

# Pharma sector faces supply risks amid Iran war fallout

Industry leaders raise concerns at Asia Pharma Expo

**STAR BUSINESS REPORT**

Bangladesh's pharmaceutical industry is facing mounting pressure as the ongoing US-Israel war on Iran disrupts global supply chains, threatening the availability of raw materials, pushing up freight costs and raising concerns over production stability.

The issue was highlighted at the inaugural session of the 17th Asia Pharma Expo 2026 and Asia Lab Expo 2026, held at the Bangladesh-China Friendship Exhibition Center in Dhaka's Purbachal yesterday.

Health Minister Sardar Md Sakhawat Hossain, who inaugurated the three-day exposition as the chief guest, said the government is closely monitoring the evolving situation and stressed that ensuring access to quality medicines remains a top priority.

He also reiterated a zero-tolerance stance on corruption and irregularities in the sector.

Industry leaders said the Gulf region unrest has already started to affect the import of active pharmaceutical ingredients (APIs) and other essential



Visitors gather at the 17th Asia Pharma Expo 2026 and Asia Lab Expo 2026, an international showcase of complete pharmaceutical manufacturing solutions, at the Bangladesh-China Friendship Exhibition Center in Dhaka's Purbachal yesterday.

inputs, many of which rely on complex shipping routes through the Middle East.

"The war has disrupted logistics, increased freight costs and caused shipment delays," said Abdul Muktedir, president of the Bangladesh Association of Pharmaceutical Industries (BAPI).

"Rerouting of sea and air cargo is making imports more expensive and unpredictable."

The disruption is particularly significant for Bangladesh, which remains heavily dependent on imported raw materials despite its strong domestic manufacturing base. Prolonged instability

could drive up production costs and put pressure on medicine prices in the coming months, industry insiders said.

According to BAPI, the industry now meets nearly 98 percent of domestic demand and exports medicines to more than 120 countries, reflecting steady expansion over the past decade.

Bangladesh currently exports around \$300 million worth of medicines annually and is emerging as a growing player in the global pharmaceutical market.

However, sustaining this momentum will depend on the sector's ability to navigate external shocks and ensure an uninterrupted supply of inputs.

Muktedir stressed the urgency of accelerating the development of a domestic API industry to reduce reliance on imports.

"The current situation highlights our vulnerability. Policy support is essential to strengthen local capacity," he said.

He warned that if the conflict persists, rising freight costs and supply uncertainties could erode profit margins and disrupt production cycles, with smaller manufacturers likely to face greater pressure.

# Cold storage owners want govt aid for disaster-hit potato growers

**STAR BUSINESS REPORT**

The Bangladesh Cold Storage Association (BCSA) has urged the government to include potato farmers affected by recent storms and rainfall in an agricultural rehabilitation programme.

In a letter sent to the Ministry of Agriculture on March 25, it said early storms and heavy rainfall in the first half of March severely impacted major potato-producing districts, including Rangpur, Rajshahi, Bogura, Joypurhat, Naogaon, Thakurgaon, Gaibandha, Nilphamari, Kurigram, Lalmonirhat, Dinajpur and Panchagarh.

Waterlogging during the harvesting period caused extensive damage to potatoes left in the fields, as well as to crops that had not yet been harvested.

As a result, the affected potatoes have become unsuitable for storage in cold storage facilities.

The association estimates that around 45,000 hectares of potato farmland have been damaged across these districts, with total losses amounting to approximately Tk 675 crore.

Farmers who managed to harvest their potatoes are facing further losses, as poor quality has made the produce unsuitable for storage, forcing them to sell at significantly reduced prices of Tk 5-6 per kilogramme (kg), well below prevailing market rates.

## Govt eyes \$2b

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IMF is also under consideration, although no formal discussions have taken place yet," he added.

The possibility of extra financing from the Asian Development Bank and other sources is also being explored.

Appointed last month after the new government took office, Rahman said Bangladesh needs to ensure energy security and cut costs, and that the government is trying.

"The situation is changing rapidly - sometimes there is talk of a ceasefire, and then again, fears of new conflict arise. Therefore, efforts are being made to take necessary decisions by constantly monitoring the situation and coordinating with all relevant parties.

"Our goal is only one: to keep the economy relatively stable even in this uncertain situation," he said.

He added that in the current situation, the central bank's policy stance is extremely important. "Especially on the exchange rate issue, we have to remain cautious. The BB is also not going to reduce the policy rate."

"In the current situation, it is not realistic to reduce interest rates quickly, as controlling inflation is essential. It will also take time for confidence in new investments to return," the BB chief said.

He added that over the last five to eight years, crises have become a new normal. "New problems appear every one or two years - including Covid, war, and other challenges. It seems we have to move forward accepting this reality."

**STRENGTHENING FINANCIAL SECTOR AND INDUSTRY**

The governor also spoke about keeping the financial sector free from political influence. Work is ongoing to recover defaulted loans and assets siphoned abroad. Most of the non-disclosure agreements have been signed by banks with international asset recovery firms.

Last week, the governor met with large industrial groups and employment-generating firms to address their concerns.

"Our main priorities are three - agriculture, the SME sector, and restarting closed factories. Efforts are being made to bring closed factories back into production, even partially, because these are national assets," he said.

Initiatives have been taken to increase cashless transactions. By June 30, the Bangla QR code will be mandatory at all payment points, with strict enforcement from July. This will increase transactions and boost revenue.

Responding to questions about troubled non-bank financial institutions (NBFIs), he said efforts are being made for a quick solution. The BB had earlier decided to liquidate six NBFIs due to poor financial health and sought funds from the finance ministry to repay depositors.

"It is our responsibility to protect depositors, as they have kept money in licensed institutions," he added, noting that the BB will also move forward with making Sammilito Islami Bank operational.

The bank was created as a state-owned entity in December last year through the merger of five troubled Shariah-based lenders. The appointment of a managing director is underway, and the board of the bank will be reconstituted.

## 66 WTO members

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e-invoicing and the legal recognition of electronic transferable records, such as bills of lading and promissory notes.

The agreement is not applicable to Bangladesh as the country remains in favour of continuing the long-standing moratorium on imposing customs duties on electronic transmissions, said Mustafizur Rahman, a distinguished fellow at the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), who is attending the conference.

He said Bangladesh should cautiously observe the development before making a decision, adding that with the massive digitalisation of global trade, a significant volume of transactions now occurs digitally.

As a major importer and exporter of commodities and services, the withdrawal of the e-commerce moratorium could increase business costs for Bangladesh, he said.

## Govt rules out

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"Increased investment will lead to higher production, which will create jobs. Higher employment will, in turn, raise incomes and government revenue," Titumir noted.

Stating that the government inherited a "destroyed economy," he said revenue figures in the past were often manipulated. With the updated iBAS system, real-time data will now be available.

He also described the decision to split the NBR into two entities as logical, adding that discussions would be held to move forward on the matter.

## New budget must balance

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He sought suggestions regarding these concerns from the economists.

Economists, in response, suggested including a low number of projects in the budget to ensure smooth implementation.

They also stressed the need to strengthen, streamline and ensure accountability in the formulation of the Annual Development Programme (ADP).

Without addressing these weaknesses, they cautioned, the effectiveness of public investment will remain limited.

No move should be taken to reduce the policy rate at this stage, most economists suggested, as inflation remains high and could intensify further with rising energy and import costs.

Sharing his experience as adviser of the previous interim government, Salehuddin Ahmed stressed that balancing political commitments with economic realities remains a key challenge. He suggested continuing the reform initiatives.

Referring to family cards and expanded safety net schemes, economists suggested streamlining the existing social safety net programmes alongside those electoral promises.

They also called for prioritising restoring confidence in the private

sector, stressing the need for improving the investment climate, ensuring policy continuity and reducing administrative bottlenecks.

In the current uncertain environment, investors remain cautious, making it crucial for the government to provide clear and credible policy signals, they noted.

Tax reform featured prominently in the discussion. Structural weaknesses in the National Board of Revenue (NBR), limited tax collection capacity and persistent tax evasion were identified as major concerns.

Economists stressed that expanding the tax base and undertaking administrative reforms are essential for improving revenue mobilisation. They also called for modernisation, greater automation and enhanced accountability within the NBR.

Rashed Al Mahmud Titumir, economic adviser to the prime minister, Md Mostaqur Rahman, governor of Bangladesh Bank, and Md Khairuzzaman Mozumder, secretary of the Finance Division, Monzur Ahmed, member of the General Economic Division of the Planning Commission, Nazma Mobarek, secretary of the Financial Institutions Division, and AK Enamul Haque, director general of Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS), were also present at the meeting.

## Half of Japanese

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Expansion plans vary across sectors. While 62.2 percent of firms in non-manufacturing sectors intend to expand, compared with 47.6 percent in manufacturing, Bangladesh continues to attract interest as a production base.

Kataoka said that Japanese firms are gradually redirecting investment focus from Southeast Asia to South Asia, with Bangladesh emerging as a key destination alongside India and Pakistan.

"Bangladesh is among the countries where Japanese firms show strong expansion interest compared to several Southeast Asian markets," he added.

The rising interest reflects growing opportunities in urban consumption, particularly in Dhaka, where purchasing power is rising alongside demand for higher-quality goods.

On Japanese investment, Kataoka said it is difficult to determine an accurate figure, as many companies channel funds through third countries, meaning such investments are not reflected in official Japanese data.

However, direct investment from Japanese sources alone is estimated at no less than \$400 million.

Despite the improving outlook, structural challenges continue to weigh on businesses.

Companies report that time-consuming tax procedures, regulatory uncertainty, bureaucratic inefficiencies, and inconsistent policy implementation remain major hurdles, often slowing operations and complicating long-term planning.

"These issues will take time to resolve, but improvements in government procedures could attract more Japanese investment," Kataoka said.

He also pointed to broader concerns, including social instability and an underdeveloped legal system, which continue to affect operational efficiency and investor confidence.

Kataoka added that firms are likely to prioritise developing a skilled workforce for employment in Japan, as the country's ageing population continues to grow. Bangladesh could play a key role in supplying workers, particularly in engineering, agriculture, and construction.

## Food exports to the Gulf

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Sayedul Azhar Sarwar, head of business at Danish Foods Ltd, a concern of Partex Star Group, said rising freight rates have introduced a new "war cost" that is significantly increasing overall expenses.

"Importers are increasingly reluctant to accept deliveries as higher costs erode competitiveness, particularly for goods already in transit," he said. He estimated that overall costs have risen by at least 15 percent, prompting many buyers to delay orders in the hope of more stable conditions.

He also said that job uncertainty among migrant workers is beginning to affect consumption, which could dampen demand for non-essential food items.

Luthful Kabir Shaheen, director for business development at City Group, said shipment schedules had become increasingly unpredictable, causing delays not only in the Middle East but also in Europe and the US, with transit times extending by around 10 days.

He, however, said production remains broadly stable, with companies adapting by routing goods through alternative Gulf hubs such as Dubai. "Despite steady demand for essential food items, the export process has become more complex, requiring greater operational flexibility."

Similar to City Group, Sameera Rahman, head of export at Meghna Group of Industries, said their output for Middle Eastern markets remains steady.

"Our manufacturing operations are fully functional, supported by reinforced supply chains and careful resource planning," she said. "But logistics remain under strain."

She added that many shipping lines have paused new bookings and cancelled existing ones, disrupting dispatch schedules, while rising risk premiums were further driving up costs.

"War risk surcharges have nearly doubled freight costs on some routes, including shipments to Oman," added Rahman.

According to the Export Promotion Bureau (EPB), processed food exports to the Middle East stand at \$40-\$45 million annually, while the broader agricultural sector earned \$65.24 million in the fiscal year 2024-25.

## Bank Asia to buy

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operations, subject to regulatory approval and completion of legal formalities.

The sale process began in April last year. Legal formalities for the transfer of assets and liabilities are still pending, while core banking system migration must also be aligned.

The audit and valuation of Bank Alfalah's Bangladesh operations were conducted by PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) Bangladesh, a UK-based multinational tax, audit, and consulting firm.

Bank Asia, which began its journey in 1999, is a pioneer in agent banking services in Bangladesh. If the acquisition is completed, it will be the

third such takeover by Bank Asia in its 26 years of operation.

In 2001, the bank acquired the operations of the Canada-based Bank of Nova Scotia in Dhaka - the first of its kind in Bangladesh's banking history, according to Bank Asia's website. It later took over the Bangladesh operations of Muslim Commercial Bank Ltd, a renowned Pakistani bank.

Bank Alfalah is incorporated in Pakistan, with its main capital base coming from Abu Dhabi Investment Funds.

Over 51 percent of its equity is held by the Abu Dhabi Royal Family. The bank began operations in Bangladesh in 2005 and currently has seven branches in the country.

**Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh**  
Office of the Executive Engineer  
Education Engineering Department  
Kushtia  
Website: [eed.kushtia.gov.bd](http://eed.kushtia.gov.bd)

Memo No. EED/Kush/323-School/Generator/2025-26/43 Date: 29/03/2026

**Re-Tender Notice No. 43/2025-26**  
**Open Tendering Method**

This is to notify all concerned that e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the Procurement of following works. Details are given below:

Sl No.	Tender ID No.	Package No.	Name of work	Document last selling (date & time)	Tender closing (date & time)
01	1248618	EED/Kush/323-School/Generator/2025-26/WD-01	Supply, Installation, Testing and Commissioning of 60 KVA Diesel Generator & Construction of Generator Room at Mirpur Government Girls High School, Mirpur, Kushtia.	15-Apr-2026 16:00	16-Apr-2026 13:00

The interested persons/firms may visit website (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) to get the details of the tender. This is an online tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required. Further information & guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP helpdesk ([helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd](mailto:helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd)).

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GD-658

**গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার**  
**বিভাগীয় বন কর্মকর্তার কার্যালয়**  
**ময়মনসিংহ বন বিভাগ**  
**পুনঃ ইজারা বিজ্ঞপ্তি**

০১	মন্ত্রণালয়/বিভাগ	৪	পরিবেশ, বন ও জলবায়ু পরিবর্তন মন্ত্রণালয়।
০২	সংস্থা	৪	বন অধিদপ্তর, বাংলাদেশ।
০৩	ইজারা প্রদানকারী সংস্থার নাম	৪	বিভাগীয় বন কর্মকর্তা, ময়মনসিংহ বন বিভাগ, ময়মনসিংহ।
০৪	বিজ্ঞপ্তি নং ও তারিখ	৪	মববি- ০৪ অব ২০২৫-২৬, তারিখ- ২৯/০৩/২০২৬ খ্রি।
০৫	ক্রয় পদ্ধতি	৪	উন্মুক্ত দরপত্র পদ্ধতি।
০৬	দরপত্র প্রকাশের তারিখ	৪	৩০/০৩/২০২৬ খ্রি।
০৭	দরপত্র বিক্রির শেষ তারিখ ও সময়	৪	০৫/০৪/২০২৬ খ্রি. বিকাল - ০৫.০০ ঘটিকা পর্যন্ত।
০৮	দরপত্র দাখিলের তারিখ ও সময়	৪	০৬/০৪/২০২৬ খ্রি. দুপুর ০১.০০ ঘটিকা।
০৯	দরপত্র খোলার স্থান, তারিখ ও সময়	৪	বিভাগীয় বন কর্মকর্তার কার্যালয়, ময়মনসিংহ বন বিভাগ, ময়মনসিংহ। তারিখ-০৬/০৪/২০২৬ খ্রি. বেলা- ০৪.০০ ঘটিকা।
১০	দরপত্র দাখিলের স্থান	৪	(ক) বিভাগীয় বন কর্মকর্তার কার্যালয়, ময়মনসিংহ বন বিভাগ, ময়মনসিংহ। (খ) জেলা প্রশাসকের কার্যালয়, ময়মনসিংহ ও শেরপুর জেলা।
১১	দরপত্র সিদ্ধি/উদ্ধি বিক্রয়ের স্থান	৪	(ক) বিভাগীয় বন কর্মকর্তার কার্যালয়, ময়মনসিংহ বন বিভাগ, ময়মনসিংহ। (খ) রেঞ্জ কর্মকর্তার কার্যালয়, ময়ুটিলা রেঞ্জ, নালিতাবাড়ী, শেরপুর। (গ) সামাজিক বনায়ন নারসিংগী ও প্রশিক্ষণ কেন্দ্র, শেরপুর সদর।
১২	ইজারার মেয়াদ	৪	কার্যসেবা প্রদানের তারিখ হইতে ০১ (এক) বছর।

১৩। ইজারা সমূহের গ্রুপ এবং অন্যান্য তথ্যাদি ৪

ক্রমিক নং	কার্যের বিবরণ	দরপত্র দাতা / প্রতিষ্ঠানের মেয়াদ	বায়নার টাকা	সিদ্ধি/উদ্ধি মূল্য
১	৪ ময়ুটিলা ইকো-পার্ক, নালিতাবাড়ী, শেরপুর এর গ্রুপে শেইট, সাব-শেইট ও পার্কিং এলাকা ইজারা।	কমপক্ষে নগদ ছিডি ২০.০ লক্ষ টাকার আর্থিক স্বচ্ছলতা সম্পন্ন যে কোন ব্যক্তি বা প্রতিষ্ঠান।	উদ্ধৃত দরের ২.৫% হারে	৭৫০/-
২	৪ ময়ুটিলা ইকো-পার্ক, নালিতাবাড়ী, শেরপুর এর ওয়াচ টাওয়ার, শিল্পপার্শ্বের গ্রুপে শেইট, পার্কিং টয়লেট, পেকে কোট ও নৌকা চালানো, পেকে ছইলের সাহায্যে মৎস্য শিকার ইজারা।	কমপক্ষে নগদ ছিডি ১.০ লক্ষ টাকার আর্থিক স্বচ্ছলতা সম্পন্ন যে কোন ব্যক্তি বা প্রতিষ্ঠান।	উদ্ধৃত দরের ২.৫% হারে	৪০০/-
৩	৪ ময়ুটিলা ইকো-পার্ক, নালিতাবাড়ী, শেরপুর এর ক্যান্টিন ইজারা।	কমপক্ষে নগদ ছিডি ৪.০ লক্ষ টাকার আর্থিক স্বচ্ছলতা ও ক্যান্টিন/বেকোরার পরিচালনার অভিজ্ঞতা সম্পন্ন যে কোন ব্যক্তি বা প্রতিষ্ঠান।	উদ্ধৃত দরের ২.৫% হারে	৪০০/-

১৪। ইজারা সম্পর্কিত বিস্তারিত তথ্যাদি ও শর্তাবলী সংক্রান্ত মন্ত্র সমূহ হতে দেখতে ও জানতে পারা যাবে। ইজারাদাতা অথবা ইজারা বিজ্ঞপ্তি গ্রহণ বা বাতিল করার অধিকার সংরক্ষণ করেন।

**কাজী মুহাম্মদ নূরুল করিম**  
বিভাগীয় বন কর্মকর্তা  
ময়মনসিংহ বন বিভাগ।  
ফোন-০২৯৬৬৩৬-৪৪৩৮০

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