

ইপিএ স্বাক্ষরের প্রস্তাবে অনুমোদন জাপানের বাজারে বাংলাদেশী পণ্যের শুল্কমুক্ত প্রবেশাধিকার নিশ্চিতের উদ্যোগ

নিজস্ব প্রতিবেদক ■

জাপানের বাজারে বাংলাদেশী পণ্যের শুল্কমুক্ত প্রবেশাধিকার নিশ্চিত করতে উদ্যোগ নিয়েছে সরকার। এ লক্ষ্যে দুই দেশের মধ্যে অর্থনৈতিক অংশীদারত্ব চুক্তি (ইপিএ) স্বাক্ষরের প্রস্তাবে অনুমোদন দিয়েছে উপদেষ্টা পরিষদ। প্রধান উপদেষ্টার প্রেস সচিব শফিকুল আলম গতকাল রাজধানীর ফরেন সার্ভিস একাডেমিতে এক ব্রিফিংয়ে এ তথ্য জানান। এ চুক্তি হলে বাংলাদেশের ৭ হাজার ৩৭৯টি পণ্য জাপানের বাজারে তাৎক্ষণিকভাবে শুল্কমুক্ত প্রবেশাধিকার পাবে বলেও জানান তিনি। অন্যদিকে বাণিজ্য মন্ত্রণালয় গতকাল এক সংবাদ বিজ্ঞপ্তিতে জানিয়েছে, জাপানের বাজারে বাংলাদেশী পণ্যের শুল্কমুক্ত প্রবেশাধিকারের জন্য ইপিএ স্বাক্ষরের উদ্যোগ নিয়েছে সরকার। প্রেস সচিব বলেন, 'এলডিসি হিসেবে এ প্রথম বাংলাদেশ বিশ্বের চতুর্থ বৃহত্তম অর্থনীতির সঙ্গে চুক্তি করেছে। এর ফলে বাংলাদেশের ৭ হাজার ৩৭৯টি পণ্য জাপানের বাজারে তাৎক্ষণিক শুল্কমুক্ত প্রবেশাধিকার সুবিধা পাবে। আর জাপান তার ১ হাজার ৩৯টি পণ্যে বাংলাদেশের বাজারে তাৎক্ষণিক শুল্কমুক্ত প্রবেশাধিকার পাবে।' বর্তমানে জাপানের এসব পণ্যের ওপর এমএফএন (মোস্ট ফেভারড নেশন) ট্যারিফের হার শূন্য শতাংশ ও ১ শতাংশ রয়েছে। শফিকুল আলম আরো বলেন, 'এর ফলে আমাদের প্রধান রফতানি পণ্য আরএমজি (তৈরি পোশাক) জাপানের বাজারে শুল্কমুক্ত প্রবেশাধিকার পাবে। আর জাপান বাংলাদেশের জন্য ১২০টি সেবা খাত উন্মুক্ত করবে।' তবে এতে শুল্ক আদায় কমে যাওয়ার তেমন কোনো আশঙ্কা নেই বলে দাবি করেন তিনি। প্রেস সচিব বলেন, 'বাংলাদেশ-জাপান অর্থনৈতিক অংশীদারত্বটা অনেক দিন ধরে আলোচনা হচ্ছে। এর মধ্যে আটটি মিটিং

হয়েছে আমাদের বাণিজ্য উপদেষ্টা ও বাণিজ্য সচিবের নেতৃত্বে। গত ২২ ডিসেম্বর যৌথভাবে বাণিজ্য উপদেষ্টা শেখ বশিরউদ্দীন ও জাপানের পররাষ্ট্রমন্ত্রী মোতেগি তোশিমিতসু এ আলোচনা সম্পন্ন হওয়ার কথা বলেছেন।' অন্যদিকে বাণিজ্য মন্ত্রণালয়ের বিজ্ঞপ্তিতে চুক্তির উদ্দেশ্য সম্পর্কে বলা হয়েছে, বাংলাদেশ-জাপানের মধ্যে বাণিজ্য ও বিনিয়োগ সম্প্রসারণ, জাপানি বিনিয়োগকারীদের আস্থা সুদৃঢ়করণ ও দীর্ঘমেয়াদি জাপানি বিনিয়োগ আকর্ষণ করবে। চুক্তির আওতায় পণ্য, সেবা বাণিজ্য, শুল্ক, বিনিয়োগ, বাণিজ্য বৃদ্ধি ও মেধাস্বত্বসহ (ইন্টেলেকচুয়াল প্রপার্টি) বিভিন্ন গুরুত্বপূর্ণ খাত অন্তর্ভুক্ত রয়েছে। বাংলাদেশ-জাপান ইপিএর উল্লেখযোগ্য বৈশিষ্ট্যগুলোর মধ্যে রয়েছে বাংলাদেশের প্রধান রফতানি পণ্য, বিশেষ করে তৈরি পোশাকসহ অন্যান্য পণ্য চুক্তি স্বাক্ষরের দিন থেকেই জাপানের বাজারে শুল্কমুক্ত প্রবেশাধিকার সুবিধা পাবে। এছাড়া তৈরি পোশাক খাতে সিঙ্গেল স্টেজ ট্রান্সফরমেশন সুবিধাও পাওয়া যাবে। সেবা বাণিজ্য (ট্রেড ইন সার্ভিসেস) খাতেও উভয় দেশ উল্লেখযোগ্য অঙ্গীকার করেছে। জাপানের জন্য বাংলাদেশ ডব্লিউটিও সেক্টরাল ক্ল্যাসিফিকেশন লিস্ট অনুযায়ী, ১২টি সেক্টরের আওতায় ৯৭টি সাব-সেক্টর উন্মুক্ত করতে সম্মত হয়েছে। অন্যদিকে বাংলাদেশের জন্য ১২০টি সাব-সেক্টর উন্মুক্ত করতে সম্মত হয়েছে জাপান। এর ফলে বাংলাদেশে জাপানি বিনিয়োগ বৃদ্ধি এবং প্রযুক্তি স্থানান্তর ত্বরান্বিত হবে। বাণিজ্য মন্ত্রণালয় বলছে, এ চুক্তি বাংলাদেশের জন্য ব্যাপক বাণিজ্য ও অর্থনৈতিক সুফল বয়ে আনবে। ফলে বাংলাদেশে বাণিজ্য সম্প্রসারণ, বিনিয়োগ বৃদ্ধি এবং কর্মসংস্থানের নতুন সুযোগ সৃষ্টি হবে, যার মাধ্যমে বাংলাদেশ-জাপান অর্থনৈতিক সম্পর্কের এক নতুন অধ্যায়ের সূচনা হবে। জাপান আগামী ৬ ফেব্রুয়ারি চুক্তিটি স্বাক্ষর করতে ইচ্ছুক।





সেমিনারে বাণিজ্য উপদেষ্টা রফতানি খাত বৈচিত্র্যকরণে কাজ করছে সরকার

নিজস্ব প্রতিবেদক

দেশের রফতানি খাত কেবল তৈরি পোশাক শিল্পের ওপর নির্ভরশীল না রেখে আরো বৈচিত্র্যময় ও প্রতিযোগিতামূলক করতে সরকার কাজ করছে বলে জানিয়েছেন বাণিজ্য উপদেষ্টা শেখ বশিরউদ্দীন। তিনি বলেন, '২০৩০ সালের মধ্যে ১০০ বিলিয়ন ডলারের রফতানি লক্ষ্যমাত্রা অর্জনে এক্সপোর্ট কম্পিটিটিভনেস ফর জবস প্রকল্পের মাধ্যমে বড় ধরনের সংস্কার ও বিনিয়োগ শুরু হয়েছে।'

রাজধানীর পূর্বাচলে বাংলাদেশ-চায়না ফ্রেডশিপ এক্সিবিশন সেন্টারে গতকাল 'রোল অব কম্পিটিটিভনেস ফর জব প্রজেক্ট অন এক্সপোর্ট ডাইভারসিফিকেশন ইন বাংলাদেশ' শীর্ষক সেমিনারে প্রধান অতিথির বক্তব্যে বাণিজ্য উপদেষ্টা এ কথা বলেন। রফতানি উন্নয়ন ব্যুরো (ইপিবি) আয়োজিত এ অনুষ্ঠানে সভাপতিত্ব করেন ইপিবির ডাইস চেয়ারম্যান ও প্রধান নির্বাহী মোহাম্মদ হাসান আরিফ। বিশেষ অতিথি ছিলেন বাণিজ্য মন্ত্রণালয়ের সচিব মাহবুবুর রহমান।

সেমিনারে উপদেষ্টা শেখ বশিরউদ্দীন বলেন, 'বর্তমানে বাংলাদেশের মোট রফতানি আয়ের ৮০ শতাংশের বেশি আসে তৈরি পোশাক খাত থেকে। এ এককনির্ভরতা দীর্ঘমেয়াদি অর্থনৈতিক ঝুঁকি তৈরি করছে। ২০৩০ সালের লক্ষ্যমাত্রা পূরণ করতে হলে নন-পোশাক খাতের প্রবৃদ্ধি অন্তত আড়াই গুণ বাড়ানো প্রয়োজন। এ লক্ষ্য পূরণে চামড়া, জুতা, প্লাস্টিক এবং হালকা প্রকৌশল খাতকে অগ্রাধিকার দেয়া হচ্ছে।'

তিনি বলেন, 'প্রকল্পের আওতায় সারা দেশে চারটি অত্যাধুনিক প্রযুক্তি কেন্দ্র স্থাপন করা হচ্ছে। এসব কেন্দ্রে সরকারি-বেসরকারি অংশীদারত্বের ভিত্তিতে ক্ষুদ্র ও মাঝারি শিল্প উদ্যোক্তারা উন্নত যন্ত্রপাতি ব্যবহারের সুযোগ, কারিগরি প্রশিক্ষণ এবং পণ্য প্রোটোটাইপিংয়ের সুবিধা পাবেন।'

সেমিনারে মূল প্রবন্ধ উপস্থাপন করেন লাইট ক্যাসেল পার্টনার্সের সিইও বিজন ইসলাম। এছাড়া আরো বক্তব্য রাখেন ইউএনডিপি বাংলাদেশের সিনিয়র ইকোনমিক অ্যাডভাইজার ওয়াইস প্যারি, পলিসি এক্সচেঞ্জ বাংলাদেশের চেয়ারম্যান ড. এম মাসরুর রিয়াজ এবং ওয়ার্ল্ড ব্যাংকের ফাইন্যান্স কম্পিটিটিভনেস অ্যান্ড ইনোভেশন প্রকল্পের সিনিয়র প্রাইভেট সেক্টর স্পেশালিস্ট হোসনা ফেরদৌস সুমি।



Govt approves EPA signing with Japan

It will be Bangladesh's first full-fledged trade agreement with a major partner

BANGLADESH-JAPAN EPA: KEY HIGHLIGHTS

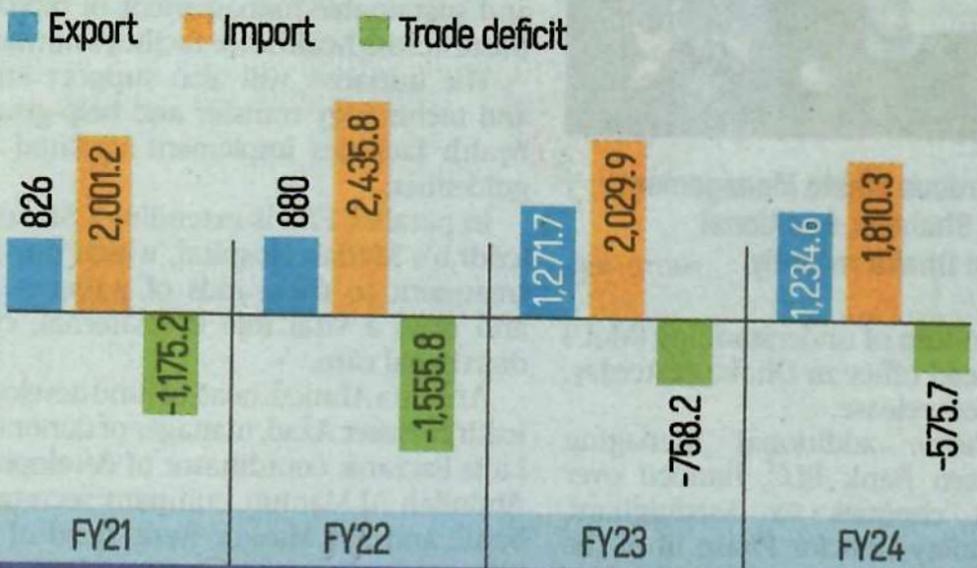


- Joint Study Group report published: December 2023
- Negotiations launched: March 2024
- EPA finalised after seven rounds of talks
- Advisory council approval: January 22, 2025
- Signing expected: February 6, 2026

POST-AGREEMENT

- | | |
|---|--|
| Bangladesh: duty-free access for 7,379 products | Japan: zero-duty access for 1,039 products |
| Bangladesh to open 97 subsectors in 12 sectors | Japan to open 120 subsectors |

BANGLADESH'S TRADE WITH JAPAN (In million \$)



SOURCE: BB

REFAYET ULLAH MIRDHA

The interim government's advisory council yesterday approved the signing of an Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) with Japan, paving the way for duty-free market access for Bangladeshi exports to the East Asian country after LDC graduation.

Bangladesh is scheduled to graduate from LDC (least developed country) status in November this year.

Once the agreement comes into effect, Japan will allow duty-free access for 7,379 products, which are 97 percent of Bangladesh's export basket, including the main garment items, according to a press release from the commerce ministry.

In return, Bangladesh will provide duty-free access to 1,039 Japanese products, largely in phases over 18 years.

With the advisory council's approval, all procedural steps required for signing the agreement have been completed, Commerce

Secretary Mahbubur Rahman told The Daily Star over the phone.

He said the Japanese government has also approved the final draft, and the EPA is scheduled to be signed in Tokyo on February 6. Senior officials from both countries will attend the signing ceremony.

The deal will be Bangladesh's first full-fledged trade agreement with a major partner. So far, the country has signed only one preferential trade agreement, also with Japan, in December 2020.

Unlike a conventional tariff-focused trade deal, the EPA covers a broad range of areas, including investment, services, labour standards, regulatory cooperation and compliance issues.

Earlier, at a press conference in December last year, Japanese Foreign Minister Motegi Toshimitsu endorsed the draft during a phone conversation with Commerce Adviser Sk Bashir Uddin.

The EPA introduces single-stage

transformation provisions for garments, easing rules-of-origin requirements.

The agreement also includes a chapter on trade in services. Bangladesh has agreed to open 97 sub-sectors across 12 service sectors to Japan, while Japan will open 120 sub-sectors to Bangladesh. The move is expected to facilitate greater Japanese investment and technology transfer.

Japanese investment in Bangladesh currently stands at about \$500 million, a small fraction of Japan's global outward investment.

The East Asian country remains Bangladesh's largest export destination in Asia, with shipments currently standing at nearly \$2 billion, driven largely by demand for Bangladeshi garments under Japan's duty-free access scheme for LDCs.

Last month, Japan reaffirmed to the World Trade Organisation that it would continue duty-free market access for Bangladesh for three more years, up to 2029.

"The EPA between Bangladesh and Japan is an extremely important milestone for Bangladesh," said Mohammad Abdur Razzaque, chairman of Research and Policy Integration for Development (RAPID).

"It sends a strong signal that Bangladesh can successfully negotiate comprehensive trade

agreements with major global partners," he added.

Bangladesh has been pursuing trade agreements with major partners to secure preferential market access after LDC graduation. Studies suggest the country could lose up to \$8 billion in annual exports once LDC-related benefits expire.

At present, around 73

percent of Bangladesh's exports depend on LDC-related trade facilities. Bangladesh is the largest beneficiary of such preferences, accounting for 67 percent of benefits extended to all 44 LDCs.

Negotiations on the EPA began in May 2024 and concluded after eight rounds, with the final round held in Tokyo in September last year.

Japan's exports to US fall as tariffs bite

AFP, Tokyo

Japan's exports to the United States dropped 11.1 percent in December and slipped more than four percent last year, official figures showed Thursday, as tariffs bite.

In 2025, Japan's exports to the United States fell 4.1 percent, contributing to a 12.6 percent decline in Tokyo's trade surplus with Washington to 7.5 trillion yen (\$47 billion), finance ministry data showed.

A drop in the number of cars and auto parts exported, as well as rise in imports of liquified petroleum gas, cereals and power-generating machines, were primary factors in Tokyo's shrinking trade surplus with Washington, according to the data.

In December, Tokyo's exports to Washington fell 11.1 percent to 1.81 trillion yen (\$11.4 billion), with the trade surplus shrinking 31.7 percent to 690.6 billion yen (\$4.4 billion). In July, Tokyo and Washington announced a trade deal lowering tariffs to 15 percent from a feared 25 percent.

Crucially, that reduction included the auto sector, an industry that accounted for 30 percent of Japanese exports to the United States in 2024.

However, Tokyo officials and business leaders have said the 15 percent tariffs are still high compared with the period before the second Trump administration.

Japan's overall trade account logged a deficit of 2.65 trillion yen in 2025, its fifth consecutive deficit.



SWEEPING REFORM PUSH BY INTERIM GOVT

Cabinet approves Dhaka Central Univ ordinance, Japan trade pact

FE REPORT

A slew of far-reaching ordinances and policy proposals get the interim government's nod to unclog long-stalled reforms in higher education, trade and governance while Bangladesh heads towards a crucial electoral moment. At a weekly meeting of the Advisory Council, chaired by Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus, ministers signed off on 11 out of 13 agenda items, including the long-anticipated Dhaka Central University Ordinance 2026, and a proposal to conclude Bangladesh-Japan Economic Partnership Agreement (BJEPA). Two drafts - on money laundering prevention and the national qualifications framework - were sent back for further scrutiny, a move officials framed as evidence of deliberation rather than haste.

The most politically and socially resonant decision is the endorsement of the Dhaka Central University

- Legal, policy measures endorsed also touch on finance, labour, public admin
- Two ordinances on retirement benefits and welfare trusts for teachers, employees of private institutions also cleared
- Two drafts on money laundering prevention and national qualifications framework sent back
- Right to Information Ordinance 2026 notable among approved items

Ordinance aimed at bringing seven government colleges in the capital under a single academic umbrella. For years, these institutions - among them Dhaka College, Eden Mohila College and Government Titumir College - have been trapped in

administrative limbo, plagued by session backlogs, inconsistent examinations and overlapping oversight between universities and ministries. Under the new ordinance, the

colleges will become affiliated colleges of a newly created Dhaka Central University, while retaining their individual identities, campuses and ownership of assets.

The government argues that this hybrid model avoids the disruption of a full merger while imposing a unified academic calendar, examination system and assessment framework.

The ordinance sets out a comprehensive governance structure: the President will serve as chancellor, a Vice-chancellor will be appointed from a senate-nominated panel, and the university will be overseen by bodies that include a senate, syndicate and academic council. The University Grants Commission will retain inspection and supervisory powers over academic and administrative standards.

Separate schools for arts, science, social sciences, business studies, law and fine arts are envisaged, each led by a head of school.

Admissions will be centralised, combining SSC and HSC results with an entry test, allowing students to enroll either on the main campus or at one of the affiliated colleges.

Supporters see the move as an overdue attempt to rationalise Dhaka's sprawling public college system and restore academic credibility.

Critics, however, warn that success will hinge on implementation: without adequate funding, staffing and autonomy, they argue, a new

Approval for the Right to Information Ordinance 2026 is notable, given Bangladesh's uneven record on transparency. While details of the amendments were not immediately disclosed, civil-society groups will be watching closely to see whether the new law strengthens access to information or dilutes existing safeguards.

Internationally, the council endorsed a draft Mutual Legal Assistance treaty with Malaysia, a step aimed at improving cooperation on criminal matters, including financial crimes and cross-border investigations.

The green light for signing the Bangladesh-Japan Economic Partnership Agreement carries broader economic and diplomatic implications. Japan is one of Bangladesh's largest development partners and a key source of investment in infrastructure, energy and manufacturing.

An EPA could deepen market access, streamline trade rules and signal policy stability to foreign investors at a time when Bangladesh faces pressure from slowing growth, foreign-exchange constraints and looming graduation from the least-developed country (LDC) status.

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Textile mill shutdown threat raises alarm over RMG exports ahead of polls

RMG - BANGLADESH

REYAD HOSSAIN

As textile millers and garment exporters remain locked in a bitter dispute over duty-free yarn imports – and the Bangladesh Textile Mills Association (BTMA) has announced an indefinite shutdown of mills – the government is scrambling to avert a potential disruption to RMG exports, which account for about 85% of Bangladesh's total export earnings.

Commerce Secretary Mahbubur Rahman told The Business Standard yesterday that the government recognises the seriousness of the crisis and is exploring possible options.

"The textile industry is facing problems, no doubt. Something has to be done," he said. "We are thinking about what alternatives are possible."

Describing the issue as complex, he added, "We must find a way out. We will try to come up with a solution as quickly as possible."

The commerce secretary noted that multiple stakeholders are involved – including the government, textile mill owners and garment manufacturers – and said their concerns would need to be carefully balanced. However, he did not specify what options were under active consideration.

Shutdown threat ahead of polls

Meanwhile, textile mill owners have threatened to shut down factories from 1 February, citing what they describe as prolonged government inaction in protecting the \$23 billion textile industry. The announcement comes at a sensitive time, less than two

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RMG EXPORTS AT RISK

Garments account for 85% of Bangladesh's total exports

Textile mill shutdown to disrupt the entire supply chain

BTMA's shutdown threat from 1 Feb, just 11 days before the 12 Feb election

Around 10 lakh workers in textile sector to face wage uncertainty

Risks of possible labour unrest, vandalism

Textile closures could worsen loan defaults

ROOTS OF THE PROBLEMS

- Allegations of yarn import surge in FY25, and continuing
- Imports more than doubled in past three years
- Local millers at price disadvantage as Indian yarn allegedly sells at cheaper rates
- Textile mills running at only 50% of installed capacity

Tk26,000 crore (\$2bn+) worth of yarn imported

Over 80% from India

Backed by Indian govt incentives

About \$0.30 cheaper per unit than local yarn

Unsold yarn stockpiling

“It is not a threat. The sector will shut down anyway... We do not have the capacity to repay bank loans. This is a crisis. It is a national crisis.”

– Showkat Aziz Russell, BTMA president

“Withdrawing bonded facilities will hamper garment exports. However, spinning mills must be sustained as an import-substituting backward linkage industry.”

– Dr Mostafa Abid Khan, International trade expert and former BTTC member

weeks before the national election scheduled for 12 February.

BTMA President Showkat Aziz Russell formally announced the decision yesterday.

"This is not a threat. The sector will shut down anyway," he said. "This is a crisis, a national crisis."

Russell criticised the pace of policymaking, saying, "In any situation, India can make a decision within a few hours, whereas our government cannot do so even in months."

He also alleged that while the government provides various incentives to the garment sector, textile mill owners do not benefit from them. Instead, he claimed, most of the gains flow to foreign buyers.

According to Russell, under the open costing method any increase in production costs is ultimately passed on to buyers. However, if domestic textile mills collapse, garment manufacturers will be forced to import yarn from India at higher prices in the long run, eroding competitiveness.

Risks to workers, banks and exports

Industry insiders warned that an actual shutdown of textile mills would have far-reaching consequences. More than 10 lakh workers employed in the sector could face uncertainty over wages and benefits, potentially triggering labour unrest.

A halt in yarn production would disrupt the garments supply chain, while difficulties in repaying bank loans could push non-performing loans (NPLs even higher at a time when banks are already under pressure, with NPLs estimated at around 35%.

Economists warn that large-scale closures in the textile sector could add further strain to an economy

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already grappling with multiple challenges.

Against this backdrop, experts have urged the government to act swiftly to reach an acceptable solution that balances the interests of yarn-producing textile mills and garment exporters.

How the dispute escalated

The conflict intensified after the Ministry of Commerce, responding to a letter from the Bangladesh Trade and Tariff Commission (BTTC), wrote to the National Board of Revenue on 12 January seeking the withdrawal of the existing duty-free yarn import facility under bonded licences.

Garment exporters strongly opposed the move, warning of "tough action" and describing the withdrawal of the facility as "suicidal" for the export-oriented apparel sector.

Amid the backlash, the commerce ministry appeared to step back from its position. Textile mill owners later met the finance adviser on Wednesday, seeking the immediate issuance of an order withdrawing the bonded facility for yarn imports, but received no clear response.

In frustration, BTMA held what it described as an "emergency press conference" yesterday to reiterate its shutdown stance.

"The apparel sector contributes 13% to the country's GDP, yet policymakers do not even allocate 13 minutes for the sector's people," Russell said. "Every department is simply passing responsibility to others, like a game of pillow passing."

Reiterating the shutdown threat, he added, "We will shut down no matter what. We do not have the capacity to repay bank loans. Our capital has been reduced by half."

BTMA leaders said mill owners have repeatedly sought either the withdrawal of the bonded facility for yarn imports from India or the introduction of special cash incentives to help the sector survive.

Potential fallout of textile mill shutdowns

Around 10 lakh workers are employed in Bangladesh's textile sector. If these factories

are shut down from 1 February, just ahead of the national election, the payment of workers' wages will become uncertain before the polls, potentially triggering labour unrest.

Speaking to The Business Standard after the press conference, Showkat Aziz said, "If mills are shut down, workers will resort to vandalism at factories to demand their wages."

He said textile entrepreneurs are deeply intertwined with the sector. "Textiles are not our only business. We expanded our other businesses around this industry. If textile mills shut down, everything else will also struggle," he said, adding that NPLs would inevitably rise.

"We would survive only if we could exit this business," he added.

Professor Mustafizur Rahman, distinguished fellow at the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), said textile mill closures would not only fuel labour unrest but also disrupt raw material supplies for garment exports, while increasing import dependence.

"If large, capital-intensive mills shut down and fail to repay loans, NPLs will rise further," he warned.

Experts suggest alternatives

Dr Mostafa Abid Khan, an international trade expert and former member of the BTTC, said withdrawing bonded facilities would hurt garment exports, but stressed that spinning mills must be sustained as an import-substituting backward linkage industry.

"Any decision must be taken through consultations with all stakeholders and in compliance with World Trade Organization rules," he said, adding that a mechanism should be developed to support spinning mills so they remain competitive.

Mustafizur Rahman said there is no obligation to protect textile mills by withdrawing bonded facilities for garment exporters.

"In line with LDC rules, limited cash compensation or special loan facilities could be provided for a specific period," he said.

He also suggested initiating anti-dumping investigations against India if evidence shows yarn is being exported to Bangladesh

at unfairly low prices, which could justify the imposition of duties. Alternatively, import quotas could be considered.

Addressing concerns about WTO violations, he noted that no country has taken to dispute settlement over such measures during LDC status or within three years of graduation, making the risk relatively low.

Yarn import trends

In FY25, Bangladesh imported yarn worth about Tk26,000 crore – more than \$2 billion – with over 80% sourced from India. Yarn imports from India have more than doubled over the past three years.

Local entrepreneurs claim Indian government incentives allow exporters to sell yarn to Bangladesh at prices roughly \$0.30 lower than domestic prices, leaving local mills unable to compete. As a result, stocks have piled up and some factories are operating at only half their installed capacity.

However, Fazlee Shamim Ehsan, executive president of the Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BKMEA), disputed claims of a continuous rise in imports.

"From July to December, imports declined compared to the same period of the previous fiscal year, mainly because garment exports have fallen," he said.

He argued that the core issue is declining competitiveness in the domestic textile sector.

"We all agree the textile sector needs protection," he said. "But it cannot come at the cost of harming garment exporters. If India supports its industry, Bangladesh can consider similar support if necessary."

BGMEA Acting President Salim echoed those concerns last week, warning that blocking imports could create a monopoly, as local mills cannot supply all yarn types, particularly premium varieties.

He said exporters would prefer local sourcing if mills could ensure timely delivery and competitive pricing, and urged the government to support spinning mills through productivity upgrades, incentives and uninterrupted energy supply.



Bangladesh approves proposal to sign EPA with Japan

ECONOMY - BANGLADESH

UNB

The Council of Advisers yesterday approved a proposal to sign the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) with Japan which will help Bangladesh enjoy immediate duty-free access to the Japanese market for 7,379 products.

In return, Japan will receive immediate duty-free access to 1,039 products from Bangladesh through the signing of the EPA between Bangladesh and Japan.

It will be a milestone and historic agreement, Chief Adviser's Press Secretary Shafiqul Alam told the reporters at the Foreign Service Academy.

While briefing the journalists, Shafiqul said this will eventually help Bangladesh negotiate better with other countries on the trade front.

"We are trying to diversify exports and markets," said the press secretary, noting Bangladesh's RMG products will enjoy duty-free market access to Japan's market.

