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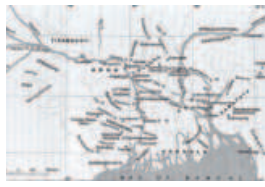
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Dhaka confident of riding out tariff storm

Say advisers and exporters; govt to send two letters to Trump administration within 48 hours

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladeshi exporters remain optimistic about withstanding the Trump administration's sweeping tariffs, hoping that bold diplomacy and a united front at home will shield them from the trade shock.

Manufacturers and exporters see a narrow but promising window to strengthen Bangladesh's position in the US market, as Dhaka signals its intention to reduce the trade imbalance and actively engage with Washington.

To that end, the government will send two formal letters to the US administration within 48 hours, laying out Bangladesh's plan to address the bilateral trade gap and remove both tariff and non-tariff barriers.

Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus will write to US President Donald Trump, while Commerce Adviser Sk Bashir Uddin will address the United States Trade Representative (USTR), the US government's lead trade negotiation office. Both letters will outline specific policy measures to deepen trade ties and restore confidence.

These initiatives come in direct response to Trump's new reciprocal tariff regime announced on April 2, which has upended traditional global trade frameworks and triggered re-evaluations in capitals around the world.

Bangladeshi exporters have expressed alarm, warning that the new tariffs could disrupt exports to the US, which remains Bangladesh's single largest export destination.

Garment manufacturers say the new tariffs, effective from April 9, are likely to provide international buyers with additional leverage to further suppress prices paid to Bangladeshi exporters.

The decision to draft the letters was taken yesterday at a high-level meeting at the finance ministry, attended by four advisers to the interim



SUFFOCATING THE NEIGHBOURHOODS

Thick smoke billowing from the burning waste at Matuail landfill in Dhaka's Demra shrouds the sky. The toxic haze drifts towards the neighbourhoods forcing people to inhale the nearly unbreathable air. Exposure to such poor quality air not only triggers short-term health issues but also long-term respiratory complications. Today is World Health Day.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

“One thing we all agree on is that Bangladesh must not lose its competitiveness, especially not to a rival country.”
Syed Nasim Manzur, MD, Apex Footwear Ltd

government, senior bureaucrats and representatives from key export sectors.

Following the meeting, Syed Nasim Manzur, president of the Leathergoods and Footwear Manufacturers & Exporters Association of Bangladesh (LFMEAB), expressed strong optimism.

“From the private sector, we are extremely confident. If there's a level playing field, we can succeed -- we've done it before, and we can do it again,” he said. “It's the government's responsibility to create that level playing field. The rest is on us. That's why a united effort is essential.”

Manzur said the current sense of momentum was driven by the government's clear and time-bound plan. “We've said it before: this has a shelf life. If we don't act within that window, we will fall behind. But today, I feel we may be able to avoid that. And more importantly, we can overcome it.”

Manzur, managing director of Apex Footwear Ltd, emphasised that all stakeholders were aligned on one core principle: national interest comes first. “Identifying opportunities while safeguarding Bangladesh's interests is essential,” he said.

“One thing we all agree on is that Bangladesh must not lose its competitiveness, especially not to a rival country,” Manzur added.

He also underscored the importance of broadening the export base. “Of course, RMG is our main export driver. But there's a world beyond RMG. We're seeing new sectors emerge,” he said.

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UPRISING ASSAULT
61 pro-AL lawyers land behind bars

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday ordered 64 pro-Awami League lawyers to be sent to jail after rejecting their bail prayers in a case filed over assault, vandalism, and attempted murder during the uprising last year.

Three of the 64 fled the courtroom on hearing the court's rejection of their bail petitions, court sources said, adding that their identities could not be confirmed.

Former presidents of Dhaka Bar Association Saidur Rahman Manik, Gazi Shah Alam, Mahbubur Rahman, its former general secretary Asaduzzaman Khan Rachi, and former public prosecutor Nazrul Islam Shamim are among the accused.

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How our media got politicised

Media Reform Commission report details 15 years of censorship and cronyism

ZYMA ISLAM

How did our media get to a place where censorship is rampant and media organisations pander to political parties?

The Media Reform Commission found a key reason: 30 years of free passes to political allies to establish media organisations with dubious sources of funding.

The commission conducted a survey among 45,000 households and found 79.46 percent participants saying that the media was not independent because of political interference, and just over half said that media freedom was hindered by the interference of influential figures. A quarter mentioned that the business interests of the media outlet owners negatively affected their freedom.

“Over the last three decades, nobody has questioned the source of funding for mass media. As a result, mass media has been politicised. Many large business groups have used mass media as a shield to protect their

business interests and influenced editorial policies to serve the government of the day,” says the Media Reform Commission report.

“They have concentrated power by each owning multiple newspapers, TV channels, online news portals and radio stations. These have hurt competition and eroded public trust in the media.”

The report goes on to say, “All investors have to declare the source of income of their capital, there is no such compulsion when it comes to investing in media. As a result, black money has entered the industry.”

“Those who have invested black money and abused the influential power of the media to protect their own vested or political interests have created anarchy within the industry.”

In 1996, when Awami League came into power, it provided licences to Ekushey TV (ETV), ATN Bangla and Channel i. But the government also closed down Dainik Bangla, Times, Bichitra and Ananda Bichitra.

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BUSINESS

Remittances hit record \$3.29b in March

Bangladesh received a record \$3.29 billion in remittances in March -- the highest monthly figure to date -- marking a 65 percent year-on-year surge.

The rise is largely attributed to stronger inflows through formal channels, an uptick in overseas employment and expatriates sending more money home for Eid-related expenses.

Remittance earnings have been climbing steadily since August last year, providing some much-needed breathing space.

STORY ON B1

STANDING WITH GAZA

Students go on strike across Bangladesh

STAR REPORT

Students, universities, and political parties have announced programmes in solidarity with the oppressed people of Gaza.

Today's programmes include strikes in educational institutions and workplaces and demonstrations in the capital and other cities, denouncing the ongoing genocide and mass destruction in Gaza.

The announcements follow a global call to action by Palestinian activists, urging schools, universities, offices, and courts to shut down simultaneously to demand an immediate end to the violence.

In response, students from dozens of institutions across the country announced the suspension of academic activities. Dhaka University (DU) and Rajshahi University (RU) authorities officially backed the strike.

Since Israel launched its offensive on Gaza -- a 365 square-kilometre enclave of 2.4 million people -- on October 7, 2023, at least 50,695 Palestinians have been killed and 115,338 others wounded. According to the United Nations, nearly 69 percent of Gaza's buildings have been destroyed or damaged.

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PHOTO: AFP

Demonstrators march during the nationwide “Hands Off!” protest against US President Donald Trump and his adviser, Tesla CEO Elon Musk in New York. Tens of thousands of protesters flooded the streets of major US cities on Saturday to oppose the divisive policies of Trump.

Anti-Trump rallies rock US

AFP, Washington

Tens of thousands of protesters flooded the streets of major US cities on Saturday to oppose the divisive policies of President Donald Trump, in the largest demonstrations since his return to the White House.

Opponents of the Republican president's policies -- from government staffing cuts to trade tariffs and eroding civil liberties -- rallied in Washington, New York, Houston, Florida, Colorado and Los Angeles, among other locations.

“I am so angry, I'm so mad, all the time, yes. A bunch of privileged, white alleged rapists are controlling our country. It's not great,” said New York painter Shaina Kesner, 43, joining a crowd marching through the heart of Manhattan.

In Washington, thousands of demonstrators -- many traveling from across the United States -- gathered on the National Mall where dozens of speakers rallied opposition to Trump.

“We have about 100 people who have come down by bus and van from New Hampshire to protest against this outrageous administration (that) is causing us to lose our allies across the world, and causing devastation to people here at home,” said Diane Kolifirath, 64, a bike tour guide.

“They're gutting our government.”

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