সমকাল
18 JUN 2026

বাংলাদেশের অবস্থান শক্তিশালী করবে মার্কিন বাণিজ্য চুক্তি

সংসদে প্রশ্নের জবাবে পররাষ্ট্রমন্ত্রী

■ সমকাল প্রতিবেদক

ড. খলিলুর রহমান

যুক্তরাষ্ট্রের সঙ্গে অন্তর্বর্তী সরকারের স্বাক্ষরিক বাণিজ্য চুক্তি নিয়ে আলোচনা-সমালোচনা চললেও পররাষ্ট্রমন্ত্রী ড. খলিলুর রহমানের দাবি, এই চুক্তিতে বাংলাদেশের অবস্থান শক্তিশালী হবে। তিনি বলেছেন, যুক্তরাষ্ট্রের সঙ্গে স্বাক্ষরিত বাণিজ্য চুক্তির মাধ্যমে মার্কিন তুলা ব্যবহার করে উৎপাদিত তৈরি পোশাকে শূন্য শুল্ক সুবিধা নিশ্চিত হয়েছে। চুক্তিটি বৈদেশিক বিনিয়োগ আকর্ষণ, জ্বালানি নিরাপত্তা জোরদার এবং বৈশ্বিক সরবরাহ ব্যবস্থায় বাংলাদেশের অবস্থান আরও শক্তিশালী করতে ইতিবাচক ভূমিকা রাখবে বলে আশা করা যায়।

গতকাল বুধবার জাতীয় সংসদে গাজীপুর-৫ আসনের সরকারদলীয় সংসদ সদস্য এ কে এম ফজলুল হক মিলনের প্রশ্নের জবাবে পররাষ্ট্রমন্ত্রী এ কথা বলেন। স্পিকার হাফিজ উদ্দিন আহমদের সভাপতিত্বে বৈঠকের শুরুতে প্রশ্নোত্তর টেবিলে উপস্থাপন করা হয়।

অর্থনৈতিক কূটনীতিকে বিশেষ গুরুত্ব দেওয়ার কথা জানিয়ে খলিলুর রহমান বলেন, রপ্তানি বাজার সম্প্রসারণ, রপ্তানি বহুমুখীকরণ, আন্তর্জাতিক বিনিয়োগ আকর্ষণ এবং কর্মসংস্থানমুখী অর্থনৈতিক প্রবৃদ্ধি অর্জন সরকারের অন্যতম অগ্রাধিকার। দেশের ব্যবসায়ী ও উদ্যোক্তাদের আন্তর্জাতিক বাণিজ্যের সঙ্গে আরও ব্যাপকভাবে সম্পৃক্ত করা এবং বৈদেশিক বিনিয়োগের মাধ্যমে অর্থনীতির গতিশীলতা বৃদ্ধির লক্ষ্যে সরকার অর্থনৈতিক কূটনীতিকে বিশেষ গুরুত্ব দিচ্ছে।

চট্টগ্রাম-১৫ আসনের শাহজাহান চৌধুরীর প্রশ্নের জবাবে পররাষ্ট্রমন্ত্রী বলেন, জাতিসংঘের শরণার্থীবিষয়ক সংস্থার সাম্প্রতিক রিপোর্ট অনুযায়ী বাংলাদেশে আশ্রয় নেওয়া বাস্তুচ্যুত রোহিঙ্গা জনগোষ্ঠীর সংখ্যা বর্তমানে ১১ লাখ ৮৯ হাজার ২১৩।

রোহিঙ্গা প্রত্যাবাসনে নেওয়া পদক্ষেপের কথা তুলে ধরে পররাষ্ট্রমন্ত্রী বলেন, রাখাইন রাজ্যের পরিবর্তিত পরিস্থিতির বাস্তবতায় পরিধি বাড়িয়ে সব পক্ষের সঙ্গে আলোচনা চলছে।

কালবেলা
~~সমকাল~~
18 JUN 2026

সংসদে পররাষ্ট্রমন্ত্রী

বাংলাদেশের অবস্থান শক্তিশালী করবে মার্কিন বাণিজ্য চুক্তি

কালবেলা প্রতিবেদক

যুক্তরাষ্ট্রের সঙ্গে অন্তর্বর্তী সরকারের সই হওয়া বাণিজ্য চুক্তি বাতিলের দাবি উঠলেও পররাষ্ট্রমন্ত্রী ড. খলিলুর রহমান মনে করেন, চুক্তিটি বৈদেশিক বিনিয়োগ আকর্ষণ, জ্বালানি নিরাপত্তা জোরদার ও বৈশ্বিক সরবরাহ ব্যবস্থায় বাংলাদেশের অবস্থান শক্তিশালী করতে ইতিবাচক ভূমিকা রাখবে। তিনি বলেন, এ চুক্তির (অ্যাগ্রিমেন্ট অন রিসিপ্রোকাল ট্রেড) মাধ্যমে মার্কিন তুলা ব্যবহার করে উৎপাদিত তৈরি পোশাক রপ্তানিতে শূন্য শুল্ক সুবিধা নিশ্চিত হয়েছে।

গতকাল জাতীয় সংসদে সংসদ সদস্য এ কে এম ফজলুল হক মিলনের প্রশ্নের জবাবে পররাষ্ট্রমন্ত্রী খলিলুর রহমান এসব কথা বলেন। স্পিকার হাফিজউদ্দিন আহমদের সভাপতিত্বে অধিবেশনের শুরুতে প্রশ্নোত্তর টেবিলে উত্থাপিত হয়। সংসদে এই চুক্তির পক্ষে পররাষ্ট্রমন্ত্রী নানা যুক্তি তুলে ধরেন। ত্রয়োদশ সংসদ নির্বাচনের আগে ৯ ফেব্রুয়ারি যুক্তরাষ্ট্রের সঙ্গে এই বাণিজ্য চুক্তি করে ড. মুহাম্মদ ইউনূসের অন্তর্বর্তী সরকার।

ড. খলিলুর রহমান বলেন, রপ্তানি বাজার সম্প্রসারণ, রপ্তানি বহুমুখীকরণ, আন্তর্জাতিক বিনিয়োগ আকর্ষণ এবং কর্মসংস্থানমুখী অর্থনৈতিক প্রবৃদ্ধি অর্জন বর্তমান সরকারের অন্যতম অগ্রাধিকার। বৈশ্বিক অর্থনৈতিক প্রেক্ষাপটে দেশের ব্যবসায়ী ও উদ্যোক্তাদের আন্তর্জাতিক বাণিজ্যের সঙ্গে আরও ব্যাপকভাবে সম্পৃক্ত করা এবং বৈদেশিক বিনিয়োগের মাধ্যমে অর্থনীতির গতিশীলতা বাড়াতে সরকার অর্থনৈতিক কূটনীতিকে বিশেষ গুরুত্ব দিচ্ছে। এ লক্ষ্যে পররাষ্ট্র মন্ত্রণালয়, বাংলাদেশ বিনিয়োগ উন্নয়ন কর্তৃপক্ষ (বিডা), বাংলাদেশ অর্থনৈতিক অঞ্চল কর্তৃপক্ষ (বেজা), বাণিজ্য মন্ত্রণালয়সহ সংশ্লিষ্ট সংস্থাগুলো সমন্বিতভাবে কাজ করে যাচ্ছে।

প্রথম আলো

18 JUN 2026

বাংলাদেশের অবস্থান শক্তিশালী করতে ইতিবাচক ভূমিকা রাখবে

যুক্তরাষ্ট্রের সঙ্গে সই হওয়া বাণিজ্যচুক্তি প্রসঙ্গে পররাষ্ট্রমন্ত্রী খলিলুর রহমান এ আশাবাদের কথা বলেন।

বিশেষ প্রতিবেদক, *ঢাকা*

খলিলুর রহমান

যুক্তরাষ্ট্রের সঙ্গে সই হওয়া বাণিজ্যচুক্তি বৈদেশিক বিনিয়োগ আকর্ষণ, জ্বালানিনিরাপত্তা জোরদার এবং বৈশ্বিক সরবরাহব্যবস্থায় বাংলাদেশের অবস্থান আরও শক্তিশালী করতে ইতিবাচক ভূমিকা রাখবে বলে আশা প্রকাশ করেছেন পররাষ্ট্রমন্ত্রী খলিলুর রহমান। গতকাল বুধবার জাতীয় সংসদে গাজীপুর-৫ আসনের সদস্য এ কে এম ফজ্লুল হক মিলনের প্রশ্নের জবাবে পররাষ্ট্রমন্ত্রী খলিলুর রহমান এ আশাবাদের কথা জানান।

স্পিকার হাফিজ উদ্দিন আহমদের সভাপতিত্বে বৈঠকের শুরুতে প্রশ্নোত্তর টেবিলে উপস্থাপন করা হয়।

রপ্তানি বাজার সম্প্রসারণে বিভিন্ন উদ্যোগের কথা তুলে ধরে পররাষ্ট্রমন্ত্রী খলিলুর রহমান বলেন, 'যুক্তরাষ্ট্রের সঙ্গে সম্প্রতি অ্যাগ্রিমেন্ট অন রিসিপ্রোকাল ট্রেড (এআরটি) স্বাক্ষরিত হয়েছে। এই চুক্তির মাধ্যমে মার্কিন তুলা ব্যবহার করে উৎপাদিত তৈরি পোশাকের ক্ষেত্রে শূন্য শুল্কসুবিধা নিশ্চিত হয়েছে। চুক্তিটি বৈদেশিক বিনিয়োগ আকর্ষণ, জ্বালানিনিরাপত্তা জোরদার এবং বৈশ্বিক সরবরাহব্যবস্থায় বাংলাদেশের অবস্থান আরও শক্তিশালী করতে ইতিবাচক ভূমিকা রাখবে বলে আশা করা যায়।'

পররাষ্ট্রমন্ত্রী আরও বলেন, বাজার সম্প্রসারণ ও শুল্কসুবিধা নিশ্চিত করার লক্ষ্যে বিভিন্ন দেশের সঙ্গে প্রেফারেনশিয়াল ট্রেড অ্যাগ্রিমেন্ট (পিটিএ) বা অগ্রাধিকারমূলক বাণিজ্যচুক্তি, ফ্রি ট্রেড অ্যাগ্রিমেন্ট (এফটিএ) বা মুক্তবাণিজ্য চুক্তি এবং কম্প্রিহেনসিভ ইকোনমিক পার্টনারশিপ অ্যাগ্রিমেন্ট (সিইপিএ) বা সমন্বিত অর্থনৈতিক অংশীদারি চুক্তি সম্পাদনের উদ্যোগ নেওয়া হয়েছে।

অর্থনৈতিক কূটনীতিতে জোর

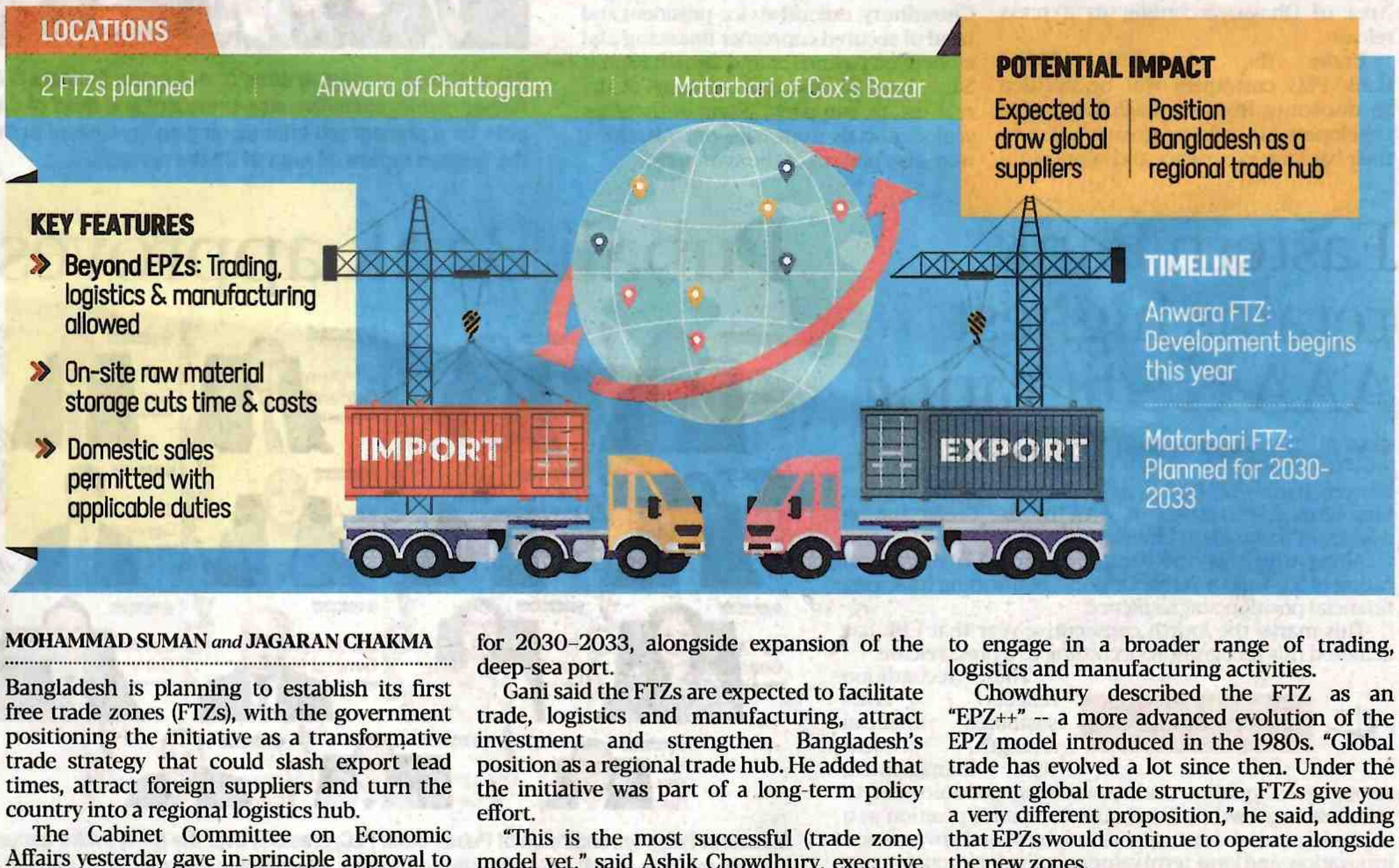
পররাষ্ট্রমন্ত্রী বলেন, রপ্তানির বাজার সম্প্রসারণ, রপ্তানি বহুমুখীকরণ, আন্তর্জাতিক বিনিয়োগ আকর্ষণ ও কর্মসংস্থানমুখী অর্থনৈতিক প্রবৃদ্ধি অর্জন বর্তমান সরকারের অন্যতম অগ্রাধিকার। বৈশ্বিক অর্থনৈতিক প্রেক্ষাপটে দেশের ব্যবসায়ী ও উদ্যোক্তাদের আন্তর্জাতিক বাণিজ্যের সঙ্গে আরও ব্যাপকভাবে সম্পৃক্ত করা এবং বৈদেশিক বিনিয়োগের মাধ্যমে অর্থনীতির গতিশীলতা বৃদ্ধি করার লক্ষ্যে সরকার অর্থনৈতিক কূটনীতিকে বিশেষ গুরুত্ব প্রদান করছে। এ লক্ষ্যে পররাষ্ট্র মন্ত্রণালয়, বাংলাদেশ বিনিয়োগ উন্নয়ন কর্তৃপক্ষ (বিডা), বাংলাদেশ অর্থনৈতিক অঞ্চল কর্তৃপক্ষ (বেজা), বাণিজ্য মন্ত্রণালয়সহ সংশ্লিষ্ট সংস্থাগুলো সমন্বিতভাবে কাজ করে যাচ্ছে।

রোহিঙ্গা জনগোষ্ঠীর সংখ্যা ১১ লাখ ৮৯ হাজার

চট্টগ্রাম-১৫ আসনের সংসদ সদস্য শাহজাহান চৌধুরীর প্রশ্নের জবাবে পররাষ্ট্রমন্ত্রী খলিলুর রহমান বলেন, জাতিসংঘের শরণার্থীবিষয়ক সংস্থা ইউএনএইচসিআরের সাম্প্রতিক রিপোর্ট অনুযায়ী বাংলাদেশে আশ্রয় নেওয়া বলপ্রয়োগে বাস্তুচ্যুত রোহিঙ্গা জনগোষ্ঠীর সংখ্যা বর্তমানে ১১ লাখ ৮৯ হাজার ২১৩।

Govt clears path for first free trade zones

Foreign suppliers will be able to stock duty-free raw materials in the zones and sell them to exporters at home and abroad



MOHAMMAD SUMAN *and* JAGARAN CHAKMA

Bangladesh is planning to establish its first free trade zones (FTZs), with the government positioning the initiative as a transformative trade strategy that could slash export lead times, attract foreign suppliers and turn the country into a regional logistics hub.

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs yesterday gave in-principle approval to the establishment of FTZs near the Matarbari deep-sea port in Cox's Bazar and in Anwara, near Chattogram Port, Cabinet Secretary Md Nasimul Gani said.

According to officials familiar with the matter, the zones will cover around 600 acres. Development of the Anwara zone is expected to begin this year. The Matarbari FTZ is slated for 2030-2033, alongside expansion of the deep-sea port.

Gani said the FTZs are expected to facilitate trade, logistics and manufacturing, attract investment and strengthen Bangladesh's position as a regional trade hub. He added that the initiative was part of a long-term policy effort.

"This is the most successful (trade zone) model yet," said Ashik Chowdhury, executive chairman of the Bangladesh Investment Development Authority (Bida). "Nearly 37 percent of Dubai's trade comes from FTZs. Given our country's geopolitical position, it has become critical for us."

Unlike conventional economic zones or export processing zones (EPZs), the proposed FTZs will allow both local and foreign investors to engage in a broader range of trading, logistics and manufacturing activities.

Chowdhury described the FTZ as an "EPZ++" -- a more advanced evolution of the EPZ model introduced in the 1980s. "Global trade has evolved a lot since then. Under the current global trade structure, FTZs give you a very different proposition," he said, adding that EPZs would continue to operate alongside the new zones.

The core proposition of the FTZ model is that the zones will function outside Bangladesh's customs territory. Investors can import raw materials and machinery duty-free, undertake value addition and re-export finished goods. Products may also enter the domestic market upon payment of applicable duties.

"You have to think of it as not part of Bangladesh. It is an overseas system," Chowdhury said.

Warehousing is expected to be the primary revenue driver. Foreign suppliers will be able to stock raw materials inside the zones and supply both Bangladeshi exporters and buyers across the region on demand. Under the current system importers suppliers can use our zones as a secondary location to supply materials across the region."

The model follows the blueprint of globally successful hubs including Dubai's Jebel Ali Free Zone, and mirrors systems already in place in Vietnam and Thailand -- countries Chowdhury acknowledged as competitors Bangladesh has been slow to match. "We are a bit late on this," regional distribution centres and multinational firms seeking supply-chain bases in South Asia.

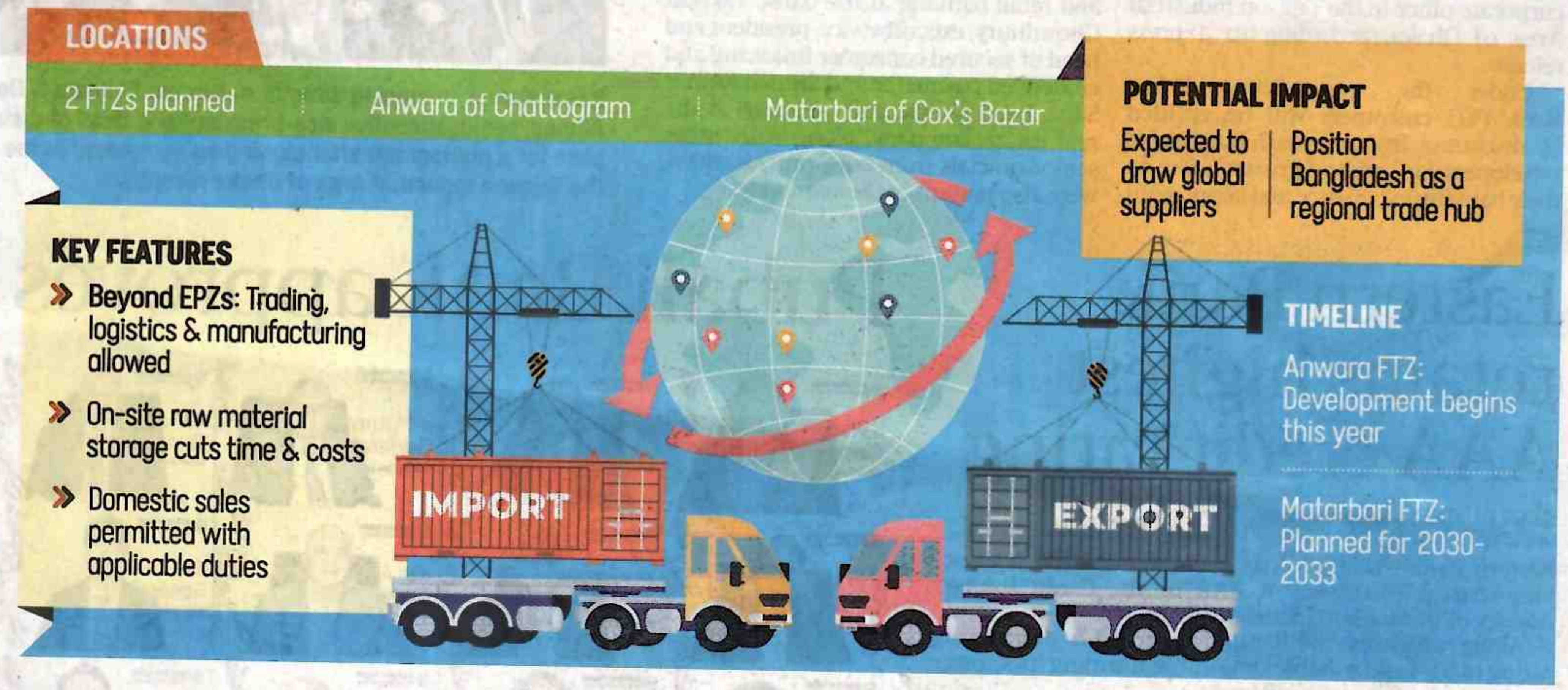
Muinul Islam, former economics professor at the University of Chittagong, said the proposal had been under discussion for over two decades. "The FTZs would not only attract fresh investment but also create a platform where suppliers and agents of industrial raw materials could stock costs, shorten transit times and improve connectivity with global shipping routes.

"These are exactly the factors multinational investors consider when selecting production and distribution locations," said M Masrur Reaz, chairman and CEO of Policy Exchange Bangladesh.

He added that the Anwara site's proximity to Chattogram port, the Karnaphuli Tunnel, Shah Haque, president of the Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industry, said the zones could attract electronics, light engineering, consumer goods, packaging and regional distribution operations.

However, he cautioned that infrastructure must keep pace, calling for an urgent upgrade of the Dhaka-Chattogram highway from four to ten

Foreign suppliers will be able to stock duty-free raw materials in the zones and sell them to exporters at home and abroad



MOHAMMAD SUMAN *and* **JAGARAN CHAKMA**

Bangladesh is planning to establish its first free trade zones (FTZs), with the government positioning the initiative as a transformative trade strategy that could slash export lead times, attract foreign suppliers and turn the country into a regional logistics hub.

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs yesterday gave in-principle approval to the establishment of FTZs near the Matarbari deep-sea port in Cox's Bazar and in Anwara, near Chattogram Port, Cabinet Secretary Md Nasimul Gani said.

According to officials familiar with the matter, the zones will cover around 600 acres. Development of the Anwara zone is expected to begin this year. The Matarbari FTZ is slated for 2030-2033, alongside expansion of the deep-sea port.

Gani said the FTZs are expected to facilitate trade, logistics and manufacturing, attract investment and strengthen Bangladesh's position as a regional trade hub. He added that the initiative was part of a long-term policy effort.

"This is the most successful (trade zone) model yet," said Ashik Chowdhury, executive chairman of the Bangladesh Investment Development Authority (Bida). "Nearly 37 percent of Dubai's trade comes from FTZs. Given our country's geopolitical position, it has become critical for us."

Unlike conventional economic zones or export processing zones (EPZs), the proposed FTZs will allow both local and foreign investors to engage in a broader range of trading, logistics and manufacturing activities.

Chowdhury described the FTZ as an "EPZ++" -- a more advanced evolution of the EPZ model introduced in the 1980s. "Global trade has evolved a lot since then. Under the current global trade structure, FTZs give you a very different proposition," he said, adding that EPZs would continue to operate alongside the new zones.

The core proposition of the FTZ model is that the zones will function outside Bangladesh's customs territory. Investors can import raw materials and machinery duty-free, undertake value addition and re-export finished goods. Products may also enter the domestic market upon payment of applicable duties.

"You have to think of it as not part of Bangladesh. It is an overseas system," Chowdhury said.

Warehousing is expected to be the primary revenue driver. Foreign suppliers will be able to stock raw materials inside the zones and supply both Bangladeshi exporters and buyers across the region on demand. Under the current system, importers pay duties upfront and seek refunds later, a process long criticised as cumbersome.

"If we have raw materials in a warehouse near to us, it will reduce lead times for our exports," Chowdhury said. "We can also start tapping exporters from neighbouring countries. The ambition is that big suppliers can use our zones as a secondary location to supply materials across the region."

The model follows the blueprint of globally successful hubs including Dubai's Jebel Ali Free Zone, and mirrors systems already in place in Vietnam and Thailand -- countries Chowdhury acknowledged as competitors Bangladesh has been slow to match. "We are a bit late on this," he said.

The initiative follows recommendations by a Bangladesh Economic Zones Authority (Beza) committee that reviewed international FTZ models. Officials expect the zones to attract light manufacturing, logistics operators, warehousing businesses, regional distribution centres and multinational firms seeking supply-chain bases in South Asia.

Muinul Islam, former economics professor at the University of Chittagong, said the proposal had been under discussion for over two decades. "The FTZs would not only attract fresh investment but also create a platform where suppliers and agents of industrial raw materials could stock and trade their products closer to export-oriented manufacturers."

Economists view the Matarbari FTZ as potentially the more transformative of the two. As Bangladesh's first deep-sea port capable of handling large-draft vessels, Matarbari is expected to cut shipping costs, shorten transit times and improve connectivity with global shipping routes.

"These are exactly the factors multinational investors consider when selecting production and distribution locations," said M Masrur Reaz, chairman and CEO of Policy Exchange Bangladesh.

He added that the Anwara site's proximity to Chattogram port, the Karnaphuli Tunnel, Shah Amanat International Airport and three existing EPZs made it an equally strong draw for foreign investors.

Business leaders have also welcomed the move as an opportunity to diversify investment beyond garments.

Mohammed Amirul Haque, president of the Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industry, said the zones could attract electronics, light engineering, consumer goods, packaging and regional distribution operations.

However, he cautioned that infrastructure must keep pace, calling for an urgent upgrade of the Dhaka-Chattogram highway from four to ten lanes.

Bida's Chowdhury said the government was working to amend seven provisions of law and regulation to operationalise the zones. "We will try to start one of the zones by next year. It will depend on how fast we can change the laws."

The Financial Express
18 JUN 2026

GOVT ENDORSES BUILDING TWO FREE-TRADE ZONES

Bay of Bengal coast becoming entrepot for duty-free trading

Chinese Economic-Industrial Zone in Anwara also cleared

FE REPORT

An entrepot is poised to emerge along the coast of the Bay of Bengal for duty-free trading by foreign and local entrepreneurs as the government approves building two free-trade zones near Chittagong seaport and beside Matarbari deep-sea port.

An entrepot is a trading centre, port, or warehouse where goods are imported, stored, and then re-exported to other countries. These goods are typically exempt from import and export duties.

Such trade zoning, which exists in some other countries, is first of its kind in Bangladesh, officials said after the approval given Wednesday in principle.

The approval was given by the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) in a meeting chaired by Finance and Planning Minister Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury at Bangladesh Secretariat in the capital.

Briefing newsmen after the meeting, Cabinet Secretary Nasimul Ghani said the setting up of the free-trade zones still remained at concept stage but got the approval at the meeting. "Detailed plan, investment structure, and management method of the zones will be finalised later."

He informs that each free-trade zone will be established in 300 acres of land aiming to boost the country's economy, expand international trade, attract foreign investment, and increase port-based economic activities.

Boosting economy, expanding international trade, attracting foreign investment, enhancing port-based economic activities aimed at

Ships coming from abroad can unload, sell or re-export goods in these trade hubs

Bangladeshi entrepreneurs will be able to supply products to int'l market from here

Mr Ghani notes that in the free-trade zones many customs and tax-related rules and regulations remain relaxed or absent in conducting international commercial activities where both foreign and local traders and investors can conduct business easily.

He also says ships coming from abroad will have the opportunity to unload, sell or re-export goods in these areas. At the same time, Bangladeshi entrepreneurs will also be able to easily supply products to the international market from here.

According to him, the setting up of such a zone will significantly increase the overall economic activity of the country.

The government hopes the volume of economic activity will increase, country's gross domestic product (GDP) will see a positive impact, port utilisation and shipping traffic will increase, and rapid transfer of goods and services will be possible once the free-trade zones are established.

Mr Ghani mentions that such free-trade zones are being operated in different countries, including the United Arab Emirates. "Though Dubai has limited natural resources, huge investments have come there due to the free economic zone and commercial facilities and it has developed into one of the centres of international trade. Bangladesh is also trying to create such an environment."

Both domestic and foreign investors will be able to invest in the free-trade zones. Manufacturing-oriented industries, warehousing, logistics, commercial services, and even tourism-based activities can be developed there.

Also, the cabinet committee approved in principle the formation of a special-purpose company and related development and land-lease agreements to establish a Chinese Economic and Industrial Zone (CEIZ) in

The Financial Express

18 JUN 2026

Textile, accessories makers seek tax parity with RMG exporters

JASIM UDDIN

- Tax disparity deters backward-linkage industry investment
- Textile manufacturers pay higher taxes than RMG exporters
- Rising costs and weak demand pressure textile sector
- BTMA urges 12pc tax rate for primary textile mills

Primary textile and garment accessories manufacturers have urged the government to ensure equal corporate tax treatment, arguing that despite being vital components of Bangladesh's apparel export value chain, they continue to shoulder a significantly higher tax burden than export-oriented garment manufacturers.

Industry leaders raised the issue while speaking to The Financial Express on the proposed FY2026-27 budget, calling for an end to what they described as a longstanding tax disparity that favours apparel exporters while placing backward-linkage industries at a competitive disadvantage.

The Bangladesh Textile Mills Association (BTMA) has requested that the government reduce the corporate tax rate for primary textile mills to 12 per cent until 2030, aligning it with the concessional rate currently enjoyed by export-oriented ready-made garment (RMG) manufacturers.

Textile millers said local yarn and fabric producers supply most of the raw materials used by garment exporters and play a crucial role in ensuring shorter lead times, higher domestic value addition and stronger export competitiveness.

Despite their contribution, textile manufacturers currently pay substantially higher taxes than the garment factories they support.

"Both sectors are part of the same export supply chain, but they are not receiving the same policy treatment," said BTMA former vice-president Md Saleudh Zaman Khan Jitu.

The association noted that the existing tax structure discourages investment in backward-linkage industries at a time when the sector is struggling with rising gas and electricity costs, high interest rates, escalating raw material prices and weak global demand.

Garment accessories manufacturers echoed similar concerns, saying local producers of labels, packaging materials, zippers, buttons, hangers and other inputs face higher operating costs and tax burdens despite contributing directly to export earnings through their support to the apparel sector.

Industry representatives stressed that strengthening backward-linkage industries is essential for Bangladesh's long-term competitiveness, particularly as the country prepares for graduation from the least developed country (LDC) category and faces increasing competition from regional rivals.

According to BTMA, textile-producing competitors such as India, Vietnam and Cambodia provide extensive tax and policy support to their textile sectors, enabling them to supply yarn and fabrics at more competitive prices.

The association warned that continued tax disparities could discourage fresh investment, accelerate factory closures and increase reliance on imported raw materials, ultimately weakening domestic value addition in apparel exports.

BTMA President Showkat Aziz Russell said textile mills and accessories manufacturers are integral parts of the country's export ecosystem and deserve policy support comparable to that provided to apparel exporters.

Industry leaders maintained that tax parity across the apparel value chain would help sustain production, protect jobs, enhance local sourcing and strengthen Bangladesh's competitiveness in the global export market.

newsmanjasi@gmail.com

The Business Standard

18 JUN 2026

Bangladesh eyes free trade zones to cut lead times, boost investment and exports

TRADE – BANGLADESH

ABBAS UDDIN NOYON

Country's first free trade zone in Ctg gets approval

Bangladesh is set to introduce free trade zones (FTZs) for the first time under a proposed customs framework, marking a major shift in its export strategy, industrial development and investment facilitation efforts.

Under the proposed framework, businesses will be allowed to import raw materials, components and goods into designated FTZs without paying duties. Companies will be able to store, process, assemble, repackage, relabel and re-export products from these zones. Goods may also be supplied to the domestic market after payment of applicable duties and taxes.

The initiative is expected to help reduce supply chain delays, lower production costs and strengthen Bangladesh's position as a regional trade and logistics hub as the country prepares for graduation from least developed country (LDC) status.

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA), chaired by Finance Minister Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury, yesterday approved a proposal to establish the country's first free trade zone in Anwara, Chattogram, aimed at boosting trade, investment, and export capacity.

Industry leaders say the move could address one of the biggest challenges facing Bangladesh's manufacturing sector: long lead times in sourcing imported inputs.

Currently, export-oriented manufacturers often require 20 to 30 days to receive imported raw materials due to procedures involving letters of credit, shipping, customs clearance, and inland transportation.

Businesses believe FTZs will allow companies to maintain inventories closer to production facilities, enabling manufacturers to access imported inputs quickly when export orders arrive.

MA Jabbar, managing director of DBL Group and President of Bangladesh Economic Zone Investor Association, said the introduction of FTZs would mark a major shift in Bangladesh's trade and investment landscape.

"Bangladesh's export basket is still highly concentrated. Free trade zones can create opportunities for new sectors to integrate into global supply chains and help generate momentum beyond the RMG industry. This initiative can play a significant role in attracting new investment and diversifying our export base," he said.

SMEs likely to be major beneficiaries

Small and medium enterprises (SMEs) are expected to gain significantly from the proposed system as many currently struggle to import raw materials due to limited access to trade finance, import facilities, and economies of scale.

Under the FTZ model, large operators could import materials in bulk and store them in designated zones, while smaller manufacturers would be able to purchase supplies according to their requirements.

Taskin Ahmed, president of the Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry, said reducing lead time is one of the biggest priorities for Bangladesh's industrial sector.

"Even large manufacturers face losses because of delays in opening LCs and transporting goods. SMEs are even more disadvantaged as many cannot directly import raw materials," he said.

He added that global buyers are increasingly demanding faster delivery, and Bangladesh often loses business opportunities to competing countries because manufacturers cannot arrange inputs quickly enough.

"An FTZ system can substantially reduce that disadvantage," he said.

Anwara in Chattogram to host first FTZ

The Bangladesh Economic Zones Authority (Beza) has been working towards establishing a modern free trade zone in Chatogram's Anwara, in line with international standards.

prising 10 relevant agencies including the commerce, industries, and shipping ministries, Finance Division, and National Board of Revenue (NBR), conducted a comprehensive review of FTZ management systems, laws, policies, incentive frameworks, and operational models from countries around the world, culminating in a detailed report.

Based on the committee's recommendations, the Anwara area along the banks of the Karnaphuli river in Chattogram was selected as the most suitable location for the country's first FTZ, taking into account its infrastructure advantages, international trade connectivity, logistics capacity, and potential for future expansion.

Learning from global models

FTZs and free trade warehousing zones have become important tools for trade facilitation and investment attraction in several economies, including the Shanghai Free Trade Zone, India's Free Trade Warehousing Zone (FTWZ) model, the industrial and trade zones of Vietnam, the Jebel Ali Free Zone in the UAE and Singapore's globally recognised trade hub model.

Experts believe Bangladesh could use a similar model to attract investment in sectors beyond garments, including electronics, automotive components, medical devices, agro-processing and light engineering.

"This is a transformative initiative," said Snehasish Barua, director of SMAC Advisory Services and partner at Snehasish Mahmud & Co.

"Currently, companies often wait weeks to receive imported raw materials. FTZs will allow manufacturers to source inputs much faster," he said.

He added that larger companies could import materials in bulk and distribute them among smaller businesses, reducing procurement and logistics costs.

However, Snehasish warned that effective monitoring would be critical.

"If duty-free goods enter the domestic market without proper controls, local industries could face unfair competition," he said.

More than a warehouse system

NBR officials insist that the initiative should not be viewed merely as another warehousing arrangement.

"Bangladesh already has a bonded warehouse system, but it primarily serves specific export-oriented industries," a senior NBR official told TBS on condition of anonymity.

"Free trade zones will be a broader and more modern customs framework that can accommodate a wider range of businesses," he added.

According to the official, the initiative presents an opportunity to position Bangladesh as a regional trade and logistics hub.

To prevent misuse, the government is planning to introduce digital tracking systems, inventory monitoring and regular customs audits.

NBR officials said the FTZ concept should not be viewed simply as an extension of the existing bonded warehouse system.

Economists believe FTZs could help diversify exports, improve manufacturing competitiveness and attract both domestic and foreign investment.

"Logistics inefficiencies and complicated lead times in sourcing imported inputs.

Currently, export-oriented manufacturers often require 20 to 30 days to receive imported raw materials due to procedures involving letters of credit, shipping, customs clearance, and inland transportation.

Businesses believe FTZs will allow companies to maintain inventories closer to production facilities, enabling manufacturers to access imported inputs quickly when export orders arrive.

MA Jabbar, managing director of DBL Group and President of Bangladesh Economic Zone Investor Association, said the introduction of FTZs would mark a major shift in Bangladesh's trade and investment landscape.

"Bangladesh's export basket is still highly concentrated. Free trade zones can create opportunities for new sectors to integrate into global supply chains and help generate momentum beyond the RMG industry. This initiative can play a significant role in attracting new investment and diversifying our export base," he said.

SMEs likely to be major beneficiaries

Small and medium enterprises (SMEs) are expected to gain significantly from the proposed system as many currently struggle to import raw materials due to limited access to trade finance, import facilities, and economies of scale.

Under the FTZ model, large operators could import materials in bulk and store them in designated zones, while smaller manufacturers would be able to purchase supplies according to their requirements.

Taskin Ahmed, president of the Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry, said reducing lead time is one of the biggest priorities for Bangladesh's industrial sector.

"Even large manufacturers face losses because of delays in opening LCs and transporting goods. SMEs are even more disadvantaged as many cannot directly import raw materials," he said.

He added that global buyers are increasingly demanding faster delivery, and Bangladesh often loses business opportunities to competing countries because manufacturers cannot arrange inputs quickly enough.

"An FTZ system can substantially reduce that disadvantage," he said.

Anwara in Chattogram to host first FTZ

The Bangladesh Economic Zones Authority (Beza) has been working towards establishing a modern free trade zone in Chatogram's Anwara, in line with international standards.

The establishment of Bangladesh's first Free Trade Zone is being regarded as a landmark step towards the country's economic transformation, enhanced global trade connectivity, and improved regional competitiveness. It is expected to position Bangladesh as a key trade and logistics hub in South and Southeast Asia, said the press release issued by the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs.

To that end, a high-level committee com-

Learning from global models

FTZs and free trade warehousing zones have become important tools for trade facilitation and investment attraction in several economies, including the Shanghai Free Trade Zone, India's Free Trade Warehousing Zone (FTWZ) model, the industrial and trade zones of Vietnam, the Jebel Ali Free Zone in the UAE and Singapore's globally recognised trade hub model.

Experts believe Bangladesh could use a similar model to attract investment in sectors beyond garments, including electronics, automotive components, medical devices, agro-processing and light engineering.

"This is a transformative initiative," said Snehasish Barua, director of SMAC Advisory Services and partner at Snehasish Mahmud & Co.

"Currently, companies often wait weeks to receive imported raw materials. FTZs will allow manufacturers to source inputs much faster," he said.

He added that larger companies could import materials in bulk and distribute them among smaller businesses, reducing procurement and logistics costs.

However, Snehasish warned that effective monitoring would be critical.

"If duty-free goods enter the domestic market without proper controls, local industries could face unfair competition," he said.

More than a warehouse system

NBR officials insist that the initiative should not be viewed merely as another warehousing arrangement.

"Bangladesh already has a bonded warehouse system, but it primarily serves specific export-oriented industries," a senior NBR official told TBS on condition of anonymity.

"Free trade zones will be a broader and more modern customs framework that can accommodate a wider range of businesses," he added.

According to the official, the initiative presents an opportunity to position Bangladesh as a regional trade and logistics hub.

To prevent misuse, the government is planning to introduce digital tracking systems, inventory monitoring and regular customs audits.

NBR officials said the FTZ concept should not be viewed simply as an extension of the existing bonded warehouse system.

Economists believe FTZs could help diversify exports, improve manufacturing competitiveness and attract both domestic and foreign investment.

"Logistics inefficiencies and complicated import-export procedures account for a significant share of business costs in Bangladesh," said Dr Masrur Reaz, chairman of Policy Exchange Bangladesh.

"If managed properly, free trade zones can play an important role in reducing those costs," he said.

He added that port efficiency, customs automation, transport infrastructure and policy stability must improve alongside the FTZ initiative.