



Although the Chattogram port is usually teeming with trucks, transport activities have been disrupted in recent days due to flash floods. Activities only resumed partially on Sunday but are yet to pick up as sections along the Dhaka-Chattogram highway were damaged by the deluge.

PHOTO: STAR/FILE

Importers can take delivery of 1,850 containers from Pangaon ICD

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The National Board of Revenue (NBR) has allowed importers to take delivery of over 1,850 containers from Pangaon Inland Container Terminal in Dhaka to reduce congestion at the Chattogram port.

The customs administration said the import containers were destined for the Inland Container Depot at Kamalapur Dhaka through railways, it said in a statement yesterday.

However, rail communication remained suspended following a deadly protest centring the students' quota reform movement in government job and the subsequent ousting of the previous Awami League government.

As a result, the transport of containers from Chattogram port to the Kamalapur ICD came to a halt though the unloading of imported goods kept going.

The NBR said the port authority requested the customs to allow taking delivery of Kamalapur ICD-bound containers from Pangaon to reduce the backlog.

As such, it allowed importers to clear 1,856 containers from Pangaon on August 22.

"So, it can be expected that the container congestion at the port will reduce a lot and the situation will improve," said the NBR.

## Ctg port facing container congestion as transport slows

MOHAMMAD SUMAN

The Chattogram port has been hit by container congestion again as daily deliveries have slowed in the amid of flash floods, which caused disruptions along the Dhaka-Chattogram Highway since Thursday.

Transport service providers said activities had resumed partially on Sunday. Still, they added that damaged roads had been hindering normal operations along the highway connecting the capital to the Chattogram port, which handles around 90 percent of the nation's trade.

According to port officials, there are usually 30,000 to 32,000 TEUs (twenty-foot equivalent units) of containers in the port yards.

However, the number stood at 37,996 TEUs on Monday, up from 36,642 TEUs on Friday.

Another 3,674 TEUs are waiting to be unloaded from 16 container ships at the port jetties, according to port data.

At the same time, the shipment of export-oriented goods has also slowed.

About 4,241 TEUs of export containers were shipped yesterday, down from 5,231 TEUs on Friday.

Khairul Alam Suzan, vice-

president of the Bangladesh Freight Forwarders Association (BAFFA), told The Daily Star: "Transportation along the highway slightly increased since Monday morning. More export-oriented vehicles are entering private depots than in the last few days.

**Transport service providers said activities had resumed partially on Sunday, but damaged roads had been hindering normal operations along the highway connecting the capital to the Chattogram port**

"It will take a few days to normalise. The highway needs to be repaired quickly to normalise the situation. Many parts of the highway have been severely damaged due to the floods," he said.

Chattogram Port Authority (CPA) Secretary Md Omar Faruk said the situation had not deteriorated too much, adding that deliveries would return to normal within two or three days.

"We have faced various problems for the last one and a

half months due to the students-led protests and a nearly week-long internet blackout. The situation was brought back to normal by keeping all kinds of activities open on weekends and holidays. Port activities were even conducted manually in the absence of the internet," he said.

"Implementing these initiatives helped reduce container congestion but it has returned due to the recent floods. However, some steps have been taken to keep export-import activities running smoothly," he added.

He added that the situation would improve once the Dhaka-Chattogram Highway becomes fully operational.

Mahbubul Alam, president of the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI), echoed the same: "The container congestion has arisen again as floods inundated multiple areas of the highway. But the situation in those areas is improving now. We hope the highway will run smoothly within a short time.

"More than 80 percent of the country's import and export goods are transported through the Dhaka-Chattogram Highway. Port activities will not return to normal until this road is fully opened," he said.

Oil rises 2% amid production outages

REUTERS, London

Oil prices rose 2 percent on Monday on news of fresh production outages in Libya, adding to earlier gains on concerns that an escalating Gaza conflict could disrupt regional oil supplies.

Brent crude futures climbed \$1.64, or 2.08 percent, to \$80.66 a barrel by 1041 GMT, while US crude futures were at \$76.38 a barrel, up \$1.55, or 2.07 percent.

Prices jumped after Libya's eastern-based Benghazi government announced the closure of all oil fields on Monday, halting production and exports.

"The biggest risk for oil market is probably a further drop in Libyan oil production due to political tensions in the country," said analyst Giovanni Staunovo of Swiss bank UBS.

Oil prices opened the week higher after Hezbollah fired hundreds of rockets and drones into Israel on Sunday and Israel's military said it struck Lebanon with around 100 jets to thwart a larger attack, in one of the biggest clashes in more than 10 months of border warfare.

The clash raised fears of wider conflict in the region.

## Navigating thru challenging times in RMG

MD MOHIUDDIN RUBEL

The recent situation in Bangladesh has posed significant challenges for the garment industry, one of the country's most vital economic sectors. A temporary halt in operations caused by unforeseen events led to considerable disruptions in export-import activities and factory operations.

As a result, the industry faced substantial financial consequences, a severe cash flow crisis and widespread supply chain interruptions. The situation was further complicated by an internet blackout, which hindered our ability to communicate with international buyers, damaging the perception of Bangladesh's stability and predictability among global partners.

During this critical period, our factories were passing busy times processing orders for the upcoming winter season. The disruption not only slowed production, but also impacted our ability to secure future orders, significantly affecting the confidence of our international buyers. Nevertheless, we recognise that such challenges are part of the broader commitment to maintaining our principles and we remain dedicated to rebuilding and sustaining the trust of our buyers despite the temporary setbacks.

The financial impact of these disruptions has been profound, with estimated losses in shipments amounting to approximately Tk 16 billion per day during the shutdown. As operations resume, factories are working tirelessly to clear backlogs, but the burden of airfreight costs and other penalties will weigh heavily on exporters. The interruption in production schedules has forced many factories to engage in costly after-hour operations to make up for lost time, adding to the financial strain.

Moreover, the industry is now grappling with increased costs related to container, transportation, freight and banking charges, all of which vary across different factories. These additional expenses are compounded by the challenges of a fluctuating global market, where demand remains uncertain.

In anticipation of potential instability, the industry has taken proactive measures to mitigate risks.

We are enhancing communication channels with buyers to ensure transparency and maintain trust. Additionally, efforts are being made to diversify and optimise logistics and supply chain strategies, reducing our vulnerability to future disruptions. By investing in technology and improving operational efficiency, we aim to build resilience within our operations, ensuring we can continue to meet our commitments to buyers even in the face of uncertainty.

At this critical juncture, it is imperative that the interim government provides support to help the industry regain its footing. Expedited processing at customs and ports is crucial for alleviating current bottlenecks and ensuring the smooth flow of import and export consignments. Flexible banking policies are needed to help businesses manage cash flow challenges effectively.

Additionally, urgent regulatory reforms are essential to create a stable and conducive environment for business activities, enabling the industry to recover from recent setbacks and prepare for future growth. These measures will be key to sustaining the industry's long-term competitiveness and ensuring its continued contribution to the national economy.

Despite numerous challenges, the industry is striving to adapt by enhancing operational efficiency, adopting technology to reduce waste and investing in higher value-added products. However, maintaining competitiveness remains a significant challenge, and continued support from the government is crucial for ensuring the long-term sustainability of the industry.

As we navigate these turbulent times, the resilience and adaptability of Bangladesh's garment industry will be key to overcoming the challenges ahead. With the right support and strategic adjustments, we are confident that the industry will emerge stronger, ready to meet the demands of the global market and continue contributing to the country's economic growth.

The author is a director of the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association



## Dutch hit Uber with \$324m fine

AFP, The Hague

The Dutch data protection watchdog said Monday it hit ride-hailing app Uber with a 290-million-euro (\$324 million) fine over the transfer of personal data of European drivers to US servers.

The regulator said the transfers were a "serious violation" of the European Union's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), as they failed to appropriately protect driver information.

"Uber did not meet the requirements of the GDPR to ensure the level of protection to the data with regard to transfers to the US. That is very serious," Dutch Data Protection Authority (DPA) chairman Aleid Wolfsen said in a statement.

The DPA said Uber collected sensitive information of European drivers, including taxi licences, location data, photos, payment details, identity documents, "and in some cases even criminal and medical data of drivers".

Over a two-year period, the DPA said, the information was transferred to Uber's US headquarters without using transfer tools.

"Because of this, the protection of personal data was not sufficient," the DPA said, noting that Uber has "ended the violation".

Uber said it would appeal the fine, a

process that suspends the penalty but can take up to four years.

"This flawed decision and extraordinary fine are completely unjustified," an Uber spokesperson said in a statement.

"Uber's cross-border data transfer process was compliant with GDPR during a 3-year period of immense uncertainty between the EU and US. We will appeal and remain confident that common sense will prevail," the statement said.

The EU has rolled out a series of rules for what big tech firms can and cannot do, and imposed huge fines for breaches in recent years.

The DPA said it started the investigation after more than 170 French drivers complained to a French human rights interest group, which then filed a complaint to France's data protection watchdog.

Under the GDPR, a business that processes data in several EU countries must deal with the data protection authority where its main office is located. Uber's European headquarters are in the Netherlands.

"In Europe, the GDPR protects the fundamental rights of people, by requiring businesses and governments to handle personal data with due care," Wolfsen said.

## India's gold duty cut likely to spark buying spree during festivals

REUTERS, Bengaluru

Gold demand in India during the upcoming festive season is likely to remain robust, as the substantial reduction in import duty has made prices appealing, providing comfort to retail consumers and encouraging purchases, industry officials said.

Higher demand in the world's second-largest gold consumer could support a rally in global prices, which hit a record high last week. But higher demand for gold imports could increase India's trade deficit and weigh on the rupee.

"The primary beneficiaries of the reduced duty cut will be retail consumers," said Sachin Jain, CEO of the World Gold Council's Indian operations.

India slashed import duties on gold in July to 6 percent from 15 percent, a step aimed at tackling smuggling.

Demand during the upcoming festival season will be very strong, Jain told Reuters on the sidelines of the India Gold Conference.

Gold demand in India usually strengthens towards the end of the year, which coincides with the traditional wedding season and major festivals including Diwali and Dusherra, when bullion buying is considered auspicious.

Retail demand has improved since the duty cut brought down prices and this momentum seems likely to continue in the coming months, said Ajoy Chawla, CEO of Jewellery division at Titan.



PHOTO: AFP/FILE

Gold jewellery kept on display inside a shop in Kolkata. Higher demand in India, world's second-largest gold consumer, could support a rally in global prices, which hit a record high last week.

Global prices hit a record high last week, but in India, domestic prices were around 71,800 rupees per 10 grams on Monday, below a record high of 74,731 rupees hit in July.

The duty cut changed sentiment among retail consumers, which were postponing purchases because of the price rise, Asher

O, managing director of India Operations at Malabar Gold and Diamonds.

Gold prices could have hit a new record high above 80,000 rupees without the duty cut, but now they are trading below the peak, which is likely to increase demand from the next month's Onam festival, said Asher.