ICC Bangladesh

NEWS BULLETIN

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Gaza-Israel conflict : a humanitarian and economic catastrophe

About ICC Bangladesh

International Chamber of Commerce (ICC), *The world business organization*, with its headquarters in Paris, celebrated its Centenary world over in 2019. ICC, with physical presence in more than 100 countries, represents 45 million companies and more than 1 billion workers worldwide. One in every three worker depend on ICC Members for their livelihood.

ICC was founded in 1919 in the aftermath of the First World War when no world system of rules governed trade, investment, finance or commercial relations. ICC's founders, referred to as "The Merchants of Peace", acted on their conviction that building stronger trade relations between nations would reduce the risk of war and armed conflict. ICC, is the largest and the only private sector non-sovereign organization, which was granted Status of a Permanent Observer at the General Assembly of the United Nations in December 2016.

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, founded in 1994, is comprised of trade organizations, national and trans-national corporations, who represent almost 80% Bangladesh economy.

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 attended the event.
- 25-26 October 2014: International Conference on "Global Economic Recovery: Asian Perspective", was in held in Dhaka 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. 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.
- 8-9 February 2017 : The first ever "UNESCAP Asia Pacific Business Forum: Regional Integration to Achieve Sustainable Development" was organized by ICC Bangladesh jointly with UNESCAP under the patronage of the Ministry of Commerce, Government of Bangladesh. The Forum was inaugurated by the Hon'ble President of the People's Republic of Bangladesh. Ministers from Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, UNESCAP Under Secretary General, UNCTAD Secretary General, business leaders and some 600 delegates from home and abroad attended the Forum.
- 10-12 December 2019 :"The Asia Pacific Conference on Financing inclusive and Sustainable Development" was organized by ICC Bangladesh jointly with UNESCAP, ADB and LIBF (The London Institute of Banking & Finance) under the patronage of the Financial Institutions Division (FID), Ministry of Finance, Government of Bangladesh to celebrate 100 years of ICC and 25 years of ICC Bangladesh. The Hon'ble President of the People's Republic of Bangladesh inaugurated the Conference. Video Messages from UN Secretary General Mr. AntónioGuterres and 8th former United Nations Secretary General Mr. Ban-Ki moon were also played during the inauguration. Ministers from Bangladesh, Cambodia, Maldives and Sri Lanka, Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and Executive Secretary of ESCAP, Central Bank Governors, Business Leaders, Policy Makers, Experts and some 800 delegates from home and 30 foreign countries attended the Conference.

As part of its activities, ICC Bangladesh has been organizing Workshops/ Seminars on International Trade Finance, mainly for bankers, within Bangladesh and in various countries. Since 2014, the National Committee has organized workshops in Kuala Lumpur (April 2014); in Colombo (February 2015); in Kunming (August 2015); in Yangon (November 2015); in Hanoi (April 2016); in Bangkok (December 2017) and in Phnom Penh (April 2018).

The National Committee also arranged participation of Bankers from Bangladesh at ICC Annual Banking Meetings held in Singapore (April 2015), in Jakarta (April 2017) and in Beijing (April 2019). Besides, ICC Bangladesh arranged participation of Bankers at ICC Austria Global Trade Conference held in Vienna in May 2017, June 2018 and May 2019, FCI Annual Meeting in Vietnam (June 2019), ICC Academy 8th Supply Chain Summit in Singapore (February 2019), International Financial Crime Forum in Kuala Lumpur (July 2019), World Conference on Banking Institutions (WCBI) organized by London Institute of Banking and Finance (LIBF) in London (September 2019), ICC 12th World Chambers Congress in Dubai (November 2021) and ICC Global Trade Facilitation Summit in Dubai (March 2022), Webinar on ICC Court Centenary (March 2023).

For professional development of bankers, ICC Bangladesh also organizes Certified Documentary Credit Specialist (CDCS) and Certificate for Specialists in Demand Guarantees (CSDG) Examinations in Dhaka, conducted worldwide every year by LIBF (London Institute of Banking and Finance) and endorsed by ICC Paris.

ICC Bangladesh participates at World Chambers Congress of ICC and World Chambers Federation (WCF), ICC World Council, WTO Ministerial Meetings, Meetings of ICC Permanent Heads, ICC Banking Commission and ICC Asia Pacific Regional Consultative Group Meetings. The National Committee also arranges visit by Bangladesh Business delegation to different countries for promotion of trade and investment.

International Chamber of Commerce

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ICC Bangladesh
The world business organization

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Editor's Note

Israeli Aggression of Gaza and Challenges ahead

It is now almost three months that the war broke out between Israel and Hamas, the militant Islamist Group that has been controlling Gaza since 2006. Since 7 October, 2023 barbaric massacre of the Palestinian, in particular new born babies & children, women & civilians have been continuing. So far, a total of 21,822 Palestinians have been killed and 56,451 wounded. Hospitals, schools, residential houses including war shelters and almost every infrastructure have been destroyed by both air and ground offensive. In a latest statement the Israeli authorities have announced that the war will continue in 2024!

Israel has ordered more than one million Palestinian civilians in northern Gaza to evacuate ahead of a ground invasion that began on October 28. Israeli forces have encircled Gaza City, cutting it off from southern Gaza and squeezing Hamas. The territory is also desperately low on water, fuel, and supplies as Israel has rejected humanitarian pauses and limited the amount of aid that can enter.

The Israeli government suspended all permits allowing Palestinians living in the West Bank to work in Israel or in Israeli settlements in the occupied territories. The International Labour Organisation (ILO) estimates that this move eliminated around 208,000 jobs- about 24% of all employment in the West Bank. Israel's agriculture and construction sectors are dependent on Palestinian and foreign workers who take on low-paid jobs that Israeli citizens refuse. For tens of thousands of government employees, the situation is equally bleak.

The conflict in Gaza and Israel is causing immense human suffering and also have consequences for the broader Middle East and North Africa region. This comes at a time when economic activity in the region was already expected to slow, falling from 5.6 percent in 2022 to 2 percent in 2023. Experts warned that large-scale conflict would constitute a major economic challenge not only for the region but also other parts of the world. It would disrupt the entire supply-chain of basic commodities including oil, gas, food grains supplies and international trade.

Its containment hinges on the success of international efforts to prevent further escalation to the broader region. What is certain is that forecasts for the most directly exposed economies will be downgraded and that policies to buffer economies against shocks and preserve stability will be critical.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict dates back to the end of the nineteenth century. The war ended in 1949 with Israel's victory, but 750,000 Palestinians were displaced, and the territory was divided into 3 parts: the State of Israel, the West Bank (of the Jordan River), and the Gaza Strip. However, there have been series of war between Israel and Palestinian including Egypt, Jordan, and Syria.

The U.S. has offered diplomatic and financial support to Israel to build up its military strength to fight against Palestine. Despite agreement between international human rights organizations that Israel is enforcing apartheid against Palestinians, the U.S. provides $3.8 billion in military aid to Israel every year and the U.S. Government continues to build close ties with Prime Minister Netanyahu and his allies. Israel must be held accountable for its rights violations and the superpower must play minimum balancing role regarding international policies.

UN Secretary-General António Guterres invoked Article 99 of the UN Charter for his first time, triggering a debate at the Security Council on matters the Secretary-General believes threaten "international peace and security;" Guterres said the situation in the Gaza Strip has led to "a severe risk of collapse of the humanitarian system" (Axios). Israel's foreign minister posted that Guterres' action "constitutes support of the Hamas terrorist organization". With the veto by the U.S. the invoking of Article 99 of the UN Charter did not make any impact on Israel.

It is imperative that immediate cease fire be enforced as well as ensure urgent and unimpeded access to essential humanitarian supplies, including food, water, shelter, medicine, fuel and electricity. The physical safety of the civilian population must be guaranteed. The occupation needs to end and there must be restitution and reconstruction of all infrastructure, towards full justice for Palestinians having their own State.

WE DEEPLY MOURN



Professor Saleemul Huq, OBE
(2 October 1952 – 28 October 2023)

ICC Bangladesh is deeply shocked and grieved at the sad demise of Prof. Saleemul Huq, OBE, a leading global figure in climate change research and policy on Saturday, 28 October 2023. Innalillahi Wainnailayhi Rajiun'.

Prof. Huq was the Director of the International Centre for Climate Change & Development (ICCCAD) and Professor at Independent University, Bangladesh (IUB). He was elected one of Nature's 10 top scientists in 2022.

We remember with gratitude his unqualified support, contribution, guidance for of climate change, environment and development in the world. He worked extensively in the inter-linkages between climate change mitigation, adaptation and sustainable development, from the perspective of developing countries, particularly in the least developed countries (LDCs).

His contributions include his role as a lead author for the third, fourth, and fifth assessment reports of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). The IPCC panel, of which Dr. Huq was a part, was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2007.

In addition, he contributed to the Fifth Assessment Report of the IPCC. Having established the climate change research group at the International Institute for Environment & Development (IIED), based in the UK, in 2000, he later became a senior fellow, and was also Senior Adviser on Locally Led Adaptation with Global Centre on Adaptation (GCA).

Prof. Huq was the founder and the Chairman of the Bangladesh Centre for Advanced Studies (BCAS), a leading research and policy institute in Bangladesh.

He was actively engaged as an adviser on adaptation, loss and damage and climate finance to the Least Developed Countries (LDC) Group in the UNFCCC and provided training to LDC negotiators. He was also involved as a board member of Climate Vulnerability Forum under UNFCCC.

Prof. Huq was awarded 2020 National Environment Award by the Government of Bangladesh for his contribution to the development of the environment and promoting the cause of Bangladesh in adopting to climate change as well as having access to Loss and Damage Fund.

Prof. Huq was appointed Officer of the Order of the British Empire (OBE) in the 2022 New Year Honours for services to combating international climate change.

In a Facebook post, ICCCAD wrote, "A visionary leader who was not only the torch bearer for Bangladesh's fight against Climate Change but for the entire global community, his unmatched legacy will remain as a shining example for years and generations to come."

May Allah rest his soul in peace in heaven.

ICC Bangladesh News

Cross border trade key challenge to maintain economic growth & prosperity: Observed ICC Chair Ms. Garza

ICC Bangladesh arranged a reception in Dhaka on 16 October for Ms. Maria Fernanda Garza, Global Chair of the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC), The world business organization during her 3-day visit to Bangladesh. The Reception chaired by ICC Bangladesh President MahbuburRahman was attended by Commerce Minister H. E. Mr. TipuMunshi, M.P. as Chief Guest and H. E. Mr. Salman FazlurRahman, M.P. Adviser to the Hon'ble Prime Minister for Private Industry and Investment as Special Guest.



ICC Bangladesh President Mahbubur Rahman delivering his welcome address at the reception

ICC Chair Maria, thanking ICC Bangladesh President for hosting the reception, observed that continuation of cross border trade during the current turbulence in the world is the key challenge to maintain desired economic growth as well as prosperity for the greater interest of the people of the globe and the global trade communities should work in a united way to combat the challenge emerged from political, economical turbulence.

Ms. Garza said that ICC was founded in the aftermath of World War I with a vision to harness the power of business for the betterment of the world.This vision is more relevant than ever, especially in response to global challenges like the financial crisis, the COVID-19 pandemic, the Ukraine conflict, and recent events in the Middle East, she said.

ICC Chair emphasized that cross-border commerce can be a driving force for global prosperity and peace. In today's world, where uncertainty and fragmentation of globalization are pressing issues, cross-border trade remains essential for economic growth. She also underlined the importance of cybersecurity and the need for global cooperation. In an increasingly interconnected world, the development of practical policies and private sector-led initiatives is of critical importance for maintaining cybersecurity.

She mentioned that ICC plays a leading role in shaping the reform of the multilateral system. This includes advocating for climate action, preserving nature, setting rules for the global environment, and promoting integrity and digitalization. Business engagement at the highest levels is seen as vital for achieving these objectives.

Garza stressed the importance of unity within the business community and the role of the ICC as a partner in shaping global policies. She emphasized that businesses are stronger when they work together, and ICC plays a pivotal role in making a tangible difference in various aspects of society, including for the benefit of people, the planet, and prosperity.

In her remarks, Ms. Maria acknowledged the incredible progress and resilience of Bangladesh.She praised the nation for demonstrating the power of determination, unity, and an indomitable spirit in overcoming numerous challenges.She commended Bangladesh as a shining example of transforming adversity into opportunityand expressed her unwavering commitment to promoting Bangladesh on the global stage.

ICC Bangladesh President MahbuburRahman, in his welcome address, said that ICC Bangladesh isprivileged to have the opportunity to welcome ICC Chair Maria Fernanda Garza in Dhaka. He said that Ms Garza assumed the ICC Chair role in Paris for the period from July 2022 to June 2024 and is

associated, among others, with the B20 and United Nations Internet Governance Forum.

Mr. MahbuburRahman mentioned that ICC, a global business organisation, is the representative body that speaks with authority on behalf of enterprises from all sectors in every part of the world. It is the institutional representative of more than 45 million companies in over 130 countries with a mission to make business work for everyone, every day, everywhere. Globally, one in every three worker depends on ICC Members for their livelihood. ICC members include many of the world's leading companies, SMEs, business associations and local Chambers of Commerce. It influences international trade rules and holds consultative status with various global bodies.



ICC Global Chair Maria Fernanda Garza delivering her speech at the reception

Mr. Rahmansaid Bangladesh's remarkable growth, transitioning from a least developed country to a developing one by 2026, highlights its economic success, becoming the 35th largest economy in the world.The country faces economic challenges, but the government aims to stabilise the situation through regulatory reforms. Bangladesh emphasizes the role of the private sector in its development and seeks substantial investments in infrastructure, energy, and natural resource exploration, ICCB President added.

MahbuburRahman also lauded Bangladesh's humanitarian efforts in supporting displaced Rohingyas and urged international support for their repatriation. Bangladesh's dynamic leadership, led by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, has been pivotal in its journey towards becoming a middle-income nation, with ongoing infrastructure projects set to improve the business environment, he added.

Commerce Minister Mr. Tipu Munshi, M.P. in his address as Chief Guest said "We have developed a comprehensive private sector, encompassing various industries and sectors, contributing to our nation's growth and economic diversification. We're also embracing the digital age. We have made significant strides in technologies like nano-technology, blockchain, and quantum computing. Our parliament has even passed legislation to support the development of nano-technology, demonstrating our commitment to staying at the forefront of technological advancements'.

Mr. Tipu Munshi welcoming ICC Chair Maria said that Bangladesh look forward to further strengthening our collaboration for mutual progress. "Bangladesh is on an upward trajectory, and we are committed to continuous growth, development, and innovation. Thank you for being part of our journey' he said.

The Commerce Minister mentioned about his recent visit to Mexico and having very productive discussions focusing on promotion of trade and investment between the two countries. In this regard, he hoped that Ms. Maria would assist in establishing contacts between the trade bodies of the two countries for development ofbi-lateral trade between Bangladesh and Mexico.

ICC Bangladesh, under Mr. Mahbubur Rahman's dynamic leadership, actively collaborates with the government on trade and investment policies.ICC Bangladesh has organized impactful events and dialogues, enhancing cross-border business, the Minister added.

Despite challenges in capital liquidity and inflation, the government and central bank are working on stabilizing the economy through regulatory reforms, Mr. Tipu Munshi noted. Bangladesh's progress toward the Millennium Development Goals and commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals are testament to our dynamic leadership. We aim to transition into a middle-income country by 2026, with key infrastructure projects set to improve the business environment. We appreciate the international community's support for hosting displaced Rohingyas and urge global backing for their repatriation, Mr. Munshi said.

Mr. Salman F Rahman, M.P. Advisor to the Prime Minister for

Private industry and Investment said Ms. Maria Fernanda Garza's visit to Bangladesh has provided an opportunity to reinforce the ICC's commitment to global economic development, cooperation, and unity. It also allowed for the celebration of Bangladesh's remarkable achievements and resilience.

"We are thrilled to have Ms. Garza here, and I can assure you that your next visit will be even more comfortable and convenient as our traffic conditions are improving significantly due to ongoing development projects.It's indeed fascinating to note that ICC is the only private sector organization accredited to the United Nations. This unique status highlights the essential role that the private sector plays on the global stage.ICC has been at the forefront of pioneering tasks in the field of arbitration, contributing significantly to international dispute resolution', he said.

Under the dynamic leadership of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, Bangladesh has made remarkable strides in the last fifteen years. Our economy has grown four to fivefold, with a GDP now standing at US $ 461 billion, a substantial increase from the 80-90 billion range in 2009, Salman Rahman added.

One of our true success stories lies in agriculture. Despite being one of the most densely populated nations globally, we have achieved self-sufficiency in food production, a feat we are immensely proud of, the Advisor noted.

Our manufacturing sector has flourished beyond the ready-made garment (RMG) industry. Notably, our private sector has excelled in various areas, with two companies standing out as exemplars in domestic white goods, electricity generation, and agro-processing. Companies like PRAN and Walton have become billion-dollar enterprises, contributing significantly to our country's economic growth, Salman added.

ICCB Vice President Naser Ezaz Bijoy introducing ICC Chair Maria Garza emphasized the significance of ICC members in the global economy and their contributions to Bangladesh's progress and prosperity under their leadership. Ms. Garza's visit reaffirmed the ICC's commitment to global economic development, cooperation and unity as well as Bangladesh's achievements and resilience in the face of global challenges, he said.



Mr. Tipu Munshi, M.P. is addressing at the reception as Chief Guest

ICC Bangladesh President MahbuburRahman presented a memento to ICC Global Chairman Ms. Maria Fernanda Garza.

The Reception was attended, among other are : Justice K.M. Hasan, Former Chief Justice of Bangladesh; Apex Footwear Chairman Syed Manzur Elahi, ICCB Executive Board Members Abdul Hai Sarker, AftabUl Islam, Anwar-Ul-Alam Chowdhury (Parvez), Md. Fazlul Hoque, Mir Nasir Hossain, Mohammad Hatem, Omar Hazzaz, Md. Sameer Sattar, Sheikh Kabir Hossain, Simeen Rahman & Tapan Chowdhury; ICC Bangladesh Secretary General Ataur Rahman, The Daily Star

Editor Mahfuz Anam,The Financial Express Editor Shamsul Huq Zahid, The Daily Banik Barta Editor Dewan Hanif Mahmud, ICC Bangladesh Arbitration and ADR Commission CPD Distinguished Fellows Dr. Debapriya Bhattacharya and Prof. Mustafizur Rahman, Mutual Trust Bank Managing Director & CEO Syed Mahbubur Rahman, Trust Bank Managing Director & CEO Ms. Humaira Azam, National Housing Finance and Investments Managing Director Mohammad Shamsul Islam, Mr. Md. Abdul Haque, FCA, Managing Director, Eastland Insurance Company Limited; Mr. Khawza Manzer Nadeem, Managing Director, United Insurance Company Limited; Dr. ATM Tariquzzaman, CPA. Managing Director, Dhaka Stock Exchange Ltd.; Mr. Tanvir Ahmed, Managing Director, Green Textile Limited; Syed Ershad Ahmed, CM & Managing Director, Expeditors (Bangladesh) Ltd.; Mrs. Rachel Wu, Managing Director, LSI Industries Ltd.; Mr. Anis A. Khan, Advisor to the Board, Tyser Risk Management Bangladesh Limited; Mr. Zaved Akhtar, Chairman & Managing Director, Unilever Bangladesh Limited; Mr. Md. Ahsan Ullah, Supernumerary Professor, BIBM; Mr. Helal Ahmed Chowdhury, Former Managing Director, Pubali Bank Limited; Mr. Ahmed Shaheen, Additional Managing Director, Eastern Bank Limited; Mr. M. Masrur Reaz Ph.D., Chairman, Policy Exchange Bangladesh; Ms. Simone Parchment, Deputy Country Director, World Food Programme (WFP); Ms. Elisa Cortes Gil, UNICEF Bangladesh; Ms. Bitopi Das Chowdhury, Country Head of Corporate Affairs, Bangladesh, Standard Chartered Bank; among others.



Mr. Salman F Rahman, M.P. Advisor to the Prime Minister for Private Industry and Investment delivering his speech as Special Guest

Chairman Ms. Nihad Kabir, Bar-at-Law; DBL Ceramics Ltd Managing Director Mohammed Abdul Jabbar, Former Principal Secretary to Prime Minister Md. Abdul Karim, Policy Research Institute of Bangladesh Chairman Dr. Zaidi Sattar and Executive Director Dr. Ahsan H. Mansur, Centre for Policy Dialogue

ICC Global Chair Maria Garza called on Commerce Minister Tipu Munshi

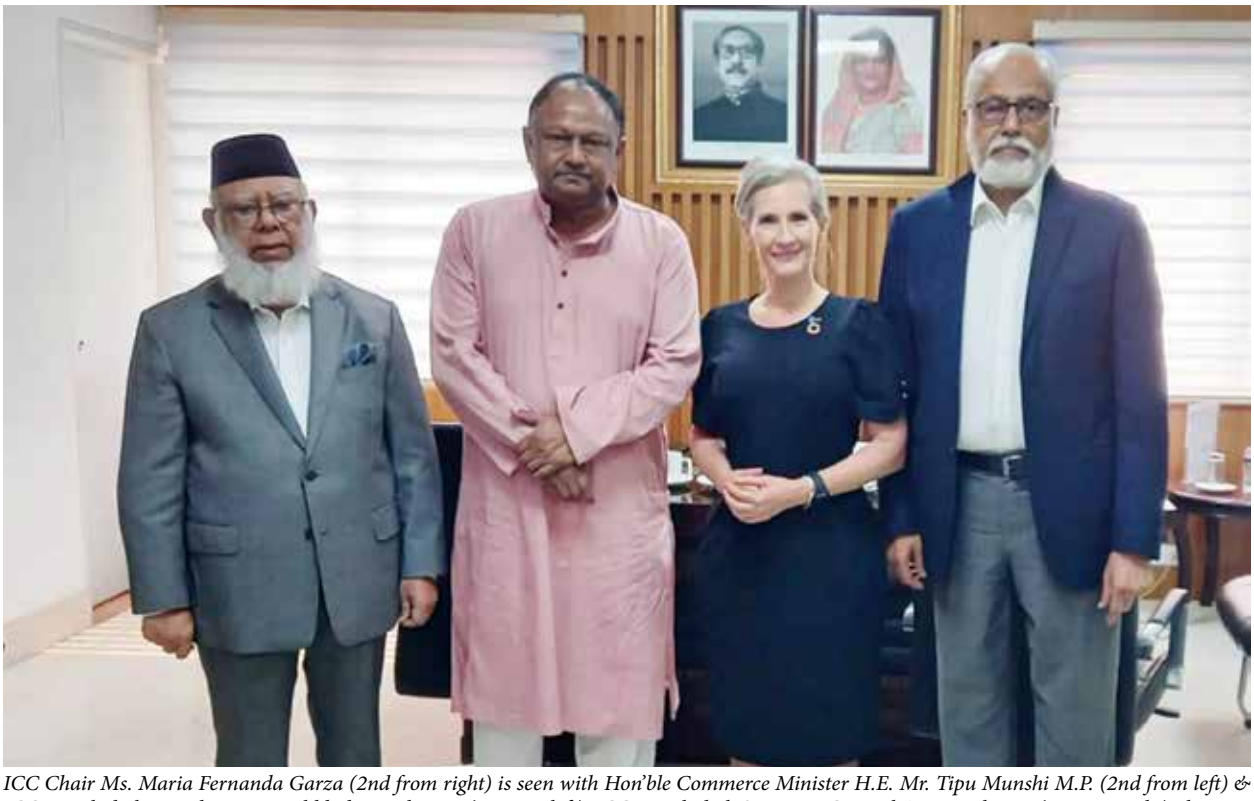
ICC Global Chair Maria Fernanda Garza during her three day visit to Bangladesh called on Commerce Minister Tipu Munshi M.P. at his office on 16 October. They discussed on several current global economic issues. Commerce Minister Mr. Tipu Munshi informed the ICC Chair about his recent visit to Mexico during which he had a very fruitful discussion with the Minister of Trade and others regarding promotion of trade and investment between Bangladesh and Mexico. He suggested to ICC Chair to arrange a visit by Mexican businesses delegation to Bangladesh to explore possibilities of trade and investment.

Mr. Tipu Munshi mentioned that Bangladesh is a star performer in relation to MDGs and is moving forward towards balanced development underpinned by the SDGs. Bangladesh is experiencing all these successes due to dynamic and prudent leadership of Hon'ble Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and Bangladesh is moving forward to become a middle income country by 2026.

However, in order to meet the criterion applied by the UN for graduation to developing country status, attain Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and achieve higher GDP, Bangladesh needs huge investment both foreign and local in different sectors Tipu Munshi added.

The international community appreciated Bangladesh government, particularly Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina for her decision to open the border for the displaced Rohingyas. The government is helping more than one million forcibly displaced Rohingyas with shelter, food, sanitation, water and medical attention. The Minister urged ICC Chair Maria to extend support in various global forums for early repatriation of Rohingyas to Myanmar.

In response Ms. Maria assured that she will take the issue in different



ICC Chair Ms. Maria Fernanda Garza (2nd from right) is seen with Hon'ble Commerce Minister H.E. Mr. Tipu Munshi M.P. (2nd from left) & ICC Bangladesh President Mr. Mahbbubur Rahman (extreme left). ICC Bangladesh Secretary General Ataur Rahman (extreme right) also seen in the picture.

global forum regarding repatriation of Rohingyas to Myanmar. She also said that she will definitely encourage businesses from Mexico to visit Bangladesh to explore bilateral trade and investment opportunities.

ICC Chair appreciated the success of Bangladesh economy despite COVID-19 and Russia-Ukraine war. ICC Global Chair noted that given current geopolitical realities, progress through multilateral consensus may not always be possible. Trust may have to be rebuilt gradually through differential engagements – with the Paris Climate Agreement and the World Trade Organization's Trade Facilitation Agreement of innovative "bottom-up" international arrangements. When multilateral efforts stall, open and non-discriminatory plurilateral initiatives (involving groups of countries with generally aligned interests and ambitions) could be a practical way forward, she added.

Ms. Maria said in a world where we have seen extraordinary advances in digitalization in recent years, it is quite remarkable that the global trading system still operates on the basis of billions of paper documents. All of which increase the cost and complexity of doing business. And which – as we saw during the pandemic – render the global trading system highly susceptible to exogenous shocks.

There are low-cost, common-sense interventions that governments can make to banish paper from the trading system. Starting with adopting internationally consistent legal reforms to give proper legal recognition to electronic trade documents, Maria told.

The meeting was also attended by ICC Bangladesh President Mahbubur Rahman and ICC Bangladesh Secretary General Ataur Rahman.

ICC Global Chair Maria meeting with ICCB Executive Board Members

ICC Global Chair Maria Fernanda Garza visited ICC Bangladesh Secretariat on 16 October and attended a meeting with ICC Bangladesh Executive Board Members. ICC Bangladesh President MahbuburRahman, welcoming ICC Chair Maria, said that it is a privilege to have her in Bangladesh, even though for a very brief period. Mr. Rahmanbriefed ICC Chair about the activities of the National Committee and the role it has been playing in promoting ICC global activities as well as arranging international

conferences, seminars/dialogues to discuss on various key issues related to trade and investment, workshops for the bankers on trade finance, and publishing quarterly news bulletins etc. He mentioned thatSince 2004, ICC Global Chairmen attended four international conferences held in Dhaka. ICC Chair Paul Polman came to Bangladesh in February 2019 and started his ICC Centenary Celebration visitto different countries.



ICC Chair Ms. Maria Fernando Garza having meeting with ICC Bangladesh President Mahbubur Rahman & Executive Board Members on October 16 at ICCB Secretariat.

ICC Chair Maria thanked ICC Bangladesh President MahbuburRahman for making elaborate programme for her to meet the Commerce Minister, ICC Bangladesh Executive Board Members, attend the reception, among others.

Ms. Maria mentioned that she is deeply conscious that her tenure as Chair of ICC has come at a remarkably uncertain time for the global economy, with the hangover and disruption caused by the Covid-19 pandemic; the international spillover effects of the war in Ukraine and most recently the truly tragic events in the Middle East over the past few days.

"We now live in an era where talk of economic and political fragmentation is the norm. Of course, thisphenomenon of fragmentation is not solely driven by war or novel viruses. It is, ultimately, a product of a much broader set of geo-economic trends, and in that vein, I think it's useful to take a step back and consider the key trends we have seen steadily emergeover the past 15 years" Maria said.

Ms. Maria praised the people of Bangladesh and said that she was amazed to see how they are facing challenges, even when half of Bangladesh's territory go under water during the monsoon. She appreciated the hard working Bangladeshi people and said "I will carry my whole life some of the experiencesI had during my short visit".

ICC Chair mentioned about the shallow economic recovery in many regions following the Global Financial Crisis coincided with a growing debate – particularly in advanced economies – about the value of multilateralism and the unequal benefits of globalization. This increasing scepticism toward multilateral cooperation has contributed to a steady escalation of protectionist interventions across a broad spectrum of policy areas.

More recently, US-China tensions, the Covid-19 pandemic and the conflict in Ukraine have brought further stress points to multilateral governance. And the multilateral trading system in particular. Indeed, new trade barriers introduced annually have nearly tripled since 2019 to almost 3,000 last year, she observed.

"Geopolitical and economic frictions have also rendered cooperation on trans-boundary issues – from cybersecurity to climate change – more difficult.Mistrust between developing and advanced economies is also an increasingly common impediment to the effective functioning of established multilateral institutions.In short, it is increasingly clear that the steady accumulation of thesefriction points has placed the worldin a growing

risk of fragmentation both politically and economically" she said.

Regarding potential cost Maria said "the International Monetary Fund has estimated that the cost to global output from geo-economic fragmentation could be up to 7 percent of GDP. With the addition of technological decoupling, modelling suggests that lost output could reach 12 percent in some countries."

"The World Bank has also warned that weaknesses in global cooperation risk giving rise to higher macroeconomic and financial volatility – while concomitantly constraining the international community's ability to support crisis in countries. Indeed, deficiencies in the existing international architecture to assist economies facing protracted debt and liquidity problems have already placed a major drag on trade and social development in around 30 emerging economies since the pandemic." She observed .

Moreover, recent analysis from the United Nations has highlighted that the world is "way off track" to achieving global climate goals – with projected temperature rises by 2050, based on current emissions trajectories, expected to place over 8 percent of GDP at risk. Taken together, the economic risks of fragmentation are of a truly massive magnitude. And as the IMF has admitted – when interlinkages are properly considered – may be of a scale far greater than we currently appreciate" said Maria.

Regarding deglobalization ICC Global Chair said the World Trade Organization has made a compelling case that we are not yet at the point of full-scale deglobalization. The value of world merchandise trade rose 12 percent to $25trillion in 2022 – though partly because of inflation linked to rising commodity and fuel prices sparked by the Ukraine war. The value of world commercial services trade was $6.8trillion in 2022, up 15 per cent from a year earlier.

In another positive trend, developing economies increased their share of digital services exports by 3 percentage points in 2022. While trade in environmental goods had quadrupled since 2000, outpacing the growth of total goods over the same period.Though – as recent WTO research has astutely shown– patterns of trade are starting to subtly shift in line with geopolitical cleavages.

ICC Chair observed "There is, I believe, a simple commercial logic behind the resilience of global trade in the face of the geo-economic tensions -The first is that factories, machinery and human capital do not spring out of the ground over-night – nor can they each be built without considerable upfront cost. -Setting aside the most basic of manufacturing operations, the proponents of reshoring seem to have a grossly outdated understanding of how value chains work – and the capex and skills needed for production in some areas. -Ask yourself this: how can those Multinational Corporations who have devolved responsibilities for product innovation and R+D down to suppliers with whom they have long term relationships suddenly transfer those responsibilities closer to home?" She said this not to discount the notion that globalization is at an important crossroads. But rather to make the point that it is often more resilient or "sticky" that commentators sometimes rush to suggest.

Maria suggested that Business too has a role to play here: "We are making rapid progress in aligning industry behind common standards and trusted systems. But we need governments to move with us at commensurate speed. And third: I'd encourage governments to think carefully about how they can prime the supply of cost-effective trade finance to small businesses. It's well known that there's a chronic shortage of trade finance globally."

"And one that, according to our data, very worryingly disproportionately impacts women entrepreneurs. Part of the challenge here is making sure that trade assets receive proportionate regulatory treatment. Something that may ultimately require changes to the Basel III framework.But, even absent of that, I'd encourage governments to think about utilizing credit guarantee schemes or other interventions that can help viable businesses access to the finance they need to trade across borders. Again, these are reforms that we need to champion together" she observed.

ICC Chair Maria expressed her sincere gratitude to ICC Bangladesh President Mahbubur Rahman for the warm welcome and incredible hospitality extended her during the visit to Bangladesh. ICC Chaircommended ICC Bangladesh President Mahbubur Rahman for the significant contributions made by him for the economic and social development of Bangladesh as well as for his inspiring leadership as Chair of the Bangladesh National Committee.

ICC Chair Maria said "During my visit, it became evident to me the vital role that ICC Bangladesh, along with its esteemed members, plays in driving the economic and social progress of the nation. The impact you are making is nothing short of remarkable, and I am grateful for the

opportunity to witness this firsthand. Furthermore, the visit to the countryside and spending the day in the tea garden was an enriching and memorable experience. Thank you for organizing this visit and for welcoming me so warmly. It provided valuable insights into the local context and the incredible efforts being made within the community. Once again, thank you all very much for your generosity, kindness, and the enlightening conversations. I look forward to continued collaboration and to furthering our shared mission of fostering economic growth societal advancement. "

The meeting was attended by ICCBangladesh Executive Board Members, namely Abdul Hai Sarker, Anwar-Ul-Alam Chowdhury (Parvez), Md. Fazlul Hoque, Md. Sameer Sattar, Mir Nasir Hossain, Simeen Rahman, Sheikh Kabir Hossain and Tapan Chowdhury; ICCB Banking Commission Chairman Muhammad A. (Rumee) Ali, ICC Bangladesh Arbitration and ADR Commission Chairman Ms. Nihad Kabir and ICCBangladesh Secretary General Ataur Rahman.

ICC Chair called on FBCCI President discussed about collaboration

ICC Chair Maria Fernanda Garza called on Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI) President Mahbubul Alam at FBBCI on 16 October.

FBCCI President Alam lauded ICC's arbitration services and requested for ICC'sassistance to enhance FBCCI's capacity for dispute prevention and resolution and facilitate training programmes on arbitration for FBCCI.He also sought cooperation from the ICC to help the private sector's skill development through Research and development (R&D), cooperation in drafting proposals for free trade agreements and preferential trade agreements on dumping and anti-dumping issues. Mr. Mahbubul Alam also lauded cooperative relations with the ICC Bangladesh.

ICC Chair mentioned about the ICC Centenary Declaration on Dispute Prevention and Settlement. She said that ICC would be pleased to facilitate training on arbitration and dispute resolution for FBCCI. Ms. Maria stressed the importance of cross-border commerce, especially in an uncertain global landscape. She also discussed the importance of cutting-edge technology and Cyber security in the business sector.

ICC Bangladesh President MahbuburRahman, ICC Bangladesh Executive Board Member &former FBCCI President Mir Nasir Hossain, FBCCI Vice Presidents Khairul Huda Chopol, Mohammad Anwar Sadat Sarker and Md Munir Hossain; ICC Bangladesh Secretary General Ataur Rahman among others were present during the meeting.



ICC Chair Garza (5th from right) is seen with FBCCI President Mr. Mahbubul Alam (5th from left) & ICC Bangladesh President Mr. Mahbubur Rahman (4th from right) during her visit to FBCCI.

ICC Bangladesh and UNICEF to advance children's well-beingin Bangladesh

ICC Bangladesh and UNICEF launcheda new partnership to addressthe challenges impacting children in Bangladesh and reinforcea shared commitmenttowards the United Nations2030 Sustainable Development Goals. The two organizations will work jointly to promote children's rights and well-being in Bangladesh and strengthen cooperation efforts toachieve the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030.

During thelaunchevent, ICC Bangladesh President MahbuburRahman and UNICEF Representative to Bangladesh Sheldon Yett signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) during a simple ceremony held at ICC Bangladesh Secretariat on 31 October. Under the MoU, the two organizations will work togetherto leverage expertise, mobilize resources, and collaborate to protect and promote children's rights in Bangladesh, including duringemergencies and disasters.

"Thank you to UNICEF for taking the initiative to collaborate with the private sector for the well-being of children in Bangladesh. We are proud to strengthen our cooperation with UNICEF to turn aspirations of the global goals into actions in Bangladesh," said Mr. MahbuburRahman. "To attain the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030, it is very necessary to invest in children now to equip them with the resources and skills to face future challenges. It is crucial to urgently prioritise our investment, particularly in health, nutrition, education, and other economic sectors key for children"he said.

"Children in Bangladesh are buffeted by multiple simultaneous crises. Approximately one in three children in Bangladesh, nearly 20 million children, for example, are affected by the direct impact of climate change. Both the state and the private sector need to invest to help children grow to their full potential," said Mr. Sheldon Yett, UNICEF Representative to Bangladesh. "When businesses put forth innovative ideas and leverage resources to invest in children, we improve the lives of every child, drive economic growth, and shape the future of Bangladesh. Our partnership with the International Chamber of Commerce-Bangladesh will help to tackle the challenges children face, strengthen cooperation around the Sustainable Development Goals, and help drive a brighter future for every child in Bangladesh."

With robust global networks and shared interests in sustainable development, the two organizationsare uniquely positioned to join hands and address the most urgent crises that children in Bangladesh confront.Both will work together to harness collective strengths and tackle barriers preventing children in Bangladesh from surviving, thriving, and fulfilling their potential.

It may be mentioned here that in September 2022 during the 77th session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York, ICC ChairMaria Fernanda Garza and UNICEF Executive Director, Catherine Russell signed a MoU with the commitment to protecting children from the impact of conflict, climate change, and the COVID-19 pandemic and strengthening cooperation around the Sustainable Development Agenda.



ICC Bangladesh President Mr. MahbuburRahman and UNICEF Representative to Bangladesh Mr. Sheldon Yett signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for Children's well-being in Bangladesh at the ICCB Secretariat at Gulshan in Dhaka on 31 October.

The signing ceremony was also attended, among others ICCBangladesh Vice President Mr. Naser Ezaz Bijoy; ICC Bangladesh Executive Board Member Mr. Aftab Ul Islam, Mr. Abul Kasem Khan, Managing Director, A. K. Khan Telecom Ltd.; ICCB Secretary General Ataur Rahman and Ms. Fiona Ward, Ms. Miki Fukuhara & Mr. Zahidul Islam from UNICEF.

ICC Bangladesh 93rd Executive Board Meeting held

The 93rd Meeting of the Executive Board of ICC Bangladesh was held on Wednesday, 6 December at ICC Bangladesh Secretariat. The Meeting presided over by ICC Bangladesh President Mahbubur Rahman was attended by the following Board Members: Abdul Hai Sarker, Aftab Ul Islam, Anwar-Ul-Alam Chowdhury (Parvez), Faruque Hassan, Mir Nasir Hossain, Mohammad Hatem, Omar Hazzaz, Simeen Rahman and Secretary General Ataur Rahman. ICCB Banking Commission Chairman Mr. Mohammad A. (Rumee) Ali attended the meeting as special guest. The other members could not attend due to prior engagements.



93rd ICC Bangladesh Executive Board Meeting in progress

The Executive Board was briefed about the activities of the National Secretariat during September-November 2023. The Executive Board approved the ICC Bangladesh Budget for 2024,formation of a three-member Election Scrutiny Board and a three-member Election Appellate Board for the election of the ICC Bangladesh Executive Board as the tenure of the present Board will expire on 31 March 2024. The Executive Board was informed aboutaICC Bangladesh project approved by ICC HQs. under the National Committee Fund (NC Fund) in 2023. Under the project ICC Bangladesh will organize Workshops on Capacity building of MSMEs and Women Entrepreneurs for using ICC Rules in International Trade in two phases during 2024.The Executive Board decided to raise fund from Members and non-members as a token of support for providing basic needs to the worst affected people of Gaza. Arrangements will be made with appropriate authority to reach the Aid to the people in distress.

ICC Workshop on Settlement of Documentary Credit Disputes through ADR

ICC Bangladesh organized a day-long Workshop on Settlement of Documentary Credit Disputes through ADR: Review of ICC Arbitration & DOCDEX Cases held in Dhaka on 2 December. ICC Bangladesh Vice President and CEO of Standard Chartered Bank Naser EzazBijoy inaugurated the Workshop. In his inaugural address Mr. Bijoy said that international trade transactions are susceptible to disputes and as such the parties engaged in international trade should prepare a dispute resolution strategy. Settling those disputes through litigation may appear time consuming and expensive. For a cost-efficient and quick resolution, parties may agree to ADR (Alternative Dispute Resolution). ADR offers the parties an effective means to resolve disputes outside the courtroom. In this regard he referred to a range of alternative dispute resolution (ADR) services and procedures available under the auspices of the ICC International Court of Arbitration, the world's leading arbitration institution. He hoped that the bankers attending the workshop would actively participate at the workshop and learn from the presentation to be made by the speaker on the decision/observations on

variousICC Arbitration & DOCDEX cases.

ICC Bangladesh Banking Commission Chairman Muhammad A. (Rumee) Ali, Supernumerary Professor of BIBM& Former Executive Director of Bangladesh Bank Md. Ahsan Ullah and ICC Bangladesh secretary General Ataur Rahman attended the closing ceremony and distributed certificates among the participants.

Mr. Ahsan Ullah in his remarks said that the bankers must be careful in operation of international trade in order to reduce the risk of non-payment. With the graduation of Bangladesh to a middle income country in 2026 and expected increase in international trade, the bankers must ensure that all international practices and necessary agreements are made to safeguard against all international trade transactions. In view of the present foreign exchange volatile situation the bankers need to know their customers as well as the foreign buyers and importers about their performance before opening letters of credit, he said.

ICC Bangladesh Banking Commission Chairman observed that banks must have appropriate risk management guidelines to ensure good governance. International trade transactions are prone to disputes. Settling those disputes through litigation may appear time consuming and expensive. For a cost-efficient and quick resolution, parties may agree to ADR (Alternative Dispute Resolution) to resolve any possible disputes. To get remedy under ADR, they need to include an arbitration or mediation clause in their agreement, he said.

To make international trade dealings safer, it is necessary to devise a dispute resolution strategy. This is of immense importance in order to ensure prompt repatriation of export earnings.Most importantly, after graduating into middlecountry, Bangladesh will face more challenges in doing international trade with rest of the world as it will be deprived of a number of LDC benefits. In the changing scenario, we have to learn how to handle cross-border legal issues in international trade dealings and make the transactions smoother and faster. Adopting ADR could be an effective step to manage the imminent challenges. Stakeholders including businesses, bankers, and regulators must also enhance their skills and literacy in this regard, the Chairman said.

ICC Bangladesh Secretary General Ataur Rahman said that ICC offers a range of alternative dispute resolution (ADR) services and procedures including Arbitration, mediation and DOCDEX services. Bankers and businesses may avail these services to keep their business interests intact and timely settlement of disputes. He thanked K. M Lutfor Rahman, Director, FCSO Trade AML Head at Standard Chartered Bank for conducing the Workshop and the banks for nominating theirs officials for the attending the day-lone workshop.

A total of 96 participants including 88 from 25 commercial banks, four from BIBM, commercial officials two clients of Prime Bank and a lawyer attended the Workshop.



ICC Bangladesh Vice President & Standard Chartered Bank CEO Naser Ezaz Bijoy delivering his inaugural address

Congratulations
'Lifetime Achievement Award'
to
Syed Manzur Elahi
by
DHL-The Daily Star Bangladesh Business Awards



Apex Group Chairman Syed Manzur Elahi has received the 21st DHL-The Daily Star Bangladesh Business Awards 'Lifetime Achievement Award'.

Syed Manzur Elahi (born 26 February 1942) is a Bangladeshi businessman, entrepreneur and industrialist. He is the chairman of Apex group. He is also the founding chairman of Mutual Trust Bank and Grey Advertising Bangladesh and has been the head of 22 different companies.

He occupies the position of Chairman of Apex Tannery Ltd., Apex Footwear Ltd., Gallerie Apex (a subsidiary of Apex Footwear Ltd.), Apex Pharma Ltd., Grey Advertising (Bangladesh) Ltd., Holiday Publications Ltd., Quantum Market Research Bangladesh Ltd., Quantum Consumer Solutions Ltd., Manusher Jonno Foundation, Blue Ocean Footwear Ltd., Apex Investments Ltd.(Bangladesh) and Apex Enterprises Ltd. Mr. Elahi is also Chairman at Bangladesh Freedom Foundation and on the board of 8 other companies.

In his past career Mr. Elahi held the position of Chairman of Pioneer Insurance Co. Ltd., Chairman for East West University Foundation, Chairman at Bangladesh Association of Banks, Director at Central Depository Bangladesh Ltd., President for Dhaka University Alumni Association, President at Bangladesh Employers Association, President of Bangladesh Employers Federation, Member of Public Administration Reforms Commission and Member of Regulatory Reforms Commission.

Mr. Elahi has participated in many international workshops on private sector development, including University of Michigan at Ann Arbor, USA and at Harvard University, USA. Mr. Elahi served twice as an Advisor to the Caretaker Governments in 1996 and 2001.

He is a Trustee of Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), a leading think tank of Bangladesh and a Board Member of BIRDEM.

Congratulations
3rd HSBC Business Excellence Awards

The Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corporation (HSBC)Bangladesh honoured eight business enterprises of Bangladesh during the 3rd HSBC Business Excellence Awards held in Dhaka on 28 October for their outstanding contribution to the sustainable growth of the economy even during challenging times. The Awards have been organized by HSBC in partnership with the Commerce Ministry and the British High Commission in Dhaka. Commerce Minister Tipu Munshi MP handed over the crests to the winners of the 3rd HSBC Business Excellence Awards.

Congratulating the winners, Commerce Minister Tipu Munshi, M.P. said the government would not be involved in any business, rather it would be an enabler to businesses."We are working to improve things in order to attract foreign investments, including facilitating the ease of doing business and improving the supply of power" he added.

British High Commissioner to Bangladesh Ms. Sarah Cooke in her speech said, "A vibrant and resilient private sector drives Bangladesh's economic development. "I am pleased that the British High Commission Dhaka is joining HSBC to honour the best of these enterprises through the Business Excellence Awards, celebrating the innovation and ideas, which strengthen economic growth, create jobs, and attract more foreign investments."

Ha-Meem Group and Square Group, the two Members of ICC Bangladesh received the Award in RMG category and Special Achievement category respectively.

HA-MEEM GROUP

Ha-Meem Group received Award in RMG category

Ha-Meem Group, one of the largest textile and garments manufacturers in the country, was awarded in the readymade garment category with an annual export value of $50 million and above. The company shipped products worth $700 million in the financial year that ended on June 30.



SQUARE

Square Group received in Special Achievement category

Square Group, one of the most prominent conglomerates with operations in diversified areas such as pharmaceuticals, healthcare, textiles, consumer goods, media and IT, was given the special achievement award for its exemplary contribution to the socio-economic growth, excellence in innovation, job creation, and supporting the community.



Congratulations

StanChart wins 'Best Bank' award for Excellence 2023

Standard Chartered has earned the prestigious title of 'Best Bank' in Bangladesh at Euromoney Awards for Excellence 2023.This milestone victory is recognition of the bank's long-standing push to embrace digitalisation and disruption - a strategy that has enabled Standard Chartered to stand at the forefront of financial innovation.

The bank was also honoured as part of this year's Euromoney Awards for Excellence for launching inventive and impactful community projects, adopting a concentrated focus on accelerating zero, and creating new opportunities for countless stakeholders.



City Bank wins ADB's Award 5th time in a Row

City Bank has once again been named the 'Leading Partner Bank in Bangladesh' at the Trade and Supply Chain Finance Program (TSCFP) Awards 2023 organized by Asian Development Bank (ADB). The award came in recognition of City Bank being the most active partner bank measured by the number of trade finance transactions recorded in Bangladesh in collaboration with ADB in last fiscal year. With this year's award, the bank has been honoured with 'Leading Partner Bank' accolade for consecutively 4th year. Prior to that, in 2019, the bank won the 'Momentum Award' for the highest growth in transactions partnered with ADB.



IBBL achieved 'Global Islamic Finance Award 2023'

Islami Bank Bangladesh PLC has achieved Global Islamic Finance Award 2023 in the category of 'Most Outstanding Islamic Bank 2023' conferred by UK based Global Islamic Finance Awards (GIFA). This was announced in 13th Global Islamic Finance Awards programme held in Dakar, Senegal recently.



MTB wins the 2023 Global Climate Partner Award

Mutual Trust Bank Ltd. (MTB) was selected as the 2023 Global Climate Partnership Award winner.

Chosen from a pool of 14 innovative applications by a jury of external experts, MTB stood out with its innovative idea of bridging the gap between smallholder farmers in Bangladesh and cost-effective electric vehicle (EV) solutions through accessible finance. Beyond its climate benefits, MTB seeks to establish an inclusive financial ecosystem that will significantly enhance the farmers' quality of life.

MTB will receive USD 50,000 to implement their award-winning climate finance concept. This prize will help them to address some of the most pressing challenges that continue to affect small farmers in Bangladesh, such as rising food prices, low bargaining power of farmers, and environmental vulnerability.



New Member:

The Executive Board of ICC Bangladesh during its 93rd Meeting held on 6 December approved the ICC Bangladesh Membership of Rahman's Chambers under corporate category which will be represented by Mr. Mohammed Forrukh Rahman.

ICC Academy & LIBF Online Professional Qualifications Courses

ICC Academy offering the following categories professional certification programmes:

Trade finance
- Global Trade Certificate (GTC)
- Certified Trade Finance Professional (CTFP)
- Certificate in Digital Trade Strategy

International business
- Export/Import Certificate (EIC)
- Incoterms® 2020 Certificate (INCO)
- Free Trade Agreement Certificate (FTAC)
- E-Invoicing Solutions Certificate (ESC)
- Microfinance Associate Certificate (MAC)

Regulation and compliance
- Certificate on the Common Reporting Standard (CCRS)
- IMB NVOCC Bill of Lading Certificate (NBL)
- Ethical Marketing and Advertising (EMA)

LIBF offering the following professional qualifications certificate courses:

- Certificate for Documentary Credit Specialists (CDCS)
- Certificate for Specialists in Demand Guarantees (CSDG)
- Certificate in International Trade and Finance (CITF)
- Certificate in Trade Finance Compliance (CTFC)
- Certificate in Supply Chain Finance (CSCF)
- Certificate in Principles of Payments (CertPAY)

For registration, please contact:

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New Edition of International Standard Banking Practice (ISBP) 2023



For your copies please contact:

ICC Bangladesh
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Since its initial publication in 2002 (Publication 645), International Standard Banking Practice (ISBP) has become an invaluable aid to trade finance professionals when creating documents for presentation under, or for the examination of documents presented under, a documentary credit.

New Edition
The 2023 edition of ISBP covers, practices identified from Opinions approved by ICC national committees since 2013, and clarifies amongst others:

- Terminology
- Preliminary conditions
- Signatures and signs
- Multimodal transport document
- Insurance documents

International Standard Banking Practice — 2023 edition is the most up to date guide for the examination of documents under documentary credits reflecting practices agreed by ICC national committees. It also serves as an aid to a beneficiary of a documentary credit in its creation and presentation of documents to a nominated bank or issuing bank. The publication should always be read in conjunction with UCP 600.

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From The Album



Commerce Minister Mr. Tipu Munshi M. P. (3rd from left) & ICC Bangladesh President Mahbubur Rahman (3rd from right) presenting crest to ICC Chair Maria Fernanda Garza (2nd from right) at her reception on 16 October. Alao seen in the picture, Mr. Salman F Rahman, M.P. Advisor to the Prime Minister for Private Industry and Investment (extreme right), ICCB Vice President Naser Ezaz Bijoy (2nd from left) and ICCB Secretary General Ataur Rahman (extreme left).



Group picture of ICC Bangladesh staff members with ICC Chair Maria Fernanda Garza, ICC Bangladesh President Mahbubur Rahman and ICC Bangladesh Vice President Naser Ezaz Bijoy.



Group picture of the workshop participants with ICCB Banking Commission Chairman Muhammad A. (Rumee) Ali (centre), Former Executive Director of Bangladesh Bank Md. Ahsan Ullah (2nd from left), ICCB Secretary General Ataur Rahman (extreme left), SCB FCSO Trade AML Head & Workshop Resource Person KM Lutfor Rahman (2nd from right) and ICCB General Manager Ajay B. Saha (extreme right).

ICC HQs News

ICC Dispute Resolution Services in 2023



Wrapping up the 100th year of the ICC International Court of Arbitration, looking back at 2023. From the 28,000th case milestone to the publication of ICC's Guide on Effective Conflict Management, ICC is highlighting 10 key achievements from their dispute resolution year.

Looking to the next 100 years of service, leadership, and engagement, ICC reaffirmed their commitment to promote access to justice and the rule of law to make business work for everyone, every day, everywhere. They unveiled the ICC Centenary Declaration on Dispute Prevention and Resolution setting out their vision to shape dispute resolution and prevention for the next century.

ICC registered the 28,000th case under the ICC Arbitration Rules, marking a significant milestone in centenary year. The filing of the 28,000th case demonstrates the trust parties, across industries and regions, have in ICC to resolve their commercial disputes. As part of the ICC Court Centenary Programme ICC launched a new series of ICC Advanced Arbitration Academies to support the next generation of arbitrators. More than 160 arbitration professionals were accepted into the four Academies in Asia, Eastern Europe, and North and Latin America. The programme continues in 2024 with two new academies in Africa and the Middle East.

The Centenary programme also included a global tour of flagship regional and local events, highlighting their commitment to strengthening regional and local arbitral ecosystems. Throughout their centenary year, they held close to 1,000 events, including conferences, trainings, and other educational activities. Attendance at their flagship conferences broke records with over 2,600 in-person participants.

ICC Dispute Resolution Services featured in more than 70 news articles in 2023, in international and local business and legal media. Articles covered the ICC Court Centenary as well as ICC thought leadership, diversity initiatives and arbitration developments.



Continuing to drive thought leadership, ICC released the ICC Commission on Arbitration and ADR's report and guide to increase awareness of different alternative dispute resolution techniques and how to facilitate the settlement of disputes in international arbitration. Their Guide on Effective Conflict Management offers guidance in selecting the most appropriate ADR technique and explains how to efficiently use them to avoid escalation, resolve disputes and reduce the cost of unavoidable disputes, before and after the commencement of arbitration proceedings. The Report on Facilitating Settlement in International Arbitration proposes ways for parties to settle disputes even if arbitration has already begun, thereby preserving business relationships.

Paving the way for more disability inclusion initiatives in international arbitration and ADR, the ICC Commission on Arbitration and ADR also released a Guide on Disability Inclusion in International Arbitration and ADR. The ground-breaking publication, developed by the ICC Commission on Arbitration and ADR, provides actionable guidance to practitioners, arbitrators, arbitral institutions and associations. It aims to drive disability inclusion within the field of dispute resolution by providing specific recommendations and checklists along with other practical tools.

Global business response to COP28 outcome

ICC has issued the following statement upon conclusion of COP28. ICC Secretary General John W.H. Denton AO said: "The success of COP28 should not be judged by the semantics of a single sentence on fossil fuels.



"From a business perspective, the totality of the agreements forged at the conference send an important signal of intent to increase the pace and scale of efforts across the global economy to limit global temperature increases to 1.5 degrees Celsius. COP28 has – by any objective measure – succeeded in bringing much-needed political focus, specificity and urgency to task of implementing the Paris Agreement.

"The revised Global Stocktake decision provides a useful roadmap for policy change to speed mitigation and adaptation efforts, transform energy systems and turbocharge the flow of climate finance to developing economies. After years of apparent drift in the UN climate process, the global direction of travel towards a net-zero future is now much clearer. That alone will be of great reassurance to business and investors.

"There are, to be sure, gaps in the agreement. But what matters now is action and accountability. "The acid test will be whether governments make good on their new – and very welcome – commitment to present significantly upgraded national climate action plans at COP29. We also need to a see a step-change in international cooperation to address pervasive barriers to the deployment of climate solutions and finance by the private sector.

"COP28 has delivered a blueprint for action to get the world back on track in implementing the Paris Agreement. We now need governments to walk the talk – and without delay."

ICC issued a statement to strengthen the landmark Global Methane Pledge at COP28.

While businesses across the ICC network are firmly committed to reducing methane emissions, it is increasingly apparent that clear policy signals from governments are urgently needed to scale-up mitigation efforts in line with the prevailing climate science.

In this context, the statement proposes five targeted measures to strengthen the Global Methane Pledge two years on from its launch – with a central focus on enhancing the transparency and accountability of national methane mitigation plans.

1. All countries that have joined the GMP should be required to submit detailed national action plans by COP29. Appropriate technical assistance should be made available to any developing countries requiring support to meet this deadline- backed by enhanced resourcing for the Climate and Clean Air Coalition and the UN Environment Program.

2. Annual ministerial meetings of the GMP from 2025 onwards should incorporate progress reports from all GMP governments on their methane reduction efforts to the highest tier of UNFCCC reporting – creating an (informal) accountability mechanism capable of boosting private investment in mitigation solutions.



3. The endorsement model for the GMP should be evolved from "joining" to "signing" before COP29, including an explicit recognition of the two key expectations above – sending an unequivocal political signal regarding the international community's commitment to fully implement the Pledge.

4. Delivering the GMP should be positioned as the key goal for all multilateral funding to support

methane reduction efforts – brining coherence and focus to an increasingly heterogeneous public financing environment.

5. Governance and administration of the Pledge should be placed under the UNFCCC – establishing the GMP as a core component of annual COP meetings.

The recommendations were delivered – on behalf of the global business community – ahead of the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP28) took place in Dubai from 30 November to 12 December 2023.

Key enablers for a circular economy

The circular economy is pivotal for achieving climate and sustainable development goals and must be included in the COP28 outcomes. With this paper, ICC, on behalf of the global business community, underscores the importance to move from the 'take-make-use-waste' model to a sustainable, resource-efficient circular economy. Scaling these efforts requires a more supportive environment from governments to enable a faster and broader transition.

A circular economy has the potential to create a more sustainable future by moving away from the "take-make-use-waste" model of a linear economy. It has the power to transform profoundly the way economies operate, fostering job creation and sustainable economic growth.

Our current way of living has led to what the United Nations describes as a triple planetary crisis: climate change, pollution and biodiversity loss. This crisis exerts immense pressure on our planet, leaving no time to waste.

Greenhouse gas emissions are the primary driver of environmental damage and climate change. 70%



of global greenhouse gas emissions originate from material handling and use, according to the latest Circularity Gap Report. Material extraction and usage are also key factors contributing to over 90% of global biodiversity loss and water stress. A circular economy offers a transformative solution.

It is essential to overcome barriers to adopt circular business models. Governments must recognise the pivotal role of circular economy principles in achieving net-zero targets, improving food security and alleviating water stress.

ICC has identified five key enablers to advance circular economy practices: Change the way we view "waste" and enable the free trade of resources; Prioritise quality of products over nature of original production; Enable the use of strategic material banks and cross-border reverse logistics; Adopt globally harmonised standards and definitions to achieve circularity at scale; Recover raw materials from urban flows to boost food supply, prevent water scarcity and reduce the risk of eutrophication of estuaries and coastal waters.

In 2023, ICC explored the role of innovation in waste management with a focus on challenges in shipping waste across borders for research purposes. The paper includes case studies that demonstrate how current laws and regulations impact company investments in circular innovations.

How to fix the WTO: A holistic framework for reform

ICC has proposed a framework that sets out a holistic vision for reform of the World Trade Organization (WTO) from the perspective of the global business community. Such a framework is necessary to ensure a comprehensive approach to reform across the three vital functions of the organisation.

The global business community places great importance on the WTO and the broader multilateral trading system.

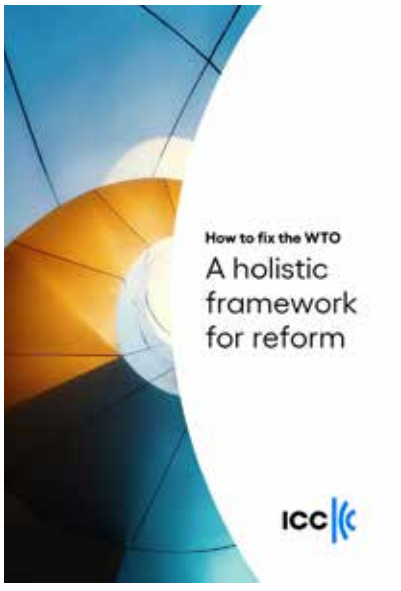
More than a quarter of a century after its creation, the WTO remains the most important forum for creating, monitoring and enforcing trade rules. However, the WTO is in urgent need of reform and new rules must be written to ensure it continues to serve the needs of businesses — the ultimate end-users of the global trading system.

The global business community is deeply concerned by the steady

erosion of the multilateral trading system, which imposes significant costs on business, particularly MSMEs who do not have the resources to navigate an increasingly complex and fragmented global trading environment.

Why do we need a holistic approach to WTO reform?

Proposals have been made to address many of the issues facing the WTO, some dating back more than a decade. But an effective approach to the problems and challenges facing the system must take careful account of the interconnectedness of the WTO's three core functions, which were designed to bolster one another and carry equal weight: negotiation, dispute settlement and monitoring and deliberation. Any chronic imbalance cannot be sustained — failings in one function inevitably weaken the others. Any effort to reform the WTO must address all policy, legal, and architectural issues comprehensively.



The road to WTO reform

At the 13th WTO ministerial conference (MC13) in February 2024, ICC on behalf of the global business community urges trade ministers to reaffirm the common purpose of the WTO, agree on a coherent and holistic vision for WTO reform based on the organisation's foundational principles, and deliver on a work programme for WTO reform covering all three pillars of the organisation.

The framework's primary aim is to encourage WTO members to align behind common vision and work programme for reform at MC13. ICC will be issuing detailed guidance and deeper dives on specific items separately to encourage and support discussions and negotiations at relevant times.

Updated ICC Principles to further standardise sustainable trade and trade finance

The International Chamber of Commerce – along with partner Boston Consulting Group (BCG) and contributors from global financial institutions and corporates – has published "Wave 2" of its Principles for Sustainable Trade. The newly updated Principles are the latest deliverable from ICC's ongoing work with banks, businesses, governments, NGOs and regulators to deliver a consensus view on how to define sustainable trade and trade finance. The Principles expand the sectoral coverage of the standardised sustainability methodology and incorporate a number of enhancements to improve its robustness and usability.

With international trade representing as much as 30% of all carbon emissions, enabling and accelerating sustainable trade and supply chains is critical to help the global economy deliver on the Paris Agreement. However, to date, there is no consensus definition on what constitutes sustainable trade or sustainable trade finance – nor a means of assessing transactions to determine whether they meet such practices.

Launched in 2022, ICC's 'Wave 1' framework embarked on the journey to set the standards for sustainable trade and enable banks, businesses, governments, NGOs, and regulators to assess transactions in a standardised way, to determine where and to what extent they meet these standards.

The framework was initially focused on the textiles sector and piloted by over 30 leading trade banks and corporates to ensure it provided transparency on the right issues related to sustainable trade – and, critically, in a workable and replicable way.

Following the 2022 pilots, ICC has launched 'Wave 2' – an enhanced set of principles that brings together learnings from the pilot to increase its breadth and depth, as well as ensure it is sufficiently scalable to be applied to real-world transactions.

Key enhancements include:



Expanding coverage from textiles to agriculture, energy and automotive sectors; Implementing a "graded score" so that one can articulate and compare the extent to which a trade transaction is sustainable; Refocusing the core assessment towards "Use of Proceeds" to increase alignment with existing sustainable finance frameworks; Adding a standardised means to assess the sustainability of how goods are transported; Enabling the use of approved taxonomies and third party ESG scores to assess transactions; Removing the need for any subjective judgement to increase the robustness of the framework and enable its automation going forward.

Rifat Hisarcıklıoğlu named Chair of ICC World Chambers Federation

Rifat Hisarcıklıoğlu, a prominent Turkish business leader, has been named Chair of the ICC World Chambers Federation (WCF). His mandate is effective immediately and will run until 30 June 2025.



A member of the ICC Executive Board and Chair of ICC Türkiye, Mr Hisarcıklıoğlu is the President of the Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Türkiye (TOBB), the largest business organisation in Turkiye. He is also Chair of Eskihisar Group Companies, Vice-President of EUROCHAMBRES, Vice-President of the Confederation of Asia Pacific Chambers of Commerce, President of the Union of Turkic Chambers of Commerce and Industry, Vice-President of the Islamic Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture. Mr Hisarcıklıoğlu was also Chair of B20 Türkiye, the premier dialogue platform for engaging global business leaders with G20 governments and leaders during Türkiye's G20 presidency.

Mr Hisarcıklıoğlu's contributions to economic development and the business community have been recognised globally, with honorary doctorates and awards from governments and organisations worldwide. He has held prominent positions in various international and chamber organisations and has also received prestigious awards from several countries for his significant achievements in the business field.

Mr Hisarcıklıoğlu was selected following a formal process, pursuant to the WCF bylaws and the ICC Constitution, and in full consultation with the WCF General Counsel who selected Mr Hisarcıklıoğlu from three finalists.

Mr Hisarcıklıoğlu's election is subject to formal ratification by the ICC World Council upon recommendation by the ICC Executive Board. Candidacies for the position of WCF Chair were submitted by six chambers in Bangladesh, Bolivia, Egypt, Kenya, Nigeria and Türkiye. Selection criteria included the candidate's knowledge of WCF and ICC principles and strategic directions as well as geographical and gender diversity.

ICC calls on international communities to help struggling economies

Business leaders from around the world convened in October 2nd week for the Annual Meetings of the World Bank Group (WBO) and International Monetary Fund (IMF) to discuss economic development. ICC proposed solutions to counter developmental obstacles and called on the international community to address the problem of access to trade finance.

ICC Secretary General John W.H. Denton AO joined global leaders, policymakers and entrepreneurs on the panel "Job-Rich Growth: The Answer to Poverty". They discussed the main challenges faced by firms to enhance job creation such as limited access to finance, regulatory barriers and poor business environments.



Underscoring the lack of job opportunities in low-income countries, he highlighted four areas for immediate action: Address debt vulnerabilities; Increase access to finance; Enhance trade facilitation

Accelerate trade digitalization; "As an international community, we need to force a realignment of some of these rules to ensure there's access to trade finance because trade is the vector through which economic growth continues; [it] is the vector through which people get employment, and [it] is the vector through which communities prosper."

Mr Denton stressed the importance of strengthening the Common Framework to ensure that countries in or at risk of being in debt distress can negotiate a prompt restructuring of their debt. He also called on governments to enhance trade facilitation and increase access to finance, particularly for smaller companies, as vital cornerstones for economic growth.

Given that 98% of bills of lading are currently still paper, Mr Denton also highlighted the imperative of trade digitalisation to streamline burdensome processes and enable market access. During the discussion Mr Denton drew attention to the potential of AI to be a powerful driver of effective and inclusive private sector growth. He also added that developing economies should not be left behind. "We need good policies that enable investment in the digital infrastructure, skills and capacity building," he said.

Rise in maritime incidents and piracy reveals latest IMB report

The ICC International Maritime Bureau (IMB) has revealed a rise in reported incidents in the Gulf of Guinea and concerns for the Singapore Straits in its latest report for the period of January-September 2023, released on 11 October.



Ninety-nine incidents of piracy and armed robbery against ships were reported in the first nine months of 2023, an increase from 90 incidents for the same period in 2022. In 2023, 85 vessels were boarded, nine had attempted attacks, three were hijacked and two were fired upon. Perpetrators successfully boarded 89% of targeted vessels with most incidents occurring at night.

Even though reported violence towards crew members is among the lowest in three decades, the risk to crew remains real with 69 taken hostage, 14 kidnapped, eight threatened, three injured and one assaulted.

Reported incidents increased in the Gulf of Guinea in the first nine months of 2023, from 21 compared to 14 for the same period in 2022. Seventeen were classified as armed robberies and four as piracy with a mounting concern for crew as 54 were taken hostage, 14 kidnapped and two were injured.

The Singapore Straits continues to raise concerns with 33 reported incidents in the first nine months of 2023 compared to 31 in the same period last year. Overall, 31 vessels were boarded with five crew taken hostage and two threatened with 25% of incidents reported in July. In most cases, ship stores or properties were reported stolen. Considering the navigational challenges of the Singapore Straits, even low-level opportunistic incidents, could potentially increase the risk to safe navigation in these congested waters. IMB also expresses concern over the risks of late or under reporting of these incidents and commends local authorities for investigating nearly all reported incidents.

The IMB recorded an increase in the number of incidents in the Indonesian archipelagic region, with 12 incidents reported compared to 10 for the same period in 2020 and seven in 2021. Knives were sighted in five out of the 12 reported incidents. Reports from Callao Anchorage in Peru have increased to 13 from eight in the same period in 2022, with reports of nine crew taken hostage and one member threatened and another assaulted.

ICC releases Guide for Disability Inclusion in International Arbitration and ADR

The new guide addresses the needs of persons with disabilities participating in international arbitration and ADR procedures and beyond. ICC has released a guide on Disability Inclusion in International Arbitration and ADR. Produced by the ICC Commission on Arbitration and ADR, the ground-breaking publication provides clear guidance to address and accommodate the needs of people with disabilities participating in arbitral and ADR procedures or other activities and events in the field of dispute prevention and resolution. By providing actionable guidance to practitioners, arbitrators, arbitral institutions, and associations, the guide aims to drive disability inclusion within the field of dispute resolution by providing specific recommendations and checklists along with other practical tools.



Aligned with the ICC Centenary Declaration on Dispute Prevention and Resolution the guide builds on ICC's cutting-edge work on diversity, equity and inclusion in all aspects of dispute prevention and resolution. The guide paves the way for more disability inclusion initiatives in the world of international arbitration and ADR. The Guide on Disability Inclusion in International Arbitration and ADR begins with an introduction and is followed by three main sections. Section 1 – Recommendations and disability inclusion toolkit, including sample wording for Procedural Order n° 1. Section 2 – Understanding disability Section 3 – Disability inclusion in international arbitration and ADR.

ICC Trade Register Report: Global risks in trade finance

The 2023 edition of the ICC Trade Register report includes a first look at credit risk performance of trade finance under the lasting effects of COVID-19 on the global economy. It is an updated market forecasts for global trade and trade finance in the emerging macroeconomic climate.

The ICC Trade Register is an unparalleled resource that measures global risk in trade and export finance. The ICC Trade Register is facilitated by the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) and the world's leading banks.

An objective and transparent overview of the credit risk profile, as well as characteristics of trade, supply chain and export finance to inform policy and regulatory decisions. Access to high-quality and up-to-date data on trade, supply chain and export finance, which can be incorporated into annual credit risk factor reviews and trade finance model calibrations. A common understanding of the international regulations affecting bank capital requirements for trade and export finance.

The ICC Trade Register aligns its analytical methods to the Basel Approach and includes short-term traditional trade and supply chain finance products as well as medium to long-term export credit agency (ECA) backed export finance loans. Short-term products are instruments with a typical maturity of less than one year and with a clear link to a specific underlying trade transaction.

The 2023 ICC Trade Register report includes analysis on trade finance asset classes for more than a decade, the data – which has been compiled and provided by the 22 contributing banks and financial institutions – represents up to 23% of all global trade finance transactions.

The report focuses on credit-related risk across trade, supply and export finance products, including: Import and export letters of credit; Loans for import/export; Performance guarantees and standby letters of credit; Restricted to "payables", part of supply chain products and solutions; Export Loans backed by export credit agencies and multilaterals for commercial and/or political risk.

The 2023 edition of the ICC Trade Register report provides a precise analysis of global trade and post pandemic trends, supply chain disruptions and geopolitical consequences on specific markets such as energy or agriculture. It is an updated market forecasts for global trade and trade finance.



ICC encourages banking institutions to join the trade register and provide their anonymised and standardised trade finance data to strengthen the report.

The ICC Trade Register project was established in 2011 with 7 banks. Since then, membership has grown to 22 banks across Europe, Africa, North America, Asia and Australia. ICC Trade Register members are 'owners' of the project and have a prominent role in steering the strategic direction.

ICC Trade Register membership is open to any bank that has a demonstrable capability to collect and deliver data. Members of the Trade Register are not subject to the report fees, only to the maintenance fee. On the "provide to receive" principle, members benefit from further insights and down to even more granular information than in the full report. Membership is currently only available for regulated banks.

The information on trade finance products, gathered from member banks, includes approximately 23% of global traditional trade finance flows, excluding loans for import/export. Members providing data are entitled to further insights on a specific trend, country, or product against anonymised data from the aggregated other members on the "provide to receive" principle.

Bangladesh Economy

Bangabandhu Sheikh Mhjibur Rahman Tunnel inaugurated: South Asia's first underwater tunnel

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, M.P. inaugurated Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Tunnel on 28 October. Spanning under the Karnaphuli River, it stands as the very first tunnel in Bangladesh's landscape and the first-ever under-river tunnel for road communication in South Asia. The journey of the tunnel commenced in 2016.Tunnel opened for vehicular traffic from 29 October.



It is truly transformative for its capacity to forge an alternative route, connecting Chattogram to the destinations of Cox's Bazar, Teknaf, and Matarbari. In doing so, it will reduce around 40 kilometers of the existing distance between these bustling hubs.

The main tunnel extends for 3.32 kilometers, featuring two four-lane tubes, each spanning 2.45 kilometers. Complementing this, two 5.35 km link roads at the tunnel's western and eastern termini, along with a 727-meter flyover at the Anwara end, are expected to elevate regional connectivity. The tunnel will allow vehicles to run at a maximum speed of 80 km. The tunnel resides at depths ranging from 18 to 31 meters beneath the Karnaphuli River.

This project, supported by the governments of Bangladesh and China, received a total investment of Tk 10,689.71 crore. The Bangladesh government provided BDT 4,619.70 crore in financing, with the remaining BDT 6,070.01 crore being funded by the Exim Bank of China. The China Communication and Construction Company Limited (CCCC) is responsible for the tunnel's construction. Bangladesh government envisions a 'One City Two Towns' concept, akin to Shanghai's, on both banks of the Karnaphuli River.

The Tunnel will yield the Financial and Economic Internal Rates of Return (IRR) at 6.19% and 12.49%, respectively. It is forecasted to boost Bangladesh's GDP by 0.166%.

The Bangabandhu Tunnel will be a key link for the Marine Drive Road from Chattogram to Cox's Bazar, unlocking tourism potential in South Chattogram and Cox's Bazar. It facilitates easy access to attractions like Parki Beach in Anwara, ultimately enhancing the region's tourism appeal.

The Karnaphuli River, with its vital maritime access to the Bay of Bengal, is essential for Chattogram Port, local industries, and the Bangladesh Navy. Building a tunnel was the only solution to preserve these crucial assets while addressing the city's transportation challenges. The tunnel is expected to provide support to the Korean EPZ and



the under-construction China EPZ. Furthermore, several major industrial groups have secured land for future factory development. New efforts are underway to construct 80 industrial facilities, spanning textiles, shipbuilding, food processing, steel, and cement, along the Karnaphuli River. This will accelerate economic progress, raising living standards and employment opportunities in the southern region.

Adding to the list of positive impacts of the tunnel, it will connect to the Asian Highway network, enabling cross-border movement of goods between India, Bangladesh, and Myanmar. This, along with enhancing Chattogram port efficiency, will greatly boost road-based cross-border trade. Being a part of the China Government's 'One Belt, One Road' initiative will also provide a key link in cross-country transport corridors. The tunnel serves not just as a transportation route or boon to the economy but as a symbol of the nation's progress and development.

Source : The Daily Star

Dhaka-Chattogram-Cox's Bazar rail to usher new connectivity to ASEAN

The inauguration of the new 100-kilometre long railway line from Dohazari to Cox's Bazar, on November 11, established the first ever rail connectivity from Dhaka and Chattogram to Bangladesh's southeast coast. The new development is expected to usher in a new era of tourism, trade and connectivity for the region.



The opening of the new oyster-shaped railway station in Hajipara of Jhelongja union of Cox's Bazar is part of the government's efforts to develop the region and attract investment. The new rail line is aimed at reducing travel time between Cox's Bazar and other parts of the country, making it easier and more affordable for tourists and business travellers to visit the region.

"The government is eyeing to introduce Wi-Fi internet connection on trains and there are further plans to establish rail connectivity between Cox's Bazar and major parts of the country," said Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina during the opening of the new rail line by unveiling a plaque at the newly constructed rail station in Cox's Bazar. At the station, the main building's ground floor houses ticket counters, reception rooms, lockers, information centres, mosques, children's entertainment areas, passenger lounges and footbridges. The second floor accommodates shopping malls, childcare centres, and restaurants. The third floor boasts a 39-room star hotel, while the fourth floor houses a restaurant, childcare centre, conference hall, and officers' offices.

As many as 46,000 people can travel through this station a day and tourists can spend time at the beach by keeping their luggage in the station lockers. From Dhaka, the train will take approximately 8 hours and 10 minutes to reach Cox's Bazar with stopping at two stations-Dhaka airport and Chattogram. The train will leave Dhaka at 10:30 pm and reach Cox's Bazar at 6:40 am while it will leave Cox's Bazar at 1:00 pm and will reach Dhaka at 9:10 pm.

Bangladesh wins IMO Council election for first time

Bangladesh has won the 175-member International Maritime Organization (IMO) council election 2023 held in London at the IMO headquarters in category C, securing 128 votes. This is the first time Bangladesh has won the election in the highly competitive 'Category C' of the IMO. IMO is the only UN specialised body that regulates global shipping standards

that affects ship operating flag states, seafarers, and maritime safety, security and marine pollution.

Bangladesh's international trade, of which 90 per cent is operated by the sea, and transition of Bangladesh's maritime ports into green, digitalised and smarter ports, and Bangladesh's compliance with the Hong Kong convention on ship recycling usage of greener fuels, and other critically important issues to Bangladesh's shipping and maritime industry are some of the key issues that Bangladesh would be negotiating at the IMO council during the term 2024-25.

The Assembly of the International Maritime Organization elected the members of its Council for the 2024-2025 biennium on December.

Development Partners arranged $8bn for climate resilience

In a first in Asia, development partners have come together to announce an $8 billion fund to help Bangladesh mitigate and adapt to the effects of climate change. This collaborative approach is being spearheaded by the International Monetary Fund.



"Bangladesh has been at the forefront of those warning about the elevated risks of climate change for vulnerable countries as well as stressing the importance of international collaboration to support those in need," said Kristalina Georgieva, the MD of IMF, in a statement on 3 December.

The country has made significant strides to bolster climate resilience, adaptation, preparedness and conservation, she said in a statement released on the sideline of COP28 that took place in Dubai. "We commend Bangladesh's steadfast implementation of their climate agenda and their tireless efforts to promote global collective action to address climate change," she added.

The partners involved in the Bangladesh Climate and Development Platform (BCDP) are the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the World Bank, the International Finance Corporation (IFC), the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA), the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), Agence Française de Développement (AFD), the European Union and the European Investment Bank (EIB), as part of Team Europe, the Green Climate Fund (GCF), the government of South Korea, Japan International Cooperation Agency (Jica), and the United Kingdom.

Source : The Daily Star

Bangladesh to be second-fastest economy among 46 nations: Mastercard

Bangladesh will be the second fastest-growing economy from among 46 countries next year, according to an annual economic outlook of Mastercard Economics Institute (MEI). The country's real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is expected to grow 6.3 per cent in 2024 whereas India's expected growth is 6.4 per cent, the highest among the countries in the list. Vietnam came in third slot with a projection of 6.2 per cent.

The MEI released the "Economic Outlook: Balancing Prices & Priorities" for the coming year on 12 December, outlining the watchouts that would define global growth.

However, the MEI's estimate is lower than the Bangladesh government's target of 7.5 per cent for FY 24. Earlier, International Monetary Fund (IMF) projected a 6.0 per cent GDP growth while the World Bank 5.6 per cent.

In FY 23, the country's economy grew by 6.03 per cent, according to state data. According to the MEI outlook, the Philippines' GDP is expected to grow 5.6 per cent, the fourth highest, followed by Indonesia's 5.1 per cent. It also forecasted a 4.6 per cent GDP growth for Mainland China and 4.5 per cent for Malaysia.

WB to provide $1.1b for five development projects

Bangladesh and the World Bank on 23 November signed five financing agreements worth over $1.1 billion to help the country achieve resilient and inclusive growth by improving early childhood development, secondary education, riverbank protection and navigability, urban primary health, and gas distribution efficiency.

The agreements were signed by Sharifa Khan, Senior Secretary, Economic Relations Division (ERD), the government of Bangladesh and Abdoulaye Seck, World Bank Country Director for Bangladesh and Bhutan, on behalf of Bangladesh and the World Bank, respectively.

The credits are from the World Bank's International Development Association (IDA). Bangladesh currently has the largest ongoing IDA program, totaling $16.46 billion in 57 projects. These projects are aligned with the Eighth Five-Year Plan 2021-2025 and support the country's graduation from LDC status in 2026 and the vision 2041.

The five projects are: The $210 million Bangladesh Enhancing Investments and Benefits for Early Years Project will help improve early childhood development by providing cash transfers and counseling services to about 1.7 million pregnant women and mothers of children under 4 years of age in vulnerable households.



The $300 million Learning Acceleration in Secondary Education Operation Project will help strengthen secondary education by improving learning outcome and teaching quality.

The $102 million Jamuna River Sustainable Management Project 1, will help improve riverbank protection and navigability in the Jamuna River, protecting about 2,500 hectares of land from riverbank erosion and flooding, saving thousands of people from displacement and safeguarding their livelihoods and assets.

The $200 million Urban Health, Nutrition and Population Project will improve primary healthcare services for treatment, prevention and referral for common illnesses including mosquito-borne diseases like dengue in Dhaka North and South City Corporations, Chattogram City Corporation, and Savar and Tarabo municipalities.

It will also support mosquito control, medical waste management, and behavior change communication. It will help improve antenatal services for women, with a target of over 250,000 women receiving at least four checkups during pregnancy. It will support hypertension screening and follow-up of about 1.3 million adults. The $300 million Gas Sector Efficiency Improvement and Carbon Abatement Project will help improve the efficiency of gas distribution and end-use through pre-paid metering systems and reduce methane emissions along the natural gas value chain. It will install more than 1.2 million prepaid gas meters in Dhaka and Rajshahi Division.

ADB approved $1b for 5 sustainable development projects

Bangladesh on 28 November secured $1.026 billion in financing from the Asian Development Bank (ADB) to support five sustainable development projects in the energy, health, sanitation, technology, and connectivity sectors. Md Shahriar Kader Siddiky, secretary at the Economic Relations Division (ERD), and Edimon Ginting, ADB country director for Bangladesh, signed the agreements on behalf of their respective sides at a ceremony held at the ERD in Dhaka.

Promoting energy efficiency

ADB will provide $200 million to assist Bangladesh in enhancing energy efficiency through smart metering as well as supporting its transition to clean energy solutions. The Smart Metering Energy Efficiency Improvement Project will support the government's efforts to reduce losses by installing 650,000 smart prepaid gas meters for residential customers, primarily in South Dhaka and Narayanganj.

Developing vaccine production

Bangladesh will receive $336.5 million to establish domestic vaccine, therapeutics, and diagnostics manufacturing capacity and strengthen the national regulator to ensure vaccine supply security in the country.

Delivering clean water in CHT

ADB will give a $90 million loan to develop infrastructure and systems that will provide clean drinking water and sanitation services in

Bandarban, Lama, and Rangamati towns in the Chattogram Hill Tracts (CHT) region of Bangladesh.

Strengthening technology and engineering programmes

The ADB will provide a $100 million loan to improve computer science, software engineering, and information technology programmes in three public universities: Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology,



the University of Dhaka, and Jashore University of Science and Technology.

Upgrading the Dhaka-Northwest International Road Corridor

ADB is to give €277.88 million ($300 million) to help upgrade the Dhaka-Northwest international trade corridor in Bangladesh. The assistance forms the third tranche of $1.2 billion in multitranche ADB loans for the Second South Asia Sub-regional Economic Cooperation Dhaka-Northwest Corridor Road Project.

$400m ADB loan for climate priorities

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) will provide US$400 million as policy-based loan to help Bangladesh implementing its National Adaptation Plan 2023-2050 and Nationally Determined Contributions 2021 Update to the Paris Agreement to achieve a climate-resilient inclusive development.

Economic Relations Division (ERD) Secretary Shahriar Kader Siddiky and the ADB Country Director for Bangladesh Edimon Ginting signed the loan agreement on behalf of their respective sides at a ceremony at ERD in Dhaka on 11 December. This assistance is the first subprogramme of the indicative $700 million Climate-Resilient Inclusive Development Programme, it said, adding that Bangladesh is one of the world's most vulnerable countries to the adverse impacts of climate change, recording an annual average loss of about $3 billion.

The programme aims to create an enabling institutional and policy environment to mobilise climate finance, prioritise climate actions in the country's overall development agenda, and help the government implement reforms in climate-critical sectors, including agriculture, disaster management, transport and infrastructure, urban development, and energy.

It facilitated the creation of the National Committee for Environment and Climate Change, headed by the Prime Minister, for holistic implementation of the government's climate priorities across ministries. The programme will intensively support the government in operationalising the Bangladesh Climate and Development Partnership presented recently at COP28. Besides, the programme also supports the mainstreaming of climate priorities in government planning and resource allocation, and the mobilisation of climate finance through green bonds and sustainable finance policy.

$120m ADB loans for Chittagong Hill Tracts rural communities

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) will provide US$120 million loans for improving basic services and climate resilience at rural communities in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) of Bangladesh. To this effect, a loan deal was signed on 4 October in Dhaka between the ADB and the Economic Relations Division (ERD). Sharifa Khan, Secretary, ERD, and Edimon Ginting, ADB Country Director for Bangladesh signed the agreement.

Under a project, the authorities will help improve village access roads, develop water supply sources and sanitation services, install rooftop solar systems, and establish agricultural facilities at three hilly districts including Bandarban, Khagrachari and Rangamati. The project will also improve about 140 kilometres of rural roads with all-weather standards incorporating nature-based, climate-resilient, and safety features.

ADB Country Director Edimon Ginting said the project is expected to increase cropping intensity by at least 50 per cent on at least 7,500 hectares of agricultural land; reduce by 50 per cent the average time taken for women from 57,000 households to fetch potable water; and reduce the average travel time along the project-supported roads by 50 per cent for buses, cars, and trucks compared with the baseline year of 2023 by the year 2031.

ADB provides $106m to improve water management, agri-productivity in Bangladesh

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the Government of Bangladesh on 29 October signed a loan agreement for $106 million to improve water resources management and agricultural productivity in rural Bangladesh. An agreement for a grant of $17.80 million from the Government of the Netherlands was also signed. ADB will administer the grant, which will finance innovative pilot works and consulting services focusing on innovation.

Sharifa Khan, secretary of Economic Relations Division, and Edimon Ginting, ADB country director for Bangladesh signed the agreements on behalf of Bangladesh and ADB, respectively.

The project builds on the success and lessons from three prior ADB-financed participatory small-scale water resources management projects in Bangladesh. It will scale up investment while intensifying support for climate and disaster resilience and food security through new and improved water resources infrastructures and services for flood and drought risk management, drainage improvement, and irrigation systems modernisation.

EU and Bangladesh signed €400 million for renewable energy

At the Global Gateway Forum on 25 October the EU, the European Investment Bank (EIB) and Bangladesh signed agreements worth €400 million for renewable energy projects to contribute to a sustainable green transition of Bangladesh's power sector and to the achievement of the country's climate mitigation targets.

President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen, together with Prime Minister Hasina, launched the negotiations on a new Partnership and Cooperation Agreement to expand and develop the relationship between the EU and Bangladesh. On this occasion, five additional cooperation actions, worth €70 million, supporting education, decent work, green construction, e-governance and the prevention of gender-based violence were also launched.

Projects will contribute to boost access to energy and rural development throughout Bangladesh, consisting mainly of utility scale solar photovoltaic and onshore wind projects, and potentially associated battery energy storage systems. The operation



is expected to contribute to the installation of an estimated 750 MWp of new renewable energy capacity in Bangladesh. The investments are also likely to improve power distribution and decentralisation, eventually increasing national and, potentially regional, connectivity and resilience.

As part of the technical assistance, the EU will help to examine project proposals including ways of combining energy production and food production on the same plot of land, solar, hybrid solar/wind, and solar with battery.

At the Global Gateway Forum, an additional €70 million package in cooperation actions were signed between the EU and Bangladesh in support of the education sector (€30 million), to promote the decent work agenda, to scale up green construction, to boost effective digital governance, and to prevent gender-based violence in public spaces in the country (€10 million in each case).

IMF approved second tranche of $4.7bn loan

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) on 12 December approved the release of a second tranche of a $4.7 billion loan that was approved last January. This second transfer will see $682 million transferred to

Bangladesh's account. Alongside the $400 million the country received as loan from the Asian Development Bank (ADB), these will help to ease significant pressure that has been building on the country's forex reserves in the last two years. The IMF board approved the $4.7 billion loan on January 30.



In the first tranche, Bangladesh received $447.8 million on February 2 this year. The country is expected to receive the rest in another five tranches. Earlier, in October, an IMF delegation came to Bangladesh on a two-week visit, reviewed the loan programme and placed the second loan tranche proposal before the IMF board.

Germany to provide €25.5m for three projects

Germany will provide 25.5 million Euros to Bangladesh in three projects in the areas of local government, access to justice for women and climate change. In this regard, three agreements amounting €25.5 million were signed on 16 November between Bangladesh and Germany.

Three technical cooperation agreements were on "Liveable and Inclusive Cities for All (LICA)", "Access to Justice for Women: Strengthening Community Dispute Resolution and Improving Case Management (A2 Justice)", and "Strengthening Institutions for Climate Change Adapted Water Resource Management in Dhaka".

Sharifa Khan, senior secretary, Economic Relations Divisions (ERD) and Country Director, GiZ, Andreas Kuck of the Federal Republic of Germany in Bangladesh signed the agreements on behalf of their respective sides. The total available fund for the "Liveable and Inclusive Cities for All (LICA)," is up to 5.5 million Euros. The Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) under the Local Government Division (LGD) will implement the project.



The available fund for the "Access to Justice for Women: Strengthening Community Dispute Resolution and Improving Case Management (A2 Justice)" is 15.50 million Euros. The Law and Justice Division (LJD) under the Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs will implement the project.

The total available fund for "Strengthening Institutions for Climate Change Adapted Water Resource Management in Dhaka" is up to 4.5 million Euros. The Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) will implement the project.

The main objectives of the project are to ensure institutional and technical foundations to ensure improved water quality in the Meghna River at the level of the actors involved in Bangladesh.

Chinese firm to set up $89m composite factory at Mongla EPZ

Chinese company M/s Yun Sheng BD Co Ltd is going to establish a composite (Textile, Garments and Accessories) industry in Mongla Export Processing Zone (Mongla EPZ). This would be the first such kind of factory in Mongla EPZ. This company will create employment opportunity for 5421 Bangladesh nationals.



Yun Sheng BD will invest US$ 89 million to produce fabrics, garments and garments accessories items. It would be the highest amount of

proposed investment ever from a single company. An agreement was signed on 4 December between Bangladesh Export Processing Zones Authority (BEPZA) and Yun Sheng BD Co Ltd to this effect at BEPZA Complex in the city.

Yun Sheng BD will produce Woven/ Knitted Fabrics, Padding, Quilting, Printing Fabrics, Embroidered Fabrics, Coated Fabrics, Laminated Fabrics, all kind of tape, Knit & Woven garments products etc. Ali Reza Mazid, Member (Investment Promotion) of BEPZA and Ji Lai Yang, Managing Director of Yun Sheng BD signed the agreement on behalf of their respective organizations. BEPZA Executive Chairman Major General Abul Kalam Mohammad Ziaur Rahman, ndc, psc witnessed the signing ceremony.

Chinese company to invest $28.2 million in Uttara EPZ

Chinese company M/s United Spinning and Dyeing Limited is going to set up a dyed textile yarn factory in Uttara EPZ in Nilphamari with an investment of $28.2 million. To this end, Bangladesh Export Processing Zone Authority (BEPZA) signed an agreement with the company on November 20 at BEPZA Complex in Dhaka.

Ali Reza Majid, BEPZA Member (Investment Development) and Yu Min, Managing Director of United Spinning and Dyeing Limited signed the agreement on behalf of their respective organizations. Major General Abul Kalam Mohammad Ziaur Rahman, Executive Chairman of BEPZA was present at the signing ceremony.



The company will produce 12,000 tons of dyed textile yarn annually. The new investment will create employment opportunities for 1,816 Bangladeshi citizens. Yu Min hopped that the company would come into production within next October. Yu Min said this is their first investment in Uttara EPZ and there are plans to invest more.

BEPZA economic zone attracts US $ 11.55 million investment from China's Quality Sportswear Mfrs Ltd.

Quality Sportswear Mfrs Ltd., a Chinese company, is set to invest US $ 11.55 million in establishing a garments and accessories manufacturing facility at the BEPZA Economic Zone in Mirsarai, Chittagong.

The factory aims to achieve an annual production target of 6.05 million garments and 0.8 million accessories, including money bags and travelling bags, creating employment opportunities for 3,310 Bangladeshi workers. This investment is part of Bepza's approval for 26 enterprises to set up industries in the Mirsarai economic zone, contributing to the production of diverse products. The collective proposed investment of these enterprises amounts to US $ 529.4 million.

The agreement, signed by Ali Reza Mazid, Bepza's member for Investment Promotion, and Zhang Zhilan, director of Quality Sportswear Mfrs Ltd., solidifies the commitment between the two organisations. The signing ceremony took place at the Bepza Complex in Dhaka.



Chinese company to set up pharma ingredients factory in Bepza EZ

Chinese company Crescent Hi Tech is going to set up an active pharmaceutical ingredients (API) manufacturing industry in the Bangladesh Export Processing Zones Authority (Bepza) Economic Zone with an investment of $7.6 million. This will be the first API factory in the economic zone located in the Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Shilpa Nagar in Chattogram. An agreement was signed in this regard between the two parties on 6 December.

Ali Reza Mazid, member (investment promotion) of Bepza and Xie Weimin, Chairman of Crescent Hi Tech, signed the agreement on behalf of their respective organisations. Bepza Executive Chairman Abul Kalam Mohammad Ziaur Rahman was present at the signing ceremony.

The company will produce 315 tonnes of 1.4-Dihydroxy Anthraquinone, 189 tonnes of 1.4-Diamino Anthraquinone, 661 tonnes of Glycuresis 26 and 53; 629 tonnes of Hepatitis C 30 and 27 annually. More than 2,000 Bangladeshis will get employment opportunities in this factory.



DBL new Textile venture at SEZ in Sylhet

DBL Group announces the inauguration of Jinnat Textile Mills Limited, a significant addition to its portfolio and a testament to the group's commitment to excellence in the textile industry. The inauguration ceremony, held on 23rd November 2023 at DBL Industrial Park, Shreehatta Economic Zone, Moulvibazar, Sylhet.

Ms. Sarah Cooke, the British High Commissioner to Bangladesh as the Chief Guest was attented as the Chief Guest where Mr. Shaikh Yusuf Harun, Executive Chairman (Senior Secretary) of Bangladesh Economic Zones Authority (BEZA) as the Guest of Honour, along with Mohammad Rehan Rashid, Country Director for Bangladesh at British International Investment, Richard Palmer, Director and Head of Private Debt, British International Investment.

Jinnat Textile Mills Limited is poised to contribute to the production of high-quality textiles to serve international buyers. British International Investment (BII) provided a $52 million loan for establishing this factory.

Sino-Malaysian Co to invest $14.55m in BEPZA EZ

Vernon and Oliver Furniture Company Limited, a China-Malaysia owned company, will produce mattress by investing $14.55 million in the largest venture of Bangladesh Export Processing Zones Authority (BEPZA). Mattress is the new addition to be produced in BEPZA Economic Zone. An agreement to this effect was signed on 26 November between BEPZA and Vernon & Oliver Furniture Company Limited at BEPZA Complex in the city.

Ali Reza Mazid, Member (Investment Promotion) of BEPZA, and Lee Wai Choong, Managing Director of Vernon and Oliver Furniture Company Limited signed the agreement on behalf of their respective organisations. BEPZA Executive Chairman Maj Gen Abul Kalam Mohammad Ziaur Rahman witnessed the signing ceremony.

This company will be the first Mattress manufacturing industry

among the EPZs and BEPZA EZ. The company will produce 1.8 lakh pieces of Spring Mattress & Foam Mattress annually. 600 Bangladeshi nationals will get employment opportunities in this factory.

PRAN-RFL plans to invest Tk 680cr in Habiganj Industrial Park

PRAN-RFL is going to make new investment of Tk680 crore in the year 2024 at its Habiganj Industrial Park (HIP) to expand production capacity to meet growing consumers demand. According to sources the group has already invested Tk 6,300 crore in the Habiganj Industrial Park (HIP).This new investment will create employment for around 3,000 people.

Currently, the company exports goods worth $400 million in a year to 145 countries globally. The group's annual business turnover is $3.0billon. The new facility will produce poultry, bakery, noodles, glassware, recycled products, fittings, switches and sockets, stationery, cables, bicycles and SS pipes.

Currently the Shayestaganj Habiganj industrial park is located on 300 acres of land and the new plant would be set up on another 200 acres of land adjacent to the existing industrial park. The HIP was launched in 2010 and the plant went into production in 2013. The group produces 300 brands, 6300 kinds of products in 31 locations in the country. Some 25,000 employees are working at HIP and the group's total employment now stands at 1.45 lakh.

Tk 1,900cr BSRM project to expand production capacity

BSRM has taken a nearly Tk 1,900 crore scheme to set up its second re-rolling plant to expand its capacity and cater to increased demand for public and private construction in the country. As part of the bid, the steel industry is setting up a melting furnace unit to increase its billet making capacity by 2.5 lakh tonnes, and a re-rolling unit to increase its capacity by 6 lakh tonnes per annum at the BSRM Industrial Estate in Mirsarai, Chattogram.

After the expansion, the total steel production capacity of the Chattogram-based business house will be around 24 lakh tonnes by next year, which will be nearly one-fourth of the total steel-making capacity in the country. Of the $175 million project, the steel maker will get $108 million from international financiers, including $50 million from JICA

A portion of the project cost -- Tk 800 crore or nearly $80 million -- will be met through loans from local financiers in the form of local currency, taka. The JICA, India's EXIM Bank, Standard Chartered Bank Singapore and Brac Bank Ltd will provide $108 million while the Infrastructure Development Company Ltd (Idcol), Eastern Bank PLC, Prime Bank Ltd and The City Bank Ltd will provide Tk 800 crore altogether, BSRM will bear the rest of the cost.

The steel maker signed the loan agreement with financiers, namely with JICA and others, on October 4 and held a ceremony on October 17 to mark the signing. This is the first private sector financing by JICA in Bangladesh. In a press statement posted on its website, JICA said this loan will support the construction of a new, environmentally friendly steel plant by BSRM.

Source : The Daily Star

Rooftop solar power promises $1b savings a year

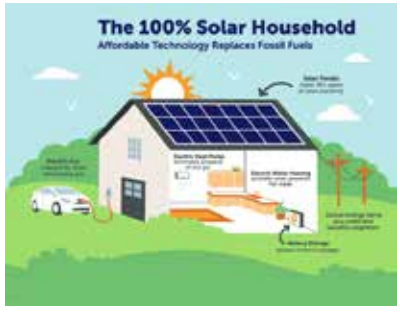
A 2,000-megawatt new rooftop solar capacity could help Bangladesh save between $476 million and $1 billion annually, according to a study of the Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis (IEEFA). "While the economic benefits of rooftop solar are clear, its slow progress shows the sector is held back by lack of awareness, low confidence, perceived risks, high import duties, and tight fiscal conditions," it said.

The study calculated the levelised cost of energy (LCOE) from 1 MW rooftop solar without a battery storage facility at Tk 5 ($0.046) per kilowatt-hour (kWh) against the electricity tariffs of Tk 9.9 ($0.09) and Tk 10.55 ($0.096) for industrial and commercial buildings, respectively.

The institute has considered a tariff of Tk 18.68 per kWh for furnace oil-

based plants and Tk 39.4 for diesel-fired units. This could yield annual savings of $476 million for the former and $1 billion for the latter, according to the study.

The IEEFA assumes that a rooftop solar will produce electricity for at least four hours a day. Rooftop solar systems have the potential to lessen the pressure on the national grid when demand surges. It could have helped contribute to the economy by supporting industrial production, cutting down fossil fuel imports or easing some pressure on foreign currency reserves, the report said.



The IEEFA describes rooftop solar as low-hanging fruit for the country amid obstacles facing utility-scale renewable energy projects, including in the areas of acquiring large quantities of land and obtaining numerous government approvals.

Source : The Daily Star

Standard Chartered extend supports for establishment of Polymerisation Plant

Standard Chartered has arranged syndicated financing for Modern Syntex Limited's Continuous Polymerisation Plant via an Export Credit Agency (ECA) backed term loan of €38 million and a commercial BDT syndicated term loan of BDT 4,505 million. It is the first full-scale production facility for man-made fibre in Bangladesh – which will play a significant role in boosting export diversification across the nation's Readymade Garments (RMG) sector.

With an investment of $131 million the plant will manufacture polyester staple fibres (PSF), textile grade polyester chips (PET chips), draw textured yarn (DTY), and fully drawn yarn (FDY). The production of these materials provides backward-linkage support that helps meet local demand across a variety of industries, including RMG, textile, footwear and vehicle making. This demand is currently being met via import from China, Indonesia, Taiwan, Malaysia, India, and other markets.

Naser Ezaz Bijoy, Chief Executive Officer, Standard Chartered Bangladesh, said, "Globally, the apparel industry is moving towards manmade fabric, and Bangladesh has scant capacity in backward integration to support apparel exporters to meet this growing global demand. This timely investment will not only reduce the dependency on imported manmade fibre (MMF) – saving foreign exchange and transportation costs – it will also enable our RMG sector to diversify their product basket for export of more high-value-added MMF products, such as technical textiles, functional apparel, and smart textiles."

Bangladeshi RMG factory became world's highest-rated green factory: USGBC

A Bangladeshi readymade garment factory is now the global leader as a Leed-certified green factory with a score of 106 -- the highest ever score in the industry category project in the world. The Gazipur-based SM Sourcing obtained leadership in energy and environmental design (Leed) certificate in the platinum category from the US Green Building Council (USGBC).

The factory obtained a platinum certificate at Leed O+M; Existing Building v4 rating system with a smart score of 106 out of 110. However, the factory unit surpassed the previous highest-rated LEED Green Factory in the world, which was also from Bangladesh – Green Textiles Limited Unit 4 – which held a commendable score of 104.

This remarkable achievement marks a new chapter in sustainable textile manufacturing, further solidifying our country's commitment to environmental leadership. Now Bangladesh has strengthened its position as the global leader in green



environmentally-friendly apparel factories, with 206 factories. Apart from SM Sourcing, Nice Cotton Limited, another Gazipur-based manufacturer, received a platinum certificate from the USGBC for the Leed O+M: Existing Building v4.1 rating system, scoring 81 out of 110. Bangladesh has made remarkable strides sustainably with 206 Leed green factories, including 76 platinum-rated, 116 gold-rated, 10 silver-rated, and 4 certified, solidifying its commitment to environmental stewardship.

Bangladesh takes the helm as top knitwear supplier to EU : Eurostat

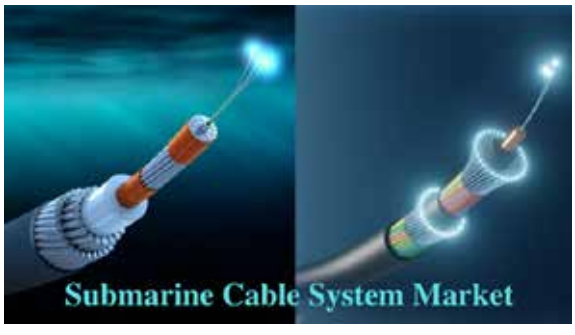
For the first time, Bangladesh has claimed the title of the European Union's leading knitwear exporter, surpassing China, owing to the advantageous duty facility provided by the bloc's Everything but Arms (EBA) scheme. Eurostat data for January to September 2023 reveals that Bangladesh's knitwear imports to the EU, both in terms of US dollars and volume, outpaced those of any other country. During this period, the EU's knitwear imports from Bangladesh totalled US $ 9 billion, slightly surpassing the US $ 8.96 billion imported from China.

In weight, Bangladesh exported 571 million kilograms of knitwear to the EU, compared to China's 442 million kilograms, according to Faruque Hassan, President of the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA), citing data from the statistical office of the European Union.

Hassan attributed Bangladesh's remarkable performance in EU knitwear to recent investments in high-value items, particularly activewear. He expresses optimism about the industry's potential to make a significant shift toward non-cotton-based athleisure items, which encompass casual, comfortable clothing suitable for both exercise and everyday wear.

Three firms spending Tk 1,000cr on first private submarine cable

Three local companies are spending about Tk 1,000 crore for the first private submarine cable that will connect Bangladesh with the outside world for data transmission. Three private licensees of submarine cable -- Summit Communications, CdNet Communications and Metacore Subcom Ltd -- have formed a consortium to install the cable, which will have the capacity to supply 45,000Gbps bandwidth.



Bangladesh Submarine Cables PLC (BSCPLC) is expected to lower internet prices by increasing the supply of bandwidth. The 3,000km undersea cable, originating from Singapore, will connect to Bangladesh's Cox's Bazar. The fibre laying process will be conducted in two phases.

Campana will provide a connection to the Sigmar cable, a 1900-km long cable system connecting Singapore and Myanmar. The three companies will pay about $35 million and will get indefensible rights of use for 25 years. For the second phase, the local consortium is finalising a deal with submarine cable provider HMN to lay fibre from Cox's Bazar to Myanmar. For that, the three companies have to spend about $45 million.

Currently, total bandwidth usage stands at about 5,000Gbps and more than half of it -- about 2,700Gbps -- comes through international terrestrial cable (ITC) licences, which are used to import bandwidth from India across land. The rest -- about 2,300Gbps -- is supplied by the BSCPLC, which connects the country with two submarine cables.

Solar to be the most affordable energy source for Bangladesh: Bloomberg

Bangladesh's heavy reliance on fossil-fuel thermal power plants has reduced the country's energy security, while draining its foreign curreny reserves and increasing local pollution. In addition, further expansion of fossil-fuel thermal power plants would jeopardize

the country's energy security and affordability.

Renewables, and in particular solar, are set to be the cheapest option for Bangladesh to meet growing electricity demand, according to a new report published by research firm BloombergNEF (BNEF). The cost of electricity generation from a new solar power plant is already competitive with those of new coal and gas power plants in Bangladesh. The levelized cost of electricity (LCOE) – the financial measure used by developers and investors – for a new utility-scale solar project in Bangladesh ranges from $97-135/MWh today, according to BNEF analysis, compared to $88-116/MWh for a combined cycle gas turbine, or CCGT, and $110-150/MWh for a coal power plant. By 2025, solar becomes the cheapest option. By 2030, solar paired with batteries will also achieve a cheaper LCOE than new thermal power plants. Electricity from onshore wind paired with batteries would also become cheaper than new thermal plants by mid 2030s.

Transition to Renewable energy can positively contribute to employment generation in the country : CPD study

Energy transition in Bangladesh will positively contribute to employment generation in the country. The planned energy transition, according to the Mujib Climate Prosperity Plan (MCPP) and Draft Integrated Power and Energy Master Plan (IEPMP), is likely to contribute to a substantial rise in renewable energy use in the power sector — from as low as 80 per cent to as high as 1240 per cent of renewable energy use could happen by 2030.

The use of fossil fuels in the power sector would decline between 27.8 per cent and 30 per cent during the same period. Such an energy transition within seven years is likely to impact employment generation in renewable energy-based power generation positively. CPD study shows that the renewable energy sector could generate about 9300–28626 new employment, mainly through on-grid-based electricity generation.

On the other hand, new employment in fossil fuel-based power generation would be either negative (-387) to positive (8614). However, a substantial part of the new employment in the power sector could be absorbed by reemploying the occupants of the fossil fuel-based power plants. These findings have been shared by the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) at the dialogue titled 'Energy Transition in Bangladesh: Employment and Skills' held on 19 October 2023, in Dhaka.



In his keynote presentation, Dr Khondaker Golam Moazzem, Research Director, CPD said that the scarcity of trained engineers has resulted in a significant demand for individuals with engineering expertise. The demand for skilled technicians is moderate, yet it is easier to locate trained technicians than skilled engineers.

The energy shift to renewables has the potential to give rise to several novel career vocations, including renewable energy technicians, energy storage specialists, smart grid engineers, energy analysts, environmental planners and consultants, energy efficiency experts, green building designers and architects.

On the other hand, specific occupational positions are frequently present in power plants reliant on fossil fuels, which may not be necessary or may possess diminished importance in renewable power plants. These include fuel handling and storage personnel, ash disposal and pollution control specialists, boiler operators and combustion engineers, flue gas desulfurisation (FGD) technicians, coal yard workers, conveyor operators, and oil and gas refinery workers.

Considering the overall transformation in the energy and employment sectors, nine-point recommendations have been made in the study. These include — (a) Investment in workforce development; (b) Formulating pragmatic policies; (c) Replicating globally successful measures; (d) Redesigning academic courses; (e) Promoting industry-academia collaboration; (f) Supporting local manufacturing; (g) Creating green jobs reporting mechanisms; (h) Developing transition plans for fossil fuel workers; (i) Conducting more research on emerging issues and concerns.

Excelerate Energy - Petrobangla signed 15-year LNG supply deal

Excelerate Energy, a US-based liquefied natural gas (LNG) company, and Bangladesh Oil, Gas & Mineral Corporation (Petrobangla) have entered into a long-term LNG sale and purchase agreement (SPA). As per the agreement, Petrobangla has committed to buying 0.85 million tonnes per annum (MTPA) to 1MTPA of LNG from Excelerate Energy over a 15-year period starting from January 2026.

The delivery plan includes 0.85MTPA of LNG in 2026 and 2027, followed by 1MTPA from 2028 to 2040. According to Excelerate Energy, the long-term SPA marks the next stage of its plan for integrating its business in Bangladesh. In 2018, the company initially introduced LNG to the Bangladesh market through the commissioning of its $179.5m Moheshkhali LNG floating storage and regasification unit (FSRU) terminal.

Over the subsequent years, the company expanded its presence by deploying a second FSRU terminal in the Bay of Bengal and leveraging its infrastructure to secure spot LNG cargo sales into Bangladesh. Presently, Excelerate Energy's two FSRUs contribute roughly 25% of the country's natural gas supply.

Chinese consortium to set up 100MW solar plant at Gouripur

The government has approved the setting up of another 100MW solar power plant in the private sector on a "no electricity, no payment" basis. A Chinese consortium of Cassiopea Fashion Limited, Xizi Clean Energy Equipment Manufacturing Company, and Cassiopea Apparels Limited will set up the power plant at Gouripur in Mymensingh on a "Build, Own and Operate" basis.

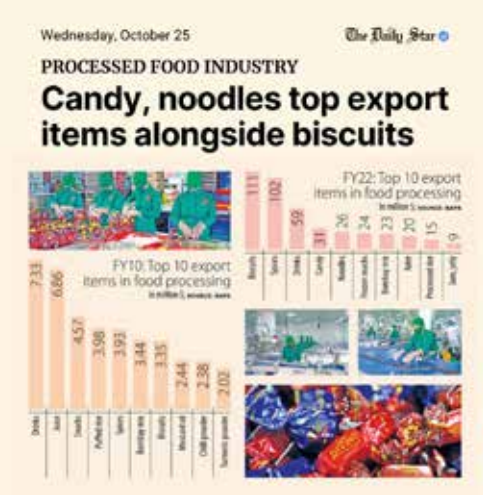
The Cabinet Committee on Public Procurement on 8 November approved the tariff proposal for the setting up of the power plant. As per the approved tariff, the government will purchase power from the solar plant for the next 20 years at a rate of $0.10/kWh, which is Tk11.05 per kWh at the current exchange rate.

In line with the current exchange rate, the total expenditure of the government on purchasing power from the solar plant will be Tk3,580.80 crore over two decades. It will take 24 months to build the plant.



$30 million processed food export during FY -22

Candy, which did not attract the attention of exporters even a decade ago, has become one of the top five items in Bangladesh's processed food export basket, highlighting the much-needed value-addition brought on by manufacturers. Noodles, another popular food, has also become one of the major items shipped from the country.


Wednesday, October 25

The Daily Star

PROCESSED FOOD INDUSTRY

Candy, noodles top export items alongside biscuits

FY22: Top 10 export items in food processing

FY10: Top 10 export items in food processing

Biscuit and bakery items, which ranked seventh on the list of top 10 export products in 2009-10, have become the No.1 item in the processed food category, replacing drinks, according to data compiled by the Bangladesh Agro-Processors Association (BAPA). The data points to the changing composition of the processed food export basket.

BAPA figures showed that exporters fetched $30 million from candy shipments in 2021-22. The product was the fourth-largest earner in the processed foods category in the year. Biscuits and bakery items topped the list and spices and drinks came second and third respectively in FY22.

Source : The Daily Star

Bangladesh projected to be 20th largest economy by 2038

Bangladesh's long-term outlook looks brighter as a leading London-based think tank projects the country to become the 20th largest economy out of 191 countries by 2038, owing to its macroeconomic stability, strong remittance flows and a robust export market.

The Centre for Economics and Business Research (CEBR) last year projected that Bangladesh would become the 24th largest economy by 2036. The CEBR disclosed its latest findings in its annual World Economic League Table (WELT 2023) report on 25 December, stating that Bangladesh has been among the world's fastest growing economies over the last decade.



The country is forecasted to place 35th in 2023, reaching 26th spot in 2027, before eventually jumping to 20th in 2038, according to the latest report. This represents an economic boom during the ongoing, as well as, the next decade. Previously, the nation held 57th, 58th, and 42th positions in 2007, 2012, and 2017 respectively, indicating an upward trend in economic performance and consistency in growth.

India has been holding the top position in the South Asian region since the first edition of the report came out in 2009, and is forecasted to become the third $10 trillion economy in 2035 and the world's third largest by 2032. Bangladesh is currently the second largest economy in the region, says the report, and will continue to keep its position till 2038 with a GDP size of $1,628 billion at current prices (currently $429 billion).

Pakistan (43rd) holds the third position followed by Sri Lanka (75th), Nepal (101st), the Maldives (152nd), and Bhutan (164th) in South Asia.

The US (1st), China (2nd), and Japan (3rd) are currently the top three economies in the world, and it is forecasted that China is now not set to overtake the US as the world's largest economy until 2036 at the earliest – six years later than expected due to the country's zero Covid policy and rising trade tensions with the West.

The think tank has classified Bangladesh as a lower middle-income country for 2022, lauding Bangladesh government's efforts to maintain a low debt-to-GDP ratio, while operating a 5.1% fiscal deficit in 2022. Moreover, it mentions the strong macroeconomic fundamentals, infrastructure improvements and enhanced digitalisation that has enabled the country to move towards post-pandemic recovery.

The output growth in the fiscal 2020-21 was estimated to stand at 6.9%, after which growth is expected to have accelerated to 7.2% in the fiscal 2021-22. The CEBR expects an average growth rate of 6.4% between the fiscals 2022-23 and 2026-27.

The source for Bangladesh's strong and consistent growth is being tied down to strong remittance flows and a robust export market, with the two factors anticipated to play a prominent role in the economy's growth moving forwards. The report, however, mentioned that the economy might face multiple hurdles while achieving a medium- to long-term outlook.

While GDP rose relatively strongly in the fiscal 2021-22, inflation also ran hot, a fallout of the Russia-Ukraine conflict being one of the causes.

The paper deems high inflation as a key downside risk for Bangladesh, not least due to the fact that it leads to a higher current account deficit, in light of elevated commodity prices. It proposed strong foreign direct investment from both India and China to help accelerate such developments.

Global/Regional News

COP28 climate deal: transition the global economy away from fossil fuels

Nations struck a historic deal on 13 December at the COP28 climate summit in Dubai to transition the global economy away from fossil fuels, following two weeks of hard-fought debate.

Here are some takeaways from the pact:

Twilight for oil?

The headline agreement in the COP28 pact was a provision that



calls for "transitioning away from fossil fuels in energy systems, in a just, orderly and equitable manner- so as to achieve net zero by 2050 in keeping with the science."

But it boils down to the first time the world has expressed a unified desire to eventually end the oil age, and it sends a resounding signal to international markets. It will not immediately destroy petroleum consumption and shrink prices. But - if it leads to incremental policy moves and shifting investment trends over time - it could ensure a longer-term transformation of the energy economy.

Not so fast

The pact also had rewards for oil producers, in the form of a clear acknowledgment that technologies exist that can reduce the climate impact of oil, natural gas and coal - mainly by capturing carbon dioxide produced when fossil fuels are burned to prevent the emissions entering the atmosphere. Embedded in a list of actions that countries should take to fight climate change was: "Accelerating zero and low-emission technologies, including, inter alia, renewables, nuclear, abatement and removal technologies such as carbon capture and utilization and storage."

Carbon capture has been around for a long time, but it remains very expensive in certain applications, and has never been proven at the vast global scale that would be needed to have an impact on climate change.

A source familiar with Saudi thinking said the kingdom, the de facto head of the oil producing group the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries, could accept the deal because it provides a 'menu' for every country to follow its own pathway.

Where's the money?

Even the delegations that appeared happiest with the accord had issues with it. The main one was the absence of any additional financing to help developing nations with the huge cost of transitioning away from fossil fuels. Money to help poor, climate-vulnerable countries adapt to the impacts of climate change was also lacking.

1.5 C goal stays in conversation

The United States, the European Union, and scores of other countries were generally pleased with the outcome of the talks, saying the deal maintained a chance of limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degress Fahrenheit) above the pre-industrial average. Getting there will be tough - requiring cutting emissions nearly in half in just six years, and to net zero by 2050.

Only 4% top companies meet UN climate target guidelines : Net Zero Tracker

Half of the world's 2,000 biggest listed companies have set a target to get to net-zero emissions by mid-century, but just a fraction meet tough United Nations guidelines for what constitutes a quality pledge, a report on 6 November showed.

Net Zero Tracker, an independent data consortium including Oxford University, said corporate targets from Forbes2000 index companies had jumped 40% to 1,003 in October 2023, from 702 in June 2022, covering two-thirds of revenues, some $27 trillion.

However, just 4% of the targets meet the criteria laid down by the U.N.'s Race to Zero campaign, for example by covering all emissions, starting to cut them immediately, and including an annual progress update on interim and longer term targets. Of those to set a target, just 37% had one that covered their Scope 3 emissions, or those tied to a company's value chain. Just 13% had a quality threshold for the use of carbon offsets.

"A clear line in the sand on net zero has surfaced. Countless net zero targets are credibility light, but now we can say for certain that most of the world's largest listed companies are on the right side of the line on net zero intent," said John Lang, Project Lead, the Net Zero Tracker.

As well as companies, the Net Zero Tracker tracks pledges made by nations, states and regions, and cities using machine and human data analysis. Alongside Oxford Net Zero, the consortium includes The Energy & Climate Intelligence Unit (ECIU); Data-Driven EnviroLab (UNC) and the New Climate Institute.



Greenhouse gases in atmosphere hit record high in 2022 : UN

The United Nations says the concentration of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere surged to new highs last year as climate change fuelled extreme weather across the globe. In a bulletin released on 15 November, the UN's World Meteorological Organization (WMO) said three main greenhouse gases broke records in 2022 and warned that there is "no end in sight".



"Despite decades of warnings from the scientific community, thousands of pages of reports and dozens of climate conferences, we are still heading in the wrong direction," WMO Secretary-General Petteri Taalas said.

The UN weather agency said global concentrations of carbon dioxide were 50 percent higher than the pre-industrial average, an unsettling new record. Other gases, such as methane and nitrous oxide, also reached new highs.

"The current level of greenhouse gas concentrations puts us on the pathway of an increase in temperatures well above the Paris Agreement targets by the end of this century," said Taalas, referring to the goal of limiting global warming to less than 2 degrees Celsius (3.6 degrees Fahrenheit) over pre-industrial times.

"This will be accompanied by more extreme weather, including intense heat and rainfall, ice melt, sea level rise and ocean heat and acidification."

Rich Nations likely to meet $100b goal : OECD

At the 15th Conference of Parties (COP15) of the UNFCCC in Copenhagen in 2009, developed countries committed to a collective goal of mobilising USD 100 billion per year by 2020 for climate action in developing countries, in the context of meaningful mitigation actions and transparency on implementation. The goal was formalised at COP16 in Cancun, and at COP21 in Paris, it was reiterated and extended to 2025.

At the request of donor countries, the OECD has been tracking progress towards this goal since 2015. It produces regular analyses of progress made, based on a robust accounting framework that is consistent with the COP24 outcome agreed by all Parties to the Paris Agreement on funding sources and financial instruments.

OECD
BETTER POLICIES FOR BETTER LIVES

The report released on 16 November 2023 by the OECD Secretary-General, presents aggregate trends of annual climate finance provided and mobilised by developed countries for developing countries for the period 2013-21. It includes breakdowns by climate theme, sector, financial instrument and region for the period 2016-21. The report also provides key recommendations for international providers to increase financing for adaptation and more effectively mobilise private finance for climate action, which are both key policy priorities and current bottlenecks. The recommendations in this report draw from two supplementary OECD publications on scaling up private climate finance and adaptation finance.

Key findings include:

- In 2021, total climate finance provided and mobilised by

developed countries for developing countries amounted to USD 89.6 billion, showing a significant 7.6% increase over the previous year.

- Public climate finance (bilateral and multilateral) almost doubled over the 2013-21 period, from USD 38 billion to USD 73.1 billion, accounting for the vast majority of the total USD 89.6 billion in 2021.
- Adaptation finance dropped by USD 4 billion (-14%) in 2021, resulting in a decrease in its share of total climate finance from 34% to 27%. At the same time, cross-cutting finance, increased from USD 6 billion in 2020 to USD 11.2 billion in 2021.
- Mobilised private climate finance, for which comparable data are only available from 2016, amounted to USD 14.4 billion in 2021, or 16% of the total.

Energy efficiency must double in pace by 2030 to hit climate goals : IEA

Countries must double the pace of measures to improve energy efficiency if global climate targets are to be met, the International Energy Agency (IEA) said in a report on 29 November. Record high energy costs last year helped to spur the take-up of measures such replacing gas boilers with heat pumps and switching to LED lightbulbs, but the rate of energy efficiency progress has since slowed, the IEA said.

"The world's climate ambitions hinge on our ability to make the global energy system much more efficient," IEA Executive Director Fatih Birol said. "If governments want to keep the 1.5 degree Celsius goal within reach while supporting energy security, doubling energy efficiency progress this decade is critical," he said.

The IEA said investments have led to energy being used 1.3% more efficiently this year compared with last year, but that the improvement rate had slowed from a 2% increase in 2022. Energy efficiency needs to double from that level to 4% a year for climate targets to be met, the IEA said.

Some $700 billion has been spent globally on energy efficiency support since 2020, the IEA said. Of this, almost 70% was spent in just five countries - France, Germany, Italy, Norway and the United States.

Over 130 nations agree to include food, agriculture in climate plans

More than 130 countries agreed to prioritise food and agriculture in their national climate plans at Cop28 in Dubai on 1 December in a move hailed by observers despite fears over its silence on the role of fossil fuels.

Food systems are estimated to be responsible for roughly a third of human-made greenhouse gases, but are increasingly threatened by global warming and biodiversity loss. A total of 134 countries who produce 70 percent of the food eaten worldwide signed the declaration, summit hosts the United Arab Emirates said.

"There is no path to achieving the goals of the Paris climate agreement and keeping 1.5 degrees Celsius within reach that does not urgently address the interactions between food systems, agriculture and climate," the UAE's climate change minister Mariam Almheiri said.



The declaration said that countries will strengthen efforts to integrate food systems into their emissions-cutting plans. Nations would also pursue efforts to support farmers and other vulnerable food producers, including through increased funding, more infrastructure and developing early warning systems, it added.

It also emphasised the importance of restoring land, changing away from greenhouse-gas emitting agricultural practices and reducing food loss. The United States, European Union, China and Brazil were among the countries to sign the declaration.

The 134 nations are home to 5.7 billion people and represent more than three quarters of all greenhouse gas emissions from the global food system -- or 25 percent of total emissions worldwide, the Cop28 statement said.

Coal use hits record in 2023, Earth's hottest year

Global consumption of coal reached an all-time high in 2023, the IEA energy watchdog said on 15 December, as Earth experienced its hottest recorded year. The International Energy Agency reported that nations would burn even more coal this year than in 2022, the previous record for consumption of the key source of planet-warming gases.

Scientists say greenhouse gases will need to be cut almost in half this decade to meet the world's targets of limiting global heating and avoiding catastrophic impacts on the Earth's climate. The EU's Copernicus Climate Change Service said earlier in December that 2023 will be the hottest on record after November became the sixth record-breaking month in a row.

The IEA said, nevertheless, that after peaking this year, worldwide coal consumption was expected to start declining in 2024, as renewable power generation from solar and wind continues to expand. Its latest forecasts were published two days after the conclusion of the United Nations climate negotiations (COP28) in Dubai -– where nearly 200 countries reached a deal that the world should be "transitioning away from fossil fuels" to limit global warming.

It was the first time in the 28-year history of the annual climate negotiations that all fossil fuels were mentioned in an accord. The disruption in the Earth's climate has contributed to an increase in the intensity and frequency of storms, droughts and lethal wildfires around the world.

The IEA said consumption of coal, the dirtiest fossil fuel, rose by 1.4 percent in 2023 to a record 8.5 billion tonnes, as increases in China, India and Indonesia outweighed sharply falling demand in Europe and the United States, the IEA said. "We expect to see a trend emerging of declining worldwide coal demand, starting in 2024," the energy watchdog said, as renewable power generation from solar and wind continues to expand.



The appetite for coal is strongest in Asia, it said. Consumption in China alone grew by 220 million tonnes or 4.9 percent in 2023, while in India it grew eight percent and in Indonesia by 11 percent. Elsewhere, coal use fell 23 percent or by 107 million tonnes in Europe, while in the United States it dropped 95 million tonnes or by 21 percent, largely due to weakening industrial activity and an ongoing shift away from coal-fired generation towards renewables.

The IEA said it was difficult to forecast demand in Russia, currently the fourth-largest coal consumer, because of the ongoing conflict in Ukraine, and forecasts for Ukraine were equally uncertain.

While the IEA predicted a decline in coal in power stations, it said its use in heavy industries like cement production was expected to continue at high levels. Paradoxically, the high demand for coal in Indonesia's mining sector stems from its booming industry in extracting and refining nickel for use in electric car batteries.

China remains the world's largest user of coal, responsible for half (54 percent) of all coal burned worldwide. More than 60 percent of coal burned in China is used to generate electricity and the country continues to build coal-fired power stations. In 2023 the country has approved new projects totalling 52 gigawatts of new electricity-generating capacity.

The IEA nevertheless expects coal consumption in China to start declining, unless heatwaves and very cold spells lead to higher demand on its power plants. Burning coal to generate electricity would decline in China to 2.8 billion tonnes, a drop of 175 million, over the period 2024-26. In its place, the main demand for coal would come from India, at least as far as 2026, the IEA said.

In the European Union, an expansion of renewable energies, which generate very little greenhouse gas emissions, is curbing demand for coal. In Germany, the use of ignite- and coal-powered power stations is expected to tail off significantly by 2025, the watchdog forecast, as solar and wind farms come on stream.

Industries could save US$437b a year via energy efficiency efforts

Global industry could save around US$437 billion (RM2 trillion) a year from 2030 via energy efficiency savings and could also achieve big reductions in carbon emissions, a study showed. The report by

the Energy Efficiency Movement, an industry collective, which has Switzerland's ABB, Germany's DHL Group, Sweden's Alfa Laval and Microsoft among its members, said four gigatonnes of carbon emissions could be saved by 2030 each year — if companies doubled down on efficiency measures.

That would be the equivalent of taking 60% of the world's internal combustion vehicles off the roads, the report said. PETRONAS has released its 2024-2026 Activity Outlook, outlining forecast activities that call for greater collaboration with the oil and gas service and equipment (OGSE) providers to ensure energy demand is met while ramping up its clean energy initiatives.



Companies could undertake regular energy audits, review the ideal size of industrial assets, connect sites and machines to reap energy synergies and use more efficient engines, the report said. "Since renewables can only provide a part of the answer, the critical role energy efficiency plays in accelerating the energy transition toward reaching net-zero emissions by 2050 is undeniable." Industry, including makers of cement, steel and chemicals, use some of the most polluting production techniques, and are faced with the costly process to decarbonise to meet climate goals as well as staying competitive.

The US Energy Information Administration (EIA) said global energy consumption will likely increase through 2050 and outpace advances in energy efficiency, boosted by population growth and higher living standards, among other factors. Non-fossil fuel-based resources, including renewables, will produce more energy through 2050, but that growth is not likely to be enough to reduce global energy-related CO2 emissions, it said.

Record 114m people displaced worldwide : UN

The number of people displaced by war, persecution, violence and human rights violations globally is likely to have exceeded 114 million at the end of September, the United Nations (UN) Refugee Agency (UNHCR) said on 25 October.

By the end of June in 2023, 110 million people had been forcibly displaced worldwide, up 1.6 million from the end of 2022. In the three months from June to the end of September, the number of forcibly displaced grew by 4 million, bringing the total to 114 million. Low and middle-income countries hosted 75 percent of the refugees and other people in need of international protection, the UNHCR said

The conflict in the Middle East erupted on Oct 7, beyond the period covered by the UNHCR, therefore the report does not take into account its consequences in terms of human displacement. According to the agency, the main drivers of forced displacement in the first half of 2023 included violence, droughts, floods and insecurity.



"The world's focus now is - rightly - on the humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza. But globally, far too many conflicts are proliferating or escalating, shattering innocent lives and uprooting people," UN High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi said.

"The international community's inability to solve conflicts or prevent new ones is driving displacement and misery. We must look within, work together to end conflicts and allow refugees and other displaced people to return home or restart their lives," he said.

Low and middle-income countries hosted 75 percent of the refugees and other people in need of international protection, the UNHCR said, adding that globally, 1.6 million new individual asylum applications were made in the first six months of this year, the largest number ever recorded.

Global business cycle is in transition

Global economic activity was mixed during the third quarter of 2023, with distinct signs of improvement in the United States and China but continued sluggishness elsewhere. Global industrial production was

up by just 0.4% in August 2023 compared with the same month a year earlier, according to estimates compiled by the Netherlands Bureau for Economic Policy Analysis (CPB).

But trade volumes were down by 3.8% in August compared with a year earlier and have not grown for a year, a sign of stagnation that is consistent with a recession ("World trade monitor", CPB, Oct. 25).

The United States and China, the world's two largest economies, showed signs of growing somewhat faster in the third quarter after a pronounced slowdown in the first half of 2023. Preliminary estimates show U.S. real gross domestic product increased at an annualised rate of 4.9% in the three months from July to September up from 2.1% in the three months from April to June.

The largest contribution came from increased consumer spending (+2.7 percentage points) especially on services (+1.6 percentage points) with a smaller contribution from goods (+1.1 percentage points).

The acceleration is consistent with data from purchasing managers surveys showing service sector activity increased in the third quarter after the barest of slowdowns during the second quarter. Manufacturing activity continued to decline



but there were clear signs it was approaching a cyclical trough with expansion imminent.

Initial claims for unemployment benefits have trended lower since the start of July after rising throughout the first six months of the year. Service sector prices rose at an annualised rate of 5.2% in the three months ending in September up from 3.3% in the three months ending in June. But there were also warning signs that some of the strength may be temporary and not sustained in the coming quarters.

The second largest contributor to real gross domestic product growth in the third quarter came from business inventories (1.3 percentage points). Contributions from inventory changes are normally reversed within 3-6 months so the tailwind in the third quarter is likely to turn into a headwind in the fourth.

Real final sales to private domestic purchasers (FSPDP), a measure that strips out volatile changes in inventories, trade and government spending, increased at an annualised rate of 3.3% between July and September. Real final sales accelerated markedly from annualised growth of 1.7% between April and June and a contraction of -0.2% between October and December 2022. Final sales confirm the economy has returned to moderate growth after the briefest and shallowest of cyclical slowdowns at the end of 2022 and the start of 2023.

But there are questions about how sustainable the current rebound will prove. There is not much spare capacity in the labour market or in energy supplies for renewed growth without sparking inflation. The unemployment rate was just 3.8% in September while inventories of diesel and other distillate fuel oils were 19 million barrels (-15% or -1.29 standard deviations) below the prior 10-year seasonal average.

Eurozone Business Activity Going From 'Bad To Worse'

Eurozone business activity slumped at a faster pace in October, resulting in job losses, a closely watched Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) survey put out by S&P Global showed on 24 October. The PMI score for October slumped to 46.5, lower than the revised 47.2 given for September. A figure under 50 indicates a contraction of business activity, while one over 50 suggests growth.



"In the eurozone, things are moving from bad to worse," said Cyrus de la Rubia, chief economist at the Hamburg Commercial Bank which partners with S&P for the PMI. "We wouldn't be caught off guard to see a mild recession in the eurozone in the second half of this year," he said.

Although eurozone inflation is still far above the ECB's two-percent target -- driven up since last year by Russia's invasion of Ukraine -- it is slowing, and economic headwinds are growing. The PMI score has now

dropped for five successive months, and was declining at the fastest pace since November 2020.

The data showed private-sector activity in the eurozone was shrinking at the fastest rate in a decade if figures from pandemic-affected months were stripped out. New orders were plummeting. "Companies cut employment as a result, representing the first drop in headcounts since the lockdowns of early 2021," S&P Global said in a statement giving the PMI survey result.

Jobs in the manufacturing sector were being shed at the fastest rate since August 2020, and hiring in the services sector was close to a standstill. The year-ahead outlook of purchasing managers questioned "remained among the weakest seen over the past year," even if it there was a "marginal" uptick for October.

Even though the eurozone's number-two economy France saw a slower services sector decline, partly offsetting a sharper manufacturing slide, PMI sentiment was slumping faster than in number-one economy Germany. "France and Germany have now respectively seen five and four months of falling output, while the rest of the eurozone as a whole has seen three straight monthly declines," S&P Global said.

The ECB has been tightening the monetary screws a turn at every one of its last 10 meetings, and the bank's key deposit rate now sits at an unprecedented four percent. The conflict in the Middle East has added to uncertainty for economic forecasts, however, with markets watching for signs it might send oil prices even higher.

ECB President Christine Lagarde has acknowledged the "pain" felt by households as a result of the aggressive rate hikes, but has cautioned against relenting too soon. Analysts said the ECB was likely to pause its rate rises for now, but keep monetary policy tight for some time going forward.

Consumer prices in the 20-nation currency bloc rose at an annual rate of 4.3 percent in September, its lowest rate in almost two years. The International Monetary Fund revised its forecast for Germany downwards earlier this month, predicting Europe's biggest economy would shrink by 0.5 percent in 2023, while the eurozone as a whole would limp to 0.7-percent growth.

China saved $ 10b from record sanctioned of oil imports

China has reaped savings this year of nearly $10 billion through record purchases of oil from countries under Western sanctions, according to Reuters' calculations based on data from traders and shiptrackers.

An unintended consequence of sanctions imposed by the United States and others on Russia, Iran and Venezuela has been to lower the oil import costs for refiners in top economic rival China, which often criticises such "unilateral" penalties.



Reuters' analysis of China's savings on oil purchases from the three sanctioned countries compares what Chinese importers would have paid by purchasing similar grades from non-sanctioned producers.

The lower-priced imports have been a boon by bolstering throughput and margins for the world's second-largest oil consumer and refiner, especially small independent operators known as "teapots", and facilitating lucrative exports by state-owned refiners of diesel and gasoline as the country faces economic headwinds.

China's purchases are also a revenue lifeline for Moscow, Tehran and Caracas, whose economies are otherwise curtailed by Western sanctions and a decline in investment. China shipped in a record 2.765 million barrels per day (bpd) of crude by sea from Iran, Russia and Venezuela in the first nine months of 2023, according to an average of data provided by tanker trackers Vortexa and Kpler.

The three countries accounted for a quarter of China's imports between January and September, up from about 21% in 2022 and double the 12% share in 2020, Reuters' analysis found, displacing alternatives from the Middle East, West Africa and South America.

China's Foreign Ministry did not respond to specific questions sent by Reuters. Instead, in a statement, it repeated its stance that Beijing opposes unilateral sanctions and China's normal trade deserves respect and protection.

Oxfam Warns of $220b budget cuts in emerging economies amid debt crisis

Some of the world's poorest countries face budget cuts of more than $220 billion in the next five years due to a debt crisis, according to an Oxfam International report released ahead of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) Annual Meetings on 9 October.

Oxfam's report also found that on current terms, low- and lower-middle-income countries will have to pay nearly $500 million a day in interest and debt repayments through 2029. Oxfam urged the IMF and the World Bank to create a fairer system instead of focusing on debt restructuring and spending cuts in the wake of the crisis.

"The IMF is forcing poorer countries into a starvation diet of spending cuts, driving up inequality and suffering," Oxfam International interim Executive Director Amitabh Behar said in a statement. He added that emerging economies are still being told to cut spending on public services and social programs critical to fighting poverty, reducing inequality, and realizing the rights of women and girls. "Their answer to the debt crisis is more austerity, and their answer to the financing gulf is more loans. True win-wins, like fairly taxing the rich, are being left on the table," he added.

As of March, there have been 14 separate default events since 2020 across nine different sovereigns, ratings agency Fitch said. A 5% wealth tax on fortunes worth over $5 million would help Egypt double its spending on healthcare, Jordan double its education budget, and Lebanon increase its spending on both healthcare and education seven times over, the report suggests.

Morocco alone could raise $1.2 billion when facing an $11.7 billion repair bill from the latest devastating earthquake. The country plans to spend at least $11.7 billion on post-earthquake reconstruction program over the next five years. The region's 23 billionaires have gained more wealth in the last three years than in the entire decade that preceded them.

Global hydropower generation to fall in 2023 : EIU

The Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) said its revised 2023 forecast is that global hydropower generation will decline by 1.8%, owing largely to a drought-induced dip in China. The drop in hydropower generation will raise energy security risks, leading some countries to increase fossil fuel output to fill the gap. However, EIU said it expects this decline to be temporary unless weather conditions continue to be problematic.

Dry weather conditions since 2022 will keep European hydropower generation below average in 2023, while generation in the Americas region will remain at similar levels to last year, owing to the varied effects of the El Niño phenomenon.

The downward revision of the hydropower forecasts was prompted by disappointing generation data for the first half of 2023 in several countries, EIU said. The forecast that global hydroelectricity generation will decline by an estimated 1.8% in 2023 follows an uptick in 2022 that was led by increases in Brazil, the U.S., Canada, Turkey and Vietnam. Hydroelectricity is the biggest global source of clean energy, so increasing occurrences of droughts and high temperatures-exacerbated by climate change-will raise energy security risks, prompting the need to fill the gap with fossil-fuel based power generation. Although EIU said it expects the hydropower dip in 2023 to be temporary, increasing frequency and intensity of extreme

weather events presents a major downside risk to its hydropower generation forecast, likely leading to a higher-than-expected emissions trajectory.

The 2023 decline will be led by the drop in China, where EIU expects hydropower production to decrease by 7% year on year. Dry weather conditions since the second half of 2022 have severely affected hydropower generation. Generation in the first half of 2023 was down by 22% compared to the same period in 2022.

The southwestern part of the country, which produces more than half of China's hydroelectricity in a normal year, was among the worst affected. The effects of the ongoing El Niño weather phenomenon will probably bring heavy rains in the area and across southern China, but it is unlikely to shift the full-year generation picture markedly. The country accounts for about a third of global hydropower production, so this fall will be enough to offset any gains in other parts of the world, EIU said.

The worst of El Niño's drying conditions in Asia will be felt in Vietnam, which gets about 30% of its electricity supply from hydropower plants. Ongoing droughts in hydropower-rich regions of the country are expected to reduce Vietnam's hydropower generation by about 8% in 2023.

Hot and dry weather conditions are also being experienced in much of the U.S. and Canada, pulling down their potential for hydropower generation.

Canada depends on hydropower to meet about 60% of its electricity needs, and generation in 2023 is expected to remain at similar levels to 2022.

A power deficit arising out of hydroelectricity supply may spur higher generation from gas-fired stations. In the U.S., dependence on hydropower is low, but generation in the first half of this year was down by 7% compared with the same period in 2022, owing to drier than normal conditions in key hydropower states. EIU expects hydropower generation in the U.S. to decline slightly in 2023.

South Asia worst in world for water scarcity : UN

More children in South Asia are struggling due to severe water scarcity made worse by the impacts of climate change than anywhere else worldwide, the United Nations said on 13 November. "A staggering 347 million children under 18 are exposed to high or extremely high water scarcity in South Asia, the highest number among all regions in the world," UNICEF said in a report.

The eight-nation region, comprising Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Maldives, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, is home to more than a quarter of the world's children. "Climate change is disrupting weather patterns and rainfall, leading to unpredictable water availability," UNICEF said in its report.

The report cites poor water quality, lack of water and mismanagement such as over-pumping of aquifers, while climate change decreases the amount of water replenishing them. "When village wells go dry, homes, health centers and schools are all affected," UNICEF added. "With an increasingly unpredictable climate, water scarcity is expected to become worse for children in South Asia."

"Safe water is a basic human right," said Sanjay Wijesekera, UNICEF chief for South Asia. "Yet millions of children in South Asia don't have enough to drink in a region plagued by floods, droughts and other extreme weather events, triggered increasingly by climate change."



Last year, 45 million children lacked access to basic drinking water services in South Asia, more than any other region, but UNICEF said services were expanding rapidly, with that number slated to be halved by 2030.

Behind South Asia was Eastern and Southern Africa, where 130 million children are at risk from severe water scarcity, the report added.

WTO News

G20 trade policy direction becoming more restrictive amid continued slow trade growth

Trade measures introduced by G20 economies have become more restrictive in recent months, according to the 30th WTO Trade Monitoring Report on G20 trade measures issued on 18 December. The report shows that between mid-May and mid-October 2023, G20 economies introduced more trade-restrictive than trade-facilitating measures on goods, although the value of traded merchandise covered by facilitating measures continued to exceed that covered by restrictions. Director-General Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala called on the G20 to show leadership and contribute to economic stability and growth by unwinding recent and longstanding restrictions on trade.



The report is set against a backdrop of continued slow growth in world trade. The WTO's latest forecast (5 October 2023) estimated merchandise trade volume growth of 0.8% in 2023 (down from the previous estimate of 1.7%) and 3.3% in 2024 (nearly unchanged from 3.2% previously). In the first half of 2023, the volume of world merchandise trade was down 0.5% year-on-year, as high inflation and rising interest rates weighed on trade and output in advanced economies, and as property market strains prevented a stronger post-pandemic recovery in China.

The Trade Monitoring Report indicates that although the trade coverage of import-facilitating measures still exceeded that of restrictive ones during the review period, this gap has narrowed considerably. During the review period, trade-facilitating measures were estimated at USD 318.8 billion (down from USD 691.9 billion in the last report, issued in July 2023) and trade-restrictive ones at USD 246 billion (up from USD 88 billion).

For the first time since 2015, the monthly average of 9.8 new trade restrictions introduced by G20 economies during the review period outpaced that of trade-facilitating measures (8.8). In addition, the longstanding stockpile of G20 import restrictions in force showed no sign of any meaningful roll back of existing measures. By mid-October 2023, USD 2,287 billion worth of traded goods (representing 11.8% of G20 imports) were affected by import restrictions implemented by G20 economies since 2009.

Export restrictions have become more prominent since 2020, with a series of measures introduced first in the context of COVID-19 and more recently of the war in Ukraine and the food security crisis. Although some of these export restrictions have been rolled back, as of mid-October 2023, 75 export restrictions on food, feed and fertilizers were still in place globally.

The implementation of new COVID-19 trade-related measures by G20 economies decelerated further over the past five months, with the number of new COVID-19-related support measures falling sharply. As of mid-October 2023, 82.9% of G20 COVID-19 trade restrictions had been repealed, leaving 11 export restrictions in place. The trade coverage of the pandemic-related trade restrictions still in place was estimated at USD 15.1 billion (down from USD 16.2 billion).

The review period saw a significant increase in the introduction of new general economic support measures by G20 economies. These included environmental impact reduction programmes, renewable-energy production schemes, support for energy efficiency and decarbonization and for clean- and renewable-energy projects. Other measures included various support programmes for the agricultural sector, tourism, aviation and transport.

The report also shows that the succession of crises and the uncertain economic environment continue to weigh on international investment and in particular on foreign direct investment (FDI). This sustained weakness in FDI makes

it more challenging to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This concern is amplified by the SDG investment gap in developing countries, the deficit in investment needed to help developing economies achieve the SDG targets. This has alarmingly widened from USD 2.5 trillion to about USD 4 trillion per year, leading up to 2030, according to data by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

Digital trade is key to boosting growth in developing economies

The transformative effects of digital trade on developing economies are explored in a report just published by the WTO in cooperation with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the World Bank. "Digital Trade for Development" also emphasizes the pivotal role of international cooperation in helping developing economies seize the opportunities of digital trade and tackle the related challenges.

Digital trade, encompassing all trade that is digitally ordered and/or delivered, is radically changing the global economy. One of the most striking trends in this digital era is the rapid growth of digitally delivered services, which have experienced a nearly fourfold increase in value since 2005, significantly outpacing the growth of goods and other services exports.

In 2022, digitally delivered services accounted for 54 per cent of total services exports. This surge is creating new opportunities for various players in the global market, including micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs).

While developed economies are the main exporters of digitally delivered services, developing economies, including in Africa, are increasingly exporting such services. That said, least-developed countries (LDCs) continue to experience slower growth in digitally delivered services exports.

Access to fast, affordable and reliable digital infrastructure as well as access to training in the skills necessary to utilize digital technologies are pivotal to enable economies to engage in and benefit from digital trade.



Significant progress has been made in increasing access to the internet, with about 67 per cent of the world's population - totalling approximately 5.4 billion people — currently having internet access. However, one-third of the global population, primarily in low-income and lower-middle-income economies, still remains offline.

Trade policy can contribute to building a more rapid, cost-effective and dynamic digital infrastructure. This can be achieved, for instance, by addressing high tariffs on imports of information and communications technology (ICT) equipment, restrictive import policies and limited competition in telecommunications services.

Governments play a critical role in ensuring that the regulatory and policy environment for digital trade is predictable and interoperable, and in contributing to the development of digital infrastructure and skills.

Recent WTO analysis finds that when a strong regulatory environment for digitally delivered services is put in place, the reduction in trade costs due to the effect of improved digital connectivity more than doubles in middle- and low-income economies. If economies are to harness the full benefits of digital trade, it is not only domestic efforts that are essential but also international cooperation.

International financial and technical support are necessary to build capacity in developing economies so that they can improve connectivity and skills and regulate areas relevant to digital trade. Initiatives such as the WTO-led Aid for Trade, the UNCTAD-led eTrade for all and the World Bank-led Digital Advisory and Trade Assistance (DATA) Fund are significant steps in this direction.

It is also essential to improve data collection as the availability of official statistics on digital trade is currently limited. The WTO is contributing to this effort, most recently through the launch of a new dataset on digitally delivered services. The governance of digital trade-related issues has seen progress primarily through bilateral and regional trade agreements. By the end of 2022, 116 such agreements included digital trade provisions. As yet, few LDCs are party to these agreements.

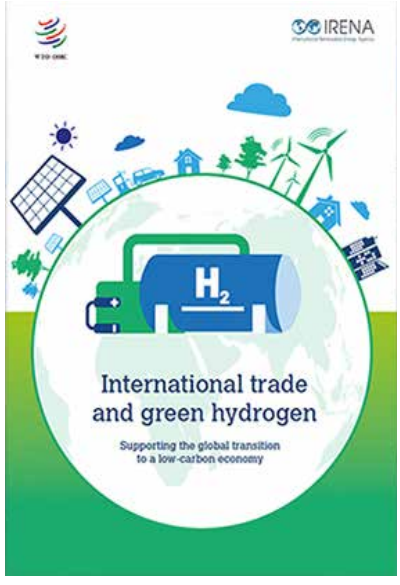
IRENA-WTO for developing green hydrogen markets

A joint report by the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) and the WTO published on 9 December provides insights into global hydrogen trade and policies for scaling up production. Hydrogen produced exclusively from renewable power — known as green hydrogen — is widely recognised as a key pillar in replacing fossil fuels and decarbonizing sectors that cannot easily be electrified, such as some industrial processes, shipping and aviation.

The transition to low-carbon energy will require a fast increase in the production of green hydrogen. IRENA estimates that hydrogen and its derivatives would meet 14% of global final energy consumption in 2050 in a scenario in which rising global temperatures resulting from emissions are limited to not more than 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels.

At present, most global hydrogen production — around 95 megatons per year — is derived from fossil fuels, contributing substantially to climate change, rather than serving as a vehicle for decarbonization.

The report stresses the urgency of transforming the hydrogen landscape, with existing uses transitioning to a clean hydrogen supply and overall hydrogen production expanding more than



five-fold by 2050. This expansion will require an unprecedented scale-up of renewable generation capacity and electrolyser capacity.

The report emphasizes that green hydrogen production expansion will require the development of new supply chains. This will have implications in terms of international trade of renewable hydrogen itself or commodities produced with it, as well as the trade of the necessary equipment and services along the value chain.

The publication highlights how lowering tariffs on key products, building reliable infrastructure, realigning domestic support programmes and developing green government procurement can foster the development of green hydrogen supply chains and the transition to a low-carbon economy. International trade could also play a significant role in matching supply and demand for green hydrogen, as the potential for domestic production in some economies might not be enough to satisfy domestic demand.

The publication also addresses the challenges and opportunities for developing economies offered by green hydrogen and its derivatives, such as green methanol and green ammonia. It underscores the importance of international cooperation and the need to align regulatory frameworks to encourage technology development, enhanced transparency and market growth.

WTO - FAO signed agreement on trade, food and climate change

The WTO and the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) agreed on 1 December to boost cooperation and collaboration on a range of issues in the area of food and agricultural trade and climate change.

The initiative comes at a time of growing crises affecting global food security and sustainable agriculture production.

WTO Director-General Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala and FAO Director-General Qu Dongyu signed a Framework Memorandum of Understanding which identifies areas of common interest between the WTO and FAO to facilitate the organizations' close cooperation in these areas. The MoU was signed at the 28th UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP28)



in Dubai which the two organization heads attended.

The MoU will consolidate existing collaboration between the WTO and FAO, creating a stable framework within which future joint initiatives can take place.

Under the MoU, the WTO and FAO will strengthen collaboration in 17 areas of common interest, including support for the WTO's ongoing negotiations on agricultural reform, the implementation of the Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies adopted at the WTO's 12th Ministerial Conference (including on projects funded through the Fisheries Funding Mechanism Trust Fund), and hosting the annual World Cotton Day celebration on 7 October of each year.

The MoU also calls for strengthened support of FAO to the WTO Committee on Agriculture (CoA) and boosting existing collaboration on sanitary and phytosanitary measures and technical barriers to trade. Both organizations will continue their active participation in the Standards and Trade Development Facility (STDF), housed at the WTO, to help developing economies increase their food safety and animal and plant health capacity and facilitate safe trade.

The two organizations will also collaborate on climate and trade initiatives, including in the context of the annual COP meetings, as well collaborating in the context of intergovernmental processes such as the Group of Seven and Group of Twenty economies.

The WTO and FAO also pledge to develop joint publications on topics of mutual interest, including the nexus between food security, agriculture, fisheries, biodiversity, climate change, nutrition and trade. In addition, they have agreed to undertake joint technical cooperation activities and support to regional trade agreements, with a focus on Africa.

The WTO and FAO already work together within the context of the UN Global Crisis Response Group on Food, Energy and Finance set up by the UN Secretary-General in the areas of food and fertilizer, and within the Agricultural Market Information System (AMIS), the market transparency mechanism set up by the G20 economies and housed in FAO.

In addition, FAO regularly reports on the current food security situation and presents its flagship publications and research findings in the CoA, where FAO has observer status. The WTO, in turn, actively participates in various FAO bodies where it has observer status, such as the Committee on Commodity Problems.

WHO, WIPO, WTO Symposium on climate change and human health

On 14 November 2023, the World Health Organization (WHO), World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) and the World Trade Organization (WTO) held the 10th Joint Technical Symposium titled "Facing the Future: Human Health and Climate Change". The event underscored the importance of exploring the intersections between public health, trade and intellectual property (IP) to leverage existing tools and develop new technologies to address the effects of climate change on human health, especially among the world's most marginalized populations.

WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WTO Director-General Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala and WIPO Director General Daren Tang opened the Symposium. They highlighted current devastating impacts of climate change on human health and the need to apply lessons learnt from the COVID-19 pandemic response for urgent cross-sectoral efforts to protect people from the escalating climate threats.

"It is urgent that we advocate with our Member States to honor and accelerate their commitments to reduce emissions and transition to clean energy," said WHO Director-General Ghebreyesus. "In the same way that we have been fighting for global equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines, we need to ensure that intellectual property and trade rules are not a barrier to accessing greener and healthier technologies. WHO will continue working closely in these fields with WIPO, WTO, the UNFCCC, other stakeholders – and most importantly our Member States – to guide innovation and trade in the service of a more sustainable and healthier future for all."



WTO Director-General Okonjo-Iweala noted that "trade is a vital

tool for disseminating green technology and driving down the cost of decarbonization." She said that "to solve problems in public health and the climate, breakthrough technologies must be incentivized, invented, developed and widely diffused. Innovation and access must go together." She also recalled that "the pandemic response offers further lessons to guide our efforts to build climate-resilient health systems and support equitable access to medical technologies needed for climate adaptation."

WIPO Director General Daren Tang stated that WIPO has been "working to make IP part of our collective journey towards building a better future for all, as we need IP to help unleash the innovation and creative potential of our peoples in the service of realizing the SDGs". He went on to explain that there is a "gap between those who have and want to offer these technologies, and those who need them. That's why we created WIPO GREEN — a free, online platform matching providers and seekers of green tech around the world." He also stressed the importance of tools like the Trilateral Technical Assistance Platform, which will now be extended beyond COVID-19.

The keynote address was delivered by Ambrosio Yobánolo del Real, Vice-Chair of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Technology Executive Committee. He reviewed current and future adverse impacts of climate change on human health, including the prevalence of climate-sensitive diseases, risks of involuntary displacement and climate-driven violent conflicts. He noted that evidence-based actions proposed at the international level will have concurrent effects of mitigating the climate crisis while improving all dimensions of individual health and well-being.

The opening remarks and keynote address were followed by three panel discussions.

In the closing remarks, Mr Clive Ondari, Director of Health Products and Standards, Access to Medicines and Health Products Division, WHO, summarized the discussions and noted that continued collaboration with Member States, as well as engagement of the private sector, civil society and indigenous communities, will be essential to address the health challenges resulting from climate change.

Exploring new pathways for LDC integration into global trade

International trade offers least-developed countries (LDCs) a tried-and-tested route towards sustainable economic growth and development. But what can be done to help LDCs expand their share of global trade?

As LDCs strive to increase their exports, they continue to face hurdles, ranging from domestic capacity constraints to commercial and policy barriers in export markets.

A new collection of essays, titled "LDCs and the multilateral trading system — Volume 2", co-published by the WTO and the Enhanced Integrated Framework (EIF), explores some of these challenges, proposes solutions and highlights ways in which LDCs could champion their own interests more impactfully.

The authors' views were discussed at an event organized in cooperation with the EIF on 3 November. The essays highlight the following recommendations:

1. Keep building momentum in agriculture negotiations at the WTO

Agriculture is a vital and growing sector for many LDCs, but at present certain trade measures impede their full integration into global markets. More efforts are required so that agriculture can deliver its potential for LDCs.

The WTO's forthcoming 13th Ministerial Conference, which is due to take place in Abu Dhabi in February 2024, offers an opportunity to advance agricultural talks and to



level the playing field for farmers in the developing world and elsewhere.

For example, one of the essays highlighted that members could agree not to impose export prohibitions or restrictions on foodstuffs imported by LDCs.

2. There should be more support for the development of services trade in LDCs

Services trade has the potential to galvanize the economic growth of LDCs. However, despite the LDC services waiver entering into force 12 years ago, LDCs' share of global services trade is currently at 0.53 per cent.

A more effective strategy might be to work with development partners to overcome domestic and external obstacles to LDCs' increased participation in global trade in services.

For example, additional Aid for Trade support could be directed at reducing the inherent supply-side constraints facing LDC service supplying firms.

In addition, the essay on services suggests that given that two-thirds of LDC services exports flow to other developing-economy or LDC markets, technical assistance could help to build greater physical or digital connectivity among LDCs and members of regional groupings and agreements, such as the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

A Trade in Services for Development publication recently issued by the WTO and the World Bank emphasizes the importance of helping to improve the services-related skills of workers in LDCs, supporting LDCs' participation in international policy discussions and addressing data gaps in services trade.

3. LDCs should engage actively in trade negotiations

LDCs' share of global trade has not increased, even though many LDCs benefit from schemes where developed economies offer preferential treatment to imports from developing economies. Trade-distorting subsidies, import restrictions and commercial policy impediments created by other economies are among the reasons for this.

The Global Trade Alert (GTA) database reveals that while over 6,600 foreign trade policy interventions compiled since November 2008, could potentially weaken LDC exporters' competitive advantage, fewer than 1,800 interventions might have created commercial opportunities for LDCs.

LDCs therefore have a strong incentive to carefully monitor these developments, and engage actively in the discussions relating to the role of subsidies in global trade.

For LDCs to better identify and act on market threats, they also need better data. Participating in the Swiss programme on Capacities for Trade Policies (C4TP) initiative — through which the GTA has started to share information on trade policy actions with LDCs — could help.

This publication and an earlier volume published in June 2023 stem from the joint effort of the EIF and WTO Secretariat to support the implementation of the Doha Programme of Action for LDCs for the decade 2022-2031. The views expressed do not necessarily reflect the positions or opinions of WTO members; they are intended to enrich debates around how LDCs can expand their participation in global trade and overcome the hurdles limiting their economic growth.

WTO issues new edition of Trade Profiles

The WTO issued on 31 October the 2023 edition of Trade Profiles, an annual publication providing key data on merchandise trade and trade in commercial services for 197 economies. Each two-page profile provides a breakdown of the economy's major exports and imports and its main trading partners.



For merchandise trade, top exports and imports are broken down by agricultural and non-agricultural categories. For trade in services, data is provided for transport, travel and other commercial services. Statistics on intellectual property, such as patent and trademark applications, are also provided.

The profiles are available for all WTO members and observers as well as for other selected economies, providing a concise overview of global trade.



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