

যুক্তরাষ্ট্রের সঙ্গে বাণিজ্য চুক্তি সংশোধনের সুযোগ আছে



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বাংলাদেশ ও যুক্তরাষ্ট্রের মধ্যে স্বাক্ষরিত পারস্পরিক বাণিজ্য চুক্তি অপরিবর্তনীয় নয়। প্রয়োজনে এতে সংশোধন, সংযোজন বা বিয়োজনের সুযোগ রয়েছে বলে মন্তব্য করেছেন বাণিজ্যমন্ত্রী খন্দকার আবদুল মুক্তাদির। অবশ্য তিনি বলেছেন, চুক্তিতে এমন কিছু উপাদান রয়েছে, যা ভবিষ্যতে দুই দেশের বাণিজ্যিক সম্পর্ক আরও জোরদার করতে সহায়ক হতে পারে।

গতকাল বুধবার সচিবালয়ে সফররত যুক্তরাষ্ট্রের দক্ষিণ ও মধ্য এশিয়াবিষয়ক সহকারী পররাষ্ট্রমন্ত্রী পল কাপুরের সঙ্গে বৈঠক করেন বাণিজ্যমন্ত্রী। বৈঠক শেষে তিনি সাংবাদিকদের সঙ্গে কথা বলেন, যেখানে যুক্তরাষ্ট্রের সঙ্গে বাণিজ্য চুক্তির ওপর একাধিক প্রশ্ন ছিল। গত ৯ ফেব্রুয়ারি বাংলাদেশ ও যুক্তরাষ্ট্রের মধ্যে একটি বাণিজ্য চুক্তি স্বাক্ষরিত হয়।

বাণিজ্যমন্ত্রী সাংবাদিকদের জানান, বৈঠকে দুই দেশের মধ্যকার বিদ্যমান বাণিজ্য সম্পর্ক আরও জোরদার করা এবং নতুন খাতে বিনিয়োগের সম্ভাবনা, ডিজিটাল অবকাঠামো উন্নয়নসহ বাণিজ্যের নানা গুরুত্বপূর্ণ বিষয়ে আলোচনা হয়েছে। এক প্রশ্নের জবাবে তিনি বলেন, বাণিজ্য চুক্তি নিয়ে নতুন কোনো আলোচনা হয়নি। চুক্তি ইতোমধ্যে স্বাক্ষরিত হয়েছে

এবং এটি দুই দেশের মধ্যে একটি রাষ্ট্রীয় চুক্তি, যা কার্যকর করার কিছু প্রক্রিয়া রয়েছে। নতুন করে সিদ্ধান্ত নেওয়ার বিষয় নেই।

চুক্তি নিয়ে নানা ধরনের সমালোচনা হচ্ছে এবং এটি বাংলাদেশের স্বার্থের বিরুদ্ধে কিনা—এমন প্রশ্নের জবাবে খন্দকার আবদুল মুক্তাদির বলেন, যেকোনো আন্তর্জাতিক চুক্তিতে দুই পক্ষেরই কিছু দাবি থাকে। কিছু ধারা এক পক্ষের অনুকূলে থাকে, আবার কিছু ধারা অন্য পক্ষের জন্য সুবিধাজনক হয়। চুক্তিটিকে এখনই পুরোপুরি ইতিবাচক বা নেতিবাচক হিসেবে দেখার সুযোগ নেই। সরকার চুক্তিটি পর্যালোচনা করছে এবং এখন পর্যন্ত দেশের জন্য ক্ষতিকর এমন কিছু প্রতীয়মান হয়নি। প্রতিটি চুক্তিতেই পরিবর্তনের সুযোগ থাকে। এ চুক্তিতেও যদি কোনো সংশোধন, সংযোজন বা বিয়োজনের প্রয়োজন হয়, সে সুযোগ রয়েছে। তাই চুক্তি নিয়ে অতিরিক্ত উদ্বেগ হওয়ার প্রয়োজন নেই।

তিনি আরও জানান, যুক্তরাষ্ট্রের উচ্চ আদালতের ট্যারিফসংক্রান্ত রায়ের পরিপ্রেক্ষিতে পরিস্থিতি পর্যবেক্ষণ করা হচ্ছে এবং বিষয়টি এখনও বিকাশমান।

সাংবাদিকদের আরেক প্রশ্নের জবাবে তিনি বলেন, নতুন প্রধানমন্ত্রীকে মার্কিন প্রেসিডেন্টের পাঠানো অভিনন্দন বার্তায় বাণিজ্য ও সামরিক বিষয়সংক্রান্ত কিছু প্রসঙ্গ উল্লেখ থাকলেও, বৈঠকে তা নিয়ে কোনো আলোচনা হয়নি। সামরিক বিষয় বাণিজ্য মন্ত্রণালয়ের আওতাভুক্ত নয়। ভিসা বন্ড প্রসঙ্গে খন্দকার আবদুল মুক্তাদির জানান, বিষয়টি পররাষ্ট্র মন্ত্রণালয় দেখবে। সরকার চায়, দুই দেশের ব্যবসায়ী ও বিনিয়োগকারীরা যেন সহজে যাতায়াত করতে পারেন এবং কোনো ধরনের বাধার সম্মুখীন না হন। নতুন সরকারের সঙ্গে কাজ চালিয়ে যাওয়ার বিষয়ে যুক্তরাষ্ট্রের পক্ষ থেকে ইতিবাচক আশ্বাস পাওয়া গেছে।

বাণিজ্য মন্ত্রণালয়ের পক্ষ থেকে বলা হয়, গ্যাস সংকটে সার কারখানাগুলো সারা বছর চালু রাখা যায় না। এলএনজিতে যুক্তরাষ্ট্রের বিনিয়োগকারীদের বিনিয়োগের আহ্বান জানানো হয়।



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Export vulnerability demands immediate attention

cymakers should consider the matter with due seriousness and adopt policies to strengthen the market with favorable gains.

Kawaik Azad Pronoy
A Banker

The export trend in the US market for Bangladesh is now facing vulnerability due to the recent legal developments in the United States regarding the reciprocal tariff issue. Following the Supreme Court ruling on earlier tariff measures, the USA has restructured its reciprocal tariff framework, under which a 19 per cent tariff rate has been set for Bangladesh under the Agreement on Reciprocal Trade (ART). This parity is a positive factor for Bangladesh, as it ensures a stable and predictable tariff regime in the USA market.

However, since similar tariff rates are being applied to several peer competitor countries, Bangladesh's relative competitive advantage may not be significantly higher; therefore, the overall export outlook remains sensitive to further policy shifts.

US buyers are now demanding a 2 per cent cut in the ongoing prices, which is contributing to a declining profit margin trend for Bangladeshi exporters. As a result, some orders may even result in opportunity losses under the present circumstances.

This situation does not indicate a favourable trajectory for the country's export future. Besides, the RMG sector will have to incur significant expenditure during the upcoming two Eids for the payment of overtime wages and bonuses.

The USA is the second-largest market for Bangladesh, with approximately USD 8 billion in annual exports. So, it is highly necessary to review the pact with the USA, urging favorable conditions for Bangladesh, since after the ruling by the Court, the parity has been weakened, providing extra privileges to Bangladesh. Else, the reciprocal tariff for Bangladesh should be significantly reduced immediately.

Besides, exploring alternative markets and ensuring export diversification are mandatory to uplift export figures in the future. Many RMG factories are struggling with the burden of bank borrowing, and many are surviving only with policy support. In this situation, poli-



Declining export and future outlook

That Export Promotion Bureau data paint a grim picture of the country's export performance is a stark reminder of both external and internal disorders. This is no welcome news that overall export has declined for the past seven months. Last August, export recorded a year-on-year fall of 2.93 per cent. From then on there was an accelerated drop in revenue income from export of goods from this country until the decline peaked at 14.25 per cent in December. January was an exception when the negative growth stayed at 0.50 per cent only to surge in last month to 12.03 per cent. Against such declining overall exports, readymade garments (RMG) fetched US\$ 2.81 billion last month marking a 13.21 per cent year-on-year decline compared to February, 2025. This is because a few other sectors registered augmented exports. Now that the Iran war gives an indication of not ending soon, the scenario looks grimmer than ever before. This brings to an age-old saying, 'misfortune seldom comes alone'. It appears to be true not only for Bangladesh but also for the majority of nations inhabiting this planet. Following the Covid-19 pandemic, a series of reversals such as the Russia-Ukraine war and protracted conflicts in east and north east Africa as well as in the Middle East and East Asia has not helped the cause of an economic turnaround for most of the countries. Political turmoil with its negative ripple effects on countries free from war made the matter worse all across the continents. Suffering internal turbulence with huge amounts of money

Many of the export goods are more essential than apparel and are unlikely to experience low demands even in time of a war

swindled from banks and other sources out of the country, Bangladesh has yet to recover from the loss of laundered money. Marked by political uncertainties and economic sluggishness, the past one and a half years ---also a period of preparation for a general

election---were devoted to maintain some stability. In such an environment, investment is hard to come by. Without investment and job creation, the country cannot make a big stride on its way to economic recovery. But now that the supply route of fuel ---gas and oil---is closed, the scarcity of energy will slow down or even halt production in the manufacturing and industrial sectors. If the drop in work order for RMG fell over the uncertainty of election and disruption at the Chittagong Port, gas and oil shortage can simply spell disasters for the country's apparel sector. Much will depend on the Iran war's protraction or a quick end.

Amid the bleak scene, the good news is that sectors and industries like leather, pharmaceutical, jute, home textiles, light engineering and frozen fish have recorded higher export income during the period under scrutiny. This further indicates that all these productive sectors have huge potential for diversification of the country's export basket and reduce its dependence on RMG. Many of these export goods are more essential than apparel and are unlikely to experience low demands even in time of a war. For example, pharmaceutical products may even enjoy a greater demand in time of a bloody war. Emphasis on rapid growth of such industries with high potential is overdue. The new government should pay attention to realise their potential on a priority basis.



Removing non-tariff barriers could boost US investment

Says Commerce Minister Muktadir

FE REPORT

Commerce, Industry, and Textiles & Jute Minister Khandakar Abdul Muktadir has said that eliminating selected non-tariff barriers could significantly boost US investment in Bangladesh, enhancing the country's appeal as a foreign investment destination.

He made the remarks while briefing reporters after a meeting with US Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs S Paul Kapur in his office at Bangladesh Secretariat on Wednesday.

The meeting focused on strengthening bilateral trade ties, expanding investment into new sectors, improving digital infrastructure, and deepening overall trade and investment cooperation between the two countries.

The minister noted that certain procedural and policy-related bottlenecks continued to affect the investment climate.

"If we can reduce unnecessary complexities and remove non-tariff barriers, US investment in Bangladesh will grow further," he said.

He added that addressing these issues would also facilitate Bangladesh's greater access to US development assistance and financing programmes.

Responding to a question about the recent Bangladesh-US trade agreement, the minister clarified that the issue was not discussed separately during the meeting.

The agreement had already been signed at the state level and was currently in force, leaving no scope for fresh decisions at this stage, he said.

Asked whether the agreement ran counter to Bangladesh's interests, he said international agreements typically involved mutual concessions.

"Some provisions favour one side, while others benefit the other. The goal is to always reach a win-win outcome through negotiations," he said.

Although a congratulatory message from the US president referenced trade and military cooperation, no military matters were discussed at the meeting.

"Military issues do not fall under the Ministry of Commerce," the minister said.

Regarding the US Supreme Court's recent ruling on tariffs, he said the government was closely monitoring developments as the situation remained evolving.

On the possibility of amendments, he said no agreement was final and there was always scope for review and renegotiation if circumstances required.

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US to raise global tariff rate to 15% this week: Bessent

TRADE - WASHINGTON

REUTERS

Rates likely to be back to their prior levels within five months

US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent said yesterday that an increase in President Donald Trump's new temporary global import tariff to 15% from 10% is likely to be implemented sometime this week.

The new tariff rate was announced by Trump in late February after the Supreme Court struck down his previous global tariffs under a national emergencies law. He initially imposed the 150-day tariffs under Section 122 of the Trade Act of 1974 at a lower 10% rate.

"That's likely sometime this week," Bessent said on CNBC of the 15% rate order from Trump.

"During the 150 days, we will see studies from USTR on Section 301, tariffs from Commerce on Section 232," he said, referring to other tariff authorities that have withstood court challenges.

He said the effort to rebuild Trump's tariff programme under these authorities would bring US duty rates back to their prior levels within five months.

"They are slow moving, but they are more robust," Bessent said of the Section 232 national security-based tariffs and the Section 301 unfair trade practices tariffs.

The Business Standard

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separate meetings with US Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs S Paul Kapur at their respective ministries yesterday.

Commerce Minister Mukhtar, while speaking to reporters after the meeting with the US assistant secretary, said the agreement includes elements that could help further strengthen bilateral trade ties in the future and should not be viewed as "wholesale negative" or "wholesale positive".

Mukhtar said there was no discussion on the recent trade deal, noting that the agreement has already been signed and constitutes a state-level arrangement, leaving little scope for

fresh decisions at this stage.

"The agreement was signed on the 9th [February]. There was no separate discussion on it today [yesterday]," he said, adding that the deal was signed to expand economic, trade and investment relations between the two countries.

Referring to bilateral trade, he said the volume of trade between the countries exceeds \$8.5 billion, while Bangladesh imports goods worth nearly \$2.75 billion from the US. "As a single country, the US remains one of Bangladesh's largest trading partners."

At the meeting, Mukhtar highlighted the volatility in the global energy market following the Middle East conflict and sought US cooperation, especially

in ensuring LNG supplies.

He said discussions covered investment, digital infrastructure development, and prospects for future economic cooperation, alongside trade-related issues.

During the meeting, Kapur recommended the removal of non-tariff barriers that may be hindering American investment in Bangladesh, Mukhtar said.

Meanwhile, after a separate meeting with Kapur, Foreign Minister Khalilur said the reciprocal trade agreement was not signed abruptly just days before the national election.

He claimed that the matter had been discussed in advance with the leadership of BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami, and both had agreed to the deal.

"The US Trade Representative spoke to the heads of our two key parties before the elections and they also agreed to it. So it's not like we did this in the dark," Khalilur said. He said there are entry and exit clauses and the government can review it if it desires so.

"We have discussed the crisis in the Middle East. I told him [Paul Kapur] that two of our Bangladeshis have lost lives and seven others have been injured. If this war is prolonged or spreads, this fear may increase further," he said.

Dhaka conveyed to the US official that the US should try to resolve this conflict, this problem, through dialogue as soon as possible by giving diplomacy opportunity.

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Adeline Beauty Tech to invest \$22m for fashion products manufacturing facility in Bepza EZ

INVESTMENT - BANGLADESH

TBS REPORT

Chinese company Adeline Beauty Technology (Bangladesh) Co, Ltd will establish a fashion and beauty products manufacturing facility at the Bepza Economic Zone, marking a step forward in Bangladesh's diversified export growth.

The company signed a land lease agreement with the Bangladesh Export Processing Zones Authority (Bepza) on 4 March at the Bepza Complex in Dhaka.

The \$22 million investment is expected to create around 4,170 jobs, supporting export diversification. Adeline Beauty Technology will produce wigs, eyelashes and cosmetic nails for international markets

including the USA, Canada, the UK, Germany, France, Spain, Italy, UAE, Russia and Mexico.

The agreement was signed by Md Tanvir Hossain, executive director (Investment Promotion) of Bepza, and Hang Sun, managing director of Adeline Beauty Technology (Bangladesh) Co, Ltd.

Bepza Executive Chairman Major General Mohammad Moazzem Hossain witnessed the ceremony, which was also attended by senior Bepza officials and company representatives.

Speaking at the event, the Executive Chairman welcomed the investment, reaffirmed Bepza's commitment to a secure and business-friendly environment, and encouraged further Chinese investment in value-added sectors.

