

TARIFFS AND TRADE WARS

# Bangladesh's path in a new geo-economic order



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The trade war between the US and China has become a significant topic of discussion among policymakers and academics since Donald Trump took office in 2025. It started during Trump 1.0, continued under President Joe Biden, and further expanded under the Trump 2.0 era. Trade policy pundits argue that these policies have been criticised globally. However, analysis of American industrial history, economic prosperity, and the current state of international trade imbalances can broaden our perspective on the trade war and American policies.

Reindustrialisation, entrepreneurship, innovation, and creating opportunities for millions of individuals have become crucial for developed economies. The trade war of Trump 2.0 will likely remain active in the coming years and affect global value chains (GVCs). Economies across the globe might

optimisation of resources and strategies, and geo-economic and geopolitical realities.

China has shown resilience and successfully reconfigured its value chains since the trade war of Trump 1.0. However, not all economies have the free hand and resources to do so. China was the largest source of imports to the US until 2022, capturing 21 percent of the import share. Since then, China has reduced its exports to this market by diverting and increasing its exports to non-US and non-EU markets in the Global South. They have also invested heavily in developing their technological prowess under the "Made in China 2025" policy and the Belt and Road Initiative.

Bangladesh, not possessing all of China's capabilities, can learn from China's experience and reformulate international trade strategies for geographical and product diversification.

before the start of the trade war, Bangladesh's RMG industry faced serious challenges, such as low-cost and labour-intensive manufacturing, highly concentrated export markets, intermediate component and raw material sourcing, political uncertainty, graduation to a lower-middle-income country, and loss of advantages as a least developing economy.

Bangladesh should diversify its intermediate components and raw materials

area, might lead the US to reconsider the tariff issue, offer Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) facilities, and attract more American investment and technology transfers.

Bangladesh's economy and the current administration are facing challenges due to the US tariff imposition, though based on a flawed measurement. The current market dynamics and restructuring of the GVCs have led to a shift in the RMG sector from

business environment. Public policies should focus on improving the manufacturing ecosystem so that firms from other countries choose Bangladesh as their production hub to export to global markets. The competitiveness of RMG products depends not only on the cost of labour but also on the physical and soft infrastructure, both formal and informal institutions, and on stimulating public policies.

Improving infrastructures and institutions, including the smooth operation of seaports, shipping, customs administration, and banking services, can help RMG factories enhance their competitiveness. Bangladesh should diversify its export market to non-traditional markets, such as African, Middle Eastern, and South American markets, where there is a huge demand for low-cost, high-value RMG products. The interim government should discuss and negotiate with the two largest neighbouring markets, India and China, to remove non-tariff-related barriers (NTB) so Bangladeshi products can enter those markets without hassle.

Bangladesh faces the prospect of losing several advantages it enjoys as a least developed country. To address this, the government should renegotiate or ask for a delay in applying tariffs once it graduates to a lower-middle income country. For the medium and long term, Bangladesh must sign free trade agreements with leading export markets to make trade smoother. We must focus on upgrading the value ladder for our exportable products, diversifying product baskets, and ensuring technology transfer through international joint ventures and other equity investments.

People generally do not like "change" and prefer to maintain the "status quo," which leads to organisational inertia. Crisis and a chaotic environment bring opportunities to think freshly, introduce harsh reform, and rebuild organisations. The current global trade frictions can help create many opportunities for Bangladesh's manufacturing industry if proper reforms, investment in infrastructure and technology, and institutional policies are updated, and effectiveness is improved.



**Bangladesh's RMG sector needs to come out of the low-cost, low-tech, and labour-intensive business models.**

FILE PHOTO: STAR

sourcing instead of relying on only China and India. This could involve enhancing trade relations with Pakistan, Central Asian countries, Southeast Asian countries, and the US. Many Central American countries use American cotton to produce RMG products and export them to the US in a duty-free and quota-free mode. This strategy could lessen the trade deficit and encourage American policymakers to reconsider tariff levels for Bangladesh. Demonstrating a sincere effort in reducing trade deficits and strengthening partnerships in the geo-economic and geopolitical arena, including in the Indo-Pacific

low-cost, low-tech, and labour-intensive business models to high-tech and higher value-added products. To survive and prosper in this competitive business ecosystem, the government should play the role of promoter by developing specific initiatives and strategies that encourage, enable, and encourage the RMG sector to come out of the low-cost, low-tech, and labour-intensive business models.

Bangladesh can attract firms quitting the Chinese and Vietnamese markets by developing the skills and productivity of its employees, investing in advanced technologies, and creating a welcoming

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reconfigure their participation in GVCs by re-orchestrating their downstream and upstream involvement depending on each economy's context. The global production networks need to consider economic efficiency, productivity,

Thanks to its participation in GVCs, Bangladesh has become the second-largest exporter of RMG. The imposition of tariffs has created panic among the RMG industry, policymakers, and other stakeholders. Even

## REMEMBERING MUSTAFA ZAMAN ABBASI

# A folk legend who bridged religion and culture



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SYED MUNIR KHASRU

The passing of Mustafa Zaman Abbasi marks the end of an era in Bangla folk music. More than a singer, scholar, or musicologist, he embodied the soul of a cultural tradition whose depth, nuance, and spirit found the most authentic expression in him. Now that he is gone, something irreplaceable has gone with him.

He was the youngest son of legendary folk singer Abbasuddin Ahmed. He spent his early years in Kolkata before moving to Dhaka, where he earned his BA and MA from the University of Dhaka. Raised in a family steeped in music and tradition, his path was shaped by both heritage and conviction.

Abbasi was second to none in Bangladesh's realm of folk music. In this age of fleeting fame and fast trends, his work was steady, deliberate and foundational. Through his performances and popular programmes like *Amar Thikana* and *Bhora Nadeer Banke* on Bangladesh Betar and Bangladesh Television, he brought folk music into homes across the nation. He studied and collected Bhawaiya, Bhatiali, Murshidi, Chatka songs rooted in rivers, fields, and folklore. Over five decades, he not only performed but also preserved thousands of songs, giving them context and notation. His literary and musical contributions resulted in over 50 publications, including monumental works like *Bhatir Desher Bhatiali* and *History of Folk Music*. He curated folk anthologies, led music research groups, and served as president of UNESCO's Bangladesh National Committee of Music. Abbasi embodied cultural stewardship at its highest level.

His influence was not confined to music as he represented something more powerful i.e., the harmonious coexistence of faith and culture. Abbasi was a devout Muslim, deeply spiritual and grounded in religious thought. He wrote extensively on Islam, including books on the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), and translated the Holy Quran by Sufi

scholar Sahl al-Tustari, and yet, he was never insular. He sang devotional pieces like "Madeenar dhuli aji dhannya", penned spiritual works such as "Rumir Oloukik Bagan" and "Muhammad er naam (The Name of Muhammad)", yet he was equally at ease writing contemporary literature like "Harinakhi" and "Shondhye Hoyni Ekhono". Abbasi's understanding of Islam was gentle. He believed, and often said, that Muslims should also love believers of other faiths.



**Mustafa Zaman Abbasi (1937-2025)**

He viewed culture not as a threat to religion, but as a way of expressing the divine, through melody, rhythm, and word. He stood as a rare example of a life where religion and culture were not at odds but in conversation. In Abbasi, faith and folklore, prayer, and poetry, came together seamlessly. He showed that one could be God-fearing and a practising Muslim without being immutable, culturally literate without being secularist, and that tradition need not be preserved in rigidity but in joyful celebration.

Abbasi's deep and resonant voice carried not only songs, but values.

It carried stories of rural Bengal, laments of lovers, invocations of river gods, and praises of Allah. It carried the past into the present and gave it relevance. Those who heard him sing will remember the sincerity in his tone, the reverence in his expression, and the precision behind every performance.

His contributions were widely recognised. The Ekushey Padak, Bangladesh's second highest civilian award, was among many accolades he received. Also included are Nazrul Academy Award, Shilpakala Academy Award, Lalou Parishad Award, and Abbasuddin Gold Medal. He was the director general of Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy and participated in global cultural forums. Even in his later years, he remained intellectually active. He taught at Independent University, where he founded the Kazi Nazrul Islam and Abbasuddin

Ahmed Research and Study Centre. He engaged with his students as equals, discussing music, literature, and faith with the same warmth he shared with longtime friends. Abbasi served as district governor of Rotary Bangladesh, where both he and his late wife, Asma Abbasi, district chairperson of Inner Wheel Bangladesh, dedicated themselves to community service and social welfare. Asma Abbasi was a distinguished educator and author in her own right, she was Abbasi's partner in every sense. Together, they built a life that reflected not only deep religious values but also

cultural enlightenment. Asma Abbasi being the younger sister of my mother Najma Khasru, I witnessed the synergy of the Khala-Khalu or Abbasi-Asma partnership. They have been blessed with two bright, intelligent, and culturally talented daughters Samira Abbasi and Sharmini Abbasi.

At a time when religion and culture seem to be at odds, as people with extreme views on both sides

make it sound like it must be one or the other, Abbasi was a living example they are not mutually exclusive but rather complimentary. Late Mustafa Zaman Abbasi was one who lived by example whereby he would say prayers five times in the mosque, while not missing an opportunity to attend a cultural evening.

For those of us who knew Abbasi closely, his passing is more than just

a loss for the family but, above all, he was a kindhearted, graceful soul who lived through his beliefs, music, and words. He lived a life worth singing about. May the Almighty grant his soul eternal peace in the afterworld as he treats the gardens of heaven murmuring the hymns, songs, and poetry eloquently as he did in this world.


**Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh**  
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**Memo No- 35.01.1213.406.14.259.25, 906** **Date- 18.05.25**

e-Tenders are invited in e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) by Executive Engineer, RHD, Road Division, Brahmanbaria for the procurement of :

S.L. No	Package No.	Tender ID	Name of the works	Downloaded & Last Selling Date & Time	Closing & Opening Date & Time
1.	e-GP/BRD/ADP/BABNSR and SNL/ WP-6/2024- 2025	1107138	Earth Work, Construction of Rigid Pavement, Flexible Pavement (Reconstruction, Widening & Strengthening), Surfacing, Drain (RCC U Drain & Brick Masonry U-Drain) and Protective work at 1st km to 6th km (Ch.0+000 m to Ch.6+000 m) of Sarail-Nasirmagar-Lakhai Road (R-220) under Road Division, Brahmanbaria during the year 2024-2025.	12/05/2025 11:30 to 18/06/2025 17:00	19/06/2025 12:30
2.	e-GP/BRD/ADP/BABNSR and SNL/ WP-07 /2024-2025	1107140	Earth Work, Flexible Pavement (Widening & Strengthening), Surfacing, RCC Box Culvert (1 Nos) and Protective work at 6th km to 12th km (Ch.6+000m to 12+000m) of SarailNasirmagar-Lakhai Road (R-220) under Road Division, Brahmanbaria during the year 2024- 2025.	12/05/2025 11:30 to 18/06/2025 17:00	19/06/2025 12:30
3.	e-GP/BRD/ADP/BABNSR and SNL/ WP-08 /2024-2025	1107141	Earth Work, Construction of Rigid Pavement, Flexible Pavement (Widening & Strengthening), Surfacing, RCC Box Culvert (2 Nos) and Protective work at 13th km to 18th km (Ch.12+000m to 18+000m) of Sarail-Nasirmagar-Lakhai Road (R-220) under Road Division, Brahmanbaria during the year 2024-2025.	12/05/2025 11:30 to 18/06/2025 17:00	19/06/2025 12:30
4.	e-GP/BRD/ADP/BABNSR and SNL/ WP-09 /2024-2025	1107145	Earth Work, Construction of Rigid Pavement, Flexible Pavement (Widening & Strengthening), Surfacing, Bridge (1 No) and Protective work at 19th km to 26th (p) km (Ch.18+000 m to 25+128m) of Sarail-Nasirmagar- Lakhai Road (R-220) under Road Division, Brahmanbaria during the year 2024-2025.	12/05/2025 11:30 to 18/06/2025 17:00	19/06/2025 12:30
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