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## From the desk of Editor



Seaports are vital gateways for international trade, with approximately 80% of global trade by volume and 70% by value transported via sea routes. This edition of the FICCI Monthly Bulletin is dedicated to strengthening port facilities to drive future trade and commerce.

Chattogram Port, Bangladesh's primary seaport, plays a crucial role in global supply chains due to its strategic location along the Bay of Bengal. It has been used by India, Nepal, and Bhutan for transshipment, and recent operational improvements have enhanced its efficiency. However, limited port capacity remains a significant challenge, preventing Bangladesh from fully leveraging its geographic advantage and robust manufacturing potential.

As a leading business chamber, FICCI actively engages in collaborative efforts to build capacity and improve efficiency, ensuring sustainable business growth and national development. In addition to our regular activities, we organize monthly events such as the Luncheon Meeting and Leaders Talk to amplify stakeholder voices on shared concerns.

Key priorities such as developing logistics infrastructure, enhancing connectivity, improving efficiency, and creating an investor-friendly environment are essential for attracting higher foreign direct investment (FDI). These efforts are critical for technology transfer, knowledge exchange, and accelerated economic growth.

This edition of the FICCI Monthly Bulletin features articles addressing stakeholder concerns regarding port facilities and the broader logistics ecosystem, aiming to strengthen future trade and commerce.

Ongoing projects such as the Matarbari Deep Sea Port and Bay Terminal in Chattogram have the potential to expand port capacity, reduce export lead times, and significantly lower shipping costs. However, inadequate road, rail, and inland waterway connectivity between ports and cargo hinterlands continue to drive up transportation costs and cause delays, limiting industrial expansion and economic growth.

We hope that the articles in this edition of the FiCCI Monthly Bulletin will inspire our readers and stakeholders to work collectively towards the shared goal of strengthening port facilities. A thriving port infrastructure will help position Bangladesh as a major global export hub in an increasingly dynamic global economy.

T. I. M. Nurul Kabir



### MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Members, Colleagues, and Stakeholders.

I am delighted to welcome you to the March edition of our Bulletin, themed "Strengthening Port Facilities: Driving Future Trade & Commerce."

As we know, ports are the vital gateways to global trade, and Bangladesh is at a pivotal moment in its economic journey. With a dynamic and rapidly growing economy, the development of our port infrastructure is key to ensuring long-term prosperity. In this edition, we take a closer look at the essential role ports play, not only in today's trade landscape but in shaping the future of global commerce.

Bangladesh is uniquely positioned to become a central hub for international trade. To unlock this potential, it's crucial that we invest in modernizing and expanding our port facilities. Upgrading infrastructure, improving logistics, and incorporating cutting-edge technologies will streamline the movement of goods, strengthen connectivity, and ultimately lower trade costs, making Bangladesh an even more competitive player in the global market.

The significance of robust, efficient ports cannot be overstated, especially as we navigate an increasingly interconnected world. Our ports must be ready to meet the demands of growing international trade while upholding the highest standards of sustainability, security, and efficiency. This is not just about expanding capacity but also ensuring that our ports are equipped for the future.

At FICCI, we are fully committed to advocating for and supporting initiatives that strengthen the business climate in Bangladesh. A well-developed port infrastructure is at the heart of this mission. By fostering partnerships, encouraging investment, and championing technological advancements, we can help ensure Bangladesh's continued success in the global marketplace.

I encourage you all to engage with the articles shared in this Bulletin and reflect on how, as investors and stakeholders, we can all contribute to the growth and development of Bangladesh's port sector. The success stories shared by our member companies serve as inspiring examples, highlighting the positive impact of their contributions across various sectors.

Finally, I would like to extend my heartfelt gratitude to all the contributors for sharing their valuable expertise, and to our sponsors and the FICCI Secretariat for their unwavering dedication to publishing bulletins regularly.

Thank you for your unwavering support and commitment to FICCI.

Warm regards,

Zaved Akhtar President, FICCI



### INTERVIEW

As the primary gateway handling over 90% of Bangladesh's international trade, Chittagong Port remains a cornerstone of the nation's economic engine and global connectivity. Amid a significant rise in export-import volumes, the port is undergoing a transformative phase—driven by strategic infrastructure expansion and the integration of cutting-edge technologies. In this exclusive interview with the Foreign Investors' Chamber of Commerce & Industry (FICCI), featured in the March edition of its Monthly Bulletin themed "Strengthening Port Infrastructure: Driving Future Trade & Commerce," Rear Admiral S M Moniruzzaman, Chairman of the Chittagong Port Authority, outlines the port's forward-looking development agenda, digital evolution, stakeholder collaboration, and long-term vision to establish Bangladesh as a competitive logistics and trade hub in South Asia.



Q1. What are the current plans for expanding the infrastructure at Chittagong Port to accommodate the growing volume of trade?

Chittagong port is a traditional and natural river port that has grown over a thousand years. This port handles more than 92% of cargo and 98% of containers of total export and import in Bangladesh. There is a growing trend of cargo volume, particularly containerised cargos. Currently, Chittagong port handles more than 3.5 million Twenty Foot Equivalent Unit (TEU) of containers which is likely to grow further at an average rate of 7%. Chittagong port needs to handle more than 5 million TEUs of containers in 2030 which will reach around 7 million TEUs in 2035. In 2040, it will reach over 10 million TEUs. Because of the natural limitations, this port can only handle ships upto 200 m in length and 10 m in drought. Similarly, the ships movement in this port is tide dependent. We can operate ships during the high waters only; and more precisely during day time. In order to overcome these limitations, there is a need for capacity development as well as enhancement of efficiency.

In doing so, green infrastructure development is quintessential. Therefore, Chittagong port has taken initiatives to develop a deep sea port at Matarbari which will be operational in 2029 and a dedicated major sea port at Bay Terminal that will be operational in 2031. We are also going to build another container terminal and a heavy lift cargo jetty in Laldia by 2027. In addition, we are also planning to develop a free zone and a cold storage/reefer container yard in close vicinity of Chittagong port very soon.



Q2. How is the port leveraging modern technology and digital solutions to improve efficiency and reduce turnaround time?

In order to enhance the efficiency and reduce turnaround time, there is a need for introducing innovative measures like adopting new technology and digitalisation. We have planned for adopting 5G technology. Recently, we introduced EU funded port community system, i.e., Maritime Port Single Window(MPSW), to have real-time visibility of ships and cargo. Now, we're going to integrate with the customs digital platform ASYCUDA with our Terminal Operating System (TOS). We also introduced online vehicle ticketing and real-time tracking system. Now, we're working with HSBC and EBL for real time gross settlement (RTGS) to facilitate online payments and banking. Once it is done, it will enhance efficiency, enable 24/7 real-time payments, boosting operations and capacity. Also, we are upgrading existing terminal operating system with the latest version as well as shifting our physical computer servers to clouds that is national data centre at Ghazipur, Moreover, we are also going to incorporate cyber security measures to maintain robust, uninterrupted and reliable data handling. Moreover, to remain relevant and contemporary with the global platform; we are also procuring new equipments with Green Technology for decarbonization. All together, once we adopt this integrated MPSW as port community system; it will enhance our operational efficiency in terms of speed, capacity and also cargo handling. In turn, that will greatly reduce our ships turn around time as well as reduce the cargo delivery time substantially. This will not only reduce the cost, but also enhance the port's image globally to attract more foreign investments as well as improve overall Export-Import efficiency.



Q3. How does Chittagong Port position itself as a competitive hub for trade in South Asia? What steps are being taken to ensure the port remains resilient and adaptable to the rapidly changing global trade environment?

Chittagong port sits between the two major growing manufacturing hubs i.e., China and India. Major trade routes both to and from East and West flow through the Bay of Bengal. Cox's Bazar air port also seats on the major air routes both to and form East and West. Therefore, Bangladesh has a great potential for Regional connectivity and be vibrant hub of global supply and logistics chain in terms of sea borne cargo as well as air cargo. In addition, we have great potentials for developing manufacturing hub, energy hub for refueling, ship repair and maintenance facilities to compete the global market as well as conducting both direct shipping and coastal shipping regionally and globally. Therefore, Chittagong port will not only become the game changer, but also a blessing and growth booster for Bangladesh.



Q4. How does the port engage with various stakeholders, including shipping companies, exporters, and policymakers, to address challenges and improve services? What initiatives are in place to strengthen the connectivity between Chittagong Port and inland transport networks, such as rail and road systems?

Chittagong port regularly conducts meetings with multiple authorities, agencies, business community, ships owner, main line operators, terminal operators, ships operators, NBR, customs, local administration, different associations, agents, local communities and stakeholders to improve the efficiency of the port and its services. Currently, Chittagong port handles 96% of cargo by road, 3% by rail and 2% by river routes. In order to improve the efficient transportation of goods to and from its destination, there is a great necessity for improving and developing multimodal connectivity in terms of rail, road, river and air cargo transportation. For this, we have taken plan to reduce the transportation by road upto 70% and increase by rail upto 20% as well as by river upto 10%. If we can do that, we shall be able to greatly vitalize the multimodal transportation and logistics. This will give great advantage in terms of speed of delivery, safety and competitive transportation of goods both in the hinterland as well as in the coastal shipping networks.



Q5. How is the port enhancing its security protocols to ensure smooth and safe trade operations?

Chittagong port is a ISPS code complaint port. We maintain international security protocols, standing operating procedure, international best practices, regulations and principles. Chittagong port conducts regular training and exercises as well as safety, security, survey, inspections and checks. We adhere very strictly the safety and security protocols. We have a great team of safety and security team of professionals with a robust organisational structure that maintain 24/7 readiness, surveillance, vigilance, monitoring, control and interventions. Recently, US coast guard conducted a security audit as part of ISPS code compliance. This time, there was no observation from the team, which is unprecedented. Chittagong port maintenance all the international norms, protocols as well as national guidelines for maintaining safety and security of port, its operations and safe movement of cargo to and from its destination. However, we are introducing modern access control, scanning, surveillance, and security equipment for enhancing security and safety operations.



Q6. What are the main strategies being adopted to enhance the port's revenue while maintaining affordability for users?

First of all, we have broken the syndicates and taken measures to a vast monopoly. We cancelled many licenses who used to do business violating the due procedures. We have devised new policy for allowing people to participate in day to day business with new licenses. In all the tendering process, we have introduced open tendering method, and tendering processes are done through online electronic platform. As such, there is less chance of monopoly and syndication. We also introduced four times store rents for late delivery as well as 72 hours time for leaving the port limits after loading from mother vessels. These initiatives enable free flow of goods to the market and thereby reduce the cost of commodity prices. In a nutshell, we have taken initiatives for ease of doing business as well as introducing efficiency which will reduce the turn around time and enhance capacity for speedy delivery /handling of cargo. They have largely reduced the cost of cargo as well as increased handling capacity. They enabled the unprecedented revenue growth for both Chittagong port and Customs.

### Q7. What is your long-term vision for Chittagong Port, and how do you see it shaping the future of trade and commerce in Bangladesh?

First of all, we want to be competitive, efficient and capable export and import hub in Bangladesh. We want to introduce green technology and incorporate MSW as port community system that will give real-time total visibility for all export and import cargo, ship and transportation system. We want to enhance our capacity proportionately with the trend of growth. So that, we do not fall in the trap of supply and demand. We want to remain relevant with adaptation of green technology as part of our commitment to global initiatives for environmental compliance in terms of decarbonization and digitalization.



We shall remain compatible with global maritime platform and industries. Our initiatives for digital and green maritime corridor will consistently remain in transition. We also expect that Chittagong port facilities will be a resilient and adaptive export import hub in the region and leader in global shipping industry to support both future foreign investment as well as domestic business development of Bangladesh. In order to be consistent and contemporary, we shall introduce Maritime Port Strategy for future growth, efficient port operations and competitive export/import. We envision that Chittagong will be the growth engine and manufacturing hub of Bangladesh, where Chittagong port will be the key player to support those initiatives.

# THEMATIC ARTICLE

FICCI'S COMMITMENT TO **ECONOMIC EXCELLENCE CONTINUES TO SHAPE A** PROSPEROUS FUTURE FOR BANGLADESH WORD BUSINESS

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Sea ports play an instrumental role in international trade and economic growth as almost 80% of global trade by volume and 70% by value is transported via sea routes, it also works as key catalyst for the growth of blue economy, enhancing connectivity, strengthening national security & resilience along with ensuring long-term competitiveness in an interconnected world. Chattogram Port being Bangladesh's main seaport, handles over 90% of the nation's trade and about 98% of container trade. Its strategic location along the Bay of Bengal makes it a vital player in global supply chains and has been used by India, Nepal and Bhutan for transshipment.

### Logistic Dynamics in Bangladesh

According to the World Bank, logistics costs in Bangladesh range from 4.5% to 48%, which is significantly higher compared to peer countries. National export earnings could increase by 19% with short and medium-term reforms in the logistics sector, 1% reduction in logistics costs could boost the demand for Bangladeshi exports by up to 7.4%.

### Chattogram Port: Current Capacity and Key Performance Indicators

The port handled 3.26 mn TEUs (twenty-foot equivalent units) of containers in 2024, which is 6.8% higher than 3.05 mn TEUs in 2023, The port is ranked 337th out of 405 in the World Bank's Container Port Performance Index 2023, Average RMG supply lead time is higher in Bangladesh (95 days) compared to Vietnam (60 days). and China (32.5 days).



### Chattogram Port: Future Version at a Glance

- Growing Trade Volume: As per Chattogram Port Authority projections, the port needs to be able to handle 8.6 mn TEUs annually by 2035 and 11.5 mn TEUs by 2040.
- Infrastructure Upgrades: Future capacity must include facilities for handling Panamax and post-Panamax ships, requiring deeper drafts and longer berths.
- Port Access and Cargo Handling: Improving transportation links and digitizing systems to improve turnaround time and reduce delays.

### Digitization of Ecosystem and Regulatory Reforms

Bangladesh Single Window (BSW) aims to streamline trade operations by ultimately combining the activities of 19 agencies related to customs under one system. The window will streamline procedures for international trade-related permits, licenses, certificates, and customs declarations and expected to reduce paperwork, time, and costs.

### Infrastructure & FDI: Now and Beyond

### Patenga Container Terminal (PCT): The First Foreign-Operated Terminal at Chattogram Port.

- It is expected to reduce container congestion at the port by integrating import handling alongside export and empty container management.
- The PCT built with BDT 12.30 bn (USD 100.8 mn) from Chittagong Port Authority (CPA)'s own fund. In December 2023, the port authority signed a 22-year contract with Red Sea Gateway, which is looking to increase container handling capacity from 250,000 TEUs to 600,000 TEUs.



### Chattogram Port Access Road Improvement Project

The project of ADB will improve the Chattogram Port Access Road, a 11.5-kilometer road linking Dhaka-Chattogram highway and the Port, by increasing lanes and adding a service road.

### Bay Terminal Marine Infrastructure Development Project (BTMIDP):

- The project will double the handling capacity of the port and significantly reduce congestion in the city. Estimated project cost is BDT 149.1 bn (USD 1.22 bn). Completion is expected between 2029 and 2030.
- The Bay Terminal will be able to accommodate vessels with a depth of 12 meters and 280 meters in length from existing capacity of 10 meters in depth and 200 meters in length.
- The project will allow to berth ships with a carrying capacity of up to 6,000 containers up from present capacity of around 2,000 containers.



### International Port Handlers

DP World and AP Moller-Maersk, two major port handlers in the world, have expressed their interest in making big investments in Bangladesh's shipping industries to help the country build new ports along the coast of the Bay of Bengal and become a major global export hub.

### Matarbari Deep Sea Port

- The project to transform the Matarbari port into a deep-sea port is estimated to be completed by 2029. The estimated cost is USD 2 bn (BDT 243.81 bn), with JICA extending USD 1.06 bn (Tk 128.93 billion), while the government and the Port Authority will cover the rest.
- The multipurpose terminal's expected capacity to cater to large cargo vessels, capable of transporting 80,000 to 100,000 metric tons of goods, marks a considerable improvement from the current limit of only 20,000-30,000 metric tons.
- Matarbari Deep Seaport also envisions handling 1.4 to 4.2 million TEU containers by 2041.
- The new port indicates a heightened route efficiency, establishing a direct trade pathway to Europe and the US reducing durations from Bangladesh to the US from 45 days to just 23 days. Insights from the Chattogram Port Authority also suggest that constructing a deeper port capable of accommodating larger vessels could potentially slash transportation costs by 15%.



### FDI Landscape in Bangladesh

There is no denying that foreign direct investment (FDI) plays a crucial role for any developing country as it's instrumental in shaping up the economy and expediting growth across different sectors. Before August 2024, Bangladesh witnessed steady but moderate FDI inflows; however, the overall situation was still not very satisfactory. The country's net foreign direct investment (FDI) inflow fell by 8.8% in FY24 in comparison to previous years amidst different uncertainties, including political instability, a shaky foreign exchange situation and other relevant factors. Especially after the political transition on 5 August, many things have changed while many foreign investors are in fix about making fresh investments in Bangladesh.

Despite significant challenges, many multi national companies riding on the confidence of foreign investors, are continuously plowing back its revenue into Bangladesh's market as part of its long-term commitment to the local market and the communities. CCI Bangladesh is one of those companies that's continuously striving to add value to the evolving local market through significant business and community investments, employment opportunities.



### Turkish investment in Bangladesh via CCI Bangladesh - a new frontier

Türkiye and Bangladesh share very congenial business relations based on mutual interests. The amount of trade between the two countries currently stands at \$1 billion, with industry insiders speculating it to reach \$3. billion soon. It is promising to see that many Turkish companies are taking an interest in this market because of its strategic advantage.

The Anadolu Group operates in 20 countries and exports to over 100 countries while maintaining its activities in 8 industries with more than 80 companies and approximately 100 production facilities, 6 R&D centers along with over 100,000 employees.

The Anadolu Group is the majority shareholder of Coca-Cola Icecek (CCI), a leading multinational beverage company. In 2024 CCI acquired Coca-Cola Bangladesh Beverages (CCBB) for USD 130 million, which serves as a strong indicator of confidence in Bangladesh's investment potential. To continue, CCI has further invested USD 20 million, post acquiring CCBB.

CCI operates in Türkiye, Pakistan, Kazakhstan, Iraq, Uzbekistan, Bangladesh, Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan, Jordan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Syria. It employs more than 10,000 people, has a total of 33 bottling plants, and 3 fruit processing plants in 12 countries, offering a wide range of beverages to a population base of 600 million people. In addition to sparkling beverages, the product portfolio includes juices, waters, sports and energy drinks, iced teas and coffee.



This acquisition is especially significant as it can spur in growth on many fronts and benefit the local economy. CCI will be leveraging its sustainable business model in the high potential market of Bangladesh, which will benefit the beverage industry and related sectors in the long run.

With more upcoming investments, CCI will contribute more towards the socio-economic development of Bangladesh. All of these will have knock-on impacts on Bangladesh's economy. acting as a real shot in the arm of the ailing economy.

### The Coca-Cola System's business in Bangladesh: Why this market bears significance

Coca-Cola has been operating in Bangladesh through its authorized bottlers since 1962 by manufacturing and selling non-alcoholic beverages including Coca-Cola, Sprite, Fanta, and Kintey, Since its inception in Bangladesh, the company has adhered to strong business policies, corporate governance, and a solid investment strategy. In February 2024, even in the years to come, this market holds considerable significance for CCI Bangladesh. Bangladesh as a market is very important for CCI Bangladesh owing to several reasons. A growing market, further complimented by a young workforce and strategic location, has the potential to turn Bangladesh into a key investment hub.

Realizing this, CCI Bangladesh has been prioritizing the Bangladesh market to expedite steady growth. As a testament of this commitment, the Coca-Cola system in Bangladesh employs more than 2500 employees directly & indirectly, and 22,100 jobs are generated in the broader Bangladeshi economy through a wide network of distributors. vendors, retailers, transporters, and farmers.



### Looking forward: How CCI investment will make a difference

CCf's investment in Bangladesh has the potential to elevate the existing bilateral relations between Bangladesh and Türkiye, taking them to new heights. It will also open up the doors for broader collaborations across various industries. Most importantly, CCI's entry into Bangladesh offers substantial growth opportunities. Bangladesh's non-alcoholic beverage market has grown at an impressive 10% CAGR between 2019 and 2022, with an anticipated 12% annual growth through 2032. CCI will play a key role in meeting this target with its technological amenities and operational expertise. With years of experience in the beverage industry, CCI will not only maintain the quality of available products but also help this industry register exponential growth by relentlessly focusing on innovations. As a by-product, this renewed focus by CCI on the Bangladesh market will definitely help to lure in other foreign investors who are now in some sort of fix owing to current instability. [Source] [Source]



As a responsible corporate citizen, CCI Bangladesh remains steadfast on its sustainable operational and community development goals. The company will keep working to adopt a circular economy model to reduce waste, conserve water, and support local communities. CCI Bangladesh has partnered with Mumanu and BPCL to collect over 8,000 MT of PET for recycling, creating a circular flow of materials while generating more than 350 jobs in the process. Additionally, the Water Champion Initiative provides clean drinking water to 15,000 students daily through safe water plants in schools, supported by rainwater harvesting projects that help replenish

groundwater.



To reduce its carbon footprint, switched to HFC-free coolers, and introduced lightweight packaging with 40% less plastic. CCI Bangladesh is also actively involved in community engagement with projects like tree planting, flood relief, and coastal cleanups that benefit both the environment and local communities. These initiatives underscore CCI Bangladesh's commitment to sustainability and long-term positive impact.



### Future plans for sustainability & innovation in business

There are enough opportunities for bringing in innovations in product portfolio and exploring opportunities within the Non-Alcoholic Ready-to-Drink (NARTD) sector. Driven by an urge to meet a broader range of consumer needs, CCI Bangladesh intends to tap into the growth potential in various beverage categories, including affordable products, ready-to-drink iced teas, coffees, juices, and mineral water. While branching out to these categories, CCI Bangladesh remains committed to product quality. CCI Bangladesh adheres to stringent quality benchmarks to maintain a high standard. In addition to this, the company has been actively refining its offerings, utilizing data on consumer behaviour to create demand-driven products tailored to the local market. While expanding its operations in the NARTD market, CCI Bangladesh will create scopes for local job creation, which will, in turn, bolster the local economy.





### Challenges ahead - How Bangladesh can lure in more foreign investments

There are quite a few challenges for Bangladesh to make sure that foreign investors take a serious interest in the local market. Political uncertainties remain a key challenge, followed by bureaucratic tangles and a not-so-friendly business climate. CCI Bangladesh looks forward to continued improvements in the business climate, without which it is not possible to implement such visionary strategies and future plans for Bangladesh's economy. Regaining the confidence of the investors is of paramount importance right now. To achieve this, the stakeholders need to focus on the potential of public-private partnerships. More engagements between the stakeholders, including the government and other organizations such as Bangladesh Investment Development Authority (BIDA), could go a long way in ironing out the wrinkles that are acting as barriers to creating a congenial business environment.

Attract a lot of foreign investments in recent years largely because of the fact that they have a very strong policy framework. Taking inspiration from global examples, Bangladesh should also simplify the procedures and introduce more business-friendly policies for both new and existing foreign investors so that FDI inflows show steady growth in the coming years.

Streamlining processes, reducing hassles for investors, strategic prioritization, and sector- specific policy restructuring is the key to establishing an investor-friendly business environment in the country. If Bangladesh can truly support the existing investments, the country could become a hub for different global brands looking for new markets in Asia and turn itself into a top destination for foreign investors,



### THE ROLE OF 5G PRIVATE NETWORKS IN BANGLADESH'S SEA PORT MODERNIZATION: DRIVING FUTURE TRADE & COMMERCE



### The Digital Imperative for Bangladesh's Ports

In today's world, where global trade thrives on speed and efficiency, modern ports must adopt advanced telecom and connectivity infrastructure to stay competitive. Bangladesh, with vital maritime gateways like Chattogram, Mongla, Payra, and Matarbari, needs to leverage 5G private networks for Al-driven automation, smart logistics, and seamless trade operations. However, current telecom regulatory constraints require reform to facilitate private network deployment at ports and enhance the country's global competitiveness.

Bangladesh's ports, handling over 90% of its international trade, face congestion, outdated infrastructure, and inefficient cargo handling. For instance, Chattogram Port's average container dwell time is about 9.16 days. compared to less than 2 days in Singapore. This highlights the need for modernization. Implementing 5G private networks can enable Al-driven automation, smart logistics. and efficient trade operations, boosting Bangladesh's global trade competitiveness.



### Transforming Ports Into High-Tech Logistics Hubs

Ports worldwide are evolving into high-tech logistics hubs, where Al-driven automation, IoT-based tracking systems, and autonomous vehicles streamline operations. These advancements reduce congestion, enhance security, and optimize cargo management, ultimately leading to increased efficiency. Leading ports like Singapore and Rotterdam have embraced cutting-edge technologies, incorporating private 5G networks to facilitate seamless communication between systems, vehicles, and logistics chains. This digital shift allows for real-time monitoring, remote-controlled cranes, predictive maintenance, and Al-powered customs clearance, vastly improving operational efficiency. For Bangladesh to achieve similar success, its ports must undergo a similar digital transformation.

### The Role of 5G Private Networks in Port Modernization

The backbone of any smart port is a robust, low-latency, high-speed network. A 5G private network provides dedicated, secure, and ultra-reliable connectivity, ensuring real-time data exchange for autonomous vehicles, Al-driven decision-making, and industrial IoT applications. Deploying 5G private networks at Bangladesh's ports would enable:

- Real-time Al-driven operations, including automated cranes, Al-assisted logistics, and digital customs
- Autonomous vehicles and drones, enhancing cargo handling and security surveillance.
- Remote monitoring and predictive maintenance, reducing downtime through proactive equipment servicing.

Ports like Singapore's PSA and Rotterdam's Maasvlakte II Terminal have already integrated private 5G. networks, significantly improving their turnaround time, security, and efficiency. Bangladesh must follow suit to remain competitive in the global logistics arena.



### Addressing Telecom Infrastructure Challenges

Despite its ambitions for digital transformation, Bangladesh's ports face major telecom infrastructure challenges:

- . Low-speed networks and unreliable connectivity hinder AI and IoT-driven operations.
- Lack of dedicated spectrum prevents seamless, high-speed communication within port facilities.
- Lack of clear provisions in telecom licensing policies delays private 5G network deployment, limiting technological advancements.

Currently, the regulations limit private 5G network rollouts for ports, forcing them to rely on public networks that lack the required speed, security, and reliability. This limits digital adoption and increases dependence on manual operations, reducing efficiency.

### Policy Reforms: Unlocking Smart Port Connectivity

To drive modernization, Bangladesh must implement policy reforms that enable private 5G network deployment within port zones. Key actions include:

- Reforming telecom licensing framework to allow port authorities and neutral host operators to deploy
  private networks.
- Allocating dedicated 5G spectrum for industrial use, ensuring that port operations are not hindered by bandwidth congestion.
- Encouraging public-private partnerships (PPP) between telecom providers, port authorities, Neutral host providers, and the government to facilitate infrastructure and upgrades.

### A Future Vision for Al-Enabled Smart Ports

The roadmap for Bangladesh's port transformation involves a collaborative effort between government agencies, telecom operators, logistics companies, and policymakers. With the right telecom infrastructure, Bangladesh can establish Al-powered, 5G-enabled ports that:

- Increase efficiency in cargo handling and clearance, reducing processing times from days to hours.
- Cut operational costs through automation, predictive maintenance, and digital logistics solutions.
- Enhance security via Al surveillance, IoT sensors, and remote-controlled monitoring systems.

By integrating 5G private networks, Bangladesh's ports can evolve into world-class logistics hubs, attracting more foreign investment and boosting trade competitiveness.

### Shaping the Future of Bangladesh's Trade and Commerce

Bangladesh's economic growth depends on its ability to modernize trade infrastructure and adopt cutting-edge technologies. It is time to drive regulatory changes that will empower the nation's ports to compete globally, enhance trade efficiency, and fuel future commerce. By embracing telecom and connectivity advancements, Bangladesh can position itself as a leader in maritime trade and logistics, ensuring sustainable economic growth in the years to come.

### MODERNIZING BANGLADESH'S PORT INFRASTRUCTURE: CHALLENGES, OPPORTUNITIES, AND THE PATH TO TRADE-LED GROWTH





Md Ruhul Amin District Manager & Managing Director Expeditors (Bangladesh) Ltd.



Subimol Dey Manager - Ocean Services Expeditors (Bangladesh) Ltd.



Bangladesh is uniquely positioned to become a significant player in global trade due to its strategic location along major maritime routes. With a growing economy and increasing demand for exports, the country has enormous potential to expand its international trade footprint. However, despite these advantages, Bangladesh's port infrastructure faces several pressing challenges that hinder its ability to fully capitalize on this opportunity. Congestion, outdated facilities, and a lack of technological integration are key obstacles to efficient trade operations. By addressing these issues through strategic investments, technological upgrades, and policy reforms, Bangladesh can unlock new avenues for economic growth.



### Current Challenges in Port Infrastructure

At the heart of Bangladesh's port infrastructure issues is Chattogram Port, the country's busiest and most crucial maritime gateway. Responsible for handling over 90% of Bangladesh's seaborne trade, the port is overwhelmed by growing cargo volumes. Chronic congestion leads to long waiting times for vessels, increased shipping costs, and delays in the supply chain. This inefficiency not only hampers export competitiveness but also affects the overall ease of doing business.

One of the root causes of this congestion is aging infrastructure. Much of the port's equipment and operational systems are outdated and rely heavily on manual labor. The lack of modern container handling equipment, inadequate berthing facilities, and slow cargo clearance processes contribute to the bottlenecks. Additionally, limited draft depth at the port restricts the size of vessels it can accommodate, forcing larger ships to bypass Bangladesh and dock in neighboring countries.

Compounding the problem is the limited adoption of automation and digital technologies. Manual documentation, paper-based systems, and insufficient cargo tracking capabilities slow down the entire logistics process, resulting in inefficiencies that undermine Bangladesh's trade competitiveness.





### Strategic Investments and Future-Ready Ports

Recognizing the urgent need for modernization, the government has initiated several transformative projects aimed at expanding capacity and improving efficiency. Among the most significant are the Payra Port and the Matarbari Deep Seaport.

Payra Port, still under development, is designed to ease the pressure on Chattogram Port by offering an alternative trade route. However, it is the Matarbari Deep Seaport that holds the most promise for transforming Bangladesh's trade capabilities. With the ability to handle large, deep-draft vessels, Matarbari will enable direct shipping to and from global ports, reducing dependency on transshipment hubs in Singapore and Colombo. This will not only lower shipping costs but also improve turnaround times and supply chain efficiency.

In tandem with physical infrastructure expansion, Bangladesh must focus on automation and digitalization. Implementing advanced cargo management systems, integrating AI for logistics planning, and using blockchain for transparent documentation can greatly improve port operations. These technologies reduce human error, accelerate cargo handling, and provide real-time tracking for traders and shipping lines.



### Economic Opportunities from Modernization

Modernizing port infrastructure goes beyond solving logistical issues—it has profound implications for national economic growth. Four key opportunities emerge:

- Increasing Port Capacity: Expanding port terminals, deepening harbors, and upgrading equipment will accommodate larger vessels and higher cargo volumes. This will reduce port congestion, attract global shipping lines, and position Bangladesh as a more competitive trade hub in the region.
- 2. Technological Integration: Embracing automation, Al, and blockchain will enhance operational efficiency. reduce labor dependency, and speed up cargo processing. Improved logistics translate into cost savings and faster trade flows, making Bangladesh more attractive to international investors.
- Sustainability Initiatives: Ports have a critical role in reducing environmental impact. Adopting renewable energy, electrifying equipment, and implementing eco-friendly waste management systems will align Bangladesh's ports with global sustainability standards. These green credentials can enhance the country's image as an environmentally responsible trade partner.
- 4. Public-Private Partnerships (PPP): Leveraging private investment and expertise through PPPs will accelerate infrastructure development and bring in cutting-edge innovations. A strong PPP framework can ensure efficient project execution, cost-effective solutions, and long-term operational excellence.

### Policy Recommendations for Accelerated Development

To fully realize these opportunities, coordinated policy actions are essential. Below points can be consider:

Investing in advanced technologies must be a top priority. Modern ports rely on seamless data flows and integrated systems, which demand robust digital infrastructure and skilled personnel.

Encouraging public-private partnerships through favorable regulatory frameworks will attract both local and foreign investors, Simplifying procedures, ensuring transparency, and offering incentives will make the sector more appealing to private entities.

Green port practices should be mandated and incentivized. Offering tax breaks or subsidies for ports that adopt solar power, electric vehicles, or zero-emission technologies can drive widespread adoption of sustainable practices.

Expanding physical infrastructure remains fundamental, Continued investment in dredging, terminal expansion. and intermodal transport connectivity will help handle the increasing trade volume and reduce regional disparities in trade access.

Enhancing port security and resilience is crucial in today's complex trade environment, Modern surveillance systems, cybersecurity protocols, and disaster-response mechanisms will protect assets and ensure uninterrupted trade operations.

Simplifying trade procedures through digitized customs processes and streamlined regulations will reduce delays and improve Bangladesh's ranking in global trade indices.





### Learning from Global Success Stories

Bangladesh can draw valuable lessons from global leaders in port infrastructure development:

- Singapore Port has set the benchmark for automation and efficiency. By implementing automated cranes and digital supply chain platforms, it has become one of the world's most efficient ports.
- Port of Rotterdam is a model for sustainability, its use of renewable energy, electric vehicles, and digital integration demonstrates how environmental responsibility and efficiency can go hand in hand.
- Greater Bay Area Ports in China (including Hong Kong, Shenzhen, and Guangzhou) showcase the power of technology and regional integration. Their role in China's Belt and Road Initiative highlights the importance of connectivity and coordinated logistics.
- Port of Los Angeles has leveraged green technology and digital innovation to maintain its status as the busiest container port in the U.S. Its success proves that modernization can also be environmentally sustainable.

### Conclusion

Bangladesh stands at a critical juncture in its journey toward becoming a global trade hub. While its port infrastructure faces challenges like congestion, outdated systems, and limited automation, there is a clear path forward. Strategic investments in infrastructure, embracing digital transformation, adopting green technologies, and fostering public-private partnerships will unlock new economic opportunities. By learning from global best practices and implementing bold reforms, Bangladesh can transform its ports into engines of trade-led growth, enhancing its global competitiveness and driving long-term prosperity.



### An Economy driven by export business

Bangladesh's trade success story has been driven by its globally competitive ready-made garment (RMG) sector and a young, industrious population. The RMG sector contributes to almost 80% of the country's export revenues, contributes to over 11% of the GDP and makes Bangladesh the world's second-largest garment exporter. It creates employment for approximately 4.4 million workers. At the heart of this trade engine lies Chattogram Port, which handles over 90% of the country's import and export cargo. Its importance to national GDP, export earnings, and employment is undeniable.

### Keeping up with growing trade

Over the last few years, trade has grown significantly in and out of Bangladesh, putting immense pressure on its logistics infrastructure and ecosystem. The port's capacity and efficiency, on the other hand, have not been able to grow at the same pace. If Bangladesh is to maintain its momentum, Chattogram Port must evolve from a congested bottleneck into a modern, high-performing trade gateway.



### The cost of inefficiency

The core challenge at Chattogram is not simply about infrastructure — it is about performance. For example, the average dwell time for containers exceeds 11 days, compared to the 3-day regional benchmark. Berth availability remains limited, and manual or outdated handling systems slow cargo flow. These inefficiencies impose real costs on businesses. Exporters are forced to maintain high buffer stock levels, rely on expensive emergency airfreight, or risk missing critical delivery windows. For RMG exporters, where speed-to-market is essential, even a single day of delay can mean cancelled orders or discounted prices. Ultimately, it is not just port users who pay the price — Bangladesh's reputation as a reliable sourcing destination is at stake.

### Learning excellence from global operators

There is an incredible opportunity for Chattogram Port and Bangladesh's trade ecosystem to learn from global operators who have overcome similar challenges through well-structured public-private partnerships. In Morocco, the development of Tanger Med Port through private investment and professional terminal management reduced dwell times from over a week to under 48 hours, while attracting billions in new industrial activity. India's Jawaharlal Nehru Port Trust (JNPT), once congested and state-run, became South Asia's top container port by adopting a landlord model and bringing in global terminal operators. In both cases, pricing frameworks were designed to ensure fair returns to investors, but were also linked to performance. These success stories show that when governments, regulators, and private operators align around outcomes, the result is faster cargo flow, lower logistics costs, and stronger trade competitiveness.



### How modernizing Chattogram can unlock its full potential

Chattogram's existing footprint can be significantly enhanced by adding berth capacity, investing in modern handling equipment, and digitizing cargo flows, which would dramatically reduce wait times. However, achieving this requires substantial investment, and such an investment will only occur if there is confidence in stable, performance-linked pricing. Terminal handling charges (THC), often less than 5% of total logistics costs, are not the real barrier to trade competitiveness. In fact, under-pricing THC may lead to underinvestment, which perpetuates inefficiencies. A smarter approach is to align tariffs with service standards and reinvestment commitments. This creates a virtuous cycle: better service allows exporters to meet delivery windows, attract more orders, and justify the investment in efficiency. Moreover, by modernizing its port operations, Bangladesh can enhance its ease-of-doing-business ranking, attract more foreign direct investment, and support diversification beyond garments. For the local community, it can enhance port safety and a future-fit, skilled workforce at the core of operations.

### A way forward: performance-driven collaboration

Chattogram's future depends on enhanced and better-managed infrastructure. Reforming the port's governance model to allow greater private sector participation — with accountability, transparency, and performance benchmarks – will be key. Tariff-setting mechanisms should be depoliticised and designed to enable cost recovery and service improvement. Most importantly, all stakeholders must rally around a shared goal: making Chattogram a source of national pride and a driver of global trade. With bold but balanced reform, Chattogram can shift from being a bottleneck to becoming Bangladesh's strongest asset in a fast-moving global economy.

### ENHANCING PORT CONNECTIVITY FOR FDI AND EXPORT GROWTH



### New Horizon Paves Way for Stronger Global Integration for Bangladesh

Bangladesh has entered a new dawn since the political changes in August last year. With significant political transformation underway, the country is expected to stride towards its aspirations for development, democratic principle, and good governance. As the interim government consolidates its agenda, the emphasis on governance reforms, economic liberalization, and citizen-centric policies is expected to play a crucial role in stabilizing the country and promoting sustainable development. This transition has given rise to opportunities for economic reforms and global engagement, particularly in attracting Foreign Direct Investment (FDI).

### 2. FDI Critical for Growth but Several Hurdles Limit Prospects

There is no doubt that FDI is an avenue for technology transfer, capital mobilization, market access, and job creation. Historically, FDI has significantly contributed to Bangladesh's growth and development, especially through successful collaboration with foreign partners in joint ventures and other corporate structures. It has played a pivotal role in advancing the Ready-Made Garments (RMG) sector, establishing Bangladesh as a global leader in the industry. Despite the success in the RMG sector, Bangladesh continues to trail its regional counterparts in attracting foreign investment. In 2023, Bangladesh secured only USD 3 billion in FDI which is significantly lower than Vietnam's USD 18.5 billion and India's USD 28.16 billion, reflecting a decline in competitiveness [1]. This figure also marks a drop from USD 3.4 billion in the previous year [2].

Additionally, the recent observation by IMF that FDI data had been overstated by \$5.7 billion over the past four years will deepen the existing skepticism further, revealing an even lower actual FDI inflow[3]. At the same time, Bangladesh is in critical need to enhance its participation in global value chain, and diversification of its export products and markets. This situation highlights Bangladesh's imperatives to attract foreign investors and the urgent need for decisive action to restore confidence and enhance competitiveness.

Recent observation of IMF-FDI data had been overstated by \$5.7 billion over the past four years



Figure 1: Bangladesh FDI Inflows (In Million USD) Source: Foreign Direct Investment and External Debt, Bangladesh Bank

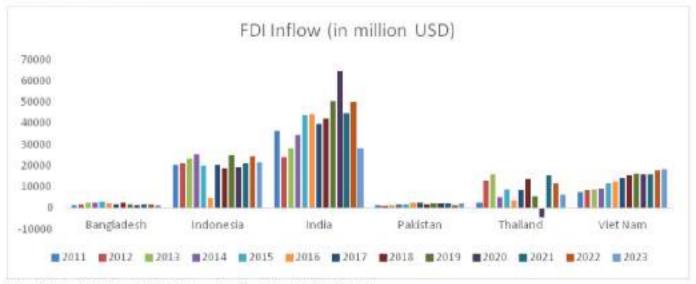


Figure 2: Bangladesh Lags Behind Comparator Countries in Attracting FDI Source: World Bank

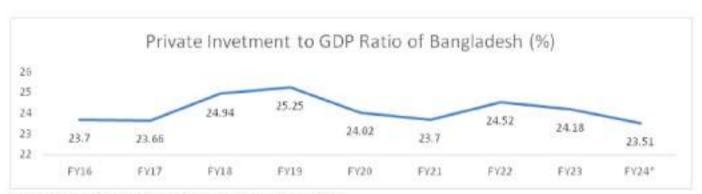


Figure 3: Stagnating Private Investment to GDP Ratio in Bangladesh Source: National Accounts Statistics 2024, BBS

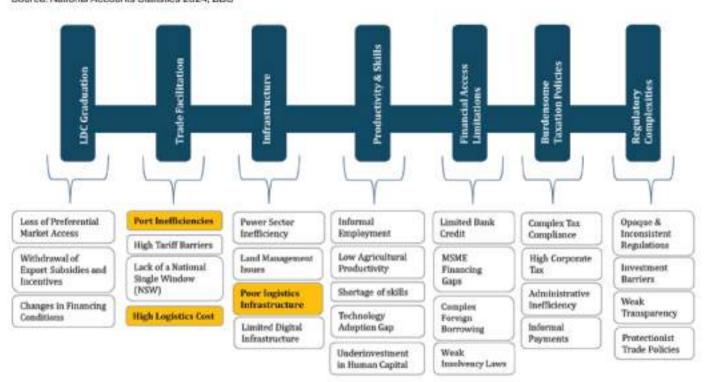


Figure 4: Constraints Along the Investment Climate in Bangladesh

### 3. Efficient Port-led Connectivity Key to Unlock FDI and Exports Potential

Developing ports-led logistics infrastructure could be transformative in addressing these challenges by enhancing connectivity, reducing overall logistics costs and lead time, and creating an investor-friendly environment to attract higher levels of FDI. However, Bangladesh's current logistics infrastructure is under-developed and this will limit the industries and economy from reaching the full potential.

Table 1: Logistics Performance Index 2023

Country	LPI Rank	Customs Rank	Infrastructure Rank	Timeliness Rank	
Bangladesh	88	101	108	87	
India	38	47	47	35	
Vietnam	43	43	47	59	
Thailand	34	31	25	46	
South Korea	17	7	9	25	

Source: The Logistics Performance Index and its Indicators, 2023, World Bank

Table 2: The Container Port Performance Index 2023

Country	Port	Rank	
Bangladesh	Chattogram	337	
	Mundra	29	
India	Chennai	84	
Pakistan	Karachi	64	
Sri Lanka	Colombo	39	

Source: Container Port Performance Index 2023, World Bank

Chattogram Port, which handles over 90% of the nation's trade and about 98% of container trade, has been steadily increasing its capacity to handle cargo. The port is ranked 337th out of 405 in the World Bank's Container Port Performance Index 2023(4). According to the same report, ships face average turnaround times of 3.23. days at Chattogram, compared to Colombo which takes only 0.86 days[5]. Lastly, import clearance takes an average of 11 days, while export border compliance requires 36 hours[6]. While recent operations in Chattogram Port have shown improvements, there is still room to further increase efficiency in the port sector.

Table 3: Emerging Markets Index 2023

Country	Ranking	Domestic Logistics Opportunities	International Logistics Opportunities	Business Fundamentals	Digital Readiness	Overall
China	1	8.47	9.75	7.11	6.63	8.31
India	2	8.04	7.45	5.94	7.61	7.43
Indonesia	5	6.34	5.89	5.77	6.21	6.08
Thailand	8	5.11	5.98	5.77	6.04	5.67
Vietnam	10	5.02	6.03	5.61	5.43	5.52
Philippines	18	5.02	528	4.31	5.99	5.18
Pakistan	26	5.16	4.63	4.13	5.06	4.81
Bangladesh	35	5.02	4.48	3.53	4.63	4.53

Source: Emerging Markets Index 2023, Aglity

Any efficiency gains in the ports will be negated if bottlenecks in the broader logistics ecosystem are not removed. Road, rail, and inland waterway connectivity between ports and the cargo hinterlands remain inadequate, adding to transportation costs and delays. The recent launch of a National Single Window (NSW) system

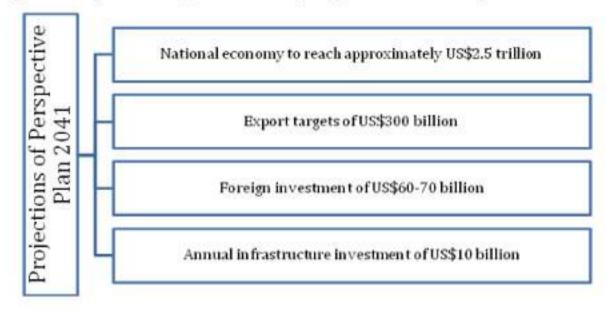
system is a step in the right direction, that will streamline regulatory process and improve efficiency, but it will take time for the full implementation to proceed and the benefits to take effect. These challenges, coupled with limited port capacity, prevent Bangladesh from capitalizing on its geographic advantage and robust manufacturing base. The cumulative inefficiencies indicate weak global competitiveness, higher business and trading costs, and trade delays that discourage investments and hinder economic growth.

According to the World Bank, the logistics costs in Bangladesh range from 4.5% to 48%, varying by sector, which is significantly higher compared to other trade partners and neighboring countries[7]. The report suggests that national export earnings could increase by 19% with targeted short-term and medium-term reforms in the logistics sector. A 1% reduction in transportation/logistics costs could boost the demand for Bangladeshi exports by up to 7.4% (8). It is widely recognized that a well-developed logistics system is crucial for expanding trade, diversifying exports, attracting both local and foreign investment, and achieving higher economic growth.

Logistics costs in Bangladesh range from 4.5% to 48%, varying by sector, which is significantly higher compared to other trade partners and neighboring countries.

Moreover, the Bangladesh Perspective Plan projects the national economy to reach approximately US\$2.5 trillion by 2041, with export targets of US\$300 billion, foreign investment of US\$60-70 billion, and annual infrastructure investment of US\$10 billion(9). Achieving these goals requires substantial investment in the logistics sector, which will serve as a key catalyst for growth.

Figure 5: Achieving the Goals of Perspective Plan 2041 Requires Significant Investment in the Logistics Sector



Some critical projects under planning, such as the Matarbari Deep Sea Port and the Bay Terminal in Chattogram, offer glimpses of hope. These initiatives promise to increase port capacity, reduce export lead times, and cut shipping costs by up to 15%(10). For instance, the Bay Terminal is designed to handle larger vessels, potentially increasing total container handling capacity to over 6 million TEUs by 2036, up from the current 3.2 million TEUs, However, the success of these projects depends on swift completion of project preparations and roll out of the project implementation, as well as supporting infrastructure such as a breakwater and adequate dredging of the navigational channel, and complementary investments in hinterland connectivity, warehousing, and digitalization. Without these, the benefits of expanded port capacity will remain unrealized.

### 4. Global Best Practices: Lessons from Other Economies

Global examples provide valuable lessons for Bangladesh. Vietnam's integration of FDI into its logistics strategy has not only improved port efficiency but also facilitated export diversification. Similarly, Singapore's adoption of digital platforms, such as Port Community System, has streamlined customs processes and optimized trade flows. These cases underscore the importance of embracing technology, encouraging private sector participation, and ensuring a policy framework that attracts long-term investments.

### 5. Key Policy Considerations for Better Port-led Connectivity

For Bangladesh, the path forward is clear. The government must prioritize private participation in port operations, engaging highly reputed global operators through Public-Private Partnerships to bring in expertise and technological advancements. This will also help mobilize foreign private capital at a time when government needs to minimise its public spending until fiscal discipline is restored. Simplifying customs procedures, reducing regulatory barriers, and integrating digital tools like AI and blockchain can significantly enhance operational efficiency. Moreover, developing multimodal logistics systems that connect ports with industrial zones and economic hubs is crucial for unlocking the country's trade potential.

### **Way Forward**

Promoting PPP in Ports: The government must prioritize private participation in port operations, engaging highly reputed global operators through Public-Private Partnerships

Streamlining Customs Processes: Simplifying customs procedures, reducing regulatory barriers, and integrating digital tools like AI and blockchain can significantly enhance operational efficiency

Developing Multimodal Logistics: Develope multimodal logistics systems that connect ports with industrial zones and economic hubs is crucial for unlocking the country's trade potential.

Improving the logistics infrastructure is not merely a technical endeavor; it is a strategic imperative. The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) estimates that improved infrastructure could generate an additional \$35.5 billion for Bangladesh by 2030. Such a transformation would not only enhance trade competitiveness but also position Bangladesh as a regional logistics hub, attracting high-value FDI and driving sustainable economic growth.

Figure 6: Strategic Gains from Reducing Logistics Costs and Enhancing Transport Efficiency (1) (2) (3)

Strategic Gains from Reducing Logistics Costs and Enhancing Transport Efficiency

- If logistics cost is reduced by 25%, exports can increase by 20%.
- •A 1% reduction in transportation cost can lead to a 7.4% increase in exports.
- Exports can increase by 7.4% if dwell times is reduced by a day.

As Bangladesh charts its course toward becoming a high-income country, the role of ports and logistics cannot be overstated. A modern, efficient, and transparent logistics system will act as a catalyst for growth, enabling the country to integrate seamlessly into global markets and attract the investments needed to build a resilient, competitive economy. The stakes are high, but the rewards are transformative. With bold reforms and strategic investments, Bangladesh can unlock its true potential, creating a future of prosperity and global prominence.

- [1] World Investment Report 2024
- [2] World Investment Report 2024
- (3) FDI data overstated by \$5.7b in four years, The Daily Star, 2024
- [4] Container Port Performance Index 2023, World Bank.
- [5] Container Port Performance Index 2023, World Bank
- [6] Container Port Performance Index 2023, World Bank
- [7] National Logistics Policy 2024
- (8) National Logistics Policy 2024
- (9) National Logistics Policy 2024
- [10] Matarbari A Future Commercial Hub of the Region, Chittagong Port Authority, 2020.

<sup>1</sup> Bangladesh can increase 20% export growth by cutting logistics costs: Experts, 2022, TBS

<sup>2</sup> Logistics costs need to dramatically come down to meet post-LDC challenges, 2023, TBS

<sup>3</sup> One day dwell-time reduction at Chittagong port to increase exports by over 7.0pc; WB official, 2021, The Financial Express.

### RENGTHENING PORT FACILITIES: DRIVING FUTURE TRADE & COMMERCE



Ports are the lifeline of global trade, serving as gateways for the movement of goods and commodities. In Bangladesh, where exports and imports fuel economic growth, the efficiency and capacity of port facilities are not just important—they are essential. As the CEO of RSGT Bangladesh, I am proud to lead a team dedicated to strengthening our port infrastructure, ensuring it serves as a catalyst for a thriving future in trade and commerce.

Bangladesh's economy is on an upward path, powered by industries like garments, which account for a significant share of exports. Yet, to sustain this momentum and seize new opportunities. Bangladesh ports must keep pace with the demands of global trade. Efficient port facilities reduce costs and time, attract investment, and solidity the position as a competitive player in the international supply chain. At RSGT Bangladesh, we are committed to making this vision a reality.

At RSGT Bangladesh, we have always believed that a modern, efficient, and secure port terminal is key to unlocking economic growth and fostering global trade. Our mission is to be at the forefront of innovation in port operations, delivering world-class services that enhance connectivity, reduce turnaround times, and ultimately contribute to a thriving national economy. With our vision anchored in operational excellence, sustainability, and customer-centricity, we continue to invest in cutting-edge technology and robust infrastructure.



One of our most significant recent investments is the USD 30 million in advanced Ship-to-Shore (STS) cranes. This investment marks a turning point in our operational capabilities, as these state-of-the-art cranes not only increase the efficiency of container handling but also contribute to improved safety and reduced vessel turnaround times. The installation of these advanced STS cranes reflects our strategic focus on modernizing our equipment to meet the increasing demands of global trade. By leveraging the latest technology, we are ensuring that our terminal can handle higher volumes of cargo while maintaining precision and operational integrity.

As part of our long-term vision, RSGT Bangladesh is committed to investing a total of USD 170 million. We have already procured 9 Reach Stackers, 4 Empty Container Handlers, 18 Terminal Tractors, 23 Terminal Trailers, 6 Forklifts, and 12 Container Spreaders. By 2027, our projected equipment fleet will include 4 Ship-to-Shore cranes.

18 Rubber-Tired Gantry cranes, 11 Reach Stackers, 13 Empty Container Handlers, 40 Terminal Tractors, 43 Terminal Trailers, and 13 Forklifts, This expansion will significantly enhance our operational capability and allow us to handle up to 500,000 Twenty-Foot Equivalent Units (TEUs) annually-solidifying our position as a future-ready gateway for Bangladesh's trade and commerce.

In parallel with our technological advancements, we have enhanced our digital systems to streamline documentation, container scanning, and customs verification processes. These upgrades are a testament to our commitment to innovation and operational efficiency. The integration of digital platforms has simplified workflows, improved data accuracy, and reduced manual intervention. As a result, our port terminal now operates with increased transparency and faster processing times-critical factors in today's dynamic trade environment.



Another significant area of progress is our focus on sustainability. We recognize that modern port operations must balance economic growth with environmental responsibility. As part of our long-term strategy, we are implementing energy-efficient systems and sustainable practices across our operations. These measures reduce our carbon footprint and set a benchmark for the industry, paying the way for a greener and more sustainable future in maritime logistics.

Our dedicated team remains our greatest asset, and their expertise and commitment have been instrumental in driving these initiatives forward. At RSGT Bangladesh, we invest in continuous training and capacity building to ensure our workforce is equipped with the knowledge and skills required to operate in a fast-paced, technology-driven environment. This commitment to excellence is reflected in our operational achievements and the enhanced service quality that our customers now experience.

Furthermore, our strategic collaborations with global partners and stakeholders have played a pivotal role in our success. Through these partnerships, we have been able to benchmark our performance against international standards and adopt best practices from around the world. These collaborations have not only enriched our operational strategies but have also expanded our network, positioning RSGT Bangladesh as a key player in the region's maritime landscape.

Looking ahead, our vision is to continue evolving as a modern port operator that leverages technology, innovation, and strategic partnerships to drive trade and commerce. We are committed to further enhancing our digital capabilities and investing in sustainable practices. As global trade dynamics evolve, our goal is to remain agile and proactive in adapting to new challenges and opportunities.

In conclusion, the strides we have made at RSGT Bangladesh-from significant investments in advanced STS cranes to the integration of digital systems and sustainable practices-demonstrate our unwavering commitment to excellence in port operations. We aim to facilitate seamless trade, enhance operational efficiency, and support the growth of commerce in Bangladesh and the wider region. We are confident that these initiatives will not only benefit our customers but will also contribute to the broader economic development of the country.

As we move forward, we remain dedicated to our core values of integrity, responsible care, and customer-centric mentality. I invite all our stakeholders to join us on this transformative journey as we strengthen our port facilities and drive future trade and commerce to new heights.



The cement industry of Bangladesh is one of the largest importers by weight, having procured an unparalleled volume of raw material in past years. Cement industry is not only critical to country's construction and infrastructural growth, but it is also interlinked with over 200 small, medium and large sized industries through forward and backward integration.

Cement production in Bangladesh primarily involves grinding raw materials such as clinker, gypsum, limestone, slag, and fly ash. Due to the absence of economically viable limestone reserves within the country, nearly all cement manufacturing facilities operate solely as grinding units, relying on imported raw materials. Currently, only a limited number of coal-based power plants produce fly ash, which is insufficient to meet industry demand. As a result, the cement sector is heavily dependent on imports, with over 85% of raw materials sourced from countries including Thailand, Indonesia, the UAE, India, Pakistan, Oman, China, Vietnam, and Japan. This high reliance on imports makes the industry particularly vulnerable to factors such as port infrastructure, customs regulations, and international freight dynamics. Hence, the industry is vulnerable to freight volatility, supply chain disruptions, and tariff anomalies. As cement forms the base of all infrastructure development, its cost and quality significantly determine the outcomes of construction projects, Consequently, inefficiencies in raw material handling and port operations are directly reflected in project delays and increased construction costs. For example, in 2024 alone, the cement industry imported clinker valued at approximately \$877 million. With the right policy and infrastructure reforms such as revising customs assessments and improving port efficiency importers could save at least \$2 per ton, translating to \$44 million in potential annual savings. This underscores the need for systemic changes across regulatory, logistical, and operational domains.



Clinker, gypsum, and slag are primarily imported through seaports, while the transportation of fly ash and limestone largely depends on inland ports. Chittagong Port, which manages over 90% of Bangladesh's maritime trade, serves as the principal gateway for raw material imports. Although Mongla Port is expanding, it still faces limitations in both capacity and connectivity, currently catering mainly to cement manufacturers located in the southern region of the country. Inland ports such as Hili, Tamabil, and Sheola also play a significant role in sourcing cement raw materials.



Ongoing infrastructure developments such as the expansion of Matarbari Seaport, and inland ports like Sonamasjid, Bhomra, and Pangaon are expected to substantially enhance import capabilities. However, persistent challenges such as port congestion, shallow draft restrictions, and inefficiencies in cargo handling continue to result in elevated demurrage charges and extended vessel turnaround times. According to the Agility Emerging Markets Logistics Index 2024, Bangladesh ranks 36th in terms of international logistics opportunities, with a score of 4.37 out of 10, positioning it relatively low compared to other South Asian emerging economies. As per expert analysis, reducing domestic logistics costs by 17% has the potential to increase Bangladesh's export volumes by around 7.4%. However, poor port infrastructure remains a critical challenge, with approximately 35% of goods reportedly sustaining damage during port handling. The World Bank highlights that further improvements such as decreasing dwell times and marginally enhancing average transport speeds by just one day could lead to additional export growth of 7.4% respectively.

These Bangladeshi ports currently lack the infrastructure to accommodate very large ore carriers (VLOC). ultra-large container vessels (ULOC), or Chinamax ships. This forces dependence on feeder vessels and lighterage, driving up freight and handling costs. Competing regional ports in Sri Lanka, India, and Myanmar boast superior draft depth, modern cargo-handling equipment, and faster processing placing Bangladesh at a disadvantage in terms of logistics competitiveness.



The Bangladesh Water Transport Coordination Cell (BWTCC) has also drawn criticism for its non-transparent vessel allocation process. Smaller and mid-sized importers often face challenges due to lack of access or favoritism within the system. Cargo delays at outer anchorage due to allocation inefficiencies increase demurrage and operational costs. Although BWTCC introduced fixed freight rate charts, stakeholders argue they fail to reflect real-time market conditions, creating friction between importers and vessel owners.

Seasonality also profoundly influences import operations. During the dry season, high construction demand increases raw material imports, leading to congestion, delays, and higher demurrage costs. In contrast, the monsoon season affects operational efficiency due to rain-related disruptions, further complicating unloading and handling at ports like Chattogram and Mongla. Such seasonal fluctuations raise logistics costs and reduce overall productivity.

Bangladesh has initiated several regional trade integration efforts to streamline logistics. The Chittagong-Ranong Port MoU signed with Thailand aims to establish a direct maritime route, cutting freight time and cost. This aligns with the broader Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC).



Furthermore, to unlock the full potential of the cement industry and improve trade competitiveness, the following measures are essential:

- Implement a Single Window System: Enable paperless documentation and streamline customs procedures to reduce clearance time.
- Modernize Port Infrastructure: Deepen and dredge port channels to accommodate large vessels. reducing dependence on feeder vessels.
- . Expand Berthing & Storage: Increase berth capacity and storage areas to minimize vessel wait times and handling delays.
- Upgrade Equipment: Install high-capacity gantry cranes, mobile harbor cranes, and conveyor systems for efficient bulk handling.
- Digitize Logistics: Develop a unified Port Community System to integrate customs, port authorities, importers/ exporters, and shipping agents.
- Reform BWTCC: Ensure transparency in vessel allocation, reflecting real-time market conditions.
- Incentivize KPIs: Award port handling contracts based on performance indicators such as cost-efficiency, speed, and safety.



The cement industry's critical role in national infrastructure demands a responsive, integrated trade and logistics ecosystem. Addressing challenges across port infrastructure, customs valuation, and seasonal bottlenecks will not only lower input costs but also enhance Bangladesh's industrial competitiveness and regional trade positioning. Strategic investments and policy reforms can turn current vulnerabilities into long-term advantages, ensuring sustainable growth in both construction and manufacturing sectors.

THE SUSTAINABILITY IMPERATIVE: WHY BUSINESS MUST SHAPE. NOT JUST SURVIVE THE FUTURE



Recently, I came across a new concept called "Sustainomy." As highlighted in a 2024 TIME Magazine article, Sustainomy offers a bold reimagining of economic growth that integrates prosperity, people, and the planet into a unified framework. Rather than focusing solely on markets and profits, Sustainomy calls for creating inclusive, collaborative ecosystems prioritising long-term sustainability. This model reinforces the imperative for businesses to shape-not merely survive-the future.

This articulation of sustainability aligns with the urgent need for change in today's complex global business landscape. The role of business is undergoing a fundamental transformation, with expectations from stakeholders and consumers no longer limited to delivering shareholder value or essential products. It is expanding to encompass solving pressing challenges for society and the planet. Once an emerging concern, sustainability is now a defining mandate for modern leadership. Yet, in many instances, leadership is still catching up with this shift.



A generational lens helps contextualise this evolution. Many of today's corporate leaders began their careers in the 1990s-an era marked by the advent of landlines and fax machines when sustainability was still peripheral to business strategy. Back then, the priority was awareness. Global milestones like the Rio Earth Summit or the release of An Inconvenient Truth played pivotal roles in sounding the alarm about the environmental costs of unchecked growth. These early efforts laid critical foundations. But the sustainability conversation has decisively moved forward since then. What was once a guestion of whether businesses should engage in sustainability has evolved into how urgently and effectively, they deliver measurable impact. The era of intent has passed. The era of accountability is here—and it is urgent.

Two examples: one from the challenge side and the other from the consumer side—illustrate this shift clearly.

From a challenge perspective, the impacts of climate change are no longer theoretical-they are real, widespread, and deeply felt. In the past two years, more lives were lost to heatwaves than to floods in Bangladesh - a historic reversal that underlines the changing nature of climate risks. This has prompted national conversations, even among those previously disengaged from climate concerns, and raised serious economic alarms. Research indicates that every 1°C rise in temperature results in a 2% drop in productivity. In 2024 alone, heatwayes led to global economic losses exceeding USD 21 billion. These figures underscore the growing interdependence between environmental health and financial stability. Climate resilience, therefore, must be viewed not just as a corporate responsibility but as a boardroom priority.

Conversely, the shift in consumer perception —especially among younger generations—reshapes market dynamics. Gen Z and Millennials are not only value-driven in their choices—they are values-driven. According to PwC, 73% of Millennials are willing to pay a premium for sustainable products, while 92% report higher trust in brands that demonstrate environmental and social responsibility. This significant shift in consumer behaviour means that purpose-driven brands are no longer niche—they are the future of competitiveness.

Yet, making any organisation, process, or product sustainable at scale is challenging. This transformation is far from a turnkey FROM LEGACY TO LEADERSHIP:
The Shift Toward Sustainability Business

73% Melantisk are utiling to pay more for sustainable products.
92% Trust boards with social/environmental responsibility.

Sustainability is no longer a department. It's the strategy.

solution. For example, a legacy company like Unilever—whose core product, soap, has remained unchanged for over 130 years—must now rethink how it sources, makes, and markets its products. It must harness transformative technology and show agility to keep pace with regulatory shifts, scientific findings, and the rising expectations of consumers and communities. Sustainability is no longer a separate function—it is a strategic lens through which modern businesses must operate.



The evolving business case for sustainability is exemplified in Unilever's journey over the last two decades. In 2010, Unilever introduced the Unilever Sustainable Living Plan (USLP) with the bold ambition of decoupling business growth from environmental impact. At the time, this was considered aspirational. Yet, the outcomes were tangible. Brands that integrated sustainability outperformed the broader portfolio, and efficiencies driven by sustainable practices resulted in savings exceeding €1 billion. These outcomes challenged a prevailing notion—that sustainability hinders performance. On the contrary, Unilever's strategy demonstrated that embedding sustainability enhances resilience, sharpens innovation, and strengthens growth. It's a pathway to a more prosperous future.

As global challenges intensified, Unilever redefined its approach. The launch of the Unilever Compass marked a shift from fragmented initiatives to an integrated sustainability framework anchored in three core ambitions: improving planetary health, enhancing people's well-being, and building a fairer, more inclusive society. This strategic lens extends across the value chain—from sourcing and production to consumption and post-use.



In 2023, Unilever launched the Growth Action Plan (GAP) 2030 with a clear commitment to prioritise consumers and drive sustainability, embodying the vision to 'Brighten Everyday Life for All.' This ambitious initiative zeroes in on four critical areas: Climate, Nature, Plastic, and Livelihood, mandating sustainable practices throughout our supply chain. To make a more profound impact, we must approach these challenges holistically and from end to end.

Take our work with plastic, for example, Unilever operates with a clear vision; plastic should not return to the environment. That's why we use less plastic in packaging through reengineering, reducing, and reusing. We also invest in retail refill technology to empower consumers with convenient, sustainable choices. Yet, post-consumption waste management remains a major obstacle. This is where the next level of involvement—value chain development and adaptive change—becomes critical.



As one of the pioneering companies in Bangladesh, Unilever has piloted and scaled a municipal-backed, city-wide plastic waste management model. In collaboration with Chattogram City Corporation, UBL is facilitating the collection and processing of 10% of the city's annual plastic waste-more than the amount UBL uses. In doing so, UBL has fostered a circular value chain and an entrepreneurial ecosystem, positively impacting the livelihoods of over 3,000 waste workers. These workers have received safety training, protective equipment, appreciation awards, and even health insurance, reinforcing an enabling environment for sustainable change.

These examples exemplify how business-led initiatives can drive meaningful impact. The good news is that the industry mindset is evolving. And this transformation is not limited to the consumer goods sector. In technology, companies like Microsoft have committed to becoming carbon-negative by 2030. In finance, institutions such as BlackRock are integrating ESG metrics into investment decisions. Even in heavy industries like cement and steel, decarbonisation strategies are developed through cross-sector innovation and partnerships.

The scale of today's sustainability challenges—like deforestation, water stress, and food insecurity—requires more than isolated efforts. These deep-rooted issues demand joint solutions from a broad coalition of stakeholders. Organisations like FICCI are crucial in shaping policy, supporting small businesses, and facilitating strategic partnerships. Businesses must not only lead—they must champion change throughout the ecosystem.

The influence of Gen Z and Gen Alpha is already reshaping workplaces and marketplaces. These generations bring urgency and demand authenticity, and they are redefining leadership itself. Young professionals are stepping up within Unilever with innovation, accountability, and purpose. Sustainability is no longer an initiative-it's a mindset embedded in corporate culture.

As global value chains shift toward regenerative and responsible models, Bangladesh stands at a strategic crossroads. With its expanding manufacturing base, digital infrastructure, and entrepreneurial energy, the country has the potential to lead sustainable industrial development—not just in RMG but across emerging sectors. Realising this potential will require alignment between business ambition, government policy, and national sustainability objectives.

The first chapter of the sustainability movement was about raising awareness. That chapter is closed. The current moment demands a new kind of leadership grounded in action, driven by agility, and committed to system-wide impact.

While the case for sustainability is compelling, the path forward is complex. Companies must navigate cost pressures, shifting regulations, and competing priorities. But those who embrace this complexity-rather than shy away from it-will emerge stronger, more resilient, and more trusted.

This is not just a sustainability imperative. It is a leadership test for our generation. The future will belong not only to those who build market share but also to those who create shared value.

## MEMBER'S STORY





#### EXCELERATE ENERGY, EMPOWERS WOMEN IN MOHESHKHALI WITH SEWING TRAINING INITIATIVE

Excelerate Energy, A leading US-based LNG company, has taken a significant step toward fostering financial independence among women in Moheshkhali by launching a sewing training program. The inauguration ceremony of the initiative was held on 04 December, 2024 at Ghotivanga Government Primary School, Moheshkhali, with Mr. Peter Haas, Strategic adviser of Excelerate Energy, gracing the event as the chief guest. Vice President for Government Relations and Public Affairs Mr. Derek Wong, Country Manager of Excelerate Energy Bangladesh Mr. Habibur Rahman Bhuiyan and Director Finance of Excelerate Energy Bangladesh Mr. K M Atiqul Islam was also present there.



Picture: Sewing Machine Handover Ceremony at Moheshkhai, Cox's Bazar

This initiative aims to empower 20 women from the local community by equipping them with essential sewing skills, enabling them to contribute to their household income and attain financial self-sufficiency. As part of the program, sewing machines were distributed among the trainees during the ceremony to support their journey toward entrepreneurship and sustainable livelihoods.

Addressing the gathering, Mr. Peter Haas expressed Excelerate Energy's commitment to supporting community development. "At Excelerate Energy, we believe in creating meaningful impacts in the communities where we operate. This sewing training program is a testament to our dedication to empowering women and fostering economic growth in Moheshkhali," he said.

Local community leaders, program trainers, and Excelerate Energy representatives attended the event, applauding the initiative's potential to transform the lives of participating women and their families. This training program reflects Excelerate's core values of Stewardship, Accountability, Improvement, and Leadership and commitment to the local communities in which the Company operates.



Upon completion of the training, participants expressed confidence in their ability to produce ready-made garments for their families, relatives, and community members. The initiative has not only equipped the trainees with valuable technical skills but also inspired a spirit of entrepreneurship. Many participants shared their aspirations to establish small tailoring businesses or shops, with the goal of meeting the growing demand for quality clothing within the local area.



#### About Excelerate Energy:

Excelerate Energy, Inc. is a U.S.-based LNG company located in The Woodlands, Texas, Excelerate is changing the way the world accesses cleaner forms of energy by providing integrated services along the LNG value chain with an objective of delivering rapid-to-market and reliable LNG solutions to customers. The Company offers a full range of flexible regasification services from FSRUs to infrastructure development to LNG supply. Excelerate has a presence in Abu Dhabi, Antwerp, Boston, Buenos Aires, Chattogram, Dhaka, Doha, Dubai, Hanoi, Helsinki, London, Río de Janeiro, Singapore, and Washington, DC. For more information, please visit www.excelerateenergy.com.



#### STANDARD CHARTERED AND UCEP BANGLADESH CREATE EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR 3000 YOUTHS IN GAZIPUR

Standard Chartered Bank has recently launched the latest phase of 'Giving Wings to Dreams for Youth Empowerment' programme in collaboration with UCEP Bangladesh, in Gazipur industrial zone.

Over the next two years, the programme will serve 3,000 beneficiaries, prioritising those who have become unemployed recently. Participants will receive classroom and workplace-based training in electrical installation and maintenance; welding; sewing machine operation; motorcycle service maintenance; refrigeration and air conditioning; apparel screen printing; tailoring and dress making; beauty care and various other employable skills.

After completing trade-specific trainings, high-potential trainees will receive Entrepreneurship Development Training. All graduates will receive employment placement support. The project prioritises inclusivity with a target of 50% female representation, 2-5% returnee migrants and 2% representation of persons with disabilities among the beneficiaries. The initiative also offers a Workplace Wellbeing Management course to sensitize participants on physical and mental health wellbeing idea and topics, along with sexual and reproductive health and rights.



Bitopi Das Chowdhury, Head, Corporate Affairs, Brand & Marketing, Standard Chartered Bangladesh, said, "As the oldest and largest foreign financial institution in Bangladesh, Standard Chartered has always prioritised investing in education and helping develop the youth of this nation. Through initiatives such as this, we are supporting them with contemporary knowledge, certified skills, and opportunities to find gainful employment or to become entrepreneurs. We thank our partner UCEP Bangladesh for their continued efforts to further our mission to upskill the youth for a sustainable economic impact."

The programme was launched in 2019, with a cohort of 300 trainees. Following its success, more initiatives were lunched in 2020, 2021 and 2022. Till date, the programme has supported more than 6000 participants with skills training along with mid-level management and entrepreneurship development opportunities. More than 70% of the graduates have secured employment through the job placement support, which is also a part of this programme.

The project has been launched under Futuremakers by Standard Chartered, the Bank's flagship global community initiative. Futuremakers aim to tackle inequality and empower disadvantaged young people, helping them learn, earn and grow. Since launching in 2019, Futuremakers has enabled and supported more than 88,900 jobs across the world.

With around 120 years of commitment to Bangladesh's growth, Standard Chartered continues to champion initiatives that promote sustainable development in critical sectors like agriculture, environment, health and education. The Bank remains dedicated to investing in communities, expanding services, and creating new opportunities, while fostering inclusive and sustainable growth across Bangladesh.

## SINGER beko

#### TÜRKIYE'S KOC GROUP REAFFIRMS COMMITMENT TO BANGLADESH

Senior executives from Türkiye's Koc Group visit Dhaka to strengthen business ties in the region.



Türkiye's leading investment holding company, Koc Holding, has reaffirmed its commitment to Bangladesh through a high-profile visit from senior executives of Koc Holding, Beko and Aygaz. The delegation included Mr. Levent Çakıroğlu, CEO of Koc Holding, Dr. Fatih Kemal Ebiclioğlu, President of Consumer Durables Group at Koc Holding: Mr. Yağız Eyüboğlu. President of Energy Group at Koc Holding: Mr. Melih Poyraz, General Manager of Aygaz; Mr. Can Dincer, Chief Commercial Officer for Türkiye and South Asia at Beko; Mr. Akın Garzanlı, Chief Marketing Officer at Beko; Mr. Fatih Özkadı, Chief Sustainability, Quality, and Customer Care Officer at Beko; and Mr. Zafer Üstüner, Chief Commercial Officer for Asia-Pacific at Beko. Hosted by senior executives of Singer Bangladesh Ltd., a subsidiary of Beko - flagship of Koc Group in consumer durables industry, alongside United Aygaz LPG, a joint venture between United Enterprises and Aygaz - Koc Group's leading company in energy sector, the visit underscores Koc Group's long-term vision for Bangladesh and its commitment to deepening business ties in the region.

Emphasizing Bangladesh's promising growth potential in the different sectors, Levent Çakıroğlu, CEO of Koc Holding said: "At Koc Group, our guiding principles remain centered on consistency, creating value for our stakeholders, expanding, and diversifying our global reach, and customer-centric innovation. We are deeply committed to shaping the industries of the future around the world. Over the past five years, we have invested over \$14 billion globally on a combined basis, driven by our focus on sustainable growth. technological advancement, and long-term prosperity.



Bangladesh, along with the wider South Asia region, holds strategic importance for us as a growing market for local manufacturing, R&D, as well as a potential export hub, given its dynamic consumer durables and energy sectors. Our commitment to Bangladesh remains steadfast, and we will continue to drive growth, enhance operations, and contribute to the country's industrial and economic development in the years ahead."

During the visit, the delegation toured the newly inaugurated Singer Bangladesh Limited - Home Appliances Plant, a significant milestone in Koc Holding's presence in Bangladesh highlighting the group's dedication to innovation, operational excellence, and long-term value creation. The executives also visited United Aygaz LPG. which plays a vital role in expanding access to clean and efficient energy solutions in Bangladesh.





Highlighting Bangladesh's thriving consumer goods industry, fueled by rapid urbanization and economic expansion Dr. Fatih Kemal Ebiclioğlu, President of Consumer Durables Group at Koc Holding said: "Since entering Bangladesh, our goal has not only been to expand our business but also to contribute meaningfully to the socio-economic development of the country. Through the acquisition of Singer Bangladesh Limited, we have successfully combined Beko's global expertise with Singer's 120-year legacy, deep local insights, and extensive distribution network with an aim to elevate the consumer durables industry and improve the lives of Bangladeshi consumers. This synergy has strengthened our retail presence, enhanced employee experiences, and advanced our manufacturing capabilities. Since 2019, we have invested \$146 million in Singer Bangladesh, including our latest \$78 million factory investment creating up to 4,000 job opportunities, reaffirming our long-term commitment to the country. Our vision is to establish Singer as the leading consumer durables brand in Bangladesh. Moving forward, we will continue to drive industrial development, elevate customer experience with our world-class retail expertise, and foster economic growth for the industry."

Koc Group remains committed to driving innovation, enhancing local expertise, and delivering high-quality products and services that contribute to the prosperity of Bangladesh as the Group continues to expand its footprint. Koc Holding aims to play a pivotal role in the country's economic transformation through strategic partnerships and long-term investments, reinforcing its position as a trusted and valued partner in Bangladesh's development journey.



The Managing Director & CEO of Singer Bangladesh Limited Mr. M.H.M. Fairoz said, "Singer is the pioneer in the consumer durables business in Bangladesh and one of the largest retailers in Bangladesh. Keeping customer centricity at the core of our operations, Singer Bangladesh is transforming its business to bring Beko's globally recognized standards to Bangladeshi consumers. We are now at the peak of our transformation journey, which is enabled by the exceptional transformations in production, retail experience and working space. The retail transformation will roll-out to all consumer touchpoints across the country and all Bangladeshi consumers will have unprecedented and immersive retail experience. We are also improving our aftersales service, talent development, IT support and more to improve the overall performance of Singer Bangladesh. With the vision to make Singer Bangladesh one of the top brands in the country, we reaffirm our commitment to innovation, sustainability, and enhancing the lives of our customers with superior products and services."

Koc Group's operations play a pivotal role in strengthening the economic relations between Türkive and Bangladesh, which bound by shared values and mutual respect. Bilateral trade between the two countries exceeded \$1.3 billion in 2024. Both Türkiye and Bangladesh are fully committed to further enhancing this collaboration, with the ambitious goal of increasing bilateral trade to \$2 billion in the near future.



#### SYNGENTA BANGLADESH JOINS UNITED NATIONS GLOBAL COMPACT



We Syngenta Bangladesh officially received Membership Certificate from the United Nations Global Compact Network Bangladesh - marking a new chapter in our journey towards sustainability and responsible business practices.



Hedayet Ullah, Managing Director, Syngenta Bangladesh, received the certificate from Ms. Shahamin Zaman, Executive Director, UN Global Compact Network Bangladesh. Other officials of UNGC and the Syngenta Bangladesh country leadership team were also present at the ceremony.

Joining UNGC is just the beginning - we're excited to collaborate, learn, and showcase how agriculture can drive positive change.



#### UNILEVER BANGLADESH: LEADING THE WAY IN GENDER BALANCE

In today's global economy, gender equity is not only a moral imperative—it is a strategic business advantage. At Unilever Bangladesh, the commitment to Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) is more than corporate rhetoric. It reflects a purposeful transformation that has redefined organisational culture, empowered the workforce, and set new benchmarks for the industry. The company is steadfast in its vision of building a workplace where every individual thrives—regardless of gender—contributing uniquely to innovation and sustainable growth.

#### Progress Rooted in Purpose

Unilever Bangladesh's journey towards gender equity is marked by consistent, measurable progress. They have achieved a remarkable stride in female representation in the senior management, increasing from a modest 13% in 2019 to an impressive 40% in 2025, which was also 50% in 2023. By appointing the first female Finance Director, Regional Manager, and Logistics Manager, they have systematically dismantled traditional industry barriers. This transformation is a result of committed leadership, strategic talent development, progressive policies, and an inclusive workplace culture.

#### Creating Equitable Workplaces through Inclusive Policies and Infrastructure

The company is unwavering in its mission to build an equitable workforce that respects the dignity and potential of every individual. Guided by the belief that no woman should be left behind, Unilever Bangladesh is embedding gender inclusion across its operations, value chain, and broader societal engagement. Their approach begins with a commitment to get their own house in order-ensuring internal practices reflect the change they wish to see externally.



To address historical imbalances, the company maintains a 70:30 female-to-male candidate ratio in entry-level recruitment process. Beyond offices, targeted investments are being made to increase women's representation in field sales and factory roles-areas traditionally dominated by men. Today, nearly 200 women work within the distribution force, and over 15% of managerial roles in sales are held by women. To support this progress, female territory managers are provided with structured assistance, including coordination with local law enforcement and dedicated security support. In manufacturing, over 250 women are employed on the shop floor in their oldest establishment, the Kalurghat Factory (KGF) in Chattogram, Notably, in 2017, Unilever Bangladesh led the way in

South Asia by appointing female production shift officers for night operations—challenging longstanding cultural norms about women working late hours. These bold actions have significantly advanced gender diversity across functions and levels.

#### Institutionalising Inclusion: Systems That Support Gender Equity

Unilever Bangladesh's ED&I Council, comprising both male and female leaders, drives organisation-wide awareness and participation. Strategic partnerships with like-minded organisations facilitate learning exchanges and collaborative initiatives on diversity challenges. Their comprehensive policy framework includes robust Prevention of Sexual Harassment (POSH) protocols, industry-leading maternity and paternity leave provisions, education assistance programmes, career break options, caregiver support services, and flexible working arrangements.

Both corporate offices and factories are equipped with daycare centres, each offering specialised early childhood development programmes—ensuring working parents are fully supported in balancing their professional and personal responsibilities.



#### Championing Leadership in Gender Inclusion

At the heart of Unilever Bangladesh's efforts is a leadership team that actively champions gender inclusion. Personalised talent development plans and structured mentoring programmes empower high-potential female employees to grow into leadership roles.

Beyond internal initiatives, the company leverages the power of storytelling to inspire change. Stories of their women leaders—shared across internal channels and external platforms—help challenge industry stereotypes and attract diverse talent. These campaigns serve not just to celebrate achievements, but to shift mindsets and redefine what leadership looks like.

#### International Women's Day 2025: A Two-Fold Commitment to Collective Action

This year, Unilever Bangladesh reaffirmed its leadership in gender equity through an impactful two-fold International Women's Day campaign - "AcceleratingAction: Empowered Women, Empowering the Future". Acknowledging that the journey towards true equity requires collective action, the campaign extended beyond the company's own workforce to include partner organisations.

In the first phase, the company spotlighted inspiring stories of female leaders from partner organisations amplifying voices that can motivate and mentor young leaders across industries. This initiative underscored Unilever Bangladesh's belief that gender equity is not just an internal commitment, but a shared value that shapes how they collaborate across the ecosystem.



Scan QR Code to watch the video #AccelerateAction

The second phase focused inward, celebrating the stories of women within Unilever Bangladesh who are defying stereotypes and overcoming barriers in male-dominated roles. Their resilience, ambition, and achievements reflect the power of a workplace culture where inclusion is embedded and practiced every day.



#### From Balance to Belonging: Redefining Success

Unilever Bangladesh's commitment goes beyond achieving gender balance. The goal is to cultivate a truly inclusive environment where diverse perspectives fuel creativity and long-term growth. Recognition as Employer of Choice in the FMCG sector for 12 consecutive years, along with the FICCI DE&I Champion award, reaffirms the company's industry leadership in fostering inclusive workplaces. This transformation is not just about business—it is about shaping a better society. By nurturing leadership, breaking down systemic barriers, and influencing broader norms, Unilever Bangladesh is inspiring a more inclusive business ecosystem for all.

#### Inspiring Collective Progress

The path to gender equity is not one to be walked alone. Across Bangladesh, many organisations are embracing this vision, working relentlessly to create a more inclusive and equitable society. Unilever Bangladesh stands as a catalyst and collaborator in this journey—proving that when businesses commit to authentic inclusion, the impact extends far beyond the workplace. Together, we can ensure that inclusion is not just a moment we celebrate—but a reality we build, every single day.



**OUR JOURNEY** WILL CONTINUE FOR A MORE GLORIOUS BANGLADESH

as we still have a long way to go with many roads unexplored



Md. Mahbub ur Rahman, CEO of HSBC Bangladesh and Director of FICCI, shared his insights during the latest edition of the FICCI Leaders Talk. The discussion was anchored by the chamber's Executive Director, Mr. T.I.M. Nurul Kabir, Mr. Mahbub highlighted significant challenges facing the banking sector, including navigating regulatory complexities, combating cybersecurity threats, and addressing the growing demand for sustainable banking practices. He stressed the vital role of innovation and collaboration between financial institutions and policymakers to build resilience and foster progress.



Mr. Mahbub also explored opportunities within the banking sector, emphasizing the importance of digital transformation in improving customer experience and enhancing operational efficiency. He underscored the potential of emerging markets and the importance of financial inclusion as key drivers of economic growth. Additionally, he offered valuable advice for the younger generation, encouraging them to develop their careers in this evolving and dynamic global environment. The discussion provided a comprehensive view of the trajectory of Bangladesh's banking sector while inspiring stakeholders and future professionals alike.

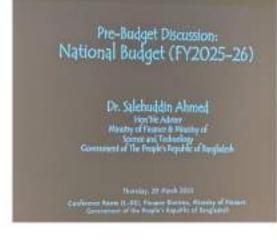
#### FICCI ENGAGES IN PRE-BUDGET DISCUSSION FOR FY 2025-26



Dr. Salehuddin Ahmed, Honorable Financial Adviser to the Ministries of Finance and Science & Technology, convened a pre-budget discussion with leaders from the country's top business chambers on March 20, 2025, at the Finance Division of the Ministry of Finance. The meeting provided a platform for exchanging views on key policy priorities ahead of the upcoming national budget.







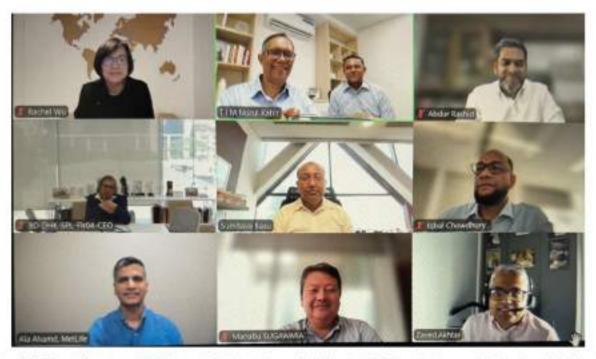
Representing FICCI, Tax and Tariff Committee Chair Mr. Mohammad Iqbal Chowdhury and Executive Director Mr. T.I.M. Nurul Kabir actively contributed to the discussion, alongside esteemed officials, including the NBR Chairman, the Finance Division Secretary, the ERD Secretary, and the Financial Institutions Division Secretary.

#### FICCI PRESIDENT HOSTS MEETING WITH CEO'S OF MEMBER COMPANIES



FICCI President Mr. Zaved Akhtar hosted a meeting at the FICCI office, which was attended by Ms. Monisha Abraham, Managing Director & Chief Executive Officer of British American Tobacco (BAT); Mr. Paul Holloway, Managing Director of JT International Bangladesh Limited; Mr. Gintautas Dirgela, Director - Corporate Affairs & Communications at JT International Bangladesh Limited; Mr. Reza-ur-Rahman Mahmud, Chief Executive Officer of Philip Morris Bangladesh; and Executive Director TIM Nurul Kabir. The meeting brought together distinguished leaders to engage in meaningful discussions.

#### 15TH BOARD MEETING



The 15th Board Meeting of FICCI was held virtually on 16th March 2025. Presided over by President Mr. Zaved Akhtar and attended by other board members, the meeting centered on vital discussions and strategic planning, emphasizing FICCI's commitment to enhancing the business environment in Bangladesh.

#### FELLOWSHIP DINNER AT RESIDENCE OF SOUTH KOREAN AMBASSADOR



#### MEETING OF FICCI TARIFF, TAXATION, AND REGULATORY AFFAIRS COMMITTEE (2024-25)



On 3rd April 2025, the FICCI Standing Committee for Tariff, Taxation, and Regulatory Affairs (2024-25) held a virtual meeting. Presided over by the committee chair, Mr. Mohammad Igbal Chowdhury, the session was attended by committee members who contributed to discussions on key issues and priorities for the upcoming term.

#### NEW MEMBER ENROLLMENT IN FICCI



#### VFS Global Bangladesh Pvt. Ltd.

FICCI is delighted to welcome VFS Global, the world's leading outsourcing and technology services specialist for governments and diplomatic missions, as a new member. Mr. Mohiuddin Howlader, Finance Controller - Bangladesh, received the membership certificate from FICCI Executive Director TIM Nurul Kabir.

Supporting 69 governments worldwide, VFS Global handles administrative tasks for visa, passport, and consular services, allowing authorities to focus on core functions. With a strong focus on innovation-including the adoption of Generative Al-the company operates 3,593 Application Centres across 158 countries, having processed over 309 million applications and 159 million biometric enrolments to date.



#### UPCOMING EVENT



#### NEW COUNTRY MANAGER JOINS DACHSER (BANGLADESH)





Mr. Naresh Raghubir Chaudhary Country Manager DACHSER (Bangladesh) Limited

Mr. Naresh Raghubir Chaudhary joins DACHSER (Bangladesh) Limited as Country Manager. With nearly two decades of extensive experience in the freight forwarding industry, Mr. Naresh has held leadership roles at renowned global logistics firms including DHL, DB Schenker, Dachser, and Aramex. His proven track record of delivering results through strategic insight and dynamic leadership-both in domestic and international markets-positions him well to lead DACHSER Bangladesh into its next phase of growth and excellence.

#### NEW CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER JOINS BANGLALINK

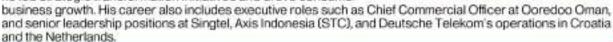


### banglalink

Mr. Johan Buse Chief Executive Officer Banglalink Digital Communications Ltd.

Johan Buse is a seasoned global senior executive with over two decades of leadership experience in the telecommunications and digital sectors across Europe, Asia, and the Middle East. He was appointed Chief Executive Officer of Banglalink Digital Communications Ltd., VEON's digital operator in Bangladesh, effective April 6, 2025.

Before joining Banglalink, Johan served as Chief of the Consumer Business Group at StarHub in Singapore, where he led strategic transformation initiatives and drove consumer





#### NEWLY APPOINTED DEPUTY CEO OF BANGLALINK





Jahrat Adib Chowdhury Appointed Deputy CEO Banglalink Digital Communications Ltd.

Jahrat is serving as the Deputy Chief Executive Officer of Banglalink. She joined Banglalink on September 15, 2014, assuming the role of Chief Legal Officer and Company Secretary. Jahrat, a Barristerat-Law from Lincoln's Inn, UK, and an Advocate of the Supreme Court of Bangladesh has over two decades of professional experience.

Prior to her tenure at Banglalink, Jahrat served as the Country Head of Legal & Compliance and was a member of the Country Executive Committee at Novartis (Bangladesh) Limited. From 2010 to 2013, she held the position of Head of Legal & Compliance at Grameenphone IT Limited (later known as Accenture Bangladesh Ltd.) and concurrently led the Corporate Affairs function. Before that, she held various roles within Grameenphone Limited.







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# সুরক্ষিত রাখে আপনার ভালোবাসার সবকিছু!



## **উন্মোচিত** হোক নতুন **দিগন্ত**



আরএকে সিরামিকস QR কোড দিয়ে

পণ্যের তথ্য জানা এখন আরও সহজ।

- ় টেক্সচার ও ফিনিশ
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- নিকটতম RAK Ceramics ডিসন্ধে মেন্টার খুঁজাত এবং সরাসরি কালেকশন দেখাত-

QR কোড স্ক্যান করুন।



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## EN 15343

### CECERTIFICATION - TRACEABILITY OF PLASTICS RECYCLING AND RECYCLED PLASTIC CONTENT



#### WHAT IS EN 15343?

Sustainable plastic recycling is crucial to reducing waste, conserving resources and promoting economic growth.

Compliance with EN 15343, the European standard for plastics recycling traceability and recycled content, ensures that plastic manufacturers and packagers meet stringent traceability and recycling requirements.

This is often a key factor in regulatory compliance and can be essential for obtaining tax reductions on non-reusable plastic packaging.

#### WHAT ARE THE KEY REQUIREMENTS OF EN 15343?

A system with a documentary structure is required to meet the requirements of the reference standard, including:

- · Control of incoming materials
- · Control of the recycling production process
- · Characteristics of recycled plastics
- Traceability
- · Quality assessment
- · Calculation of recycled content

#### WHO IS IT FOR?

Plastic manufacturers, packagers, recyclers and processors.

#### WHAT IS THE EN 15343 CERTIFICATION PROCESS?

You will need to follow the requirements specified in the standard, be prepared for the audits and rectify any nonconformities. The initial certification audit is divided into a Stage 1 Audit and Stage 2 Audit. Upon satisfactory audits, you will achieve certification which is subject to surveillance audits.

#### KEY BENEFITS

- Show your adherence to traceability and recycling standards to meet legal and regulatory requirements
- Enhance sustainability by reducing single-use plastics and contributing to a circular economy by incorporating recycled materials into your products
- Ensure compliance with the main obligations of the EU Directive on single-use plastics
- Support the UN Sustainable Development Goals and Agenda 2030 by implementing sustainable recycling practices
- Improve your brand reputation
- · Apply for tax reductions

#### WHY SGS?

As a global leader in sustainability and certification, we offer unrivaled certification expertise and reliability. Our specialized knowledge in plastics recycling and sustainability enables us to provide customized solutions tailored to your specific needs – guiding you through every step of the certification process.

As an independent, accurate and trusted benchmark in the industry, we are dedicated to supporting your journey towards greater sustainability and regulatory compliance. We are here to help you enhance your recycling processes, improve operational efficiency and minimize the risks associated with non-compliance.

#### ABOUT SGS

We are SGS – the world's leading testing, inspection and certification company. We are recognized as the global benchmark for sustainability, quality and integrity.



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Haleon pic is a British multinational company headquartered in Weybridge, Surrey, United Kingdom. In July 2022, we became the world's first truly global, standalone consumer healthcare company. Haleon is the result of the combination of three consumer health businesses – GSK, Novartis, and Pfizer – over the last decade. The early foundations to what is today Haleon are in a single apothecary shop in London, opened in 1715 by Silvanus Bevan.

Haleon is a world-leading consumer health company with a clear purpose to deliver better everyday health with humanity. Some of our brands\* have over 170 years' worth of history and are built on trusted science, innovation and human understanding and are trusted by millions of consumers globally.



















\*All brands are not registered or available in Bangladesh. Only Sensodyne, Parudontax and Eno are currently available in Bangladesh.