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Enhancing Bangladesh –Thailand Economic Engagement: Challenges, Opportunities, and the Way Forward in the Future Free Trade Agreement (FTA) Hybrid Meeting process on 12th May 2026 Meeting Room G United Nations Conference Centre (UNCC), Bangkok, Thailand

Organizers :	Embassy of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, Bangkok United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP)
Co-organizers:	International Institute for Trade and Development (ITD)
Date:	12th May 2026
Time:	10.00-12.45 hrs. (Bangkok local time/ UTC+7)
Venue:	Meeting Room G, United Nations Conference Centre (UNCC), Bangkok, Thailand
Format:	Hybrid Meeting (in-person and Online via Zoom)
Language:	English
Attendances:	40 in-person

Rationale

Bangladesh and Thailand share long-standing civilizational and cultural ties; however, the bilateral economic relationship remains significantly underdeveloped relative to the potential offered by geographical proximity, market complementarities, and shared regional platforms such as BIMSTEC. Bilateral trade currently stands at around USD 1.1–1.5 billion, with Thailand accounting for the majority of exports, while Bangladesh's exports remain below USD 100 million annually.

This imbalance reflects deeper structural issues, including limited export diversification, tariff and non-tariff barriers, weak logistics connectivity, and underutilized institutional mechanisms. At the same time, recent developments present a strategic opening. Thailand's announcement to initiate Free Trade Agreement (FTA) negotiations with Bangladesh by the end of 2025 coincides with Bangladesh's impending LDC graduation in November 2026, making economic diplomacy with Thailand both urgent and strategic.

Against this backdrop, this seminar aims to create a focused policy dialogue among policymakers, business leaders, academics, and development partners on how Bangladesh and Thailand can transform their economic engagement from modest trade flows into a comprehensive, future-oriented partnership.

Objectives

1. To examine and analyze the current status, challenges, and opportunities of economic relations between the Kingdom of Thailand and the People's Republic of Bangladesh across trade in goods, trade in services, and investment, on the basis of evidence-based analysis and empirical data.

2. To promote the exchange of perspectives and knowledge among multi-stakeholder participants, including representatives from the government, private sector, and academic communities of both countries.

3. To identify concrete policy recommendations and actionable pathways for enhancing trade facilitation, services trade cooperation, investment flows, and value-chain integration between the two countries.



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4. To support the bilateral negotiation process and economic diplomacy between the Kingdom of Thailand and the People's Republic of Bangladesh going forward.

Expected Outcomes

1. Stakeholders from all sectors of both countries develop a comprehensive shared understanding of the current status, potential, and strategic importance of economic cooperation in trade in goods, trade in services, and investment between the Kingdom of Thailand and the People's Republic of Bangladesh.

2. A meaningful exchange of knowledge and diverse perspectives takes place among government, private sector, and academic representatives of both countries, contributing to the strengthening of collaborative networks that are robust and sustainable in the long term.

3. A concrete set of policy recommendations is produced, encompassing the identification of high-priority sectors for cooperation, measures to enhance trade facilitation, development of services trade cooperation, and promotion of investment flows and value-chain integration between the two countries.

4. Evidence-based insights and academic guidance are generated to inform the design of a mutually beneficial trade and investment framework, which can be effectively fed into bilateral and regional negotiation processes and economic diplomacy going forward.

Target participants

The International Seminar will bring together senior government officials from the Ministry of Commerce, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and investment promotion agencies such as the Thailand Board of Investment (BOI), representatives from the Thai Chamber of Commerce and the Federation of Thai Industries, diplomatic missions and international organizations based in Bangkok, as well as trade and investment experts, policy researchers, academics, and private sector representatives, ensuring a broad and inclusive multi-stakeholder dialogue between the two countries, 40 participants expected to attend.



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(Tentative) Agenda

Enhancing Bangladesh –Thailand Economic Engagement: Challenges, Opportunities, and the Way Forward in the Future Free Trade Agreement (FTA)

Date: Tuesday 12th May 2026
Time: 10.00-12.45 hrs. (Bangkok local time/ UTC+7)
Venue: Meeting Room G, United Nations Conference Centre (UNCC)
Language: English

Time	Program Description
	1. Welcome Remark
09.30 – 10.00 hrs.	Registration
10.00 – 10.15 hrs.	Welcome Remarks: H.E. Ms. Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana, Executive Secretary, UN ESCAP H.E. Mr. Faiyaz Murshid Kazi, Ambassador of Bangladesh to Thailand, Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to UN ESCAP Mr. Suphakit Chareonkul, Executive Director, ITD
	2. Prospects for goods and services trade between Bangladesh and Thailand
10.15-10.45 hrs.	Topic Presentation: "From Modest Trade Flows to Strategic Partnership: Prospects and Pathways for Enhancing Thailand –Bangladesh Trade in Goods and Services" Presenter: Ms. Chotima Iemsawasdikul, Director-General, Department of Trade Negotiations, Ministry of Commerce, Thailand
	Topic Presentation: “(tentative) Bangladesh - Thailand Trade in Services: Opportunities and Challenges with insights from Bangladesh’s readiness to join the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP).” Presenter: Dr. Alexey Kravchenko, Economic Affairs Officer, ESCAP TIID
	Presentation: “Bangladesh - Thailand Trade in Services: Opportunities and Challenges with insights from Bangladesh’s readiness to join the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) (tbc).” Presenter: Dr. Rupa Chanda, Director, ESCAP TIID
10.45 – 11.15 hrs.	Panel Discussion



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	<p>Key questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the current structure and composition of bilateral trade in goods and services between Bangladesh and Thailand, and what factors explain existing trade imbalances? • What are the key tariff and non-tariff barriers, including standards and regulatory requirements? • What role could PTA/FTA, including RCEP, play in enhancing competitiveness, particularly in the context of Bangladesh's post-LDC graduation? • How can improvements in connectivity, such as direct maritime links, regional transport corridors (e.g., BIMSTEC), and digital trade facilitation, help reduce trade costs and support trade expansion? • What challenges do Bangladeshi and Thai businesses face in accessing each other's markets, particularly in terms of compliance, procedures, and market entry conditions? <p>Speakers / Discussants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Expert from a think tank in Bangladesh (TBC) - The Federation of Thai Industries - H.E. Mr. Chutintorn Gongsakdi, Thailand Trade Representative (TBC) - Senior official from the Bangladesh government (TBC) - Representative from the Bangladesh Thai Chamber of Commerce & Industry (TBC) <p>Moderator: Yann Duval (Chief of TPFs, ESCAP)</p>
11.15–11.45 hrs.	Coffee Break
	2. Prospects for Investment and Business Relations between Bangladesh and Thailand
11.45–11.55 hrs.	<p>Presenter: TBC</p> <p>Presenter: An invited speaker from Bangladesh</p>
11.55–12.05 hrs.	<p>Presentation: “Bangladesh–Thailand Investment Relations: Leverage PTAs for enhancing FDI (TBC).”</p> <p>Presenter: Eiichiro Takinami, Associate Expert Officer, ESCAP TIID</p>
12.05 – 12.35 hrs.	<p>Speakers / Discussants</p> <p>Key Questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the current trends and patterns of bilateral investment flows between Thailand and Bangladesh? • What are the key regulatory, institutional, and business environment challenges affecting investment in Bangladesh? • What role can PTA/FTA agreements and policy frameworks play in attracting and facilitating FDI? • What challenges are faced by investors from both countries seeking to invest in each other's markets?



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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What incentives and measures are being undertaken by the BIDA and BOI Thailand to support foreign investors? <p>- Senior official from Thailand Board of Investment (BOI) Coordinated by UNESCAP (TBC)</p> <p>- Senior official from The Bangladesh Investment Development Authority (BIDA) Coordinated by UNESCAP (TBC)</p> <p>- Thai- Bangladesh Business Council (TBC)</p> <p>- Private sector representative (TBC)</p> <p>- The Federation of Thai Industries (TBC)</p> <p>Moderator: Bhumbhat Srihamart (Academic Officer, ITD)</p>
	3. The Way Forward & Concluding Remarks
12.35 – 12.45 hrs.	<p>Closing remarks by the high-level Government officials or by the ESCAP Director /Chief to summarize the seminar and suggest ways forward.</p> <p>By Mr. Wimon Punkong Deputy Executive Director (Academic)</p>

Disclaimer: The agenda is subject to change as appropriate.

For general information about the event, please contact:

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For registration-related matters, please contact:

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