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পঞ্চান্ন-উর্ধ্ব সিনিয়র সিটিজেনদের জন্য। ১৮-উর্ধ্ব মহিলারাও এই হিসাবটি খুলতে পারবেন।

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star BUSINESS

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Apparel benefitting from US-China trade war

REFAYET ULLAH MIRDHA

Bangladesh's garment sector is turning into a beneficiary of the US-China trade war as American retailers are placing more work orders, but other sectors, such as jute and leather goods, are yet to see an uptick in fortunes.

Though China is by far the world's biggest exporter of manufactured goods, some factory owners over the past decade began moving production to other developing countries such as Bangladesh, Cambodia and Vietnam, said a recent report of The Financial Times.

This was in search of cheaper wages and a hedge against the political and economic risks that come from reliance on one country.

"Factory owners and US buyers say the trade war will intensify this shift," said the London-based news organisation.

The observation proved true as local garment manufacturers acknowledged receiving more work orders from the US.

Take, for instance, the case of Viyellatex Group, a leading exporter that mainly ships to European countries.

Three American buyers, who had folded their business in Bangladesh two years ago, are set to place bulk orders, said David Hasanat, chairman and managing director of



Foreign buyers check clothes on display at an exposition in Dhaka. American retailers are placing more work orders with Bangladeshi manufacturers amid the US-China trade war.

Viyellatex Group, while withholding the retailers' identities.

These three are not the only ones as many other US-based clothing retailers are now queuing up at his factory as China has already turned expensive for them, he said, adding

that the trade war has been the impetus needed to re-route the buyers to Bangladesh.

Three out of every 10 buyers Hasanat now serves are from the US — a development of six months. The year-on-year growth of

Viyellatex Group's American buyers is 25 percent.

The number will increase further if the Trump administration finally scraps the North American Free Trade Agreement (Nafta), Hasanat said.

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State sugar mills seek ways to clear stock

They urge govt to raise import duty

SOHEL PARVEZ

State-run Bangladesh Sugar and Food Industries Corporation (BSFIC) has urged the government to increase import duty on the sweetener to curb import and clear its unsold stock of 1.51 lakh tonnes, corporation and revenue officials said.

The corporation comes with the plea as it is planning to start crushing sugarcane by the end of next month with the hope to produce 1.2 lakh tonnes of sugar in 2018-19.

The agency, which runs 15 mills, said it cannot sell its sugar as wholesale prices have fallen below its mill gate price of Tk 50 per kilogramme in recent weeks, said the officials.

At the wholesale level, the sweetener refined by private processors, is sold at Tk 44-45 each kg now, according to BSFIC Chairman AKM Delwer Hussain.

Retail prices of sugar declined 8.7 percent year-on-year to Tk 50-55 each kg in Dhaka now, according to data from the Trading Corporation of Bangladesh.

If the current prices prevail, the agency will continue to incur losses and be unable to buy sugarcane from growers in the next crushing season.

"We are facing a fund crisis as we cannot sell sugar," he said, adding that state mills

depend on locally grown sugarcane to produce sugar and farmers tend to shift to other crops when prices are low.

Sugarcane acreage almost halved in two and a half decades to 2.33 lakh acres in 2016-17 as farmers are getting reluctant to grow the crop that takes more than a year to mature but brings lower returns compared to other crops.

"Farmers will not grow sugarcane if we cannot sell sugar at fair prices and provide attractive prices to growers," said Hussain, explaining BSFIC's position in favour of duty hike.

The corporation imported 1 lakh tonnes of sugar last year to boost its stock and help the government keep prices stable.

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Go for rooftop solar panels to raise power output

Experts urge factory owners



Tawfiq-e-Elahi Chowdhury, energy adviser to the prime minister, speaks at a seminar on "Net metering: opportunities and challenges" at the National Press Club in Dhaka yesterday.

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Factories should make the best use of their rooftops by installing solar panels to get power for their own consumption and for the national grid, experts said yesterday.

The cost of electricity generation will be much lower than that of the grid power if rooftop solar panels are used, said Tawfiq-e-Elahi Chowdhury, the prime minister's energy adviser.

At the same time, the factories would be able to sell their excess electricity at the tariff rate of the grid power, he said.

He spoke at a seminar on "Net metering: opportunities and challenges" at the National Press Club in Dhaka.

The Forum for Energy Reporters Bangladesh (FERB) and the Solar Module Manufacturers Association of Bangladesh (SMMAB) jointly organised the programme.

Net metering is a billing mechanism that

Let Accord operate till task ends

Say sourcing investors

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Some 153 global investors representing \$2.8 trillion in assets have called for the continuation of the Bangladesh Accord for Fire and Building Safety (Accord) until it completes its mandate and government agencies are able to assume its responsibilities.

The investors issued a statement on Thursday in response to a June 2018 High Court ruling stipulating that the Accord's operational authority will expire on December 1, says a statement from the Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility (ICCR).

Agreeing that significant progress has been made since 2013, the Accord stakeholders claim that all of the original safety goals have not yet been fully achieved while the government was not fully ready to take over the Accord's functions.

The statement was organised by the Bangladesh Investor Initiative, a coalition of global investors that coalesced in response to the tragic collapse of the Rana Plaza building outside Dhaka in 2013.

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TICFA MEETING

Bangladesh demands better prices for garment items

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Bangladesh sought better prices for its export items, especially garments, from the US retailers and brands in the fourth round of Ticfa meeting held in Washington on Thursday.

In the event of the Trade and Investment Forum Agreement (Ticfa), Bangladesh also demanded duty privilege for all the products of its export basket to the American markets.

Bangladeshi garment makers have been remediateing the factories as per the recommendations of the Accord

and Alliance—building inspection and remediation agencies—which will cost them nearly \$3 billion.

The tenure of both the western agencies will end in December this year.

But the western buyers still do not want to raise the prices a bit in an excuse of a fall in demand for apparel items in their countries, including the US, the commerce ministry said in a statement.

In the meeting, Bangladesh also sought increased investment from the US, according to the statement.

Bangladesh also reminded US of

the Bali declaration of the World Trade Organisation in 2013, when the developed nations agreed to give duty waiver to the goods of least developed countries.

In Bali, they also gave word to offer duty benefits to 97 percent of the goods originated from the LDCs, if duty waiver to all goods is not possible.

Bangladeshi products also enjoy the duty waiver, but the US kept garment items—the main export item of Bangladesh—out of the 97 percent package's list.

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DBBL awards scholarships to 3,031 students

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Year this year and are now studying at the higher secondary level.

Dutch-Bangla Bank Ltd Minister (DBBL) A M A yesterday awarded 3,031 meritorious and unprivileged students at an event at Shaheed Suhrawardy Indoor Stadium in Dhaka.

The private commercial bank equivalent DBBL, under its

corporate social responsibility programme, has been distributing the scholarship among meritorious students at HSC and graduation levels since 1997.

So far, the private commercial bank has awarded



Finance Minister AMA Muhith and Law Minister Anisul Huq hand over a Dutch-Bangla Bank scholarship to a student at Shaheed Suhrawardy Indoor Stadium in the capital's Mirpur yesterday. Bangladesh Bank Governor Fazle Kabir was present.

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