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Pvt sector sidelined in tariff talks

At a Star roundtable, industry leaders, trade experts slam govt's handling of negotiations with US

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Business leaders and trade experts have expressed frustration over the government's handling of negotiations with the United States on punitive tariffs, warning that poor preparation, lack of transparency, and minimal private sector involvement have left Bangladesh vulnerable in its most crucial export market.

Their concerns were aired at a roundtable hosted yesterday by The Daily Star, titled "What's Next for Bangladesh After US Tariff Talks?", where participants criticised the government's reactive and disjointed response to the Trump administration's imposition of a steep 35 percent tariff on Bangladeshi goods.

As Dhaka prepares for a third round of negotiations with the Office of the United States Trade Representative -- after two earlier rounds failed to secure a deal -- a deepening trust deficit between the government and industry stakeholders has come to the surface.

Business leaders warned that without their direct involvement, negotiators risk accepting terms that could render large parts of the country's garment industry uncompetitive.

Some participants said Bangladesh's failure to act swiftly and strategically has resulted in one of the highest tariff rates among exporting nations. In contrast, Vietnam, a direct competitor in the global apparel market, secured a significantly

RECOMMENDATIONS

2 tier committees need to be formed immediately

Intense negotiations with USTR for tariff reduction must continue

Lessons must be learnt from other countries' negotiations

US trade bodies like AAFA, others should be used to convince Trump admin

negotiating."

He called for forming formal negotiation support committees that include BGMEA leadership and relevant business leaders. "If we, the stakeholders, are not told where the problem is, how can we help?" he asked.

Mahmud Hasan Khan, president of the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA), confirmed that the industry was not part of the negotiation process at the outset. "We've been engaged in a limited capacity only in recent days," he said.

He, however, cautioned that broader geopolitical considerations beyond trade seem to be at play. Due to a non-disclosure agreement (NDA) signed between Dhaka and Washington, stakeholders remain

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lower rate of 20 percent, leaving Bangladesh at a distinct disadvantage.

"This is our single biggest export market. And we may lose it because we weren't proactive," said AK Azad, chairman and CEO of Ha-Meem Group. He argued that the government had failed to hire experienced lobbyists or involve the private sector at a critical early stage when the direction of talks could have been influenced.

"Global brands are already anxious," Azad added. "They see us lagging while others move forward... We didn't even know what our neighbours were



Nari Samhati, a women's rights group, takes out a torch procession from in front of the National Museum in the capital's Shahbagh last night to commemorate the role of female student protesters in the July uprising.

Govt declares day of state mourning today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has declared a one-day state mourning on the occasion of "July Martyrs' Day" to be observed today.

The Cabinet Division issued a gazette notification in this regard yesterday.

Earlier, the cabinet officially recognised July 16 as "July Martyrs' Day".

According to the Cabinet Division, the day will be observed for the first time today. As part of the observance, national flags will be flown at half-mast at all government, semi-government, autonomous, and educational institutions, as well as at

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PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

CONSENSUS TALKS Key amendments must pass JS, public

Parties agree on referendum for changing caretaker system

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Political parties yesterday reached a consensus that any constitutional amendment concerning the caretaker government system must secure a two-thirds majority in parliament, followed by a referendum.

They also agreed on this two-step process for bringing any changes to the constitution's preamble, Article 8 (on basic principles), Article 48 (concerning the appointment and powers of the president), Article 56 (regarding the appointment of

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The hands that stretched to freedom

S DILIP ROY

Abu Sayed is no longer just a name.

The English department student of Begum Rokeya University, Rangpur (BRUR) was brutally shot dead by police on this very day a year ago.

Martyred on his own campus for protesting a discriminatory quota system, he



has become a symbol of a generation's conscience in its fight against authoritarianism.

The video of his killing -- Sayed with arms outstretched, a single stick in hand -- showed how metal pellets struck him one after another.

The footage, which spread like wildfire, did more than galvanise the quota reform

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A Palestinian man mourns while holding the shrouded body of a child killed in overnight Israeli strikes, inside the morgue of Al-Shifa Hospital in Gaza City yesterday. Story on page 12.

PHOTO: AFP

'It felt like an abduction'
Says Assamese teacher pushed into Bangladesh

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN and DIPAN NANDY

Khairul Islam, a 48 year-old primary school teacher in Assam's Muriagon village, had just finished his evening lessons on May 27 when he was dragged into a nightmare.

Khairul Master, as he is locally known, was audibly shaken when recalling the day during a telephone conversation with The Daily Star yesterday.

When he heard that this paper was calling from Bangladesh, his voice broke.

"Bangladesh gave me a new life," he said. "I will pray for this country from the bottom of my heart for the rest of my life."

Khairul recounted how members of India's Border Security Force (BSF) arrived without warning. "They came to take me away. I resisted. I kept asking, 'Why me? What did I do?' But they didn't answer. They slapped me."

What followed, he described, felt like an abduction.

"They struck me with a truncheon. Then they blindfolded me, tied my hands,

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NEWS ANALYSIS

Crime 'stable' at 11 murders, 15 rapes a day!

Jan-June police data show

TANIM AHMED

A government statement claiming there has been no significant rise in crime begins with the observation that recent news reports, hinting at a spike in crime, are "fuelling fear and insecurity among citizens".

The chief adviser's press wing goes on to assert that the official crime statistics from September 2024 to June 2025 do not "completely" support the claim that crime is sharply rising this year. "In fact, the data reveals stabilisation in major crime categories over the past 10 months."

These are not the "hallmarks of a crime wave" because some serious crimes are supposedly either "declining or stable", CA's press wing claims.

It says, "Citizens should remain vigilant but also trust that law enforcement is maintaining control, as reflected by relatively stable crime trends."

Before going into the two tables provided by the press wing, the rhetoric begs to be examined. The statement seems to blame the media for fuelling fear and insecurity through its inaccurate reporting, much of which was triggered by the gruesome death of a scrap trader in Old Dhaka, at a stone's throw from an Ansar office.

The press wing presses the point that crime has stabilised, not risen; that it is declining or stable. The language belies the extent of insensitivity of the chief adviser's spokespersons when they talk

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We Deeply Mourn

Inna Lillahi Wa Inna Ilahi Razi'un

Truly, to Allah we belong and truly, to Him we shall return



Sayeed Hossain Chowdhury

11 November 1957 - 15 July 2025

ONE Bank PLC family deeply mourns the sad demise of Sayeed Hossain Chowdhury, founder and former Chairman of ONE Bank PLC. He breathed his last on Tuesday, 15 July, 2025. (Inna Lillahi Wa Inna Ilahi Razi'un. Truly, to Allah we belong and truly, to Him we shall return).

Sayeed H. Chowdhury was also the founder Chairman and CEO of HRC Group and a key figure in the development of ONE Bank PLC. He served as Chairman of ONE Bank from 2001 to 2008 and again from 2012-2020 and in later years as a Director. A distinguished business leader, he completed his education in the UK and began his career managing his family's business in the Gulf before returning to Bangladesh. In 1991, he established HRC Group, which grew into a major conglomerate involved in shipping, real estate, media, finance, and IT. He also held leadership roles in several organisations, namely Media New Age, ISN Ltd., and BGIC, and served as President of BOGSOA and Honorary Consul of Spain in Bangladesh. He will forever be remembered with deep respect and admiration.

We pray for the salvation of his departed soul and extend profound condolence to members of his bereaved family.



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