

Japan urges Bangladesh to sign EPA by this year, ease business rules to attract its FDI

EXPANDING BANGLADESH-JAPAN TRADE

Japan urges Bangladesh to sign EPA by this year

EPA aims to enhance bilateral trade and investment



JAPAN ALSO URGED BANGLADESH TO ADDRESS KEY ISSUES

- ▶ Simplify tax procedures
- ▶ Stabilise economic zone incentives
- ▶ Speed up visa & work permit approvals (currently 6-14 months)
- ▶ Align banking processes with int'l standards (L/C payments, etc.)
- ▶ Address skilled labour shortages
- ▶ Improve physical infrastructure

JAPANESE INVESTMENT IN BANGLADESH

- ▶ Stock FDI as of 2024: nearly \$500m
- ▶ Japanese companies operating: 330

Expansion plans: 57.7% plan to expand operations

Bangladesh's FY25 exports to Japan: \$1.41b

TBS Insights by **IPDC** FINANCE

TRADE - BANGLADESH

ABUL KASHEM

EPA talks with Japan concluded; Bangladesh set to sign by December, says commerce secy

Japan has called on Bangladesh to sign the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) within this year and to implement key reforms—such as simplifying business procedures, overhauling

customs processes, and ensuring consistent, investor-friendly tax policies—to attract more Japanese investment.

During the Japan-Bangladesh Public-Private Joint Economic Dialogue (PPED) held in Tokyo in April, Japanese officials highlighted several obstacles that need urgent attention, including unstable economic zone incentives, long visa and work permit approval times, banking practices not aligned with international standards, and shortages of skilled labour and infrastructure.

The dialogue took place ahead of Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus's visit to Japan in May, and the minutes of the meeting were circulated this week among relevant ministries, a copy of which has been obtained by The Business Standard.

EPA seen as key to sustaining trade after LDC graduation
Bangladesh's trade and investment

Japanese foreign direct investment (FDI) stood at \$500 million as of 2024, while JETRO data indicates that 330 Japanese companies currently operate in Bangladesh—57.7% of which plan to expand operations.

Japanese firms such as Lion Corporation, ONODA, and NICCA Chemical Co. Ltd have already acquired land in the Bangladesh Special Economic Zone to establish facilities.

In response to concerns raised by Japanese officials and businesses during the Japan-Bangladesh dialogue in April, Siraz Uddin Miah, principal secretary to the chief adviser, also assured Japan that the EPA would be signed this year and that challenges facing Japanese investors in Bangladesh would be addressed.

The Bangladesh delegation at the dialogue was led by Principal Secretary Siraz Uddin Miah, while Japan's delegation was headed by Takehiko Matsua, vice minister of the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry.

change in government, Japanese firms remain optimistic about business expansion in Bangladesh over the next one to two years—particularly in chemical fibre, export-oriented, and domestic market-focused industries.

He cited major hurdles such as visa and work permit delays of up to 14 months, sudden changes to tax incentives in economic zones, and banking procedures not compliant with international standards.

JICA's South Asia Director General Yamada Tetsuya observed that Bangladesh's FDI-to-GDP ratio remains very low—just 0.3%—due to complex regulations, inadequate infrastructure, and a shortage of skilled workers. He said JICA is supporting reforms to improve productivity and investment readiness.

Executives from Japanese firms also raised specific concerns. KAFCO Japan sought stability in gas supply

posed establishing training centres in Bangladesh to provide Japanese language and technical education. He also expressed interest in expanding vegetable exports to Japan.

Bida Director General Md Ariful Hoque said efforts are underway to raise FDI from 0.3% to 3% of GDP, supported by policy consistency, anti-corruption measures, and stable resource supplies.

Bangladesh Bank official Abu Saleh Mohammed Shahab Uddin assured that payment-related issues have been resolved and that reserves and exchange rates are now stable.

Meanwhile, NBR Member Md Moazzem Hossain said customs and tax reforms are progressing, with the National Single Window nearing completion and the new Customs Bond Management System (CBMS)—launched in January 2025—expected to significantly reduce clearance times and improve transparency.

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EPA seen as key to sustaining trade after LDC graduation

Bangladesh's trade and investment relations with Japan now hinge on the timely signing of the EPA. The seventh round of negotiations concluded in Tokyo from 3-12 September, covering goods, services, investment, e-commerce, and intellectual property.

Commerce Secretary Mahbubur Rahman told TBS yesterday that the final round of negotiations was completed in September.

"The negotiations are over. Japan has sent us its tariff and service schedules, and we have shared ours with them. After reviewing, we found both sides' documents are aligned," he said.

"We aim to complete all legal procedures through the Ministry of Law by November to enable signing in December. However, Japan may need more time to finish its legal process. The EPA will be signed once they are ready."

Currently, Bangladesh enjoys duty-free access to the Japanese market under its LDC status. This privilege will end upon graduation next year, after which Bangladeshi exports will face an 18% tariff. The EPA is intended to maintain duty-free access and expand trade across 17 priority sectors.

According to the Export Promotion Bureau, Bangladesh's exports to Japan reached \$1.41 billion in FY25, representing 2.92% of total export earnings.

Bangladesh Bank data shows that

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The Bangladesh delegation at the dialogue was led by Principal Secretary Siraz Uddin Miah, while Japan's delegation was headed by Takehiko Matsua, vice minister of the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI) and the Ministry of International Affairs.

The Japan-Bangladesh Economic Dialogue serves as the only platform for comprehensive discussions on business integration and economic cooperation between Bangladesh and Japan. This forum's previous dialogue was held in April 2023.

Japanese side urges swift reforms and stable policies

At the Tokyo dialogue, Japanese officials and business leaders pressed Dhaka to accelerate the EPA signing and address long-standing issues impeding investment.

Gaku Yoda, Deputy Director General at Japan's Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI), emphasised the need to conclude the EPA quickly, noting its importance for Bangladesh's smooth transition from LDC status in 2026.

He said both governments must "listen to companies' voices" and "co-operate to create a smoother business environment."

Kukubu Fumiya, Chairman of the Japan-Bangladesh Committee for Commercial and Economic Cooperation, described the early conclusion of the EPA as "an urgent issue," saying that 85% of Japanese companies in Dhaka expect it to be finalised this year.

JETRO Country Representative Ando Yuji noted that despite the

and domestic market-focused industries. He cited major hurdles such as visa and work permit delays of up to 14 months, sudden changes to tax incentives in economic zones, and banking procedures not compliant with international standards. JICA's South Asia Director General Yamada Tetsuya observed that Bangladesh's FDI-to-GDP ratio remains very low—just 0.3%—due to complex regulations, inadequate infrastructure, and a shortage of skilled workers. He said JICA is supporting reforms to improve productivity and investment readiness.

Executives from Japanese firms also raised specific concerns. KAFCO Japan sought stability in gas supply contracts, while ONODA Inc. announced plans to set up a prepaid gas meter assembly plant in Narayanganj's Special Economic Zone.

Simada Mitsuo, director for the South and Central Asia emerging regions division of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF) in Japan, presented on the current state of collaboration in the food and agriculture sector between Japan and Bangladesh.

He pointed out that improving the business environment and eradicating unclear procedures are important from the Bangladesh side.

Bangladesh promises reforms and swift EPA signing

In response, Principal Secretary to the Chief Adviser Siraz Uddin Miah, who led the Bangladesh delegation, reaffirmed that the government aims to sign the EPA this year and address Japanese investors' challenges.

He said steps are underway to ease visa issuance, work permits, and customs procedures, and pledged to review problems faced by companies such as ONODA and KAFCO.

Bangladesh's Ambassador to Japan, Md Daud Ali, said the interim government under Chief Adviser Yunus is pursuing broad reforms to strengthen the rule of law and investor confidence.

He acknowledged the language barrier as a key obstacle and pro-

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The Business Standard

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Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Export Promotion Bureau
TCB Building, 1 Kawran Bazar, Dhaka-1215
INVITATION FOR TENDER

1.	Ministry	Ministry of Commerce
2.	Procuring Entity Name	Export Promotion Bureau (EPB)
3.	Invitation for	Construction of Underground Fire Water Reservoir (Civil and Electro Mechanical works) in Bangladesh-China Friendship Exhibition Centre (BCFEC) at Purbachal, Rupganj, Narayanganj
4.	Procuring Entity code	N/A
5.	Procuring Entity District	Dhaka
6.	Invitation Ref No	26.02.0000.006.26.748(Part-4).23-1903
7.	Date	October 16, 2025
KEY INFORMATION		
8.	Procurement Method	Open Tendering Method (OTM)
FUNDING INFORMATION		
9.	Budget and Source of funds	Own Fund
PARTICULAR INFORMATION		
10.	Tender Package Name	Construction of Underground Fire Water Reservoir (Civil and Electro Mechanical works) in Bangladesh-China Friendship Exhibition Centre (BCFEC) at Purbachal, Rupganj, Narayanganj
11.	Tender Publication Date	October 17, 2025
12.	Tender Last Selling Date and Time	October 29, 2025, up to 05:00 PM
13.	Tender Closing Date and Time	October 30, 2025, Time: 12:00 PM
14.	Tender Opening Date and Time	October 30, 2025, Time: 12:30 PM
15.	Place of Selling/Receiving/Opening Tender documents	Export Promotion Bureau Attention: Secretary, Export Promotion Bureau. Address: Export Promotion Bureau Telephone: +88-02-55013420 e-mail address: secy@epb.gov.bd
INFORMATION FOR APPLICANT		
16.	Brief Eligibility and Qualification of Tenderer	<ul style="list-style-type: none">The minimum number of years of general experience of the Tenderer in the construction works shall be 5 years.The minimum specific experience in construction works of at least 01(one) contract of similar nature {Construction of Underground Fire Water Reservoir (Civil and Electro Mechanical works)} successfully completed within last 05 (Five) years value minimum amount BDT 75,00,000.00 (Seventy-Five Lac).The tenderer shall have updated Trade License, updated Income Tax clearance certificate, VAT registration certificate, and TIN Certificate.Must have an audit report of the last 03 years.The required average annual construction turnover shall be greater than Tk 1,50,00,000.00 (One Crore Fifty Lac) over the last 5 (Five) yearsThe minimum amount of liquid assets i.e. working capital or credit line(s) of the Tenderer shall be Tk 74,00,000.00 (Seventy-Four Lac)Other eligibility and qualification criteria outlined in the tender documents.
17.	Brief description of services	<ul style="list-style-type: none">The Works consist of Construction, Site preparation work, Steel Sheet Pile, Centering & Shuttering, Reinforce Cement Concrete Works, Plastering, Sand filling, Earth cutting and filling, Bailing out Water, Steel, Chemical Admixture, Pump disconnect and reconnect, Dismantling Pump house room and remaking, pump installation, Cable connect, Water pipe disconnect and reconnect, Water in and out Connect from pump, Painting Works, Fitting, Fixing, Fabrication Works, Epoxy Primer Works and Finally functional of underground Fire Water Reservoir etc.
18.	Price of Tender Document.	BDT. 1000.00 (One thousand taka) non-refundable
19.	Tender security	The amount of the Tender Security shall be Tk. 4 lakh (Four lac) taka only in the form of a Pay Order in favor of the "Export Promotion Bureau".
PROCUREMENT ENTITY DETAILS		
20.	Designation of the Official Inviting Tender	Secretary, Export Promotion Bureau.
21.	Contact address of the official Inviting Tender	Export Promotion Bureau TCB Building, 1 Kawran Bazar, 4th Floor, Dhaka. Phone: +88-02-55013420 Email: secy@epb.gov.bd

The procuring entity reserves the right to accept or reject any of the tenders or annul the tender proceedings.

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16.10.2025

Tarafdar Sohel Rahman
Secretary (Deputy Secretary)
Export Promotion Bureau
Phone: +88-02-55013420
Email: secy@epb.gov.bd

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Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Export Promotion Bureau

TCB Building, 1, Kawran Bazar, Dhaka-1215

Invitation for Tender

1	Ministry	Ministry of Commerce
2	Procuring entity name	Export Promotion Bureau (EPB)
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5	Procuring entity district	Dhaka
6	Invitation Ref No.	26.02.0000.006.26.748 (Part-4).23-1903
7	Date	October 16, 2025

KEY INFORMATION

8	Procurement method	Open Tendering Method (OTM)
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FUNDING INFORMATION

9	Budget and source of funds	Own fund
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PARTICULAR INFORMATION

10	Tender package name	Construction of Underground Fire Water Reservoir (Civil and Electro Mechanical works) in Bangladesh-China Friendship Exhibition Centre (BCFEC) at Purbachal, Rupganj, Narayanganj
11	Tender publication date	October 17, 2025
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13	Tender closing date and time	October 30, 2025, Time: 12:00pm
14	Tender opening date and time	October 30, 2025, Time: 12:30pm
15	Place of selling/receiving/opening tender documents	Export Promotion Bureau Attention: Secretary, Export Promotion Bureau. Address: Export Promotion Bureau Telephone: +88-02-55013420 E-mail address: secy@epb.gov.bd

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16	Brief eligibility and qualification of tenderer	<ul style="list-style-type: none">The minimum number of years of general experience of the Tenderer in the construction works shall be 5 years.The minimum specific experience in construction works of at least 01(one) contract of similar nature (Construction of Underground Fire Water Reservoir (Civil and Electro Mechanical works)) successfully completed within last 05 (five) years value minimum amount BDT 75,00,000.00 (seventy-five lac).The tenderer shall have updated trade license, updated income tax clearance certificate, VAT registration certificate, and TIN certificate.Must have an audit report of the last 03 years.The required average annual construction turnover shall be greater than Tk 1,50,00,000.00 (one crore fifty lac) over the last 5 (five) yearsThe minimum amount of liquid assets i.e. working capital or credit line(s) of the Tenderer shall be Tk 74,00,000.00 (seventy-four lac).Other eligibility and qualification criteria outlined in the tender documents.
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18	Price of tender document	BDT 1000.00 (one thousand Taka) non-refundable
19	Tender security	The amount of the Tender Security shall be Tk. 4 lakh (four lac) only in the form of a Pay Order in favor of the "Export Promotion Bureau".

PROCUREMENT ENTITY DETAILS

The Daily Star

17 OCT 2025



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20	Designation of the official inviting tender	Secretary, Export Promotion Bureau.
21	Contact address of the official inviting tender	Export Promotion Bureau TCB Building, 1, Kawran Bazar, 4th Floor, Dhaka, Phone: +88-02-55013420, Email: secy@epb.gov.bd
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Tarafd
16.10.2025

Tarafdard Sohel Rahman

Secretary (Deputy Secretary)

Export Promotion Bureau

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