To add more value to this mission, Glenrich International School (GIS) & Universal College Bangladesh (UCB) have been introduced in the recent years.

From exposing the tiny tots to the world of creative pursuits (pre-schooling) to deciding the right pathway for students opting for higher studies, STS Group has been playing a significant role for making the educational journey of the Bangladeshi students smoother and more rewarding. The focus, however, has always been on preparing the learners for the brave new world by inculcating a sense of global competence through integration of relevant skills in the curriculum. With an ambition to

**Empower
Inspire, and
Embrace**

the new generation of learners, ISD, the first school in Bangladesh to offer the world-renowned

International Baccalaureate (IB) curricula, has been catering to the needs of the new-age learners hailing from 32 countries riding on the expertise of experienced educators complimented by world-class facilities. On the other hand, DPS & Glenrich International School (GIS) have been offering the best schooling for students along with an environment convenient for the students to bloom to their fullest glory.



Manas Singh
CEO, STS Group

Academics, extracurricular activities, best teaching practices and international collaborations with STEMROBO, Rohit Sharma Academy, Barca Academy & ABRSM(UK) - all are mingled to make sure that students turn into life-long learners and global citizens.

When it's time to go to the next level of excellence, UCB, the country's first Ministry of Education-approved international higher education provider, serves as a phenomenal platform for attaining global education while enjoying the warmth of the home country.

UCB opens the door to new opportunities by offering courses from world-recognized institutions such as Monash University and the London School of Economics and Political Science.

All in all, from schooling to higher studies to career opportunities, STS Group is providing all-encompassing educational services with a concentrated focus on ensuring holistic development of the learners and making them

**globally
competent for
a world that
demands
people with
diversified
life-skills along
with outstanding
academic
profile.**

An educational initiative of



Unilever Bangladesh's Innovations in Sustainable Water Management

Water is crucial for society, the environment, and the economy. However, two billion people globally live in countries facing severe water stress due to a gap between water availability and consumption. According to WaterAid, Bangladesh is one of the most water-stressed countries; only 58.5% of the population have access to safely managed water. Thus, water is critical to both mitigating and adapting to the effects of climate change, and access to safe water sources is essential to reduce the spread of disease and reduce the reliance on depleting groundwater.

As a company with a purpose of making sustainable living commonplace, conserving and reusing water is instrumental to Unilever's operation as a responsible business. Their business strategy—the Unilever Compass—sets the way forward on their commitments to water, from finding innovative solutions within their production to conserving and managing water. Unilever Bangladesh Ltd. (UBL)'s largest local factory, the Kalurghat Factory (KGF) in Chattogram, is a vital manufacturing hub in South Asia, and has been serving consumers for the past 60 years. Since the inception of KGF, UBL has taken a multitude of bold innovations and upgradations over the past six decades to ensure that the factory is converted to deliver sustainable water management.



UBL's largest local factory, the Kalurghat Factory (KGF)



Seal Cooling water use in cooling Tower

To improve efficiency, special meters in water pipes have been installed for real-time monitoring, detecting anomalies and enhancing operational efficiency. Rainwater harvesting systems have been part of the KGF for many years, ensuring a sustainable water supply and addressing water shortages. A technology of vacuum pump uses real-time data to monitor water usage and significantly reduces water consumption. Recently, UBL introduced a new recovery tank that been installed to utilize condensate water, meeting an impressive 75% of their water needs. Another technological addition of installing ultra-filtration membrane replacement at the Reverse Osmosis plant has increased water output, while innovative water recycling methods save more than 199 million tonnes of water annually. The company upgraded their Effluent Treatment Plant to boost waste-water recycling to 78% and developed Zero Liquid Discharge Technology to further reduce water usage. Their smart water-saving method involving recycling water used to cool production machineries is saving 300,000 tons of water every year.

UBL is not only working toward water conversation within the factory premises but collaborating with other factories at Kalurghat to ensure water table management. Last year, UBL, FICCI, and WaterAid jointly organized a roundtable at Chattogram to share the best practices of different companies and discuss how a long-term vision needs to be developed to protect water as an essential natural resource for future generations.



Generator house roof-Rain water harvesting



Reverse Osmosis(RO) plant

As we mark World Water Day, Unilever Bangladesh's sustainable water management efforts at their Kalurghat Factory exemplify their commitment to environmental stewardship. Although the path towards water sustainability is long, they are committed to take action across our value chain, ensure efficient usage throughout their production process, and support the industry to ensure water security for Bangladesh.

To unlock boundless opportunities for future leaders, FICCI has established an impactful platform called "FICCI Leader's Talk". This series features distinguished corporate leaders from FICCI member companies who generously share insights from their life, career, and valuable experiences. Young executives, university graduates, and passionate students eager to learn corporate strategies have the privilege of engaging with these top-notch leaders.



In the inaugural episode of "FICCI Leader's Talk" Mr. Shehzad Munim, Managing Director of BAT Bangladesh and Advisor to the FICCI Board, took the center stage. He offered glimpses into his illustrious corporate journey, early life, and turning points in his career.

FICCI Executive Director Mr. T.I.M. Nurul Kabir moderated the session.

Students from various universities actively participated, posing their thought-provoking questions to our esteemed leader during the live session.



Yasir Azman elected AMTOB president



Mr. Yasir Azman
Vice President & CEO
Grameenphone Ltd.

Mr. Yasir Azman, CEO of Grameenphone Ltd and Vice President of FICCI Board (2024-25) has been elected as the president of the Association of Mobile Telecom Operators of Bangladesh (AMTOB).

Mr. Azman will succeed Mr. Erik Aas, CEO of Banglalink, and assume the role for a two-year term, effective from April. In addition to Mr. Azman appointment, the AMTOB board also elected Mr. Rajeev Sethi, CEO and Managing Director of Robi, and Mr. Erik Aas, CEO of Banglalink as the senior vice president and vice president respectively.

FICCI congratulates all the leaders for their new role.

Mr. Tanbir Ashraf has joined GSK Bangladesh Private Limited as the new Country Head



Mr. Tanbir Ashraf
Country Manager
GSK Bangladesh Private Limited



Mr Tanbir Ashraf has joined GSK Bangladesh Private Limited as the new Country Head.

With over extensive 21-year of invaluable experiences in the healthcare industry of Bangladesh, Tanbir brings expertise across core pharmaceuticals and consumer healthcare sectors. Prior to joining GSK, he served as the Country Head for Rapid Diagnostics of Abbott Bangladesh business. Started his career in Square, Tanbir has held multiple leadership positions in General Management, Marketing, Sales, Business Development, Strategy, Commercial Excellence in Novartis and Sanofi also.

FICCI co-opted Mr. Sumitava Basu as member of Board of Directors



Mr. Sumitava Basu
Country Head
Marico Bangladesh

The FICCI Board has recently co-opted Mr. Sumitava Basu, the Country Head of Marico Bangladesh, as a member of Board of Directors. He succeeded the former board member Mr. Myungho Lee, Country Representative for Bangladesh of Mitsubishi Corporation. Following Mr. Lee's reassignment abroad, FICCI has adhered to its bylaws and appointed Mr. Basu to fill the resultant vacancy on the board. extended a warm reception to Mr. Basu, presenting him with a flower bouquet.

Marubeni Corporation has recently joined FICCI as a member**Marubeni**

Mr. Manabu Sugawara
Country Head
Marubeni Corporation



President Mr. Zaved Akhtar handed over the membership certificate to Mr. Manabu Sugawara, the Country Head of Bangladesh at Marubeni Corporation. Marubeni Corporation has recently joined FICCI as a member.

With a legacy spanning over 160 years, Marubeni Corporation, identified by its securities code 8002, stands as one of the largest sogo shosha in Japan. Its global operations extend through more than 65 countries with a network of over 130 branches and offices from its headquarters in Tokyo.

Colgate-Palmolive ACI Bangladesh Pvt. Ltd. has recently joined the FICCI as a member

Colgate-Palmolive has established a robust presence in Bangladesh, offering a diverse portfolio of oral care products tailored to various market segments. The brand caters to consumers with a variety of SKU sizes and options, garnering exceptional feedback from its internal and external clientele.

FICCI bids farewell to Mr. Myung-Ho Lee

FICCI Board (2024-25) bade farewell to its outgoing Director Mr. Myung-Ho Lee during its 3rd Board Meeting on 18th March 2024.

The board expressed their profound appreciation for Mr. Lee's unwavering contribution and instrumental support in advancing development initiatives in Bangladesh. President Mr. Zaved Akhtar extended his best wishes for success in his upcoming ventures.



FICCI presented its budget proposal for preparing the National Budget 2024-25 at a pre-budget meeting organized by the National Board of Revenue (NBR) on 7th February 2024. FICCI President Mr. Zaved Akhtar led the delegation including Board of Director Mr. Mohammad Iqbal Chowdhury, Executive Director Mr. T.I.M. Nurul Kabir and other committee members attended the Pre-budget discussion at the NBR office.

Mr. Abu Hena Md. Rahmatul Muneem, Chairman of NBR presided over the meeting while some other members were also present. FICCI Tax Consultant Mr. Snehasish Barua made a presentation on the chamber's budget proposals for FY 2024-25.



The **2nd Board Meeting** was held on 3rd March 2024 at Unilever Bangladesh Limited office, Dhaka. The meeting was chaired by the President Mr. Zaved Akhtar while other Board of Directors were present.

This Board meeting was hosted by Mr. Mahub Ur Rahman at Meer Monjil, Mohammadpur, Dhaka.





FICCI President Mr. Zaved Akhtar accompanied by the Board of Directors Mr. Ala Uddin Ahmad, Mr. Mahabub ur Rahman, Engr. Abdur Rashid, Mr. Myungho Lee, Ms. Rubaba Dowla and Executive Director Mr. T.I.M. Nurul Kabir met with the Principal Secretary to the Hon'ble Prime Minister Mr. Mohammad Tofazzel Hossain Miah at PMO on 4th March 2024. During the meeting they discussed the country's overall status of trade, investment and Foreign Direct Investment (FDI).



President Mr. Zaved Akhtar, along with Executive Director Mr. T.I.M. Nurul Kabir met with the Senior Secretary of the Ministry of Industries, Ms. Zakia Sultana, at her office on February 4th, 2024.



Bangladesh is a wellspring of numerous captivating cultural attractions, with 'Pohela Boishakh' standing out as a prominent festivity of Bengali culture. This day marks the advent of the Bangla New Year and is observed nationwide with vibrant festivities and colorful decorations to preserve cultural heritage.

FICCI is all set to celebrate the eve of the Bengali new year with its valuable members and stakeholders amid a colourful grand event as follows:

Event: FICCI বর্ষবরণ ১৪৩১ ও ঈদ পুনর্মিলনী

Date & Time: April 18, 2024 from 05:00 to 09:00 PM

Venue: Aloki Convention Centre, Gulshan 1

This event will be the post Eid reunion through a cultural engagement to revamp the community after Ramadan and Eid vacation amid a grand get together.



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