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The Business Standard

15 JUL 2026

Bangladesh seeks UN support for LDC transition, SDG financing

SDG – BANGLADESH

TBS REPORT

Bangladesh has sought stronger United Nations support for its graduation from the Least Developed Country (LDC) category, implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the government's reform agenda, while also requesting a three-year extension to the transition period.

Prime Minister's Adviser on Finance and Planning Rashed Al Mahmud Titumir made the appeal during separate meetings with UN Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs Li Junhua, UNESCAP Executive Secretary Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana, and UNDP Regional Director Kanni Wignaraja.

During the meetings, Titumir presented the government's "3R Strategy" – Recovery, Restoration and Reconstruction for Acceleration – aimed at restoring macroeconomic stability, rebuilding institutions and advancing reforms following the February 2026 election.

He said Bangladesh's request to extend the LDC transition period by three years is intended to ensure macroeconomic stability, effectively implement the country's Smooth Transition Strategy and secure a sustainable and irreversible graduation process.

The UN representatives reaffirmed their support for Bangladesh's LDC graduation, governance reforms, climate resilience and expansion of social protection programmes. Junhua also pledged continued cooperation to help ensure a successful transition.

Planning State Minister Zonayed Abdur Rahim Saki also urged the international community to provide greater grant assistance, concessional financing and technology transfer to help Bangladesh bridge its annual SDG financing gap of more than $132 billion.

Delivering Bangladesh's country statement at the General Debate of the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) 2026,

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Bangladesh seeks

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Saki said the country faces major financing constraints in clean energy, infrastructure and economic growth, alongside a 37% funding shortfall for supporting around 1.3 million Rohingya refugees, leaving an immediate financing gap of about $261 million.

He said the government plans to increase education and health spending to 5% of GDP, dredge 20,000 kilometres of rivers and canals, plant 250 million saplings, expand renewable energy, promote green industries and establish a carbon market, while strengthening domestic resource mobilisation through a universal social security programme and a Farmers Card initiative.

"We stand ready to reform, invest and deliver for better implementation of the SDGs," Saki said.

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Chinese firms drive two-thirds of EPZ investments in FY26

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signed a memorandum of understanding with China Civil Engineering Construction Corporation to develop the China–Bangladesh Mongla Port Economic Zone on 110 acres of land adjacent to Mongla Port in Bagerhat.

Beza also exchanged a developer agreement with China Road and Bridge Corporation for the development of the Chinese Economic and Industrial Zone in Chattogram's Anwara.

Separately, the Bangladesh Investment Development Authority (Bida) signed a memorandum of understanding with the China Council for the Promotion of International Trade to strengthen business cooperation, facilitate Chinese investment and improve investor services.

Meanwhile, provisional land allocation has been completed for Handa Industries Ltd at the Keraniganj Economic Zone. The company plans to invest $220 million in its second factory in Bangladesh, a project expected to create around 13,000 jobs.

Billions in proposals under review

Following meetings between the prime minister and senior executives of major Chinese companies in Beijing, 12 firms proposed investments worth $9.21 billion across the energy, infrastructure, logistics, manufacturing and education sectors.

Ashik Chowdhury, executive chairman of Bida and Beza, said the government's immediate priority is to convert the proposals into actual investments.

Chinese firms eye Bangladesh expansion

Chinese Ambassador Yao Wen said the prime minister's visit has significantly boosted Chinese companies' confidence in Bangladesh.

Briefing journalists after the visit, the ambassador said the long-delayed Chinese Economic and Industrial Zone in Anwara had made substantial progress, with nearly all documentation completed within four months of the new government taking office.

Priority sectors and investor support

Bida has identified electronics, semiconductors, electric vehicle batteries, advanced textiles, technical textiles, logistics, medical devices and IT-enabled services as priority sectors for Chinese investment.

Nahian Rahman Rochi, executive member and head of business development at Bida, said Chinese companies had maintained a strong interest in Bangladesh in recent years, although government-level engagement remained critical to investment decisions.

"Chinese investors place significant importance on strong government-to-government relations and policy certainty when entering a new market. The prime minister's recent visit has strengthened that confidence," he said.

Officials believe that, if the proposed investments, commitments and lease agreements are gradually translated into operational projects, Chinese capital could become a major driver of Bangladesh's next phase of export-oriented industrial growth.

In response to growing Chinese interest, Bida has established a dedicated support framework for investors from China, including plans for an office in Ganzhou, stronger business-to-government coordination mechanisms and a specialised relationship management team.

The authority has also launched a China Desk to provide end-to-end assistance and introduced a Chinese-language investment portal offering sector-specific guidelines and information for prospective investors.

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PM assures full govt support for young entrepreneurs to transform economy

STARTUPS – BANGLADESH

TBS REPORT

Prime Minister Tarique Rahman yesterday assured young entrepreneurs of the government's full backing, saying it will do its best to help them build successful businesses as they are vital to Bangladesh's future and economic transformation.

"We are with you – to help you, guide you and stand beside you. I do not know how much we will be able to do, but we will do our utmost to support you," he said at a programme titled "Youth, Startups and Bangladesh of Possibilities" at Dhaka University's Nabab Nawab Ali Chowdhury Senate Bhaban, reports UNB.

Jointly organised by the ICT Division and Dhaka University under the slogan "Build the Nation through Startups, Bangladesh First," the event aimed to bring young people's innovation, creativity and entrepreneurial potential into the mainstream of national development.

At the programme, the prime minister inaugurated the National Startup and Entrepreneurship Platform, later joined an open discussion with students on startups and entrepreneurship, and handed over grant cheques to six selected entrepreneurs.

Acknowledging the challenges of building a business, Tarique said success requires determination, patience and perseverance. "What you want to do is not easy. It is very difficult. But you can succeed if you have the determination," he said.

Sharing his own experience, Tarique said he had once been involved in business to earn a decent living before entering politics, but later devoted most of his time to political activities.

He said his political journey had exposed him to mental and physical torture, humiliation and many hardships, requiring immense patience before reaching his current position. "I am not trying to discourage you. I want to encourage you. Every successful journey involves hardship, but if you remain determined, you can achieve your goal," he said.

The prime minister said Bangladesh needs more entrepreneurs because they create businesses, generate employment and contribute to national development.

"You are needed not only for yourselves but for millions of people and for the country," he said.

Tarique said recent visits to school innovation exhibitions and nationwide sports competitions involving around 22 lakh primary school students had strengthened his confidence in the country's future.

"Sometimes, as a politician, I become discouraged. But after seeing those children, I felt much more confident. And today, after seeing your work and hearing your experiences, my confidence has grown even stronger," he said. "It gives me confidence that when we leave, there will be capable young people to take the country forward from where we stop."

The programme also featured a documentary on Bangladesh's startup ecosystem, followed by a session titled "Not Just Stories, but Reality," where successful startup founders shared their experiences, highlighting both the opportunities and challenges of building innovative businesses.

The Daily Star

15 JUL 2026

Shinepukur Ceramics gets special LC facility

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The Bangladesh Bank (BB) has allowed Shinepukur Ceramics, a defaulting company of Beximco Group, to open letters of credit (LCs) for raw material imports under a special arrangement.

In a notification issued yesterday, the central bank said the move is meant for keeping production running at the ceramics manufacturer and protecting its workforce.

Under the arrangement, Shinepukur Ceramics can now open import LCs with Sonali Bank PLC by depositing a 100 percent margin, meaning the company will have to pay the full import value in advance.

The facility will remain in place until December next year.

Under Section 27 Ka Ka (3) of the Banking Companies Act, banks and financial institutions are barred from extending any loan facility to a defaulting borrower. With yesterday's circular, the BB has exempted Shinepukur Ceramics from this provision for 18 months.

As a condition of the approval, the central bank said all revenue earned by the company must be deposited into a designated bank account. Sonali Bank will recover its outstanding dues from that account on a proportionate basis.

However, the government and the central bank will not assume any responsibility for the loan facility provided to support the opening of the import LCs, according to the notification.

As a result, Sonali Bank will not be able to seek any financial assistance from the government or the BB for those loans in future, the central bank said.

Earlier this month, the BB granted a similar facility to Abdul Monem Sugar Refinery Ltd, another defaulting borrower, allowing it to continue opening import LCs.

The Daily Star
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Dhaka chamber urges faster trade deals ahead of LDC graduation

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Bangladesh should fast-track the signing of free trade agreements (FTAs) and preferential trade agreements (PTAs) with key trading partners to preserve its export competitiveness after graduating from the least developed country (LDC) category, the Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry (DCCI) said yesterday.

The chamber also called for stronger economic diplomacy and greater market diversification to help businesses navigate the post-LDC landscape.

The recommendations were made by DCCI President Taskeen Ahmed during a meeting with State Minister for Foreign Affairs Shama Obaed Islam at the foreign ministry.

Taskeen urged the foreign ministry to play a more proactive role in facilitating FTAs and PTAs with countries offering significant trade potential.

He said diversifying export products and destinations would be crucial to addressing the challenges of the post-LDC era, adding that Bangladesh has ample opportunities to expand trade and investment in Africa, South America and Southeast Asia.

To unlock those opportunities, he said, the government should further strengthen its economic diplomacy initiatives.

The chamber also called for stronger economic diplomacy and greater market diversification to help businesses navigate the post-LDC landscape

The DCCI president also called for simplified direct payment mechanisms to facilitate bilateral trade and investment with African countries, particularly in contract farming, information technology and agriculture.

At the event, the state minister said the government remains committed to signing trade agreements that would help expand bilateral trade and investment with Africa and other promising markets.

She said stronger collaboration between the government and the private sector would be essential to achieving positive outcomes in this regard.

Shama Obaed said African countries offer considerable export opportunities for Bangladeshi products such as jute and jute goods, leather and leather products, pharmaceuticals, fruits and ceramics. She urged local entrepreneurs to explore those markets more actively.

She also stressed the need to strengthen the capacity of the private sector to address the challenges arising from Bangladesh's graduation from the LDC category while promoting export diversification and market expansion.

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DCCI Senior Vice-President Razeev H Chowdhury, Vice-President Md Salem Sulaiman, Acting Secretary General AKM Asaduzzaman Patwary, and Syed Muntasir Mamun, director general of the International Trade, Investment and Technology Wing at the foreign ministry, also attended the meeting.

Imports of foodgrain register 2nd-highest volume in FY26

Both govt and pvt sectors raise their purchase amid stable global prices

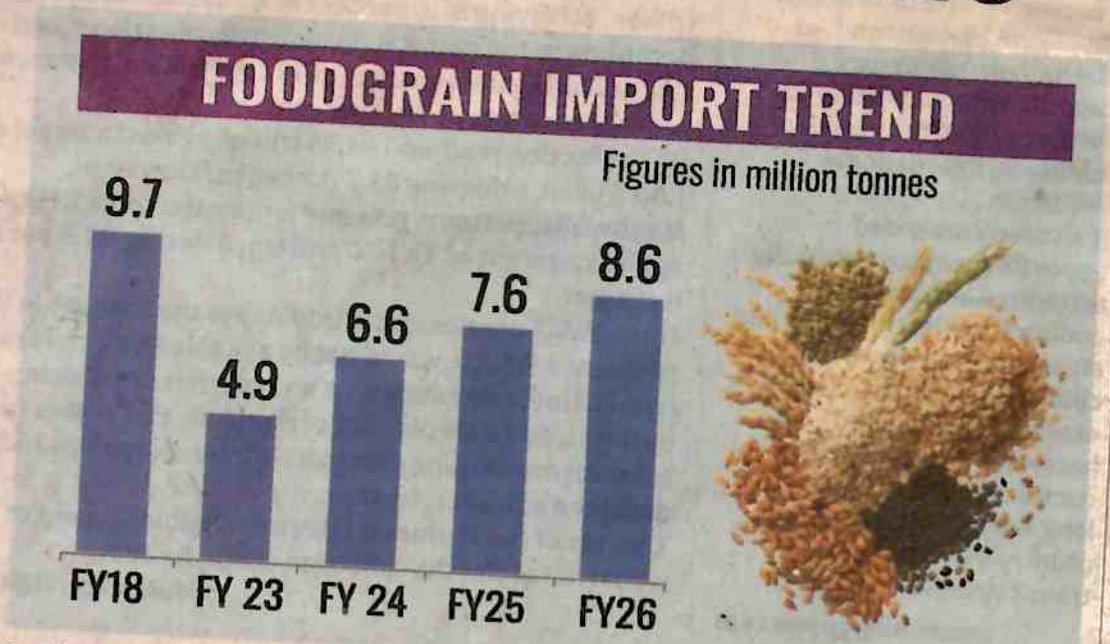
YASIR WARDAD

Bangladesh recorded its second-highest volume of foodgrains import in fiscal year (FY) 2025-26 due to surge in the wheat purchases by both the government and private sectors due to favourable prices in the global market.

According to the Ministry of Food, the country imported 8.6 million tonnes of foodgrains, including rice and wheat, during the last fiscal year (FY).

Bangladesh's highest volume of foodgrain imports was recorded at 9.7 million tonnes in FY 2017-18 as devastating flash floods damaged crops across large parts of the country, forcing the country to import a record 3.9 million tonnes of rice.

According to official data, rice imports remained almost unchanged in FY2025-26, while the wheat imports jumped by more than 49 per cent to 7.7 million tonnes.



Market analysts, however, attributed the higher imports to relatively stable prices in the international grain market, which encouraged both government agencies and private traders to increase volumes of foodgrains, despite having better domestic outputs.

Md Moniruzzaman, Director of the Directorate General of Food (DGoF), said higher domestic production, regular imports and increased public procurement helped maintain adequate foodgrain availability throughout the fiscal year.

He said the government's foodgrains stock currently stands at around 2.0 million tonnes and it is expected to increase further after completion of the ongoing Boro procurement drive.

According to the Bangladesh Bank (BB) data, the country's foodgrain import bill reached US$2.45 billion during July-April

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of FY2025-26, reflecting an 18 per cent rise over the corresponding period of the previous fiscal year.

Wheat import bill alone accounted for $1.93 billion, a 49 per cent surge from that of the previous year.

Professor Dr Rashidul Hasan said stable global grain prices enabled importers to purchase foodgrains throughout the year, thus keeping the system at a comfortable level.

He said international wheat prices remained mostly between $220 and $250 per tonne, while rice prices ranged between $380 and $450 per tonne, which allowed importers to replenish their stocks at relatively favourable rates.

Government purchases accounted for more than 15 per cent of total grain imports, it was learnt.

Despite having abundant supplies, consumer groups said households received little benefit out of the higher foodgrain imports as retail food prices remained stubbornly high throughout the year.

Secretary of the Consumers Association of Bangladesh (CAB) Humayun Kabir Bhuiayn said domestic wheat prices failed to reflect the downward prices trend in the global market, where its prices fell by around 12-16 per cent.

Retail prices of coarse wheat flour (atta) increased by Tk 4.0 to 5.0 per kg to Tk 48 and Tk 65 per kg, while refined flour (maida) was selling as high as Tk 65-78 per kg. Rice prices also maintained an upward trend in the domestic market, he said.

Coarse and medium-quality rice continued to sell at Tk 55-70 per kg, while finer varieties were priced between Tk 75 and Tk 100 per kg, despite having strong domestic outputs and higher imported grains.

কালবেলা

15 JUL 2026

এলডিসি উত্তরণে মুক্ত বাণিজ্য চুক্তি জোরদারের আহ্বান

পররাষ্ট্র প্রতিমন্ত্রীর সঙ্গে ঢাকা চেম্বার প্রতিনিধিদলের সাক্ষাৎ

কালবেলা প্রতিবেদক »

এলডিসি উত্তরণ-পরবর্তী সময়ে বৈশ্বিক বাণিজ্যের প্রতিযোগিতা মোকাবিলায় বাংলাদেশের সক্ষমতা বাড়ানোর আহ্বান জানিয়েছে ঢাকা চেম্বার অব কমার্স অ্যান্ড ইন্ডাস্ট্রি (ডিসিসিআই)। সংগঠনটি জানায়, রপ্তানি পণ্যের বহুমুখীকরণ, বাজার সম্প্রসারণের লক্ষ্যে বাণিজ্যিক সম্ভাবনাময় দেশগুলোর সঙ্গে মুক্তবাণিজ্য চুক্তি সই এবং অর্থনৈতিক কূটনীতি আরও জোরদারে গুরুত্ব দিতে হবে।

গতকাল মঙ্গলবার পররাষ্ট্র মন্ত্রণালয়ে পররাষ্ট্র প্রতিমন্ত্রী শামা ওবায়েদ ইসলামের সঙ্গে এক সাক্ষাতে এ আহ্বান জানান ঢাকা চেম্বারের সভাপতি তাসকীন আহমেদ।

তিনি বলেন, আফ্রিকা, দক্ষিণ আমেরিকা ও দক্ষিণ-পূর্ব এশিয়ার দেশগুলোতে বাংলাদেশের রপ্তানি বাণিজ্য ও বিনিয়োগের প্রচুর সম্ভাবনা রয়েছে। এটি কাজে লাগাতে বর্তমান সরকারের অর্থনৈতিক কূটনীতি কার্যক্রম আরও জোরদার করা প্রয়োজন। তবে, আফ্রিকার দেশগুলোর সঙ্গে কনট্রাক্ট ফার্মিং, তথ্যপ্রযুক্তিসহ কৃষি খাতে দ্বিপক্ষীয় বাণিজ্য ও বিনিয়োগ সম্প্রসারণে বাংলাদেশের সরাসরি পেমেন্ট ব্যবস্থাপনা সহজীকরণের ওপর জোরারোপ করেন ডিসিসিআই সভাপতি।

এ সময় পররাষ্ট্র প্রতিমন্ত্রী বলেন, আফ্রিকা মহাদেশসহ সম্ভাবনাময় দেশগুলোর সঙ্গে দ্বিপক্ষীয় বাণিজ্য ও বিনিয়োগ উন্নয়নে সহায়ক বাণিজ্য চুক্তি স্বাক্ষরে সরকারের প্রচেষ্টা অব্যাহত রয়েছে। এক্ষেত্রে সরকারি-বেসরকারি খাতের যৌথ উদ্যোগ ইতিবাচক ফল আনতে গুরুত্বপূর্ণ অবদান রাখবে।

এ সময় শামা ওবায়েদ ইসলাম জানান, বিশেষ করে আফ্রিকা অঞ্চলের দেশগুলোতে আমাদের উৎপাদিত পাট ও পাটজাত পণ্য, চামড়া ও চামড়াজাত পণ্য, ওষুধ, ফলমূল ও সিরামিক পণ্যের প্রচুর সম্ভাবনা রয়েছে। এ সম্ভাবনা কাজে লাগাতে দেশীয় উদ্যোক্তাদের আরও মনোনিবেশ করা প্রয়োজন।

এলডিসি উত্তরণ-পরবর্তী সময়ে দেশের বাণিজ্যিক চ্যালেঞ্জ মোকাবিলায় বেসরকারি খাতের সক্ষমতা বাড়ানো, সেইসঙ্গে রপ্তানি পণ্যের বহুমুখীকরণ ও বাজার সম্প্রসারণেরও আহ্বান জানান প্রতিমন্ত্রী।

এ সময় ঢাকা চেম্বারের ঊর্ধ্বতন সহসভাপতি রাজিব এইচ চৌধুরী, সহসভাপতি মো. সালিম সোলায়মান, ভারপ্রাপ্ত মহাসচিব ড. এ কে এম আসাদুজ্জামান পাটোয়ারী এবং পররাষ্ট্র মন্ত্রণালয়ের আন্তর্জাতিক বাণিজ্য, বিনিয়োগ ও প্রযুক্তি অনু বিভাগের মহাপরিচালক ড. সৈয়দ মুনতাসির মামুন উপস্থিত ছিলেন।