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# Exporters brace for impact as India shuts cargo route

REFAYET ULLAH MIRDHA and RASHIDUL HASAN

Exporters in Bangladesh's garment sector face a moment of reckoning over how they will manage urgent international shipments after India abruptly closed a transshipment route that had grown popular for air cargo.

The route, via Kolkata and Delhi airports, allowed Bangladeshi exporters to move goods overland to India through the Benapole-Petrapole border and then air-ship them worldwide. It became especially popular during and after the Covid-19 pandemic, offering faster service and, often, lower costs than relying on the overstretched Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport (HSIA) in Dhaka.

Industry estimates suggest about 18 percent of Bangladesh's garment air cargo was flown through Indian

Industry estimates suggest about 18 percent of Bangladesh's garment air cargo was flown through Indian airports before the closure.

airports. Bangladesh exported roughly 3,400 tonnes of garments by air per week, with 600 tonnes flown through Indian airports before the transshipment ban, according to data from the Bangladesh Freight Forwarders Association.

The government has acknowledged airport challenges and says reforms are underway. Commerce Secretary Mahbubur Rahman said efforts were being made to reduce HSIA's ground handling costs and improve cargo services. Commerce Adviser Sk Bashir Uddin held meetings with relevant ministries yesterday to strengthen both Dhaka and Sylhet airports as viable export gateways.

A glimmer of hope lies in the third terminal at HSIA, which industry leaders say features modern scanning, testing, and temperature-controlled facilities. "The third terminal is the finest. It's just like the airport in Singapore," said Kabir Ahmed, president of the Bangladesh Freight Forwarders Association (BAFFA).

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LAST-MINUTE PREPARATION ... Two students going through books before entering their exam hall. SSC and its equivalent examinations for 2025 began across the country yesterday. The photo was taken at the Motijheel Government Boys' High School exam centre.

PHOTO: ORCHID CHANGMA

## TRANSSHIPMENT 4 lorries with RMG goods turned away from Benapole

STAR REPORT

Four lorries carrying garment products were refused entry through Petrapole Port on Wednesday, hours after India cancelled a transit facility that allowed Bangladesh to export goods to third countries through India.

The shipment refused entry by Indian customs was meant for Bhutan, said Irtiza Ahmed Anik, owner of the clearing and forwarding agency in charge of the shipment.

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## US TARIFF FREEZE Crucial window for better negotiations

Some believe the US-China trade war may help redirect RMG orders to Bangladesh

REFAYET ULLAH MIRDHA

The 90-day suspension of reciprocal tariffs by the US has brought a much-needed reprieve for Bangladesh's readymade garment sector, which had been preparing for a potential slowdown in orders and pricing pressures.

With the pause in place, industry insiders see a crucial window to negotiate

better trade terms while ensuring timely shipments to avoid future tariff hikes.

Adding to the optimism, the US administration's steep 125 percent tariff on Chinese imports may redirect work orders to Bangladesh, further strengthening its foothold in the global apparel market.

However, exporters remain cautious,

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## INVESTMENT SUMMIT Event generates interest among foreign investors

Some point out roadblocks

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The four-day Bangladesh Investment Summit concluded yesterday, creating interest among foreign investors, but they raised concerns over access to resources, policy continuity and corruption.

Around 400 to 450 foreign investors and their representatives joined the summit and expressed their interest in Bangladesh.

The summit also witnessed the signing of an initial agreement on investment by two foreign firms, including Handa Industries, a renowned China-based apparel manufacturing company specialising in high-quality knitted textiles, dyeing processes and garments on a global scale, with the Bangladesh Investment Development Authority (BIDA).

The company will invest \$150 million in Bangladesh.

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## BUSINESS

Govt courts healthcare FDI as market heads towards \$23b by 2030


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Bangladesh at risk of slipping to third in global RMG export

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