

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF OLDER PERSONS

Dhaka is not for old people, but it is their city too



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My first memories of my grandfather date back to a time when he was already retired. Back then, my understanding of what it meant to be "old" was shaped entirely by my grandparents. My grandfather, however, was still fully active and self-reliant. He had his wife, my grandmother, by his side for companionship and conversation. He even took on another job after retirement, simply to keep himself busy.

He often walked me to and from school, and I remember vividly the bus rides we took together to visit my aunts and uncles. But now, more than two decades later, he rarely leaves the house and struggles with even the most basic of human activities. My idea of what it means to grow old has changed, and not for the better. And in a city like Dhaka, that reality feels particularly stark.

Because my grandfather lives with us, I have an intimate view of the challenges older people typically face every day. Even now, in his early 90s, he must visit the bank once a year in person to keep his retirement pension active. Once that annual deadline approaches, he calls me and asks if I can take him. For reasons only he knows, he prefers going to the bank with me. And in this simple ritual, there is a certain warmth, a reminder that our elders still seek purpose and belonging, even in the smallest of acts.

The first obstacle is mobility. We are

fortunate to have a lift in our building without which it would be nearly impossible for him to walk down seven flights of stairs. But the absence of lifts elsewhere means he cannot visit some of his children and grandchildren. If their homes aren't accessible, there's simply no way for him to go to their houses, which means everyone must come to him. That, of course, isn't always possible.

Then there is the ordeal of transportation. Getting him from the ground floor into a CNG run auto-rickshaw or a car is a slow, careful process. The 30 or so steps from our gate to the street are risky. Rickshaws, motorbikes and cars rush past, indifferent to anyone around. There's no footpath near our house, which makes that small walk even more hazardous. And because it takes time for him to get into a vehicle, impatient drivers often honk and yell. The absence of a safe footpath also means he cannot take the slow afternoon walks he loves—something so small, yet vital, for physical and mental well-being.

Once we reach the bank, a new challenge begins. Often there is a lot of walking, waiting in queues, and going from one counter to another. Some people do try to be mindful of his age and limited mobility and help as much as possible, but the truth is most places in this city simply aren't designed with elderly people in mind.

We are lucky that we can afford private transport like auto-rickshaws and ride-sharing services. I cannot help but think of those who must rely on public transport services—buses that rarely stop properly at designated bus stands, let alone offer any accessibility support. Even our much-celebrated metro rail, which does have accessibility features, has broken or non-functional lifts.

issues remain out of reach for most families. As a result, many are forced to endure the exhausting and risky process of taking their elderly family members through congested streets and to crowded waiting rooms.

Perhaps what's the most heart-breaking for people like my grandfather is loneliness. While he lives with us, his daughter and grandchildren, that is the full extent of his social life. He calls relatives occasionally, but

people are entirely dependent on others to go out. But not everyone has family members who can spare the time or resources to provide that support. Shouldn't we, as a society, create a safe system with accessible infrastructure, safe parks and public spaces, and well-designed public transport systems so that people of all ages, including the elderly, can move about, socialise, and enjoy the outdoors? In our rush to build roads, bridges, and high-rises, we seem to have forgotten those who came before us. And in doing so, we are forgetting ourselves—because we, too, will grow old one day.

This year's International Day of Older Persons calls for due recognition for the elderly people not as passive recipients of care but as agents of change—individuals whose wisdom, resilience, and lived experience continue to shape families, communities, and nations. My grandfather, even in his 90s, insists on managing his own pension because it gives him a sense of purpose. His stories, advice, and gentle humour are lessons for us young people.

To truly honour our elders, we must do more than care for them. We must uphold their rights, protect their dignity, and let their voices be heard in decision-making. From designing accessible buildings and transport systems to reforming bureaucratic processes and healthcare, we need policies that reflect the reality of ageing. We must end age discrimination and build communities where everyone, regardless of their age, can live with dignity, purpose, and opportunities. If we begin to see our elderly citizens as central to our shared future rather than "burden" from the past, we will not only make their lives better, but make our society more humane, more inclusive, and as a consequence be more prepared for our own future.



VISUAL: SALMAN SAKIB SHAHRYAR

Ageing inevitably brings more frequent hospital visits, but most of our hospitals is poorly equipped to support the elderly. Public hospitals are overcrowded and chaotic, while private hospitals are prohibitively expensive. Even ambulances, sirens blaring, get trapped in Dhaka's unrelenting traffic. There is no guarantee an elderly person will reach a medical facility in time, even during an emergency.

Affordable home-based medical check-ups that are so vital for those with mobility

in-person meetings are rare. We humans have an innate need for socialisation, yet due to a lack of parks, accessible public spaces, and inclusive infrastructure, elderly people in Dhaka are largely confined to their homes. And given the patriarchal structure of our society, one could easily guess how it must be for elderly women. The struggles of elderly women are a combination of the problems that come with age and those that come with being a woman.

We have built a society where many elderly

The illusion of advantage: US reciprocal tariffs and Bangladesh's exports



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At first glance, the outcome that Bangladesh secured in the new American regime of so-called reciprocal tariffs appears to be a success. While China continues to face a 30 percent tariff, and India an even harsher rate of 50 percent, Bangladesh landed in the relatively lighter bracket of 20 percent. Unsurprisingly, many have viewed this as a position of strength for our exporters in a market that remains their single largest destination. Some tend to believe that with such an advantage over key rivals, Bangladesh's shipments to the US should expand.

Yet, the reality is more complex. While differential tariffs do reshape competitive advantage, as proven by Bangladesh's success in garment exports under the Least Developed Country (LDC)-specific duty-free regime in the EU, UK, Japan, and Canada, the unprecedented rise in overall US tariffs is more likely to contract demand, limiting export expansion. Therefore, what looks like a relative gain can translate into a loss once the overall size of the American market begins to shrink.

Prior to reciprocal tariffs, four percent of Bangladesh's exports had duty-free access; these are now subject to a full 20 percent duty. More than half (53 percent) of Bangladeshi exports previously faced 15-20 percent US tariffs, which will now escalate to 35-40 percent. Before reciprocal tariffs, 12 percent of exports were subject to tariffs of above 25 percent; these items will now be hit with 45-60 percent.

For example, Bangladeshi export items such as men's/boys' trousers and shorts, with export receipts of about \$1.5 billion and \$750 million, respectively, in 2024, now face 36.5 percent duties in the US, up from 16.5 percent. Men's trousers of synthetic fibres, with an export value of \$260 million, face tariff hikes from 28 to 48 percent. Sweaters and pullovers made of man-made fibres, with \$160 million in exports, face a tariff rise from 32 to 52 percent.

Although tariffs are collected at the border, their impact passes through wholesalers and retailers, resulting in higher prices for shoppers. Importers push part of the duty forward while pressing

foreign suppliers to absorb some of the increase through lower quotes. For an industry where profitability rests on single-digit margins, any further squeeze on net prices could be devastating and even lead to cessation of supplies.

Higher retail prices reduce the willingness to buy, and orders will likely be scaled back. Uncertainty over prices and supply-side issues can make American importers and consumers more conservative. The effect would be a contraction of the US apparel market with smaller runs and thinner inventories. Exporters facing the steepest duties lose shelf space first, but even apparent

Even when rivals are hit harder, the contracting size of the US market leaves little scope for Bangladesh to turn relative positioning into growth. In the EU, Bangladeshi apparel exports may expand by about two percent, but only with falling prices.

"winners" gain little. In a shrinking market, gains in share can get offset by reduced demand and tougher bargaining from buyers demanding lower prices and stricter compliance. Relative advantage translates into harsher terms of trade.

Nor do the consequences remain confined to the United States. Rival suppliers, losing the US market, will turn to Europe and elsewhere, crowding segments and pushing down prices. Even where Bangladeshi firms have strong presence, they may have to accept reduced margins to defend volume.

If there were any doubt about these possibilities, model-based exercises provide confirmation. A recent assessment by Research and Policy Integration for Development (RAPID), drawing on simulations with the Global Trade Analysis Project (GTAP) framework, shows the US apparel market may shrink by around 12 percent, equivalent to nearly \$10 billion. Bangladeshi's shipments to the US are set to fall by

14 percent, or about \$1.25 billion, of which \$1.08 billion is apparel alone. Cambodia, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka also register double-digit losses, while India and China suffer much steeper declines. Given ongoing US-India negotiations, if India secures a reduced tariff of 20 percent, Bangladesh's export decline to the US could deepen to 18 percent.

The implication is clear: even when rivals are hit harder, the contracting size of the market leaves little scope for Bangladesh to turn relative positioning into growth. In the EU, Bangladeshi apparel exports may expand by about two percent, but only with falling prices.

The tariff shocks in the US are set to intersect with Bangladesh's forthcoming LDC graduation, resulting in the loss of international support measures. This double trouble calls for a strategic response focusing on building export competitiveness.

In the immediate term, cushioning measures are needed for firms most exposed to the US market. Temporary credit lines, export refinancing facilities, or targeted marketing assistance can provide breathing space, allowing viable firms to ride out the shock without losing customers.

Yet cushioning alone will not suffice. While there cannot be a substitute for the US market, diversifying destinations is now imperative. Compared to China, India, or Vietnam, Bangladesh's export volume is minuscule, which means new market opportunities can help offset any potential export loss. Given the impending LDC graduation, securing the EU's Generalised Scheme of Preferences Plus status with a relaxation of safeguard measures on apparel must now be the top priority.

Parallel efforts with Japan through a Free Trade Agreement already under negotiation, with Canada for extended LDC-related preferences, and with other partners for improved access cannot be overemphasised.

Market diversification, however, is only half the story. Product diversification and upgrading are equally pressing and often preconditions for further success. Along with low-end cotton garments, moving into higher-value segments, expanding exports of synthetics, and developing non-apparel lines could reduce vulnerability. These shifts require investment in quality, design, technology, innovation, and compliance, supported by policies that encourage upgrading at the firm level.

Trade negotiations form another strand of response.

Breakthroughs with Japan and the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership can secure market access in dynamic economies and help integrate into East Asian supply chains. But progress in this regard will require the government to reduce dependence on trade taxes for revenue collection. Rationalising tariffs would help reduce the disadvantages exporters face from high trade protection and would incentivise investment in export-oriented industries.

Underlying all these measures is the broader reform agenda encouraging competitiveness. Exporters need reliable energy supplies, efficient logistics, modernised ports, and credible compliance with sustainability standards if they are to survive in a harsher environment. As emphasised in the government's Smooth Transition Strategy for LDC graduation, investments in skills, technology adoption, and productivity-enhancing industrial policies are essential for withstanding

external shocks.

The choices ahead are not about celebrating relative gains or lamenting lost advantages. They are about recognising that the rules have changed, and survival depends on adaptation and improved competitiveness. The future of the export engine will be decided by the resolve at home to prepare for a trading system where preferences are thinning and competition is harsher than ever.

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh	
Office of the Controller of Stores (East)	
Bangladesh Railway	
CRB, Chattogram-4000.	
www.railway.gov.bd	
No. 54.01.1500.117.07.001.25	
Dated: 29-09-2025	
e-Tender Notice	
Notice no-54.01.1500.117.07.001.25-02	
Amendment/Corrigendum	
e-Tender is invited in the National eGP System portal (https://www.eprocure.gov.bd) by Controller of Stores (East), Bangladesh Railway, CRB, Chattogram (Tender ID: 1142053) for the Procurement of Goods as stated below:	
Description	Old Value
Experience Criteria	<p>(a) General Experience: The minimum of years of general experience of the Tenderer in the supply of Goods and related services as Supplier shall be 03 (THREE) years.</p> <p>(b) Specific Experience: The minimum specific experience as Supplier in supply of similar Goods (similar goods means any Mechanical Item for Bangladesh Railway) of at least 01 (ONE) contracts successfully completed within the last 3 (THREE) years, each with a value of at least Tk. 174 (Seventy Four LAKH).</p> <p>Documentary Evidence for Specific Experience i.e. R-Note. Completion certificate must be submitted along with tender.</p> <p>(c) Supply and/or Production capacity: The minimum supply and/or production capacity of Goods is/ are: 850 Kg Per Month.</p> <p>Liquid assets i.e. working capital or credit line: The minimum amount of liquid assets i.e. working capital or credit line(s) of the Tenderer shall be Tk 195 (Ninety Five) Lakh.</p>
The Tenderer shall submit with its e-Tender the following additional documents	<p>(a) General Experience: The Tenderer Shall have a minimum 03 (Three) years General/Overall Experience in Supply of goods and related services. Documentary evidence (Completion Certificate from the end user) must be submitted. Date Counting backward from the date of publication of the IFT/Notice in e-GP website.</p> <p>(b) Specific Experience: Specific Experience in supply of similar goods (similar goods means any Mechanical Item for Railway Rolling Stocks) at least 01 (ONE) Contract successfully completed within the last 03 (THREE) years each with a value of at least tk 5500000.00 (Fifty Five lakh). Documentary evidence (Completion certificate) must be submitted. Date Counting backward from the date of publication of the IFT/Notice in e-GP website.</p> <p>(c) Supply and/or Production capacity: Supply and/or Production capacity: 10000 kgs per year. Liquid assets i.e. working capital or credit line: The minimum amount of liquid assets i.e. working capital or credit line(s) of the Tenderer shall be Tk 6000000.00 (Sixty Lakh)</p> <p>1) Manufacturer's Authorization Letter for the Offered Goods</p> <p>2) Proof of Successful Acceptance of the Similar Goods by the procuring Entity as mentioned as the specific experience criteria.</p> <p>3) Manufacturer's and their Authorized Distributor's address, email and telephone number should be stated clearly in consent letter.</p> <p>NOTE: All submitted Documents shall be Verified by PE in Tender Evaluation.</p>
All other terms and conditions of the tender shall remain unchanged.	
<p>S(25)(65)</p> <p>GD-2143</p> <p>(Engr. Md. Al-Amin) 29-09-25</p> <p>Sr. Asst. Controller of Stores (HQ) (Adl. Charge) On the behalf of Controller of Stores (East) # 01711-692931</p>	