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Public Private Partnership for Economic Integration

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Editor's Note

Public-Private Partnership for Regional Economic Cooperation

Asia remains the fastest-growing region on the planet. Growth in developing East Asia and Pacific is expected to remain resilient over the next three years, according to a recent World Bank report. As a growing region, Asia is the future of the world. By 2030, the Region will represent two-thirds of the global middle class. Southeast Asia will play an increasingly important role in the world economy. Some countries of this sub-region have been categorized as middle-income economies, and have started to turn their attention towards avoiding the middle-income trap. However, the region still faces significant risks to growth and countries need to take measures to reduce financial and fiscal vulnerabilities.

Asia's long standing traditions has helped to promote regional cooperation, however progress is uneven and hence it has left many unrealized opportunities. Recent estimates suggest that Asia Pacific Region is only achieving 47 per cent of its integration potential, and among the subregions, the largest untapped potential for integration is in South Asia and in North and Central Asia.

Boosting regional integration has the potential to both create economic dynamism and facilitate shared prosperity through promoting greater market integration, seamless connectivity, financial cooperation and stability and improved living conditions. The implementation of the 2030 SDG Agenda requires a fundamental rethinking to set regional integration processes on a path that incorporates sustainability.

Further, infrastructure connectivity plays a crucial role in bridging different areas of the Asian Region and enabling them to reap the full socio-economic benefits of economic cooperation and integration. Nevertheless, further improvement of infrastructure in the region faces major challenges due to the lack of effective mechanisms for coordination and dialogue on regional integration through funding infrastructure projects.

On the other hand, infrastructure development is central to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development with at least 12 out of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) having a direct link to infrastructure. Across the Asia Region, economic growth as well as broader development of economies is hindered by a shortage of roads, mass rapid transit systems, telecommunications, power plants, water and sanitation and other basic infrastructure, all of which are critical to achieve sustainable development.

Recognizing the potential of the private sector for sustainable development, it is vital that the Asia region develops new forms of partnerships with businesses that go beyond the delivery of traditional government-to-government official development assistance and technical support. Such partnerships must go deeper and should focus on key areas of inclusive and sustainable development that are of mutual interest, including science, technology and innovation, human resource development, infrastructure development and multi-dimensional South-South cooperation.

Governments must also take the lead in ensuring that frameworks and national action plans are in place to allow for greater business contributions to the SDGs and to regional integration goals. Likewise, they must also take steps to eliminate hurdles preventing the private sector from operating effectively, such as irregular or unstable power supply, weak or limited property rights, and barriers to cross-border trade.

Bangladesh is uniquely positioned to take advantage of its location in the eastern sub-region of South Asia. It can be a centre-point of different initiatives that seek to connect BBIN with the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), Bangladesh-India-China-Myanmar (BICM) cooperation arrangement, and also with other East Asian countries.

With deeper trade, investment and connectivity linkages within the sub-region, Bangladesh can benefit from new markets, new import sources of high-quality and better priced products, increasing opportunities for transport and logistics services. Increased trade will contribute directly to investment and job creation in manufacturing, agriculture as well as services which will facilitate to achieve its goal to become middle income status by 2021.

The first ever UNESCAP Asia Pacific Business Forum was held in Dhaka during 8-9 February. The Forum concluded with a call for deepening of regional integration in Asia and the Pacific with the view to lifting millions out of poverty, driving economic growth and achieving sustainable development goals.

ICC Bangladesh News

Asia Pacific Business Forum 2017 held in Dhaka
Asia Pacific needs to be more integrated : Speakers said

The Thirteenth Asia-Pacific Business Forum was held at the Pan Pacific Sonargaon Hotel in Dhaka, Bangladesh on 8 and 9 February 2017. The Forum was attended by up to 500 participants fromand abroad representing government, business, civil society, academia and others.

The Forum was organized for the first time in Bangladesh by the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) Bangladesh and United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) under the patronage of the Ministry of Commerce of the Government of Bangladesh..

Partners and sponsors of the Forum comprised of the following: Bangladesh Investment Development Authority, Standard Chartered (platinum partners);Bangladesh Insurance Association, City Bank, Shasha Denims Ltd. (gold partners); BergerTrusted Worldwide, Eastland Insurance, Green Delta Insurance, Joules Power Limited, National Housing, Navana Group, Reliance Insurance Limited, The Merchants Ltd., Uttara Finance and Investments Limited (silver partners); The Daily Star, The Financial Express, Prothom Alo, Samakal, Channel i, Channel 24, Maasranga Television were the media partners and Centre for Policy Dialogure (CPD) was the knowledge partner of the event.

H.E. Mr. Md. Abdul Hamid, Hon'ble President of the People's Republic of Bangladesh was the Chief Guestand inaugurated the Forum held on 8 February at Pan Pacific Sonargaon Hotel. A keynote address on behalf of business was delivered by Dr. Victor K. Fung, former global chairman of ICC and Chairman of Fung Group. Ms. Shamshad Akhtar, Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and Executive Secretary of ESCAP and Mr. Mahbubur Rahman, President of ICC Bangladesh delivered a welcome address. H.E. Mr. Tofail Ahmed, M.P., Hon'ble Minister of Commerce of the Government of Bangladesh delivered theopening address on behalf of the Government.

The overarching theme of the 2-day Forum, "Regional Integration to Achieve Sustainable Development" was discussed in a Ministerial Plenary Session on: "Linking Business with the Sustainable Development Goals: What Can We Do?", two plenary business sessions on: "Supporting SDGs through Digital Financial Models by Inclusive Business" and "Supporting and Empowering Disadvantaged MSMEs to Become More Competitive and Sustainable"respectively and three parallel sessions on the following topics: "Devising Strategies for Resilience: Role of Business in Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Adaptation"; "New Energy Realities: Building a Resilient and Low-Carbon Future"; and "Supporting Trade and Transport Facilitation for Regional Integration." A side event on "Economic

Outlook and Key Policy Challenges in Emerging Asia" was also organized.

Two pre-Forum events were organized:(a) ESBN (ESCAP Sustainable Business Network) ndividual Task Force Meetings on 7 February (b) Thirteenth Session of ESCAP Business Advisory Council (EBAC) and Third Session of ESBN on 8 February The event comes at a time when the 28-bloc European Union, the model of economic integration, is soul-searching following the shock Brexit vote and the new US administration's inward-looking trade policies. The International Chamber of Commerce Bangladesh co-organised the event with the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and Ministry of Commerce-Bangladesh. This is the first time that Bangladesh hosted the event, which has been taking place since 2004.

The Forum concluded with a call for deepening of regional integration in Asia and the Pacific with the view to lifting millions out of poverty, driving economic growth and achieving sustainable development goals. The objective of the two-day conference was to discuss the role and needs of businesses in achieving inclusive, resilient and sustainable development.



Opening Session

The Opening Session was Inaugurated by H.E. Mr. Md. Abdul Hamid, Hon'ble President of the People's Republic of Bangladesh.



Other Speakers of the Inaugural Session were H.E. Abul Maal Abdul Muhith, M.P., Minister for Finance, Government of Bangladesh; H.E. Mr. Tofail Ahmed, M.P., Minister for Commerce, Govt. of Bangladesh; H.E. Prof. Gowher Rizvi, Adviser to the Hon'ble Prime Minister for International Relations, Government of Bangladesh; H.E. Mr. Rishad Bathiudeen, Minister of Industry and Commerce, Government of Sri Lanka; H.E. Mr. Romi Gauchan Thakali, Minister for Commerce, Government of Nepal; Dr. Mukhisa Kituyi, Secretary-General, UNCTAD; Ms. Shamshad Akhtar, Under Secretary General ESCAP; ICC Bangladesh President Mahbubur Rahman; Mr. Latifur Rahman, Vice President, ICC Bangladesh; Dr. Wencai Zhang, Vice-President (Operations), Asian Development Bank (ADB); Dr. Victor K. Fung, Former Global Chairman of ICC and Chairman of Fung Group; and Datuk Seri Mohamed Iqbal Rawther, Chairperson of the ESCAP Business Advisory Council.

H.E. Mr. Md. Abdul Hamid, Hon'ble President of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

H.E. Mr. Md. Abdul Hamid, Hon'ble President of the People's Republic of Bangladesh in his inaugural address recognized the role of APBF as an important regional platform for multi-stakeholder dialogue. He noted that the Asia-Pacific Region had great potential and was characterized by rich diversity, abundance of natural resources, a wide range of markets and levels of development and human resources.

However, he noted the persistence of too much poverty and, in this regard, emphasized the need for South-South cooperation, in particular for least developed countries such as Bangladesh. It was particularly important to boost investment in infrastructure, ICT and social development. Trade and foreign direct investment (FDI) were central to human civilization and should be promoted to create jobs for the poor. ESCAP could play a role in this regard.

He offered zero tolerance to terrorism and emphasized the need for peace and prosperity. He described Bangladesh's initiatives in developing infrastructure and the challenges ahead. In particular, he noted his country's vulnerability to climate change as described in the ESCAP Economic and Social Survey. Therefore, regional cooperation to address these challenges was essential. He formally declared APBF open.

Mr. Abul Maal Abdul Muhith, M.P.

H.E. Mr. Abul Maal Abdul Muhith, M.P. noted that enhanced regional cooperation and integration were necessary but required a sacrifice in reduced national sovereignty. While emphasizing the importance of trade facilitation and energy for development, he also noted the investment and connectivity gaps.

In this regard, he noted that sub-regional cooperation within the framework of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) held great promise and required a consolidation of national institutions under one umbrella to avoid duplication. He called for enhanced integration in specific sectors, including in production and consumption, with the ultimate aim to eliminate poverty from the sub-region.



Mr. Tofail Ahmed, M.P.

In his address, H.E. Mr. Tofail Ahmed, M.P. noted that the global scenario is changing and that the Asia-Pacific Region is increasing in importance and leading globalization and regional integration initiatives. In this context, he welcomed the conclusion of the 4th Round of the Asia-Pacific Trade Agreement



(APTA) and ratification of four framework agreements and the progress made under ASEAN.

However, he warned against complacency and that poverty remained a concern for the region. In this regard, there was a need to continue the reduction of non-tariff barriers to boost trade and investment as engines of growth. He outlined the progress being made in Bangladesh with economic development under the current government under Vision 21 including digitization. Bangladesh had already achieved high growth rates and policies were implemented in support of business, trade and investment. He noted that APBF provided a useful platform for multi-stakeholder discussions on issues of importance to the role of business in achieving sustainable development.

Prof. Gowher Rizvi



H.E. Dr. Gowher Rizvi noted the new reality of Bangladesh which did not match its reputation. In particular, he noted that Bangladesh had made remarkable progress in economic development despite the challenges and hostile international environment. It had a well-established democracy and political stability which helped sustained development.

Success was also helped by increased remittances and an agricultural revolution in irrigation. Social development objectives in areas such as health for all and rising GDP/capita indicators were high compared to its peers. Women development and empowerment and social safety nets had also significantly increased. The country had built major infrastructure with its own resources and no longer faced prolonged power cuts.

Mr. Rishad Bathiudeen



H.E. Mr. Rishad Bathiudeen remarked that Sri Lanka was well on its way to achieve middle income status and the importance of PPPs in this process. In particular, PPPs had been successful in the areas of infrastructure, such as the development of transport, water, energy, sanitation, irrigation and urban development, including the development of port cities. He called for enhanced PPP initiatives and funding from the private sector rather than from the Government. In other words, he called for private sector-led PPPs rather than public-sector led PPPs.

Mr. Romi Gauchan Thakali



H.E. Mr. Romi Gauchan Thakali noted the role of APBF as a useful platform to promote private sector cooperation and dialogue. He emphasized the importance of the SDGs, in particular as poverty continued to persist in the region. The region faced major challenges such as climate change, natural disasters, corruption, terrorism, cross-border crime, etc.

In order to effectively address these challenges regional cooperation was required. In this context, he noted that his country, Nepal, should optimize the use of its abundant natural resources, as well as trade, investment, tourism, technology transfer, etc. and pursue enhanced transport and ICT connectivity for economic growth and prosperity.

He noted that least developed countries faced severe resource gaps, lack of effective market access, supply-side capacity constraints, regulatory red tape, etc. However, Nepal had made progress in improving the enabling environment for the private sector but increased investment in state-of-the art technologies was still required.

He concluded by identifying opportunities for Nepal such as agriculture, tourism, natural resources, and hydro-power which required larger inflows of FDI. Capacity building and technical assistance was required to help Nepal realize its full potential.

Dr. Mukhisa Kituyi



Dr. Mukhisa Kituyi highlighted three issues of importance: (a) the importance of multilateralism and engagement; (b) the need for the Asia-Pacific region to provide leadership; and (c) the need for global investment and role of Asia-Pacific as the leading source and destination of greenfield FDI.

Dr. Shamshad Akhtar

Dr. Shamshad Akhtar, Under-Secretary-General of the United



Nations and Executive Secretary of ESCAP opened her address by acknowledging the role of EBAC and ESBN in supporting APBF. She noted that regional cooperation has renewed its significance though progress has been uneven. There were unrealized opportunities, especially in South Asia. The private sector played an important role in fostering regional cooperation and in financing infrastructure, global value chains, ICT and energy networks to achieve seamless regional connectivity but barriers to intraregional trade needed to be further reduced.

She identified new drivers of regional cooperation such as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the ASEAN Economic Community, the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative, the Eurasian Economic Union single economic space, APTA and the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement which was still under negotiation. ESCAP supported all these processes. Market integration played an important role in fostering regional integration for economic dynamism and this issue, along with seamless connectivity, enhanced financial cooperation and increasing economic and technical cooperation to address shared vulnerabilities and risks was discussed at the ministerial level in ESCAP.

Ms. Akhtar emphasized the need to harness the capacity of business to support implementation of the 2030 Agenda through financing, innovation and development of new technologies but the enabling environment for business, in particular at the national level, needed improvement. In other words, the costs of doing business needed to be reduced. In this context, she referred to the regional framework agreement on cross-border paperless trade that ESCAP member States had adopted and was now open for signature.

She noted that the private sector was interested in the SDGs and many businesses were embedding the SDGs in their operations and pursuing business opportunities related to achieving the SDGs. Initiatives such as the Global Compact helped business align their strategies with the SDGs and selected ESBN task forces were helping develop responsible business conduct models. She called on business to pursue new and deeper forms of partnerships to boost financing for development; science, technology and innovation; human resource development, South-South cooperation; and other forms of cooperation.

She also called on EBAC to be revitalized to allow it to play a productive role in achieving sustainable development and regional integration. She concluded her address by noting that the next APBF would be held in Hong Kong in 2018 and hoped that the outcome of the Forum would feed into the regional intergovernmental processes and, ultimately, to the global High Level Political Forum.

Dr. Wencai Zhang



Dr. Wencai Zhang noted the importance of an enabling environment for the private sector as driving force of economic growth and ADB's commitment to harnessing the strength of the private sector. The private sector contributed to regional integration and could contribute to inter-governmental initiatives. In particular, the large needs for infrastructure investments required private sector contributions and participation. He noted that the private sector also contributed to technology and innovation to meet social and environmental development goals, for instance, through the development of renewable energy technology. The private sector's contribution to PPPs and expansion of global value chains for inclusive growth was also noted.

Dr. Victor K. Fung



Dr. Victor K. Fung noted the achievements of Bangladesh under the MDGs and current initiatives to achieve the SDGs. He observed with concern that there was a rise in global anti-globalization sentiments but that protectionism was not the answer.

China had taken the lead in promoting globalization for joint prosperity. In this regard, the Silk Road project cum One Road One Belt or Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) held great promise for infrastructure connectivity and intraregional trade and, ultimately, for achieving the SDGs.

China's motive for the BRI was to focus on social and environmental benefits rather than mere economic growth. Issues such as innovation, high tech and robotics played an important role in the BRI.

He also observed that the new normal in China entailed a shift towards domestic consumption with reduced job opportunities in exports. As demand from OECD countries was declining, developing countries

could fill the gap through a rising middle class.

Mahbubur Rahman



ICC Bangladesh President Mr. Mahbubur Rahman in his welcome address noted that APBF has been the best platform for regional multi-stakeholder dialogue since its inception in Shanghai in 2004. He observed that the world economy was not delivering desired social outcomes and that a new global architecture was required under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development that would leave nobody behind.

As part of this architecture he observed that: (a) the Asia-Pacific region is the powerhouse of the world and should take a lead; (b) young people deserve special attention as they shape the future; (c) the SDGs are guiding force for the private sector and decent jobs and that, in this regard, business should adopt principles of responsible business conduct; (d) regional and subregional cooperation played a critical role for the implementation of SDGs; (e) legislation was required to make all parties comply with achieving SDGs. He concluded by noting that Bangladesh had achieved most Millennium Development Goals and was striving to achieve the SDGs. The private sector remained engaged with the Government. APBF was a useful platform to articulate strategies for public-private partnerships (PPPs) to achieve the SDGs.

Mr. Latifur Rahman



Mr. Latifur Rahman delivered vote of thanks. In his address he said "on behalf of Members of ICC Bangladesh we extend warmest felicitations to all our guests from abroad". He particularly thanked the Honourable Ministers from Sri Lanka and Nepal for taking time off their busy schedule to join APBF 2017. He thanked all the speakers and discussants who have graciously agreed to speak in the different sessions of the Forum.

Datuk Seri Mohamed Iqbal Rawther



Mr. Datuk Seri Mohamed Iqbal Rawther noted that APBF was the product of UNESCAP under the UN system and that APBF 2017 had reached a new level which should provide the benchmark for future sessions of the Forum. With regard to the China-led BRI he noted that there had been an Islamic precedent in the past. He thanked all speakers.

Ministerial Plenary Session
Linking Business with the Sustainable Development Goals: What Can We Do?

The plenary session was moderated by H.E. Mr. Tofail Ahmed, M.P., Minister of Commerce, Government of Bangladesh. Ms. Shamshad Akthar, Executive Secretary of ESCAP delivered introductory remarks. In her remarks she said "It can make profound contributions to regional integration and sustainable development." Research indicates 71 percent of the businesses are already planning on how to engage with the sustainable development goals, while 41 percent will embed the SDGs into their business operations, she added.

The private sector can play a vital role in regional integration and poverty reduction by creating jobs for the young generation, said Mukhisa Kituyi, Secretary-General of United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. By aligning themselves with the SDGs, the private sector stands to potentially benefit from $12 trillion worth of business opportunities globally, which could create almost 380 million jobs by 2030.

"Such partnerships must go deeper and should focus on key areas of inclusive and sustainable development that are of mutual interest, including science, technology and innovation, human resource development, infrastructure development and multi-dimensional south-south cooperation," Mukisha added. Deeper regional integration and more investment in infrastructure are needed to create an environment for more cross-border investment, he said

Wencai Zhang, vice-president of the Asian Development Bank, called for implementation of the Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal motor vehicle agreement at the earliest. He also suggested developing more economic corridors inside the country, like special economic zones in Bangladesh, or along the border. The Manila-based multilateral lender will continue its support in different projects in this region and take up more projects. "Primarily, the private sector should come forward first for implementing the projects", he said.



Last year, the ADB as a regional bank delivered $17.5 billion, where $14 billion was co-financed, he said. It has extended $1.1 billion to Bangladesh and is trying to provide more funds such that the country can implement the seventh five-year plan easily, Zhang added.

Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, the north-east India and West Bengal are integrated, said Gowher Rizvi, foreign affairs adviser to the prime minister. "This sub-regional cooperation has a common desire to fight poverty, manage water resources and water problems." The South Asian sub-regional cooperation agreed in numerous areas to provide seamless movement, he said, adding that the government is working to upgrade the existing transport infrastructure. Rizvi said the government can do with a helping hand from the private sector as upgrading of infrastructure needs massive investment.

Besides, the following speakers made statements: H.E. Mr. Romi Gauchan Thakali, Minister for Commerce, Government of Nepal; Tan Sri Dato' Dr. Michael Yeoh, Chief Executive Officer/Director of the Asian Strategy & Leadership Institute (ASLI); and Mr. Abul Kalam Azad, Principal Coordinator, Sustainable Development Goals Affairs, Prime Minister's Office, Government of Bangladesh.

The main observations, conclusions, recommendations and outcomes of the ministerial plenary session were as follows:

- Regional integration and connectivity are required to achieve the SDGs. Business led trade and investment are essential building blocks of regional integration;
- Global challenges require global solutions. Current anti-globalization trends and retreat from multilateralism are major challenges the world is facing today. There is consensus that the benefits from globalization need to be more equitably distributed. The Asia-Pacific region could take the lead in addressing weaknesses associated with globalization as it was both a leading source and destination of FDI;
- National policy agendas need to be aligned with the SDGs. Various SDGs have a link with business and trade; FDI and global value chains (GVCs) play an important part in regional integration. In this context, it is important to forge effective integration of small land medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) into GVCs; The development of services in areas such as health, finance and tourism held great promise for achieving the SDGs;
- Globalization and participation in GVCs expose business to risks which can be reduced through global and regional cooperation and public-private partnerships; Trade has increased through enhanced connectivity but South Asia remains the least integrated subregion in the world. Addressing common challenges, in particular reducing poverty, requires cooperation, not confrontation;
- Countries should move from promoting investment and trade to active investment facilitation through their investment promotion agencies;
- It needs to be recognized that individual countries have different priorities and achieve their development objectives at different speeds; Business needs to be on board to achieve the SDGs not only through the adoption of enhanced production models and digitization but also through the adoption of responsible business practices and conduct and a higher sense of business ethics and accountability. Sustainable business is good business;
- Industry-based sustainability models could provide guidance to help business contribute to the SDGs, such as responsible or "green" stock exchanges;
- Achieving the SDGs needs to be part of corporate success and growth. SDGs provide business opportunities in areas such as sustainable agriculture, energy and cities; Business contribution to SDGs and adoption of responsible business practices need to be

monitored through mechanisms such as the Global Compact;

- In order to enhance regional connectivity, private sector investment in infrastructure is required; Bangladesh can act as a bridge between South Asia and South-East Asia. However, the country and other least developed countries are in need of technical assistance and capacity building to help them achieve the SDGs;
- There is no return to the government-led development paradigms of the 1960s/1970s. It is now the turn of the private sector to take the lead in development. However, for that purpose, the private sector needs the support from governments and the international community;
- In particular, public-private-civil society tripartite partnerships are important to achieve the SDGs but to be effective they require an enabling environment, including a proper regulatory framework and While governments could ease the tax burden of business they still required fiscal revenue to provide public goods and services. In particular, governments need to speed up regulation to keep pace with technological progress.

Supporting SDGs through Digital Financial Models by Inclusive Business

This session was moderated by Dr. Salehuddin Ahmed, former Governor, Bangladesh Bank. Technology, innovation and suitable regulations are the key to deepening financial inclusion, analysts said.

"We need a grand alliance to create a new inclusive model where the government, mobile operators, payment service providers, banks and users will get a common platform with only one objective in mind," said Muhammad A (Rumee) Ali, chairman of ICC Bangladesh Banking Commission and CEO of Bangladesh International Arbitration Centre.

Mr. Ali said bKash, a mobile financial service provider, did a great job in Bangladesh so far but it is only a payment system, which helps to transfer money. He stressed the need for proper identification of the customers for suitable wallets and a balanced regulation regime. The country needs fast and cheap payments, which will also help create a digital currency; here, the last mile access is very important, said Ali.

Salehuddin Ahmed said the regulator should not be extra cautious or careless about any new technology. "We can't stop technology but we need to be careful about it. We need to try to find out the people behind the technology, their purpose and how they are using it. "The regulator shouldn't put everything on the bank's shoulder."

Barbara Meynert, chair of ESBN Task Force on Digital Economy, said technological challenges do not create any barriers. Rather, it is regulation that is the main obstacle to financial digitisation, she added.

Ten years ago, China was a cash-driven economy but now 75 percent of their transactions happen through technology, because of a change in regulation. The same thing happened in India as well, she added.

Kamal Quadir, chief executive of bKash, said people earlier used to keep their money under their mattresses, but they now go for a digital format. Money is sent from one mobile to another, which reduces the cost of human intervention. It will lead to achieving the SDGs before the targeted time of 2030, said Quadir. "This innovation gives advantages with some kinds of challenges. And just because there are challenges, it doesn't mean that we shouldn't pursue the solutions."

Mahtabuddin Ahmed, managing director of Robi, said mobile operators have the investment and technological capability as well as the platform to give financial services. Arastoo Khan, chairman of Islami Bank Bangladesh Ltd, said digital financial services will be the real game changer and they are going



to concentrate on the issue, though there are some challenges.

Sohail RK Hussain, managing director and CEO of City Bank Ltd, said digital banking will help establish a cashless society and that will play an important role in achieving further economic growth.

Besides, the following speakers made statements: Prof. Dr. Naoyuki Yoshino, Dean, Asian Development Bank Institute; Mr. George Kam Ho Yuen, Board Director, Industrial and Commercial Bank of China (Asia); Mr. Phang Yew Kiat, Vice Chair and CEO of Credit China FinTech Holding Limited; Mr. Vineet Sachdev, Director, BOSS BPO (a unit of Bahri Trading Company, Sachdeva Group).

The main observations, conclusions, recommendations and outcomes of the session were as follows:

- As many people have no bank account digitization of cash and currency (digital liquidity) rather sooner than later is required to better address corruption and black money, increase tax revenue and generally achieve the SDGs leaving nobody behind;
- Digitization is consumer-friendly, low cost and therefore pro-poor as most people have access to the Internet in some form or another (e.g. cheap smart phones). Cash is costly; Digitalization and digital finance provides affordability, convenience, security and efficiency to a wide range of customers, many of whom have no bank account;
- In order to achieve effective digitalization of currencies and money regulation needs to be stepped up, including for enhancing cyber security. However, it is recognized that there are regulatory challenges that need to be effectively addressed;
- Effective digital financial platforms for payments, settlements and storage need to be designed on the basis of a grand alliance which brings together all stakeholders, such as retail agents, Internet (e.g. e-commerce) companies, government, regulators, customers and financers;
- Digital technologies can help the mobilization of start-up and venture capital with Internet companies as intermediaries. Such technologies should also enable companies to advertise and sell online on a trial basis;
- Internet companies can use big data to extend effective credit and credit guarantees for SMEs with no credit record;
- Though commercial banks and financial institutions face technology disruption in their services, there would still be a role for them as they have advantages in terms of financial expertise, and having a strong customer base and credit records. However, banks have to upgrade Internet-based technologies, including the expansion of smart branches;
- There is a broad scope of fintech, including blockchain and others. Financial technology needs to be combined with innovative business models to achieve success and growth;
- Fintech companies need to adapt to new regulation and fast-changing technologies and digitization of currencies. At the same time, regulators need to adapt to allow fintech companies to deliver and grow. Regulation needs to be balanced with innovation. It should be neither over-cautious nor over-zealous;
- Mobile banking provides useful services to non-bank people. New digital applications, such as e-Wallet for online payment, continue to emerge;
- Artifical intelligence can be used for business ratings.

Supporting Trade and Transport Facilitation for Regional Integration

This session was moderated by Mr. Hedayetullah Al Mamoon, ndc, Senior Secretary, Ministry of Commerce. Speakers at the session highlighted the necessity of regional integration through investment from public and private sectors and uniform policies and system. They said this would ease the cost of doing business. The speakers were sharing their views on major obstacles, role of governance and infrastructure needed for promoting trade and transport facilitation.

Senior Secretary, IRD and Chairman of National Board of Revenue Nojibur Rahman highlighted the role of the NBR in facilitating trade and said importance of cooperation, coordination, coherence, communication and courage are necessary to ensure trade facilitation for establishing regional integration. Highlighting the potential of Bangladesh Bhutan, India and Nepal (BBIN) sub-regional forum, he said NBR is also working on avoiding double taxation through intra-regional dialogue.

Secretary (Asia and Pacific) Ministry of Foreign Affairs Mahbub Uz Zaman said trade and transport facilitation helps reduce cost of doing business significantly. He hoped that benefits would be derived equally by all irrespective of traders, producers, workers and consumers. People-to-people connectivity in this regard works as a pillar for facilitation, he added.

Country Manager, Bangladesh, Bhutan & Nepal, IFC, World Bank Group Wendy Jo Werner highlighted the need for private investment and private sector development for improving trade and transport arenas and said Bangladesh could get benefit through improving logistic facilities and efficiency level in both export and import. She hoped that some major transport projects taken

under public-private partnership might bring changes in efficiency level. In its absence, like many other countries, Bangladesh remains behind in export and import ratio. She said all these are important for sustainable development by increasing connectivity and transportation.

Dr Mustafizur Rahman, Executive Director of Centre for Policy Dialogue, laid importance to south-south trade to reduce cost of trade facilitation saying that it is still high in South Asia. Pointing to other regional integration in the name of one belt, one region and BIMSTEC free trade, he said integration with South Asia and South East Asia is necessary to grab enormous opportunities of the 21st century and reach the desired goal of becoming a middle-income country as well as upper middle-income country.

Trade facilitation is the best way to translate cooperative advantage into competitive advantage by reducing tariff-related costs, he said also laying importance to comprehensive agreement on various issues including common standard certification, harmonised border system, investment in human resource development and integrated electronic data system.

Dr Ravi Ratnayake said trade and transport facilitation is neglected in the field of regional integration. The government has a role in trade facilitation by reducing policy-related cost, he added.

Though the Asia and Pacific region has champions like Singapore, he said it also has countries like Bangladesh which remain quite behind the rating in trade facilitation. He suggested opening up of single window at national level, proper utilisation of PPP in terms of financing and taking efforts to implement WTO agreements.

Country Head of Banking, Standard Chartered Bank Limited Naser Ezaz Bijoy laid importance to regional integration for reducing cost and time in trade for economic growth and increasing purchasing power and said foreign banks can provide support to improving trade-related investment. He said trade and transport facilitation helps decentralisation and increases income generation activities for the region's 1.7 billion population. He also laid importance to political consensus for overcoming challenges and setting priorities due to conflicts among countries having close borders.

Professor Sheikh Morshed Jahan sought sustainable development for inclusive growth in the region saying that regional integration can ensure this by developing marketing system. He, however, called for focusing efforts to avoid frustration that may be created in the process as producers do not get fair prices.

Mr David Morris said the region has massive potential for growth having common history, economic zones with quality food, blue ocean and fish farming. He pleaded for a long-term plan to get the benefit. He said a strategy should be to go for high-quality production not only to get market in the Asia-Pacific region but also in other parts of the world.

Mr Bipul Chatterjee pleaded for regional integration for the ease of doing business and reducing the cost of trade.

The main observations, conclusions, recommendations and outcomes of the session were as follows:



- Trade, investment and transport should be addressed in a holistic manner;
- The ESCAP/World Bank Trade-Cost database revealed that trade costs in the region were still quite high, mostly policy-related, and needed to be reduced;
- Integration and cooperation at subregional and regional level were required to facilitate trade and transport. In this regard, South Asia was lacking behind ASEAN and other subregions. In particular, SAFTA should reduce the negative list;
- ESCAP's Asian Highway and Transnational Railway had greatly contributed to transport connectivity and facilitation in the region. China's Belt and Road Initiative was also identified as an important modality for regional integration in addition to major regional and bilateral trade agreements among key countries of the region;

- Trade and transport facilitation had to be addressed along three pillars: border documentation; border logistics; and behind-the-border logistics;
- In this regard, there was a need to reduce and harmonize customs regulations and procedures among countries through the adoption of single windows, and reduce other non-tariff measures both at and behind the border;
- Trade and transport facilitation required cooperation, coordination, coherence, commitment and courage. It also required the right policies, infrastructure, institutions, procedures and regulations, technologies, resources, data and statistics;
- Both a top-down (from governments) and bottom-up (from customers and business) approach was needed. ICT in particular played an important role in facilitating trade;
- Cross-country motor vehicle agreements among countries were an important modality to facilitate transport. In addition, countries should adopt the Customs Convention on the International Transport of Goods under Cover of TIR Carnets (TIR Convention) and various countries, including China, had already done so;
- Countries were encouraged to establish joint trade and transport facilitation committees or bodies and enhance knowledge sharing among them;
- While the need for value-addition is recognized, rules of origin in regional and bilateral trade agreements should contribute to trade facilitation and not constitute another NTB;
- In promoting trade and transport facilitation, special attention should be paid to the landlocked least developed countries; Trade and transport facilitation should not only benefit traders but also producers, workers and consumers and lead to inclusive growth;
- People-to-people connectivity was important to facilitate trade; Countries were encouraged to ratify and implement the WTO Agreement on Trade Facilitation and the regional framework agreement on cross-border paperless trade under ESCAP;
- There was scope to reduce the lead-time for delivery of products across supply chains, e.g. in ready-made garments. In this context, the role of intermediaries in the supply chain is critical and they should improve their efficiency. For that purpose, and to promote the role of trade facilitation in achieving the SDGs, sustainable market eco-systems that link all GVC actors (including regulators and facilitators) should be promoted; Urban and rural development could be boosted through the improvement of urban and rural transportation, respectively;
- Trade facilitation had been neglected in favour of trade liberalization but had slowly become centre stage of current attention. Trade facilitation measures were needed at the national level (through single window), regional level (e.g. the ESCAP regional framework agreement), and global level (through WTO);
- Political commitment and the setting of realistic agendas were important to achieve meaningful trade and transport facilitation; Commercial banks played an important role in facilitating trade as they provided trade finance;
- Businesses need to adopt long-term strategic thinking on products and markets to promote their growth and sustainability and investment objectives. For instance, China's growing middle class had led to demand for boutique products from the Pacific and this, in turn, had led to expanding air-links between China and the Pacific, opening up opportunities;
- Countries need to pursue comprehensive Sanitary and Phyto-Sanitary Agreements (SPS) based on mutual recognition agreements (MRAs) to facilitate cross-border trade. At the national level, they need to improve standards and testing institutions to ensure compliance with international standards;
- There was a need to invest in human resources development of customs officials; Aid for trade should target trade facilitation; Protectionism, including an increase in G20 trade restrictive measures, should be actively fought in WTO; Avoidance of double taxation agreements facilitated FDI and trade but in practice they were not so easy to conclude.

Supporting and Empowering Disadvantaged MSMEs to Become More Competitive and Sustainable

This session was moderated by Mr. Md. Mosharraf Hossain Bhuiyan, ndc, Senior Secretary, Ministry of Industries of the Government of Bangladesh. Mrs. Rokia Afzal Rahman, Vice President, ICC Bangladesh said access to finance remains one of the major impediments to growth of micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) even though the firms generally have a good track record of repayment. "SMEs are not defaulters and women entrepreneurs pay back all the time," Rokia Afzal Rahman added.

Rokia Rahman said the banks and policymakers should come forward to support the growth of MSMEs for poverty reduction and attainment of the sustainable development goals by 2030. She said she has been with a financial institution for the last 30 years whose 80 percent of the loans are given to SMEs. "What I find is that SMEs are not wilful defaulters. Sometimes they might get into



serious problems. The borrower dies or might get into some serious problems." If one SME does not pay back, it will not cause much of a dent to the bank's balance sheet. "But if a big borrower defaults, your entire money is gone."

She went on to suggest that banks should learn from the microfinance programme. "We have to sensitise the bankers. We have to ask the government to come forward with certain policies to support the SMEs," Rahman added.

Speakers said the segment is one of the key drivers of the Bangladesh economy and generators of jobs. But the enterprises suffer from various constraints mainly inadequate access to credit and lack of skill and training and market access.

After agriculture, SMEs in Bangladesh constitute the largest segment of the private sector economy, said Momtaz Uddin Ahmed, director of SME Foundation. The SME sector employs 70-80 percent of non-agricultural workforce. Ahmed, also an honorary professor at the University of Dhaka's economics department, said 30-32 percent of the SMEs have access to institutional lending. He suggested a national database, formulation of a law and a separate bank for SMEs.

ICC Chief Operating Officer Philip Kucharski said in addition to finance, SMEs need wider access to market, training and knowledge to flourish. A lack of information on the market is also a problem for the SMEs, said Sampa Banerjee, executive director of the World Association for Small and Medium Enterprises. She suggested setting up an incubation centre for SMEs to grow.

Common facilities and common standards can be set for the growth of SMEs in the region, said Md Mosharraf Hossain Bhuiyan, senior secretary of the industries ministry. Regulatory framework for SMEs should not be stringent, he added.

Besides, the following speakers made statements: Prof. Ken Yan Cheng Pan, President, Trade & Industry Association of Singapore and Mr. Sandro Calvani, Senior Adviser on Strategic Planning, Mae Fah Luang Foundation, Thailand.

The main observations, conclusions, recommendations and outcomes of the session were as follows:

- SMEs are recognized as prime mover of industrialization and engine of economic growth and development. However, they faced multiple challenges, in particular lack of access to finance, technology, markets and knowledge, (market) information and expertise; standards compliance; access to testing; and effectively utilizing ICT.
- Bangladesh had demonstrated the importance and success of micro-finance schemes consisting of collateral free loans to poor people, in particular women. Experiences with such schemes had demonstrated that poor people, women, and small borrowers had better credit records than big borrowers.
- SME loans were not profitable to banks. However, banks could reduce risks by distributing loans to a larger group of SMEs rather than extending one loan to a single big borrower. Governments should help reduce the risks for banks.
- Only a small percentage of SMEs engaged in international trade but their involvement through value chains and e-commerce was increasing. In this regard, major challenges involved protecting intellectual property rights, ensuring cybersecurity, facilitating access to trade finance, and facilitating trade through easier customs clearing procedures and formalities. Grassroots enterprises needed support most.
- Small social enterprises often had a better record than other SMEs as long as the focus was on high quality and professionalism, making people the centre of the company factors of success as evidenced by the experiences of the Mae Fah Luang Foundation of Thailand.
- In order to provide effective assistance to SMEs, a uniform definition of SMEs was needed to collect meaningful data and statistics and formulate relevant

policies. On the basis of a uniform definition, a national database of SMEs could be set up.

- Other modalities to assist SMEs included the adoption of an SME Law, a specialized SME Bank and other specialized institutions in areas such as technology, skills, marketing and global networking.
- Special incubation platforms that helped start-ups and SME Centres across the country that linked SMEs with facilitators, business development service providers and other agencies had proved a success in India.
- Generally speaking, SMEs were helped most through the improving of an enabling environment by an non-intrusive government, including reduction and streamlining of regulations.

New Energy Realities: Building a Resilient and Low-Carbon Future

This session was moderated by Mr. Nazimuddin Chowdhury, Secretary, Energy and Mineral Resources Division, Government of Bangladesh. The following speakers made statements: Prof. Ainun Nishat, Professor Emeritus, Centre for Climate Change and Environmental Research, Bangladesh; Mr. Abrar A. Anwar, Chief Executive Officer, Standard Chartered Bank, Bangladesh; Mr. Arbind Kuymar Mishra, Member of Nepal Planning Commission; Mr. Arunabha Ghosh, Chief Executive Officer, Council on Energy, India; Mr. Karma Tshewang, Chief Engineer, Department of Hydropower & Power Systems, Bhutan; Mr. Kensuke Tanaka, Head of Asia Desk, OECD Development Centre; Prof. Dr. Badrul Imam, Department of Geology, University of Dhaka, Bangladesh; Mr. Mahmood Malik, Chief Executive Officer of Infrastructure Development Company Ltd., Bangladesh.

The session addressed the following issues:

- How can business assist governments in energy infrastructure investment for alternative and renewable energy?
- How can the poor's energy access issues be addressed?
- Why isn't sustainable energy being more widely promoted?

The main observations, conclusions, recommendations and outcomes of the session were as follows:

- To meet energy demand, Bangladesh needed to optimise production of energy. A balance of various sources including solar energy, wind energy, coal-based energy and development of hydropower were required.
- Hydro-power generation at the regional level with Nepal, India and Bhutan possessed huge potential. Bangladesh could have access to hydro power by allowing those countries to use Bangladesh's territory to transport hydro power. As is known, hydropower was the jewel of Bhutan's economy where it contributed 15 per cent of the GDP. This form of energy employed a lot of people and enabled Bhutan to export considerable amount of renewable and clean energy.
- Significant amount of investment was needed to develop renewable and alternative sources of energy. To induce investors to invest in renewable energy generation, an enabling regulatory framework was needed and investors should be protected by the government so that they were able to obtain decent returns on their investment.
- Cross-border energy trade in which neighbouring countries engaged in export and importing energy from each other could boost energy access to those countries.
- Nuclear energy emitted least amount of carbon among all sources of energy and was less costly than generating solar energy or wind energy. However, nuclear waste could cause harm to mankind. Bangladesh should develop the needed expertise in managing nuclear waste.



Devising Strategies for Resilience: Role of Business in Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Adaptation

This session was moderated by Mr. Asif Ibrahim, Chair of the ESBN Task Force on Disaster and Climate Risk Reduction. The following speakers made statements: Mr. Puji Pujiono, Regional Adviser on Disaster Risk Reduction, ESCAP; Mr. Emdadul Haque, Additional Secretary, Executive Member Planning & Development, Bangladesh Economic Zones Authority (BEZA); Mr. Daniel Gilman, Humanitarian Affairs Officer, Regional Partnerships Unit, UN OCHA, Regional Office-Asia-Pacific; Mr. Md. Abdul Jabbar, Managing Director; DBL Group; Mr. Nirvana Chaudhary, Managing Director, Chaudhary Group, Nepal; Ms. Madhura Mitra, Manager-Sustainability, PricewaterhouseCoopers India; Mr. Jared Berends, Senior Director and Operations and Resource Management, World Vision, Bangladesh; and Mr. Karma C. Nyedrup, Environment Specialist, National Environment Commission, Government of Nepal.



The session addressed the following issues:

- What is the role and potential of business in disaster risk management in Asia-Pacific?
- What are available measures and tools for business to promote climate change adaptation?
- How can we facilitate public-private partnerships in disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation?

The main observations, conclusions, recommendations and outcomes of the session were as follows:

- The Asia-Pacific region continued to witness the increasing disaster-induced economic costs that threatened the attainment of the SDGs. The business sector as one of development pillars bore most of the disaster-induced damage and losses, and SMEs, due to their peculiar characteristics, were often most devastated by disaster impacts.
- Disaster-resilient business strategies, approaches and operations for business, particularly SMEs, were urgently needed to ensure businesses' own competitiveness and profitability as well as to ensure that they contribute to the resilience of society at large.
- The international community initiated the Connecting Business initiative (CBi) for the private sector to coordinate and access the tools, resources and mechanisms to collaborate in a more holistic, more strategic, and permanent way with the United Nations system, national governments and civil society and through global coordination architecture networks.
- The Bangladesh Economic Zones Authority (BEZA) took the disaster and climate risk reduction considerations into its business equation such as the disaster and climate risk assessment during the identification and selection of sites and land acquisition; and ensuring the off-site infrastructure development and offering of incentive packages for developers.
- The DBL Group in Bangladesh was a major supplier of apparels to globally renowned retailers, which cooperated with GIZ and the government, to implement the international standard on the Occupation Health and Safety Assessment Series 18001. The formation of a social team to oversee employee welfare and safety translated to increased worker retention and productivity, as well as the mitigation of massive cost burdens from accidents and disasters.
- The Chaudhary Group in Nepal suffered significant damage and business disruption from the major earthquake in April 2015. As the Group was recovering towards normal production, distribution and consumption, it leveraged its business efficiency and resources to deliver, in addition to its commitment to build 10,000 transitional shelters, the reconstruction of more than 100 primary schools and 1,000 low-cost homes in the mountainous affected districts.

- Pricewaterhouse Coopers continued to collaborate with UNISDR to create a long term platform for public-private collaboration on disaster risk management. Learning that many companies made disaster risk reduction as their core focus and developed unique capabilities, and that there were largely untapped opportunities, the initiative helps companies to understand disaster risks, to respond with a business strategy, a structure, a process, people and technology, and to establish both the needed internal and external enabling environments.
- World Vision International launched the Asia Public-Private Partnerships Hub (Asia P3 Hub) as a multi-sector incubator that drives market-based developmental solutions to bring about transformational change. The Hub harnessed the expertise of the private sector and helped companies leverage World Vision's 50 year international experience and expertise, on working with communities to address disaster and climate risk management.
- Bhutan as a global leader in environmental conservation valued its partnership with the private sector. Large companies in Bhutan recognized the importance of integrating sustainable development into their core strategies. There was scope for the greater involvement of the private sector in policy-making and influence to integrate economic, social and environmental developments in order to attain, ultimately, the happiness of the people of Bhutan.
- The ESCAP Sustainable Business Network (ESBN) Task Force on Disaster and Climate Risk Reduction recognized the specific areas of cooperation that could contribute to ESCAP's programme on disaster risk reduction and resilience building and areas where the work of ESCAP could provide policy relevant analysis to support members promoting and investing in resilience building in the communities in which they operate as well as better integrate disaster considerations into their operations and investments.
- The Task Force identified the scope for the areas of interventions such as in addressing saline intrusion in Bangladesh's coastal areas, alleviating poverty and leveraging ICT to strengthen disaster resilience.
- The Task Force circulated for a peer review purpose, a working draft of a regional guide entitled "Roadmap to Business Engagement in Disaster Risk Reduction in Asia and the Pacific".

Economic Outlook and Key Policy Challenges in Emerging Asia

This session was moderated by Mr. Masato Abe, Economic Affair Officer, Business and Development Section; Trade, Investment and Innovation Division of UNESCAP and involved a presentation on the OECD Economic Outlook for Southeast Asia, China and India 2017: Addressing Energy Challenges by Mr. Kensuke Tanaka, Head of Asia Desk, OECD Development Centre. The Outlook was jointly produced by OECD, ESCAP and ERIA. The following discussants provided comments: Prof. Dr. Naoyuki Yoshino, Dean, Asian Development Bank Institute; Mr. Kondoker Molam Moazzem, Additional Director, Research Centre for Policy Dialogue, Bangladesh; Mr. Mohamed Macky Hashim, Founder President of SAARC CCI; and Mr. Abul Kasem Khan, President, Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Bangladesh.

The main observations, conclusions, recommendations and outcomes of the session were as follows:

- Discussants highly appreciated the joint publication that provides practical policy implications to the region.
- Transition from a middle income country to a high income country would take about 20-40 years with structural and policy changes required.
- To avoid the middle-income trap, Asia-Pacific developing countries should pay increased attention to the quality and cost of education. Instead, they have focused more on the access of education so far.
- Robust growth in Emerging Asia is expected to continue though some



key risks, such as slowing export growth, low interest rates in the advanced economies and sluggish productivity growth, need to be addressed.

- The quality of governance is also an important factor in the capacity to implement reform properly. For example, when the rule of law improves, the informal sector decreases. The governments are encouraged to foster effective public and private dialogues for the enhancement of governance.
- Governments should mobilize more resources through effective taxation for infrastructure development in Asia and the Pacific where infrastructure is relatively low quality.
- Although regional integration has achieved significant progress in a number of areas, such as trade tariff and transport infrastructure, particularly among the ASEAN member states, it is still at a relatively slower pace.
- Fossil fuels remain the main source of energy in emerging Asia where renewable energy sources, such as solar and wind, must be promoted perhaps through the carbon pricing option, which has not been popular in Asia and the pacific but can make fair pricing based on the CO2 emission for users. For this purpose, regional cooperation on renewable energy is crucial.
- Quality of infrastructure, which enhances connectivity among provinces and nations, associates positively with spillover effects (e.g., private investment, employment, SME development) and increases tax revenue.

Closing Session

The closing session was moderated by Mr. Debapriya Bhattacharya, Distinguished Fellow, Centre for Policy Dialogue, Bangladesh. Session moderators or their representatives delivered summaries of their respective sessions.



Mr. Hongjoo Hahm made a closing statement on behalf of ESCAP. Mr. Mahbubur Rahman made a closing statement on behalf of ICC Bangladesh.

Speakers at the two-day event at the Sonargaon hotel in Dhaka recognised the significant role businesses can play in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that go beyond just providing decent jobs. "The role of the private sector in implementing the SDGs is enormous," said Hongjoo Hahm, deputy executive secretary of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), in the concluding session. He said strategies have to be better aligned for the private sector's contribution.

Debapriya Bhattacharya, distinguished fellow of the Centre for Policy Dialogue, said the world is going through a turbulent transition. He said the scenario has totally changed from what was five years ago when the role of globalisation was applauded and that now people are talking about its pitfalls.

The noted economist said new types of disasters are appearing, such as those in the form of Ebola and Zika, along with natural calamities. Bhattacharya, however, also talked about opportunities in times of trouble. "...it is temporary. But those who survive are tough people and countries," he said. During turbulent times, Asia remains the beacon of hope, not only because of India and China but also for new entrepreneurship and ongoing reforms in many countries even in the face of falling exports and productivity, he added.

Bhattacharya said the continent is innovating not only in cases of reforms, policies, institutions, enterprises and inclusive finance. "Asia is also innovating regional and sub-regional cooperation," he said. "On one hand, you have the turbulent transition. On the other hand, we have the most ambitious programme, namely SDGs," he said, adding that it remains to be seen how a bridge can be built between the turbulent transition and delivery of the ambitious 2030 Agenda.

"It is the role of the private sector by way of delivering and connecting the two and implementing the SDGs. It is much beyond the corporate social responsibility and it is much more about ethical business," he said. Bhattacharya said business leaders themselves have spoken about the new partnership with the government and the civil society, and strategic partnership across borders with. "That gives us the hope," he added.

Asif Ibrahim, chair of the ESCAP's taskforce on disaster and climate risk reduction, presented recommendations from one of the sessions he moderated.

The entrepreneur said a central network can be established where businesspeople will share their practical experiences in order to reduce disaster risks.

The private sector, governments, civil societies and development partners will have to work together to improve quality of life, he said.

The session on supporting trade and transport facilitation for regional integration advocated for not keeping any sensitive list of products under regional trade agreements. Schemes like "Everything but Arms" may be followed, it added.

Speakers in the session recommended completion of regulatory procedures in a single day and effective implementation of agreements under initiatives such as BBIN (Bangladesh-Bhutan-India-Nepal), the BCIM Corridor (Bangladesh–China–India–Myanmar Forum for Regional Cooperation) and the BIMSTEC (the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation) for giving a big push to regional connectivity. Speakers said structural policy reforms need to be strengthened in areas of education, governance and infrastructure, and that regional integration and quality infrastructure are very critical for sustainable growth.

Mahbubur Rahman, president of the ICCB, and Md Mosharraf Hossain Bhuiyan, senior secretary of the industries ministry, also spoke at the concluding session.

Press Briefing

The two-day Asia Pacific Business Forum (APBF) ended with a call on the private sector to play a greater role in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) said Mahbubur Rahman, President, International Chamber of Commerce-Bangladesh at the press briefing on 09 February evening.

In the statement Mahbubur Rahman said the business could play a significant role in implementing the SDGs, going beyond just creating decent jobs, enhancing resources and energy efficiency, generating income and reducing inequality. He said the Forum called for promoting foreign direct investment, improving infrastructure and facilitating cross-border trade to ensure that the private sector contributes to achieving the SDGs.

"The SDGs has been designed in such a manner that private sector participation is essential to achieve these goals," said Mr. Rahman, who has become the new Chairman of UNESCAP Business Advisory Council.

Delegates observed that Bangladesh needed to optimise the production of energy to meet its growing demand. In this context, they called for a balanced mix of various energy sources, including solar, wind, coal and hydropower. The conference was told that hydropower generation at the regional level with Nepal, India and Bhutan possessing huge potentials while Bangladesh could have access to such energy sources if the country allows these countries to use its territory to transmit the hydropower.

It also called for greater investment in developing renewable and alternative sources of energy and an enabling regulatory framework to attract investment in renewable energy generation. Calling for supporting trade and transport facilitation for regional integration, speakers at the conference said the sensitive list of trade must be reduced to zero under the regional trade agreements whereas the schemes such as 'Everything but Arms' should be the reference point.

The authorized economic operators should be allowed to work as a third party agent to facilitate customs related procedural issues, the delegates said. The forum proposed to establish a single window facility at the border points while ensuring that all the regulatory formalities were completed within one day. The conference also called for creating a 'customs clearing facilitation body' to arrange dialogues among the market and non-market economic agents and try to come with actionable solutions.

Speakers also observed that SMEs in the least developed countries needed to be integrated with the international value and supply chains. They also called for initiating regional financing schemes to be specific for the micro-SMEs.

In the press briefing Mahbubur Rahman also informed that the next Asia Pacific Business Forum will be held early next year in Hong Kong.



Inaugural Speech of the Hon'ble President of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
H.E. Mr. Md. Abdul Hamid
Asia Pacific Business Forum 2017

Venue: Pan Pacific Sonargaon Hotel

Date: 8 February, 2017



Assalamualaikum

Mr. Abul Maal Abdul Muhith MP, Hon'ble Minister for Finance;

Mr. Tofail Ahmed, MP, Hon'ble Minister for Commerce;

Mr. Rishad Bathiudeen, Hon'ble Minister of Industry and Commerce, Sri Lanka;

Mr. Romi Gauchan Thakali, Hon'ble Minister for Commerce, Nepal;

Prof. Dr. Gowher Rizvi, Adviser to the Hon'ble Prime Minister for International Relations;

Dr. Mukhisa Kituyi; Hon'ble Secretary General of UNCTAD;

Dr. Victor K. Fung, Keynote speaker and Chairman of Fung Group;

Mr. Mahbubur Rahman, President, ICC Bangladesh;

Dr. Shamshad Akhtar, Under-Secretary General of UN and Executive Secretary of ESCAP;

Distinguished Guests;

Ladies and Gentlemen

A very good afternoon to you all.

I am indeed very happy to be present amongst you at the inaugural Session of UN-ESCAP Asia Pacific Business Forum 2017 jointly organized by ICC Bangladesh, The world business organization and UN-ESCAP under the patronage of the Ministry of Commerce, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh. I would like to congratulate the organizers for holding such an important business forum in Dhaka which is spearheaded to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted by the UN General Assembly with a title `Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development'. I believe this Forum is being held at an appropriate time of global economic recovery. We have to stand together and improve cooperation for building a better future for the generations to come.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As we know that the Asia-Pacific Business Forum (APBF) is the flagship regional business forum organized by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP). This Forum has been providing the best platform for regional public-private sector dialogue on the role and needs of business in

achieving inclusive, resilient and sustainable development since its inception in 2004 in Shanghai, China. I am very proud that Bangladesh with its abundant potential is now working hand-in-hand with international and regional forum to create and promote global peace and harmony.

Distinguished Guests,

Asia Pacific region is one of the most potential areas in the world considering its geo-political location and diversity. This region is enriched with abundant natural resources, vast ocean, safe harbor and a wide range of market. It has also huge capable and efficient human resources who are inter-related with shared culture and history. The South-South and Triangular cooperation is necessary to promote and encourage global partnership and solidarity to transform the conditions of the Least Developed Countries and Land Locked Developing Countries. It is important to recognize the changing role of both state and market with varying country situations. In the past success has come through ensuring joint investments among nations in infrastructure and social sectors. We have to harness the prosperity and probability of this region for the socio-economic development of the people. Mutual trust and respect along with warm relations among the nations are essential to accelerate the pace of development. I believe, ESCAP can play a pivotal role in this regard.

Distinguished Gests Ladies and Gentlemen,

As you all know that poverty is the curse of human civilization. There are so many people in Asia and Pacific are living under the poverty line which must be addressed. Therefore, our focus should be given on this issue on priority basis for eradicating this menace with a view to building a happy and prosperous region. In line with SDGs, we have to work unitedly to free this region from the curse of poverty. I believe that socio-economic cooperation and integration including technical and information technology support are imperative among the countries of the region. Finding out the vulnerability, we have to give special attention and to undertake initiatives for boosting investment and production and creating job opportunity for the less fortunate people of this region.

Extremism and terrorism have been appeared before the human civilization as a concern of great threat. No country, oriental or occidental, north or south rich or poor, large or small is free from this threat. It is the greatest enemy of mankind, civilization and development. To build a congenial and healthy atmosphere not only for Asia Pacific region but also for global community for better living. We have to fight unitedly and coherently against this menace for the sake of entire mankind. The Government of Bangladesh is following "Zero tolerance" policy for combating terrorism. I urge the leaders of Asia pacific Region to come forward together to resist and fight against the terrorism for attaining continued peace, prosperity, stability and development.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Government of Bangladesh is focusing on initiatives regarding energy security, industrial ventures, water and waste management and infrastructure development. These will assist in achieving the 17 goals of SDGs that successfully uphold human rights and peace for reducing poverty, hunger and inequity.

The United Nation's report on 'Economic Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific' had cautioned that almost all Asia-Pacific countries are highly vulnerable to climate change. It is the demand of time that we proceed towards our path of development together. Let us collaborate and cooperate with each other and then days of our success will not be far.

Hon'ble Ministers and Delegates from abroad,

I extend my sincere thanks and appreciation to you for attending this august gathering. I believe that your presence in this conference would surely open up a window of opportunity for exploring the potentialities of Asian countries and thus taking proper initiatives for better Asia. I wish you all a very successful stay in Dhaka.

Finally, I thank the National Committee of the ICC, UN-ESCAP and the Ministry of Commerce once again for taking the initiative to organize this Forum. I wish every success of the APBF and I hereby declare the "Asia Pacific Business Forum: Regional Integration to Achieve Sustainable Development" Open.

Khoda Hafez, May Bangladesh Live Forever.

Address by Mr. Tofail Ahmed, M.P.
Hon'ble Minister, Ministry of Commerce
Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh



Hon'ble President

Other Dignitaries

AssalamuAlaikum and a very good morning.

Let me begin by welcoming you all to the 3rd Asia Pacific Business Forum in the historic city of Dhaka. I would also like to take this opportunity to express my sincere appreciation to ESCAP and ICC Bangladesh for choosing this city as the venue for such an important meeting/ conference. It's good to see again my dear friends ESCAP Executive Secretary and also Sri Lankan Commerce Minister whom I meet last month in Bangkok for the 4th Ministerial of the Asia Pacific Trade Agreement (APTA). I'm also happy to see the UNCTAD Secretary General, Nepal's Commerce Minister and many others dignitaries who have come to Dhaka for this conference.

Hon'ble Delegates,

In the history of human being, global landscape of importance gets changed every time. The 21st century is said to be the Asia's century. The impressive economic growth and development in the Asia Pacific region is a testimony to that. While the world witnessed a global a prolonged financial crisis, the Asia Pacific region proved almost resilient to the crisis. However, we need to prepare and we put our hands together to harness the full potentials of the region.

Dear Friends,

Globalization and regional integration is a fact and fashion in today's politico-economic scenario. Asia Pacific countries are actually the front-runners in regional economic integration initiatives. Progresses in the ASEAN, APTA, SAFTA, BIMSTEC, BCIM, etc. are just a few instances in the big list of those initiatives. In the 4th APTA Ministerial held last month, 4th round tariff liberalization negotiation was accepted, which will bring more than 10 thousand tariff lines to be traded among the participating states either duty-free or with lesser duty in the coming days. To our information, the ASEAN FTA is running very well. IntraAsian trade and investment is also increasing day by day. But we should not be complacent. We need to go a long way in completely eradicating poverty from the Asian countries. To do so, the Asia Pacific countries need to take measures for addressing both tariff and non-tariff issues in order to boosting trade and investment among themselves and also outside Asia.

Dear Participants,

Let me take this opportunity to apprise you the recent happenings in Bangladesh. The present Government of Bangladesh came into office in 2009 following a landslide victory in election and was reelected in 2014. Bangladesh is moving ahead with the dynamic and visionary leadership of our Hon'ble Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, the daughter of the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, under whose leadership and sacrifice we earned invaluable independence in 1971. Bangabandhu dreamt of a 'Golden Bengal' (Sonar Bangla)where masspeople of Bangladesh would live in prosperity with equitable access to quality education, healthcare, rule of

law, standard of living and employment opportunities.

We inherited ainfrastructurally destroyed and devastated economy with almost no export income and foreign currency after our independence in 1971. Some world leaders regarded Bangladesh as a bottomless basket. But, the bottomless basket has turned into an emerging tiger, one of the fastest growing economies in the world with consistent growth rate above 6%, and in 2016 our growth rate was 7.11%. Bangladesh has already become a lower middle income countryas per the World Bank criteria. Today our export income has reached34.26 billion USD registering a growth rate of 9.77%. Recently, theeconomic and social progress of Bangladesh has been highly praised by Mr. Amartya Sen, Nobel Laureate, and Mr. Koushik Bose, Vice President of the World Bank. They stated that Bangladesh is a role model for many developing and least developed countries in terms of social and economic progress. The Hon'ble Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has set Vision 2021 for Bangladesh to become a middle income and fully digitized country by 2021, when Bangladesh would celebrate its golden jubilee, the fiftieth anniversary of independence. Bangladesh dreams of becoming a developed country by 2041.

Dear Attendees,

Asia Pacific countries should put their best efforts to create a congenial atmosphere for flourishing trade. The policy makers should create appropriate mechanismwhile the business people and the entrepreneurs should strive to utilize that in augmenting business. I believe that exchange of views through the dialogue and conferences like this with participation of top policy makers, academics and business leaders will help to find the way forward.

I hope and wish that the two day-long conference will provide ample opportunity for the participants from the different countries to share their ideas on how the Asia Pacific business can have further momentum in moving forward. That will help us achieve the cherished goal of uplifting the lives of the millions of people in the Asia Pacific region out of poverty and attain the desired sustainable development.

Finally I wish pleasant stay in Dhaka of all the foreign country participants.

Khoda Hafez

Joy Bangla, Joy Asia Pacific Business Forum

Address by Dr. Shamshad Akhtar
Under Secretary- General of the United Nations and
Executive Secretary of ESCAP



Hon'ble President of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Distinguished Dignitaries,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Welcome to the 13th session of the Asia-Pacific Business Forum hosted by the Government of Bangladesh and the International Chamber of Commerce Bangladesh. The ESCAP Business Advisory Council and its Sustainable Business Network need to be acknowledged for their steadfast support to his Forum along with ADB, CitiBank, IFC and the many other cooperating agencies for their contributions.

Regional cooperation is a pertinent theme for this year and is assuming renewed significance. Asia-Pacific's long standing engagement and traditions have helped promote regional cooperation, however progress is uneven and hence it has left many unrealized opportunities. Recent estimates suggest that our region is only achieving 47 per cent of its integration potential, and among the subregions, the largest untapped potential for integration is in South Asia and in North and Central Asia 1. The private sector can both influence regional integration, and be influenced by it. Private sector participation in infrastructure development, along with the provision of financing and new technologies is indispensable to create the cross-border transport, ICT and energy networks of the future. Governments cannot achieve this alone. In turn, this enhanced connectivity and reduced barriers to trade will open up new markets, reshape value chains and create multiple opportunities for private sector growth.

New drivers of change will bring fresh impetus to regional integration efforts in our region and beyond. Key among these are the adoption of the global 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development with its emphasis on addressing transboundary challenges; the formation of the ASEAN Economic Community; the implementation of the Belt and Road Initiative; and the move of the Eurasian Economic Union to form a single economic space. Adding to this is the renewed interest in moving forward on the Regional Comprehensive Partnership Agreement; and the adoption of fourth round of tariff concessions and framework agreements in investment, trade facilitation and services by the Asia Pacific Trade Agreement.

Boosting regional integration in the Asia-Pacific has the potential to both create economic dynamism, and facilitate shared prosperity through promoting greater market integration, seamless connectivity, financial cooperation and stability, and improved living conditions. The implementation of the 2030 Agenda requires a fundamental rethink to set regional integration processes on a path that incorporates sustainability. If we are to deliver real solutions for sustainable development, we must harness the capacities of business and industries to innovate, bring new technologies to market and to scale up solutions. While the benefits of integration can be significant, they will not be realized without sustained efforts. An enabling policy environment needs to be put in place, and countries must deal with structural bottlenecks including infrastructure deficits, weak institutions and lack of capital.

The private sector can make profound contributions to regional integration and sustainable development by driving productive processes to generate jobs and investment; and green growth to enhance social wellbeing and

the health of the environment. Indeed the private sector is interested in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, or SDGs. Research indicates that 71 per cent of businesses are already planning on how to engage with the SDGs and 41 per cent say they will embed the SDGs into their business operations2. Through delivering on the SDGs, the private sector could stand to benefit from a potential $12 trillion worth of business opportunities globally, which could create almost 380 million jobs by 20303. It is clear the private sector cannot afford to ignore the SDGs.

Several processes are also currently underway to ramp up private sector engagement with the Sustainable Development Agenda4. Among them, I would like to highlight the global SDG Compass5 initiative, which provides companies with an innovative guide to align their strategies with relevant sustainable development goals, or SDGs, and measure and manage their impacts. Additionally, ESCAP, through our Sustainable Business Network Task Force on Banking and Finance has also developed the Responsible Business Model 2.0, a framework to facilitate companies' engagement with the SDGs and enhance their ability to address pressing global challenges.

Recognizing the potential of the private sector for sustainable development, it is critical that the Asia-Pacific region develops new forms of partnerships with businesses that go beyond the delivery of traditional government-to-government official development assistance and technical support. Such partnerships must go deeper and should focus on key areas of inclusive and sustainable development that are of mutual interest, including science, technology and innovation, human resource development, infrastructure development and multi-dimensional South-South cooperation.

Governments must also take the lead in ensuring that frameworks and national action plans are in place to allow for greater business contributions to the SDGs and to regional integration goals. Likewise, they must also take steps to eliminate hurdles preventing the private sector from operating effectively, such as irregular or unstable power supply, weak or limited property rights, and barriers to cross-border trade. The Asia-Pacific is home to 17 countries ranked in the bottom half of the World Bank's East of Doing Business index, including Bangladesh, which is ranked at 176 out of 190 economies. In this context, I would like to highlight the UN treaty on facilitation of cross-border paperless trade, which is currently open for signature, which will serve to cut cross-border trade costs by up to $7 billion per year within the region.

ESCAP supports dialogue among business leaders in our region on issues related to sustainable development, which feed into ESCAP's normative and policy advice work. ESCAP's Asia Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development and our Financing for Development Forum; coupled with our endeavors to strengthen regional economic cooperation and integration can serve as effective vehicles to promote dialogue and strengthen cooperation between member States and the private sector.

In this vein I hope to see EBAC reform and consolidate to help support ESCAP in support of the SDGs, and I look forward to the conclusions of the next APBF, which is to take place early next year in Hong Kong. This timing is crucial to enable the outcomes of APBF to feed into the Asia Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development and Financing for Development Forum I mentioned above, which in turn, feed into the larger global agenda in New York.

To conclude, this Forum provides an opportunity to further reflect on how the private sector can work with governments and the UN system to progress regional integration and sustainable development. I look forward to your views and perspectives, and hope they can be translated into concrete results and recommendations.

I thank you and wish the Asia-Pacific Business Forum 2017 every success.

Address by Mahbubur Rahman
President
International Chamber of Commerce-Bangladesh



Bismillah-hir Rahmanir Rahim

Hon'ble President of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Distinguished Dignitaries,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Assalamu Alaikum Wa Rahmatullahi Wa Barakatuhu

On behalf of the Bangladesh National Committee of the International Chamber of Commerce-The world business organization, I would like to warmly welcome you all to the Inaugural Ceremony of the Asia Pacific Business Forum (APBF) 2017. Since its inception in 2004, the APBF's mission has been to provide the best platform for regional public-private dialogue on the role and needs of business in achieving inclusive, resilient and sustainable development.

We are very glad and honoured to organise the first ever Asia Pacific Business Forum in Dhaka, at the request of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP). The theme of this year's Forum is "Regional Integration to Achieve Sustainable Development", as envisaged by the United Nations' Agenda 2030.

We are grateful that his Excellency, the Hon'ble President of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, has very graciously agreed to inaugurate the Asia Pacific Business Forum 2017. This is a tremendous source of inspiration for all of us.

I would also like to take this opportunity to gratefully thank H.E. Mr. Rishad Bathiudeen, Minister of Industry and Commerce, Sri Lanka; H. E. Mr. Romi Gauchan Thakali, Minister of Commerce of Nepal; Dr. Mukhisa Kituyi, Secretary-General of UNCTAD; Mr. Wencai Zhang, Vice-President ADB and Dr. Victor K. Fung, Group Chairman, Fung Group for being present at this occasion and support our case.

I extend my deep gratitude to the Hon'ble Minister for Finance, Hon'ble Minister for Commerce and Hon'ble Adviser for International Affairs & Special Representative of the Hon'ble Prime Minister of the government of Bangladesh for their whole-hearted support to us.

Finally, I would like to thank, all of our partners and distinguished delegates without whose unreserved support, organizing this event could not have been possible.

Ladies & Gentlemen,

The global economy delivered an impressive output of about US$75 trillion in 2016 and expected to reach $100 trillion by 2021. However, the existing outmoded operating system of the world economy is constrained in its ability to deliver adequately fair social outcomes and to protect the planet. Indeed, we need a new global economic architecture to overcome these structural challenges.

In this context, I would like to put forward three prepositions before you.

First, this is an era where Asia has emerged as the powerhouse of world economy. The continent accounts for 4.44 billion people or about 60 percent of the world population inhabiting 30 percent of the world's land mass. The young population of Asia has been the driving force behind the success of its labour intensive export sector. The demographic dividend enjoyed especially by South and South-East Asia is undoubtedly a force to reckon with. Hence, in the coming years, Asia will play the most critical role in sculpting the future of the world development. Moreover, The Asia-Pacific region requires about 40% of the world's bio-productive capacity with China being the second greatest consumer in the world, using up 15% of the world's total bio-capacity. Asia is also home to diverse societies, each with their own creativity and technological prowess.

Second, we are currently living in an era where the global development discourse will be guided by the sustainable development goals (SDGs) over the next decade and half. This comprehensive and transformative agenda reiterates the role of the private sector several times, particularly in ensuring sustained and inclusive economic growth, responsible consumption and production, and the creation of more decent jobs. The SDGs demand a committed private sector in conducting their businesses in a more responsible and accountable manner.

The third and final point. I would like to emphasise on is the critical role of regional and sub-regional cooperation in realising the potential of the Asia-Pacific region as well as implementation of the SDGs. While the private sector's vital role in shaping and delivering regional cooperation is accepted as conventional economic wisdom, there is a need for necessary legislative and regulatory frameworks to attain its espoused objectives. However, a "one size fits all" model may not be applicable given the varying level of development and endowments as well as heterogeneous nature of markets in the Asia-Pacific. Our designs should be sensitive to contextual realities and geared to meet the diverse set of challenges.

Excellencies, Participants and Guests,

The UN 2030 Agenda addresses the needs of the people in both developed and developing countries, and emphasises that "no one should be left behind" in the course of delivering the Sustainable Development Goals. Bangladesh has been one of the star performers in achieving most of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The country has been a front runner in integrating the SDGs in its Seventh Five Year Plan. The private sector along with other sections of the society remains engaged with the government in ensuring the SDGs are implemented in Bangladesh.

I would like to conclude by expressing my sheer optimism for platforms like the Asia Pacific Business Forum in addressing the emerging challenges and actualising the potential of the countries of the region. It is my firm believe, that this Forum 2017, which has brought together policy makers, business leaders, expertise from home and abroad – will contribute in articulating strategies for achieving SDGs in the Asia Pacific Region. Effective public and private partnerships will play a key role in this regard.

Thus, this Forum is also an expression of commitment of the private sector to work hand-in-hand with the Government in achieving higher accomplishments in the near future.

Friends,

I thank you all again for joining us. I extend to all the participants our very best wishes for a productive engagement in tomorrow's sessions.

Mahbubur Rahman
President
ICC Bangladesh

Dhaka, Bangladesh
February 08, 2015

Keynote Address by Victor K Fung
Bangladesh 8 February 2017



Your Excellency Mr. Mohammad Abdul Hamid, Honorable President of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, Excellencies, my good friend ICC Bangladesh Chairman Mabubur Rahman, Ladies and Gentlemen.

I am greatly honored to be addressing the distinguished participants of the UN ESCAP Asia Pacific Business Forum, held for the first time here in Dhaka. I would like to start by declaring my admiration for Bangladesh's tremendous achievements under the Millennium Development Goals. I look forward to its continued achievements under the Sustainable Development Goals about which we will hear more at this Forum.

For my address, I thought it would be useful to step back - and look ahead - to an economic initiative that, I believe has a major bearing on our region's future over the next 10 years and beyond. It also promises to be a significant driver of the next era of economic development in China, as well as a powerful stimulus for regional and global economic growth. I refer to what is popularly called "the 21st Century Silk Road Project". In China it is known as "One Belt, One Road", or simply, the "Belt and Road Initiative".

Many people expressed surprise at President Xi Jin Ping's robust defense of globalization at the Davos meeting last month, against a backdrop of rising anti-globalization sentiments in some parts of the world. But this should not be a surprise. For over three decades, China has been embracing globalization which has lifted hundreds of millions out of poverty and contributed to vibrant economic growth all over the world. Of course globalization has resulted in some dislocations and its benefits have not always been fairly distributed. But these are problems to be addressed, not reasons to replace globalization with protectionism and narrow nationalism.

The Belt and Road is a visionary project which is very much in line with the world's trend towards globalization over the last 30 years. President Xi outlined China's "Belt and Road" vision during a seminal speech at the Boao Forum in March 2015, where a strategic framework was proposed to bring the concept closer to realization. A top priority is infrastructure connectivity, for which a US$40 billion Silk Road Fund has been established. This is in addition to the new Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, whose initial capital base is US$100 billion.

As the project is a work in progress, many details of the "Belt and Road Initiative" still need to be filled in. What we know so far is that the "Belt" refers to the overland route, to the north - the traditional Silk Road of Marco Polo's travels. As in ancient times, it starts in Xian, traverses Central Asia all the way up to Russia and across to the Baltics, then down through Europe all the way – notionally - to Venice, where the original Silk Road terminated.

The "Road" is to the south. It is basically the maritime route travelled by the famous Chinese Admiral Zheng He during the Ming Dynasty, some 600 years ago. It goes from the East Coast of China, where Zheng He set sail, down the coast of southern China to Hong Kong, then to Vietnam, Singapore and other ASEAN countries, through the Malacca Strait, across to the Indian Coast, then further across to East Africa, up through the Middle East, partially overland to Turkey and also ending up in Venice.

Linking the north and south routes are a number of economic corridors. Of particular interest to us here is the Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar Economic Corridor. This positions Bangladesh as a key country in this visionary project.

In all, the "Belt and Road Initiative" will link some 60 countries and 4.6 billion people. According to research by the Fung Business Intelligence Centre, these countries jointly account for 37% of global GDP and nearly one-third of the world's household consumption.

Before I elaborate on the implications of those numbers, I would like to share my thoughts on China's motivations behind this bold vision.

To my mind, "the Belt and Road Initiative" is part of China's overall response to a new and dramatically changed situation. After decades of high-speed growth, GDP growth is now around 6% to 7% - what Chinese leaders call "the new normal". Of course, today's slower growth is against a much bigger base. But China's acceptance of this "new normal" is a significant statement that the leadership now values quality of growth, including inclusiveness and environmental protection, over speed of growth.

In particular, "the new normal" means China being less dependent on investment and exports, and more on consumption in the domestic Chinese market. The big push now is also towards innovation and high-tech production across 10 industry areas, including robotics. There is also a major focus on integrating information and industry, including the use of big data.

At macro level, China knows that "the new normal" means rebalancing its economy towards domestic consumption. Long-term, that is good news for the global economy because it heralds China's coming of age as a consumer market. The challenge for China, though, is that such rebalancing potentially involves doing away with an estimated 200 million jobs in the export sector. How can China – or any economy, for that matter – generate that number of new or replacement jobs? A big part of the answer is for China to enlarge its services sector.

Today, more than 50% of China's economy is derived from services. Although that is quite remarkable when you consider that the figure was more like 20% in 1980, it is not enough. To my mind, China should be aiming for 60-70% by the middle of the century if it is to meet its aspirations to be a developed country and first-tier economic power. In other words, China needs to add up to 20% to the contribution of services to GDP in just one generation.

Taken together, these directional changes – moving to higher-value industries, boosting domestic consumption and expanding China's services sector – are monumental. They cannot be done with "business as usual". That, to my mind, is the backdrop to China's pursuit of important new economic initiatives like the Belt and Road Initiative.

All these have enormous implications when you consider what is happening to global patterns of consumption. The OECD countries accounted for 83% of global consumption in 1980. Today, they still represent the bulk of consumption but their share has gone down to 67%. If you project out another 30 years to the middle of the century, that share will have dropped to below 50%. So who will pick up share from the OECD countries? Obviously, the answer is non-OECD countries, including China, India, and developing economies in ASEAN, the Middle East, Africa and Latin America. These are where a global middle class is rising, empowered as no other consumers before them by digital technology and mobile communications.

According to an OECD study, this new middle class is expected to number 3.2 billion by 2020 – just three years away – and 4.9 billion by 2030. Almost all of this growth will come from Asia, which is forecast to represent 66% of the global middle class population by 2030. That is when consumer spending from the global middle class is expected to reach US$56 trillion, with Asia accounting for nearly 60 per cent. You can begin to see how all the pieces fit together. Global economic re-balancing; China, the world's second-largest economy, changing direction; the rise of a new global middle class, anchored in Asia… And, the Belt and Road Initiative, physically linking and integrating the lion's share of the non-OECD markets.

Many of us at Li & Fung remember the days when flows were relatively simple. Containers packed with consumer goods headed West from China and other parts of Asia; empty containers headed East, returning from Europe and the US.

In future, and with the added impetus of the Belt and Road, if you manufacture in China you will not export just to America and Europe. You will leave some goods in China, you will export others to Southeast Asia, some to India, plus you will continue to ship to Europe and America. The flows will be multidirectional and more widespread than ever. It is already happening. Although China is taking the initiative - with policy coordination, capacity building, trade facilitation and financial cooperation – the Belt and Road Initiative will be global trade's equivalent of public goods. Once the physical networks are upgraded and expanded, they will be open to everyone. We can expect all countries along the route to trade more with each other. With some 60 countries in this super-connected network, it will potentially be one of the largest economic groupings in the world – maybe the largest. This offers exciting opportunities that are open to all who choose to participate.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I would like to conclude by reiterating that the Belt and Road Initiative is underpinned by a deep commitment to globalization and the sharing of prosperity among nations through trade and investment flows. By participation in this project, let's also be guided by the UN Sustainable Development Goals to ensure that growth will do no further harm to our planet, that it is inclusive and that prosperity can be shared equitably and even more widely. I wish all of you a productive discussion at this Forum and a most successful outcome.

New EBAC Chairman
Mahbubur Rahman, President
International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) – Bangladesh, & Chairman & CEO, ETBL Holdings Limited.



Mr. Mahbubur Rahman (1942) is the President of International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) – Bangladesh, The world business organization & the Chairman & CEO of ETBL Holdings Limited (Estd. 1962)- a conglomerate of 7 (Seven) wholly owned commercial & industrial affiliates and stake holder of 4 (Four) PLCs. He is the Founder Chairman of Eastland Insurance Co. Ltd. (plc) (Estd. 1986), Bangladesh International Arbitration Centre (BIAC) – The Institution for Alternative Dispute Resolution (2004) and International Publications Limited (Publishers of The Financial Express – The National English Financial Daily, 1993).

Mr. Rahman is a Founder Member of Business Advisory Council (EBAC) of UN-ESCAP; Vice Chairman of Bangladesh Foreign Trade Institute (BFTI), Member of the Board of Governors of Institute of Business Administration (IBA) of the University of Dhaka, Founder Member of the Independent University Bangladesh (IUB) and a Board Director of Karnaphuli Fertilizer Co. Ltd. (KAFCO).

Mr. Rahman was the President of the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FBCCI) -- The Apex National Chamber of Bangladesh (1992-1994), The Dhaka Chamber of Commerce & Industry (DCCI) -- The premier Chamber of the country (1985-86 and 1991-92), Founder Vice President (1993-95) of 8-Nation SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Vice President (West Asia) of 57-nation Islamic Chamber of Commerce in 1993-95.

During 1972-79, Mr. Rahman represented Government of Sri Lanka in Bangladesh before Colombo setup its Diplomatic Mission in Dhaka. He was the Founder Director and Chairman of National Bank Limited (plc), (Estd. 1983) Former Board Member of BIMAN-Bangladesh Airlines (National Carrier of Bangladesh), The Dhaka Stock Exchange and Member of the Board of Governors of Bangladesh Open University (BOU).

Mr. Rahman was awarded The Lifetime Achievement Award in 2012, by the "DHL-The Daily Star" sponsored most prestigious 'Bangladesh Business Award'.

Mr. Rahman was honoured as a "Presidential Friend of Indonesia" in 2012 at its 67th Independence Day in Jakarta by the President His Excellency Mr. Susilo Bambang Yodyono of Indonesia.

Mr. Rahman has been honoured by The Daily Star as eminent personalities for Lifetime Contribution to Nation-Building in 2016.

He hosted several International Business & Economic Events in Dhaka attended by Heads of many Multi-Lateral Agencies as well as Heads of Governments & led many Trade & Investment Delegations to a number of overseas destinations including heading a few Business Delegations as entourages of the President/Prime Minister of Bangladesh.

Summary Records of the Twelfth Meeting of the ESCAP Business Advisory Council (EBAC)

Introduction

The twelfth meeting of the ESCAP Business Advisory Council (EBAC) and the third meeting of the ESCAP Sustainable Business Network (ESBN) were held at the Pan Pacific Sonargaon Hotel in Dhaka, on 8 February 2017 prior to the opening session of the Asia-Pacific Business Forum (APBF) 2017 in the same venue. The meetings were attended by 24 EBAC/ESBN members and advisors, and three observers. The following ESBN Task Forces held separate meetings at the same venue on 7 February 2017: Banking and Finance; Pacific Islands-Asia; while the Task Force on Digital Economy and the Task Force on Green Business with update on the Task Force on Young Entrepreneurship organized a joint meeting. The Task Force on Disaster and Climate Risk Reduction organized a session as part of the APBF titled as "Devising Strategies for Resilience: Role of Business in Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Adaptation" instead of a task force meeting.

Opening and Welcome Remarks

Mr. Hongjoo Hahm, Deputy Executive Secretary (DES) of ESCAP, delivered his opening remarks on behalf of Dr. Shamshad Akhtar, Executive Secretary of ESCAP. He informed the meeting that the Executive Secretary of ESCAP would leave at the end of May. He recognized the good work of the ESBN task forces but called for stronger alignment of the work of ESBN with that of ESCAP. He also requested EBAC and ESBN to discuss leadership change, including transitory arrangements until a new Chair could be elected and to reflect on the mandate, scope and membership of EBAC/ESBN. He proposed a core set of members of EBAC and broadening its geographical coverage to expand members from under or un-represented sub-regions of ESCAP.

With regard to EBAC, he looked forward to a smaller and stronger group of senior business representatives that could advice ESCAP and the ES on ESCAP policies and programmes. Its outcome documents should feed in directly to ESCAP's inter-governmental processes and meetings such as those on Financing for Development and the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development, and possibly the Commission and its committees. He noted that EBAC was unique among all regional commissions of the United Nations but that the level of multi-stakeholder dialogue should be enhanced. He also called on a review of funding of EBAC/ESBN/APBF activities and the conclusion of partnerships and recruitment of sponsors for this purpose.

Mr. Mohamed Iqbal Rawther, Chair of EBAC, welcomed the remarks of the DES and asked how to address the DES views and meet expectations of ESCAP. He reminded the meeting that the basic and founding objective of EBAC was to provide recommendations to ESCAP and its member governments and that this role should be strengthened. Some form of consolidation between EBAC and ESBN could take place to provide useful feedback to ESCAP.

In addition, he suggested to consolidate task forces and make them more aligned with ESCAP governance structure. He noted the role of certain champions of EBAC and the important contribution of Bangladesh in particular. He called for a reduced number of task forces by consolidating some of them and noted that the time was opportune for change, which should not be drastic but aimed at continued renewal.

Mr. Iqbal further noted that the private sector played a dominant role



Twelfth EBAC Meeting is in progress

in economic development and that it should be pro-active in working with governments to achieve the sustainable development goals (SDGs) instead of merely reacting to governments.

Finally, he informed the Meeting that he was no longer seeking to extend his term as Chair of EBAC. He concluded by thanking the Government of Bangladesh and the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) Bangladesh for hosting EBAC/ESBN meetings and APBF 2017.

Four task forces made briefings: Task Forces on Green Business, Digital Economy and Young Entrepreneurship; Task Force on Agriculture and Food; Task Force on Banking and Finance; Task Force on Disaster and Climate Risk Reduction (DCRR).

The twelfth EBAC Meeting made the following decisions:

1. Mr. Mahbubur Rahman, President of International Chamber of Commerce, Bangladesh, was elected Chairman of EBAC by acclamation;
2. Mr. George Lam was elected Vice-Chair or EBAC by acclamation;
3. Mr. Asif Ibrahim was elected Executive Director (or alternative title to be determined) of EBAC. Detailed terms of reference for this position would be presented for adoption at the next EBAC/ESBN meeting;
4. Mr. Iqbal Rawther and Mr. Chote Sophonpanich were made Honourable Chairs and Advisers of EBAC by acclamation;
5. Future elections of Chair and Vice-Chair could be conducted through some form of voting though consensus would be pursued on a priority basis;
6. A meeting with the Task Forces on Banking and Finance, Green Business and Digital Economy would be convened in Hong Kong in April to discuss the preparations for APBF 2018.
7. The next EBAC/ESBM Meeting would be held as part of the Fifth Trade and Investment Week of ESCAP, 30 October – 3 November which would allow EBAC to report on its outcome to the fifth session of the Committee on Trade and Investment which would be held from 31 October to 2 November 2017. The meetings would be held on 29 and 30 October subject to confirmation from the secretariat. The agenda of the Meeting would be proposed in due course by the Secretariat in consultation with the Chair, Vice-Chair, and Executive Director of EBAC;
8. EBAC welcomed the following new members: Mr. Michael Yeoh, Co-Founder and Chief Executive Officer of the Asian Strategy & Leadership Institute (ASLI) of Malaysia; Mr. Fuad A.Hashimi, Executive Director of the Centre of Excellence in Responsible Business of Pakistan; and Mr. Ken Pan, President of the Trade and Industry Association of Singapore (TIAS) subject to confirmation of the EBAC Membership Committee and completion of due diligence by the secretariat.

Closing Session

Mr. HongjooHahm and Mr. Mohamed Iqbal Rawther made closing statements and congratulated Mr. Mahbubur Rahman, ICCB President & Chairman ETBL Holdings Ltd. on his election as Chair of EBAC. The Meeting expressed its high appreciation to Mr. Iqbal for his long and outstanding service as Chair of EBAC and to Mr. Chote as Vice-Chair. Mr. Chote delivered a brief closing statement wishing EBAC all success.

Roundtable Discussion on 'Digital Bangladesh: Transformation in Business, Finance and Banking'

The Bonik Barta and IBM jointly convened a Roundtable Discussion on 'Digital Bangladesh: Transformation in Business, Finance and Banking' due to IBM Chairman & CEO Mr. Randy Walker's visit to Bangladesh on March 06 at Pan Pacific Sonargaon Hotel. Mahbubur Rahman, President, International Chamber of Commerce-Bangladesh Chaired the Round Table. Aftab ul Islam, Director, Bangladesh Bank gave the Welcome Address. Mr. Randy Walker IBM Chairman & CEO and Mr. Karan Bajwa, Managing Director of IBM India were the Key-Note Speaker.

The world is now experiencing the greatest information and communication technology revolution in human history. Digital tools are invading the business environment, provoking significant changes in the way we work, communicate, and sell. This has given rise to new opportunities and has triggered the growing need of Digital Transformation of our enterprises. Besides all the technological advancement security is the main concern for sectors like business, finance, and banking. In the roundtable session, all the CEO's from different sectors expressed their viewpoint and agreed they have to be more conscious and tactful regarding acceptance of new technology and its security.

Randy Walker said once the technology was only practiced by the people who were related to the specific sector but nowadays it is a common practice for everyone. Now everyone is talking about technology and more importantly the security. People want to get access to the most advanced technology but they don't have any idea what is going to happen next if they have been attacked. Likely

a person, an organization also wants security. He also said IBM is aware of this and they are working to ensure the security of the systems around the world. He said IBM is working on Artificial Intelligence (AI), Big Data, Data Cloud, & Lake and providing Data Cloud service. IBM expressed their interest in investing in health sectors of Bangladesh as it is a growing sector besides working in banking and finance service as well.

Randy Walker also said that they only can provide security for the external threats but the organization itself has to ensure security from the inside. As we know bad peoples are everywhere and they attack from the inside not from the outside.

The chairman of the session Mr. Mahbubur Rahman said only trained people should be appointed to deliver the service. IBM can give us that support to train people.

Mr. Aftab ul Islam said IBM can work as a partner for Digital Bangladesh. Peoples of Bangladesh will appreciate the partnership of IBM with the Government.



Mr. Karan Bajwa emphasized on two specific questions. One; Do we have enough trained human resources, Two; How fast can we learn from the mistakes others making. These two questions are very important for transformation.

Syed Waseque Md Ali, Managing Director, First Security Islami Bank Limited, Md. Ataur Rahman Prodhan, Managing Director, Rupali Bank Limited, Golam Hafiz Ahmed, Managing Director and CEO, NCC Bank Limited, M.A. Halim Chowdhury, Managing Director & CEO, Pubali Bank Limited, Mohammad Shams-Ul Islam (Managing Director & CEO, Agrani Bank), Shibli Rubaiat-ul-Islam (Dean, Faculty of Business Studies, Dhaka University & Chairman, Sadharan Bima Corporation), Kamal Quadir, CEO, bKash, Mamun Rashid, Managing Partner, PwC Bangladesh, Mohammed Nasir Uddin Chowdhury, Managing Director, Capital Market Group Operation, Lanka Bangla Securities Limited), Mominul Islam, Managing Director and CEO, IPDC Finance, M. H. Samad, Managing Director & CEO, Central Depository Bangladesh Ltd., Syed Mohammad Kamal, Country Manager, Master Card Bangladesh, Md. Jalalul Azim, Managing Director, Pragati Life Insurance Limited, Basab Bagchi, Chief Executive Officer, Thakral Information Systems Pvt. Ltd., Shahzaman Mozumder, Consultant Thakral Information Systems Pvt. Ltd., Gurmukh Singh Thakral, Managing Director, Thakral Brothers Pte Ltd & Chairman, Thakral Information Systems Pvt. Ltd. were the other panel speakers.

Farewell to Indonesian Ambassador

ICC Bangladesh hosted a farewell lunch on 25 January for H. E. Mr. Iwan Wiranata-atmadja, Ambassador of Indonesia to Bangladesh. ICC Bangladesh President Mahbubur Rahman thanked Ambassador Wiranata-atmadja for his continuous support and cooperation in furthering the relations between the two countries, in particular in expanding trade and investment.

Mahbubur Rahman recalled his visit to Indonesia in August 2012 at the invitation of the then President of Indonesia H.E. Prof. Dr. H. Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono as the Presidential Friend of Indonesia. He also referred to inviting the Former President Yudhoyono as the keynote Speaker at the Asia Pacific Business Forum scheduled to be held in Dhaka on 8-9 February 2017.

Indonesian Ambassador Wiranata-atmadja mentioned that Indonesia

was among the first Asian countries that recognized the Independence of Bangladesh as a sovereign State on 25 February 1972 and among the first countries that established diplomatic relations, marked by official opening of the Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia in Dhaka on 1 May 1972.

Indonesia sees Bangladesh as one of its major trade partners in South Asia because of its unique geographical location, which links the South Asian Region with the ASEAN. The similarities and commonly shared culture, religion, custom and social values, as well as historical background are other related chapter of potentials that lead to the peoples of the two countries to more actively interact , mutually complete and share one to another in the framework of boosting the bilateral relations and cooperation between Indonesia and Bangladesh. Recently, the bilateral trade between Indonesia and Bangladesh reached 1.40 billion US dollars showing an increase of over 32% over the previous year.

In order to promote further relations with respect to trade and to promote tourism, Indonesian government has decided to extend visa on arrival to Bangladesh visitors to Indonesia, the Ambassador mentioned.

Ambassador Wiranata-atmadja thanked ICC Bangladesh President for arranging the Lunch and giving him the opportunity of meeting so many business leaders of Bangladesh. He also said that he and his wife will always cherish the love and affectionate that they have received from the people of Bangladesh during his tenure. The Ambassador also said that he always remember the brotherly affection that ICC Bangladesh Mahbubur Rahman has extended to him and his family.

Both the countries are activein the Non Aligned Movement (NAM) and are members of the , Organization of Islamic Countries (OIC), D-8, ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), Centre on Integrated Rural Development for Asia and the Pacific (CIRDAP), Partnership in Population and Development (PPD), Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) and other international organizations inside or outside the United Nations.

The lunch was attended by H.E. Ms. Panpimon Suwannapongse, Ambassador of Thailand to Bangladesh; H.E. Ms. Nur Ashikin binti Mohd Taib, High Commissioner-designate of Malaysia to Bangladesh; H. E. Mr. Benoit Pierre Laramee, High Commissioner of Canada to Bangladesh; Mr. Darryl Lau Kai Mun, Consul General of the Republic of Singapore to Bangladesh; H. E. Ms. Yasoja Gunasekera, High Commissioner of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka to Bangladesh; Mrs. Rokia Afzal Rahman, Vice President, ICCB; ICCB Board Members A.S.M. Quasem, R. Maksud Khan; Mr. Matiur Rahman, Chairman & Managing Director, Uttara Group of Companies; Mr. Mahbub Jamil, Chairman, ICE Technologies Limited; Mr. Abul Kasem Khan, President, Dhaka Chamber of Commerce & Industry (DCCI); Mr. Rizwan Rahman, Managing Director, ETBL Holding Ltd.; BIDA Executive Chairman, Kazi M. Aminul Islam; BIAC Chairman Mohammad A. (Rumee) Ali and Md. Khalilur Rahman, Managing Director, National Housing Finance and Investments Ltd.



ICCB President Mahbubur Rahman (4th from left) is seen with Indonesian Ambassador H. E. Mr. Iwan Wiranata-atmadja (middle). Also seen in the picture sitting from left to right Thai Ambassador H.E. Ms. Panpimon Suwannapongse; Malaysian High Commissioner H.E. Ms. Nur Ashikin binti Mohd Taib; Canadian High Commissioner H. E. Mr. Benoit Pierre Laramee; BIDA Executive Chairman, Kazi M. Aminul Islam; Sri Lankan High Commissioner H. E. Ms. Yasoja Gunasekera; Rokia Afzal Rahman, Vice President, ICCB and Mahbub Jamil, Chairman, ICE Technologies Limited. Standing from left to right Md. Khalilur Rahman, Managing Director, National Housing Finance and Investments Ltd.; Mr. Darryl Lau Kai Mun, Consul General of the Republic of Singapore to Bangladesh; Mr. Matiur Rahman, Chairman & Managing Director, Uttara Group of Companies; BIAC CEO Mohammad A. (Rumee) Ali; ETBL Holding Ltd., Managing Director, Mr. Rizwan Rahman, DCCI President Abul Kasem Khan; ICCB Board Members, R. Maksud Khan; A.S.M. Quasem and ICCB Secretary General Ataur Rahman.

Images from the Gallery at APBF Dhaka 2017



H.E. Mr. Md. Abdul Hamid, Hon'ble President of the People's Republic of Bangladesh is launching Special Publication of APBF.



A partial view of audience at Inaugural Ceremony.



H.E. Mr. Md. Abdul Hamid, Hon'ble President of the People's Republic of Bangladesh (middle) is seen with H.E. Mr. Tofail Ahmed, M.P. (3rd from left); H.E. Mr. Rishad Bathiudeen, Minister of Industry and Commerce, Sri Lanka (2nd from right); ICCB President Mahbubur Rahman (2nd from left); ICCB Vice Presidents Latifur Rahman & Rokia Afzal Rahman (extreme right & extreme left) and ICCB Secretary General Ataur Rahman (3rd from right) is seen by the sideline of the APBF.

Images from the Gallery at APBF Dhaka 2017



ICC Bangladesh President Mahbubur Rahman is presenting Memento to H.E. Md. Abdul Hamid, Hon'ble President of the People's Republic of Bangladesh.



Group Picture of the ICC Bangladesh Executive Board Members with H.E. Mr. Md. Abdul Hamid, Hon'ble President of the People's Republic of Bangladesh with other dignitaries.



ICC Bangladesh President Mahbubur Rahman presented crest to the Dignitaries at the Inaugural Ceremony.

Images from the Gallery at APBF Dhaka 2017



H.E. Mr. Tofail Ahmed, M.P. Minister of Commerce, Govt. of the People's Republic of Bangladesh is addressing at Plenary Session.



H.E. Prof. Gowher Rizvi is addressing at APBF Inaugural Session.



A view of participants at Plenary Session.

Images from the Gallery at APBF Dhaka 2017



H.E. Mr Tofail Ahmed M.P., Minister of Commerce, Govt. of the People's Republic of Bangladesh (middle) is seen with Former Adviser to the care taker govt. of Bangladesh Dr. Mirza Md. Azizul Islam (3rd from left), Principle Coordinator, Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Affairs, PMO Mr. Abul Kalam Azad (2nd from left), UNCTAD Secretary General Dr. Mukhisa Kituyi (3rd from right), Mr. Wencai Zhang, Vice-president (Operations) (extreme right), Dato Iqbal Rawther (extreme left) & Tan Sri Dato' Dr. Michael yeoh, Chief Executive Officer/ Director, Asian Strategy & Leadership Institute (ASLI) (2nd from right).



Speakers at the Business Session on Supporting SDGs through Digital Financial Models by Inclusive Business. The session was Moderated by Dr. Salehuddin Ahmed, Former Governor, Bangladesh bank.



Speakers at the Business Session on Supporting and Empowering Disadvantaged MSMEs to Become More Competitive and Sustainable. The Session was Moderated by Md. Mosharraf Hossain Bhuiyan, ndc, Senior Secretary, Ministry of Industries (middle) Bangladesh.

Images from the Gallery at APBF Dhaka 2017



Speakers at the Business Session on Supporting Trade and Transport Facilitation for Regional Integration. The Session was moderated by Mr. Hedayetullah Al Mamoon, ndc; Senior Secretary Ministry of Commerce (4th from left) Bangladesh.



Speakers at the Business Session on Economic Outlook and Key Policy Challenges in Emerging Asia. The Session was Moderated by Mr. Masato Abe, Economic Affairs Officer, Business and Development Section, Trade, Investment and Innovation Division, UNESCAP (extreme left).



ICC Bangladesh President Mahbubur Rahman is seen with UNCTAD Secretary General Dr. Mukhisa Kituyi .

Images from the Gallery at APBF Dhaka 2017



Dr. Victor K. Fung, Former Global Chairman of ICC and Chairman of Fung Group (middle) is seen with Prof. Barbara Meynert, Chair of the ESBN Task Force on Digital Economy; Mr. George Kam Ho Yuen, Board Director, Industrial and Commercial Bank of China (Asia) (2nd from right); Mr. Carson Wen, Chairman, Sancus Capital Limited (extreme left) and Mr. Sebastian Shiu Wai, Chairman & CEO Chung Mei International Holdings Ltd. (extreme right).



Outgoing EBAC Chairman Dato Iqbal Rawther (2nd from left) is seen with Tan Sri Dato' Dr. Michael yeoh, Chief Executive Officer/ Director, Asian Strategy & Leadership Institute (ASLI) (2nd from right); Mr. George Kam Ho Yuen, Board Director, Industrial and Commercial Bank of China (Asia) (extrme right).



A group picture of APBF organizing committee

Bangladesh Economy

$100m ADB loan for skills development of young workforce

The government on February 14 signed an agreement for a $100 million loan with the Asian Development Bank (ADB) for upskilling young workforce, especially women, to enhance job opportunities, expand economic base and boost income. The assistance is the second tranche of the $350 million multi-tranche financing facility approved by ADB in 2014 for the skills for employment investment programme (SEIP). The remaining amount from the ADB assistance is expected to be utilised before the period of the financing facility ends in 2024.

Kazi Shofiqul Azam, secretary of the Economic Relations Division, and Kazuhiko Higuchi, country director of the Bangladesh resident mission of ADB, signed the loan agreement at a ceremony in Dhaka. The second tranche of the SEIP will support expansion of the training programme to nine priority industries, bringing in three additional industry associations (Bangladesh Agro-processors' Association, Industry Skills Council for Hospitality and Tourism, and Bangladesh Women Chamber of Commerce and Industry), and 15 training providers. Upskilling training for Bangladeshi migrant workers overseas, especially for managerial skills, is an important goal under the expanded programme, ADB said. Over 240,000 people, 30 percent of whom are women, will be trained by 2021, according to the statement.

The SEIP tranche 2 programme is estimated to cost a total of $133 million. In addition to the $100 million ADB assistance, the programme is complemented by $25 million from the Bangladesh government, $4.5 million from the Swiss government, and $3.5 million from the private sector. The second tranche of the ADB loan will have a 25-year term, including a grace period of 5 years, and an interest rate of 2 percent per annum.

Fast-track projects to get more loans from ADB

The Asian Development Bank will extend credit support beyond its commitment if Bangladesh can improve its spending capability by accelerating project implementation, ADB Vice President Wencai Zhang said on January 09. "We will increase our lending to Bangladesh, but it depends on how many projects are ready to implement in the country." "We can do more if the Bangladesh government wants to borrow from ADB; but it is not only about approval. We want to make sure that the projects are ready," he said.

Speaking at a press briefing at the ADB's Dhaka office, Zhang said the ADB would like to provide $18 billion to Bangladesh in five years. "We may provide $1.8-$2 billion by 2017 and we delivered over $1.1 billion last year."

The ADB will approve a project soon to support the energy sector to help Bangladesh in generating more power by 2021. Zhang shed light on regional co-operation for power export and import, in his meeting with the state minister for energy. The ADB will help Bangladesh in building transmission lines to trade power with India and Bhutan, he said.

Three countries have already rectified the draft of BBIN agreement, but Bhutan is yet to rectify. "We are ready to support the implementation but it is not so easy." About the impact of the coal-fired power plant at the Sundarbans, he said: "I believe that super technology will be used to minimise the negative effect of the power projects on environment."

Zhang said Bangladesh has achieved a good progress to graduate to a middle income country and the private sector has a significant role to play. He suggested Bangladesh ensure good governance, strengthen capital market and remove infrastructure bottlenecks to materialise the graduation properly.

$300m WB fund to empower local government bodies

The government on March 06 signed a $300 million financing agreement with the World Bank to strengthen local governments by establishing national budget transfers for all 4,550 union parishads, the lowest tier of local government. Built on the success of two predecessor projects, the Local Governance Support Project–3 (LGSP3) will mainstream the annual financial audits of the union parishads and

will benefit over 115 million people across the country. The project will also pilot a fiscal transfer system for 16 municipalities in eight divisions.

The eligible municipalities will receive expanded block grants to give them access to greater resources to respond to local service delivery priorities. "Over the past decade, the World Bank has been supporting the government's vision of a stronger and more accountable local governance system," said Qimiao Fan, World Bank country director for Bangladesh, Bhutan and Nepal. "Started in 2006, the LGSP was the first nationwide programme to provide block grants to union parishads to spend at their own discretion."

"With consecutive projects, fiscal transfer to union parishads for discretionary spending has increased 11-fold to Tk 2.23 million per union parishad in fiscal year 2016 from Tk 0.2 million in fiscal year 2007," Fan said. "LGSP3 will continue the momentum, and the enhanced discretionary resources will enable local governments respond to local needs more effectively."

Since 2006, the World Bank has been financing the union parishad block grants. From the fourth year of the LGSP3 project, the government will fully finance the union parishad block grants out of national budgetary allocations with all the principal features. LGSP3 will fully functionalise the web-based monitoring of union parishads functions developed under the predecessor project.

"Bangladesh has made significant progress in moving forward the decentralisation agenda as stated in the Seventh Five Year Plan," said Kazi Azam, secretary-in-charge of the Economic Relations Division. LGSP3 will also continue community-based initiatives and strengthen women's role in decision-making. At least 30 percent of the grants will continue to be earmarked for schemes prioritised by women.

Azam and Fan signed the financing agreement on behalf of the government and the World Bank, at the ERD. The zero-interest credit from the International Development Associa-tion, the World Bank's concessional arm, has a maturity of 38 years, including a 6-year grace period; and carries a service charge of 0.75 percent.

Four joint venture companies to invest $600m for 258MW solar power

Four joint venture companies are going to invest more than $600 million in different parts of the country to generate 258 megawatts of electricity from solar energy. The cabinet committee on purchase on March 01 approved a proposal to set up the four power plants. The government will purchase electricity at Tk 10.40 to Tk 11.20 per kilowatt-hour unit. Funds for the power plants will be raised from international banks and financial institutions.

The division has selected the companies based on their financial strength and capacity to raise credit. The figure on the actual investment to be made by the companies will be available after implementation of the projects, which have to be completed within 18 months of signing the agreements.

A consortium of Zhejiang DunAn New Energy Co, China National Machinery Import and Export Corporation, Solar Tech Power and Amity Solar will set up a 100MW plant in the Teesta barrage area under Nilphamari and Lalmonirhat districts. The plant will be run on a built-own-operate basis. The government will purchase each unit of electricity at Tk 11.20.

The consortium has offered a separate commitment letter on equity financing, while China Development Bank has submitted a letter of intent on debt financing, according to the power division. Energon Technologies FZE of the UAE and China Sunergy Co will construct a 100MW solar power plant at Mongla in Bagerhat. Each unit of electricity will cost Tk 11.04. The power plant will have three phases: 30MW in the first phase, 30MW in the second phase and 40MW in the third phase.

Energon Technologies will finance 75 percent of the equity while some 80 percent of the total project cost will come as debt. Two banks have committed loans for the project. Netherlands Bank is interested to lend up to $725 million. A 50MW solar power plant will be set up in Tangail. A consortium of Hanwha 63 City Co Ltd and BJ Power Company Ltd of South Korea and Solar City Bangladesh Ltd will construct the



plant. The government will purchase power at Tk 10.40 a unit. The total project cost is $131 million, according to the project proposal.

An 8MW solar power plant will be set up in Panchagarh by a joint venture of Paragon Poultry Ltd and Parasol Energy Ltd of Bangladesh and Symbior Solar Siam Ltd of Hong Kong. Each unit of electricity will cost Tk 10.40. Bangladesh now produces 190MW of electricity from solar

energy, according to the Sustainable and Renewable Energy Development Authority. This represents 44 percent of the renewable energy produced in the country.

The government is diversifying its energy sources amid depletion of natural gas reserves, which account for more than half of 8,000MW to 9,000MW of actual electricity generation in the country. The contribution of renewable energy to overall electricity production is about 2 percent. The government plans to raise it to 10 percent by 2020.

Summit signs deal to build $500m LNG terminal

Summit Group has signed an initial contract with Petrobangla to set up a liquefied natural gas terminal on Moheshkhali Island in Cox's Bazar at a cost of about $500 million. Summit LNG Terminal Company, a unit of Summit Group, will develop the floating facilities in 18 months after signing the final contract, the company said in a statement on January 04.

Energy Secretary Nazimuddin Chowdhury, Petrobangla Chairman Abul Mansur Md Faizullah, Summit Group Chairman Muhammed Aziz Khan, Vice-Chairmen Md Latif Khan and Md Farid Khan and General Electric's Infrastructure Director Peter Mackey were present at the signing of the initial agreement at Petrobangla in Dhaka on January 03.

The floating terminal will supply 500 million cubic feet of natural gas per day. The LNG will cost the government $0.45 per 1,000 cubic feet of natural gas. Summit will transfer the facilities to Petrobangla after operating it for 15 years. Summit will implement the project jointly with US-based GE as equity investment partner, and plans to implement the LNG terminal project with its own funds.

"We want to ensure constant supply of primary energy for the country by implementing this project," said Aziz Khan. LNG will be the easiest, most cost-effective, environment-friendly and quickest solution to meet the primary fuel demand as the current supply of gas will start declining in 2018, he said. Khan also said the floating terminal will help Summit implement a large gas-based power plant, having a capacity of generating 600 megawatts of electricity. This is the third LNG-related agreement the government has signed so far.

In December, Petrobangla signed an initial agreement with India's energy company Petronet to set up an LNG re-gasification terminal on Kutubdia Island and a pipeline at an estimated cost of $950 million. In July, the state-run corporation and US-based Excelerate Energy signed the final deals to set up Bangladesh's first LNG terminal, which will handle imported LNG and supply it to the national grid from early 2018. The terminal will be set up at Moheshkhali in the Bay of Bengal.

Bangladesh is looking outside to ease its energy shortage largely caused by depleting domestic reserves and rising demand. Gas supply stands at about 2,700 MMCFD against the demand for 3,300 MMCFD. The government aims to set up four land-based LNG terminals and one or two floating storage and re-gasification units.

Offshore gas exploration: S Korean firm gets block-12

Bangladesh on March 14 awarded an offshore block to Posco Daewoo Corporation of South Korea for gas exploration. Senior officials of Posco Daewoo and Bangladesh's Petrobangla and energy ministry signed a production sharing contract for the deep-sea block-12 in the Bay of Bengal at the headquarters of Petrobangla in Dhaka.

As per the agreement, the two-dimensional seismic survey would begin this year, and based on the outcomes of the survey, the real picture of gas availability could be known by 2019, according to Petrobangla. Posco Daewoo is also exploring gas at a block of neighbouring Myanmar and has discovered gas reserves last year.

The block is adjacent to block-12 of Bangladesh. Bangladesh has 26 blocks in the Bay. Of them 15 are deep-sea blocks and 11 are in shallow waters. "We can find gas in Bangladesh as well, as the petroleum structure and geological setting is similar in the two blocks," said Young-Sang Kim, chief executive officer of Posco Daewoo, at the signing ceremony.

He said if gas was found, the block would meet Bangladesh's energy demands and stimulate its economic growth.

The Korean company would spend $3-5 million for carrying out a two-dimensional survey, $5-7 million for a three-dimensional survey, and $50-100 million for drilling wells, said the CEO. Ahn Seong-doo, ambassador of South Korea to Bangladesh, said offshore blocks could be a driving force for Bangladesh's development as it has limited natural resources.

Tajul Islam, chairman of the parliamentary standing committee on energy, said the settlement of maritime boundary disputes with neighbouring countries has offered Bangladesh a huge area to explore hydrocarbon resources. Nasrul Hamid, state minister for power

and energy, said the country has not been able to award offshore blocks for exploration for a long time. "It is good that it has happened at last."

Bangladesh's efforts to attract international companies for deep-sea blocks explorations were delayed due to low oil price in the international market for more than two years.

The low price discouraged oil companies from expanding in new territories. Nasrul said the government would hold more offshore block biddings in the next couple of years. The government is working to buy a survey vessel, he said.

Tawfiq-e-Elahi Chowdhury, energy adviser to the prime minister, said the government is working on four areas, including onshore, offshore and liquefied natural gas, to ensure the country's energy security. Posco Daewoo's achievement in Myanmar has encouraged the company to explore gas in Bangladesh, said energy secretary Nazimuddin Chowdhury. As the company has found gas in the adjacent block, we might get good news from our block," he said.

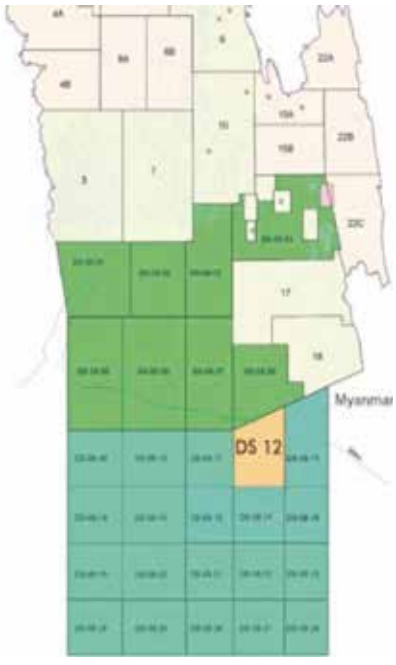
Petrobangla Chairman Abul Mansur Md Faizullah said offshore accounts for a third of the hydrocarbon resources produced in the world. "So, we are focusing more on offshore resources." Block-12 is over 3,560 sqkm with depths between 1,000 and 2,000 metres.

The initial exploration period is five years and the subsequent exploration period is three years, according to a Petrobangla press release.

In the initial exploration period, the 2D survey would be carried out in the first two years over an area of 1,800 sqkm, the 3D seismic survey in the third year over an area of 1,000 sqkm and one exploratory well will be drilled in the fourth and fifth year.

This was the first time a production sharing contract was signed under the Prompt Power and Energy Supply (Special) Act-2010, which is used for speeding up the process of contract signing.

Bangladesh would get 65 to 90 percent of the profits from the sale of oil and condensate pumped out of the block. For natural gas it would be between 60 and 85 percent, according to a handout given at the programme by



Petrobangla. The Korean company could get a maximum of 70 percent of the available petroleum per year to recover its exploration costs.

In February last year, Petrobangla had sought expression of interest for gas exploration in block-12, -16 and -21 and received proposals from Singapore-based KrisEnergy (Asia), Posco Daewoo, and Norway's Statoil. But when the final offer was sought from the companies, only Daewoo came up with a proposal for block-12.

Posco Daewoo now produces 500 million cubic feet per day of gas from wells in Myanmar and in South Korea. The Korean company estimates that the Myanmar gas fields have 4.5 trillion cubic feet of gas reserves, enough to cover three years of liquefied natural gas supplies to South Korea. In recent years, Bangladesh has raised its natural gas production and average production stands at 2,700 million cubic feet per day. However, the demand stands at over 3,300 million cubic feet per day, according to Petrobangla.

As the gas reserves are depleting and there were no new gas discoveries, the government is awarding deep-sea blocks to international oil companies to boost production. In 2014, the government awarded shallow water block-11 to Australian oil and gas company Santos and Singapore-based Kris Energy, and shallow water block-4 and -9 to India's state-owned Oil and Natural Gas Corporation Videsh Ltd.

Under the amended model production sharing contract 2012, the provision for exports has been kept. But Posco Daewoo would have to offer the gas to Petrobangla first. If Petrobangla refuses to buy the gas, the Korean company would have to find local buyers. Once the first two options were exhausted, they could look for buyers outside the country.

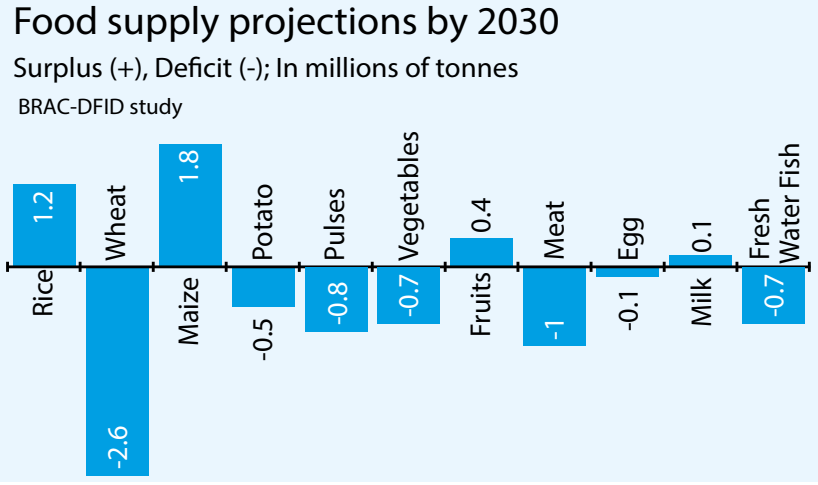
Officials of Petrobangla said Bangladesh has amended its Model PSC 2012 keeping it in line with those in Myanmar and other countries in order to woo more international companies to explore its vast waters. This has been done as global oil giants were not keen on investing in projects that would not offer attractive incentives against the investment risk they would be taking.

Bangladesh had awarded deep-sea block-10 and -11 to US oil giant ConocoPhillips in 2011 under the model PSC 2008. But the company wound up its operations in late 2014 despite carrying out extensive survey, as the government did not grant the benefits of Model PSC 2012 to the company, sources said.

Joo Si-Bo, senior executive vice-president of Posco Daewoo, Khadiza Nasreen, deputy secretary of the energy ministry, and Syed Ashfaquzzaman, secretary of Petrobangla, signed the deal.

Agriculture vital to poverty reduction: Brac-DFID study

Agriculture plays a three times more powerful role than non-agriculture when it comes to poverty reduction, according to a joint study of the Brac and the UK's Department for International Development. The study, which was unveiled on January 31, found that a 1 percent increase in agricultural income would reduce poverty by 0.39 percent. In contrast, a 1 percent rise in non-agriculture income will alleviate poverty by 0.11 percent.



"Agriculture demands high attention in future as far as poverty reduction is concerned," said Abdul Bayes, director of Brac Research and Evaluation Division. Bayes presented one of the four papers of the study titled 'Strategic Agricultural Sector and Food Security Diagnostic for Bangladesh' at a seminar held on January 31 at the Brac Centre.

Subsequently, the government policy and support to agricultural productivity growth is essential for an effective poverty reduction and food security strategy. The study also projected that Bangladesh might produce 38.7 million tonnes of rice by 2030 against the demand for 37.6 million tonnes, indicating a surplus of the staple.

Production of wheat, maize and non-cereal crops, especially potato, pulses, vegetables, fruits, eggs, meat, milk and fresh water fish will also rise but there would still be a deficit. Citing the trend of diversification of consumption, he said calorie intake from potato, vegetables and animal products increased gradually between 1990 and 2010 and it will continue to rise between 2030 and 2050.

Bangladesh's agriculture, particularly rice production, grew over the past decades for supportive policies for fertiliser and irrigation as well as liberalisation, said SM Fakhrul Islam, a consultant, in another paper. But agriculture today faces challenges -- scarcity of surface water for irrigation and a decline in groundwater level, arsenic pollution, yield gap and slow farm mechanisation -- for higher growth.

Augmentation of surface water for irrigation through development of water reservoir, reduction of use of ground water and adoption of water-saving technology is necessary. He also stressed the need for acceleration of farm mechanisation and improvement of market linkages and development of the value chain to boost agriculture productivity and growth.

In a separate paper styled 'Competiveness of Bangladesh Agriculture, Commercialisation and Value Chain', he said Bangladesh has comparative advantage in rice production. "It could export surplus rice and the farmer could earn higher return through access to international markets," he said. To exploit the export potential, Bangladesh will need to enhance its supply side capacity, improve value chains and pursue a broad-based diversified agricultural production and export strategy.

The marketing of paddy has increased overtime despite farm size becoming smaller. Producers marketed 50 percent of rice in 2014, up from 26 percent in 1988.

The contribution of small farmers in rice production has also increased during the period, he said, adding that 30 percent of the marketed paddy comes from three-fourths of rural households who own up to one acre of land.

In a paper 'Diagnostic Study on Bangladesh Agriculture', Andrew Jenkins, coordinator of Impact Assessment Unit at Brac, said Bangladesh could earn more than $1.8 billion in a period of about 18 years from exports of fresh and processed foods.

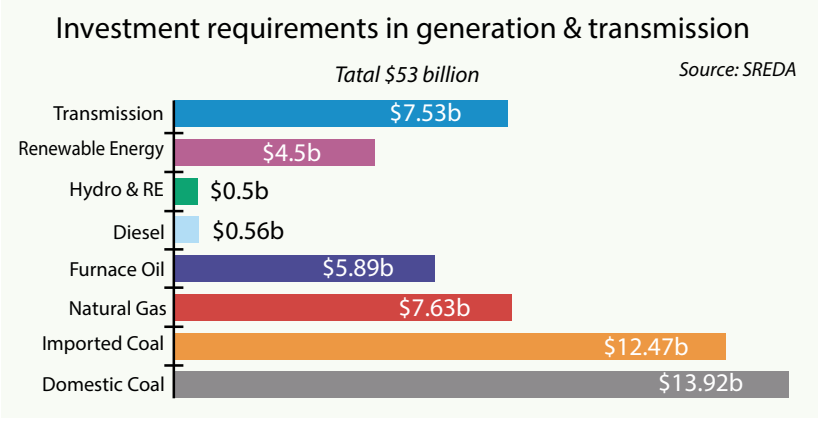
Subsequently, facilities for marketing, storage and information especially for perishable products should be extended he said. Citing the value chain analysis, he said producers suffer from low productivity and low quality of inputs.

Mohammad Yunus, senior research fellow of Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies, stressed the need for ensuring fair prices of farm produce so that growers stay with farming.

"Arable land is shrinking. It is a reality. Based on that we also need to know that farmers will till land as long as it is profitable," he said, suggesting letting the rice market function properly through reduced government intervention.

Powering Bangladesh : HSBC

The government of Bangladesh has set a target to bring the whole country under electricity coverage by 2021. To achieve this target, the country requires multibillion dollar investments in the power sector. As a result, the government is increasingly diversifying the sources of investment.



"We are attracting innovative funds. One of the big innovative ways is Export Credit Agency (ECA) financing," Nasrul Hamid, state minister for power, energy and mineral resources, told reporters at the Dhaka Reporters Unity on January 21. Under the ECA arrangement, the agencies involved in the project implementation will mobilise finances, said the minister.

Small power projects are attracting private sector investment while the government is seeking innovative financing through joint venture and the ECA backed financing for large power projects.

The Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation (HSBC) had pioneered the ECA financing in the country's power sector in 2012 arranging $420 million credit facility for Ashuganj Power Station Company Ltd. Since then, HSBC has arranged about $1.14 billion of financing to implement five major power projects in the country. Other international banks followed the suit. About $4.5 billion has been invested in the power sector of the country under the ECA arrangement in the last five years, establishing ECA as an alternative financing mode. Under the arrangement, power plants get a grace period in the first two to three years while the unit is under construction. The loans are repaid in instalments in the next 10 years.

ECAs are government departments or government-sponsored institutions with sovereign status in developed countries, established to support the export of capital goods and services from its country to the developing nations. Some ECAs have direct lending programmes which can increase the competitiveness of the funding to the project. It follows a common set of guidelines and characteristics known as the "OECD Consensus".

ECA funding is not only a matter of credit risk mitigation, it also enables projects to access a much larger pool of liquidity. What is popularly known as suppliers' credit in Bangladesh is basically a form of export credit in the international financial market.

A total of $6.9 billion ($3.1 billion in the public sector and $3.8 billion in the private sector) of investment has been made for setting up power plants in the country for generating 7,200 megawatts (MW), according to Bangladesh Power Development Board (BPDB). To implement the proposed ongoing power projects which will generate about 10,700MW electricity, the country will require a total investment of $15.5 billion, out of which the public sector is investing $8.2 billion and the private sector investment will be $7.3 billion. The government also has a plan to generate 60,000MW of electricity by 2041 - a move that will require further investment worth $20 billion.

The investment opportunities are not restricted to generation of power: the country will require another $20 billion of investment in transmission and distribution, said Tawfiq-e-Elahi Chowdhury, the prime minister's adviser on power, energy and mineral resources, last year. The government, which has trebled the installed power generation capacity as well as the actual generation in the last six years, has also enabled and created the environment for international financiers and arrangements to become part of the effort.

In 2013, Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies carried out a study to find out the average cost of unserved energy, which was calculated using the share of energy consumed by different sectors. It showed a weighted average of Tk 26.73 per kWh. The average bulk tariff on electricity in the country at present is less than Tk 5 per kWh which indicates that the cost of unserved energy was more than five times the country's average electricity tariff.

Key Points
$1.14b of ECA-backed financing arranged by HSBC for **5** power plants
Country's first ECA-baked deal in power sector for **$420m** arranged by HSBC
Country's first power import of 250MW facilitated by HSBC
Country's first commercial financing in power transmission sector arranged by HSBC

According to the World Economic Forum's Global Competitiveness Report 2014-2015, inadequate and unreliable energy and power supply appears to be the most binding constraint on the country's competitiveness. The cost of power outages has been estimated to equal 0.5 percent of gross domestic product.

Bangladesh has one of the lowest per capita power consumptions in the region which stands at roughly 350kWh compared to 1,075 kWh in India, 527 kWh in Sri Lanka, and 495 kWh in Pakistan. Bangladesh needs more credible power supply to bring the remaining one-third population under its electricity coverage.

Electricity demand in Bangladesh is growing due to underlying economic growth which averaged more than 6 percent over the last decade and climbed above 7 percent in the last fiscal year. Being the leading trade finance bank in the globe, HSBC has been facilitating international trade in Bangladesh. To note, HSBC has worked as the trade bank for the first cross-border electricity trade of the country.

In 2013, the prime minister of Bangladesh inaugurated the first electricity import of 250MW from India. HSBC has also arranged low cost foreign financing for the state-owned electricity transmission authority to implement a 61-kilometer inter-district electricity transmission line and substation project. The bank sees infrastructure as the backbone of development for a country. HSBC's expertise and international network give the bank the capability to help support the Bangladesh government's infrastructure development plans, Tawfiq-e-Elahi Chowdhury added.

HSBC has one of the largest global export and specialised finance teams and has arranged ECA supported facilities across diverse business sectors worldwide, with almost all the ECAs globally.

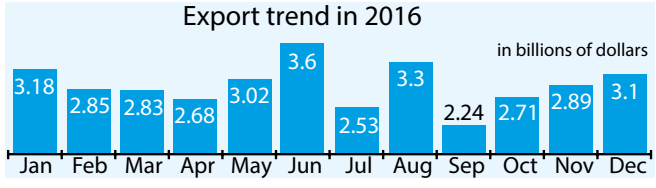
Today, HSBC is in a leading position in arranging ECA financing around the world, raising $5.23 trillion in ECA-backed financing with more than fifty deals in 2015.

HSBC Bangladesh believes that the investment gives a very positive message to international investors about Bangladesh, which is very important. Experts, however, said, when projects such as public infrastructure are funded with external finance – concessional or non-concessional, such as export credits, suppliers' credits and buyer credits, it is absolutely essential to focus on cost recovery-related issues.

Exports robust despite dismal global trade

Exports registered 7.11 percent growth in 2016 to $34.93 billion on the back of higher shipments of garment items. The amount would have been more if the country's major export destinations had not gone through an uncertain political time in 2016, according to exporters. Garment shipments, which typically account for 80 percent of the export earnings, brought home $28.61 billion last year, up 7.89 percent year-on-year, according to data from the Export Promotion Bureau.

In 2016, the unit price of garment items decreased by 2 percent year-on-year and the depreciation of the pound as a result of the UK's shock decision to withdraw from the European Union on June 23, 2016 affected the receipts. The UK is the third largest export destination for Bangladesh after the US and Germany. Bangladesh typically ships more than $3 billion worth of garment products to the UK in a year.



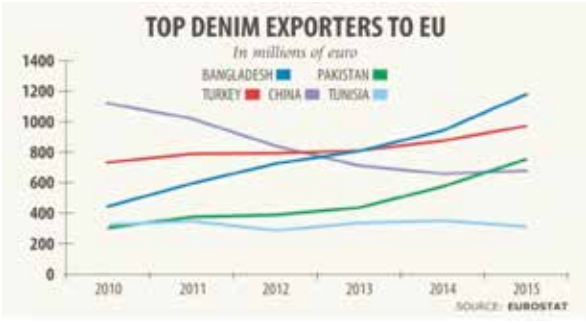
With the uncertainty surrounding Brexit, the election of Donald J Trump as the 45th president of the US, and the scheduled polls in Germany and France, the outlook does not look too promising. Although according to experts it is not a major cause of concern as exports to new destinations have been on the rise as a result of relaxation of the Rules of Origin.

Some Asian markets such as Japan, China and India are showing good promise and exports to Japan have already crossed the $1 billion mark in 2016. However, 2016 ended on a somewhat dismal note, as exports slid 3.11 percent in the month of December from a year earlier. In December, exports raked in $3.11 billion, which also missed the month's target of $3.35 billion. Garments raked in $2.58 billion last month, down 3.73 percent year-on-year.

Bangladesh overtakes China as top denim supplier to EU

Bangladesh has overtaken China to become the largest denim supplier to the European Union -- a development that would give confidence to the country's garment sector as it looks to hit $50 billion in exports by 2021.In the January-June period of 2016, Bangladesh exported €567.97 million worth of denim

products to the 28-nation bloc -- enough to secure a 21.18 percent market share, the highest.



The country has also become the third largest denim supplier -- after China and Mexico -- to the US. It exported $186.30 million worth of denim products to the US, registering a 12.03 percent market share, eclipsed only by China (26.04 percent) and Mexico (25.40 percent). The headway has been possible because of the millions of dollars that the local denim fabrics makers invested to set up state-of-the-art facilities in their plants. Currently, Bangladesh has 30 denim mills for which investment to the tune of $1 billion was made. The collective production capacity of the mills is 435 million yards a year.

Almost 70 percent of the population in the US wear denim products regularly, according to industry insiders. An average consumer owns seven denim products at any given time, they said. Over in the UK, one of the largest clothing markets in Europe, each consumer owns an average of 17 denim garments.

Bangladeshi entrepreneurs supply denim products to major global retailers including Levi's, Diesel, G-Star RAW, H&M, Uniqlo, Tesco, Wrangler, s.Oliver, Hugo Boss, Walmart, and Gap. The denim sub-sector could play a significant role in achieving the $50 billion export target by the end of 2021. Annually 2.1 billion pieces of denim are sold globally, according to Bangladesh Denim Expo, the organiser of the exposition.

In 2014, the size of the global denim market stood at $56.20 billion, Mostafiz said. By 2020, the global denim market will reach $64.1 billion, while Bangladesh's denim export is forecasted to reach $7 billion by the end of 2021. It is estimated that the global denim market will grow by about 8 percent a year until 2020, Mostafiz said citing data from the Cotton Inc USA.

China Harbour to build economic zone in Anwara

China Harbour and Engineering Co. Ltd will develop an economic and industrial zone dedicated for Chinese investors at Anwara in Chittagong. The cabinet committee on economic affairs awarded the job to the Chinese company on February 08. The government has sought $281 million in soft loans from China for building the infrastructure of the economic zone and providing various services. A memorandum of understanding was signed for the soft loan during the visit of the Chinese president to Bangladesh last year.

According to an official of Bangladesh Economic Zones Authority 774 acres have already been acquired for the proposed zone. Connecting roads will be widened and water treatment plant and power distribution lines will be set up with financing from China.

Offices and commercial buildings will be constructed as well. The cabinet committee on January 03 approved another proposal for the appointment of a developer for another economic zone at Mirsharai in Chittagong. The committee gave a go-ahead to the agreement to be signed with PowerPac-East West GasMin consortium for developing the Mirsharai economic zone under public private partnership.



It also approved signing of an agreement with POSCO Daewoo Corporation for gas exploration and extraction at deep-sea block DS-12.

Global yarn makers see Bangladesh as a potential market

Global textile and yarn makers see Bangladesh as a potential market despite the country's apparel export is facing challenges in some of its strong markets, including the United States and Europe. Though fabrics and yarn are being locally made, Bangladesh still needs to import a good quantity to meet the growing demand. In Bangladesh, local spinners meet over 90 percent demand for raw materials of the knitwear sector and over 40 percent demand of the woven sector.

"Bangladesh is a good market for us as the demand for fabrics here is rising from the garment makers," said Lavender Zhang, manager of Jiangsu Wulong Knitting Co, a knitwear fabrics maker. Zhang spoke at the 11th Dhaka International Yarn & Fabric Show 2017—Winter Edition and Dhaka Int'l Denim Show 2017.

Mirza Azam, state minister for textiles and jute, inaugurated the fair jointly organised by CEMS Global and CCPIT (CCPIT-TEX) at International Convention City Bashundhara in the capital. Around 180 companies from six countries showed their products at the three-day event.

Bangladesh's apparel exports to the US, its single largest destination, declined 1.96 percent year-on-year to $5.49 billion in 2016, due to the volatile US economy and the recent presidential election. Exports to the UK and some other European markets also fell last year.

"Bangladesh is our future market as China has been losing its market share in the global apparel business," Zhang said. She said the demand for specialised textile like linen is very high in Bangladesh, which is quite capable of supplying fabrics in bulk to the garment makers. "We have a plan to open a sales office in Dhaka in future as the business is growing," said Zhang, who came in Bangladesh for the first time to take part in the fair.



"The fabrics and yarn market in Bangladesh is growing riding on the higher demand from the customers," said Arifur Rahman Dewan, manager for sales and marketing at Huaren Linen Group (Bangladesh), a major supplier of linen fabrics from China worldwide. Dewan said currently his company supplies linen fabrics to 15 customers and it has a target to increase the customer base to 100 by the end of 2020.

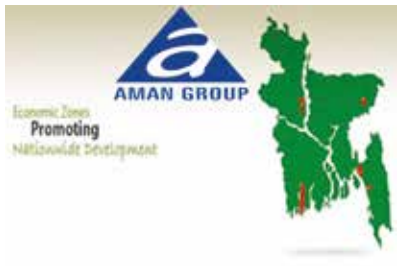
"Achieving the target of 100 customers is not difficult in Bangladesh, as there is huge demand for linen products," Dewan said. His company produces nearly 60 million yards of fabrics a year. Ma Mingqiang, ambassador of China to Bangladesh; Shubhashish Bose, secretary in charge of the ministry of textiles and jute, and Faruque Hassan, senior vice-president of Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association, also attended the opening ceremony of the fair.

Aman Group invests Tk 2,700cr to set up 3 plants in economic zone

Aman Group has put in about Tk 2,700 crore for setting up three factories at its economic zone in Narayanganj. Cement manufactured at the unit will hit the market within the next couple of days, while commercial production at the packaging unit will start next month, said Rafiqul Islam, chairman and managing director of Aman Group.

The group has set up a shipbuilding plant at the zone, where the manufacturing of 12 vessels is going on in full swing and the group has plan to set up an LPG plant, food and beverage unit and power plant in the economic zone. An economic zone is a designated area in a country with special economic regulations that differ from the rest of the country. An entrepreneur can enjoy various benefits, including tax incentives, from the authorities by setting up an industrial unit in an economic zone.

Aman Group got the final nod for the economic zone from the Bangladesh Economic Zones Authority on March 16, making it the third company from the private sector to do so. Meghna Group was the first private sector



player to receive the final licence from the Beza. Abdul Monem Ltd is the other player to get the final licence. Other local and foreign entrepreneurs from various sectors including construction materials, light engineering, petrochemical, garments and textiles, shipbuilding and IT can invest in the zone.

Aman Group completed the environmental impact assessment and feasibility study and prepared a master plan on the economic zone as per the conditions of a prequalification licence it received in February last year.

The zone is situated on 83 acres of land at Sonargaon in Narayanganj, which is in close proximity to the Dhaka-Chittagong highway and the Meghna Ghat river port. The zone, however, can be extended up to 150 acres.

Beza Executive Chairman Paban Chowdhury said they are planning to offer 4,000 acres of land for development under private or public-private initiatives in the next one month.

Beza has so far offered about 1,300 acres of land for development in its four economic zones. "We will

provide all the necessary support to the private sector for economic zone development," he said. Beza has so far awarded pre-qualification licences to 10 other local private companies to set up 13 economic zones. It is also setting up four economic zones in the public sector. The authority is aiming to create jobs for one crore people in 100 economic zones by 2030 and produce goods and services worth $40 billion.

India plans to invest $3b in Bangladesh

Investments from India worth over $3 billion have been registered with the Bangladesh Investment Development Authority (BIDA). More investments in the power, liquefied natural gas and port sectors in Bangladesh are in the pipeline as there is great business potential here, said the top Indian diplomat at the inauguration of the three-day Indo-Bangla Trade Fair 2017 at Sonragaon Hotel in Dhaka on February 16.



Commerce Minister Tofail Ahmed opened the fourth version of the fair as chief guest. The India-Bangladesh Chamber of Commerce and Industry (IBCCI) organised the fair to display products and services from both countries to the customers. Companies from both India and Bangladesh explored new opportunities for investments and to set up joint ventures in each other's countries.

Indian companies such as Marico, CEAT, Tata Motors, Godrej, Sun Pharma, Asian Paints have made substantial investments in Bangladesh, the high commissioner said. India has also been offered exclusive sites by Bangladesh to establish special economic zones, he said. These zones may be at Mongla or Chittagong, he added. "With the India-Bangladesh trade and commercial relationship growing at a substantial pace, Bangladesh is now India's biggest trade partner in South Asia."

In the last 15 years, Bangladesh's exports to India have grown tenfold and India's exports to Bangladesh six times. Bilateral trade in 2015-16 stood at $6.14 billion. In November last year, IBCCI had organised a fruitful discussion on enhancing India-Bangladesh Waterways Connectivity, which saw good participation from both the countries. Around 60 companies from India and Bangladesh, from diverse sectors like automobiles, pharmaceuticals and chemicals, are participating in the fair. This also includes business delegations from Confederation of Indian Industry and Bengal Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Kolkata. Tofail Ahmed urged the Indian government to remove the tariff, para-tariff and non-tariff barriers for a higher export of goods from Bangladesh to India.

The balance of trade between the two countries is heavily tilted towards India because Bangladesh imports a lot of raw materials and food items from there. India has given duty-free access to all Bangladeshi goods except 25 alcoholic and beverage items.

Abdul Matlub Ahmad, president of Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry, Taskeen Ahmed, president of IBCCI, Abhijeet Chakravorty, country head at State Bank of India, Ambarish Dasgupta, leader of the Bengal Chamber of Commerce and Industry Delegation, and Pankaj Tandon, leader of the Confederation of Indian Industry Delegation, also spoke.

Norwegian fund's investment in Dhaka bourse rises six-fold

Norway's sovereign wealth fund invested $112 million in Bangladesh's stockmarket in 2016 -- a six-fold rise compared to the previous year. The Government Pension Fund Global, the world's biggest wealth fund, made the investment in 15 companies that are listed on the Dhaka Stock Exchange, the premier bourse.

The wealth fund first made investment in Bangladesh in 2015 with a modest amount of $19 million, according to the Norwegian embassy in Dhaka. The huge growth in investment in Bangladesh by the Fund is very positive, it said.

The fund gained $53 billion last year. Apart from the Norwegian fund, several global investment banks such as Morgan Stanley, JPMorgan and Goldman Sachs as well as asset management firms such as BlackRock have presence in the capital market of Bangladesh.

Net foreign investment was Tk 1,340 crore in 2016, up from Tk 185 crore in the previous year.

Regional News

Asia must spend $26tn on infrastructure by 2030: ADB

Asian nations must spend $26 trillion by 2030 on infrastructure to battle poverty, boost economic growth and fight climate change, the Asian Development Bank warned on February 28. In its "Meeting Asia's infrastructure needs" report, the lender said governments in some of the poorest countries in the world should invest in everything from transport, telecommunications, power and water and sanitation.

It added that despite dramatic infrastructure growth in recent decades, more than 400 million people have no access to electricity, 300 million lack safe drinking water and around 1.5 billion are without basic sanitation. "The demand for infrastructure across Asia and the Pacific far outstrips current supply," ADB President Takehiko Nakao said in a statement released alongside the report.

"Asia needs new and upgraded infrastructure that will set the standard for quality, encourage economic growth, and respond to the pressing global challenge that is climate change," Nakao said. The more than $1.7 trillion needed each year -- from 2016 to 2030 -- is twice the $881 billion invested at the moment, the Bank said. ADB suggested the bulk of the cash, $14.7 trillion, should go on power, while $8.4 trillion should be spent on transport and $2.3 trillion on telecoms. It indicated $800 billion for water and sanitation.

Its report also said that of the total annual amount, $200 billion should be invested in mitigating climate change,renewable energy and public transport. But it said a substantial infrastructure gap still remains in the 45 countries included in the report. However, the warning comes as many economies in the region continue to struggle with a global slowdown while there are growing concerns US President Donald Trump could embark on a protectionist agenda that would batter world trade.

And while several countries around the region have promised hundreds of billions for new building programmes -- including India, Indonesia and the Philippines -- problems such as bureaucracy and corruption act as a drag.

Analysts also say governments should look to private finance for help. "Mobilising private capital flows to fund the financing gap that cannot be met by public financing is still a major challenge," said Rajiv Biswas, Asia-Pacific chief economist at IHS Global Insight in Singapore. The lender, set up in 1966, is owned by 67 member-countries, 48 of which are in Asia. It approved a record $16.3 billion in loans and grants to the region in 2015.

In a separate report, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development said India's rapid economic growth has lifted 140 million people out of poverty in the past decade but large parts of the population still lack access to electricity and toilets.

Eight richest as wealthy as half of humanity : Oxfam

Just eight individuals, all men, own as much wealth as the poorest half of the world's population, Oxfam said on January 16 in a report calling for action to curtail rewards for those at the top. As decision makers and many of the super-rich gather for this week's World Economic Forum (WEF) annual meeting in Davos, the charity's report suggests the wealth gap is wider than ever before, with new data for China and India indicating that the poorest half of the world owns less than previously estimated.

Oxfam, which described the gap as "obscene", said if the new data had been available before, it would have shown that in 2016 nine people owned the same as the 3.6 billion who make up the poorest half of humanity, rather than 62 estimated at the time. In 2010, by comparison, it took the combined assets of the 43 richest people to equal the wealth of the poorest 50 percent, according to the latest calculations.

Within the labour share, wage disparities have been growing. Wages in low-skill sectors in particular have been falling behind productivity in emerging economies and stagnating in many rich countries, while wages at the top continue to grow.

A CEO of a company, which is part of the Financial Times Stock Exchange 100 Index, earns as much in a year as 10,000 people working in garment

factories in Bangladesh, according to the report. The CEO of India's top information firm earns 416 times the salary of a typical employee.

The squeeze on employment and wages for the lowest-paid workers results in people working for poverty wages in precarious employment. Wage workers in Nepal earned just $73 per month in 2008, followed by $119 in Pakistan (2013) and $121 in Cambodia (2012). Due to the low wage levels, the latter two countries are also among those with the highest incidence of working poverty worldwide.

In many countries, even the legal minimum wage fails to meet the wage required for a decent standard of living. The minimum wage for banana workers in the Dominican Republic is just 40 percent of a living wage; in Bangladesh it is nearer 20 percent of that required to live a decent life.

Over the last two decades the richest 10 percent of the population in China, Indonesia, Laos, India, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka have seen their share of income increase by more than 15 percent, while the poorest 10 percent have seen their share of income fall by more than 15 percent.

Due to a combination of discrimination and working in low-pay sectors, women's wages across Asia are between 70 percent and 90 percent of men's. Many women struggle to survive as the national minimum wage in many Asian countries -- where it is paid -- is on average a quarter of the amount required for a decent standard of living.

Inequality has moved up the agenda in recent years, with the head of the International Monetary Fund and the Pope among those warning of its corrosive effects, while resentment of elites has helped fuel an upsurge in populist politics. Oxfam called in its report for a crackdown on tax dodging and a shift away from "super-charged" shareholder capitalism that pays out disproportionately to the rich.

While many workers struggle with stagnating incomes, the wealth of the super-rich has increased by an average of 11 percent a year since 2009. Bill Gates, the world's richest man who is a regular at Davos, has seen his fortune rise by 50 percent or $25 billion since announcing plans to leave Microsoft in 2006, despite his efforts to give much of it away.

While Gates exemplifies how outsized wealth can be recycled to help the poor, Oxfam believes such "big philanthropy" does not address the fundamental problem. Oxfam bases its calculations on data from Swiss bank Credit Suisse and Forbes. The eight individuals named in the report are Gates, Inditex founder Amancio Ortega, veteran investor Warren Buffett, Mexico's Carlos Slim, Amazon boss Jeff Bezos, Facebook's Mark Zuckerberg, Oracle's Larry Ellison and former New York City mayor Michael Bloomberg.

Women in business to thrive on access to finance: study

Strong supporting conditions such as access to financial services and ease of doing business pave the way for businesses owned by women to progress, according to a study by MasterCard. These enabling conditions are pivotal in overcoming the two main obstacles -- cultural biases and fewer opportunities -- that discourage women the most from becoming entrepreneurs, according to the study "MasterCard Index of Women Entrepreneurs".

The index uses 12 indicators and 25 sub-indicators to look at how 54 economies in Asia, Africa, America and Europe differ in terms of the level of women advancement outcomes, knowledge assets and financial access and supporting entrepreneurial factors.

"The prevalence of ambitious, resourceful women should be regarded as a prime business opportunity. As society addresses existing cultural bias, we will do our part to help create those conditions that will strengthen the foundation for personal and economic growth," said Martina Hund-Mejean, chief financial officer of MasterCard.

Developed markets top the index. The top-ranked countries have the strongest conditions that support women business ownership, a high quality of governance and ease of doing business. On the other hand, lower-income economies such as Uganda, Bangladesh and Vietnam have some of the highest percentages of women entrepreneurs, driven mostly by necessity as opposed to being inspired by business opportunities.

India becomes front in global e-commerce proxy war

Global tech giants are heading for a proxy war in India. Alibaba is leading a $200 million investment into Paytm's marketplace, creating a new Indian unicorn. It confirms the intention of the Chinese behemoth to take on Amazon, which is aggressively ramping up, investing $5 billion into its local operation as other homegrown rivals flail. Only one of the tech big boys will emerge victorious.

The $255 billion Chinese group and Paytm have already invested together

to build a dominant mobile-wallet payment business, now worth around $5 billion. Their smaller e-commerce unit is now being separated out to meet Indian regulations. After the latest fundraising, Jack Ma's Alibaba and its own payments affiliate Ant Financial will effectively control the e-commerce company and continue to own a large stake in the payments arm, which must be majority Indian-owned.

Local rivals Flipkart and Snapdeal, backed by New York investment firm Tiger Global and Japan's SoftBank, respectively, helped to establish the domestic e-commerce industry. But their future roles look uncertain as these global tech giants, with deeper pockets, get stuck into the market. Privately owned Flipkart is fighting hard to maintain a narrow lead; investors now reckon it is worth as little as one third of its $15 billion peak in 2015. Meanwhile, the founders of Snapdeal are cutting costs and headcount; an email to employees admits errors in executing its strategy. Talk of a possible merger between Snapdeal and Paytm keeps surfacing in local media. That makes sense, given SoftBank already owns a near 30 percent stake in Alibaba and could lose a fortune fighting head-to-head to build market share.



For now, Indian e-commerce has become a free-for-all, and a stark contrast to China where foreign companies have struggled. But there isn't room for everyone to financially succeed. Alibaba's new commitment to Paytm E-commerce, following its success in building out a local mobile wallet business, puts it in a strong position. Fold in Snapdeal, and Amazon's Jeff Bezos would face a significant obstacle in the road to global domination.

Chinese bank opens 6 Grameen-style branches

A Chinese bank in collaboration with Grameen China has opened six branches in the country's Henan province which will follow the microcredit model of Grameen Bank. Nobel Laureate Prof Muhammad Yunus attended the launch as the chief guest on February 26. Zhongyuan Bank and Grameen China have teamed up to provide financial services to the rural poor of the province, Yunus Centre said in a statement on March 05.

Zhongyuan Bank is a new bank in Henan that was created in 2014. Last year it posted a profit of $3 billion, according to the statement. The bank, which will provide the loan capital and bear the operational expenses of the new initiative, invited Prof Yunus to its headquarters at Zhengzhou in Henan to meet with the top officials of the bank and discuss about the collaboration. Grameen China will implement the initiative.

The opening ceremony was addressed by the secretary of Henan provincial government and the bank's chairman in presence of about 250 dignitaries. Earlier, the Nobel laureate and his delegation were received by Xie Fuzhan, secretary of the Communist Party of China in the province, at the party office in Zhengzhou. Fuzhan said he was delighted to see the collaboration between Zhongyuan Bank and Grameen China.

He thanked Yunus for his work on behalf of the poor around the world, and especially for his efforts aimed at supporting the poverty alleviation initiative in China. He said Prof Yunus and his work and philosophy are well-known and admired throughout China. Fuzhan pledged his support for the programme and introduced Yunus to the senior members of the party who, he said, would be at the economist's disposal for any help to run the microcredit activities.



Yunus congratulated the secretary for China's commitment to poverty reduction and for its success in lifting 300 million poor people out of poverty in the last three decades. The founder of Grameen Bank said he would be delighted to support China's goal to eradicate poverty by 2020. On the previous day in Beijing, Grameen China hosted a half-day conference on the progress of Grameen microcredit in China. It was attended by all the microcredit leaders in the country.

The session was addressed by Yunus, Prof H Latifee, managing director of Grameen Trust, which has been implementing microcredit in China since 1994, and the senior representatives of the Chinese Association of Microfinance such as Du Xiaoshan and Bai Chengyu.

Yunus also attended the launch of the first Yunus Social Business Centre at a leading university in Beijing. The centre is collaboration between Renmin University and Yunus Centre, Bangladesh. The university organised a daylong conference to discuss the progress and prospects for microcredit and social business in China.

ICC HQs News

ICC releases new guidelines on tax principles for multinational businesses

In response to a growing lack of trust between multinational companies and the general public over tax matters, ICC has released a new set guidelines on tax principles as business seeks to publicly commit itself to international standards of transparency and cooperation.



Business should comply fully with all applicable tax laws and regulations, the guidelines state, utilising tax incentives that are "transparent, published and/or endorsed" by the host nation and refrain from claiming exemptions not granted according to statutory, regulatory or administrative frameworks.

Moreover, recognising that tax cooperation is a two-way street, the guidelines include principles for tax authorities that multinationals believe would smooth interactions, such as clarity of legislation, transparency of enquiries and effective dispute resolution processes. In order for business to behave responsibly, there needs to be clear rules and conditions applied by both parties.

Rebuilding trust

In a global climate where trust in institutions is fading, it is important that business promotes an understanding of its strategic decisions to the general public. According to a 2017 Edelman study, 66% of the general population consider that a company paying its "fair share of taxes" is important for building trust.

Responding to this increasing public demand for multinationals to disclose their tax policies, the ICC document provides a series of guidelines for transparency and reporting principles, for instance having companies release a statement describing measures they have adopted to ensure their management of tax risks and improve their transparency towards shareholders.

The ICC guidelines highlight the fact that international businesses wishing to implement progressive tax principles need the cooperation of fiscal authorities in establishing an environment that is conducive to the effective application of these principles. Beyond transparency and reporting, the guidelines cover principles for tax planning, legislation, pre-clearance systems and dispute resolution—all of which aim to pave the way towards a conducive fiscal environment.

Global expertise

By providing principles guiding the behaviour of multinational companies as well as the principles that need to be followed by the tax authorities, ICC seeks to enhance co-operation, trust and confidence between tax authorities, business taxpayers and the public concerning the operation of the global tax system.

The ICC Commission on Taxation comprises more than 150 taxation experts from companies and business associations in approximately 40 countries from different regions of the world and across all economic sectors. Its mandate is to promote transparent and non-discriminatory treatment of foreign investment and earnings that eliminates tax obstacles to cross-border trade and investment. The commission analyses developments in international fiscal policy and legislation and puts forward business views on government and intergovernmental projects affecting taxation.

ICC Banking Commission launches questionnaire for 2017 Global Survey on Trade Finance

The International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) Banking Commission has released the questionnaire designed to gather data for its flagship annual trade finance report—urging banks globally to participate before the 20 April deadline. One of the most comprehensive market intelligence publications, the report—entitled "Rethinking Trade & Finance"—provides a snapshot into the trade finance industry, allowing banks, traders and government officials to gauge global trade expectations.

The participation in this survey of banks providing trade finance will enable the ICC Banking Commission to analyse likely developments to the ever-changing landscape. The process of identifying the information required in the survey and submitting it to the ICC Banking Commission may also help banks comprehend their trade finance status against the market trends reported in ICC's market intelligence report. Finally, participants who fully complete the questionnaire will be provided with an additional comprehensive data-rich report with the survey results, containing further more detailed information obtained from a deep exploration of the survey data.

The 2017 survey will delve into trade finance and supply chain finance key trends, strategy, evolution, as well as operational, product and sales-related areas. The Rethinking Trade & Finance report will also analyse the global architecture for trade – focusing on new patterns in international trade, new trade corridors, and structural and geographic changes in trade patterns, amongst other topics.

To ensure the project's strategic orientation and alignment with the complexity of the trade finance industry, the ICC Banking Commission has also created a new editorial board and strengthened its focus on delivering genuine market intelligence. The questionnaire closes on 20 April and the report will be released in June 2017.

2017 Business for Peace Award winners named

ICC Secretary General John Danilovich joins Governing Mayor of Oslo Raymond Johansen in the Norwegian capital on March 28 to announce the four winners of the 2017 Business for Peace Awards. The Awards recognise outstanding business people who have been able to achieve business success while acting in an ethically responsible way. Past Business for Peace Award winners include Paul Polman, CEO of Unilever; Richard Branson, CEO of Virgin Group and Ouided Bouchamaoui, Nobel Prize winner and ICC Tunisia Honorary Chairman.



The 2017 Business for Peace honourees will be celebrated at the Business for Peace Award Ceremony on 16 May at Oslo City hall. Gro Harlem Bruntland former Prime Minister of Norway and former Director-General of the World Health Organization will deliver a keynote address.

Honourees are selected by an independent jury of Nobel Prize winners in Peace and in Economics. ICC regional offices (national committees) as well as local chambers of commerce, members of the ICC World Chambers Federation (WCF), United Nations Global Compact (UNGC) and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) local offices assist in the global nomination process by leveraging their respective networks in the search for outstanding business people who have been able to achieve business success while acting in an ethically responsible way.

2017 Business for Peace Award winners are:

Durreen Shahnaz (Singapore/ Bangladesh)

Ms Shahnaz spearheaded the transformation of the way financial and capital markets work; moving beyond profit maximising to maximising purpose and impact. Having overcome obstacles and challenges unknown to most successful business people, Ms Shahnaz began her career at Morgan Stanley (New York) and Merrill Lynch (Hong Kong), before moving to Grameen Bank (Bangladesh).

In 2009, Ms Shahnaz founded Impact Investment Exchange (IIX), the world's first public trading platform dedicated to connecting Impact Enterprises with mission-aligned investment. IIX Foundation (formerly known as Shujog) was established shortly after, complementing the work of IIX by fostering growth, innovation and market readiness of SEs.

Elon Musk (South Africa/USA)

Mr Musk is recognised for advancing the technology frontier to address the systemic challenges of climate change and building societal trust in sustainable energy and transportation. The Award also recognises his leadership in the automotive industry and for efforts in tackling some of the world's most complex challenges.

Harley Seyedin (Iran/USA)

An Iranian immigrant to the US, Mr Seyedin receives the Award for "businessworthy" entrepreneurship. He is also recognised for promoting societal inclusiveness and opportunities for the poor and building a multinational electricity and low-carbon infrastructure development He has spent more than 20 years in China, always seeking to promote a development model that is being socially, environmentally and economically sustainable. Mr Seyedin has been President of the American Chamber of Commerce in South China for the past nine years.

Murad Al-Katib (Canada)

The son of Turkish immigrants to Canada, Mr Al-Katib is recognised for his leadership in sustainable agriculture and for his contribution to feeding millions of refugee families during the on-going Syrian crisis.

Mr Al-Katib is President, CEO and board member of AGT Food and Ingredients Inc., which buys lentils and other pulses from producers and sells them around the world. The company has grown into one of the world's largest lentil companies, handling about a quarter of global supplies.

AGT is a major partner of the United Nations World Food Programme through its operations in Canada and Turkey. AGT estimates that its supplies to the programme feeds more than 4 million refugee families each year.

ICC Merchants of Peace recognised

ICC Executive Board member Sheikh Khalifa Bin Jassim Bin Mohammed Al Thani and former Board Member of ICC UK Kenneth Gardener have become the latest recipients of the prestigious ICC Merchants of Peace Award. Merchants_of_Peace_award established by the world business organization in 2012, the Award recognizes members of the business community who have made a significant contribution to advancing ICC's mission to promote peace and prosperity through international trade and investment.

Award recipients are chosen by the ICC Chairmanship following nomination from the ICC global network of national committees, the World Chambers Federation, individual companies and the ICC Secretariat. The Award is named after ICC founders, known as the "merchants of peace", who recognized the powerful role trade and investment could play in fostering peace and prosperity among nations.

Awarding the ICC Merchants of Peace medal to the two recipients on the side-lines of ICC governing body meetings in London on 3rd week of March, ICC Secretary General John Danilovich said: "With their commitment to ICC's founding mission of peace and prosperity through world trade Sheikh Khalifa and Ken Gardener are true Merchants of Peace and thoroughly deserving of this Award."

Sheikh Khalifa Bin Jassim Bin Mohammed Al Thani



A long-standing member of the ICC family, Sheikh Khalifa is a member of the ICC Executive Board, Chairman of ICC Qatar and a member of the ICC World Chambers Federation General Council. Sheikh Khalifa is also the Chairman of the Qatar Chamber of Commerce and Industry. Under his leadership, the Qatar Chamber has achieved numerous successes, welcoming global trade and investment and providing a wide range of services and support to the local and international business community.

Sheikh Khalifa was instrumental in supporting the launch the ICC World Trade Agenda initiative in 2012 which helped secure the first multilateral trade agreement in two decades in 2013.

Kenneth Gardener

Alongside senior roles in a range of international corporations, Mr Gardener has worked with ICC for almost half a century in a number of important roles. He was a member of ICC UK's Governing Body for over 40 years – for much of that time as its Honorary Treasurer, finally stepping down from that role in 2016.

Mr Gardener was instrumental in the development of ICC's first set of principles for international investment – a landmark product which has shaped government policy and corporate behaviour in the years since. Mr Gardener also served as a member of ICC's World Council and the organization's Finance Committee.

Kazakhstan to join ATA Carnet System

The ATA Carnet System is set to expand to 77 countries on 1 April 2017, when Kazakhstan officially joins the international system. The Chamber of International Commerce of Kazakhstan will become the 76th guaranteeing organisation member of the ICC World Chambers Federation (WCF) ATA international guarantee chain.

Situated in Central Asia and Eastern Europe, the Republic of Kazakhstan ranks as the ninth largest country in the world and is the world´s largest landlocked country. It has long been identified as a priority target countries by the network of organisations already affiliated with the ATA guarantee chain. Kazakhstan's entry into the ATA chain will significantly facilitate trade relations between Kazakhstan businesses and their foreign partners.

Ruedi Bolliger Chair of the ICC WCF World ATA Carnet Council (WATAC) said: "The implementation of the ATA system shows the commitment of Kazakhstan to promoting economic growth and trade facilitation. Throughout the ATA world, there is a sense of achievement in having completed this first step in opening new opportunities for business. We are very much looking forward to Carnet holders, from both Kazakhstan as well as the existing ATA world, successfully conducting their business missions thanks to the smooth processing of ATA carnet



formalities at all national borders." "We are very much looking forward to Carnet holders, from both Kazakhstan as well as the existing ATA world, successfully conducting their business missions thanks to the smooth processing of ATA carnet formalities at all national borders."

The ATA Carnet is an international customs document that allows for the duty-free and tax-free temporary import of goods for up to one year. Carnets are particularly useful for businesses importing, temporarily, professional equipment for projects and events, providing samples to customers or exhibiting at trade fairs. They improve opportunities for businesses by reducing customs procedures and minimising heavy deposits.

WATAC is the ICC working body responsible for administering the international guarantee chain for ATA Carnets. The chain includes chambers and business organisations that have been appointed by their national customs authorities to issue and guarantee Carnets.

Prior to Kazakhstan, Brazil joined the ATA Carnet system on 28 June 2016 after Indonesia who joined on 15 May 2015. More than 180,000 Carnets are issued every year worldwide, for goods with a total value of over US$21 billion. Carnets cover all goods traded internationally, with the exception of perishable items.

ICC hails entry into force of WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement

ICC has welcomed the entry into force of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA)—a landmark global trade agreement which could provide a boost to global trade flows of over US$1trillion.

More than two-thirds of WTO member states have now ratified the agreement, with Chad, Jordan, Oman and Rwanda the latest countries to do so as part of an almost two-year process. Reaching this threshold means the TFA now becomes an official part of the multilateral trading system which covers more than 96% of global GDP.

The TFA-the first multilateral trade agreement to enter into force in over two decades-aims to make trade easier and simpler by cutting red-tape at borders. ICC has estimated that the deal could support the creation of some 20 million jobs worldwide- the vast majority in developing countries.

ICC has been a leading proponent of the TFA, playing a key role in the 2013 negotiations that led to the agreement and working closely with the WTO and other international organizations to coordinate and support the deal's implementation.

ICC is actively supporting the implementation of the TFA through the Global Alliance for Trade Facilitation-a major public-private partnership supported by a number of donor governments and international businesses. The



Alliance is currently rolling out trade facilitation projects in Colombia, Ghana, Kenya and Viet Nam based on TFA standards.

New ICC Court Secretary General & Deputy Secretary General

ICC has appointed Alexander G. Fessas as Secretary General of the ICC Court and Director of ICC Dispute Resolution Services and Ana Serra e Moura as Deputy Secretary General of the ICC Court.

Alexander G. Fessas, a Cypriot national born in Athens, currently serves as Managing Counsel and is the third most senior member of the ICC Court's Secretariat. He started his career with ICC working as Deputy Counsel in the Eastern European team in 2011. He was later promoted to Counsel, first in charge of the North American team and later in charge of the Eastern Mediterranean and Middle East team. Before joining ICC, Alexander was an associate at Stelios Koussoulis & Partners, an Athens-based law firm until 2007, and a sole practitioner thereafter.

He acted both as counsel and administrative secretary in international and domestic commercial arbitration cases in construction, energy and telecommunications disputes. He had also undertaken other roles including as editor-in-chief of the Revue hellénique de droit international . Alexander is admitted to the Athens Bar. He obtained his undergraduate and postgraduate degrees from the Faculty of Law of the University of Athens, having specialized in conflict of laws, arbitration and comparative law. Aside his native Greek, Alexander speaks English and French.

The appointment of Mr. Fessas was made upon unanimous recommendation by a selection committee chaired by ICC Court Governing Body Chairman Karl Hennessee and composed of ICC Secretary General John Danilovich, ICC Court President Alexis Mourre, and ICC Court Vice-Presidents Anne-Veronique Schlaepfer and Eduardo Zuleta.

Ana Serra e Moura, in turn, currently serves as Counsel in charge of Latin America and the Iberian Peninsula. She joined ICC as Deputy Counsel of

the same team in 2011. Ana is also the project manager of the opening of the ICC Court Secretariat's office in Sao Paulo, which will be announced shortly. She is admitted to the Portuguese Bar. She obtained her law degree from the Universidade Católica Portuguesa in Lisbon and furthered her studies at the Instituto de Empresa Law School in Madrid. Before joining ICC, she worked with Juan Fernández-Armesto, founding partner of Armesto & Asociados in Madrid and CCA Advogados Ontier in Lisbon. In addition to Portuguese, her native language, she speaks English, Spanish and French. Ms Serra e Moura has ample experience in both commercial and investment arbitration, as well as commercial and corporate law.



The appointment of new leadership comes as the ICC Court prepares for the entry into force of the revised ICC Arbitration Rules which include new Expedited Procedure Provisions. The incoming and outgoing leadership will work hand in hand during the next three months to ensure a smooth transition and implementation of the new Rules and other on-going projects.

ICC Academy debuts first export & import programme

The International Chamber of Commerce's (ICC) globally recognised e-learning platform, the ICC Academy, has launched its first certification on export and import operations.

Developed to support the needs of companies operating in complex international environments, EIC e-courses provide learning on the full cycle of import and export procedures. The certification offers training on issues ranging from negotiating contracts to resolving cross-border disputes.

As ICC is the international organization that sets global terms and rules for transactions worldwide, the EIC is an authoritative certification programme for best export and import practices. All courses were developed by leading trade expert Guillermo Jimenez- author of the best-seller, ICC Guide to Export/Import: Global Standards for International Trade . The programme is built around five core modules that focus on the practical aspects surrounding international business. Former ICC Head of Division and current university professor Mr Jimenez said: "In a complex, rapidly-changing environment, it pays to be up-to-date with global export standards and strategies. This comprehensive ICC Academy programme provides a foundation in export/import practices and terminology."

Taking 25 hours in total, the interactive e-courses include: International Trade and Export-Import Transactions ; International Business Transactions and Contracts ;Export/Import Finance – Payment and Security Devices ; International Logistics, Shipping, and Sourcing and Global Business Management: Strategies and Structures. Each course incorporates video examples, case studies, structured lessons, self-assessments and a virtual coach to ensure participants are well equipped to become active actors on the international trading stage. The EIC was launched today at a high-level event hosted by IE Singapore. The half-day ceremony included a roundtable discussion on capacity building in global trade, with senior executives from KPMG, Michael Page International, Singapore Management University and Temasek Polytechnic.

The EIC is the third training programme introduced by the ICC Academy, which seeks to assist companies looking to expand internationally.

The ICC Academy earlier introduced the Global Trade Certificate (GTC) and Certified Trade Finance Professional Programme (CTFP) , both of which are aimed at professionals in the global trading sector. Additionally, they worked with IE Singapore to produce theInternational Trade Associate Programme (ITAP) adapted for polytechnic students and the Professional Conversion Programme (PCP) for mid-career professionals pursuing new career opportunities in international trade. These certification programmes have reached over 1,150 learners from 77 countries.

College of Law and Business secures place as 12th ICC Mediation Competition champion

With 147 mock sessions under their belts, the College of Law and Business walked away from the mediation table last night as the winners of the 12th International Commercial Mediation Competition

of the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC). The KMPG-sponsored final was held on February 08 in Paris at the Maison du Barreau.

Five days ago, the biggest educational event of ICC kicked off with 65 eager and excited university teams, representing 33 countries. Each had put months and hundreds of hours into perfecting their problem-solving skills in cross-border commercial disputes.

However, it was the brilliance and expertise of the College of Law and Business (Israel) that locked in the victory against V.M. Salgaocar College of Law Goa, Goa University (India).

Among the eight Competition cases drafted by an international team of experts, the one selected for the final was written by Working Group Chair, Alan Limbury. The spirited dispute dealt with a well-known wine association and its less then bubbly reaction over a retailer's questionable use of its wine appellation.

The professional acting as the mediator during the 2017 Competition Final was Peggy Lansbach O'More. Ms Lansbach O'More is also a mediator who mediates on employment discrimination and labour-management conflicts for the United States Government Sharing Neutrals Programme. Speaking about the final session between the teams from Israel and India, Ms Lansbach

The winning team included Rachel Rhodes and Daniel Winer, who participated in the Competition without a coach. This was the first time the College of Law and Business has been represented at the prestigious event.

Second place team, V.M Salgaocar College of Law Goa, Goa University, was represented by Sidney Cardoso and Bernard Fernandes. They also competed without the guidance of a coach.

During the final award ceremony, Fernando Cusado, Partner at KPMG Advisory (Forensic) in Madrid, Spain, the headline sponsor of the 12th edition of the Competition, extended his company's admiration of the global capacity building event. KPMG has been a long-time supporter of the ICC Mediation Week, for which the world business organization is thankful for their continued contribution.

Global impacts of counterfeiting and piracy to reach US$4.2 trillion by 2022

A new report released on February 06 indicates that the global economic value of counterfeiting and piracy could reach US$2.3 trillion by 2022.

Titled, The Economic Impacts of Counterfeiting and Piracy, the report provides estimates on the wider social and economic impacts on displaced economic activity, investment, public fiscal losses and criminal enforcement, and concludes that these costs could reach an estimated US$1.9 trillion by 2022.

Taken together, the negative impacts of counterfeiting and piracy are projected to drain US$4.2 trillion from the global economy and put 5.4 million legitimate jobs at risk by 2022.

The report from Frontier Economics , an internationally recognised economics research firm, was commissioned by ICC's Business Action to Stop Counterfeiting and Piracy (BASCAP) and the International Trademark Association (INTA). It was launched today in Hong Kong during INTA's 2017 Anticounterfeiting Conference.

"This new study shows that the magnitude of counterfeiting and piracy is huge, and growing," said Amar Breckenridge, senior associate at Frontier Economics. "Our objective is to as accurately as possible characterise the magnitude and growth of this illegal underground economy and its impacts on governments and consumers.

The results show once again that in an interconnected economy, consumers and governments suffer alongside legitimate businesses from the trade in counterfeit and pirated goods."

Frontier's analysis builds on a 2016 report published by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the European Union Intellectual Property Office (EUIPO), which estimated the value of the international trade in counterfeit and pirated products at US$461 billion in 2013, or as much as 2.5% of all international trade.

This represents an increase of more than 80% over the findings in OECD's ground breaking 2008 report.

International trade organisations release compliance guidance for trade transactions

The Banking Commission of the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC), the Wolfsberg Group, and the Bankers Association for Finance and Trade (BAFT) jointly announce on 24 january the publication of The Wolfsberg Group, ICC and BAFT Trade Finance Principles.

The guidance document updates the Wolfsberg Group's Trade Finance Principles paper last revised in 2011. This broader industry edition now addresses the due diligence required by global and regional financial institutions of all sizes in the financing of international trade. The document was updated to reflect the growing regulatory expectations, as well as the more stringent application of existing

regulations faced by the industry today. The collaborative effort will help standardise the practice of financial crimes compliance for trade transactions. The publication of this document is the culmination of more than two years of work undertaken by the organisations and their members.

Sustainable business opens major economic opportunity says new report

The International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) has welcomed the findings of a landmark report by the Business & Sustainable Development Commission (BSDC) which reveals that sustainable business models could open economic opportunities worth at least US$12 trillion – creating up to 380 million jobs a year by 2030.

The new report – Better Business, Better World – has been developed by a group of over 35 CEOs and civil society leaders including ICC Secretary General, John Danilovich. The BSDC initiative was launched one year ago with the aim of inspiring business leaders to drive implementation of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals – often known as the "SDGs" or "Global Goals".

The BSDC's headline finding is that putting the SDGs at the heart of the world's economic strategy could unleash a step-change in growth and productivity. Analysis presented in the report suggests that SDG-related markets have the potential to grow two to three times faster than average GDP over the next five years – with many "unicorns" (start-ups valued at over US$1 billion) already finding major success in these sectors from mobility systems through to circular manufacturing.

Many companies are already taking action to support implementation of the Global Goals – but as the BSDC report highlights, more widespread business action is required to address global challenges such as climate change and forced migration.

Better Business, Better World was launched at the Philanthropreneurship Forum in Vienna, Austria, and will also be discussed at this week's World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland.

ICC Academy and ADB join forces to help close skills gap in developing Asia

The International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) Academy and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) have partnered to offer online global trade and trade finance training. Through ADB's Trade Finance Programme (TFP), the e-courses will use the Academy's international training model and be accessible via its innovative digital platform.

This coming February, the first e-course will be made available with more e-courses to follow throughout the first half of 2017. The initial phase will benefit 150 bank staff from approximately 80 TFP partner banks. It will include the Academy's two industry-backed certification programmes, the entry-level Global Trade Certificate (GTC) and the advanced Certified Trade Finance Professional (CTFP). Through this capacity-building initiative, the TFP will allow its partner banks to provide better financing options to local export and import companies.

The Academy is the world business organization's ground-breaking e-learning platform. Established in 2015 to address the global shortage of trade finance expertise, the Academy provides online certification and professional development services to meet the needs of banks, corporates and other organisations at the forefront of international trade.

Commenting on the recent partnership, ICC Academy General Manager Daniel Kok said: "Together with ADB, the ICC Academy is proud to have taken a step forward to train and progress capabilities in developing countries. With ADB as our partner, we pledge to help fill the ever-changing skills gap."

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Backed by ADB's AAA credit rating, the ADB TFP provides guarantees and loans to over 200 partner banks to support trade. The programme permits companies throughout Asia to engage in import and export activities. With dedicated trade finance specialists and a 24-hour response time, the TFP has established itself as a key partner in the international trade community. To close gaps in the region's most challenging markets, it provides fast, reliable and responsive assistance.

ADB's head of trade finance Steven Beck said: "The ADB Trade Finance Programme is committed to providing partner banks with the knowledge required to give companies the best possible support to reach their potential through international trade." The ADB Trade Finance Programme is committed to providing partner banks with the knowledge required to give companies the best possible support to reach their potential through international trade."

TFP complements its financial backing with a regular series of workshops and seminars to increase understanding and expertise in trade finance products and operations, risk management and fraud prevention. Since 2009, TFP has supported more than 8,600 small- and medium-sized businesses across developing Asia–through over 13,000 transactions valued at over US$25.5 billion–in sectors ranging from commodities and capital goods to medical supplies and consumer goods.

WTO News

WTO members welcome entry into force of the Trade Facilitation Agreement

WTO members hailed the entry into force of the Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) as a historic achievement at a meeting of the General Council on 27 February. In welcoming this milestone, members pledged to advance work on implementing the TFA so that the full benefits of the Agreement can be reaped.

The TFA, the first multilateral deal concluded in the 21 year history of the WTO, entered into force on 22 February after the organization obtained the needed acceptance from two-thirds of its 164 members for the agreement to take effect. The TFA seeks to expedite the movement, release and clearance of goods across borders and creates a significant boost for the multilateral trading system.

In his address to WTO members, Director-General Roberto Azevêdo said:

"By ratifying the agreement, members have shown their commitment to the multilateral trading system. You have followed through on the promises made when this deal was struck in Bali. And by bringing the deal into force we can now begin the work of turning its benefits into reality." DG Azevêdo also thanked the members for their considerable efforts to reach this historic juncture. "This achievement belongs to all of you," he said.

The Director-General, in his capacity as depositary of the WTO Agreements and their amendments, signed the official depositary notification of the TFA's entry into force. He handed over the notification to General Council Chair Ambassador Harald Neple (Norway) at the meeting. "The Agreement on Trade Facilitation is a defining multilateral achievement of our time," Ambassador Neple said. "It is practical, modern and global and it symbolizes the essence of the WTO: members from all corners of the globe coming together, overcoming differences and responding to pressing trade issues for the benefit of all," he said.

The chair called on members who have not yet ratified the TFA to do so soon and to deposit their instruments of acceptance. All members, the chair added, must work together to fully implement the Agreement. All delegations taking the floor at the meeting—representing developed, developing and least-developed countries (LDCs)—welcomed the TFA's entry into force.

Cambodia, speaking on behalf of the least-developed countries (LDC) group, said the milestone marked a very important start to members' work to achieve results in trade facilitation. Cambodia, along with several other delegations, emphasized the need of developing countries and LDCs for implementation assistance. Several delegations meanwhile echoed the chair's call for the remaining members to ratify the TFA while also offering their support for capacity building for the Agreement's implementation. Many also remarked that the TFA's entry into force demonstrated members' collaboration across various levels of development and could serve as a model for more WTO agreements in the future.

The Agreement is unique in that it allows developing and least-developed countries to set their own timetables for implementing the TFA depending on their capacities to do so – and it provides for support to help them develop their capacity. The Trade Facilitation Agreement Facility (TFAF) was created at the request of developing and least-developed countries to help ensure they receive the assistance needed to reap the full benefits of the TFA and to support the ultimate goal of full implementation of the new agreement by all members. The TFA further provides for the establishment of a Committee on Trade Facilitation to periodically review the Agreement's operation and implementation.

Full implementation of the TFA is forecast to slash members' trade costs by an average of 14.3 per cent, with developing countries having the most to gain, according to a 2015 study carried out by WTO economists. The TFA is also likely to reduce the time needed to import goods by over a day and a half and to export goods by almost two days, representing a reduction of 47 per cent and 91 per cent respectively over the current average.

Roberto Azevêdo reappointed WTO Director-General; second term begins in September

At a meeting of the General Council on 28 February, WTO members agreed by consensus to appoint Roberto Azevêdo for a second four-year term as Director-General. Mr Azevêdo, whose second term will begin on 1 September 2017, earlier outlined his vision for the future and took questions from the membership on challenges facing the organization. Director-General Azevêdo confirmed his willingness to serve a second term in the role in a letter to WTO members on 3 November 2016 at the outset of the selection process. He was the only candidate nominated for the post when the process closed on 31 December 2016. In thanking members for their support, DG Azevêdo said he believed the WTO

"is on the right path. We have achieved a great deal over the last few years. The WTO is stronger today than it was in 2013."

"But we can do much more — particularly for the smaller players and those who feel cut off from the economic benefits of trade. We must build a more inclusive trading system. I look forward to working with you all to that end." DG Azevêdo also encouraged members to speak up for the WTO. "I ask you to stand up and make the case for the value that you see in trade and the trading system.

This organization is here for a reason — to support economic development, growth and job creation, but also to support peace, cooperation and solidarity among nations. DG Azevêdo also took questions from the membership regarding the management of the WTO, how to advance negotiations and ensure a successful outcome at the organization's upcoming 11th Ministerial Conference in December 2017, the challenges currently facing the multilateral trading system, and other issues of interest to members.

2017 Public Forum theme to be "Trade: Behind the Headlines"

The WTO's 2017 Public Forum, to be held on 26-28 September, will present an opportunity for participants to go beyond the rhetoric and examine the opportunities trade offers and the challenges it can bring. Entitled "Trade: Behind the Headlines", the Forum comes at a time when anti-globalisation sentiment and rising protectionism call into question the role of trade.

At this year's Forum, discussions will focus on how to make trade work for more people and address more effectively the challenges trade can generate. It will provide a platform for engagement and deliberation on how trade and the WTO can contribute to attaining the Sustainable Development Goals, how the benefits of trade can be shared more widely among countries, businesses and individuals and how best to tackle the challenges of the changing trade landscape.

Sessions for the Public Forum are organised by civil society, academia, business, governments, parliamentarians and intergovernmental organizations. The call for proposals will open soon.

Registration for those wishing to attend the Forum is due to open on 15 May 2017.

DG Azevêdo inaugurates WTO's first Young Professionals Programme

Director-General Roberto Azevêdo welcomed the first cohort of young professionals at an inauguration ceremony of the WTO Young Professionals Programme on 6 March.The WTO Young Professionals Programme was launched in 2016 with the aim of enhancing the knowledge and skills on WTO issues of young professionals from developing and least developed countries — especially from WTO members that are not currently represented at the professional level in the WTO Secretariat.

"By allowing these young professionals to get to know our work and to contribute to our activities, this Programme can help to widen the pool of qualified applicants for future recruitment exercises at the WTO, and elsewhere," said DG Azevêdo. "I think this is an important step to help increase diversity and broaden representation of the membership in the Secretariat."

DG Azevêdo encouraged the young professionals to develop their knowledge, skills and experience during the 12-month placement at the WTO, and to help spread the knowledge of the WTO back home. "You can be the ambassadors of the WTO, and encourage others who are interested in the Organization to come here", he told the young professionals.

Leticia Caminero, a young professional from the Dominican Republic, shared her impression of the programme: "It has been amazing to experience the international spectrum of intellectual property policies, to learn about the WTO Secretariat's work and how countries come together and try to better the system."

Leticia is currently working in the Intellectual Property, Government Procurement and Competition Division. Before joining the Young Professionals Programme, Leticia ran a law firm in the Dominican Republic advising artists and movie producers on intellectual property rights. She said that the last month had been remarkable, as she personally witnessed the entry into force of the TRIPS amendment to ease access to affordable medicines.

Fernando Bertran, another young professional from Chile, said he would like to help raise awareness about WTO issues back home. "Coming from the private sector in Latin America, people around me are not fully aware of what the WTO does, and it is a real privilege to witness first hand things of such importance, to which we normally would not have access."

Fernando is currently working in the Legal Affairs Division of the WTO Secretariat. Before, he worked in a private law firm in Chile.

The first cohort of five young professionals has been selected from a total of 848 candidates after a competitive, merit-based selection process. They started working in the WTO in early 2017 and will spend one year in the WTO Secretariat to learn about the WTO's work and to contribute to its activities.

About ICC Bangladesh

International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) - The world business organization was founded in 1919 by a few visionary business leaders of Europe immediately after the First World War; having its HQrs. in Paris. ICC has been promoting Free Market Economy, formulating various rules and guidelines for cross border trade and investment. ICC's 6.5 million member companies in over 130 countries have interests spanning in every sector of private enterprise. ICC works in close cooperation with national governments and multi-national institutions such as G-8/G-20, World Bank, WTO, Asian Development Bank, UNCTAD, OECD and several UN agencies for promotion, protection and development of world economy.

Bangladesh National Committee of ICC, established in 1994, is comprised of major Chambers of Commerce & Industry, Business Associations, Stock Exchange, Banks, Non-banking Financial Institutions, Insurance Companies, Trans-national companies, Law Firms and large Corporate Houses having significant interest in international trade.

The activities of ICC Bangladesh include promotion of foreign trade and investment, trade policy reviews, business dialogues, seminars & workshops both at home and abroad on related policy issues, harmonization of trade law & rules, legal reforms, updating businesses with the ICC rules & standards for cross border business transactions. ICC Bangladesh has so far organized following regional & international conferences.

- **10-11 November 2000:** ICC Asia Conference on "Investment in Developing Countries: Increasing Opportunities" organized in Dhaka was inaugurated by the Prime Minister of Bangladesh and attended by a number of high profile dignitaries including the Thai Deputy Prime Minister & WTO Director General Designate, ADB President, UN-ESCAP Executive Secretary and Chinese Vice Minister for Foreign Trade & Economic Cooperation. More than 250 participants from 24 countries participated in this event.
- **17-18 January 2004:** International Conference on "Global Economic Governance and Challenges of Multilateralism" was held in Dhaka, coinciding with 10th Anniversary of ICC Bangladesh. The Conference was inaugurated by the Prime Minister of Bangladesh and Thai Prime Minister was the Keynote Speaker. WTO Director General, EU Commissioner for Trade, UNESCAP Executive Secretary, Governor of Japan Bank for International Cooperation, six Ministers from three continents, Bangladesh Ministers, ICC Chairman, ICC Vice Chairman, ICC Secretary General and more than 500 participants from 38 countries attended this event.
- **27-28 September 2005:** Regional Seminar on "Capital Market Development: Asian Experience". The Seminar held in Dhaka was inaugurated by the President of the People's Republic of Bangladesh and attended by Chairmen/CEOs of securities & exchange commissions, stock exchanges, capital market operators, financial institutions and investors from 15 Asian countries.
- **13 April 2010:** Conference on "Energy for Growth" was held in Dhaka coinciding with the 15 years of ICC's presence in Bangladesh. The Conference was inaugurated by the Finance Minister of Bangladesh and attended by ICC Global Chairman, Minister for Commerce of Bangladesh, Minister for Development Cooperation of Denmark and Adviser to the Bangladesh Prime Minister for Energy & Mineral Resources. Some 800 delegates from home and abroad including energy experts and international financiers from Australia, China, Denmark, India, Germany, Japan, Singapore, Switzerland, UK and USA.
- **25-26 October 2014:** International Conference on "Global Economic Recovery: Asian Perspective", coinciding with the 20 years of ICC's presence in Bangladesh. The Conference was inaugurated by the President of the People's Republic of Bangladesh H.E. Mr. Md. Abdul Hamid. Minister for Finance & Minister for Commerce of Bangladesh, UNCTAD Secretary General, Ministers from Myanmar and Nepal; ICC Vice Chairman; ICC Secretary General; ICC Research Foundation Chairman; Director of ICC National Committees and more than 500 participants attended this event.

As part of its activities, ICC Bangladesh has been organizing Workshops/Seminars on International Trade Finance, mainly for bankers Bangladesh, in various countries since 2014. So far such events have been organized in Kuala Lumpur in April, 2014; in Colombo in February 2015; in Kunming in August 2015 in Yangon in November 2015 and in Hanoi in February 2016.

ICCB also organizes Certified Documentary Credit Specialist (CDCS), Certificate for Specialists in Demand Guarantees (CSDG) and Certificate of International Trade Finance (CITF) Examinations in Dhaka, conducted worldwide every year by ***ifs*** University College and endorsed by ICC Paris.

ICC Bangladesh participates in most of the World Chambers Congress & ICC World Congresses held every two years and WTO Ministerial Meetings as well as ICC Regional Consultative Group Meetings.

BANGLADESH INTERNATIONAL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
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