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BD to retain duty-free mkt access to UK after LDC exit

A significant message that would give huge comfort to apparel exporters.

— Dr Masrur Reaz

Equally important are UK's revised rules of origin giving greater flexibility in sourcing imported inputs and do not impose double-transformation requirement.

— Dr Razzaque

For 92pc of its goods, no need for negotiating separate trade agreement with UK

DOULOT AKTER MALA

Bangladeshi exporters will continue to enjoy preferential access to the UK market after Bangladesh graduates from the least-developed-country status, the United Kingdom has assured.

Economists say the UK's decision provides Bangladesh with valuable policy space and greater certainty on the cusp of transition from the world's poor-country club.

A letter from the British mission in Bangladesh says 92 per cent of goods will continue to qualify for duty-free access without the need for Bangladesh to negotiate a separate trade agreement with the UK.

The letter, dated August 19, from James Goldman, Deputy High Commissioner and Development Director at the British High Commission in Dhaka, was sent to Md Ataur Rahman Khan, Secretary of the Ministry of Commerce.

Bangladesh currently enjoys tariff-free access for 99.8 per cent of goods exported to the UK under the UK's Developing Countries Trading Scheme (DCTS).

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BD to retain duty-free mkt access to UK after LDC exit

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According to the communication in writing, Bangladesh will retain its existing market access for three years after its LDC graduation, providing exporters with a transition period before moving to a new preferential arrangement.

Following the transition period, Bangladesh will move to the Enhanced Preferences tier of the DCTS, under which 92 per cent of goods will continue to qualify for duty-free access without requiring further renegotiation.

Commerce ministry's senior officials have said apparel and readymade garments are within the 92-percent duty access list, so reduction in ratio won't affect Bangladesh's export.

Talking to the FE on Thursday, Commerce Secretary Md Ataur Rahman Khan termed it a significant ... "We hope to get three years' extension to stay as LDC until November 2029, so the existing duty benefit will remain unchanged for next three years," he said.

Trade economist Dr Masrur Reaz also takes it as a significant massage from the British High commission that would give a huge comfort to the apparel exporters.

Dr Reaz, chairman of the Policy Exchange Bangladesh, says when all other countries' preferential-trade benefit will expire with the LDC graduation, the UK will retain it.

"The letter made it clear that there is no expiration date of UK's preferential trade benefit," he says.

In this period, he suggests, Bangladesh must act seriously to sign free-trade agreements with the major trade partners to retain the trade benefits to avail after LDC graduation.

In the letter, the British government has also provided specific reassurance to ... Dr Mohammad Abdur Razzaque, Chairman of Research and Policy Integration for Development (RAPID), finds this as a welcome news for Bangladesh as it prepares for LDC exit.

"The UK has provided considerable certainty by confirming that Bangladesh will retain its existing market access for three years after graduation and will then move directly into the Enhanced Preferences tier of the DCTS."

For Bangladesh, he says, the most important aspect is the treatment to garments, which account for the overwhelming majority of the country's exports to the UK.

"Market access for garments will remain unchanged under the Enhanced Preferences arrangement."

Equally important are the UK's revised rules of origin, which provide substantially greater flexibility in sourcing imported inputs and do not impose a double- ... industry, given its dependence on imported fabrics and other intermediate inputs in several product categories, Dr Razzaque further notes.

It is also important to recognise that the UK Government introduced these changes to its rules of origin autonomously.

"The changes, therefore, demonstrate the UK's recognition of the adjustment challenges facing Bangladesh and other graduating LDCs, while providing particularly important benefits for Bangladesh because of the scale and composition of its exports to the UK."

This is a positive example of how major trading partners can support a smoother LDC transition, he has said.

The combination of the three-year transition period, subsequent access to Enhanced Preferences, and more liberal rules of origin considerably reduce the ...

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US overtakes India as Bangladesh's second-largest trading partner

FE REPORT

BD's exports to US dominated by ready-made garments

US imposed new 10pc tariff on Bangladeshi imports under Section 301 in July

The US overtook India to become Bangladesh's second-largest trading partner in May, signifying the growing importance of the American market to the country's external sector, according to the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) data.

The shift was driven primarily by Bangladesh's large export surplus with the US.

In May, Bangladesh exported goods worth Tk 104.53 billion to the US and imported Tk 29.79 billion, putting bilateral trade at Tk 134.32 billion.

Trade with India was lower during the month, although the exact figure should be taken from the corresponding BBS table before publication.

China remained Bangladesh's largest trading partner, maintaining its longstanding lead through its dominant role as a source of industrial raw materials, machinery, and finished goods.

India traditionally occupied the second position, helped by its geographic proximity and extensive cross-border trade.

But the US has increasingly challenged that position as Bangladesh's export-oriented economy has become more dependent on demand in the American market.

The latest BBS figures show that the contest between the US and India for the second place has become relatively close.

During the first five months of the calendar year, the US ranked second in January, April, and May, while India held the position in February and March.

The shift is significant because the US is Bangladesh's largest single-country export market.

Bangladesh's exports to the US are dominated by ready-made garments, making the American market particularly important for the country's manufacturing and foreign-exchange earnings.

The growing weight of the US in Bangladesh's trade also comes as the two countries reshape their commercial relationship.

In February, Washington and Dhaka reached an agreement on reciprocal trade that included

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preferential access for US industrial and agricultural products to Bangladesh and a mechanism for certain Bangladeshi textile and apparel products to qualify for zero reciprocal tariffs, subject to specified conditions.

The relationship has also become more consequential for Bangladeshi exporters as US tariff policy has shifted.

In July, the US imposed a new 10 per cent tariff on Bangladeshi imports under Section 301, in addition to the existing most-favoured-nation duties.

That makes the rise of the US as a trading partner more than a statistical shift.

It reflects the growing exposure of Bangladesh's external sector to American demand and trade policy, even as China continues to dominate the country's overall import trade. The May figures therefore reinforce a broader change in Bangladesh's trading pattern: China remains the largest partner by total trade, but the US is gaining ground on India, powered by Bangladesh's export strength in the American market.

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Ukrainian father-son duo chose Bangladesh over Vietnam. Now their shoes reach 70 countries

Friday Feature

JAHIR RAYHAN

Annual exports total $25m; capacity set to reach 10,000 pairs

It was August 2007. A Ukrainian father and son arrived in Bangladesh for what was supposed to be a brief stopover on their way to Vietnam, where they were considering setting up a business.

While staying at a hotel, the son, Lavryk Andrity, began wondering why they should travel on to Vietnam when Bangladesh itself might offer what they were looking for.

"I had heard about Bangladesh's tanneries and leather industry. So, I asked my father why we should go to Vietnam when Bangladesh has a huge population and could be a good place to establish a company," he recalled.

Then came an unlikely lead: a copy of the Yellow Pages.

Andrity picked it up at the hotel and spotted an advertisement for the Bangladesh Export Processing Zones Authority (Bepza). He and his father decided to pay the authorities a visit.

"We visited Bepza, liked the people there and received full support. We then decided not to go to Vietnam and instead establish our company in Bangladesh. We are happy with that decision," he told The Business Standard.

That unplanned stopover eventually gave birth to the company Super Protective Shoes (Pvt) Ltd at Adamjee Export Processing Zone in Narayanganj, a business that now exports around $25 million worth of military boots, safety shoes, and other specialised footwear annually to markets across the world.

From Adamjee to global markets

Nearly two decades after production began, Super Protective Shoes now exports to around 60-70 countries, including Ukraine, Germany and other European and international markets.

The company produces safety, work, industrial and military footwear, SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

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including boots, PU products and insoles. Military footwear accounts for around 10% of its exports, with most going to Ukraine.

Super Protective Shoes has so far invested around $13 million in Bangladesh and employs nearly 1,000 workers. Depending on orders, the factory produces around 5,000-6,000 pairs of shoes a day.

Andrity, now chairman and managing director of the company, said it has offices in Ukraine, elsewhere in Europe and in the Middle East, including the UAE. It also operates a large warehouse in Germany, from where products are supplied to different markets.

The company plans to raise annual exports to $50 million within the next two years as it expands production capacity and introduces technology for technically advanced and ultra-light safety footwear. "We also plan to invest an additional $10 million in Bangladesh," Andrity said.

Where machines meet hands

Inside the Adamjee factory, that global business takes shape one pair at a time.

During a visit by The Business Standard this week, workers were seen operating modern machinery across different stages of production.

At one end, leather was being cut according to shoe designs. Elsewhere, workers stitched components, matched them with designs, assembled soles and finished shoes, while some monitored production through computer screens.

The process combines modern machinery with manual skills, moving through cutting, stitching, assembling, moulding and finishing before the shoes reach the packaging section.

Most of the leather used in the footwear is sourced from Brazil, Ukraine, India and Turkey, while some also comes from Pakistan and Bangladesh, according to the company.

Among those on the production floor was Liza Akter, operating a machine that cuts leather according to shoe designs. She said the workplace provides good facilities and that she earns around Tk23,000 a month.

In the packaging section, Niamat Ali was busy packing finished shoes. He studied up to class eight and has worked at the factory since 2019.

Niamat said the salary and working environment were good, which encouraged him to remain with the company rather than look for work elsewhere.

Making safety shoes lighter

Super Protective Shoes is now introducing specialised technology aimed at making safety footwear lighter while maintaining durability.

"We are bringing new technology to produce ultra-light safety shoes. This technology is new to Bangladesh and, as far as we know, is among the first of its kind in the world," Andrity said.

The company is producing specialised outsoles using advanced machinery to reduce the weight of safety shoes while retaining their durability.

Andrity said demand for lightweight footwear was growing among younger consumers and in markets including Bangladesh, Europe and China. But durability remained crucial for people who wear safety shoes at work.

"That is why we are introducing this technology – to produce safety shoes that combine durability with an ultra-light design," he said.

The company has purchased machinery from Europe, Taiwan and China, depending on the type of equipment required. It is also installing new machinery that will raise production capacity to around 10,000 pairs a day. The company plans to increase its workforce alongside the expansion.

Sourcing more from Bangladesh

As Bangladesh's footwear technology and supporting industries have developed, Super Protective Shoes has also been able to source some tools and production equipment locally.

"Different tools and production equipment are now being produced locally, which is very helpful for us because we can source some of these items locally," Andrity said.

The company's growth comes as Adamjee EPZ continues to attract export-oriented investment.

Md Abdur Rahman Bhuiyan, executive director of Adamjee EPZ, said uninterrupted supplies of gas, electricity and water have helped generate investor interest in the zone.

In FY26, 47 factories operating at Adamjee EPZ exported goods worth $1.179 billion.

"With 10 more factories currently under construction coming into production, annual exports can potentially reach $1.5 billion," Bhuiyan said.

Growing, but running out of room

For Super Protective Shoes, however, further growth has brought another challenge: finding space.

"We are looking for space to expand our business, but we are unable to find available space in this export processing zone," Andrity said.

He added that the company would consider investing elsewhere in Bangladesh if it could find land with facilities similar to those offered by Bepza.

Nearly two decades after a father and son changed their travel plans and chose Bangladesh over Vietnam, the company they built here is now looking for its next place to grow.

Decent work environment, skills vital for RMG's global competitiveness: Experts

TBS ROUNDTABLE

TBS REPORT

Bangladesh's readymade garment (RMG) sector must move beyond compliance and invest in workers' skills, wellbeing and responsible business practices to remain globally competitive amid technological and economic shifts, industry and labour experts said.

They made the remarks at a roundtable titled "Redesigning Systems for Decent Work and Global Competitiveness", jointly organised by CARE Bangladesh and The Business Standard at the TBS office yesterday. Fatima Jahan Seema, lead, Program Monitoring & Impact at CARE Bangladesh, presented the keynote and moderated the discussion.

Seema said LDC graduation, declining trade preferences, technological change and climate risks were pushing the sector into a critical transition. Although apparel exports reached around $42 billion in FY2021-22, Bangladesh must focus on higher-value products, productivity and market diversification.

With trade preferences potentially eroding after 2029,

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workers will need digital, technical, machine-operation, quality-management and supervisory skills, while women should move into technical, supervisory and management roles, she said.

The Business Standard and CARE Bangladesh jointly organise a roundtable titled "Redesigning Systems for Decent Work and Global Competitiveness" at the TBS office in the capital yesterday, with experts discussing skills, worker wellbeing and responsible business practices. PHOTO: MEHEDI HASAN

Emebet Menna, deputy country director at CARE Bangladesh, said decent work must be a shared responsibility of the government, buyers, factories and trade unions.

"Decent work should not be viewed merely as a compliance requirement; rather, it requires a genuine shift in mindset," she said, stressing that workplace safety and welfare affect productivity and competitiveness.

Mohammad Shah Alam, deputy general manager at Epyllion Group, said gas shortages and power disruptions were raising costs and worsening working conditions.

Some factories cannot run enough fans during outages, forcing workers to work in excessive heat. Stable energy supplies are essential for both worker welfare and competitiveness, he said.

Md Arifuzzaman, deputy inspector general at the Department of Inspection for Factories and Establishments, said RMG factory accidents have fallen by around 80%, while accidents in other industries have increased.

"We are therefore giving greater attention to sectors such as leather, ceramics and re-rolling mills during factory inspections," he said.

He proposed a national minimum wage instead of separate sector-based wages and stressed worker participation in wage-setting.

"Simply increasing wages will not improve workers' skills. Their mental and social wellbeing at the workplace also needs to be given importance," he said.

Nishat Nahrin Hamid, chairperson of the BGMEA Standing Committee on Energy Optimization, said energy costs doubled in 2023, while inflation and declining orders added pressure on suppliers.

"If workers are satisfied and properly managed, productivity increases, benefiting workers, factories and buyers alike," she said, urging global brands to treat factories as long-term partners.

Labour rights advocate Rajekuzzaman Ratan said decent work requires a democratic workplace where workers can raise concerns. He noted that 282 of 724 approved inspector positions remain vacant.

"Decent work should not be viewed merely as a compliance issue. It should also be seen as a means of improving workers' quality of life, skills and bargaining power," he said.

Taslima Yasmin, associate professor of law at Dhaka University, said women's participation must be accompanied by stronger measures against gender-based violence and sexual harassment.

Despite Bangladesh's ratification of ILO Convention 190, she said the Labour Act lacks clear penalties and remedies. She called for a separate workplace sexual-harassment law and specialised inspector training.

Speakers also stressed communication, leadership, problem-solving, time-management, stress-management and financial decision-making skills alongside technical training. "Training workers alone will not bring sustainable change. Management attitudes, workplace culture and production systems also need to change," they said.

Md Ryhan Ibn Rahman of Natural Group, China Rahman of the Federation of Garments Workers, Sekender Ali Mina of Safety and Rights Society and Sramik Nirapotta Forum, Bablur Rahman of Fair Wear Foundation, and AKM Monirul Kobir of BILS also spoke at the event.

বণিক বার্তা
21 AUG 2026

বাংলাদেশী রফতানিকারকদের ডিসিটিএস ব্যবহারে জোর যুক্তরাজ্যের

নিজস্ব প্রতিবেদক ■

বাংলাদেশের রফতানিকারকদের জন্য যুক্তরাজ্যের ডেভেলপিং কান্ট্রিজ ট্রেডিং স্কিম (ডিসিটিএস) সুবিধার বিষয়ে সচেতনতা বাড়ানো ও এর সর্বোচ্চ ব্যবহার নিশ্চিত করতে বাংলাদেশ সরকার, ব্যবসায়ী সংগঠন ও রফতানিকারকদের সঙ্গে ঘনিষ্ঠভাবে কাজ করবে ব্রিটিশ হাইকমিশন। গত বুধবার বাণিজ্য সচিব মো. আতাউর রহমান খানকে দেয়া এক চিঠিতে এ কথা জানিয়েছেন বাংলাদেশে ব্রিটিশ ডেপুটি হাইকমিশনার জেমস গোল্ডম্যান।

চিঠিতে বলা হয়, ডিসিটিএস নিয়ে সম্প্রতি রপ্তানি উন্নয়ন ব্যুরোর (ইপিবি) সঙ্গে যৌথভাবে আয়োজিত গোলটেবিল বৈঠকে হওয়া আলোচনার ভিত্তিতে যুক্তরাজ্যের বাজারে বাংলাদেশের রফতানিকারকদের প্রবেশাধিকার অব্যাহত থাকবে। বর্তমানে ডিসিটিএসের আওতায় যুক্তরাজ্যে রফতানি করা বাংলাদেশের ৯৯ দশমিক ৮ শতাংশ পণ্য শুল্কমুক্ত সুবিধা পায়। বাংলাদেশ স্বল্পোন্নত দেশের (এলডিসি) তালিকা থেকে উত্তরণের পর তিন বছরের একটি পরিবর্তনকালীন সময় থাকবে। এ সময়ে যুক্তরাজ্যের বাজারে বাংলাদেশের প্রবেশাধিকার অপরিবর্তিত থাকবে। এরপর বাংলাদেশ সরাসরি ডিসিটিএসের 'এনহ্যান্সড প্রেফারেন্সেস' স্তরে প্রবেশ করবে। এ স্তরে ৯২ শতাংশ পণ্য শুল্কমুক্তভাবে যুক্তরাজ্যের বাজারে প্রবেশের যোগ্য হবে।

চিঠিতে বলা হয়, বাংলাদেশের পোশাক খাতের জন্য বিষয়টি বিশেষভাবে ইতিবাচক। 'এনহ্যান্সড প্রেফারেন্সেস'-এর আওতায় পোশাকের বাজার প্রবেশাধিকার অপরিবর্তিত থাকবে। যুক্তরাজ্যের হালনাগাদ 'রুলস অব অরিজিন'-এর ফলে পোশাক রফতানিকারকদের জন্য বর্তমানে প্রযোজ্য নিয়মই বহাল থাকবে। এর মধ্যে ডাবল ট্রান্সফরমেশনের কোনো বাধ্যবাধকতাও থাকছে না। এছাড়া অগ্রাধিকারমূলক বাজার সুবিধা বজায় রেখেই বিভিন্ন দেশ থেকে কাঁচামাল ও উপকরণ সংগ্রহের ক্ষেত্রে রফতানিকারকদের আরো বেশি নমনীয়তা দেয়া হয়েছে বলে চিঠিতে জানানো হয়। ডিসিটিএস সম্পর্কে রফতানিকারক ও বাণিজ্যসংশ্লিষ্টদের মধ্যে সচেতনতা বাড়াতে আগামী মাসগুলোতে ইপিবির সঙ্গে অংশীদারত্বের ভিত্তিতে ধারাবাহিক কর্মশালা আয়োজনের কথাও জানিয়েছে ব্রিটিশ হাইকমিশন।

বণিক বার্তা
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বাংলাদেশের পোশাক শিল্পে দীর্ঘমেয়াদি প্রতিশ্রুতি পুনর্ব্যক্ত করেছে এলপিপি

বণিক বার্তা ডেস্ক ■

ইউরোপীয় রিটেইল খাতের অন্যতম বৈশ্বিক প্রতিষ্ঠান এলপিপি বাংলাদেশের তৈরি পোশাক খাতের প্রতি তাদের সুদৃঢ় প্রতিশ্রুতি পুনর্ব্যক্ত করেছে। একই সঙ্গে দেশের তৈরি পোশাক (আরএমজি) শিল্পের প্রবৃদ্ধিতে গুরুত্বপূর্ণ অংশীদার হিসেবে নিজেদের ভূমিকার ওপরও গুরুত্বারোপ করেছে প্রতিষ্ঠানটি।

বাংলাদেশের অন্যতম বৃহৎ পোশাক ক্রেতাপ্রতিষ্ঠান হিসেবে দেশের অর্থনীতিতে গুরুত্বপূর্ণ ভূমিকা রাখছে এলপিপি। বর্তমানে বাংলাদেশ থেকে পোশাক ক্রয়ের ক্ষেত্রে প্রতিষ্ঠানটির অবস্থান অষ্টম। বছরে ৭৫০ মিলিয়ন মার্কিন ডলারের বেশি মূল্যের পোশাক সোর্সিংয়ের পাশাপাশি ৩৫০টিরও বেশি বাংলাদেশী প্রস্তুতকারক প্রতিষ্ঠানের সঙ্গে কাজ করছে এলপিপি। প্রতিষ্ঠানটির ব্যবসায়িক কার্যক্রম হাজারো মানুষের কর্মসংস্থান সৃষ্টি করছে এবং দেশের শিল্পোন্নয়নে সরাসরি অবদান রাখছে।

সম্প্রতি আর্থিক জটিলতার বিষয়ে এলপিপি স্পষ্টভাবে জানিয়েছে, এফইএসের সঙ্গে পূর্ববর্তী ব্যবসায়িক সম্পর্কের কারণে সবচেয়ে বেশি ক্ষতির মুখে পড়েছে প্রতিষ্ঠানটি। বর্তমানে এফইএসের কাছে এলপিপির পাওনা ৩৬ দশমিক ৫ বিলিয়ন টাকা, যা প্রায় ১ দশমিক ১ বিলিয়ন পোলিশ জলোটি। এর ফলে পোল্যান্ডভিত্তিক এ রিটেইল প্রতিষ্ঠানকে উল্লেখযোগ্য আর্থিক ক্ষতি বহন করতে হয়েছে। তৃতীয় পক্ষের এসব দায়ের কারণে বড় ধরনের আর্থিক চাপের মুখে পড়লেও এলপিপি স্বচ্ছতার সঙ্গে পরিস্থিতি মোকাবেলা করে যাচ্ছে।

সবচেয়ে গুরুত্বপূর্ণ বিষয় হলো, এলপিপির ব্যবস্থাপনা কর্তৃপক্ষ স্পষ্টভাবে জানিয়েছে, এ ধরনের আর্থিক চ্যালেঞ্জ বাংলাদেশের সঙ্গে তাদের দীর্ঘদিনের অংশীদারত্বকে কোনোভাবেই প্রভাবিত করবে না। সোর্সিং কার্যক্রম অব্যাহত রাখা, নিজস্ব চুক্তি অনুযায়ী যাবতীয় দায় যথাযথভাবে পালন এবং বাংলাদেশের পোশাক প্রস্তুতকারকদের সঙ্গে স্থিতিশীল ও স্বচ্ছ ব্যবসায়িক সম্পর্ক বজায় রাখতে এলপিপি সম্পূর্ণভাবে প্রতিশ্রুতিবদ্ধ।

এলপিপি জানিয়েছে, 'বাংলাদেশ আমাদের বৈশ্বিক সরবরাহ ব্যবস্থার অন্যতম গুরুত্বপূর্ণ ভিত্তি। এফইএস-সংক্রান্ত ইস্যুতে সবচেয়ে বেশি ক্ষতিগ্রস্ত পক্ষ হওয়া সত্ত্বেও বাংলাদেশের পোশাক খাতের স্থিতিশীলতা, দীর্ঘমেয়াদি সমৃদ্ধি এবং এ খাতকে এগিয়ে নেয়া স্থানীয় কর্মীদের স্বার্থ নিশ্চিত করাই আমাদের অগ্রাধিকার।'

ভবিষ্যতেও এলপিপি স্থানীয় প্রস্তুতকারক প্রতিষ্ঠান ও শিল্পসংশ্লিষ্ট সংগঠনগুলোর সঙ্গে সহযোগিতা অব্যাহত রাখবে, যাতে সরবরাহ ব্যবস্থায় ধারাবাহিকতা ও স্থিতিশীলতা নিশ্চিত করা যায়। একই সঙ্গে বাংলাদেশে প্রতিষ্ঠানটির বৃহৎ বিনিয়োগ স্থানীয় অর্থনীতির উন্নয়নে অবদান রাখার পাশাপাশি বৈশ্বিক পোশাক শিল্পের ইকোসিস্টেমকে আরো শক্তিশালী করবে।