সমকাল
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# ইইউর ১৫ দেশে বাংলাদেশের পোশাক রপ্তানি কমেছে

■ আবু হেনা মুহিব

ইউরোপীয় ইউনিয়নে (ইইউ) তৈরি পোশাক রপ্তানি পরিস্থিতি ক্রমেই খারাপের দিকে যাচ্ছে। গত ২০২৫-২৬ অর্থবছরের ২৭ জাতির জোটের ১৫টি দেশেই তৈরি পোশাক রপ্তানি কমেছে। দেশগুলো বাংলাদেশের পোশাকের বড় বাজার। যেসব দেশে রপ্তানি সামান্য বেড়েছে, তার বেশির ভাগই বাংলাদেশের রপ্তানির ছোট বাজার। জোটগতভাবে ইইউ বাংলাদেশের প্রধান রপ্তানি বাজার। মোট রপ্তানি আয়ের ৫০ শতাংশেরও বেশি আসে এখান থেকে।

ইইউ জোটে বাংলাদেশের তৈরি পোশাকের প্রধান বাজার হচ্ছে জার্মানি। একক দেশ হিসেবে যুক্তরাষ্ট্রের পর দ্বিতীয় প্রধান বাজার। বিগত দিনে কোনো কোনো বছর যুক্তরাষ্ট্রের চেয়েও বেশি পোশাক রপ্তানি হয়েছে জার্মানিতে। রপ্তানি উন্নয়ন ব্যুরো ও তৈরি পোশাক রপ্তানিকারকদের দুই সংগঠন বিজিএমইএ ও বিকেএমইএর উপাত্ত বিশ্লেষণে দেখা যায়, জার্মানিতে ২০২৪-২৫ অর্থবছর অর্থাৎ আগের অর্থবছরের চেয়ে গত অর্থবছর পোশাক রপ্তানি কম হয়েছে ১১ দশমিক ৫ শতাংশ। অর্থবছরের ৪৯৫ কোটি ডলারের রপ্তানি গত অর্থবছরে ৪৩৮ কোটি ডলারে নেমে এসেছে।

জার্মানিতে তৈরি পোশাকের ওভেনের (শার্ট, প্যান্ট) চেয়ে নিট ক্যাটেগরির পণ্য (গেঞ্জি জাতীয় পোশাক) রপ্তানি হয়ে থাকে। সেদেশে গত বছর নিটের রপ্তানি বেশি হারে কমেছে। নিট পোশাকের রপ্তানি কমেছে প্রায় ১৩ শতাংশ। ওভেনের কমেছে ১০ শতাংশের মতো। অবশ্য পোশাকের মোট রপ্তানিতে গত বছরও নিটের অংশই বেশি ছিল, যার পরিমাণ ২৬৮ কোটি ডলার। অন্যদিকে ওভেন পণ্য রপ্তানির পরিমাণ ছিল ১৭০ কোটি ডলার।

গত অর্থবছরে ফ্রান্সে রপ্তানি কম হয়েছে ৯ শতাংশের মতো। পরিমাণ দাঁড়িয়েছে ১৯৭ কোটি ডলারের কিছু কম। আগের অর্থবছরে যা ছিল ২১৬ কোটি ডলার। ফ্রান্সে নিট পোশাকের রপ্তানি ১১ শতাংশ কমেছে। ওভেনের ক্ষেত্রে কমার হার ৫ শতাংশ। চতুর্থ প্রধান বাজার ইতালিতে রপ্তানি পরিস্থিতিও একই রকম। গত অর্থবছর দেশটিতে পোশাক রপ্তানি কম হয়েছে ৮ শতাংশের মতো। আগের অর্থবছরের ১৫৪ কোটি ডলারের পোশাক রপ্তানি ১৪২ কোটি ডলারে নেমে এসেছে। এখানেও ওভেনের তুলনায় নিটের রপ্তানি কমেছে বেশি হারে।

ইউরোপে নিট পোশাক রপ্তানিতে ব্যাপক হারে কমে যাওয়ার কারণ জানতে চাইলে নিট ক্যাটেগরির পণ্য উৎপাদন ও রপ্তানিকারক উদ্যোক্তাদের সংগঠন বিকেএমইএর নির্বাহী সভাপতি ফজলে শামীম এহসান সমকালকে বলেন, নিট পণ্যে স্থানীয় মূল্য সংযোজন ওভেনের তুলনায় অনেক বেশি। গড়ে প্রায় ৯০ শতাংশ। নিট উৎপাদনে স্থানীয় প্রক্রিয়া বেশি। এ কারণে কোনো সংকট এলে আগে নিট ক্ষতিগ্রস্ত হয়। গ্যাস-বিদ্যুৎ সংকট, ব্যাংক ঋণে সুদের উচ্চ হার কিংবা শ্রমিক অসন্তোষ এরকম যে কোনো পরিস্থিতি তৈরি হলেই আঘাতটা নিট খাতে বেশি পড়ে।

ফজলে শামীম এহসান আরও বলেন, মার্কিন প্রেসিডেন্ট ডোনাল্ড ট্রাম্প আরোপিত অতিরিক্ত শুল্ক আরোপ করায় বিশ্ব বাজারে রপ্তানি সংকুচিত হয়। আবার মার্কিন শুল্কহার এড়াতে চীন ও ভারতের মতো প্রতিযোগী দেশ ইইউতে মনোযোগ বাড়িয়েছে। এরকম অনেক কারণে ইইউতে বাংলাদেশের রপ্তানি কমেছে। এছাড়া অভ্যন্তরীণভাবে গ্যাস-বিদ্যুতের সংকট, বর্ধিত মূল্য ও শ্রমিক মজুরি বৃদ্ধি–এসব কারণে উৎপান ব্যয় অনেক বেড়েছে; যার কারণে অন্য দেশের চেয়ে বাংলাদেশের পণ্যের প্রতিযোগী সক্ষমতা কমেছে।

ইইউ জোটে রপ্তানি কমে যাওয়া বাকি দেশগুলোর মধ্যে ডেনমার্কে রপ্তানি কম হয়েছে ১০ শতাংশ। ১০৪ কোটি ডলারের রপ্তানি ৯৪ কোটি ডলারে নেমে এসেছে। বেলজিয়ামে রপ্তানি কমেছে ৫ শতাংশ। রপ্তানি নেমে আসে ৫৩ কোটি ডলারে; যা আগের অর্থবছরে ৫৫ কোটি ডলার ছিল। চেক রিপাবলিকে কমেছে ৩ শতাংশ। ৩২ কোটি ডলার থেকে ৩১ ডলারে নেমে এসেছে পোশাক রপ্তানি। আয়ারল্যান্ডে রপ্তানি কমেছে ১০ শতাংশেরও বেশি। ২৫ থেকে ২৩ কোটি ডলারে নেমে এসেছে। রোমানিয়ায় সবচেয়ে বেশি ২০ শতাংশ কমেছে রপ্তানি। রপ্তানি কমে হয়েছে ১৮ কোটি ডলার; যা আগের অর্থবছর ছিল ২৩ কোটি ডলার।

রপ্তানি কমে যাওয়া অন্য দেশগুলো হচ্ছে– পর্তুগাল, স্লোভাকিয়া, গ্রিস, ক্রোয়েশিয়া, ফিনল্যান্ড, লুক্সেমবার্গ ও মাল্টা। অবশ্য, দ্বিতীয় প্রধান বাজার স্পেনে রপ্তানি বেড়েছে ৬ শতাংশ। রপ্তানি হয়েছে ৩৬০ কোটি ডলার। আগের অর্থবছর যা ছিল ৩৪০ কোটি ডলার। রপ্তানি বাড়ার তালিকায় রয়েছে নেদারল্যান্ডস, সুইডেন, স্লোভেনিয়া, পোল্যান্ড, লিথুয়ানিয়া, লাতভিয়া, হাঙ্গেরি, সাইপ্রাস ও বুলগেরিয়া।

সব মিলিয়ে ইইউ জোটে রপ্তানি হয়েছে ১ হাজার ৯০৬ কোটি ডলারের পোশাক; যা আগের অর্থবছরে ছিল ১ হাজার ৯৭১ কোটি ডলার। এক বছরে জোটে রপ্তানি কমে গেছে ৩ দশমিক ৩১ শতাংশ। রপ্তানি কমে যাওয়ার কারণে বাংলাদেশের পোশাকের রপ্তানি বাজার হিসেবে ইইউর হিস্যা কমে ৪৯ দশমিক ২৫ শতাংশে নেমে এসেছে; যা আগের অর্থবছরে ছিল ৫০ দশমিক ১০ শতাংশ।

The Financial Express

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# Govt, businesses eye 'Vietnam model' to diversify exports

Focus on renewable energy to address power crunch

PM promises bi-monthly dialogues, orders round-the-clock port operations

JASIM UDDIN

The government and private-sector leaders have agreed to adopt the "Vietnam model" as a benchmark to diversify Bangladesh's export basket and accelerate outward trade growth, outlining a series of policy interventions aimed at eliminating longstanding bottlenecks to trade and investment.

The decision emerged from a high-level, four-hour interactive meeting between Prime Minister Tarique Rahman and top private-sector entrepreneurs at the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) in Tejgaon on Saturday.

Organised by the Bangladesh Investment Development Authority (BIDA), the meeting focused on export diversification, trade facilitation, and how to tackle the ongoing industrial power crunch.

Speaking at the session, Prime Minister Tarique Rahman expressed optimism that joint efforts between the public and private sectors could transform the national economy within the next four to five years.

"We all acknowledge that there are many problems, but if we work together, we can overcome them," the Prime Minister said. Noting that his administration -- less than six months in office -- has already held multiple sits-down with the business

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# Govt, businesses eye 'Vietnam model' to diversify exports

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community, he announced that follow-up dialogues would take place every two to three months to monitor progress.

Of the 28 issues raised during the previous consultation, official sources confirmed that decisions were already taken on 21, with implementation underway for the remaining seven.

Key measures include introducing 24-hour operations at Chattogram Port and Dhaka airport, establishing internationally accredited testing laboratories under public-private partnership (PPP) arrangements for export products, and expediting business-related approvals and trade facilitation.

During the meeting business leaders called for easier access to credit, greater policy support and a more business-friendly environment to facilitate investment and industrial growth. They also appreciated a number of recent government initiatives and expressed satisfaction with the progress made so far.

Speaking after the meeting, Meghna Group of Industries (MGI) Chairman Mostafa Kamal said the Prime Minister held a candid and constructive discussion with business leaders.

He said that effective action had already been taken on eight to nine of the 20 agenda items discussed at the previous meeting. To monitor progress, it was decided that the Prime Minister would hold follow-up meetings with business leaders in every two months.

"The business community expressed satisfaction with the current investment-friendly environment," he added.

However, several participants said they had been requested not to make individual comments to the media after the meeting.

Requesting anonymity, one business leader told The Financial Express that the discussions were entirely focused on boosting exports rather than addressing company-specific issues.

"No participant raised any individual business concerns. We discussed export opportunities and challenges under the ten agenda items prepared by the Prime Minister's Office," he said.

Business leaders highlighted persistent gas and electricity shortages as well as tariff and non-tariff barriers affecting exports. According to the participant, the Prime Minister immediately instructed the relevant ministers and senior officials to resolve several issues, while the officials concerned assured the meeting of prompt follow-up.

Another business leader said the government confirmed that Chattogram Port would soon begin round-the-clock operations, a long-standing demand from exporters first raised at the previous meeting to speed up export shipments.

The participants also highlighted the lack of internationally recognised testing facilities as a major obstacle to exports.

Following discussions, the Prime Minister proposed establishing internationally accredited testing laboratories through PPP arrangements, under which the government would provide land while private investors would finance and operate the facilities. Foreign investment in such laboratories would also be welcomed, business leaders said.

Another business leader said the pharmaceutical industry received special attention during the discussions.

He said the meeting reviewed Bangladesh's post-LDC graduation challenges, particularly the possible loss of patent-related flexibilities for the pharmaceutical sector.

Discussions focused on accelerating the implementation of the API Industrial Park and ensuring policy support for domestic production of active pharmaceutical ingredients (APIs).

"We also informed the Prime Minister that international certification remains a major hurdle for pharmaceutical exports. We requested that certification authorities from the US, the UK and other developed countries conduct inspections in Bangladesh and that recognition by overseas regulatory authorities be facilitated," the participant said.

Business leaders also proposed visa-free entry for investors from the United Kingdom, the United States, Japan and South Korea, along with a streamlined online visa system to make it easier for investors from all countries to obtain Bangladeshi visas.

Following the meeting, Prime Minister's Office spokesperson Mahdi Amin told reporters that the government had decided to introduce uninterrupted 24-hour services at the country's ports to facilitate import and export trade, with implementation expected shortly.

He said the government also pledged full policy support to revive the private sector and overcome the prolonged economic slowdown.

Mahdi Amin said Bangladesh had regained democratic momentum and broader economic stability under the leadership of Prime Minister Tareq Rahman.

He added that Sergio Gor, a representative from the United States, had highly appreciated the government's positive initiatives over the past five months.

As part of growing international interest, a delegation comprising 45 business executives and investors from 25 leading US companies is expected to visit Bangladesh by the end of next week to explore business opportunities, he said.

The spokesperson noted that years of authoritarian rule had left many state institutions requiring structural reforms.

He added that the meeting included extensive discussions on resolving critical challenges, particularly in the power and energy sectors.

Another business leader, speaking on condition of anonymity, told The Financial Express that the country's energy situation dominated the nearly four-hour discussion.

"Energy has become the most pressing challenge facing all industries," he said.

"The most encouraging aspect of the meeting was that the Prime Minister's Office asked participants at the outset not to raise company-specific issues. Instead, discussions were centred on macroeconomic challenges facing the overall industrial sector."

He said this enabled the Prime Minister to hear firsthand the concerns of businesses across different sectors.

Representatives from a wide range of industries shared their views, while the Prime Minister immediately directed the relevant ministers and officials to address several issues raised during the meeting.

The participant added that government officials outlined the steps already taken to ease the energy crisis and sought recommendations from business leaders on what additional measures could be adopted.

The government also requested suggestions on policies to accelerate the adoption of renewable energy.

Another business leader said the Prime Minister sought recommendations on priority sectors to achieve Bangladesh's target of US$100 billion in exports by 2030.

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The Daily Star

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# Polish apparel giant suspends Bangladesh sourcing amid $40m payment disputes

APPAREL - BANGLADESH

REYAD HOSSAIN

## LPP freezes orders after local suppliers pursue legal action over unpaid Russian shipments

Polish apparel brand LPP has suspended new orders from Bangladesh amid disputes with local garment exporters and buying houses over payment of $40 million in unpaid goods linked to Russian buyer FES Retail.

In a letter sent to Bangladeshi suppliers on 30 July, LPP said, "LPP is suspending the placement of new orders and the submission of new developments to suppliers in Bangladesh while we conduct a comprehensive review of our future sourcing strategy."

It added, "During this period, I SEE PAGE 6 COL 1

## desh sourcing amid $40m

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we will also be evaluating sourcing opportunities and production capabilities in other countries."

The decision follows legal proceedings initiated by local exporters over non-payment, which LPP requested suppliers withdraw as a precondition for negotiations.

The payment dispute involves roughly 40 Bangladeshi garment manufacturers and buying houses that supplied goods intended for FES Retail in Russia via sales contracts guaranteed by LPP.

Following the outbreak of the Russia-Ukraine war, LPP redirected its ordering and payment arrangements through FES Retail due to operational hurdles in Russia, initially settling invoices before halting payments over the past 18 months.

According to the exporters, LPP used to source more than $700 million worth of garments annually from Bangladesh.

Industry sources said the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association held a meeting yesterday with affected exporters to discuss possible solutions.

The Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers and Exporters Association has also taken a firm stance. Its President, Mohammad Hatem, said the organisation had received the suspension letter.

"Whether they continue sourcing from Bangladesh is their business," he said. "But if they fail to take steps to settle the outstanding payments owed to Bangladeshi exporters, we will move to have them blacklisted in Bangladesh."

He added that the association would also raise the issue of LPP's alleged non-compliance with the European Union, buyers' forums and other relevant stakeholders.

Hatem said the industry would be better off without buyers who failed to honour payment obligations, adding that several factories had already suffered as a result of the dispute.

Abdul Hamid, president of the Bangladesh Garment Buying House Association, however, said they do not want to lose a buyer sourcing more than $700 million worth of garments annually from the country. At the same time, he stressed that factories affected by the payment dispute also needed protection.

Hamid added that LPP had at one stage offered to settle the dues at a 50% discount, but questioned whether any exporter could survive after accepting such a steep reduction.

### Exporters describe payment dispute

According to exporters and buying house representatives, LPP faced difficulties exporting goods to Russia under its own name after the Russia-Ukraine war began. They said the company subsequently started placing orders and handling payments through FES Retail for exports from Bangladesh.

Exporters said garments were shipped to the Russian buyer under sales contracts and that LPP initially settled the payments.

However, they alleged that payments stopped around 18 months ago despite continued shipments. Earlier this year, exporters said LPP informed them that it had no relationship with FES Retail, leading to a dispute over payment for previously supplied goods.

Abdul Hamid said exporters had shipped goods to the Russian buyer on the basis of LPP's guarantee.

"Our members have spent the past one and a half years sending letters and emails seeking payment," he said. "They repeatedly assured us that the issue would be resolved, but nothing has happened."

He said exporters had since taken legal action. "LPP has indicated it is willing to hold discussions if the lawsuits are withdrawn, but exporters remain unconvinced because no settlement has been reached so far."

The Business Standard said it emailed LPP yesterday seeking comment on the allegations but had not received a response at the time of publication.

### Exporters count losses

Alamgir Hossain, managing director of Hejaz Sweaters Limited, said his company manufactured garments worth $49,000 for the Russian buyer before being informed by its buying house that payment had become uncertain.

"For the past year, those goods have remained in our warehouse," he said. "We have already paid for raw materials and wages, but I do not know how we will absorb the losses."

Another exporter, Shraboni Knitwear, said it had already shipped goods worth about $70,000 and still had another $30,000 worth of products in its warehouse. The company said it had not received any payment.

Several exporters believe LPP's decision to suspend new orders is intended to pressure Bangladeshi suppliers amid the payment dispute.

Alamgir said he believes that the announcement was meant to intimidate suppliers. He, however, argued that Bangladesh remained a more stable sourcing destination than several competing countries.

The Business Standard

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# Empty containers pile up at ICDs as import-export gap doubles in five years

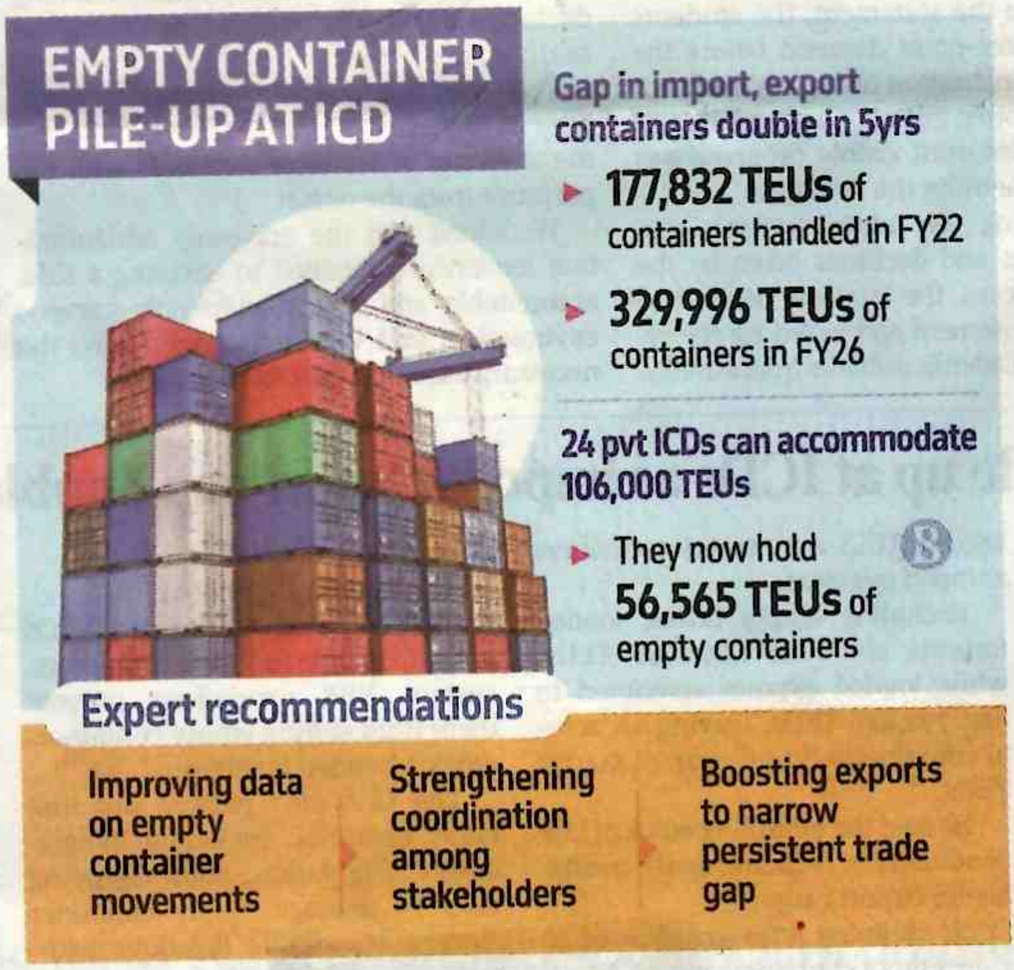
PORT – CHATTOGRAM

MIZANUR RAHMAN YOUSUF

A widening imbalance between Bangladesh's container imports and exports is leaving inland container depots (ICDs) overflowing with empty containers, straining storage capacity for export cargo and prompting the Chattogram Port Authority (CPA) to renew its push for regulatory changes.

The CPA has asked the National Board of Revenue to allow shipping agents and main line operators (MLOs) to store empty containers at suitable non-bonded locations without requiring bonded warehouse licences, arguing that the current rules are worsening congestion at both the port and private depots.

In a letter sent on 26 July, the port authority revived a prior proposal submitted in October 2025 that has yet to receive approval.




### Import-export gap reaches record high

CPA data show the gap between import and export containers has nearly doubled over the past five years, rising from 177,832 twenty-foot equivalent units (TEUs) in FY22 to a record 329,996 TEUs in FY26.

In FY22, the country handled 1.72 million TEUs of imports and 1.54 million TEUs of exports, leaving a gap of 177,832 TEUs.

The gap widened to 237,609 TEUs in FY23, despite imports falling slightly to 1.62 million TEUs and exports declining to 1.38 million TEUs.

In FY24, imports rebounded to 1.72 million TEUs, while exports reached 1.45 million TEUs, pushing the imbalance further to 278,500 TEUs.

Although the gap narrowed marginally to 276,357 TEUs in FY25, imports continued to outpace exports, with 1.79 million TEUs of imports compared with 1.51 million TEUs of exports.

Imports climbed to 1.93 million TEUs while I SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

exports rose to 1.60 million TEUs in FY26.

According to industry operators, the country's 24 private ICDs, which have a combined storage capacity of around 106,000 TEUs, are currently holding 56,565 TEUs of empty containers.

Ruhul Amin Sikder, secretary general of the Bangladesh Inland Container Depot Association, said the actual trade imbalance is even wider than official statistics indicate because the data include both loaded and empty containers.

"The country's real export volume is nearly half of its imports," he told The Business Standard.

"When vessels arrive and depart, both loaded and empty containers are counted in the port statistics. As a result, the published figures do not reflect the actual volume of export cargo," Ruhul Amin said.

According to detailed port data for calendar year 2023, the port handled 1,337,613 TEUs of imports, including 94,915 empty containers. During the same period, exports totalled 1,315,337 TEUs, of which ... TEUs were empty containers shipped overseas.

Excluding empty boxes, loaded imports stood at 1,242,698 TEUs, while loaded exports amounted to just 730,446 TEUs, leaving an actual containerised trade gap of 512,252 TEUs.

He said the mounting stock of idle containers is reducing space available for export cargo.

"If shipping lines are allowed to store empty containers in non-bonded facilities, both ICD operators and shipping lines will get much-needed relief," he said.

### Port calls for regulatory changes

In its letter to the NBR, the CPA said all imported less-than-container-load (LCL) cargo is destuffed inside the port, while nearly 70% of full container load (FCL) imports are opened for cargo delivery. As importers collect their goods, thousands of containers become empty every day.

However, empty containers are evacuated much more slowly than they are generated, leading to a steady build-up at both the port and private depots.

The authority noted that although shipping agents and MLOs are responsible for these containers, current NBR regulations prevent them from storing empty containers outside bonded facilities.

The CPA also pointed out that many countries, including Bangladesh's neighbours, allow shipping lines to manage empty container storage at suitable locations without requiring bonded warehouse licences.

Allowing similar arrangements in Bangladesh, it said, would improve yard utilisation, reduce congestion and streamline container handling.

### Low commercial incentive to move empty boxes

Khairul Alam Suzan, former vice president of the Bangladesh Freight Forwarders Association and former director of the Bangladesh Shipping Agents Association, said depot operators earn significantly more from handling loaded import and export containers than from storing empty ones.

Shipping lines also incur losses when transporting empty equipment.

"A loaded container may generate freight of around $300, while an empty container earns only about $100 despite occupying the same vessel space and requiring the same handling," he said.

"As a result, shipping lines often delay repositioning empty containers, prolonging their stay in Bangladesh and worsening congestion across the logistics chain," he said.

### Long-term solutions needed

Industry experts say the growing stockpile of empty containers reflects Bangladesh's structural trade imbalance rather than simply a shortage of storage space.

Alongside allowing non-bonded storage, they recommend improving data on empty container movements, strengthening coordination among the CPA, Customs, NBR, shipping lines and depot operators, and boosting exports to narrow the persistent trade gap.

Without such measures, they warn, pressure on the port and the country's logistics network is likely to intensify as container traffic continues to grow.

## $100 BILLION EXPORTS BY 2030

# Businesses see energy crisis as main hurdle

## PM promises solutions, stresses close cooperation

STAR REPORT

Businesses yesterday demanded a better investment climate and adequate energy supplies for industries as the government seeks to raise annual exports to $100 billion by 2030 from $48 billion in the immediate past fiscal year.

During the second consultation meeting with Prime Minister Tarique Rahman at his Tejgaon office in Dhaka, business leaders also called for steps to address issues related to the tax regime and regulatory complexities.

They said the energy crisis remains the biggest obstacle to achieving the 2030 export target.

In response, Tarique outlined both short- and long-term measures, assuring business leaders that the government is working to install a Floating Storage and Regasification Unit (FSRU) dedicated to industrial use within the next two years, in addition to the existing two.

FSRUs store liquefied natural gas (LNG), regasify it and feed it into the onshore pipeline network for power plants, industries and households.

The nearly four-hour meeting, which began around 10:00am, was organised by the Bangladesh Investment Development Authority, reports UNB, citing the prime minister's Deputy Press Secretary Mostafa Zulfiquar Hasan.

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FROM PAGE 1

Twelve ministers and 15 business leaders from different sectors spoke at the meeting.

The prime minister said the government has identified 10 promising sectors, including garments, pharmaceuticals, electrical and electronic products, motor parts, man-made fibre garments, ceramics and tableware, and leather and leather goods, to help achieve the $100 billion export target by 2030.

He said the country's economic challenges could be overcome through close cooperation between the government and the business community.

Many issues raised by business leaders during earlier consultations have already been resolved, while the concerns highlighted yesterday will also be addressed, he added.

"We all acknowledge there are many problems. The government has at least demonstrated that it is trying. The government is not yet six months old, but we have already held several meetings with the business community. We are addressing sector-specific challenges one by one."

The prime minister said another meeting with business leaders would be held within the next two to three months.

"The more we sit together, the better we will understand your problems and the easier it will be to resolve them."

He said sustained engagement between the government and the private sector could bring meaningful improvements to the economy within four to five years.

Officials informed the meeting that decisions have already been taken on 21 of the 28 issues discussed during the previous consultation, while work on the remaining seven is underway, adds UNB.

**THE DECISIONS**

The decisions included exploring alternatives to the time-consuming Letter of Credit (LC) system for business transactions and reducing the import duty on solar panels to 2 percent from nearly 35 percent. The 15 percent VAT on solar panel imports, however, will remain unchanged.

The government has also decided to waive all duties on imports of raw materials for sodium-ion and lithium-ion batteries, except customs duties of 1 percent and 15 percent, according to a keynote presentation by the Prime Minister's Office.

Other decisions include involving private sector representatives in National Board of Revenue policy formulation, simplifying approval of bond licences, expanding bond facilities for all export-oriented industries, extending the tenure of bond licences to five years, and allowing companies to continue using bond facilities during audits.

At the request of business leaders, the government also decided to reduce the gap between the assessment value and customs value of imported goods. The government will also assist businesses in establishing a light engineering hub in Bogura.

Two business leaders who attended the meeting told The Daily Star that the government has already acquired 50 bighas of land near the Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients (API) Industrial Park in Gajaria upazila of Munshiganj to set up a steam generator for the park.

They also urged the government to allow industrial units to buy CNG from filling stations at night, when vehicle demand is lower.

According to them, filling station operators are reluctant to sell CNG to industries during the day because of high demand from vehicles.

Garment sector leaders recently made the same request, citing an acute gas shortage that is disrupting industrial production.

The meeting also discussed Bangladesh's challenges in graduating from the group of least developed countries (LDCs) and issues related to the Third Terminal of Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport in Dhaka.