



"When there's a clear act of aggression, I think what we should do isn't bow down or try to reach a settlement."
French President Emmanuel Macron on renewed friction with US

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US tariff cut comes at a steep cost

Bangladesh secures a marginal US tariff cut to 19%, but commits to billions of dollars in purchases

STAR REPORT

Bangladesh's interim government has signed a sweeping trade agreement with the United States at the twilight of its tenure to secure a partial tariff relief, but the deal comes with significant geopolitical strings attached.

The Agreement on Reciprocal Trade, signed on February 9, goes far beyond standard tariff reductions. Instead, it creates a binding framework that integrates Bangladesh's defence, energy, trade and digital infrastructure into the US sphere of influence.

The agreement mandates that Bangladesh "shall endeavour to increase purchases of US military equipment" while simultaneously limiting procurement from "certain countries" — a thinly veiled reference to Chinese suppliers. The US has also committed to working with Bangladesh to "streamline and enhance defence trade."

The signing of the agreement with Bangladesh is the first of its kind in South Asia and "marks a meaningful step forward in opening markets, addressing trade barriers, and creating new opportunities for American exporters," United States Trade Representative Jamieson Greer said in a statement.

His office, USTR, published the 32-page agreement on its website.

The deal prohibits Bangladesh from purchasing nuclear reactors, fuel rods, or enriched uranium from any country that "jeopardises essential US interests." The clause offers a narrow exception only for existing reactors where no alternative supplier exists, effectively vetoing future nuclear cooperation with Russia or China.

Under Article 4.3 of the agreement, if Bangladesh enters into a free trade or preferential economic agreement with a "non-market country" (a US regulatory term used for China and Russia), the US can terminate the entire deal and reimpose punitive tariffs.

According to another provision, if the US implements border measures or trade actions to protect its own national security, Bangladesh is treaty-bound to adopt "complementary restrictive measures" following consultations. This provision obliges Dhaka to automatically align with US sanctions and trade wars, removing its ability to remain neutral in great power conflicts.

As part of the deal, the US has cut its reciprocal tariff on Bangladeshi exports to 19 percent from 20 percent. The US will grant duty-free or preferential access to approximately 2,500 Bangladeshi products, while Dhaka will open its

market to around 4,400 American goods on similar terms. The list includes US chemicals, medical devices, machinery and motor vehicles and parts; information and communication technology (ICT) equipment; beef, poultry, and tree nuts and fruit.

However, the deal enforces a kind of managed trade with specific targets. Bangladesh has committed

"This is an imposed agreement done through the total weaponisation of trade," said Mustafizur, adding that the US had attached conditions to the reduction of additional tariffs that were originally imposed unjustly.

"Under the deal, Bangladesh must offer zero duty on a number of US items and slash duties on certain other goods over five and 10 years,

RECIPROCAL TRADE DEAL

BANGLADESH SHALL

- ➔ Offer zero tariffs on many US goods
- ➔ Provide preferential access for US agricultural items
- ➔ Boost purchases of US military equipment
- ➔ Recognise FDA approvals for pharma, medical devices
- ➔ Enhance intellectual property protection
- ➔ Remove restrictions on labour right to strike in EPZs
- ➔ Make customs fully digital/paperless by 2030
- ➔ Support US trade actions on other countries
- ➔ Avoid nuclear purchases from risky countries

THE US SHALL

- ➔ Offer 19% reciprocal tariffs on Bangladeshi goods
- ➔ Zero duty for select Bangladeshi textiles/apparel
- ➔ Support digital trade & cybersecurity
- ➔ Apply rules of origin if third-country benefits are disproportionate

This list is not exhaustive

to purchasing \$15 billion worth of US energy commodities, including liquefied natural gas (LNG), over 15 years.

Additionally, Biman Bangladesh Airlines, the state carrier, will purchase 14 Boeing aircraft, steering the country's aviation sector away from European competitor Airbus. In the agricultural sector, Dhaka will import at least \$3.5 billion worth of US farm products, including wheat and soybean.

WEAPONISATION OF TRADE
Mustafizur Rahman, a distinguished fellow at the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), said the agreement imposes numerous compliance requirements that restrict Bangladesh's policy flexibility.

Constraints are acute in procurement, especially in the defence sector, as it limits the country's choices about both suppliers and equipment, he said.

beginning with a 50 percent cut from the date the agreement comes into force.

This has "significant revenue implications," he said.

"We are just two days away from the national election. My point is, why do they have to rush to sign an agreement that the elected government will have to implement? I don't understand the rationale," Mustafizur said.

"Couldn't we request the US to wait for a couple of days so that a democratically elected government could review and finalise the deal?"

In another significant move, Bangladesh will have to remove restrictions on the right to strike, increase fines for anti-union discrimination, and, within two years, bring its Export Processing

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BANGLADESH COMMITS TO \$18.5B US FARM, ENERGY IMPORTS — BI

Nation at fever pitch ahead of historic election

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

All eyes are fixed on tomorrow's parliamentary polls as the Election Commission and law enforcement agencies enter the final stretch of preparations to ensure a smooth exercise of franchise.

The nation throbs with anticipation, buoyed by hopes that the ballot will usher in a peaceful transition and open a new chapter in democratic practice.

The election is being held 18 months after an unprecedented student-led mass uprising brought down Sheikh Hasina's Awami League government, raising expectations that the vote could mark a break from past practices and a return to more accountable democratic norms.

For millions of voters, the long wait for an election that could reshape the country's democratic trajectory now narrows to a single, decisive day after 20 days of intense formal campaigning ended yesterday morning.

Alongside electing their representatives, voters will also cast ballots in a national referendum on the July National Charter, a document outlining key constitutional and institutional reforms.

The outcome is expected to influence how the country is governed in the years ahead, adding further weight to tomorrow's vote.

Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus last evening addressed the nation in a televised speech, urging citizens to make election day the "birthday of a new Bangladesh", saying voters themselves would write the history of the country's glorious future.

As many as 42,779 polling stations are set for 12.77 crore people to exercise their voting rights. Voting will run from 7:30am to 4:30pm without break. Of the voters, 6.48 crore are male and 6.28 crore female.

A total of 1,755 candidates from 50 registered political parties are

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Interim govt advisers' wealth grew 6% on average in FY25

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Advisers in the outgoing interim government, along with their spouses, disclosed wealth statements yesterday, detailing changes in their assets between June 30, 2024, and June 30, 2025.

Overall, advisers and their spouses recorded a median wealth increase of six percent during this period.

To start things off, Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus reported an 11 percent rise, worth Tk 1.6 crore. Meanwhile, his wife, Dr Afroz Yunus, saw her financial assets fall by almost half, resulting in a 40 percent overall decline.

Environment and information adviser Syeda Rizwana Hasan's assets dropped by half, including a Tk 1 crore depletion in financial holdings. Her husband, Abu Bakar Siddique, reported no significant change.

Health adviser Nurjahan Begum's husband, KM Asaduzzaman, also lost half his wealth over the past year, with financial assets down Tk 1.64 crore, though his non-financial assets rose by Tk 14 lakh. Nurjahan's own assets remained largely unchanged.

Land adviser Ali Imam Majumder's non-financial assets halved, falling by Tk 11 lakh, but his financial assets rose by Tk 62.7 lakh, lifting his total holdings from Tk 3.37 crore to Tk 3.88 crore.

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WEALTHIEST ADVISERS

Sheikh Bashir Uddin	Tk 91.7 crore
Dr Wahiduddin Mahmud	Tk 16.2 crore
Dr Muhammad Yunus	Tk 15.6 crore

LEAST WEALTHY ADVISERS

Mahfuj Alam	Tk 12.8 lakh
Asif Mahmud Sajib Bhuiyan	Tk 15 lakh
Farida Akhtar	Tk 1 crore

Civil aviation ministry's clarification, our reply

The Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism has issued a clarification to our report titled "Lord of the wings," published on February 6. In a statement signed by Public Relations Officer Tariqul Islam, the ministry said it sought to clarify the "ongoing misrepresentation of several issues."

License issue of Akij Bashir Aviation Limited

The Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism strongly condemns the use of terms such as "unabashed cronyism" to characterize an issue against which there is no substantial evidence to claim.

Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh (CAAB) processes AOC applications strictly according to existing regulations derived from ICAO Annexes. These procedures are applied consistently to all applicants, regardless

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Police roll out three-tier security plan

Concern remains over unrecovered arms

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN and TOUSIF KAUM

With the much-awaited national election set to take place tomorrow, looted firearms yet to be recovered and thousands of licensed weapons yet to be deposited may pose security challenges, experts and law enforcers said.

Meanwhile, incidents of political violence and harassment of journalists have escalated sharply ahead of the polls, rights group Ain o Salish Kendra said in a statement yesterday.

Quoting media reports, ASK said it recorded 58 incidents of political violence between February 1 and 10, leaving 489 people injured and two dead. During the same period, at least 47 journalists were attacked across the country.

By comparison, 49 incidents were reported during the last 10 days of January (January 21-31), in which 414 people were injured and four killed. Around 16 journalists were attacked throughout the month of January, the ASK report added.

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Travellers rush to get on or off the roof of Kalni Express from Dhaka at Brahmanbaria Railway Station yesterday. With election day and its eve declared public holidays and the weekend following, thousands of people headed home, making bus, train stations and launch terminals appear as if it were Eid-time.

PHOTO: MASUK HRIDYOY

People head home with ballots on their minds

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

It feels almost like Eid again — the familiar rush of people heading home. But this time, the journey carries a different spirit: people are setting out to exercise their right to vote.

Tomorrow's election has wrapped the nation in a holiday hush. With both the polling day and its eve declared public holidays across the country, and a special break granted yesterday for workers in industrial zones, the everyday rhythm has slowed to a pause, which will stretch further, with a two-day weekend following the vote.

From the bustling streets of Dhaka to the industrial belts, people began leaving on Monday night. By early morning yesterday, the exodus gathered pace with families, workers, and students streaming out towards their village homes, swelling the pressure on highways, rail lines, and waterways.

Bus terminals and railway stations across the capital were crowded with homebound passengers, bags in hands, and faces lightened up with smiles.

"We are going home with the joy of Eid. For the first time, I will be casting

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