



“Bangladesh must shift from preference-driven growth to productivity-driven competitiveness and deepen collaboration between government and business.”

Anisuzzaman Chowdhury
Special assistant to the chief adviser



“When industries don’t have energy security, then proceeding with the LDC graduation will be suicidal with the imposition of export tariffs.”

AK Azad
Chairman of Ha-Meem Group



“What we are requesting is not to avoid graduation, but to delay its implementation by three to five years so that our industries have time to adjust.”

Anwar-Ul-Alam Chowdhury Parvez
President of BCI



“Even if Bangladesh wants to pursue a deferral, it should also prepare for the graduation. For example, Vietnam has signed FTAs with the EU, reducing its export tariffs to zero.”

Mustafizur Rahman
Distinguished fellow, CPD



“Let’s invite the Committee for Development Policy to evaluate the private sector and economic readiness for graduation immediately. Let’s start lobbying with the EU and friendly states for support on deferral.”

Syed Nasim Manzur MD
of Apex Footwear Ltd



“When Bangladesh graduates from the LDC category, foreign borrowing will become expensive, directly impacting exporters who rely on affordable credit to maintain competitiveness in global markets.”

Mashrur Arefin
MD of City Bank



“Even if Bangladesh wants to pursue a deferral of graduation, it should also take preparations for the graduation.”

Zahid Hussain
Former lead economist of World Bank’s Dhaka office



“We need to explore all possible avenues. We should first try to defer the graduation. We need to make an effort. But if we don’t improve our capabilities, there will be no benefit.”

Md Fazlul Hoque
MD of Plummy Fashions Ltd



“There are sufficient arguments why we should not rush to graduation. We have to preserve our international trade preferences. These are going to erode the moment we graduate.”

Kamran T Rahman
President of MCCI



“As 75 percent of Bangladesh’s exports are linked to LDC privileges, the country should team up with Nepal and Laos, also set to graduate, to push for a collective deferment.”

Mohammad Abdur Razzaque
Chairman of RAPID

Bangladesh condemns Israeli attack on Qatar

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The unprovoked and unjustifiable Israeli attack on the sovereign territory of Qatar is not merely an attack on Qatar but an affront to the dignity of the entire Muslim Ummah, said Foreign Affairs Adviser Touhid Hossain yesterday.

He made the remarks while attending the Emergency Arab-Islamic Summit held in Doha on September 15, 2025.

At the summit, Bangladesh called for coordinated diplomatic, political and economic measures by all OIC member states to deter further Israeli provocation and aggression.

The summit was chaired by Emir of Qatar Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani. OIC Secretary General Hussain Ibrahim Taha and Arab League Secretary General Ahmed Aboul Gheit delivered welcome remarks.

It was attended by 24 heads of state and government, while delegations from other countries were led by foreign ministers or senior dignitaries.

The leaders called for an immediate end to Israeli occupation of Gaza and the establishment of a Palestinian state under the two-state formula, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

They urged uninterrupted access to international aid and food supplies for the people of Gaza, saying Palestinian men and women are dying of starvation.

They also demanded intervention from the UN Security Council and the International Court of Justice to hold Israeli leaders accountable for violating the territorial sovereignty of Muslim states and committing genocide in Palestine.

Tenure of consensus commission extended by one month

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The interim government yesterday extended the tenure of National Consensus Commission by one month.

A gazette notification signed by Cabinet Secretary Dr Sheikh Abdur Rashid said the commission, formed through SRO No-55 Act, 2025 on February 12, will now continue its work until October 15.

The seven-member commission, led by Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus, was tasked with reviewing and adopting recommendations from six national reform commissions. As part of its responsibilities, it has been engaging with political parties to reach agreements on reforms.

Reform or brace for setbacks

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The European Union and Canada will face tariffs between 12 and 18 percent – a factor that will undermine competitiveness, Azad added.

Syed Nasim Manzur, president of the Leathergoods and Footwear Manufacturers & Exporters Association of Bangladesh, said, “Graduation must be a controlled landing, not a crash landing. The process is well defined. I think technical eligibility does not mean readiness.”

He said while the private sector is not prepared, bureaucrats are making “fake claims”. “LDC graduation now would be suicidal,” he warned.

Manzur recounted how buyers in the US, Italy, Japan and Hong Kong warned him during recent visits. “All the buyers say, ‘Sir, you must be competitive. No space of emotion or relationship here.’ The biggest buyers in H&M, Inditex say, ‘If you lose preference, we will reduce business.’”

He urged Dhaka to immediately invite the UN Committee for Development Policy (CDP) to assess readiness, target the November 25 CDP review, and intensify lobbying in Brussels, Strasbourg and friendly capitals. Bangladesh should also coordinate with Nepal and Lao PDR, two other graduating countries, to push for deferral.

Manzur also recommended benchmarking finance costs with Vietnam and India, easing central bank export rules, expanding Export Development Fund facilities, and modernising payment regulations to cut the cost of doing business.

Anwar-Ul-Alam Chowdhury Parvez, president of Bangladesh Chamber of Industries, said business enterprises, particularly SMEs, have been battered since 2020 by one crisis after another: pandemic, Ukraine war, and energy shortages. Yet they received little coordinated support.

He also said businesspeople understand that graduation is inevitable. “But the core issue is whether we are prepared to withstand the impact. What we are requesting is

not to avoid graduation, but to delay its implementation by three to five years so that our industries have time to adjust,” he said.

Parvez said the loss of duty-free access to key markets such as the EU, UK, and Canada will hit Bangladesh’s exporters hard.

“We are particularly concerned about the influx of foreign merchandise in the domestic market, which will severely undercut local manufacturing,” he said.

Kamran T Rahman, president of Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry, also warned that graduation would strip Bangladesh of preferential trade and concessional financing.

“It is imperative that the government works closely with the private sector to create a comprehensive roadmap that addresses these challenges head-on,” he said.

Mashrur Arefin, managing director of City Bank, highlighted the looming financial squeeze: graduation will end concessional lending from multilateral agencies. “Borrowing terms from multilateral agencies such as JICA and the World Bank will become less favourable, resulting in higher interest rates,” he said.

Fazlul Hoque, managing director of Plummy Fashions, lamented that even as incentives on export receipts were cut, private sector voices remained marginal in policymaking. He urged faster port operations and productivity upgrades at factories.

Economist Mustafizur Rahman, a distinguished fellow at the Centre for Policy Dialogue, said if any country meets the graduation criteria for six years in the triennial review, as Bangladesh has done, then it can still approach the UN CDP for a deferral.

CDP will review Bangladesh’s case on November 25. “Remember, the formulation of the Smooth Transition Strategy (STS) is part of the CDP mechanism. When a country graduates, they must prepare the STS, and that review will now take place,”

Mustafizur said. He stressed that even if Bangladesh wants to pursue a deferral of graduation, it should also take preparations for the graduation. “I agree we must prepare. But why not also try for a deferral? On the technical side, this STS we have prepared can be used to argue, for example, about our single-window export readiness...”

He pointed to other options like Vietnam’s FTAs with the EU, which allowed duty-free exports even after losing LDC preferences.

Mohammad Abdur Razzaque, chairman of Research and Policy Integration for Development, urged launching immediate diplomatic efforts through the G-77, the EU, India and the US.

However, he admitted that since Bangladesh’s graduation resolution has already gone to the UN General Assembly, deferral will be difficult. He stressed coordination with Nepal and Lao PDR and called for lobbying to ease EU GSP Plus conditions.

He also urged continuing subsidies, improving the Savar tannery CETP to attract leather orders shifting from China, and addressing infrastructure bottlenecks that raise costs.

Zahid Hussain, former lead economist at World Bank’s Dhaka office, suggested thinking about alternatives if Bangladesh cannot seek a deferral.

For instance, Bangladesh can demand a waiver on some pharmaceutical products, he said. Bangladesh can also lobby with the EU for signing an FTA and ease the conditions for GSP Plus facilities.

But whatever the outcome is, Bangladesh needs structural reforms and improved efficiency, he said.

Mahfuz Anam, editor and publisher of The Daily Star, said the government could have paid more attention to the preparation, noting that it has only 14 months left to act decisively.

“The well deserving private sector was also not given proper attention in the steps of preparation,” he added.

He was referring to the USTR’s recent decision – announced on July 31 – to lower the reciprocal tariff rate on Bangladeshi exports to the US from 35 percent to 20 percent, a move he described as a significant milestone in bilateral trade relations, said Chief Adviser’s Deputy Press Secretary Abul Kalam Azad Majumder.

During the meeting, both sides discussed strategies to reduce the trade imbalance between the two countries, as well as Bangladesh’s intention to expand imports of US agricultural products such as cotton

and soybeans. Discussions also covered enhanced energy cooperation, including LPG imports from the US, civil aircraft purchases, drug control measures and the ongoing Rohingya humanitarian crisis.

Emphasising continued progress in bilateral engagement, Yunus voiced optimism regarding the early signing of the draft bilateral trade agreement currently under negotiation.

The chief adviser also highlighted Bangladesh’s actions in regard to the 11-point Labour Action Plan proposed by the US.

Looking ahead, Yunus said the interim government expects increased flows of investment and concessional credit in key sectors such as health and education.

“We must make sure the door to US investment in Bangladesh becomes wider,” he said, reassuring the visiting USTR team that the interim government would improve the climate for foreign direct investment in the country.

Brendan Lynch commended the constructive approach taken by Bangladeshi counterparts throughout the trade dialogue and welcomed the strengthening partnership between the two nations.

He appreciated that Bangladesh began the process back in February when the national security adviser met him and offered to unilaterally reduce the trade gap with the US.

“You dispatched a tough negotiating team who worked very hard and effectively,” he told the chief adviser.

He emphasised the importance of timely implementation of the tariff agreements and the purchase commitments.

Commerce Adviser Sheikh Bashir Uddin, National Security Adviser Khalilur Rahman, USTR Director for South Asia Emily Ashby, Senior Secretary (SDGs Affairs) Lamiya Murshed, Commerce Secretary Mahbubur Rahman, and US Chargé d’Affaires Tracey Ann Jacobson were present.

Chaos in Bhanga over EC’s new boundary

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Parishad Chairman Md Siddique, a key organiser of the movement. A case was filed under the Speedy Trial Act against 90 named individuals, including two UP chairmen, and 100-150 unidentified people.

On Sunday, the home adviser warned of stern action if the movement was not halted.

However, protesters enforced a dawn-to-dusk blockade that day, obstructing road communication between Dhaka and 21 districts in the southwest.

Yesterday morning, demonstrators attempted another blockade but were stopped by law enforcers. As the day progressed, thousands of people, including women and children, took to the streets, witnesses said.

By 11:00am, blockades were enforced at Dakshinpara point on the Dhaka-Barishal Highway and at Chhowadi on the Dhaka-Khulna Highway, halting traffic on both major routes.

Around noon, a large procession called the “Long March to Bhanga” began from Algi union and marched towards the upazila headquarters. Thousands gathered at Bhanga intersection and surrounding areas.

Police officials trying to control the situation near the Eidgah Mosque came under attack and took shelter inside the mosque.

The mob then stormed the Bhanga Police Station, vandalising five

vehicles, two motorcycles, and the traffic police office. They later crossed the Kumar River and attacked the Bhanga Upazila Parishad complex.

Inside the parishad hall room, protesters destroyed over 100 chairs, the speaker’s dais, 10 ceiling fans, and more than 30 lights. They also vandalised around 20 offices in both the new and old parishad buildings, damaging air conditioners, CCTV cameras, and windows. Seven motorcycles parked in the garage were set ablaze.

The Officers’ Club was also attacked, with its AC units smashed and CCTV cameras looted, said several government officials.

Eyewitnesses said over a thousand people, mostly aged between 12 and 35, participated in the attack, many with their faces covered and some wearing helmets. They alleged many attackers carried sticks and machetes and used petrol to set vehicles on fire.

Nazrul Islam Mridha, a cloth trader in Bhanga Bazar, said law enforcers did not intervene while the rampage was underway.

The situation began calming down around 3:00pm.

Asked, Bhanga upazila unit BNP President Khandakar Iqbal Hossain said, “Our movement for an undivided Bhanga has been peaceful. None of our leaders or activists were involved in the attacks on police and upazila offices.”

Faridpur’s Additional

Superintendent of Police Shamsul Alam told The Daily Star that the situation had returned to normal and bus services resumed in the evening.

“An assessment of damages is underway. Cases will be filed soon in connection with the attacks,” he said, adding that no police injuries were reported.

A writ petition was filed with the High Court yesterday seeking an order on the EC to restore Faridpur-4 and Faridpur-5 constituencies to their pre-2008 structure.

Meanwhile in Bagerhat, a dawn-to-dusk hartal was enforced by the all-party combined committee demanding the retention of Bagerhat’s four constituencies.

No long-haul or inter-district buses left Bagerhat’s Central Bus Terminal, but shops and businesses remained open. Motorcycles, battery-run three-wheelers and rickshaws continued to ply the highways and local roads.

Protesters will stage sit-ins today and tomorrow in front of the district and upazila election offices to press home their demand, said MA Salam, coordinator of the movement and former president of Bagerhat BNP.

As per the EC’s new gazette, the number of parliamentary constituencies there has been reduced to three from four.

(Our Faridpur and Bagerhat correspondents contributed to the report.)

Iran must dismantle uranium prog: US

REUTERS, Vienna
Iran’s uranium-enrichment programme must be “completely dismantled”, US Energy Secretary Chris Wright told the UN nuclear watchdog’s annual General Conference yesterday.

The US and Israel bombed Iran’s uranium-enrichment plants in June, arguing Iran was getting too close to being able to produce a nuclear weapon, even though the International Atomic Energy Agency that inspects

Iran’s nuclear facilities said it had no credible indication of a coordinated weapons programme.

The IAEA has, however, said it is concerned that Iran amassed an estimated 440.9 kg (972 lbs) of uranium enriched to up to 60% purity, close to the roughly 90% of weapons grade. That is enough, if enriched further, for 10 nuclear bombs, according to an IAEA yardstick.

Iran’s enrichment plants were seriously damaged or destroyed in the

attacks. It is less clear what happened to its stock of enriched uranium. The IAEA has not been able to carry out verification inspections since the attacks.

“If it wasn’t already clear enough, I will restate the United States’ position on Iran,” Wright said in a speech to the meeting of all IAEA member states.

“Iran’s nuclear weapons pathway, including all (uranium) enrichment and (plutonium) reprocessing capabilities, must be completely dismantled.”