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BUSINESS



Govt gives nod to export of raw jute stuck at ports

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The government has approved the export of raw jute shipments that were stuck at the ports. This will give relief to exporters who had already sent their goods to the ports and completed all export procedures.

The commerce ministry announced the decision through an order issued on Wednesday.

Earlier, on September 8, the ministry had issued a circular making government approval mandatory for raw jute exports. Following this, the National Board of Revenue (NBR) stopped shipments of raw jute that had already completed all procedures.

At that time, shipping bills had already been submitted, and consignments had reached different ports. The sudden decision created serious trouble for exporters.

After exporters suffered for 10 days, the ministry issued a new order allowing the release of raw jute shipments that were stranded at the ports.

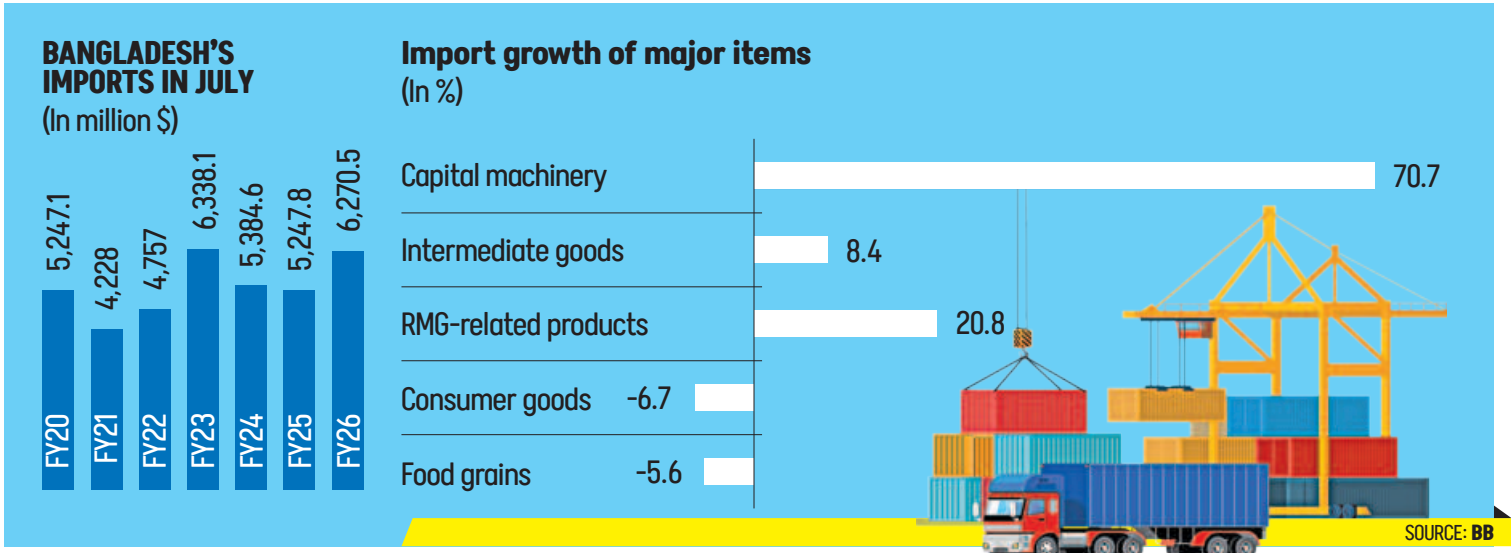
Businessmen said the September 8 circular was issued without considering its immediate or long term impact.

As a result, exporters had to pay extra charges at ports, including demurrage fees and additional truck rentals. Nearly 50,000 tonnes of raw jute consignments were stuck.

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Imports hit three-year high in July

But top businesses make a cautious interpretation



SUKANTA HALDER

The country's imports hit a three-year high in July this year, as the economy continued to recover from the dollar crisis that had forced authorities to scale back purchases from abroad.

Importers brought in goods worth \$6.2 billion in July, up 19.5 percent in the same month a year earlier, according to data from the National Board of Revenue (NBR)

compiled by the Bangladesh Bank (BB).

Bangladesh imported goods worth \$6.3 billion in July 2023. Since then, imports had fallen before recovering this year.

Business leaders said the low base of July last year, when trade was disrupted by the mass uprising against the Sheikh Hasina-led government, partly explains the sharp rise. They pointed to a return to normal business activity after last year's unrest as a key driver.

The latest increase was driven by higher imports of intermediate goods, especially ready-made garments (RMG) inputs, iron, steel and other base metals, as well as capital machinery.

Mahia Juned, additional managing director of City Bank PLC, said Bangladesh's higher import payments this fiscal year are mainly the result of a rebound in industrial demand, especially for capital machinery and

intermediate goods, following the relaxation of earlier restrictions.

"For much of the past two years, authorities had curbed imports by tightening LC approvals and requiring high cash margins to protect foreign reserves. With some of those curbs relaxed, businesses are now importing essential inputs, while elevated global prices and a weaker taka have further inflated the bill," she said.

"Overall, the increase is rooted in investment and production needs rather than consumer demand," she added.

Kamran T Rahman, president of the Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce & Industry, Dhaka (MCCI), said the noticeable rise in imports, particularly of capital machinery, signals a positive shift in industrial sentiment.

"However, this data must be interpreted with caution," said Rahman.

He said that July and August last year

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US tariffs offer big opportunity for Saarc trade

Says chamber president

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Donald Trump's reciprocal tariffs can turn into the biggest opportunity for boosting trade among Saarc nations as many countries have adopted protectionism in response to the tariffs, said Saarc Chamber President Md Jashim Uddin yesterday.

Many countries are now turning to protectionism in response to US tariffs, breaking up traditional trade routes. "For South Asia, this is not just a challenge; it is our biggest opportunity," said Jashim.

"But first, let us be concerned about our reality. Our intra-regional trade stands at a mere \$38.7 billion. That is just 8 percent of our total exports and represents lost potential," he said.

In comparison, with Asean it is 22 percent, or with the European Union 45 percent, he said.

"Our FDI figures show a positive trend but are still growing only to a million figure. We must aim for billions, not millions," Jashim said at a conference on "Advancing Global and Regional Trade & Investment."

The event was organised by the Saarc Chamber of Commerce and Industry in collaboration with the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBBCCI) at The Westin in Dhaka.

The leaders of business chambers and trade bodies, economists, trade analysts, exporters, importers, and traders from Bangladesh and other Saarc countries participated in the conference.

Global politics and economics are shifting and facing serious challenges, he said.

Supply chains are being restructured. Growth is slow, the recovery is weak, and the future is uncertain. Wars in Ukraine and the Middle East have caused problems for energy and food supplies around the world, he said.

"We need to identify the reasons. Why is this happening? This is not just because of tariffs. It is the invisible walls we have built between ourselves," Jashim also said.

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Foreign debt rises to \$112b

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Bangladesh's foreign debt rose in the last quarter of the fiscal year 2024-25, while borrowings by the private sector declined, according to Bangladesh Bank data.

Total outstanding foreign debt stood at \$112.15 billion at the end of June 2025, up 7 percent from \$104.80 billion in March.

The government accounted for most of the increase. Its outstanding debt rose to \$92.37 billion in June from \$84.91 billion three months earlier, reflecting a 9 percent rise.

Debt in other corporations also increased, reaching \$12.18 billion in June compared to \$11.30 billion in March, an 8 percent rise.

In contrast, private sector foreign debt edged down by around 1 percent

to \$19.77 billion in June from \$19.88 billion in March.

The fall is attributed to weak demand, with private sector credit growth standing at 6.49 percent in June, a historically low level, as the central bank usually sets a double-digit target in its monetary policy.

The government typically secures loans from development partners such as the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank. These are usually long-term borrowings, with funds released gradually as projects advance.

Public sector corporations, however, depend on both short-term and long-term loans. Over the past year, their short-term borrowing has decreased, while long-term debt rose slightly, Bangladesh Bank data shows.

Shipping Corp to acquire two vessels for \$77m

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

State-owned Bangladesh Shipping Corporation (BSC) has finalised a deal to buy two new ships from US-based Hellenic Dry Bulk Ventures LLC for \$76.69 million.

BSC will acquire the ships from China using its own funds. The decision was taken at a board meeting on September 17, according to a disclosure published on the Dhaka Stock Exchange (DSE) website yesterday.

Earlier, on August 12, the cabinet committee on government purchase approved the procurement of two bulk carriers, each with a carrying capacity of 63,500 deadweight tonnage (DWT).

The ships are currently under construction at Nanyang Shipyard in China and are expected to be delivered by November.

This marks the first time that BSC is using its own funds to finance such an acquisition.

At present, the state-run shipping company owns five vessels: two bulk carriers and three chemical and oil tankers.

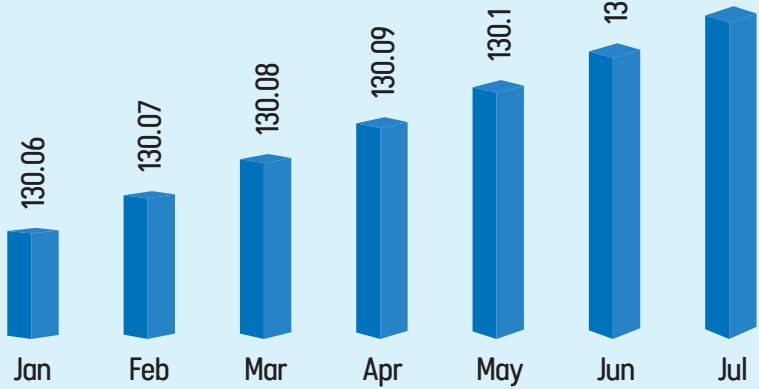
BSC saw its profit rise in the third quarter of the fiscal year 2024-25 as its revenue increased due to higher fares and vessel sales.

The company posted a profit of Tk 75.50 crore, marking a 10 percent year-on-year rise.

As of August 31, 2025, the government held 52.10 percent of BSC's shares, while institutional investors owned 21.34 percent and general investors held the remaining 26.56 percent, according to DSE data.

Established in 1972, BSC plays a key role in Bangladesh's shipping industry, supporting the country's trade through its fleet of vessels.

TOTAL INTERNET SUBSCRIBERS (In million)



SOURCE: BTRC

Internet subscriber base rebounds

24 lakh new users added in July

MAHMUDUL HASAN

Bangladesh's internet subscriber base has begun to rebound in recent months, with July recording robust growth of about 24 lakh, driven mainly by mobile operators.

According to the latest statistics from the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC), the country's total internet subscribers rose by 1.78 percent in July, reaching 13.60 crore.

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