

# Diversify exports to Asia as global trade shifts

Economist Mustafizur Rahman says only 12% of exports go to Asia despite vast market potential

**STAR BUSINESS REPORT**

Bangladesh should step up efforts to tap Asian markets as global trade and investment patterns shift rapidly, economist Mustafizur Rahman, distinguished fellow of the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), said on Sunday.

South Asia, Southeast Asia and East Asia offer significant opportunities at a time when trade is increasingly being "weaponised," he said.

He was speaking at a discussion on Bangladesh's economic transformation and trade competitiveness, organised by the South Asian Network on Economic Modeling (Sanem) and the Foreign Affairs and Trade Department of Australia at the BRAC Centre in Dhaka.

He added that currently about 12 percent of Bangladesh's exports go to Asia – a share he described as disproportionately low given the region's market potential.

India imports goods worth about \$750 billion annually, yet Bangladesh exports just over \$1.5 billion to its neighbour despite enjoying preferential access as a least developed country (LDC).

China, the world's second-largest economy, imports around \$3 trillion worth of goods each year. However, Bangladesh's exports to China remain below \$1 billion, even though 99 percent of Bangladeshi products enjoy duty-free access.

Rahman also stressed the need for product diversification. Globally, more than 70 percent of garments are made from man-made fibres, while Bangladesh's exports remain heavily cotton-based.

He highlighted strong prospects in leather and leather goods, which have about 90 percent local value addition compared to 35 percent in garments. Improving the capacity of the central effluent treatment plant (CETP) to secure Leather Working Group (LWG) certification would help the sector fetch better

prices.

Completing the Active Pharmaceutical Ingredient (API) park so it can function at optimal capacity is also critical to unlocking export potential in pharmaceuticals, he added.

Rahman urged faster implementation of the Smooth Transition Strategy (STS) ahead of Bangladesh's graduation from LDC status in November, noting that progress has been slow.

Sanem Executive Director Selim Raihan warned of major challenges in the post-LDC period due to inadequate preparedness in both the public and private sectors.

Maintaining competitiveness in global value chains, meeting compliance standards and diversifying products will be key, he said.

He also called for reforms in industrial and trade policies, including rationalising tariffs and para-tariffs.

Fazlul Hoque, managing director of Plummy Fashions, pointed to gaps in industrial infrastructure, particularly the lack of a CETP for knitwear in Narayanganj and limitations in developing such facilities for the tannery estate in Savar.

Additional Commerce Secretary Abdur Rahim Khan said policy inconsistencies, especially between import and export regimes, remain a concern, while Australia's Deputy High Commissioner Clinton Pobke flagged slow progress in financial and administrative reforms, including tax system restructuring.



Globally, more than 70 percent of garments are made from man-made fibres, while Bangladesh's exports remain heavily cotton-based.

PHOTO: STAR/FILE

# BGMEA wants urgent diesel supply

**STAR BUSINESS REPORT**

Garment exporters have urged the government to arrange priority diesel supply to factories from nearby filling stations, warning that energy shortages have cut production capacity by 25-30 percent in key industrial hubs.

The demand came at a meeting between a Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) delegation and Power, Energy and Mineral Resources Minister Iqbal Hassan Mahmood in Dhaka yesterday. BGMEA president Mahmud Hasan Khan led the delegation.

Apart from the supply disruption, rising raw material costs and higher transportation expenses tied to the energy crisis have further pushed up production costs, Khan said in a statement issued after the meeting.

Particularly, in industrial areas such as Gazipur and Ashulia, production and shipment have been severely disrupted due to inadequate diesel supply for running generators during load shedding, he added.

The minister assured the BGMEA delegation that steps would be taken to address the crisis and approved the association's proposed format for arranging urgent diesel supply from nearby filling stations.

Meanwhile, the apparel exporters also called for urgent gas connections for small

and medium industries – those with boiler capacities of 300-500 kg – and fair gas distribution across industrial areas around Dhaka.

Furthermore, they asked for the quick installation of at least two more Floating Storage and Regasification Units (FSRUs) and a simpler approval process for Electronic Volume Corrector (EVC) meters in the industrial sector.

In a bid to lower production costs and ease the government's subsidy burden, they sought the withdrawal of all import duties, VAT, and consumer-level taxes on imported fuel.

The exporters called on the government to ensure environmentally sustainable industrialisation, and special tariff concessions on the import of solar PV system equipment.

They proposed reducing duties on solar energy components – including panels, inverters, DC cables, and battery storage systems – from the current range of 28.73-61.80 percent to 1 percent.

Khan noted that while buyers' confidence had begun recovering after recent elections, the US-Israeli war on Iran has renewed pressure on global markets.

He said Bangladesh's garment sector was more exposed to the shocks stemming from the war than neighbouring competitors because of its deeper energy vulnerability.

# Gold hits one-week low

**REUTERS**

Gold hit a near one-week low on Monday as a stronger dollar and oil's surge above \$100 after the US moved to blockade Iranian ports fuelled inflation concerns, prompting traders to scale back expectations for Federal Reserve rate cuts this year.

Spot gold was down 0.4 percent at \$4,730.75 per ounce, as of 0735 GMT, after hitting its lowest since April 7 earlier in

the day at \$4,643. US gold futures for June delivery fell 0.7 percent to \$4,753.30.

The dollar strengthened 0.3 percent as the US Navy prepared a blockade of the Strait of Hormuz that could restrict Iranian oil shipments after peace talks between the US and Iran broke down.

Iran's Revolutionary Guards responded by warning that military vessels approaching the strait will be considered a ceasefire breach and dealt with harshly and decisively.

# Starlink in Bangladesh

**FROM PAGE B1**

The Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) built an entirely new Non-Geostationary Orbit licensing framework for satellite internet in weeks, a regulatory push that was partly "shaped by public demand following internet shutdowns" during the mass uprising in July 2024.

"The speed with which Bangladesh's BTRC built and approved a new licensing framework – weeks rather than years – shows what becomes possible when a government treats satellite broadband as a policy priority rather than a regulatory challenge," it states.

**UNAFFORDABLE FOR ORDINARY HOUSEHOLDS**

Starlink's monthly residential fee is broadly similar across Asia-Pacific, ranging from roughly \$45 in Australia to \$68 in the Philippines, but its weight on household budgets varies sharply by income.

Bangladesh's GDP per capita sits below \$4,000, meaning the approximately \$50 monthly plan takes up a far larger share of household income than it does in Japan, Australia, or

even Malaysia.

The pattern repeats across lower income markets in the region. In Indonesia, where Starlink's entry-level plan costs more than double the typical household internet spend, growth has been driven largely by institutional users – government health programmes, maritime operators, and industries in remote areas – rather than ordinary households.

"Starlink's pricing responds to demand and capacity conditions in ways that fixed-line operators typically do not," states Ookla. For instance, Starlink introduced surge fees of roughly \$490 to \$574 for new subscribers in high-demand areas in Indonesia in July 2025, a pricing dynamic with no equivalent in fixed-line broadband.

Bangladesh appears to be heading in the same direction in terms of usage in ordinary households. The country's three authorised resellers, Robi Axiata, Felicity IDC, and Bangladesh Satellite Company, have each signed \$2.5 million distribution agreements focused on business and priority plans.

As of January 2026, the

satellite internet service attracted only 3,469 customers as of January 2026, according to BTRC data, mostly due to prices up to ten times higher than local broadband failing to attract subscribers.

All three authorised dealers report difficulty finding customers willing to pay premium prices, The Daily Star reported last month.

"General users are concentrated in areas with fibre coverage," said Shah Ahmedul Kabir, general manager for sales and marketing at Bangladesh Satellite Company.

"So, we are focusing on niche markets such as hill tracts, remote char areas, maritime applications for fishing boats, and mobile connectivity on long-haul buses and trains," he added.

Sharful Alam, chief executive of Felicity IDC, said enterprises view Starlink primarily as backup internet connectivity rather than a core service.

"It's unlikely that people will abandon existing broadband services, given the significant price difference," he said.

Felicity IDC's Starlink packages, offering 1 TB

(terabyte) to 4 TB data allowances, range from Tk 25,000 to Tk 75,000.

For remote and underserved areas, however, the case for Starlink is clearer. Bangladesh Satellite Company has already connected 12 schools across three hill tract districts, with plans to expand to over 150 – the kind of use case where satellite internet faces little competition from fibre or mobile alternatives.

Looking ahead, Ookla's report notes that the competitive landscape across Asia-Pacific is shifting. Amazon's Project Kuiper is set to enter the region, while China's Qianfan Constellation has signed wholesale agreements with local operators in Malaysia and Thailand through a partnership model that sidesteps the foreign ownership constraints Starlink has had to negotiate market by market.

For Bangladesh, Starlink has also proposed exporting bandwidth to neighbouring countries through its local infrastructure – a proposal BTRC is currently reviewing.

Experts say approval could position Bangladesh as a regional data transit point and generate foreign currency for local operators.

# Bangladesh races

**FROM PAGE B1**

In March, as prices climbed and the planting season drew closer, BCIC floated a tender to import 200,000 tonnes of urea. As it failed to attract any offers, a second tender is now underway with the closing deadline on Thursday this week.

Contacted, BCIC Chairman Md Fazlur Rahman said Saudi Arabia has agreed to supply 40,000 tonnes, but the shipment has yet to arrive because of the disruption in Hormuz.

"So, we have requested them to see whether the fertiliser could be shipped via alternative ports that would avoid the Strait of Hormuz and ensure delivery to Bangladesh," he said.

Rahman said prices rose to \$785-\$786 a tonne last week and have climbed above \$800 this week.

He said that higher prices would swell the subsidy bill, as the government provides urea and other key fertilisers such as DAP and TSP to farmers to ensure food production.

The government has set aside Tk 17,000 crore for fertiliser subsidies in the current fiscal year. Officials expect that figure to exceed Tk 30,000 crore next year if prices remain elevated.

Rahman said efforts are underway to restart factories closed because of gas shortages. "At present,

the situation is quite complex and uncertain. We are making every possible effort to overcome this crisis."

A blog published last week by the International Food Policy Research Institute said that rice production in countries, including Bangladesh, could suffer if fertiliser supplies remain disrupted.

"Rice is fertiliser-intensive and concentrated in South and Southeast Asia, regions heavily dependent on Gulf urea imports. India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and much of Southeast Asia source a significant share of their nitrogen fertiliser from Gulf producers," the authors wrote.

"If higher fertiliser costs persist into the second half of 2026 and coincide with an El Niño event, rice-producing regions could face both rising input costs and less favourable growing conditions at the same time," it mentioned.

# No adverse steps for businesses

**FROM PAGE B1**

The DCCI said reducing pressure on the banking system is essential to support private sector-led growth.

Professor Akhand Mohammad Akhtar Hossain, chief economist of Bangladesh Bank, said government borrowing must be reduced and bank borrowing should be controlled to ease pressure on private sector credit.

He also warned that rising external borrowing could increase risk and weaken investor confidence.

Referring to weak growth of around 3 percent, he said job creation remains insufficient, and neither fiscal nor monetary stimulus alone can solve the problem without long-term growth momentum.

He cautioned against expansionary policies, saying a "populist budget is not advisable". Instead, he called for conservative

fiscal measures and tight monetary policy, even if they limit short-term demand.

Former DCCI president Rizwan Rahman said businesses are facing serious difficulties due to bureaucratic hurdles and what he described as an aggressive approach by the NBR.

He said the failure to expand the tax net is increasing pressure on existing taxpayers as a short-term measure.

He called for grassroots investment incentives, warned against printing money to control inflation, and urged higher allocations for health and education.

Another former DCCI president, Hossain Khaled, called for full automation of the tax system, including banking transactions. He said most economic activity still takes place outside formal channels, limiting revenue collection.

**নিলাম বিজ্ঞপ্তি**

স্টেশন সাপ্লাই ডিপো রামু  
রামু সেনানিবাস

এতদ্বারা সর্বসাধারণকে জানানো যাচ্ছে যে, প্রচুর সংখ্যক ব্যবহার যোগ্য/মেরামতযোগ্য/অকেজো খালি জ্বাম, ব্যারেল, পলিথিন/নাইলন/পাতের বস্তা, ক্যান/বোতল এবং অন্যান্য মোড়ক সামগ্রী স্টেশন সাপ্লাই ডিপো রামু, রামু সেনানিবাসে আগামী ০৭ইশাখ ১৪৩২ বাশাখ/ ২০ এপ্রিল ২০২৬ ইং তারিখ সকাল ১১:৩০ ঘটিকায় প্রকাশ্য নিলামের মাধ্যমে বিক্রয় করা হবে।

১। নিলামে অংশগ্রহণের জন্য আগ্রহীদেরকে নিম্নলিখিত শর্ত সাপেক্ষে আহ্বান করা যাচ্ছে:

উক্ত নিলামযোগ্য সামগ্রীর লট সমূহ ২০ এপ্রিল ২০২৬ তারিখ সকাল ০৯:০০ ঘটিকা হতে ১১:০০ ঘটিকা পর্যন্ত নিলামে অংশগ্রহণে ইচ্ছুক ব্যক্তিদের পরিদর্শনের জন্য উন্মুক্ত রাখা হবে।

২। সকল নিলাম ডাককারীদেরকে নিলাম শুরু পূর্বে নিরাপত্তা জামানত (সেরতযোগ্য) বাবদ অর্ধনায়ক, স্টেশন সাপ্লাই ডিপো রামু সেনানিবাস এর অনুকূলে ১,০০,০০০.০০ (টাকা এক লক্ষ মাত্র) টাকার ব্যাংক ড্রাফট/পে অর্ডার নিলাম পরিচালনা পর্ষদ সভাপতি/সচিব/প্রোগ্রামার কর্মকর্তার নিকট জমা করতে হবে।

৩। প্রত্যেক লটের সর্বোচ্চ নিলাম ডাক দাতাকে তাৎক্ষণিকভাবে লটের নিলাম মূল্যের ২৫% নিলাম পরিচালনা পর্ষদ সভাপতি/সচিব/প্রোগ্রামার কর্মকর্তার নিকট জমা করতে হবে।

৪। প্রত্যেক লটের সর্বোচ্চ নিলাম ডাক দাতাকে তাৎক্ষণিকভাবে লটের আয়কর বাবদ ৫% এবং মূল্য সংযোজন কর (ভ্যাট) বাবদ ৫% নিলামের স্থলে নিলাম পরিচালনার নিকট জমা করতে হবে। এখানে উল্লেখ্য যে, নিলাম কার্য সম্পন্ন হবার পর সরকারি আদেশের কোন পরিবর্তন অর্থাৎ আয়কর বা ভ্যাট সংক্রান্ত নির্দেশের পরিবর্তন করা হলে তা নিলাম ডাক গ্রহণকারীকে অনুসরণ করতে হবে।

৫। অন্যান্য শর্ত/নিয়মাবলী নিলামের স্থলে নোটিশ আকারে জানানো হবে। নিলাম কার্য পরিচালনার জন্য গঠিত বোর্ড অব অফিসার্স কোন কারণ দর্শানো ব্যতিরেকেই যে কোন লটের নিলাম দর গ্রহণ অথবা বাতিল করার ক্ষমতা রাখবে। নিলাম কার্য সম্পন্ন হবার পর সেনানিবাসের অনুমোদন সাপেক্ষে নিলামকারীকে মালামালা হস্তান্তর করা হবে।

৬। কর্তৃপক্ষ কর্তৃক অনুমোদনের পর অবশিষ্ট সমুদয় মূল্য পরবর্তী ০৬ (ছয়) টি কার্য দিবসের মধ্যে জমা পূর্বক নিজ খরচে নিলামকৃত মালামালা ডেলিভারি নিতে হবে। অন্যথায় নিলামের স্থলে গ্রহণকৃত নিলাম মূল্যের ২৫%, আয়কর ৫% এবং মূল্য সংযোজন কর (ভ্যাট) ৫% বাবদ জমাকৃত সমুদয় অর্থ বাজেয়াপ্ত করা হবে।

৭। নিলামে অংশগ্রহণকারী ব্যক্তি/প্রতিষ্ঠানকে রামু সেনানিবাসে প্রবেশকালে এমপি চেকপোস্টে পরিচয় প্রকাশিত নিলাম বিজ্ঞপ্তি কর্তব্যরত মিলিটারি পুলিশকে প্রদর্শন করতে হবে। অবজিত/কালো তালিকাভুক্ত প্রতিষ্ঠান/ব্যক্তিবর্গের সেনানিবাসে প্রবেশ সম্পূর্ণরূপে নিষিদ্ধ।

আই এস পি আর/সেনা/৩১৯

অধিনায়ক  
স্টেশন সাপ্লাই ডিপো রামু  
রামু সেনানিবাস

**দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি**

১। প্রতিষ্ঠানের নাম : ২৩ আর ই ব্যাটালিয়ন, বরিশাল সেনানিবাস।

২। কাজের বিবরণ : ২০২৫-২০২৬ অর্থ বৎসরের বাজেট কোড নং ১১৯০৬০১১০৪২৩৩/৩২৩১৩০১-প্রশিক্ষণ (এটিজি সাধারণ) যাতে বরাদ্দকৃত অর্থ ধারা সুই প্রশিক্ষণ নিশ্চিতকল্পে প্রাটিন সেভেল প্রশিক্ষণ শেড নির্মাণ এবং এতদসংক্রান্ত বিবিধ প্রশিক্ষণ ব্যয় নির্বাহ।

৩। দরপত্র বিক্রয়ের তারিখ : ১৬ এপ্রিল ২০২৬।

৪। দরপত্র বিক্রয়ের শেষ তারিখ : ২০ এপ্রিল ২০২৬।

৫। দরপত্র খোলার তারিখ ও সময় : ২০ এপ্রিল ২০২৬ সকাল ১০:০০ ঘটিকা।

৬। বিস্তারিত তথ্যের জন্য ভিজিট করুন : [www.army.mil.bd](http://www.army.mil.bd)

আই এস পি আর/সেনা/৩২৮

লেঃ কর্নেল  
অধিনায়ক  
২৩ আর ই ব্যাটালিয়ন  
বরিশাল সেনানিবাস

**Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh**  
Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS)  
**Economic Census 2023 Project**  
Parishankhyan Bhaban  
E-27/A, Agargaon, Dhaka-1207

**e-Tender Notice**

Memo No: 52.01.0000.635.07.065.26.6610 Date: 13/04/2026

e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP Portal (<https://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the Procurement of below Package for Economic Census 2023 Project.

Sl. No.	Tender ID	Procurement Nature, Type and Title	Tender Publication Date & Time	Last selling Date & Time	Closing Date & Time	Opening Date & Time
1	1239767	Goods OTM, NCT Procurement of Brochure and Leaflet etc.	13 April - 2026 15:00	23 April -2026 12:00	23 April -2026 16:00	23 April -2026 16:00

This is an online tender, where e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. To submit tender registration in the e-GP system Portal (<https://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required.

The fees for downloading the e-Tender documents from the National e-GP system Portal have to be deposited online through any e-GP registered banks branches up to date & time mentioned in respective tender. Further information and guideline are available in the National e-GP Portal and from e-GP ([helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd](mailto:helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd))

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