



# How corporate gifting boosts a thriving industry

RBR

As Ramadan concluded at the end of last month, beckoning the arrival of Eid festivities, there was a lot of buzz on social media regarding "Eid gifts". Eid gifts, not the same as "salami", from your loved ones are always bundles of happiness wrapped in love. However, when such gifts arrive from your business contacts, it can be a delightful surprise as well.

Corporate houses usually send festival goody bags, gifts, and even meals to their priority clients as a gesture of goodwill and token of appreciation to preserve connections within their business networks.

For me, it all started maybe a decade ago, when a prominent institution started giving out large fruit tree saplings to promote greenscaping in the city. It came as a part of your grocery shopping from certain superstores. The reason that I remember this is because I still cherish my pink guava tree that I received from such an unexpected source.

Nowadays, sharing corporate gifts has become a well-thought-out process, and the trend has opened up a new business opportunity – corporate gift planners, whose entire job is to make a customised gift box branded with the logo and cards, telling the story of the respective company who has commissioned them.

"Corporate gifts impact the brand image rather than immediate sales. The idea has emerged as a strategy for fostering business relationships and enhancing brand visibility, which is highly valued during special occasions. Initially, the corporate gifts were very simple such as branded mugs, T-shirts, diaries, calendars, etc. This trend has become so popular that there are now online and offline businesses dedicated to offering different types of creative ideas for bulk orders. There are boxes with a range of items depending on the occasion. It's no longer limited to expensive corporate gifts, but rather focused on the most creative, new innovative ideas because receivers happily post on social media, creating a different kind of hype," says Tanzir Dilshad Ditan, corporate brand marketing expert and founder of KrayonMag.



Long gone are the days when banks, government offices, and media houses received plastic bags full of dates for the month of Ramadan.

As the corporate gifting fad grew in the city, it evolved, and creativity took centre stage. The packaging became a point of concern and prestige, and a subtle competitiveness was marked in ideation, as to whose gift was the best of the season.

From Baishakhi narus and murals, to Shab-e-Barat gift bags of sugar, cardamoms, and ghee; these gifts grew to become lavish in order to spoil the ones receiving them.

This year's Ramadan also saw a flurry of gift boxes being delivered to special clients by public relations department of big corporations.

"For many of us, we didn't need to go grocery shopping. I have secretly started to wait for these unexpected gifts and yummy delights," says an anonymous homemaker jokingly.

She, however, also pointed out one shortcoming

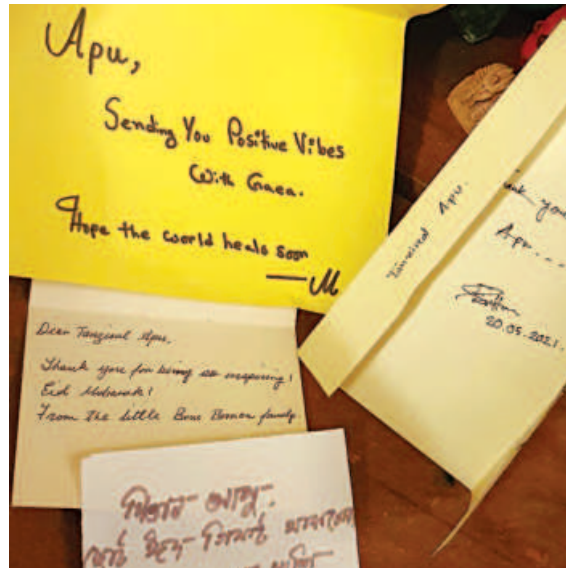


PHOTO: COURTESY

she observed in the "iftar boxes" that came her way.

"Most iftar boxes came from five-star hotels, catering to corporate offices. Amid all the fancy iftar menus, I noticed what was missing was our local sweets. Gurer Sandesh, Chhana, Balushai were replaced with pistachio Baklava, rolled date cookies, Kanafeh, Basboosa, which are typically Middle Eastern desserts," she pointed out.

All these huge iftar boxes carried similar menus, with zero variation in presentation or taste, she said, adding that regardless of what was in the box, such corporate gift boxes are still fun to receive and are well appreciated.

"Companies and marketers have long relied on the power of gifting to secure better relationships with potential and existing clients to show appreciation for their businesses. Due to the importance of the corporate gift culture, a whole new industry has emerged in Bangladesh, offering different designs and customised gift options," Ditan quips.

## LOHAGARA ACCIDENT

### 2 orphaned victims fighting to survive

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

College student Tasnia Islam Prema, who was severely injured in a road accident on the Chattogram-Cox's Bazar Highway in Chattogram's Lohagara upazila, is battling for her life in the intensive care unit of Chattogram Medical College Hospital (CMCH).

The 18-year-old sustained multiple injuries in the crash, which claimed the lives of her parents and two sisters.

Her maternal aunt Jesmin Rahman was seen anxiously waiting outside the ICU yesterday afternoon.

"The girl's parents and sisters are all gone. She has no family left.... All we ask from Allah now is that she survives. We want nothing else.

"My niece's condition is very critical. She isn't stable enough to be transferred to Dhaka. Since her admission here [CMCH], she hasn't responded. The doctors are trying their best to treat her."

The tragic accident occurred on Wednesday morning when a passenger bus collided with a microbus, killing 10 people and critically injuring three others.

All the victims, both deceased and injured, were passengers of the microbus. They were travelling to Cox's Bazar for the Eid holidays.

Another survivor, seven-year-old Araddhya Biswas, remains in critical condition at CMCH. She was moved to the ICU yesterday afternoon after her condition worsened.

Araddhya has suffered multiple injuries, including broken legs and a severe head injury.

Her uncle, Ashit Kumar Baroi, said, "No one could have imagined such a tragedy.

"Araddhya's parents died in the accident. For now, her treatment will continue in Chattogram. We will consult the doctors to decide the next steps."

Her cousin Durjoy, who was injured in the same accident, is also receiving treatment at CMCH for serious injuries, including fractures in his left arm and right leg, as well as a head injury.

## Tulip slams ACC for 'smear campaign'

STAR REPORT

British MP Tulip Siddiq has accused Bangladeshi authorities of orchestrating a smear campaign by making "false and vexatious claims" against her in the media without ever reaching out to her directly.

In a statement posted on X on Wednesday, Tulip said, "The Bangladesh authorities have been making false allegations about me to the media for months, but they have never contacted me directly."

The Labour MP for Hampstead and Kilburn resigned as a Treasury minister in January after being named in several corruption inquiries in Bangladesh.

Tulip, a niece of Bangladesh's deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina, said her lawyers wrote to Bangladeshi authorities more than two weeks ago, urging them to stop briefing the media with "baseless allegations." Her lawyers

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## Finally patched after spate of fatal crashes

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Faruk-e-Azam, adviser to the Liberation War affairs ministry, visited the site on Wednesday afternoon and instructed the RHD and the Chattogram District Administration to implement further safety measures.

Lohagara Upazila Nirbahi Officer Inamul Hasan said that as speed bumps can sometimes have adverse effects on highways, authorities are also planning to install a road divider as a long-term solution.

He, however, emphasised that a permanent solution would require expanding the highway to four or six lanes, which will take time.

Additionally, authorities are exploring measures to prevent salt-laden trucks from making the road slippery in the mornings, including the possibility of shifting salt transportation to river and sea routes.

A total of 15 people were killed and 21 others injured in the recent accidents.

On Monday, five people died, and 10 were injured in a head-on collision between two passenger buses. The following day, a microbus bound for Cox's Bazar plunged into a roadside paddy field, injuring eight people. On Wednesday, a passenger bus ran over a microbus, killing 10 people and critically injuring three others. The victims were on their way to Cox's Bazar for Eid holidays.

The bodies of the 10 deceased from Wednesday's crash have been handed over to their families.

Dohazari Highway Police Station returned the remains of eight victims, while Panchlaish Police Station handed over the other two.

Shuvo Ranjan Chakma, officer-in-charge of Dohazari Highway Police Station, confirmed that relatives and acquaintances collected the bodies on Wednesday night.

Meanwhile, the Bangladesh Road Transport Authority has announced compensation of Tk 5 lakh for the families of each deceased and Tk 3 lakh for each injured person.

The Chattogram District Administration will provide an additional Tk 50,000 to the families of the deceased and Tk 15,000 to those injured, said Deputy Commissioner Farida Khanam.

## US tariff storm bears down on Bangladesh

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Walmart and Target to pass the tariff costs onto us," he said. To counter this, it is crucial for sellers to collectively agree not to accept a reduction in prices to offset the tariff. The relevant association must closely monitor renegotiated prices and enforce penalties for non-compliance with this agreed position, Hussain said.

"Additionally, we should explore the possibility of qualifying our exports for duty exemptions by emphasising their status as low-priced essential products."

**TRADE REALIGNMENT**  
Analysts point out this escalation is part of broader regional trade realignment, as neighbouring India and Pakistan also face reciprocal tariffs of 27 percent and 29 percent, respectively. Cambodia faces the highest tariff at 49 percent closely followed by other Asian countries.

China, the primary focus of Trump's trade agenda, will face a 34 percent reciprocal tariff, which stacks atop an existing 20 percent fentanyl-related duty and separate levies on categories like solar panels. That brings the effective tariff rate on many Chinese goods to well above 50 percent.

India said it was studying the impact of the new tariff and vowed to push for a trade deal this year, signalling a conciliatory tone despite failing to get relief from Trump's trade policy.

New Delhi's response came hours after Trump announced the drastic tariffs that piled more stress on an ailing global economy and sent world stock markets and oil prices tumbling.

India's export competitiveness would be less impacted than that of key rivals due to its position in the middle of the tariff rates, said the country's industry bodies, Assocham and the Federation of Indian Export Organisations.

The tariffs would remain in effect until Trump determined that the "threat posed by the trade deficit and underlying non-reciprocal treatment is satisfied, resolved, or mitigated," the White House said.

The US has a trade deficit of \$46 billion with India.

But the reciprocal tariff will pile pressure on Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who counts himself among Trump's friends, to find ways to get India off the hook. Last week, Reuters reported that

New Delhi is open to cutting tariffs on US imports worth \$23 billion to mitigate the impact on its exports in sectors like gems and jewellery, pharmaceuticals, and auto parts.

Modi's administration has taken a number of steps to win over Trump by lowering tariffs on high-end bikes, bourbon and dropping a tax on digital services that affected US tech giants.

Before the reciprocal announcement, the simple average US tariff rates were at 3.3 percent, compared with India's 17 percent, the White House said.

Ajay Sahai, director general at the Federation of India Export Organisations, said the reciprocal tariff on India was lower than that of key competitors like Vietnam and Bangladesh, which could help Indian apparel and footwear sectors.

These tariffs signal a calculated shift in US trade policy aimed at addressing "trade imbalances and reshaping international trade practices".

Economists and trade groups have voiced concerns that these moves may invite retaliatory tariffs, potentially igniting trade conflicts and raising costs for businesses and consumers.

Washington's friends and foes united in criticism of measures they fear will deal a devastating blow to global trade. China, the world's No. 2 economy, vowed countermeasures, as did the European Union.

"The consequences will be dire for millions of people around the globe," EU chief Ursula von der Leyen said, adding the 27-member bloc was preparing to hit back if talks with Washington failed.

US Treasury Chief Scott Bessent earlier warned any retaliatory moves would only lead to escalation.

Among close US allies, the European Union was targeted with a 20 percent rate, Japan with 24 percent, South Korea with 25 percent and Taiwan with 32 percent. Even some tiny territories and uninhabited islands in the Antarctic were hit by tariffs, according to a list posted by the White House on X.

"This is not the act of a friend," said Prime Minister Anthony Albanese of Australia, a nation often described as America's "deputy sheriff" in Asia.

"The [Trump] administration's tariffs have no basis in logic and they go against the basis of our two nations' partnership."

## Restoring mutual trust key objective

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But bilateral relations have remained strained.

India has repeatedly expressed concerns over alleged attacks on religious minorities in Bangladesh, which the Bangladeshi government has termed interference in its internal affairs.

Bangladesh has witnessed growing anti-India sentiment for different reasons, including New Delhi's alleged support to Sheikh Hasina during her 15-year rule. She fled to Delhi after losing power on August 5 last year.

New Delhi has not responded to Dhaka's request to extradite the former prime minister to face trial for killings committed during the mass uprising.

Meanwhile, the Indian High Commission in Dhaka has substantially reduced the number of visas for Bangladeshis, citing a staff shortage.

Against this backdrop, the meeting between Prof Yunus and Prime Minister Modi could serve as a confidence-building measure, even amid lingering concerns between the two nations on various issues, diplomatic sources said.

"We want to have a good relationship with India, a good working relationship," Adviser Touhid told the media recently.

Foreign ministry officials emphasised the deep interdependence between Bangladesh and India, warning that strained relations hinder progress on both bilateral and regional fronts.

According to diplomatic sources, the Bangladesh side would touch upon at least nine points, starting with Bangladesh's appreciation of historical ties with India and recent diplomatic courtesies, and acknowledge India's role as a trusted neighbour and development partner.

The sources said the chief adviser would reaffirm the interim government's commitment to a smooth democratic transition, stability, and regional peace, while stressing the importance of policy continuity in existing bilateral commitments, particularly in security, trade, and connectivity.

They said Bangladesh would express readiness to engage in deeper political and economic cooperation and propose convening the Joint Consultative Commission (JCC), a foreign secretary-level dialogue, soon. "We would propose relaxing visa requirements for students, patients,

and business communities, especially to introduce more flexible and expedited visa processing for medical, educational, and business purposes," one of the sources said.

Bangladesh may also request removal of Non-Tariff Barriers and enhanced market access for Bangladesh exports, propose accelerating progress on BBN (Bangladesh Bhutan, India Nepal) motor vehicle agreement, BIMSTEC transport corridors, and energy grid connectivity.

Dhaka would also highlight the importance of train connectivity for trade, tourism, and people-to-people ties, while proposing the resumption of Bangladesh-India cross-border train operations, which have remained suspended.

It would stress improved cooperation on border security, with the emphasis on avoiding civilian casualties.

Sources said Dhaka would suggest enhancing joint patrols and information sharing to prevent untoward incidents.

Bangladesh will also urge India's active diplomatic role in facilitating the safe, dignified, and voluntary repatriation of Rohingya to Myanmar, a diplomatic official said. It would mention the challenges Bangladesh has been facing in sheltering 1.2 million refugees. Dhaka would also highlight the regional security challenges the refugee crisis poses.

The official said Prof Yunus would reaffirm Bangladesh's commitment to strengthening BIMSTEC cooperation, suggest joint projects in disaster management, climate change adaptation, and energy security, and express optimism about opening a new chapter of trust and collaboration.

He may also formally invite Modi to visit Bangladesh.

An Indian diplomat from New Delhi said India was eager to advance mutual interests and priorities, but it is crucial for India that Bangladesh pays due attention to their security and strategic concerns in the region.

"We will continue to work with Bangladesh on this," he told The Daily Star.

The diplomat emphasised that beyond trade and economic ties, stability in Bangladesh is crucial for regional security. Therefore, fostering a constructive and cooperative relationship with Bangladesh is essential for safeguarding India's borders.