



Agricultural workers collect freshly harvested corn cobs in the Teesta river char area. Inset, Another worker dries and gathers maize kernels. The photos were taken recently in Goddimari, Lalmonirhat.

PHOTO: S DILIP ROY

Bangladesh's corn imports shift away from India to Brazil, US

78% came from Brazil, 22% from US and India in first 10 months of MY26: USDA

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Brazil and the United States have become two key suppliers of corn to Bangladesh's growing feed industry, as imports from India – the traditional source – have declined, according to a recent report by the US Department of Agriculture (USDA). Bangladesh imported nearly 15 lakh tonnes of corn, also known as maize, in the first 10 months of the marketing year 2025-26 (MY26). Of this, 78 percent came from Brazil, while the remaining 22 percent was supplied by the US and India, with each accounting for 11 percent, the report on Bangladesh's grain and feed sector, published last week, said.

The report said lower global maize

prices encouraged traders and feed producers to import and stockpile large volumes. Bangladesh needs about 70 lakh tonnes of maize annually and imports around 15 lakh tonnes to cover gaps in local production.

"Growth in the poultry, dairy, and aquaculture sectors has increased demand for corn as a key feed ingredient," the US agency said.

India has traditionally been a major supplier of corn to Bangladesh due to competitive prices, efficient logistics and shorter shipping times. However, since 2024, India's exportable corn surplus has fallen sharply as it expanded corn-based biofuel production. As a result, Brazil has become the leading supplier for Bangladesh.

The report added that Bangladesh imported maize from the US in MY26 for the first time since 2018, after three local feed companies began purchases. This followed an agreement for Bangladesh to increase imports of US agricultural goods under a reciprocal trade deal aimed at reducing a trade deficit of more than \$6.2 billion.

Under the deal, the US imposed a 19 percent reciprocal tariff on Bangladesh's exports, on the condition that Dhaka would increase imports of US goods. The agreement covers wheat, soybeans and soy products, as well as cotton, with a total estimated value of \$3.5 billion.

Total maize shipments from the US to Bangladesh reached about 160,000 tonnes in MY26, the USDA said.

The USDA projects that Bangladesh's maize imports could reach 18 lakh tonnes, which is 27.2 percent higher than its estimate for MY25. However, it has lowered its forecast for MY27 to 17 lakh tonnes due to higher domestic production and larger beginning stocks.

Farmers are expected to harvest about 59 lakh tonnes of maize in MY27, up 1.7 percent from the previous year.

The report added that maize cultivation has expanded in recent years as farmers receive better prices due to strong demand from the local feed industry.

Farmers are prioritising corn because returns are about three times higher than production costs, while input costs are lower than for boro rice and vegetables grown in the same season.

Chasing the American dream, risking Europe?

MOHAMMAD ESHA

The United States is a key destination for Bangladeshi exports, especially readymade garments, accounting for one-fifth of total apparel shipments. On April 2 last year, our largest single market was jolted by the reciprocal tariff announced by Donald Trump. In the first six months of the fiscal year 2025-2026, exports recorded negative growth in every month except July. After expanding by 12.84 percent in FY 2024-2025, growth fell to minus 2.19 percent in the first half of FY26. December alone saw a sharp drop of 14.25 percent. The slide continued, with exports down 0.50 percent in January 2026 and 12.03 percent in February.

The reciprocal tariff was not the only cause. A larger concern has been political uncertainty at home. Many importers and buyers were waiting for a stable democratic environment, an elected government and a calmer political climate before placing long-term orders. There was some relief on February 9, 2026, when Bangladesh signed an agreement on reciprocal tariffs with the United States. The tariff was reduced from 20 percent to 19 percent. More importantly, garments made from cotton and synthetic fibres imported from the United States will now enjoy zero tariff on entry.

The United States produces some of the finest cotton in the world. Bangladesh also imports from Brazil, Australia, Mali, Benin, Burkina Faso and India. Although US cotton is slightly more expensive, the zero tariff on finished products should raise profitability. As 54 percent of our garment exports are knitwear made from natural cotton, using US cotton can unlock this advantage. We should seize this opportunity.

Yet Europe remains our largest market, taking about half of total garment exports. The recent free trade agreement between India and the European Union has raised fresh concerns. The deal spans 27 EU member states, covers about 2 billion people and roughly a quarter of global GDP. Under it, 144 Indian subsectors, including garments, textiles, leather and footwear, will receive duty-free access to the EU.

Bangladesh currently benefits from the EU's GSP Everything but Arms scheme, which will continue until 2029 even after graduation from least developed country status this November. But we must prepare now for the transition to GSP Plus after 2029. Even before the EU deal, India moved quickly when the United States imposed a 50 percent reciprocal tariff on Indian goods. Indian government officials and textile representatives approached major European buyers such as Inditex, LPP, Aldi, Lidl, Auchan and C and A, offering lower prices. China also stepped up low-cost garment supplies to the EU to offset losses in the US market. As competition intensified, the unit price of Bangladeshi garments in the EU fell by 3.84 percent in 2025.

Export diversification has long been discussed, but progress remains limited. About 70 percent of our garment exports are cotton-based, while nearly 70 percent of global apparel production now relies on man-made fibre and synthetic materials. The zero-tariff facility in the US market offers a chance to expand exports of man-made fibre garments using American raw materials. Beyond Europe and the United States, Bangladesh must deepen its presence in new markets, including the Gulf states, Japan, Korea, Australia, New Zealand and Latin America. The recently signed Bangladesh-Japan Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) should be fully utilised, as it grants zero duty on 99.9 percent of Bangladeshi products. Despite the challenges, I remain optimistic that Bangladesh can achieve its goal of \$100 billion in garment exports.

The writer is deputy managing director of Pubali Bank PLC

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BSEC asks brokers for data on margin rule extension request

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The Bangladesh Securities and Exchange Commission (BSEC) has sought information from the DSE Brokers Association of Bangladesh (DBA) to evaluate its request for extending the deadline for complying with new margin rules by three months.

In a letter sent to the regulator last week, DBA asked to extend the deadline for complying with the requirements set out in the Bangladesh Securities and Exchange Commission (Margin) Rules 2025. In response, BSEC, in a letter issued on Sunday (April 12), sought information from the brokers' association.

The rules came into force on November 1 last year, and are designed to strengthen risk management, protect investors and boost market stability. Three key provisions must be implemented within six months, with the current deadline set for April 30.

DBA's letter said that brokerage houses need time for internal consultations, risk assessments, board approvals and integration of the new requirements into their operational systems.

The brokers' association added that many firms are still finalising their policies and implementation plans due to a shortage of skilled personnel required under the rules, as well as limited technical support and client feedback.

Responding to the letter, BSEC asked for data so that the regulator can make a concrete decision regarding DBA's proposal to extend the deadline.

BSEC asked how many brokers have already completed finalising the conservative policy of following the margin rules, and how many brokers have formed a risk management committee.

It sought information on companies that have not aligned with the risk-based capital adequacy rules of 2019, and also on brokers that have not applied for a time extension of provisioning of unrealised losses.

Additionally, the regulator asked for information on which brokerage houses hold non-marginable securities, and the cost value and market value of those securities.

BSEC gave the DBA three working days to submit the above-mentioned information.

What does a US naval blockade of Iran mean for oil flows?

REUTERS

The US military said it would block shipping traffic in and out of Iran's ports starting at 10 a.m. ET (1400 GMT) on Monday, a move that would prevent roughly two million barrels of Iranian oil a day from entering the world's markets, further tightening global supply.

Here are details on the planned blockade and its implications for oil markets.

WHAT WAS ANNOUNCED? After weekend peace talks in Islamabad between negotiators from the US and Iran ended without a deal, President Donald Trump said the US Navy "will begin the

process of BLOCKADING any and all ships trying to enter, or leave, the Strait of Hormuz."

The US military's Central Command later said the blockade would only apply to ships going to or from Iran, including all Iranian ports on the Gulf and Gulf of Oman. US forces would not impede freedom of navigation for vessels transiting the Strait of Hormuz to and from non-Iranian ports and additional information would be provided, it said.

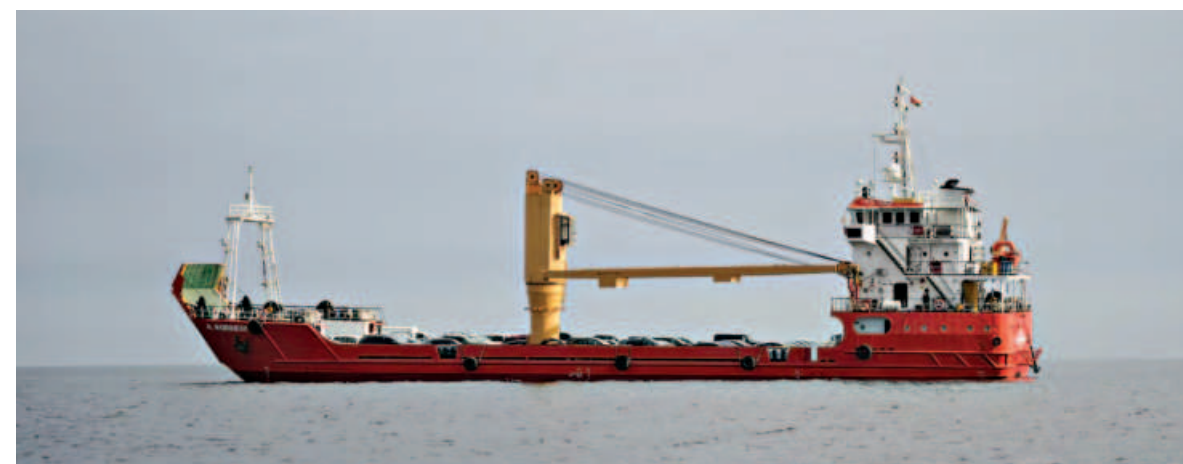
Iran's Revolutionary Guards responded to Trump by warning that military vessels approaching the strait would be considered a ceasefire breach and dealt with harshly and decisively. Retired Admiral Gary Roughead,

flagged very large crude carrier (VLCC) Mombasa B, also transited the strait earlier on Sunday and was ballasting in the Gulf.

Another VLCC, the Malta-flagged Agios Fanourios I, which tried to pass through the strait on Sunday to load Iraqi crude destined for Vietnam, turned back and was anchored near the Gulf of Oman.

On Saturday, three fully loaded supertankers passed through the Strait of Hormuz in what appeared to be the first vessels to exit the Gulf since the US Iran ceasefire deal.

Some 187 laden tankers carrying 172 million barrels of crude oil and refined products were inside the Gulf as of last Tuesday, according



A vessel at the Strait of Hormuz, off the coast of Oman's Musandam province, on April 12. Blocking Iranian shipments would disconnect a significant source of oil from the world's markets.

PHOTO: REUTERS

February 28 has led to near-record levels of Iranian oil loaded on ships, with more than 180 million barrels floating as of earlier this month, according to Kpler data.

WHAT ABOUT OIL FLOWS FROM OTHER GULF PRODUCERS? Shipping traffic through the Strait of Hormuz, which has been severely curtailed by an Iranian blockade since the start of the war, remains nearly halted despite last week's two-week ceasefire agreement between Washington and Tehran. Oil tankers were steering clear of the strait on Monday.

On Sunday, two Pakistan-flagged tankers, Shalamar and Khairpur, entered the Gulf to load cargoes from the United Arab Emirates and Kuwait; a third ship, the Liberia-

to Kpler.

WHICH IMPORTERS ARE MOST AFFECTED?

Before the war, most Iranian oil exports were shipped to China, the top global crude importer. Last month, the US unveiled a sanctions waiver that has enabled other buyers, including India, to import Iranian oil.

India is set to receive its first crude shipment from Iran in seven years this week, ship tracking data from LSEG and Kpler showed on Wednesday.

Before the war, roughly 20 percent of global oil and natural gas exports were shipped through the Strait of Hormuz, with most cargoes headed to Asia, the largest importing region.

Oil rises 7% to above \$100

REUTERS, Singapore

Oil prices climbed above \$100 a barrel on Monday as the US Navy prepared to block ships to and from Iran via the Strait of Hormuz, a move that could restrict Iranian oil exports, after Washington and Tehran failed to reach a deal to end the war.

Brent crude futures rose \$6.67, or 7.0 percent, to \$101.87 a barrel by 0630 GMT after settling 0.75 percent lower on Friday. US West Texas Intermediate was up \$7.26, or 7.5 percent, at \$103.83 a barrel following a 1.33 percent loss in the previous session.

"The market is now largely back to conditions before the ceasefire, except now the US will block the remaining up to 2 million barrels per day Iranian-linked flows through the Strait of Hormuz as well," said Saul Kavonic, head of energy research at MST Marquee.

Global monetary system not ready for AI cyber threats: IMF

AFP, Washington

The global monetary system is not prepared to address artificial intelligence's rapidly escalating risks, the IMF managing director warned Sunday, as a new Anthropoc model raises urgent cybersecurity concerns.

Kristalina Georgieva's comments came a day before the International Monetary Fund and World Bank kick off their annual spring meetings in Washington, and after US regulators last week convened an emergency meeting with top bank chiefs over the new AI model.

"We don't have the ability to – us as a world – to protect the international monetary system against massive cyber risks," she told CBS News' "Face the Nation" program.

"We are very keen to see more attention to the guardrails that are necessary to protect financial stability in a world of AI," she said, seeking global collaboration on the issue.

"Yes, this is an issue that has been addressed here in the United States, but it is an issue that easily can present itself in other parts of the world, and that is why we need people to cooperate."

Anthropic announced on April 7 that it was limiting the release of its new "Mythos" model over risks posed by its unprecedented ability to rapidly identify security vulnerabilities.

The company said it was working with a consortium of major US firms to test the model, raising concerns that foreign companies may miss out on vital safety preparations.