Anti-dumping duty on Chinese plastics if proof found: secretary

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

With over 6,000 plastic manufacturing units—mostly SMEs—and around 1.5 million jobs, the plastic industry has "multiplier effects" across various sectors, said an expert. PHOTO: STAR/FILE

Bangladesh will not hesitate to impose anti-dumping duties if China is found to be selling plastics in the country at a lower price than the normal value, Commerce Secretary Mahbubur Rahman said in response to complaints from local businesses yesterday.

"Regardless of how much we depend on China, if dumping is taking place, we will certainly impose anti-dumping duties," said Mahbubur Rahman, commerce secretary, at a focus group discussion organised by the Bangladesh Plastic Goods Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BPGMEA) at the InterContinental Dhaka.

He urged businesses to provide credible evidence to support any claims.

Manirul Islam, general manager (sales and marketing of chemicals) at Meghna Group of Industries, highlighted the issue, saying, "China used to export PVC and PET plastics to India, but it can no longer do so there. Now they are dumping plastics in Bangladesh. If we do not receive support, we will struggle to move forward."

Experts at the event said Bangladesh's plastic industry stands at a turning point as it prepares to move from incentive-based growth towards structural transformation amid the country's upcoming graduation from Least Developed Country (LDC) status.

Secretary Rahman stressed that LDC graduation will lead to the loss of preferential trade benefits, making structural reforms essential for the sector to remain globally competitive.

He added that the sector holds significant export potential but must pivot away from subsidies towards long-term institutional and technological reform.

He highlighted the Mold Making and Design Centre, developed under the Skills for Employment Investment Programme (SEIP), as a model initiative to enhance industrial capabilities in plastics and light engineering.

However, the secretary expressed concern over weak collaboration between academia and industry. "We still don't have enough institutions producing industry-ready graduates for areas like fashion technology or product design," he said, urging the private sector to take a larger role in workforce development.

"We must build capacity through technology centres, training institutes, and academic collaboration to withstand external pressures," he said.

Shamima Akhter, director of corporate affairs, partnerships and communications at Unilever Bangladesh, emphasised the need for a robust Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) framework to ensure sustainable packaging practices.

"The rapid growth of fast-moving consumer goods and packaging in Bangladesh must be matched with a roadmap for responsible waste management," she said.

She called for greater alignment between the ministries of commerce, industry, finance, and environment to avoid policy fragmentation. "Often, frameworks are created in isolation without fully understanding sectoral dynamics. A coordinated, phased approach is essential."

Akhter also sought stronger support for local recyclers, stating that better recycling infrastructure would reduce dependence on imported raw materials.

Echoing similar concerns, Shamim Ahmed, president of BPGMEA, called for a policy reset to protect the industry, which he said is deeply embedded in the national economy. "One-third of all industries depend on plastic, especially in packaging and processing."

He noted that the sector now supports export earnings exceeding $1.5 billion, with a local market valued between Tk 50,000 and Tk 60,000 crore.

However, he cautioned that LDC graduation could jeopardise this progress unless protection and incentives are recalibrated.

Ahmed lauded the government's role in setting up innovation centres, including the mold-making facility established under BPGMEA leadership with World Bank support.

Building trust with blockchain

AHMED HUMAYUN MURSHED

Blockchain. Some hear the word and think of Silicon Valley hype. But if we look past the buzz, we find something else, something that is not just about money or technology. At its core, blockchain is about trust. And in a country like ours, where trust in systems and data is often fragile, that matters.

Most people first came across blockchain through Bitcoin, its earliest and best-known use. But like the internet in its early days, blockchain is now spreading across many sectors. In today's world, simply having digital data is not enough. We need systems that are transparent, secure and verifiable. That is where blockchain comes in.

Think of it as a digital notebook shared by thousands of users. Everyone has a complete copy, and before a new entry is added, whether a transaction or a record, it is verified by the group. Once added, it cannot be changed.

Each block contains data, a timestamp and a unique fingerprint. These blocks link together to form a chain. If anyone tries to tamper with a block, the system detects it and rejects the change. Because everything runs on a decentralised network, no single authority controls the data. That is what makes blockchain so trustworthy.

So, what does this mean for Bangladesh?

Although we are trying to digitise records, we face challenges in many areas.

Take land records. The system is messy. People lose documents, plots are sold multiple times, and paper trails vanish. If land ownership were recorded on blockchain, the records would be permanent and transparent. That alone could prevent thousands of disputes.

Remittances are another area. Every year, migrant workers send money home. A portion is lost to delays, bank fees and middlemen. Blockchain-based transfers could make this faster, cheaper and more direct.

Even in exports, international buyers increasingly want to know where their products come from and whether they are ethically sourced. Blockchain can track every step of the supply chain, including export documents.

In welfare programmes, blockchain could ensure that every taka disbursed is visible and verifiable. No fake names, no missing money. Or consider academic certificates. Employers, both local and abroad, could check them instantly online without contacting the issuing institution.

Of course, blockchain is not a magic wand. Some systems, such as Bitcoin, consume huge amounts of electricity, which is not ideal in a country where power supply remains an issue. And not every problem needs blockchain. Sometimes, a standard database is enough. It should be avoided where speed, simplicity, deletable data, low cost or strict privacy are essential.

So where should we begin?

We do not need to scale nationwide straight away. Let us start small. A land registry project could be piloted in one district. Blockchain-based certificates could be tested at one university. Local developers could build the tools. Mistakes may happen, improvements can follow, and growth will come step by step. But there has to be a plan, a policy in place.

Real progress rarely begins with fanfare. Sometimes it starts with something simple: a clean, unchangeable record. A system that keeps its promise, one block at a time.

And in that quiet consistency, maybe we finally find something we have long been seeking. Trust.

The writer is co-founder and CEO at Accfintax.

Dutch-Bangla Bank to buy Tk 1,016cr building for headquarters

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Dutch-Bangla Bank, a listed lender in the country, has decided to buy a building for its headquarters in Dhaka's Motijheel at a cost of Tk 1,016 crore.

The bank's board made the decision in a meeting held on August 26, according to a disclosure on the website of the Dhaka Stock Exchange (DSE) yesterday.

The bank has decided to purchase a 21.5-storied commercial building in 47 Motijheel commercial area, with a total space of around 207,340 square feet.

Of that, 176,300 square feet is floor space and 31,040 square feet is basement.

The bank will execute the plan after obtaining the necessary approval from Bangladesh Bank.

However, stocks of Dutch-Bangla Bank dropped 1 percent to Tk 41.50 from the previous day at the DSE yesterday.

The bank's reserve and surplus stand at around Tk 4,200 crore, and its paid-up capital is Tk 966 crore, according to DSE data.

Dollar firms but worries linger over Fed independence

REUTERS, *Singapore*

The dollar advanced against the euro and sterling on Wednesday but investor concerns over the Federal Reserve's independence continued to linger, potentially limiting the US currency's rise.

The euro was down about 0.4 percent at $1.1593 and sterling slipped 0.3 percent to $1.3441, giving back some of the gains spurred by Trump's announcement on Monday that he would fire Fed Governor Lisa Cook over alleged improprieties in obtaining mortgage loans.

Cook's lawyer later said she would file a lawsuit to prevent her ouster, kicking off what could be a protracted legal fight.

Trump's unprecedented bid to remove the Fed Governor adds to the relentless pressure he has put on the central bank to lower interest rates since he returned to the White House this year.

While the dollar appears to have shaken off immediate worries over Fed independence, Trump's actions have contributed to the steepening of the US Treasury yield curve.

"Trump has essentially usurped the Fed's forward guidance function for the time being and telling markets lower rates are coming, which is being manifest in a steeper yield curve," said Jamie Cox, managing partner for Harris Financial Group.

The two-year US Treasury yield , which typically reflects near-term rate expectations, bottomed at 3.6540 percent on Wednesday, its lowest since May 1, as traders ramped up bets of imminent Fed cuts.

Islami Bank's profit fell 83% in 2024

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Islami Bank Bangladesh's earnings took a heavy hit in 2024 as surging payouts to depositors and higher provision expenses dented its bottom line.

The Shariah-based lender's net profit after tax plummeted 83 percent year-on-year to Tk 108.78 crore. Its profit stood at Tk 635.33 crore in 2023.

Its earnings per share (EPS) stood at Tk 0.68, compared to Tk 3.95 in 2023, the bank said in a price-sensitive disclosure.

Islami Bank attributed the sharp fall in profit mainly to a Tk 2,398.79 crore rise in profit paid on deposits and a Tk 415.68 crore increase in provision maintenance.

At the same time, the bank's investment income rose by Tk 1,556.36 crore, while its commission, exchange and brokerage earnings increased by Tk 1,043.48 crore – together were still lower than its spending.

Meanwhile, its net operating cash flow per share rebounded significantly to Tk 57.90 from negative Tk 10.63 in 2023, aided by a Tk 18,788.21 crore fall in investments to customers.

India's garment revenue may fall by half: report

ANN/THE STATESMAN

Revenue of India's readymade garment industry is likely to fall to just 3-5 percent in the financial year 2026 (FY26), almost half the pace of last year, Crisil Ratings said.

The readymade garment industry is one of the country's biggest job creators and exporters. It is bracing for a sharp slowdown this year after Washington announced a 50 percent tariff on Indian garment imports starting August 27, 2025.

Crisil noted that the duty hike will weaken India's price competitiveness against its Asian peers.

Notably, the US is India's single-largest garment market, accounting for around one-third of the USD 16 billion worth of exports logged in FY24.

"If these tariffs persist, shipments to the US will decline substantially," said Manish Gupta, deputy chief rating officer at Crisil Ratings. The agency expects the US share in India's garment exports to fall to 20-25 percent this year from 33 percent last year.

The analysis by Crisil covers over 120 rated manufacturers with combined revenues of around Rs 45,000 crore and shows that profitability will come under pressure.

India's Russian oil gains wiped out by US tariffs

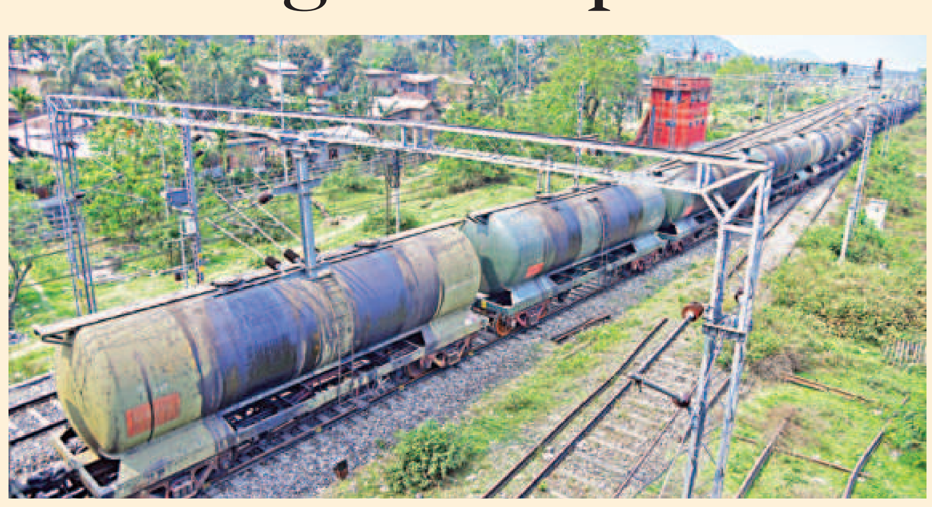
REUTERS, *New Delhi*

India saved billions of dollars by stepping up imports of discounted Russian oil in the wake of the war in Ukraine, but punitive tariffs imposed by the US that came into effect on Wednesday will quickly undo the gains, with no easy solutions in sight.

Analysts estimate India has saved at least $17 billion by increasing oil imports from Russia since early 2022. US President Donald Trump's decision to impose additional tariffs of up to 50 percent on Indian imports could slash exports by more than 40 percent, or nearly $37 billion, this April-March fiscal year alone, according to New Delhi think-tank Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI).

The fallout from the tariffs will be lingering, and could be politically debilitating for Prime Minister Narendra Modi, with thousands of jobs at risk in labour-intensive sectors such as textiles, gems, and jewellery.

India's response in the coming weeks could reshape its decades-old partnership with Russia and recalibrate its increasingly complex ties with the US, a relationship Washington sees as vital to countering China's growing influence in the Indo-Pacific, analysts said.



An oil tanker train passes near the Guwahati Refinery operated by Indian Oil Corporation in Guwahati. Russian crude now accounts for nearly 40 percent of India's total oil purchases. PHOTO: AFP/FILE

"India needs Russia for defence equipment for several more years, cheap oil when available, geopolitical support in the continental space and political backing on sensitive matters," said Happymon Jacob, the founder of Delhi's Council for Strategic and Defence Research. "That makes Russia an invaluable partner for India."

But he added: "Despite the difficulties between Delhi and Washington under Trump, the United States continues to be India's most important strategic partner. India simply doesn't have the luxury of choosing one over the other, at least not yet."

Two Indian government sources said New Delhi wants to repair ties with Washington and is open to increasing purchases of US energy but is reluctant to fully halt Russian oil imports. Discussions with the US are ongoing, India's foreign secretary told reporters on Tuesday, with officials from both countries holding virtual talks on trade, energy security including nuclear cooperation, and critical minerals exploration.

CRUDE AT $200/BBL?

Russian crude now accounts for nearly 40 percent of India's total oil purchases from nearly nothing before the war, and analysts say any immediate stoppage would not only signal capitulation under pressure but also be economically unfeasible. Indian purchases are led by billionaire Mukesh Ambani's Reliance Industries, which operates the world's largest refining complex in Modi's home state of Gujarat.

Global crude prices could more than triple to around $200 a barrel if India, the world's third-largest oil consumer and importer, stops buying oil from Russia, according to internal Indian government estimates reviewed by Reuters. It would also lose the up to 7 percent discount Russian oil offers compared to global benchmarks.