

Bangladesh in US trade crosshairs

Washington DC launches probe into excess-capacity, export incentives; exporters here unfazed

REFAYET ULLAH MIRDHA

The US has launched a fresh trade investigation into Bangladesh and more than a dozen other economies to examine whether their policies and production practices are contributing to global overcapacity that could harm American manufacturing.

The investigation was initiated on March 11 by the Office of the United States Trade Representative (USTR) under Section 301 of the Trade Act of 1974, a powerful trade enforcement tool used to challenge what Washington considers unfair foreign practices.

The exercise will determine whether the acts, policies and practices in China, the EU, India, Bangladesh, Singapore, Switzerland, Norway, Indonesia, Malaysia, Cambodia, Thailand, Korea, Vietnam, Taiwan, Mexico and Japan are "unreasonable or discriminatory and burden or restrict US commerce".

Evidence of structural excess capacity and production exists in Bangladesh, which has a goods trade surplus of \$6.15 billion with the US, the USTR said.

The bilateral surplus is led by exports in the textiles sector, with the government providing cash incentives for exports across 43 sectors, including domestic textiles and leather products.

Besides, Bangladesh's cement industry has significant excess capacity amid the industry's worst downturn in years, the USTR said.

In 2024, Bangladesh's national consumption of cement dropped to 38 million tonnes, which is less than 40 percent of total capacity, and it declined further the following year, the USTR added.

"It is not a comforting sight to see the country's name in the list for investigation," said Mahmud Hasan Khan, president of the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association.

But, the subject matters that will be investigated – such as production capacity, intellectual property rights and incentives – are unlikely to affect Bangladesh to any great extent.

For instance, Bangladesh's production is based on receiving work orders from international buyers, so excessive production is not possible.

Moreover, Bangladesh has already amended the labour law last year as per the recommendations of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and ratified three important ILO Conventions, making it the only country in South Asia to ratify all 10 fundamental ILO conventions.

The government has also already started phasing out incentives on export receipts as part of the preparations for smooth graduation from the least-developed country (LDC) bracket in November this year.

Regarding intellectual property rights, Bangladesh does not produce counterfeit goods to injure the market of other countries, so the investigation might not be a problem.

"We are prepared to face the investigation," he said, adding that such investigations were conducted earlier as well.

But, Bangladesh will have to maintain regular dialogue with the US so that the investigation process is not misunderstood or Bangladesh is not wrongly presented to the US in any way, he added.

Commerce Secretary Mahbubur Rahman said his ministry received a letter from the USTR in this regard. "We will take necessary action as per the outcomes of the investigation," he added.

It is not possible to conduct a concrete investigation and such investigations are rarely objective, said Mohammad Abdur Razzaque, also chairman of the Research and Policy Integration for Development.

For instance, Bangladeshi garment exporters send goods to the US upon receiving work orders from American retailers, brands and vendors, so excessive production is not possible, he added.

Mohammad Hatem, president of the Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers and Exporters Association, welcomed the investigation.

"We do not have any objection to conducting the investigation. We also want the business to be conducted in a transparent way," he added.



USDA cuts Bangladesh's cotton import forecast

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) has lowered its projection for Bangladesh's cotton imports, citing reduced domestic use of the key raw material for the textile industry.

The US agency said imports of cotton by Bangladesh, the world's second-largest apparel exporter, would be 79 lakh bales in the August-July period of the marketing year (MY) 2025-26, down from its projection of 80 lakh bales forecast last month.

The country will use 80 lakh bales of cotton in MY26, down from the USDA's previous estimate of 81 lakh bales for the year, according to the agency's report on world cotton markets and trade published on Monday.

The downward revision comes at a time when Bangladesh has registered a decline in garment exports. The country, which brings more than 80 percent of its annual export earnings through apparel, recorded a 3.73 percent year-on-year drop in shipments to \$25.79 billion in the July-February period of the fiscal year (FY) 2025-26.

Of that, knitwear exports fell 4.5 percent to \$14.34 billion, while woven garment shipments dropped nearly 3 percent to \$12.45 billion during the same period.

Mohiuddin Rubel, additional managing director of Denim Expert Ltd, said several interconnected factors are behind the USDA's recent downgrade of Bangladesh's cotton import and consumption projections, primarily originating from sluggish retail demand in key EU and US markets.

"As international export orders slow down, garment manufacturers have reduced their local yarn procurement, leaving domestic spinning mills burdened with an estimated Tk 12,000 crore (\$1 billion) in unsold stockpiles," he said.

Strikingly, this massive inventory buildup persists even as severe natural gas and electricity shortages have already forced

operating capacities to between 40 and 70 percent, he added.

The USDA revised the global production outlook upward by over 11 lakh bales to 1.21 crore bales, as larger crops in Brazil and China more than offset a smaller crop in Argentina.

It said global consumption is forecast to fall by more than one lakh bales to 1.18 crore bales due to reduced demand in Pakistan, Bangladesh

The Daily Star

13 MAR 2026



US launches trade probe targeting BD, 15 others

USTR to hold a hearing on May 5

FE REPORT

The United States has launched a new trade investigation into the manufacturing sectors of 16 economies, including Bangladesh, alleging that structural excess capacity and production in these countries are undermining US reindustrialisation efforts.

The probe, initiated under Section 301 of the US Trade Act of 1974, will examine whether the policies and practices of these economies unfairly burden or restrict US commerce, according to a statement issued by the Office of the United States Trade Representative (USTR) on Wednesday.

The other economies under investigation are: China, the European Union, India, Vietnam, Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Cambodia, Korea, Japan, Mexico, Singapore, Switzerland, Norway and Taiwan.

Investigation to examine alleged excess capacity, export incentives in key manufacturing sectors

United States Trade Representative Jamièson Greer announced the initiation of investigations regarding the acts, policies and practices of various economies under Section 301(b) of the Trade Act of 1974 relating to structural excess capacity and production in manufacturing sectors.

The investigations will determine whether those acts, policies and practices are unreasonable or discriminatory and whether they burden or restrict US commerce.

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Apparel exporters' raw-material costs surge 32pc, export loss looms

ME CONFLICT HITS APPAREL SUPPLY CHAIN

Product price rises dampen western buyer demand

JASIM UDDIN

Bangladesh's textile manufacturers, apparel exporters and global buyers alike feel mounting financial pressure under chain effects of the Middle East turmoil that disrupts major shipping routes and hikes freight, energy and raw material costs, industry insiders say. Initial shock is already being reported by global retailers as shipping expenses and lead times rise, while manufacturers are bracing for higher production costs due to surging prices of petroleum-based raw materials. Industry players have noted that the conflict has triggered volatility surrounding petroleum and its by-products -- key inputs for man-made

SHIPPING DISRUPTION

- Route Changes
- Ships avoiding conflict zones
- Detours via Cape of Good Hope

RAW MATERIAL PRICE SURGE

Polyester PSF Price

Before	Now
\$0.90/kg	\$1.22/kg

OTHER MATERIALS AFFECTED

Spandex, Lycra
Elastic yarn

IMPACT

- Lead time: 45-60 days
- Freight costs rising

COST IMPACT ON RMG

- Production cost pressure
- ▶ Synthetic filament prices 32% ↑
- ▶ Fabric costs ~10% ↑

GARMENT COST INCREASE

\$0.10-0.15 per piece

● Bangladesh's export competitiveness under strain

fibre (MMF) and other synthetic textile materials -- raising the cost of producing blended fabrics and MMF-based apparel. Exporters are also concerned about potential container shortages and

higher freight charges as shipping lines reroute vessels to avoid conflict-prone areas. Industry insiders warn that if geopolitical tensions persist, the combined impact of higher freight

costs, rising energy prices and costlier raw materials could weaken Bangladesh's textile-and apparel-export competitiveness.

Buyers have already begun discussions with shipping carriers to renegotiate freight costs, according to the sources.

They say polyester PSF prices have risen from around 90 cents per kilogram to about \$1.22 per kilogram on the local market, reflecting the rising cost of petroleum-based inputs.

Manufacturers also say prices of other synthetic materials such as spandex, lycra and elastic yarn have been fluctuating, adding uncertainty to production costs. Meanwhile, local textile producers have said prices of key raw materials used in textile manufacturing are also rising in line with shifts in domestic demand and supply. Talking to The Financial Express, Shofiqur Rahman, Executive Director (Marketing) of Zaber and Zubair Fabrics Ltd, said nearly half the raw materials used in blended fabrics or MMF-based garments are petroleum-derived products.

"MMF-based raw materials account for around 50 per cent of a blended fabric or MMF apparel," he said, adding that prices of filament and related synthetic fibres have already risen sharply.

According to supplier data, synthetic filament prices have increased by about 32 per cent, which could push fabric costs up by roughly 10 per cent, or about 19-20 cents per piece of garments.

He said the final cost of apparel products could rise by 10-15 cents per piece, requiring price renegotiations with buyers.

"This additional cost will have to be discussed with buyers, otherwise it may affect overall sales," he said.

He also warns that LNG-and other fuel-

import costs could increase further due to the war. Without higher energy subsidies, the situation could add to production costs for local manufacturers.

Bangladesh Textile Mills Association President Showkat Aziz Russell says rising global oil prices are also pushing up the cost of petroleum by-products.

"As primary textile producers, we will pass the additional costs on to garment manufacturers," he says, adding that the extra burden would eventually fall on end consumers.

If the war drags on in the petroleum hub, demand for MMF or blended yarn-based apparel could weaken as consumers may shift towards cotton garments, he predicts.

However, cotton prices may also rise as domino effect of freight-cost rises.

President of Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers and Exporters Association Mohammad Hatem says disruptions to key maritime routes could push global oil prices even higher and trigger a gas-supply crunch, particularly affecting liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) and liquefied natural gas (LNG) supplies.

"When production costs rise, demand tends to fall."

He notes that with the blockade of the Strait of Hormuz, as a reprisal for the US-Israel war on Iran, many vessels may be forced to take a lengthy detour via the Cape of Good Hope.

This would add thousands of kilometres to voyages, extending lead times and increasing freight costs in a double blow.

"The higher costs will also affect product prices and market demand," he adds.

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Adoption of 'product traceability strategy' to ease EU market access

FE REPORT

Bangladesh must develop a national product traceability strategy to ensure sustainable production and maintain smooth access to the European Union (EU) market, speakers at a policy discussion said on Thursday.

They warned that failure to prepare for the EU's emerging sustainability regulations could jeopardise a significant portion of the country's export earnings, as global trade standards increasingly demand verifiable environmental and labour compliance.

The call came at the first meeting of the Policy Coordination Unit (PCU) at the Ministry of Commerce, where participants reviewed a study on Bangladesh's readiness to comply with the EU's Ecodesign for Sustainable Products Regulation (ESPR) and discussed the development of a national strategy on product traceability.

The meeting was organised by the Ministry of Commerce in collaboration with the German development agency Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) under the STILE-II project.

It reviewed the findings of a 'Gap Analysis and Needs Assessment' conducted by Business Initiative Leading Development (BUILD). Chaired by Additional Secretary (Export) Md Abdur Rahim Khan, the meeting recommended forming a task team to engage in dialogue with key export-oriented sectors and assess their preparedness for the upcoming EU regulatory requirements.

Presenting a keynote titled "ESPR: A Structural Shift in Market Access Architecture," BUILD Research Director Dr Wasel Bin Shadat said the ESPR marks a major shift in market access rules, moving from voluntary environmental standards to legally binding sustainability requirements for nearly all physical goods entering the EU market.

He warned that failure to prepare could put between US\$0.36 billion and US\$1.20 billion of Bangladesh's annual export earnings at risk. A central component of the regulation is the Digital Product Passport (DPP), which will require detailed, machine-readable data on a product's carbon

Compliance with new EU sustainability rules is vital to safeguard export access

Failure to prepare could put between US\$0.36 billion and US\$1.20 billion of Bangladesh's annual export earnings at risk

footprint, materials and production processes to be available at the border.

The BUILD study identified 62 readiness gaps across six compliance domains, including 15 critical Tier-1 gaps requiring immediate national intervention to prevent potential export losses.

It also proposed developing a federated architecture for a national traceability platform.

Mr Khan noted that compliance with the ESPR would be mandatory for continued access to the EU market, while the Digital Product Passport would serve as a key tool for meeting these regulatory requirements.

He stressed that the private sector must start preparing immediately.

BUILD Chief Executive Officer Ferdaus Ara Begum highlighted the broader implications of emerging EU sustainability regulations, saying that businesses must develop a deeper understanding of these evolving compliance frameworks.

She suggested that the Registered Exporter (REX) system, currently managed by the Export Promotion Bureau, could serve as a foundation for building a national traceability platform.

Representing the apparel sector, Vidiya Amrit Khan, Vice-President of the Bangladesh Garment

Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA), said the EU market is increasingly demanding verifiable proof of responsible and sustainable sourcing.

She explained that the ESPR aims to ensure that production processes are free from child labour, unfair labour practices and environmental degradation, adding that compliance would be mandatory and non-negotiable. BGMEA, she said, has already begun working with factory owners to prepare for the new requirements.

From a financial perspective, Md Towhidul Islam, Additional Director of the Sustainable Finance Department at Bangladesh Bank, informed the meeting that a Tk 2,500 crore fund is available to support industries in adopting green and compliant production practices.

Michael Klode, project head of GIZ's STILE-II initiative, clarified that the current collaboration does not involve building the Digital Product Passport itself.

Instead, the focus is on developing a national strategy for product traceability to guide industries in meeting DPP and traceability standards.

Highlighting challenges in the leather sector, Maj Rafiqul Islam, Secretary General of the Leather Goods and Footwear Manufacturers and Exporters Association of Bangladesh (LFMEAB), said many industry members remain unfamiliar with ESPR requirements and called for awareness-raising initiatives.

He also suggested exploring the possibility of greater flexibility in the implementation timeline, while acknowledging the need for early preparation.

A B M Fakhru Alam, Group Sustainability Lead at Urmi Group, warned that delaying the adoption of traceability systems could create significant compliance burdens in the near future.

He urged the swift development of a simplified national traceability platform to help manufacturers manage required data more efficiently.

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US probes Bangladesh's export incentives, BGMEA 'uncomfortable'

TRADE - BANGLADESH

TBS REPORT

The Office of the United States Trade Representative (USTR) has opened investigations into the manufacturing sectors of 16 economies, including Bangladesh, over concerns of structural excess capacity and production under Section 301 of the Trade Act of 1974.

According to a Federal Register notice, Bangladesh faces scrutiny over government-provided cash incentives for export sectors, which the USTR says have contributed to a \$6.15 billion bilateral goods trade surplus with the United States.

Bangladesh ships more than \$8 billion worth of goods to the US each year, with ready-made garments making up the bulk of exports. The government offers cash incentives across 43 sectors, including textiles and leather products.

The notice also singled out Bangladesh's cement industry, claiming it is operating well below its production capacity. In 2024, national cement consumption fell to 38 million tonnes, less than 40% of production capacity, and is expected to decline further in 2025.

US Trade Representative Jamieson Greer said the investigation will examine whether the policies of these economies are "unreasonable or discriminatory" and whether they burden or restrict US commerce. "The United States will no longer sacrifice its industrial base to other countries exporting their problems with excess capacity," Greer added.

Other economies under review include China, the European Union, India, Vietnam, Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Cambodia, South Korea, Japan, Mexico, Singapore, Switzerland, Norway, and Taiwan.

Mahmud Hasan Khan, president of the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA), described Bangladesh's inclusion in the investigation as "uncomfortable" and "without logical basis".

"If such allegations are proven, they may impose additional tariffs," he said. "Export incentives in Bangladesh are minimal," Mahmud said, adding that while questions might arise about agricultural subsidies, the US itself heavily subsidises its farmers, whereas Bangladesh primarily subsidises fertilisers.

Mostafa Abid Khan, former member of the Bangladesh Trade and Tariff Commission, told The Business Standard, "The incentives fall within the WTO policy. I do not think the level of support encourages overcapacity, though production levels may be questioned."

The USTR has requested consultations with Bangladesh and other countries under review. A public comment docket opens on 17 March with a hearing sched



Trade deficit hits \$13.8b as export growth stalls and imports climb

TRADE - BANGLADESH

ASM SAAD

The country's trade deficit widened in the first seven months of the current fiscal year as exports declined while imports continued to rise, according to the latest balance of payments data released by the central bank.

Figures published by the Bangladesh Bank yesterday show that the trade deficit reached \$13.80 billion during July-January of the fiscal 2025-26, up from \$11.75 billion in the same period a year earlier – an increase of more than \$2 billion.

However, the data does not yet reflect the impact of the US-Israel conflict with Iran, which began on 28 February.

Exports from Bangladesh declined during the first seven months of the fiscal year. Export earnings stood at \$26.09 billion in July-January, compared with \$26.37 billion in the same period of the previous fiscal year.

At the same time, imports increased to \$39.89 billion, up from \$38.11 billion a year earlier.

Zahid Hussain, former lead economist of the World Bank Dhaka office, told The Business Standard that the shift in trade flows was the main factor behind the rising deficit. "Trade deficit increased mainly due to higher imports and lower exports," he said.

Remittances help narrow current account deficit

Despite the widening trade deficit, the country's current account deficit narrowed significantly during the same period.

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In the first seven months of FY26, the current account recorded a deficit of \$381 million, compared with a deficit of \$1.35 billion in the same period of the previous fiscal year.

Economists say the improvement is mainly the result of higher remittance inflows.

Bangladesh Bank data shows that remittances reached \$19.43 billion during July-January, up from \$15.96 billion in the corresponding period last year.

"Despite the rise in the trade deficit, strong remittance inflows helped reduce the current account deficit," Zahid Hussain said.

The current account is one of the key components of a country's balance of payments, covering net trade in goods and services, income from abroad, and current transfers such as remittances.

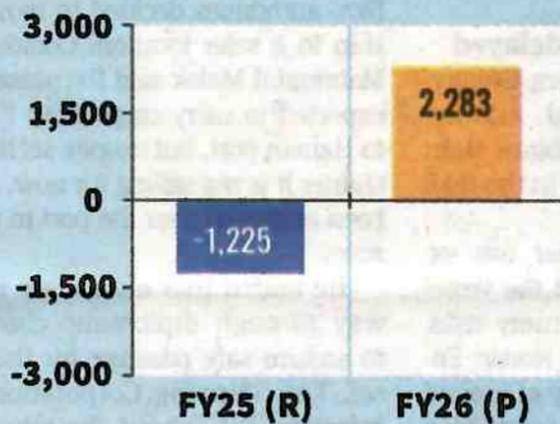
Analysts note that strong remittance inflows often help cushion the current ac-

BANGLADESH'S EXTERNAL POSITION (JUL-JAN)

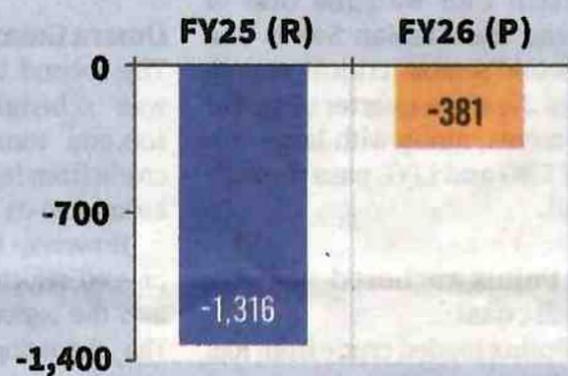
Figures in million USD



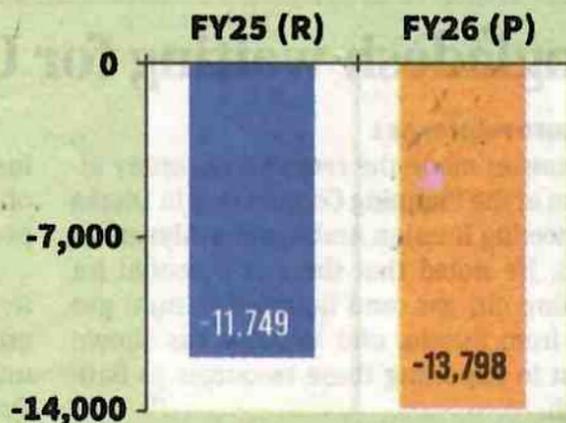
Overall balance of payments remain positive



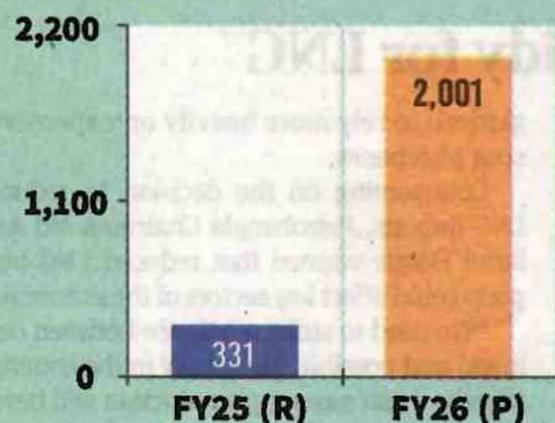
Current account deficit narrows



Trade deficit rises



Financial account in surplus



R:Revised, P:Provisional; Source:Bangladesh Bank

Financial account records surplus

Bangladesh also recorded a \$2 billion surplus in the financial account during the first seven months of FY26, a sharp increase from \$331 million in the same period of the previous fiscal year.

Economists attribute this improvement largely to a turnaround in trade credit and an increase in net foreign aid inflows.

On this, economist Zahid said, "Financial account surplus has risen despite a large decline in MLT loan disbursements, thanks to a major turnaround in trade credit."

Bangladesh Bank data shows that trade credit posted a surplus of \$1.05 billion during July-January, compared with a deficit of \$1.29 billion in the same period of the previous fiscal year.

Overall balance improves

The country's overall balance of payments

payments surplus of \$2.28 billion in the first seven months of FY26, compared with a deficit of \$1.22 billion in the same period last year.

"The first seven months show comfort in the overall balance of payments. Thanks to strong remittances, current account deficit declined noticeably relative to the same period last year despite a decline in exports and a pick-up in imports," Zahid said.

However, the ongoing Iran-Israel war could begin to affect Bangladesh's external sector in the coming months.

The exchange rate has already shown signs of pressure. Within a week, the dollar rose by more than Tk0.70, reaching around Tk123, up from Tk122.30 the previous week.

"The BoP situation may deteriorate going forward as the impact of the ongoing war starts showing from March onwards," Zahid said. "This will challenge exchange rate man-

বাংলাদেশের বিরুদ্ধে বাণিজ্য তদন্তে নেমেছে যুক্তরাষ্ট্র

সমকাল প্রতিবেদক

দেশভেদে ভিন্ন হারে উচ্চ আমদানি শুল্ক আরোপ সর্বোচ্চ আদালতে বাতিল হওয়ায় অন্য কোনো পন্থা খুঁজছিল যুক্তরাষ্ট্রের ট্রাম্প প্রশাসন। এরই অংশ হিসেবে এবার বাংলাদেশসহ ১৫ দেশ এবং ইউরোপীয় ইউনিয়ন উৎপাদন খাতে অতিরিক্ত সক্ষমতা তৈরি করে যুক্তরাষ্ট্রের বাণিজ্যকে ক্ষতিগ্রস্ত করেছে কিনা— তা নিয়ে তদন্ত শুরুর ঘোষণা দিয়েছে দেশটির বাণিজ্য প্রতিনিধির দপ্তর ইউএসটিআর। গত বুধবার ইউএসটিআর এ ঘোষণা দেয়। এসব দেশের আইন, নীতি এবং চর্চা যুক্তরাষ্ট্রের বাণিজ্যের জন্য অযৌক্তিক, বৈষম্যমূলক বা প্রতিবন্ধকতামূলক কিনা— তা বের করা তদন্তের উদ্দেশ্য।

যুক্তরাষ্ট্রের ১৯৭৪ সালের বাণিজ্য আইনের ৩০১ ধারায় এ তদন্ত শুরুর ঘোষণা দিয়েছে ইউএসটিআর। বাংলাদেশ ছাড়া এ তালিকায় রয়েছে চীন, সিঙ্গাপুর, সুইজারল্যান্ড, নরওয়ে, ইন্দোনেশিয়া, মালয়েশিয়া, কম্বোডিয়া, থাইল্যান্ড,

বাংলাদেশের নাম আসা যৌক্তিক নয়। তবে বিষয়টি গুরুত্বের সঙ্গে মোকাবিলার জন্য প্রস্তুত থাকা প্রয়োজন

মাহমুদ হাসান খান
সভাপতি, বিজিএমইএ

কোরিয়া, ভিয়েতনাম, তাইওয়ান, মেক্সিকো, জাপান এবং ভারত। ইউরোপীয় ইউনিয়নের দেশগুলোও এর আওতায় থাকবে। 'রেসিপ্রোকাল ট্যারিফ' বা পাল্টা পারস্পরিক শুল্ক আরোপের পর সমঝোতার মাধ্যমে তা কমাতে এসব দেশ যুক্তরাষ্ট্রের সঙ্গে বাণিজ্যচুক্তি স্বাক্ষর বা চূড়ান্ত করেছিল।

বাংলাদেশ গত ৯ ফেব্রুয়ারি যুক্তরাষ্ট্রের সঙ্গে

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[এখন পৃষ্ঠার পর]

বাণিজ্যচুক্তি করে। চুক্তিটি এখনও কার্যকর হয়নি। চুক্তিতে বাংলাদেশের পণ্য যুক্তরাষ্ট্রে রপ্তানিতে বাড়তি ১৯ শতাংশ শুল্ক আরোপের ঘোষণা রয়েছে। গত বছরের এপ্রিল মাসে ট্রাম্প ঘোষিত পাল্টা শুল্কহার ছিল ৩৭ শতাংশ। বাংলাদেশ সে দেশ থেকে পণ্য আমদানি বাড়ানোর নানা পদক্ষেপ নিলে ট্রাম্প প্রশাসন তা কমিয়ে ২০ শতাংশ করেছিল। তবে অর্থনীতিবিদরা বাণিজ্য চুক্তিটিতে যুক্তরাষ্ট্রকে বেশি সুবিধা দেওয়া হয়েছে বলে মত দিচ্ছেন। তারা বলেন, চুক্তির কিছু ধারা অন্য দেশের সঙ্গে বাণিজ্যকে সীমিত করে।

পাল্টা শুল্ক আরোপ-সংক্রান্ত আদেশ যুক্তরাষ্ট্রের সুপ্রিম কোর্ট অবৈধ ও বাতিল ঘোষণার পর কোনো দেশই এখন নিজে থেকে চুক্তি কার্যকর করার পদক্ষেপ নিচ্ছে না। এতে ক্ষিপ্ত হয়ে ট্রাম্প প্রশাসন এমন তদন্তের পদক্ষেপ নিয়ে থাকতে পারে বলে বিভিন্ন আন্তর্জাতিক গণমাধ্যমের খবরে বলা হয়েছে।

তদন্তের আওতায় ট্রাম্প প্রশাসন খতিয়ে দেখবে, এসব দেশ তাদের উৎপাদন সক্ষমতা বাড়াতে রাষ্ট্রীয়ভাবে এমন কোনো সহায়তা দিচ্ছে কিনা, যার কারণে যুক্তরাষ্ট্রের পণ্য টুকতে সমস্যা হচ্ছে। বিশেষত কোনো দেশে যদি নিজ দেশের শিল্পের জন্য ভর্তুকি, বর সুবিধা বা নীতি সহায়তা দিয়ে অভ্যন্তরীণ চাহিদার তুলনায় বেশি উৎপাদন করার কারণে পণ্যের মূল্য যৌক্তিক মূল্যের থেকে কম থাকে, তাহলে যুক্তরাষ্ট্র অন্যান্য বাণিজ্য চর্চা মনে করবে এবং সে দেশের ওপর বাড়তি শুল্ক আরোপ করবে।

বাংলাদেশ সরকারের দায়িত্বশীল উচ্চপদস্থ কর্মকর্তা এবং বেসরকারি খাতের প্রতিনিধিরা বলেছেন, এ ধরনের তদন্তের আওতায় বাংলাদেশের নাম থাকার কথা নয়। বাংলাদেশ এলডিসিভুক্ত দেশ। স্বল্পোন্নত দেশ হিসেবে সরকার বিভিন্ন খাতে ভর্তুকি ও নীতি সহায়তা দিতে পারে। তাছাড়া এসব কারণে যুক্তরাষ্ট্রের সঙ্গে বাণিজ্য কোনোভাবে বাধাগ্রস্ত হচ্ছে না।

যুক্তরাষ্ট্রের বাণিজ্য প্রতিনিধি জেমিনস গ্রিয়ার বলেছেন, যুক্তরাষ্ট্রের সঙ্গে বাণিজ্যে যেসব দেশের বড় বাণিজ্য উদ্বৃত্ত রয়েছে অথবা যেখানে চাহিদা ও উৎপাদন সক্ষমতার ভারসাম্য নিয়ে প্রশ্ন আছে মর্মে প্রমাণ পাওয়া গেছে, সেসব দেশই মূলত তদন্তের আওতায় এসেছে।

তিনি সাংবাদিকদের বলেন, অন্যান্য বাণিজ্য চর্চার

অভিযোগে শুরু হওয়া তদন্তের ফলে আগামী গ্রীষ্মের মধ্যেই কিছু দেশের ওপর নতুন শুল্ক আরোপ করা হতে পারে। সম্ভাব্য শুল্কের মুখে পড়তে পারে চীন, ইউরোপীয় ইউনিয়ন, ভারত, জাপান, দক্ষিণ কোরিয়া এবং মেক্সিকো।

বাংলাদেশের অবস্থান

যুক্তরাষ্ট্রের এ পদক্ষেপ নিয়ে আপাতত উদ্বেগের কোনো কারণ নেই বলে মন্তব্য করেছেন বাণিজ্য সচিব মাহবুবুর রহমান। তিনি সমকালকে বলেন, যুক্তরাষ্ট্র যদি মনে করে কোনো দেশে উৎপাদন খাতে অতিরিক্ত সক্ষমতা তৈরি করা হচ্ছে বা ভর্তুকি দিয়ে উৎপাদন টিকিয়ে রাখা হচ্ছে, সে বিষয়ে তারা তদন্ত করতে পারে। এলডিসি হওয়ায় বাংলাদেশ বিশ্ববাণিজ্য সংস্থার নিয়ম অনুযায়ী রপ্তানিতে ভর্তুকি দিতে পারে। তাই তদন্তে বাংলাদেশের সমস্যায় পড়ার আশঙ্কা নেই।

বাণিজ্য সচিব আরও বলেন, তদন্ত শুরু হলেও এতে বাংলাদেশের জন্য কোনো ঝুঁকি দেখছেন না। ভবিষ্যতে যুক্তরাষ্ট্র আনুষ্ঠানিকভাবে কোনো প্রশ্ন বা তথ্য চাইলে সে অনুযায়ী ব্যবস্থা নেওয়া হবে।

সম্প্রতি স্বাক্ষরিত বাংলাদেশ যুক্তরাষ্ট্রের সঙ্গে 'অ্যাগ্রিমেন্ট অন রেসিপ্রোকাল ট্রেড' শীর্ষক বাণিজ্যচুক্তির বর্তমান অবস্থান বিষয়ে জানতে চাইলে তিনি বলেন, চুক্তি-সংক্রান্ত নোটিফিকেশন বিষয়ে এখনও যুক্তরাষ্ট্রের পক্ষ থেকে কোনো আপডেট পাওয়া যায়নি। তারা আনুষ্ঠানিকভাবে কিছু জানালে তখন বিষয়টি বিবেচনা করা হবে।

উৎপাদন খাতে অতিরিক্ত সক্ষমতা ও অতিরিক্ত উৎপাদন-সংক্রান্ত তদন্তে বাংলাদেশের নাম থাকা কিছুটা অস্বস্তিকর বলে মনে করছেন পোশাকশিল্পের উদ্যোক্তারা। পোশাকশিল্পের মালিকদের সংগঠন বিজিএমইএর সভাপতি মাহমুদ হাসান খান সমকালকে বলেন, যুক্তরাষ্ট্রের তদন্তে অন্য ১৫ দেশের সঙ্গে বাংলাদেশের নাম আসা যৌক্তিক নয়। এটি অস্বস্তিকর। তবে যুক্তরাষ্ট্র যেহেতু তদন্ত শুরু করেছে, সে ক্ষেত্রে বিষয়টি গুরুত্বের সঙ্গে মোকাবিলার জন্য প্রস্তুত থাকা প্রয়োজন।

তিনি বলেন, যুক্তরাষ্ট্র যে ধরনের অভিযোগের ভিত্তিতে তদন্ত করছে, যেমন ভর্তুকি দিয়ে অতিরিক্ত উৎপাদন ধরে রাখা বা বৈশ্বিক বাজারে ডাম্পিংয়ের মতো চর্চা— বাংলাদেশের ক্ষেত্রে তেমন পরিস্থিতি নেই।