The Daily Star

05 JUL 2026

US shifting from aid to trade with Bangladesh

Ambassador says reciprocal trade deal a crucial step towards expanding cooperation

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Washington is seeking to move away from unilateral trade preferences and ineffective aid towards a fairer, more reciprocal economic relationship with Dhaka centred on trade, investment and long-term cooperation, US Ambassador to Bangladesh Brent Christensen said yesterday.

"As I've said before, America First does not mean America alone," he said, adding that the US values partnerships that advance mutual interests and benefits. "We want a genuine partnership -- one that creates opportunities for Americans and Bangladeshis alike."

Bangladesh has the potential to become an increasingly important economic hub due to its dynamic private sector and young workforce, he said at an event marking 250 years of American independence, jointly organised by the US Embassy and the American Chamber of Commerce in Bangladesh (AmCham) at Sheraton Dhaka.

He described the US-Bangladesh agreement on reciprocal trade and investment as an important step towards expanding economic cooperation, boosting investment, creating jobs and facilitating skills transfer.

The ambassador said Bangladesh's economic potential can be further unlocked through reducing bureaucracy, tackling corruption, encouraging competition and creating a more business-friendly environment.

He also emphasised growing cooperation in energy and said there is significant potential for collaboration in technology, the digital economy, healthcare, defence, security and investment.

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> US ambassador to Bangladesh

Mahdi Amin, adviser to Prime Minister Tarique Rahman, said the BNP-led government is committed to creating a more attractive environment for foreign direct investment (FDI), pledging policy support, deregulation and a level playing field for international investors.

Foreign investment, he said, plays a critical role in generating employment, boosting revenue collection and accelerating growth through technology transfer and innovation.

Amin cited Bangladesh's large youth population and expanding domestic market as key draws for investors, and pointed to profit repatriation, tax incentives, economic zones and high-tech parks as measures the "pro-business" administration has taken to attract capital.

He called for stronger Bangladesh-US trade and investment ties and urged more American companies to explore opportunities in the country.

Syed Mohammad Kamal, AmCham president, said the chamber has contributed significantly to Bangladesh's economic growth over the past three decades, supporting investment and knowledge transfer in sectors

in sectors including telecommunications, the digital economy, garments, medical equipment and aviation.

"AmCham has always tried to be the first point of contact for US investment coming to Bangladesh, and we will continue doing that," he said, adding that the inclusion of the embassy's commercial adviser on AmCham's executive committee would help generate new initiatives to expand business engagement.

Kamal said the chamber remains committed to creating a conducive environment for investment and facilitating stronger connections between US businesses and Bangladesh's private sector.

Muhammad Ala Uddin Ahmad, vice-president of the AmCham, said the chamber would continue to serve as a bridge between the two countries while promoting a competitive and future-ready Bangladesh.As the US marks the 250th anniversary of its independence, he said, both nations should look ahead with confidence to a new chapter of partnership, friendship and shared success.

The Financial Express

05 JUL 2026

Increasing export competitiveness

The overall export earnings of Bangladesh for FY2025–26 stood at US$48 billion as of June 2026, according to Export Promotion Bureau (EPB) data, against a target of US$55 billion. Although exports fell well short of the target, export earnings in June increased compared with June 2025. Moreover, the knitwear and woven ready-made garment (RMG) sectors recorded modest growth in June after experiencing slight declines in previous months. Workers' wages and yarn prices have increased, resulting in higher production costs. In addition, Bangladesh's exports to the EU market have declined significantly. Although the overall EU market contracted, Bangladesh's market share declined more sharply than that of its key competitor, China. This is a matter of serious concern.

Moreover, following India's free trade agreement (FTA) with the EU, India is making strong efforts to expand its presence in the European market, which could pose a significant challenge to Bangladesh in the coming years. As the EU remains the largest destination for Bangladesh's exports, this development warrants close attention. Owing to its comparatively lower profit margins, Bangladesh exports a larger volume of garments to the EU than China. However, China earns higher export revenues because of its lower production costs and greater value addition. This could gradually erode Bangladesh's competitiveness in the EU market.

FY2026–27 will be a crucial year for Bangladesh to address the challenges facing its export sector. In the meantime, the government has introduced several measures, including working capital facilities for closed and partially operational industries. It has also announced interest rate concessions on pre-shipment credit, which may help reduce exporters' financing costs. Furthermore, home textiles, jute, leather, ceramics, cement, and other non-traditional products can play a significant role in export diversification and help Bangladesh expand its export markets in the years ahead.

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The Business Standard
05 JUL 2026

Nevian's Canada export puts Bangladesh pharma

Bangladesh's pharmaceutical industry has already proved its ability to produce quality medicines at competitive prices. But entering highly regulated markets in developed countries remains a major challenge. In this context, Nevian Life Sciences has started exporting medicines to Canada through a partnership with Switzerland-based multinational company Sandoz.

Nevian's Managing Director, Musawwat Shams Zahedi, says this achievement is not only a milestone for his company, but also a new export model for Bangladesh's pharmaceutical sector.

In an interview, he spoke about the export to Canada, the importance of multinational partnerships, and the future of Bangladesh as a global medicine manufacturing hub.

Question (Q): Why is Nevian's medicine export to Canada being seen as an important achievement?

Musawwat Shams Zahedi: This is important for several reasons. Canada is one of the most strictly regulated medicine import markets in the world. To export medicine there, a company must have strong quality control systems and international-standard manufacturing capacity.

But the most important part of this achievement is the model behind it. We are not only exporting our own brand through a local distributor. We are producing medicines in Bangladesh under a multinational partnership with Sandoz.

The medicines are produced at Nevian's own manufacturing plant in Bangladesh. They are being exported based on the purchase order of Sandoz AG, Switzerland, and imported by Sandoz Canada Incorporated. This is a new example of how Bangladesh can enter the North American market through global partnerships.

Q: Do you think this can become a turning point for Bangladesh's pharmaceutical exports?

Musawwat Shams Zahedi: Yes, I believe it has that potential. Bangladesh has already shown that it can produce quality medicines at affordable prices. However, most of our export growth has so far come from semi-regulated or developing markets.

If Bangladesh wants to transform its pharmaceutical industry, it must enter highly regulated markets in developed countries. For that, we need to go beyond the traditional export model. Contract manufacturing and partnership with multinational companies can be an effective way forward. Nevian's export to Canada is a practical example of that model.

Q: How is this model different from the traditional export model?

Musawwat Shams Zahedi: In the traditional model, Bangladeshi pharmaceutical companies usually export their own brands to different countries through local distributors. But building a brand, developing a market and creating a strong distribution network in

Musawwat Shams Zahedi

foreign countries is not easy. Many local distribution partners in foreign markets do not have enough capacity to do this effectively. As a result, our export destinations and export earnings remain limited.

On the other hand, multinational companies already have strong market access, distribution networks and brand power. If Bangladeshi companies can manufacture medicines for them under international standards, it can open the door to many developed markets. Nevian's Canada export has been done through this kind of arrangement. We believe this model can also be expanded to other developed markets in Asia, North America and South America.

Q: How much did Nevian's previous Swiss legacy help in achieving this success?

Musawwat Shams Zahedi: Although the name Nevian is new, the company has a long legacy in Bangladesh linked to Swiss multinational companies.

The journey started in 1973 as Ciba-Geigy Bangladesh. Later, after global integration with Sandoz, it became Novartis Bangladesh. In 2025, after the transfer of the majority share, the company was renamed Nevian.

However, the change of name did not change our quality, process or manufacturing philosophy. We continue to manufacture world-class Novartis medicines as a licensee, using the same brands, same ingredients, same process and same quality standards. Our plant is certified by European Union GMP and Anvisa. This culture of not compromising on quality helped Nevian become a manufacturing partner in Sandoz's global supply chain.

Q: What is the biggest challenge in maintaining international quality?

Musawwat Shams Zahedi: Maintaining international quality is a continuous process. It is not only about modern machines. It is also about culture, systems and skilled people.

Gaining trust in the international market is difficult. Keeping that trust is even more difficult. A company must continuously improve in areas such as quality, data integrity, compliance and documentation.

This requires regular investment in technology, systems and human resources. It also requires patience, because return on investment in this sector, especially in exports, takes time.

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s Canada export puts Bangladesh pharma on global map

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This requires regular investment in technology, systems and human resources. It also requires patience, because return on investment in this sector, especially in exports, takes time.

If good manufacturers in the local market get a sustainable business environment, they can invest more in modern quality systems. Rational price adjustment in line with inflation can help them do that. In the end, this will not only increase export potential, but also help Bangladeshi patients get better-quality medicines.

Q: Can Bangladesh become a global hub for medicine manufacturing?

Musawwat Shams Zahedi: Yes, I strongly believe Bangladesh has that long-term potential. The pharmaceutical industry of Bangladesh has already reached a mature stage. We have skilled human resources, competitive production costs and growing technological capacity.

Now the national goal should be to establish Bangladesh as a trusted manufacturing partner for highly regulated international markets.

For this, we need to strengthen regulatory compliance, increase the number of internationally certified manufacturing plants, invest in complex medicines including biologics, and build stronger partnerships with multinational companies.

If the industry and policymakers work together in the right direction, the pharmaceutical sector can become a real driver of Bangladesh's export diversification in the coming years.

Q: What message would you like to give to international partners?

Musawwat Shams Zahedi: My message is clear: Bangladesh is no longer only a story of potential; it is also a story of proven capability. We can manufacture medicines at international standards. We can meet the strict requirements of regulatory authorities. We can also become a reliable long-term partner.

I believe more multinational companies will consider Bangladesh not only as a market, but also as a strategic manufacturing and supply hub in the future.

সমকাল
05 JUL 2026

বাংলাদেশি পাটপণ্যে অ্যান্টিডাম্পিং শুল্কের আওতা বাড়াতে পারে ভারত

সমকাল প্রতিবেদক

বাংলাদেশ থেকে পাট ও পাটজাত পণ্য আমদানিতে বিদ্যমান অ্যান্টিডাম্পিং শুল্ক বহাল রাখতে পারে ভারত। পাশাপাশি বিদ্যমান ৫৫ পাটকলের বাইরে নতুন করে কিছু পাটকলের পণ্যকেও এই ধরনের শুল্কের আওতায় আনার সুপারিশ করা হয়েছে।

ভারতের বাণিজ্য ও শিল্প মন্ত্রণালয়ের অধীন ডিরেক্টরেট জেনারেল অব ট্রেড রেমেডিজ (ডিজিটিআর) এ সুপারিশ করেছে। বাংলাদেশ ও নেপাল থেকে পাটপণ্য আমদানির ওপর সম্প্রতি প্রকাশিত ডিজিটিআরের এক প্রতিবেদনে এ সুপারিশ করা হয়। ভারতের কেন্দ্রীয় সরকার এ সুপারিশ আমলে নিয়ে প্রজ্ঞাপন জারি করলে নতুন শুল্কহার কার্যকর হবে।

২০১৭ সালের ৫ জানুয়ারি বাংলাদেশের বিভিন্ন পাটকলে উৎপাদিত পাটপণ্যের ওপর বিভিন্ন হারে অ্যান্টিডাম্পিং শুল্ক আরোপ করে ভারত। ভিন্ন ভিন্ন হারে টনপ্রতি ১৯ থেকে ৩৫২ ডলার শুল্ক আরোপ করা হয়। পাঁচ বছরের জন্য এই শুল্ক আরোপ করা হয়। এ নিয়ে তখন দুই দেশের সরকার পর্যায়ে একাধিক আলোচনা-পর্যালোচনা হয়েছে। তবে অ্যান্টিডাম্পিং শুল্ক প্রত্যাহার করা হয়নি। বরং দ্বিতীয় দফা ২০২২ সালে অ্যান্টিডাম্পিংয়ের মেয়াদ ২০২৭ সাল পর্যন্ত বাড়ানো হয়। বিধি অনুযায়ী, পাঁচ বছর পর নতুন মেয়াদ বাড়ানো না হলে এ ধরনের শুল্কের আর কার্যকারিতা থাকে না। সেই মেয়াদ শেষ হওয়ার আগেই তৃতীয় দফা অ্যান্টিডাম্পিংয়ের মেয়াদ বাড়াচ্ছে ভারত।

ভারতীয় কর্তৃপক্ষের অভিযোগ, উৎপাদনের তুলনায় কম মূল্যে পাটপণ্য রপ্তানি করছে বাংলাদেশ। তবে এই অভিযোগ জোরালোভাবে অস্বীকার করে আসছেন বাংলাদেশের উদ্যোক্তা রপ্তানিকারকরা। উদ্যোক্তাদের বক্তব্য, বেসরকারি প্রতিষ্ঠান হিসেবে কোন যুক্তিতে উৎপাদন মূল্যের তুলনায় কম দামে পাট রপ্তানি করতে যাবেন তারা।

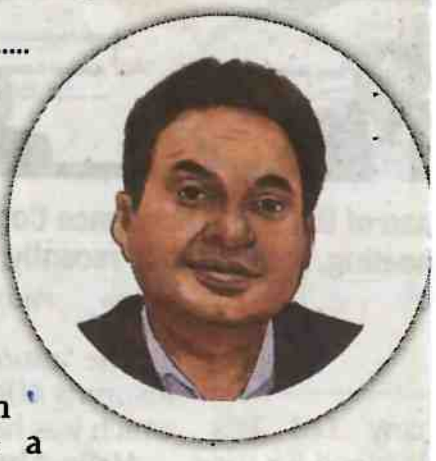
ডিজিটিআরের সুপারিশে অ্যান্টিডাম্পিং শুল্ক আরোপ হওয়া পুরোনো ৫৫টি পাটকলের সঙ্গে নতুন পর্যালোচনায় অন্তর্ভুক্ত পাটকলগুলোর জন্য সুপারিশ করা শুল্ক তুলনামূলক বেশি। ৪৪৫ ডলার শুল্কের সুপ্পারিশ করা হয়েছে।

বাংলাদেশ ট্যারিফ কমিশন সূত্রে জানা গেছে, অ্যান্টিডাম্পিংয়ের জন্য ডিজিটিআর পাটের সুতার ২৯টি পণ্যকে চিহ্নিত করেছে। সুতার মান নির্ধারণে কাউন্ট ভিত্তিতে এই পণ্যগুলোকে চিহ্নিত করা হয়। পাটের বস্তা তৈরির সুতার ৮ কাউন্ট থেকে ১২ পর্যন্ত এক ধরনের ক্যাটেগরি। ১২ থেকে ১৬ পর্যন্ত আরেক ধরনের। এভাবে ২৮ কাউন্ট পর্যন্ত বিভিন্ন শ্রেণিতে ভাগ করা হয়েছে। একইভাবে অন্যান্য পাটপণ্য, পাটের ব্যাগ, পাটের চট, পাটের কাপড়ে এই শুল্ক আরোপ করা হয়।

বাংলাদেশের পাটপণ্যের একক বড় বাজার হচ্ছে ভারত। অ্যান্টিডাম্পিং শুল্ক আরোপের পর পরই পাটপণ্য রপ্তানিতে রীতিমতো ধস নামে। রপ্তানি উন্নয়ন ব্যুরোর (ইপিবি) নথিপত্র ঘেঁটে দেখা যায়, অ্যান্টিডাম্পিং কার্যকরের আগের বছর (২০১৬ সাল) ১ লাখ ৪২ হাজার টন পাটপণ্য রপ্তানি হয় ভারতে। পরের বছর তা ৮০ হাজার টনে নামে। বিপর্যয়ের মুখে অনেক কারখানা বন্ধ হয়ে যায়।

Exports falter, remittances rise: What does this tell us?

SELIM RAIHAN



The policy puzzle is uncomfortable. Bangladesh ended FY2025-26 with a strong export rebound in June, yet the full-year export performance still slipped.

Exports stood at around $48 billion, down by 0.58 percent from the previous year, despite a sharp June increase. This means the rebound came too late to change the annual picture. It may signal some recovery in orders, delayed shipment adjustments, or short-term buyer confidence. But it does not prove that the export sector has regained strength.

The more serious issue is that the country's main export engine, readymade garments, remains vulnerable. RMG earnings declined by about 1.64 percent, while non-RMG sectors showed some gains but remained too small to alter the overall trend. Bangladesh still exports too few products, to too few markets, through too narrow a production base.

This should not surprise us. For many years, export diversification has been discussed as a national priority, but the incentive structure has not changed sufficiently. Garments continue to dominate because the sector has scale, networks, buyers, and policy attention. New sectors face much higher barriers. They struggle with finance, certification, logistics, customs, technology, and market access. Smaller exporters often find that policy support exists on paper but not in practice. The political economy of exports is therefore central.

Established sectors receive protection and attention; emerging sectors receive speeches. As LDC graduation approaches, this gap will become more costly. Preference erosion, stricter compliance rules, carbon-related standards, and buyer pressure for traceability will test Bangladesh's export model more severely than before.

The contrast with remittances is striking. Remittance inflows reached a record level in FY26, rising by more than 17 percent. This provided much-needed relief to the external sector. It helped ease pressure on the balance of payments, supported foreign exchange supply, and strengthened household purchasing power.

The shift towards a more market-based exchange rate and tighter control over informal channels may also have pushed more flows through formal systems. But this should not be mistaken for a structural

is therefore mixed. Bangladesh's external sector is not in crisis in the narrow sense, because remittances have provided a strong cushion. But it is also not secure.

A country cannot build long-term external resilience by relying mainly on low-wage garment exports and migrant workers' earnings. Both channels are exposed to external shocks. A prolonged Middle East crisis could affect labour demand, recruitment, wages, and remittance flows. It could also raise global energy prices, increasing import costs and fiscal subsidy pressures.

At the same time, weak export growth limits job

to roughly $49.5 billion to $50.5 billion. A stronger outcome is possible if apparel orders recover steadily, energy supply remains stable, logistics improve, and non-RMG exports gain some momentum.

But there are clear downside risks: uncertain global demand, geopolitical tensions, energy shocks, and domestic cost pressures. The real task is not to celebrate one month of strong exports or take comfort from record remittances.

FY27 should be treated as a year of export repair. Bangladesh needs credible exchange-rate management, faster customs reform, lower logistics costs,

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The shift towards a more market-based exchange rate and tighter control over informal channels may also have pushed more flows through formal systems. But this should not be mistaken for a structural solution. Remittances stabilise the economy; they do not transform it. They are earned through the labour of millions of migrants, many of whom work under difficult conditions abroad. The economy benefits, but the domestic production base does not automatically become more competitive.

The combined message is therefore mixed. Bangladesh's external sector is not in crisis in the narrow sense, because remittances have provided a strong cushion. But it is also not secure.

A country cannot build long-term external resilience by relying mainly on low-wage garment exports and migrant workers' earnings. Both channels are exposed to external shocks. A prolonged Middle East crisis could affect labour demand, recruitment, wages, and remittance flows. It could also raise global energy prices, increasing import costs and fiscal subsidy pressures.

At the same time, weak export growth limits job creation, investment, and industrial upgrading at home. This means the external account may appear manageable, while the underlying productive capacity remains fragile.

For FY2026-27, the export outlook should be cautious. A reasonable forecast would be modest growth of around 3 to 5 percent, taking exports to roughly $49.5 billion to $50.5 billion. A stronger outcome is possible if apparel orders recover steadily, energy supply remains stable, logistics improve, and non-RMG exports gain some momentum.

But there are clear downside risks: uncertain global demand, geopolitical tensions, energy shocks, and domestic cost pressures. The real task is not to celebrate one month of strong exports or take comfort from record remittances.

FY27 should be treated as a year of export repair. Bangladesh needs credible exchange-rate management, faster customs reform, lower logistics costs, more disciplined export incentives, stronger support for non-RMG sectors, and serious preparation for LDC graduation. Otherwise, the economy may remain externally afloat, but not externally strong.

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