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Sri Lanka seeks to strengthen relations with Bangladesh's private sector

Deputy Foreign Minister of Sri Lanka Arun Hemachandra has expressed his country's keenness to strengthen relations with Bangladesh's private sector.

"Strengthening relations between the private sectors of both Bangladesh and Sri Lanka would enhance bilateral trade and investment," he said during a meeting with the visiting business delegation of Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry (DCCI) at his office in Colombo on Thursday, reports BSS.

DCCI team led by its President Taskeen Ahmed paid courtesy calls on Sri Lanka's Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs and Foreign Employment Arun Hemachandra, and Deputy Minister for Finance and Planning Dr. Harshana Suriyapperuma at their respective ministries separately, says a press release.

Regarding a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with Bangladesh, Arun Hemachandra mentioned that Sri Lanka has already signed FTAs with Thailand and Singapore, and is currently analysing the potential benefits and risks of an FTA with Bangladesh. He invited Bangladeshi entrepreneurs to invest in Sri Lanka's promising sectors and assured full support from the Sri Lankan side.



A visiting Bangladesh business delegation led by DCCI President Taskeen Ahmed paid a courtesy call on Sri Lanka's Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs and Foreign Employment Arun Hemachandra at his ministry in Colombo on Thursday.

Taskeen Ahmed said that due to ongoing geopolitical shifts, global trade dynamics are changing and new opportunities are opening up across South and Southeast Asia. He noted that while Bangladesh is the world's second-largest exporter of ready-made garments, Sri Lanka is significantly ahead in areas such as technology, value addition of goods, and innovation. He highlighted that there is ample potential for bilateral trade and joint initiatives between the private sectors of both countries to expand. He also emphasised that

signing a FTA would further strengthen trade ties and people-to-people connectivity between both countries. He said that Bangladeshi firms are keen on joint collaboration with Sri Lankan business partners and hoped that Sri Lankan entrepreneurs would also consider investing in potential sectors of Bangladesh. Former DCCI President Rizwan Rahman mentioned that the economies of Bangladesh and Sri Lanka are quite similar in structure. Therefore, a Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA) may

not be so effective, and a full-fledged FTA would better accelerate bilateral trade and investment of the two countries, he added. In a separate meeting, Sri Lankan Deputy Minister for Finance Dr. Harshana Suriyapperuma said both countries have ample opportunities for joint collaboration, particularly in information technology and digital services, pharmaceuticals, tea, energy, financial services, and tourism sector. He mentioned that Sri Lanka has already formulated an ambitious digital roadmap aimed at transforming the

country into a fully digital state within the next two years, with all services automated. He added that the government is encouraging foreign investment in the establishment of state-of-the-art data centers, an area where Bangladeshi investors could be part of it. He invited Bangladeshi investors to explore opportunities in Sri Lanka's pharmaceutical sector to help meet the local demand. DCCI's Senior Vice President Razeef H Chowdhury and Vice President Md. Saleem Sulaiman were present during the meetings.



US buyers delay apparel orders over pending tariff call

TRADE POLICY & TARIFFS



Work order confirmation is being delayed as buyers await Trump decision



Trump's 90-day tariff pause is set to end on July 8



On April 2, Trump imposed a 37% additional duty on Bangladeshi goods



A 10% baseline tariff remains applicable for all countries except China



Local exporters hope for a lower tariff rate from Trump administration



The Daily Star

20 JUN 2025

EXPORT TRENDS

Garment exports to US surged **29.33%** y-o-y to **\$2.98b** in Jan-Apr

In the same period, total US garment imports stood at **\$26.22b**

In Jul-May, Bangladesh's garment exports to US rose **19.23%** to **\$7.03b**

REFAYET ULLAH MIRDHA

Local apparel makers are seeing delays in the confirmation of work orders for the next summer season, as US retailers and brands wait for the final decision on reciprocal tariffs by the US administration, expected in early July.

Western buyers usually place orders for upcoming seasons, such as summer and autumn, between June and September.

This year, US buyers are booking production slots as usual but are taking longer to confirm orders, according to manufacturers.

They say work orders from US-based retailers and brands are still slow, as buyers are in a wait-and-see mood now.

For now, exporters are busy shipping apparel for the upcoming

MAIN FOCUS NOW

Local exporters are currently focused on shipping Christmas orders, which continue through October

Christmas season. These shipments are expected to continue until the first week of October.

Like other countries, these consignments from Bangladesh will face an additional 10 percent baseline tariff imposed by the Trump administration.

In early April, US President Donald Trump announced high reciprocal tariffs on imported goods, set to take effect from April 9. But just before the date, he announced a three-month pause, pushing the deadline to July 9.

Local exporters are hoping

Washington will reconsider the proposed rates for key sourcing countries such as Bangladesh.

Faruque Hassan, managing director of Giant Group, said that under the new tariff plan, Bangladeshi products would face the highest rate after China, at 26 percent, including the additional 10 percent baseline tariff.

Hassan expressed hope that the US would not impose such a high rate, pointing out that it would be the steepest ever for Bangladeshi goods in the American market.

He said the US work orders for the next season are yet to pick up, as buyers are waiting for the final decision on the tariff.

Between January and April this year, garment exports from Bangladesh to the US, the country's largest single-nation market, rose by 29.33 percent year-on-year to \$2.98 billion, according to data from the Office of Textiles and Apparel (OTEXA).

The US imported \$26.22 billion worth of apparel during this period.

On a fiscal year basis, garment exports to the US increased by 19.23 percent to \$7.03 billion during July to May, according to the Export Promotion Bureau (EPB).

Exports have grown as US retailers and brands sourced goods globally to avoid the impact of Trump's high reciprocal tariffs.

Since the Covid-19 pandemic, the garment sector in Bangladesh has faced repeated challenges, including the Russia-Ukraine war, global inflation, conflict in Gaza, tensions between India and Pakistan, re-routing of shipments from the Suez Canal, and, recently, the Iran-Israel conflict.

Domestically, the sector has struggled with shortages of gas and electricity, labour unrest, and uncertainty during the political changeover last year.

"Despite global and local challenges, export

data shows that apparel shipments to the US are still growing," said Ramzul Seraj, managing director of Elite Garments Ltd, which exports mainly to the US.

He also said the inflow of work orders from the US is still unchanged, as it continues as it was earlier.

However, Sharif Zahir, managing director of Ananta Group, which also ships a large portion of its production to the US, said order inflow may remain slow for another three months due to buyer indecision over the Trump tariffs and wider economic and political uncertainty.

He noted that some US retailers and brands have shared part of the 10 percent additional tariff, covering up to five percent

themselves, although the duty is supposed to be paid by importers.

Some exporters said buyers have sought to divide the extra cost among the main partners, with fabric suppliers, manufacturers, and importers each sharing around three percent.

"Work orders from US-based retailers and brands are still slow as they are in a wait-and-see mood now," said Mahmud Hasan Khan Babu, president of the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA).

The BGMEA president said that there might be some uncertainty for the next season until the final decision comes about the Trump tariffs.



mango markets in the north

S DILIP ROY

With the intense summer heat ripening fruits earlier than expected, the famed variety of Haribhanga mango from Rangpur has hit the markets five days ahead of schedule.

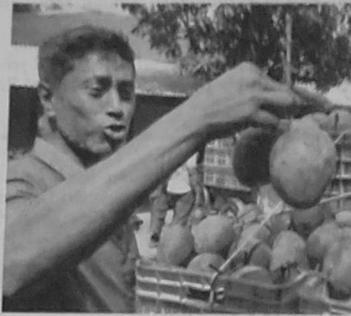
The seasonal mango trade officially began on June 15, and already over a dozen markets have sprung up across Mithapukur and Badarganj upazilas -- Padaganj being the largest among them.

From early morning till evening, the marketplaces are abuzz with activity. Mango growers are bringing their harvests directly to buyers, while traders and customers from across the region, and even other districts, are flocking to secure their share of the beloved fruit.

From permanent fruit shops to makeshift roadside stalls, Haribhanga now dominates every corner of the local fruit scene. Its popularity is not limited to Rangpur alone -- boxes are being couriered nationwide and even shipped abroad.

on 2,567 hectares of land across Rangpur, Lalmonirhat, Kurigram, Gaibandha, and Nilphamari -- an 11 hectare increase from last year.

Of this, 1,915 hectares are in Rangpur district alone, with 80 percent of production concentrated in Mithapukur and Badarganj upazilas.



per kg," he said adding, "Mango farming has made us self reliant."

Ruhul Amin, a fruit trader from Lalmonirhat, said he buys mangoes directly from farmers every day at Padaganj and nearby markets, incurring a cost of Tk 30-35 per kg, including transportation. The same mangoes are sold in retail markets at Tk 45-50.

"Buyers now ask only for Haribhanga. There's no demand for other varieties," he said. "This is our most profitable season."

Sujon Saha, a buyer from Rangpur city, shared that he bought 10 maunds (approximately 400kg) of Haribhanga mangoes from Padaganj -- keeping two maunds for his family and sending the rest to relatives in Dhaka via courier.

"I bought it at Tk 32 per kg here, while in the city's retail markets it costs around Tk 50. I'm very satisfied," he said.

DAE officials and locals said with its round to elongated shape, fibreless flesh, firm texture, and excellent shelf life, Haribhanga mango stands apart from other varieties. Thanks to its unique genetic traits, even wrinkled skins don't indicate spoilage. Its appeal is visual, nutritional, and gastronomic.

Last year, Haribhanga was granted Geographical Indication (GI) status.

Local orchard owners including Aminul Islam, Rafiqul Islam, Khurshed Alam and Moslem Uddin said they have already begun receiving export orders from Middle Eastern buyers this season.

Sirajul Islam, deputy director of the Rangpur DAE, said, "Although the official harvesting date was set for June 20, the early heat caused the mangoes to ripen faster. So, we approved harvests from June 15."

He added, "Haribhanga originated from Tekani village at Khoragachh union of Mithapukur upazila. Today, the mango is cultivated in over 80 villages across Mithapukur and Badarganj, transforming the lives of many farming families."

Data from DAE in Rangpur shows that Haribhanga mangoes are being cultivated on 2,567 hectares of land across Rangpur, Lalmonirhat, Kurigram, Gaibandha, and Nilphamari -- an 11-hectare increase from last year.

According to farmers, traders, and buyers, both supply and prices of Haribhanga mangoes are satisfactory this season.

Data from the Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE) in Rangpur shows that Haribhanga mangoes are being cultivated

The projected output for the current season stands at 39,006 tonnes, with an estimated market value exceeding Tk 140 crore.

"At least 400 tonnes of mangoes are bought and sold here every day," said Sumon Islam, a mango trader at Padaganj Bazar of Mithapukur.

"The market is now lined with temporary courier service booths through which buyers are sending mangoes to Dhaka and other districts," he shared.

He added that the market will run through July, and many wholesalers are purchasing mangoes here in bulk to distribute to smaller retail outlets across the country.

Meher Ali from Padaganj village said he has been cultivating Haribhanga on one hectare of land for the past six years, producing 14-15 tonnes annually.

"This year the fruit size is better. Despite some loss due to nor'westers, the overall quality is excellent. We are selling at Tk 27-33

