

UN to support independent assessment on Bangladesh's LDC graduation readiness

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Online Desk : United Nations Under-Secretary-General Rabab Fatima has announced that her office will support an independent readiness assessment for Bangladesh's graduation from Least Developed Country (LDC) status, following a formal request from the country's interim government. Fatima, who also serves as the UN High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries, and Small Island Developing States, made the announcement during a meeting with Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus at his hotel here on Monday. She stated that the readiness assessment is expected to begin within a month and be completed by mid-January. It will be conducted jointly by an international consultant and a Bangladeshi expert to ensure a comprehensive and balanced evaluation.

The assessment will involve extensive consultations with key stakeholders, including government officials, business chambers, development experts, civil society leaders, donors, financial institutions, and political representatives, to determine whether Bangladesh is adequately prepared for the transition. Chief Adviser Prof Yunus welcomed the initiative, emphasising the need for empirical evidence before proceeding with the graduation. "It has become an emotional issue," he remarked, highlighting the importance of objective data in informing policy decisions. In response, Fatima noted that the UN's most recent economic data on Bangladesh is over two years old. "A lot has changed since then," she said, underscoring the urgency of reassessing the country's current economic landscape and for making an informed decision.

Prof Yunus also expressed concern over the future of Bangladesh's pharmaceutical industry, which has significantly benefited from trade preferences tied to its LDC status. He observed that graduation could put the sector at risk if adequate transition measures are not in place. Fatima, the highest ranked Bangladesh origin UN official who has been serving as Under Secretary General since 2022, shared her experience working within the UN. The Chief Adviser has shown great interest and wanted to know how Dhaka can explore career opportunities for the Bangladeshi civil servants to work in various UN bodies, further strengthening the country's engagement with the international system.

The meeting was also attended by SDG Coordinator Lamiya Morshed, Foreign Secretary Asad Alam Siam, and Bangladesh's Permanent Representative to the UN, Ambassador Salahuddin Noman Chowdhury. Briefing reporters at a city hotel about the outcomes of the meeting, Chief Adviser's Press Secretary Shafiqul Alam said the assessment is very important to know how much prepared Bangladesh is to graduate from LDCs. He said the UN independent readiness assessment will begin within one month and will be completed in January next.