বণিক বার্তা
2 6 MAY 2026

দেশে প্রথমবারের মতো বাণিজ্য ও বিনিয়োগ সম্মেলন হবে জুনে

নিজস্ব প্রতিবেদক ■

আগামী জুনে প্রথমবারের মতো 'ট্রেড অ্যান্ড ইনভেস্টমেন্ট কনফারেন্স ২০২৬'-এর আয়োজন করতে যাচ্ছে বাংলাদেশ। স্বল্পোন্নত দেশের (এলডিসি) তালিকা থেকে উত্তরণের আগে অর্থনৈতিক সক্ষমতা জোরদার এবং বিদেশী বিনিয়োগ বাড়ানোই এ সম্মেলনের মূল লক্ষ্য।

রোববার পররাষ্ট্র প্রতিমন্ত্রী শামা ওবায়েদ ইসলাম সম্মেলনের প্রস্তুতি নিয়ে একটি উচ্চপর্যায়ের বৈঠকে সভাপতিত্ব করেন। পররাষ্ট্র মন্ত্রণালয়ের এক সংবাদ বিজ্ঞপ্তিতে গতকাল এ তথ্য জানানো হয়।

আগামী ১৩ জুন ঢাকার প্যান প্যাসিফিক সোনারগাঁওয়ে এ সম্মেলনের আয়োজন করা হবে।

পররাষ্ট্র মন্ত্রণালয় এবং বাংলাদেশ বিনিয়োগ উন্নয়ন কর্তৃপক্ষ (বিডা) যৌথভাবে সম্মেলনটি আয়োজন করছে। এর প্রতিপাদ্য নির্ধারণ করা হয়েছে—'ঝুঁকি মোকাবেলা, সক্ষমতার দ্বার উন্মোচন'।

দিনব্যাপী এ আয়োজনে সরকারের জ্যেষ্ঠ মন্ত্রী ও উপদেষ্টা, ঢাকায় নিযুক্ত বিভিন্ন দেশের কূটনীতিক, বহুজাতিক উন্নয়ন সংস্থার প্রতিনিধি, ব্যবসায়ী নেতা ও বেসরকারি খাতের অংশীজনরা অংশগ্রহণ করবেন।

সম্মেলনে বাণিজ্য ও বিনিয়োগ নীতি, অর্থায়ন ও মূলধন সংগ্রহ, বাজারে প্রবেশাধিকার, শিল্প প্রতিযোগিতা সক্ষমতা, কৃত্রিম বুদ্ধিমত্তা, সৃজনশীল শিল্প এবং ক্রীড়া বিষয়ে পূর্ণাঙ্গ আলোচনা ও গোলটেবিল বৈঠক হবে।

পররাষ্ট্র মন্ত্রণালয় জানায়, আগামী নভেম্বরে এলডিসি তালিকা থেকে বাংলাদেশের উত্তরণের প্রাক্কালের সময়ে এ উদ্যোগ নেয়া হচ্ছে।

এছাড়া পরিবর্তনশীল বৈশ্বিক অর্থনৈতিক চ্যালেঞ্জের মধ্যে বিদেশী প্রত্যক্ষ বিনিয়োগ (এফডিআই) বৃদ্ধি এবং অর্থনৈতিক সক্ষমতা জোরদারে সম্মেলনটি গুরুত্বপূর্ণ ভূমিকা রাখবে বলে আশা করা হচ্ছে। এ আয়োজনে প্রায় ৩৫০ জন প্রতিনিধি অংশ নেবে।

The Daily Star

26 MAY 2026

EU to assess Bangladesh's proposal for FTA

Without a deal, exporters may lose zero-duty access by 2029

REFAYET ULLAH MIRDHA

The European Union is set to begin an internal assessment of Bangladesh's proposal for a free trade agreement (FTA) with the bloc, nearly a year after the proposal was first placed.

Md Abdur Rahim Khan, additional secretary (export) at the commerce ministry, said the EU sent a letter in this regard to the ministry in the first week of this month.

The bloc, however, did not mention a specific date to start the negotiations, he added.

At present, Bangladesh enjoys zero-duty benefits to the trade bloc but may lose the privilege after 2029 if a trade deal is not secured, and Bangladeshi exporters will face a 10 percent duty from that year.

Considering the importance of zero-duty benefits, Bangladesh sent a proposal to the EU seeking negotiations on an FTA in August last year, aiming to retain preferential market access to the EU after the country graduates from least developed country (LDC) status.

Bangladesh is scheduled to graduate from LDC status on November 24 this year if the process is not deferred.

BALANCING LDC DELAY AND EU ACCESS

Khan said Bangladesh's immediate priority is delaying its graduation from the LDC category. The government applied to the UN Committee for Development Policy (UN CDP) in February this year seeking a three-year deferment until 2029, and the proposal is currently under review by relevant UN bodies.

At the same time, securing continued preferential market access to the EU remains equally important, he said.

The block is Bangladesh's largest export destination, accounting for nearly 60 percent of the country's annual exports, with annual shipments valued at over $25 billion.

Nuria Lopez, chairperson of the European Union Chamber of Commerce in Bangladesh (EuroCham Bangladesh), welcomed the ongoing communication between the two sides over a possible FTA.

Bangladesh is eager to commence these discussions, Lopez said in a WhatsApp message in reply to a question sent by The Daily Star.

She added that the prime minister had already conveyed Bangladesh's strong interest in an FTA in a letter to the president of the European Commission and that the EU is currently assessing the proposal.

"I met EU Ambassador Michael Miller in Bangladesh on Wednesday morning, and I remain hopeful," she said.

A private sector representative of both Bangladesh and the EU, Lopez will be in Brussels next month to advocate for the FTA.

"We are also working to demonstrate that an FTA is not only in Bangladesh's interest, but also of strong commercial interest to the European private sector."

WHY THE PACT MATTERS

Without an FTA or similar arrangement with the EU, Bangladeshi exporters will face a 10 percent duty from 2029 in EU. For now, the bloc has granted the country a three-year extension of zero-duty facilities.

At the same time, Bangladesh and the EU are negotiating a Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA), which aims to strengthen cooperation in areas such as trade, investment, governance, human rights, climate action and sustainable development, according to the European Commission.

Bangladesh, a member of the World Trade Organization since 1995, currently enjoys duty-free, quota-free access to the EU market under the bloc's "Everything but Arms" (EBA) scheme for LDCs. The country is currently the largest beneficiary of the EU's EBA scheme, with €19 billion worth of exports receiving preferential access in 2024 under a 96 percent utilisation rate.

In 2025, Bangladesh was the EU's 35th-largest trading partner, accounting for 0.5 percent of the bloc's total goods trade. The EU, meanwhile, remained Bangladesh's largest trading partner, making up 21.5 percent of the country's global goods trade.

Total trade in goods between Bangladesh and the EU stood at €23.3 billion in 2025, with the EU recording a trade deficit of €19.1 billion.

Textiles accounted for nearly 94 percent of the EU's imports from Bangladesh, while the bloc mainly exported machinery, appliances and chemical products.

Trade in services between the two sides reached €1.5 billion in 2024, while total trade in goods and services amounted to €23.8 billion.

According to the European Commission, EU foreign direct investment stock in Bangladesh stood at €2.5 billion in 2024, while Bangladesh's FDI stock in the EU amounted to €86 million.

The Financial Express
26 MAY 2026

High tariffs stifle Bangladesh RMG potential in LatAm

FHM HUMAYAN KABIR, BACK FROM BRAZIL

Bangladeshi garment makers are missing out on a huge market in Latin America due to tariff barriers imposed by the Mercosur countries, businesses and analysts say.

Established in 1991 to promote free-trade and regional integration, Mercosur is a South American trade bloc with four full members -- Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, and Uruguay.

Despite the enormous potential of Bangladeshi products to enter South America in higher volumes, the lack of bilateral or multilateral trade deals is affecting businesses.

Brazilian and Bangladeshi businessmen have told The Financial Express although they want to expand business with Bangladesh, the tariff barriers are creating huge roadblocks.

Brazil's 35 per cent import tariff on ready-made garment (RMG) from Bangladesh -- stemming from its Mercosur customs union membership -- severely erodes Bangladeshi apparel competitiveness.

By inflating the final retail prices, this duty restricts market penetration and forces Bangladesh into a structural trade deficit while limiting expansion into Latin America.

Bangladesh imports major agricultural commodities like raw cotton, sugar, and soybean from Brazil (exceeding $2.0 billion annually), while its exports - primarily knitwear and woven apparel -- have hovered around $150-187 million, severely tilting the trade balance.

Because the price elasticity for basic apparel is high, a 35 per cent duty coupled with cumulative internal taxes makes Bangladeshi garments substantially more expensive than locally produced Brazilian goods or items from competitors with preferential trade access.

Despite the recent spikes in bilateral trade, the high tariff continues to act as a ceiling for export growth, preventing Bangladesh from directly capturing a significant share of Brazil's apparel market.

Besides, the complex banking or payment system between Brazil and Bangladesh has held back garment importers and exporters, disrupting the potential bilateral business.

Bruno B Silveira, country manager of Brazilian garment importer RENNER in Bangladesh, tells The Financial Express the Bangladesh government should take steps to convince its Brazilian counterpart and the Mercosur trade bloc to slash tariffs on Bangladeshi products.

Since Bangladesh imports a handsome amount of Brazilian products, it can take steps to reduce trade barriers by establishing a good partnership, he adds.

Sheikh Khaledur Rahman, a Bangladesh-Brazil businessman, tells The Financial Express he has been doing garment business with Brazil for many years and tariffs are the main obstacle to trade expansion.

"Since Bangladesh has no trade deal with Brazil or the Mercosur nations, it has become very difficult to compete with other garment suppliers like India. Besides, they have good relations with China and Vietnam," he says.

"We have met some Brazilian policy-makers, bureaucrats, businessmen, and trade leaders. We suggested they go for establishing a trade relation with Bangladesh and eliminating the tariff barriers. But as we have not got any support from the Bangladeshi embassy in Brazil, we have failed to complete successful negotiations."

Another Bangladeshi businessman in Sao Paulo says they have requested the incumbent Bangladeshi ambassador to Brazil, appointed by the previous Sheikh Hasina government, to press their demands with the Latin American country, but the request has not been considered.

Echoing the same, several other businessmen have told The Financial Express the ambassador, Dr Md Tauhedul Islam, acts like a lord and does not care about the Bangladeshi community in Brazil.

In addition to Brazil, Dr Tauhedul holds concurrent diplomatic accreditation to Argentina, Chile, Uruguay, Paraguay, Bolivia, and Venezuela.

The main export items from Bangladesh include RMG, such as jerseys, pullovers, cardigans, shirts, suits, jackets, trousers, and shorts.

India and Mercosur have an active Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA) that came into force in June 2009.

Vietnam and Mercosur do not yet have any officials are discussing a possible partial or targeted Mercosur-China trade deal in response to shifting global tariffs.

By 2026, Brazil could become the world's eighth-largest economy with a gross domestic product (GDP) of $2.47 trillion.

A manager at a John Deere brand shop in the Brazilian city of Sao Carlos tells The Financial Express they are interested in importing Bangladeshi apparel and leather products, but tariffs are the major obstacle.

"We know that Bangladeshi garments are recognised worldwide. Bangladesh has a big export base in the US and European Union (EU) countries. We are also interested in importing Bangladeshi products if the barriers are removed."

GARMENT GOLDMINE IN LATIN AMERICA FOR BD

MERCOSUR MEMBERS

- Argentina
- Brazil
- Paraguay
- Uruguay

KEY BARRIER

35% import tariff on BD RMG in Brazil

TRADE IMBALANCE

IMPORTS FROM BRAZIL	EXPORTS TO BRAZIL
$2b annually	$0.15-0.18b
Cotton	Knitwear
Sugar	Woven apparel
Soybean	

COMPETITORS' EDGE

- India has PTA with Mercosur
- China has strong strategic partnership
- Vietnam started PTA talks in 2025

HOW TARIFFS HURT

- 35% tariff, internal taxes make BD RMG pricey
- Basic apparel has high price elasticity

CALL TO ACTION FOR BD

- Negotiate tariff reduction with Brazil, Mercosur
- Leverage strong imports for better trade deal
- Simplify banking, payment systems

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India and Mercosur have an active Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA) that came into force in June 2009.

Vietnam and Mercosur do not yet have any active Free Trade Agreement (FTA), but they officially launched PTA negotiations in late 2025.

China does not have a formal FTA with Brazil or Mercosur.

However, it is Brazil's largest global trading partner, and the two countries operate under major strategic partnerships and cooperation plans.

Brazil has historically vetoed formal Mercosur-China trade talks to protect domestic manufacturing, though Brazilian officials are discussing a possible partial or targeted Mercosur-China trade deal in response to shifting global tariffs.

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Former Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association president Rubana Huq tells The Financial Express that Brazil is one of the big potential markets in Latin America for Bangladesh, but tariff barriers are impeding bilateral trade.

She has urged the Bangladesh government to work with the Brazilian authorities to simplify business since the former country imports products like cotton, sugar, and soybean from the latter with zero duty.

kabirhumayan10@gmail.com