US trade show signals scope for stronger bilateral ties

Parliament Speaker Hafiz Uddin Ahmad says

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Bangladesh and the United States need to expand trade and investment ties to unlock greater economic opportunities, Parliament Speaker Hafiz Uddin Ahmad said yesterday.

He made the remarks while attending the inauguration of the three-day "US Trade Show 2026" at InterContinental Dhaka, jointly organised by the American Chamber of Commerce in Bangladesh (AmCham) and the US embassy in Dhaka.

Platforms such as the US Trade Show create opportunities to strengthen this partnership, he said, adding that Bangladesh remains committed to building a competitive and investment-friendly economy. Abdul Awal Mintoo, minister for environment, forest and climate change, said, "As we move towards a more competitive and sustainable economy, greater collaboration with international partners will be essential."

Brent T Christensen, the US ambassador to Bangladesh, said, "The United States values its strong commercial relationship with Bangladesh, and the US Trade Show reflects the growing opportunities for businesses in both countries."

He added that American companies bring world-class products, services and technologies that can contribute to Bangladesh's economic development.

Meanwhile, speaking at a seminar on women empowerment held on the sidelines of the show, Zubaida Rahman, vice-president of the Ziaur Rahman Foundation, said, "Education, economic independence, healthcare and leadership opportunities for women are essential for Bangladesh's sustainable development.

She emphasised the need to remove barriers preventing women from reaching their full potential. She also stressed that every woman should have the opportunity to turn her aspirations into achievements.



Zubaida Rahman, vice-president of Ziaur Rahman Foundation, visits various stalls on the opening day of the three-day US Trade Show 2026 at InterContinental Dhaka yesterday.

PHOTO: AMCHAM

Syed Mohammad Kamal, president of AmCham, said, "The US Trade Show has for three decades served as an important platform for connecting US businesses with the Bangladeshi market."

"Education, economic independence, healthcare and leadership opportunities for women are essential for Bangladesh's sustainable development," Zubaida Rahman, vice-president of Ziaur Rahman Foundation, said on the sidelines of a seminar titled "From aspiration to achievement: empowering the next generation of women leaders".

She emphasised the need to remove barriers preventing women from reaching their full potential, stressing that every woman should have the opportunity to turn her aspirations into achievements.

Many US companies are participating in the show, either directly or through representatives.

They include Caterpillar Inc, Chevron Corporation, Excelerate Energy Inc, ExxonMobil, APR Energy, Veon, Citigroup, MetLife Inc, Mastercard, Visa and JCB.

Other participating firms include Colgate-Palmolive (Asia) Pte, Philip Morris International, PepsiCo International, Costco Wholesale, Men's Foundry Supply LLC, Blue Ribbon Bags LLC, Heedbeauty LLC, Exxpose LLC and Catalyzr Inc.

US-Bangla to invest $22m in ground handling upgrade

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

US-Bangla Airlines plans to invest around $22 million to modernise its ground handling operations, aiming to improve flight punctuality and passenger services amid an expansion of its fleet and international network.

The airline has already opened letters of credit (LCs) worth $12 million for the investment, according to a press release issued yesterday.

It currently operates around 590 units of ground service equipment (GSE) and plans to add another 146 units over the next three to four months.

The new equipment will include aircraft pushback tractors, baggage belt loaders, baggage tractors, passenger boarding stairs, ground power units, catering trucks and other ramp support equipment.

The airline also plans to deploy 80 electric vehicles at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport in Dhaka. Work on the necessary charging infrastructure is underway.

US-Bangla currently operates 25 aircraft and plans to add 21 Boeing 737-series aircraft by December 2027.

It is also working to introduce around 16 new international destinations, expanding its existing network of 14 destinations across 10 countries.

The airline said the investment would strengthen its operational capacity as it expands its fleet and route network.

It is also developing its ground support capabilities as part of its plans to establish regional hubs in Chattogram and Sylhet.

AI adoption

FROM PAGE B1

handful of large companies.

Mahdi Amin, an adviser to the prime minister, said AI could replace some jobs but also create new ones. Preparing workers for changing labour market demands was therefore essential.

He called for academic curricula to be updated and education to become more practical, with greater emphasis on emerging fields such as data annotation and AI applications.

Simin Rahman, chief executive officer of Transcom Group, said wider AI adoption was necessary to improve productivity and strengthen industries.

Fahim Ahmed, chief executive officer of Pathao, said Bangladesh needed reliable electricity, adequate power supply and a clear financing plan to develop the data centres needed to support AI services. He also called for businesses and technology companies to be involved in formulating the country's AI policy.

AI could help small businesses manage their operations by bringing customer conversations from Facebook Messenger, Instagram and WhatsApp into a single system, he said. The technology could also provide insights to help merchants expand their businesses.

Tasfia Tasbin, co-founder and chief executive officer of Markopolo AI, said young people needed to understand how AI works instead of simply using it to generate content and ideas.

"Being tech-savvy and knowing how to use technology to create something quirky are not the same thing," she said.

She said the challenge was now less about generating ideas and more about turning them into reality. AI could take over repetitive tasks and give people more room to be creative, but businesses needed to know where the technology could add value and where human judgement remained important.

The summit was jointly organised by the Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Ministry of Science and Technology at the Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Centre in Dhaka. Held under the theme "AI-fication for Tomorrow's Economy", it brought together policymakers, business leaders, entrepreneurs, researchers and academics to discuss the technology's opportunities and challenges.

An exhibition featuring more than 150 stalls also showcased AI-based products and services developed by local and foreign entrepreneurs.

Treat EU FTA terms

FROM PAGE B1

He also called for FTA negotiations to extend beyond the EU to Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) countries and regional economies such as Malaysia.

Nazneen Ahmed, executive director of the think tank Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), said Bangladesh will permanently lose duty-free and quota-free access to the EU market as it approaches LDC graduation, with a final extension until 2029 and a transition period until 2032.

Securing the EU preferential scheme GSP Plus remains highly uncertain, she said.

Competitors such as India already have agreements with the EU, said Nazneen. Bangladesh should not treat an FTA as an isolated goal.

"The preparations it demands, including the green transition, compliance with carbon trade rules, labour standards and institutional reforms, are vital for broader economic growth and poverty reduction."

She added that the focus must shift from questioning why Bangladesh should pursue an FTA to how to negotiate effectively by acting proactively, using modern analytical tools and aligning trade talks with a national agenda for institutional transformation.

Syed Muntasir Mamun, director general of the International Trade, Investment and Technology Wing at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, said future trade negotiations must account for coming technological disruption, including artificial intelligence, quantum computing and advanced automation, which will transform global communication and commerce.

He added that Bangladesh should explore innovative trade-backed regimes, monetary swaps and equity-driven financial structures to facilitate future trade and investment.

Baiba Zarina, deputy head of the EU delegation to Bangladesh, said the EU increasingly sees Bangladesh not only as a beneficiary of preferences but as a strategic economic partner.

"We offer open, rules-based trade. We offer investment-making standards, transparency, and sustainability. We offer expertise that supports stronger institutions and greater resilience."

"I want to reaffirm that the European Union approaches this request of Bangladesh to seek and have an FTA negotiation with openness and seriousness," she said.

The EU is also very encouraged by the political commitment the current government has shown so far in addressing obstacles to trade and investment, she added.

Sharf Uddin Ahmed Choudhury, secretary of the Ministry of Commerce, said the ministry must coordinate trade policy and negotiations across government, academia and industry. The success of an FTA should be measured by export diversification, productive employment and sustainable economic resilience.

M Nazrul Islam, secretary (Bilateral-East and West) at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, said the three-year extension for LDC graduation provides a key window to advance FTA negotiations, prepare for post-LDC arrangements such as GSP Plus and tackle structural problems that affect exports.

Green Delta

FROM PAGE B1

and regulated by the Central Rating Committee of the regulator, in which insurers also sit.

IDRA Chairman Mir Nadia Nivin told The Daily Star that the companies knew the rules and violated them knowingly.

"If they think this tariff is not competitive, they can tell us for a non-tariff option, and then they can set it on a competitive basis," she said.

She said insurers know violating the tariff is clearly a "crime", so there is no need for a hearing.

Asked about the impact on clients, she said the insurers must look after their clients since they violated the law.

IDRA is working with the Bangladesh Bank and the Bangladesh Customs to create a system that leaves no scope for wrongdoing in marine premium business, she added.

BGIC Managing Director and CEO Ahmed Saifuddin Chowdhury admitted to The Daily Star that the company undercut premiums, mainly because the tariff in Bangladesh is "very high" and costly for clients.

He, however, said the regulator should have given some time and held a hearing before imposing punishment.

"Without hearing, such punishment will inconvenience our clients," he said.

Saifuddin said BGIC will tell its clients it has no option but to raise premium rates, and will follow the minimum premium rules in future.

Green Delta Insurance Managing Director and CEO Farzanah Chowdhury did not immediately respond to phone call and text message seeking comment.

Clothing sales

FROM PAGE B1

"Customer footfall has dropped by at least 15 percent to 20 percent this time compared to last year."

"Even those who are buying at a discount are doing so only for specific needs. They are not buying beyond what they need. Earlier, during offers, many would buy more than they required," he said.

Apart from economic conditions, the weather has added to the confusion. Cooler temperatures in early November usually herald the arrival of winter, but this year they have been unpredictable, leaving shops unsure what to put on display.

Mbrella, a popular menswear brand, put winter hoodies on its shelves in early November, but the mercury jumped days later, and it had to take them off.

The brand said demand for summer items such as comfortable T-shirts and polo shirts is not strong now despite discounts, yet it is not the right time to start selling winter clothes either.

"Our sales have fallen short of expectations," said Kazi Maktum Shovon, head of sales and marketing at Mbrella.

He cites the 8 pm shop closing rule as one factor. "Durga Puja ended just a few days ago, and Eid is coming up. That is also why we are not getting the response we expected," he said.

Maktum expected sales in the coming months to stay somewhat below projections.

Similarly, Mohammad Muktar Hossain, assistant manager of fashion brand Rise, said pre-winter discounts this year have not drawn the sales seen last year.

"Last October, when we ran discount offers, we sold products worth around Tk 20 lakh. This year, that has dropped to Tk 15 lakh," he said.

He blamed the economic situation, especially a sharp rise in the cost of living. "Customer footfall this season has halved, and only a few of them are making purchases."

Sazzad Hossain, online sales executive at Cats Eye, another popular lifestyle and fashion brand, said sales have dropped by around 50 percent compared with last year.

"Customers are in a wait-and-watch mode, wondering what will happen in the coming days, since the overall economic situation is not stable. So, they are holding back," he said.

At New Market, non-brand clothing shops had yet to bring in new winter stock last week. Some were trying to clear their old stock with discounts.

Sanaul Haque Babul, director of finance at the Fashion Entrepreneurs Association of Bangladesh, a trade organisation representing local fashion brands, told The Daily Star that retailers traditionally offer discounts at this time of year to boost sales, with the off-season under way.

This year, however, sales have fallen by 20 percent compared with the same period last year, as the country's political and economic situation continues to weigh on demand, he added.

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e-Tender Notice : 24/2026-2027

Memo No: 46.02.0900.000.024.26-2745 Date:05/11/2026

e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP System Portal (http://www.eprocure.gov.bd) for the procurement of the work stated below:

SL. No	Tender ID	Package No & Description	Type, Method	Tender Publication Date and Time	Last Selling Date and Time	Last Submission of Tender Security Date and Time	Closing and Opening Time and Date
1	1363160	CW13-03/CDRSSWRMP/25-26: ADB PRS. Package No. CW13-03 Small Scale water resources works for Nilkamal Subproject under Charfassion Upazila of Bhola. (SP-15317)	NCT OTM	05-Nov-2026 21.00	07-Dec-2026 17.00	08-Dec-2026 15.00	08-Dec-2026 16.00

This is an online Tender, where only e-Tender shall be accepted in the National e-GP portal and no offline/hard copies shall be accepted. The fees for downloading the e-Tender Documents from the National e-GP System Portal have to be deposited online through any registered Banks branches. Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk (http://www.eprocure.gov.bd).

05/11/26
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GD-2690

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Memo no: 57.03.5600.501.16.042.23-803 Date: 03/11/2026

e-Tender Notice

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Sl	Tender ID	Name of goods Item	Tender Documents last Selling/Downloading date and time	Tender closing date and time	Opening date and time
1	1353900	Purchase of computer accessories.	24-Nov-2026 15:00	24-Nov-2026 16:00	24-Nov-2026 16:00
2	1354199	Purchase of Other Monihari.	24-Nov-2026 15:00	24-Nov-2026 16:00	24-Nov-2026 16:00
3	1354166	Purchase of raw materials and spare parts.	25-Nov-2026 15:00	25-Nov-2026 16:00	25-Nov-2026 16:00
4	1354511	Purchase of Engineering and other equipment	25-Nov-2026 15:00	25-Nov-2026 16:00	25-Nov-2026 16:00

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