

20 FEB 2025

# চীনকে ছাড়াবে বাংলাদেশ

## তুলা আমদানি

চলতি বাণিজ্য বছর শেষে বাংলাদেশের তুলা আমদানি ৮০ লাখ বেলে দাঁড়াতে পারে। চীনের আমদানি কমে দাঁড়াতে পারে ৭৩ লাখ বেলে।

শুভংকর কর্মকার, ঢাকা

তৈরি পোশাক ও বস্ত্র খাতের প্রধান কাঁচামাল তুলা আমদানিতে চলতি ২০২৪-২৫ বাণিজ্য বছরে (আগস্ট-জুলাই) চীনকে ছাড়িয়ে যাবে বাংলাদেশ— এমন পূর্বাভাস দিয়েছে মার্কিন কৃষি বিভাগ (ইউএসডিএ)। শেষ পর্যন্ত সেটি হলে আবারও বিশ্বে শীর্ষ তুলা আমদানিকারক দেশ হবে বাংলাদেশ। করোনায় আগে ও পরে একাধিকবার বাংলাদেশ বিশ্বের শীর্ষ তুলা আমদানিকারক দেশ হয়েছিল।

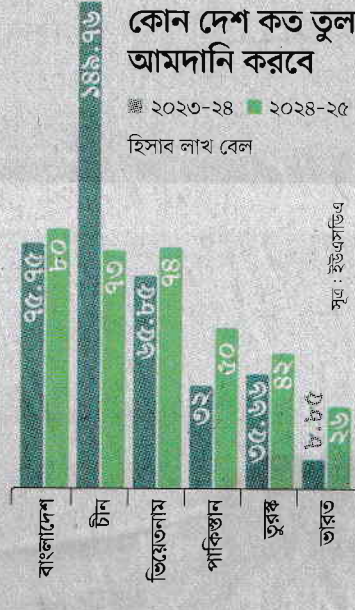
গত সপ্তাহে প্রকাশিত ইউএসডিএর প্রতিবেদন অনুযায়ী, গত আগস্টে শুরু হওয়া দেশটির ২০২৪-২৫ বাণিজ্য বছর শেষে বাংলাদেশের তুলা আমদানি বেড়ে ৮০ লাখ বেলে দাঁড়াতে পারে। যদিও গত অক্টোবরে পূর্বাভাস দেওয়া হয়েছিল, চলতি বাণিজ্য বছরে বাংলাদেশের তুলা আমদানি হতে পারে ৭৮ লাখ বেলে। এখন সেটি আরও বাড়বে বলে জানিয়েছে সংস্থাটি। মূলত তৈরি পোশাকের ক্রয়াদেশ বাড়তে থাকায় দেশে তুলা আমদানির প্রবণতা বেড়েছে। গত ২০২৩-২৪ বাণিজ্য বছরে ৭৫ লাখ ৭৫ হাজার বেলে তুলা আমদানি করেছিল বাংলাদেশ। প্রসঙ্গত, এক বেলে সমান ৪৮০ পাউন্ড বা ২১৮ কিলোগ্রাম (কেজি)।

মার্কিন সংস্থা থেকে তুলা আমদানি বৃদ্ধির পূর্বাভাস পাওয়া গেলেও দেশের বস্ত্রকল মালিকেরা বলছেন, গ্যাস-সংকটে দেশের অধিকাংশ বস্ত্রকলই পূর্ণ সক্ষমতায় চালানো যাচ্ছে না। এতে উৎপাদন খরচ বেড়ে গেছে। গত বছর প্রণোদনাও কমিয়ে দেওয়া হয়েছে। বর্তমান প্রেক্ষাপটে ভারতীয় সুতার সঙ্গে প্রতিযোগিতায় পারছে না দেশীয় সুতা উৎপাদনকারীরা। সে জন্য ভারত থেকে সুতা আমদানি বাড়ছে।

ইউএসডিএর গত অক্টোবরের প্রতিবেদনে

## কোন দেশ কত তুলা আমদানি করবে

■ ২০২৩-২৪ ■ ২০২৪-২৫  
হিসাব লাখ বেলে



পূর্বাভাস দেওয়া হয়েছিল, বিশ্বের বিভিন্ন দেশ চলতি বাণিজ্য বছরে ৪ কোটি ২৪ লাখ বেলে তুলা আমদানি করতে পারে। তার ৬৫ শতাংশই আমদানি করবে চীন, ভিয়েতনাম, বাংলাদেশ ও পাকিস্তান। চীন ৮০ লাখ, ভিয়েতনাম ৭১ লাখ, বাংলাদেশ ৭৮ লাখ ও পাকিস্তান ৪৮ লাখ বেলে তুলা আমদানি করবে বলে ওই পূর্বাভাসে বলা হয়।

অবশ্য চলতি ফেব্রুয়ারির প্রতিবেদনে সংস্থাটি বলেছে, আগের পূর্বাভাসের তুলনায় চীনের তুলা আমদানি সাত লাখ বেলে পর্যন্ত কমেতে পারে। তবে ভিয়েতনাম তিন লাখ, বাংলাদেশ দুই লাখ এবং পাকিস্তান দুই লাখ বেলে তুলা আমদানি বেশি করবে। এতে করে চীনের তুলা আমদানি দাঁড়াতে পারে ৭৩ লাখ বেলে। ভিয়েতনাম ও পাকিস্তানের তুলা আমদানি হবে যথাক্রমে ৭৪ লাখ ও ৫০ লাখ বেলে।

জানতে চাইলে বাংলাদেশ বস্ত্রকল মালিকদের সংগঠন বিটিএমএর পরিচালক মোহা. খোরশেদ

আলম প্রথম আলোকে বলেন, ইউএসডিএর পূর্বাভাস তাত্ত্বিকভাবে ঠিক আছে, তবে বাস্তবতা ভিন্ন। আমাদের কারখানার সক্ষমতা অনুযায়ী এই হিসাবটি করা হয়েছে। বর্তমানে গ্যাস-সংকটের কারণে অধিকাংশ কারখানার উৎপাদন সক্ষমতার ৪০-৫০ শতাংশ ব্যবহৃত হচ্ছে না। ফলে শেষ পর্যন্ত এত তুলা আসবে না। যেটুকু কম আসবে, তার বড় অংশই সুতা আকারে ভারত থেকে আসবে।

নিজের কারখানার উদাহরণ দিয়ে মোহা. খোরশেদ আলম বলেন, 'আমার দুটি স্পিনিং মিলে সব সময় তিন মাসের তুলা মজুত থাকে। যেহেতু উৎপাদন সক্ষমতার ৫০-৫৫ শতাংশ ব্যবহৃত হচ্ছে, ফলে গত চার মাস কোনো তুলা আমদানি করিনি।'

ইউএসডিএ বলেছে, প্রধান রপ্তানি খাতের চাহিদা পূরণে ২০২১-২২ বাণিজ্য বছরে বাংলাদেশ ৮৪ লাখ বেলে তুলা আমদানি করেছিল। সেবার চীনের আমদানি ছিল ১ কোটি ২৭ লাখ বেলে। পরের বছর থেকে চীনের আমদানি ব্যাপকভাবে কমে যায়। ২০২৩-২৪ বাণিজ্য বছরে চীন ১ কোটি ৪৯ লাখ বেলে তুলা আমদানি করে ঘুরে দাঁড়ায়। তবে চলতি বছরে আবার তাদের তুলা আমদানি উল্লেখযোগ্য হারে কমে গেছে।

জাতীয় রাজস্ব বোর্ডে (এনবিআর) তথ্যানুযায়ী, বস্ত্র খাতের ব্যবসায়ীরা গত বছর ১৮ লাখ ৮৯ হাজার টন তুলা আমদানি করে, যা আগের বছরের তুলনায় ৩৯ শতাংশ বেশি। এতে ব্যয় হয়েছে ৪৫ হাজার ৩৭৪ কোটি টাকা। এ ছাড়া সুতা আমদানি হয় ১২ লাখ টন। এতে ব্যয় হয়েছে ৪৫ হাজার ৭১৩ কোটি টাকা।

বস্ত্রকল মালিকদের সংগঠন বিটিএমএর তথ্যানুযায়ী, দেশে ৫১৯টি স্পিনিং মিল রয়েছে। তার মধ্যে কিছু মিল বন্ধ রয়েছে। এসব স্পিনিং মিল নিট কাপড়ের ৮৫-৯০ শতাংশ এবং ওভেন কাপড়ের প্রায় ৪০ শতাংশ সুতা সরবরাহ করে থাকে।

বিটিএমএর সভাপতি শওকত আজিজ রাসেল গত মঙ্গলবার এক অনুষ্ঠানে বলেন, সুতা উৎপাদনে বাংলাদেশ স্বয়ংসম্পূর্ণ। তবে গ্যাস-সংকটের কারণে বস্ত্রকলগুলো অর্ধেক চলে, অর্ধেক চলে না। কিছু বন্ধও হয়েছে। এদিকে রপ্তানিমুখী তৈরি পোশাক কারখানাগুলোতে আগামী তিন-চার মাস ভালো ক্রয়াদেশ আছে; কিন্তু গ্যাস-সংকটের কারণে তাঁদের প্রয়োজনীয় সুতা সরবরাহ করতে পারছে না দেশি বস্ত্রকলগুলো।



# Large industries see throughput resurgence

JASIM UDDIN HAROON

Large industrial enterprises in Bangladesh see throughput resurgence—after recent pickups for political upheavals—as is reflected in the large-scale manufacturing sector's latest index upswing.

The index measuring state of the manufacturing biggies expanded 11.39 per cent in October of this fiscal year, according to Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) data.

Out of 23 manufacturing subsectors, 18 recorded a growth compared to the same period a year before.

However, five in the domain—tobacco products, leather, paper, motor vehicles, and fabricated metals—saw a decline during this time.

The large-scale manufacturing sector contributes over 11 per cent to the country's GDP, and it serves as a key indicator whether the industrial units are in right direction or not.


During the first quarter of this fiscal year (July–September), the index grew by only 3.85 per cent.

The October rebound was driven by strong performances in several sectors—machinery and equipment: 37.35 per cent,

## LARGE-SCALE MANUFACTURING EXPANDS

 **3.85%**  
in Jul-Sept 2024

 **11.39%**  
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 Lower interest, ease LC curbs to support growth  
—Anwar Alam Chowdhury  
President, BCI

printing: 31.5 per cent, computer and optical products: 24 per cent, clothing (which holds the largest weight in the index): nearly 20 per cent, electrical equipment: 17.92 per cent, coke and refined petroleum products: 11.28 per cent and chemicals: 11.52 per cent.

The large industrial sectors having single-digit growth were food products recording

Out of 23 sectors, 18 record growth year on year

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Large-scale manufacturing contributes over 11pc to GDP

RMG sector drives overall growth in large-scale industries  
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Policy Exchange Bangladesh

8.0 per cent, beverages 9.4 per cent, wood and wood products 9.94 per cent, basic metals 6.52 per cent, furniture 5.65 per cent and pharmaceuticals 2.66 per cent. The strong performance of large-scale manufacturing aligns with private-sector indicator called Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) which stood at 55.7 in October, signaling economic expansion.

## OCTOBER GROWTH DRIVEN BY

Machinery and equipment <b>37.35%</b>	Electrical equipment <b>17.92%</b>
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Industry experts say challenges stemming from political unrest leading to the downfall of the Awami League government dwarfed the growth in the first quarter.

Anwar Alam Chowdhury (Pervez), president of Bangladesh Chambers of

optimism about the economy's recovery.

"Inflation is a barrier for expanding the large industrial sectors," he told the FE writer.

Dr M. Masrur Reaz, Chairman and CEO of Policy Exchange Bangladesh, attributes the growth in large-scale manufacturing to seasonal factors and a rebound in the RMG sector. "The RMG sector, which makes up over 60 per cent of the index, grew by nearly 20 per cent, driving overall growth in large-scale industries," he says.

He hopes for continued improvement in clothing manufacturing in the coming months. The economist predicts climate change could boost beverage production in the near future—as was the case in the last summer.

However, economists warn that high inflation could erode demand for goods and services, potentially slowing down the broader economic recovery.

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Industry (BCI), also sees high lending rates as a key barrier to business expansion.

He urges authorities to lower interest and ease LC restrictions—interventional measures taken to combat wayward inflation—in order to support growth.

Syed Nazrul Islam, a former leader of Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) and Managing Director of Well Dress, notes that clothing orders increased after Q1, although some orders shifted to India and Pakistan earlier in the year. Economists believe that economic activity is gradually recovering, supported by a stabilized foreign-exchange market and rising domestic demand. Dr Zahid Hussain, former lead economist at the World Bank Dhaka office, acknowledges temporary setbacks from the student-led protests in mid-July but expresses

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The Financial Express

120 FEB 2025

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# China condemns US 'tariff shocks' at WTO

AFP, Geneva

The sweeping tariffs threatened or already imposed by US President Donald Trump risk triggering inflation, market distortions, and even a global recession, China said Tuesday at the World Trade Organization.

After returning to office on January 20, Trump hit China, the world's second-biggest economy, with an additional 10 percent levy on products entering the United States.

Trump signed executive orders last week imposing new 25 percent tariffs on steel and aluminium, due to come into effect on March 12.

And he said Tuesday that US tariffs on imported cars would be around 25 percent, providing new information on duties he is expected to unveil around April 2.

"The world faces a series of tariff shocks," said Li Chenggang, China's ambassador to the WTO, at the first meeting of the year of the global trade body's decision-making General Council.

"The US has imposed or threatened tariffs on its trading partners, including China, unilaterally and arbitrarily, blatantly violating WTO rules. China firmly opposes such measures.

"These tariff shocks heighten economic uncertainty, disrupt global trade, and risk domestic inflation, market distortion, or even global recession."

Li went on to say that US unilateralism threatened to upend the rules-based multilateral trading system.

Imposing punitive tariffs on countries with high trade surpluses with the United States has been at the heart of Trump's economic policy.

He paused 25 percent levies against Canada and Mexico for a month after both countries vowed to step up measures to counter flows of the drug fentanyl and the crossing of undocumented migrants into the United States.

But Trump went ahead with tariffs on China, which in return imposed retaliatory tariffs targeting US coal and liquified natural gas.

Li said: "We cannot lose sight of the root cause of today's trade turbulence and threats to all members: it is US arbitrary tariffs and unilateral measures."

He urged Washington to withdraw the tariffs and "engage in multilateral dialogues based on equity, mutual benefit, and mutual respect".





PHOTO: PRAN

Pran-RFL Group is showcasing a variety of products at the Dubai Gulf Food Fair to introduce new items and attract new customers.

The Daily Star

20 FEB 2025

# Pran's journey in the UAE

From humble beginnings to a thriving export hub

SUKANTA HALDER from Dubai

In 2003, Pran, a leading food processor and conglomerate in Bangladesh, made its first foray into the United Arab Emirates (UAE) market.

The company purchased a second-hand car from a shop in Sharjah for 15,000 dirhams (around Tk 5 lakh) and hired one Bangladeshi employee to run its operations.

The modest business model meant the company could offer only three products: a lychee drink, chanachur, and puffed rice.

"The early days of the business were quite challenging, as Bangladeshi products had no presence in the UAE market, which was dominated by Indian and Pakistani items," Ahsan Khan Chowdhury, chairman and chief executive officer of Pran-RFL Group, told The Daily Star.

However, those days are firmly in the past. Currently, Pran has expanded its range of offerings in the UAE market to 950 items, demonstrating the brand's strong presence in the Middle East.

From small grocery stores to supermarket chains, Pran's diverse range of products has become a household name among the South Asian diaspora and beyond, with sauces, noodles, juices, spices, mustard oil, coconut water, biscuits, and puffed rice being the most in-demand items.

"Now, more than 1.5 million Bangladeshis in

workforce to 735 employees and operates a fleet of 350 vehicles, ensuring the smooth sales, marketing, and distribution of products.

Chowdhury mentioned that Emerging World is working on securing a large bank loan. If approved, there are plans to establish a manufacturing unit in Dubai.

At present, most products are imported from Bangladesh, while some are sourced from contracted manufacturers in other countries, he added.

Chowdhury believes Pran's commitment to quality and affordability has played a significant role in its rapid growth.

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During visits to multiple hypermarkets and supermarkets — including Nesto, Al Madina, and Mark and Save in Dubai, Ajman, Sharjah, and Sanaiya — on Tuesday, it was seen that Pran products were prominently displayed on shelves.

Mohammad Sajjad Hossain, marketing manager of an Al Madina outlet, said they have been selling Pran products for nearly eight years and currently offer 240 items.

In the beverage market, Pran's competitors include Rani, PepsiCo, Coca-Cola, and Star. In the spice category, the main competitors are Pakistan's Mehran and Shan, along with South Indian companies like Vijaya. In the noodles segment, key competitors include Indomie, Maggi, and Buldak.

"We are the market leader in mustard oil, although some small Indian companies are entering the competition," Mizanur Rahman, executive director of export at Pran Group, told The Daily Star.

"There is also a huge opportunity for us to expand in the Bangladeshi, Indian, Filipino, African, and mainstream Arab markets. To achieve this, we are focusing on product promotion and developing products tailored to their needs," he said.

"We have prepared products specifically for Filipino, Thai, African, and Arab communities based on their preferences.

"We are optimistic about performing well in these segments in the coming days. This is a \$46 billion market, and the main challenge is branding.

"The more we promote our country, the more confidence we will gain from mainstream customers. The governments of Turkey, China, and India are investing heavily in branding."

Rahman further stated, "We need to work on product quality, pricing, packaging, and promotion to strengthen our position in the



PHOTO: PRAN

Pran-RFL Group is showcasing a variety of products at the Dubai Gulf Food Fair to introduce new items and attract new customers.

The Daily Star

20 FEB 2025

# Pran's journey in the UAE

## From humble beginnings to a thriving export hub

SUKANTA HALDER from Dubai

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The company purchased a second-hand car from a shop in Sharjah for 15,000 dirhams (around Tk 5 lakh) and hired one Bangladeshi employee to run its operations.

The modest business model meant the company could offer only three products: a lychee drink, chanachur, and puffed rice.

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However, those days are firmly in the past. Currently, Pran has expanded its range of offerings in the UAE market to 950 items, demonstrating the brand's strong presence in the Middle East.

From small grocery stores to supermarket chains, Pran's diverse range of products has become a household name among the South Asian diaspora and beyond, with sauces, noodles, juices, spices, mustard oil, coconut water, biscuits, and puffed rice being the most in-demand items.

"Now, more than 1.5 million Bangladeshis in the UAE are our customers. When we started our business in the UAE, expatriate Bangladeshis were our initial target demographic. Once we reached them, we targeted South Asians and local consumers," Chowdhury said, adding that many Nepalis, Arabs, and Filipinos now regularly enjoy their products.

In the 2023-24 fiscal year, Pran exported products worth \$245 million to the UAE through its dealer, Emerging World Group, a Dubai-based company that markets Pran's products across the Middle East, Europe, Africa, America, and Oceania.

Emerging World Group has expanded its

workforce to 735 employees and operates a fleet of 350 vehicles, ensuring the smooth sales, marketing, and distribution of products.

Chowdhury mentioned that Emerging World is working on securing a large bank loan. If approved, there are plans to establish a manufacturing unit in Dubai.

At present, most products are imported from Bangladesh, while some are sourced from contracted manufacturers in other countries, he added.

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Mohammad Sajjad Hossain, marketing manager of an Al Madina outlet, said they have been selling Pran products for nearly eight years and currently offer 240 items.

He added that Pran's customer base includes not just Bangladeshis but also consumers from India, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Nepal, Bhutan, and various Middle Eastern countries.

An official at a Nesto store said they have been selling Pran products for many years and now offer 82 items. Due to customer satisfaction, sales of Pran products are increasing, he added.

**COMPETITORS, PROSPECTS AND CHALLENGES**

However, competition in one of the world's most luxurious destinations is stiff.

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Rahman further stated, "We need to work on product quality, pricing, packaging, and promotion to strengthen our position in the market."

To that end, Pran-RFL Group chairman and CEO Chowdhury is showcasing a variety of products at the ongoing Dubai Gulf Food Fair.

He said they attended the fair to introduce new products and attract new customers.

"This time, we gained some customers from Libya and Iraq. These two countries could be good markets for Bangladesh," he remarked.

Pran products are now exported to 145 countries worldwide. In 2024, the company exported goods worth \$377 million.

# Ctg port overrun by Dhaka bound containers

Railway operations running at half of requirement for over a month

DWAIPAYAN BARUA, Ctg

The Chattogram port has been facing acute congestion caused by a pileup of import-laden containers, particularly ones bound for the Kamalapur inland container depot (ICD) in Dhaka.

This issue has been caused by slow railway transport due to a shortage of locomotives.

For over a month, authorities have been running only one or two pairs of freight trains between the port and the Dhaka ICD per day.

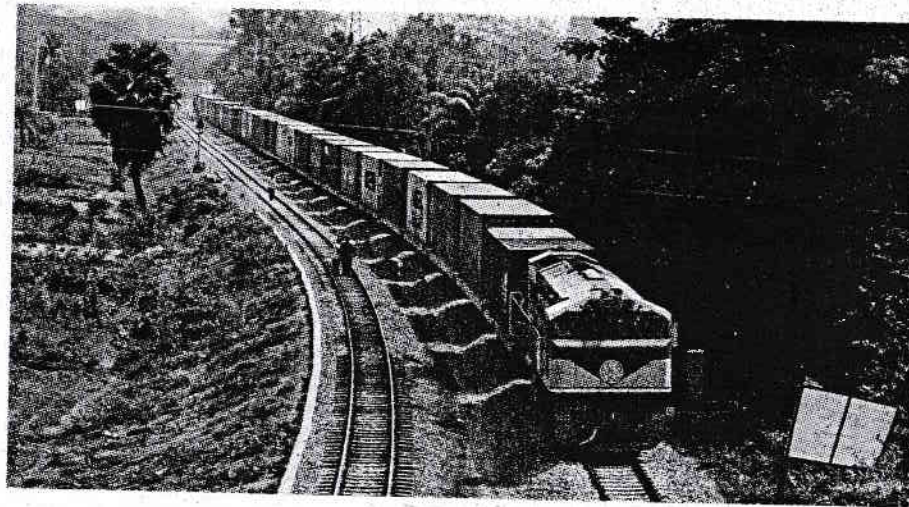
But port authorities say at least four pairs of trains need to make the trip daily to clear containers arriving at the dedicated Chattogram Goods Port Yard (CGPY).

An increase in the import of goods ahead of Ramadan, which starts next month, only caused the pressure to intensify.

Around 70 percent of the goods arriving at the port belong to importers based in Dhaka and its surrounding areas. Of those, around 3 percent are transported by railways while the rest are moved over road and river routes.

The CGPY has space to store up to 876 TEUs (twenty-foot equivalent units) of Dhaka ICD-bound import-laden containers.

However, as of yesterday, it had



**For over a month, authorities have been running only one or two pairs of freight trains between the port and the Dhaka ICD per day.**

PHOTO: STAR/FILE

exceeded more than twice the capacity, with 1,818 TEUs being crammed inside, raising concerns among the port authority as well as importers.

Bangladesh Freight Forwarders Association Vice-President Khairul Alam Suzan said containers unloaded from vessels 15 days ago were yet to be loaded onto Dhaka-bound trains.

Sources at the port informed that at least 500 TEUs of Dhaka-bound containers were on board several vessels

waiting to berth at the port.

Port users and officials said at least four trains are required to run daily and take away at least 200 TEUs of containers from the CGPY to Dhaka in order for the yard to function smoothly.

Data collected from the port shows that the railway made only 28 trips in the first 15 days of this month, taking 1,167 TEUs of containers to Dhaka.

From January 1 to January 31, a total of 68 trips were made, bringing 2,698 TEUs

from the port to Dhaka.

Abdul Malek, chief manager at the CGPY, said they need more locomotives to run daily but are currently getting only one.

With the introduction of freight services on different routes, the Chattogram-Cox's Bazar route's locomotives have been engaged, causing a shortage.

To find a solution, the port authority (CPA) sat in a meeting with officials of Bangladesh Railway and Chattogram Custom House.

CPA Secretary Md Omer Faruk said they urged the railway to run at least two pairs of trains per day in order to carry a significant number of containers to Dhaka.

To clear the backlog, the port authority (CPA) is seeking approval to take up to 1,000 Dhaka-bound containers from the port yard or from the Chattogram Container Terminal in Keraniya.

The authorities of Bangladesh Railway assured that they would run more trains accordingly, Faruk said, and they were preparing to send a letter in this regard yesterday.

Usually, imported cargo is delivered to the recipient at the destination point as per the import documents.

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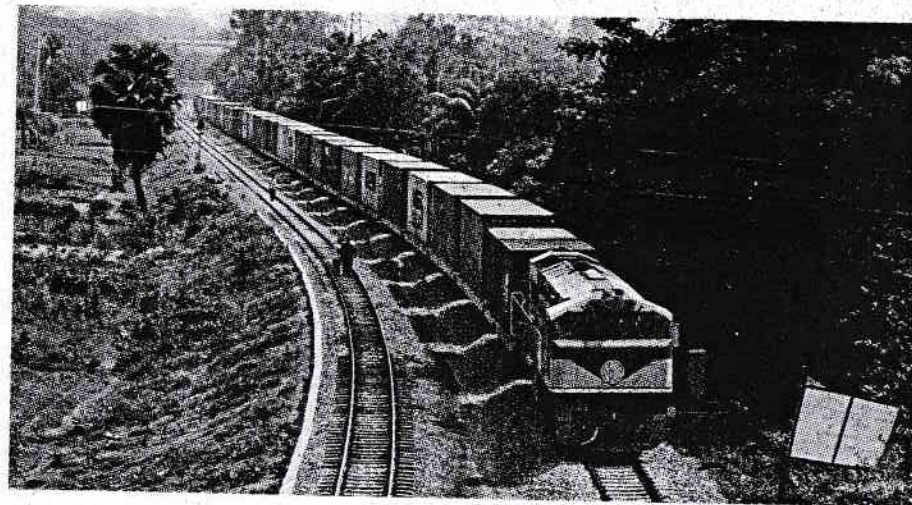
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from the port to Dhaka.

Abdul Malek, chief master of the railway at the CGPY, said they need at least 4 to 5 locomotives to run daily whereas they are currently getting only one or two.

With the introduction of several train services on different routes, including the Chattogram-Cox's Bazar route, several locomotives have become otherwise engaged, causing a scarcity, he added.

To find a solution, the Chittagong Port Authority (CPA) sat in an urgent meeting with officials of Bangladesh Railway and Chattogram Custom House on Tuesday.

CPA Secretary Md Omar Faruk said they urged the railway authorities at the meeting to run at least three trains every day in order to carry a significant volume of containers to Dhaka.

To clear the backlog, he said the Chattogram Custom House was requested to give approval to take delivery of these Dhaka-bound containers either from the port yard or from the Pangaon Inland Container Terminal in Keraniganj.

The authorities of both institutions assured that they would take steps accordingly, Faruk said, adding that they were preparing to send letters to the two in this regard yesterday.

Usually, imported cargo is allowed to be delivered to the recipients from the destination point as mentioned in the import documents.





# From waste to forex, fish scales bring smile to many in Pabna

ECONOMY - BANGLADESH

## KHORSHED ALAM

Fifty-five-year-old Marjina Khatun from Ranigram under Pabna sadar upazila used to work as a domestic help about four years ago. But with an innovative move, she has now been able to run her own family with the income generated from selling fish scales and wastes.

Sharing her story with TBS, she said her husband and disabled son run a fish business in the local market. They collect wet fish scales and wastes from the market, clean and dry them, and then sell them to traders, earning over Tk30,000 per month.

With that money, they have bought land and built a house.

They are now engaged in fish farming in their own pond. Additionally, they have purchased one bigha of land adjacent to their courtyard. Looking ahead, Marjina dreams of creating employment for other women in her village.

Inspired by a businessman from Jashore, Marjina got involved in fish scale processing four years ago. She shared that in the beginning, she used to dry the scales on jute sacks spread on the ground, which resulted in lower quality and lower prices. Later, with training, support, and technology provided by a local NGO "Programme for Community Development", she adopted a specialised processing method. This improved **SEE PAGE 4 COL 1**



**Marjina Khatun smilingly shows off the fish scales she processes at her factory at Ranigram under Pabna sadar upazila. Fifty-five-year-old Marjina started fish scale processing four years ago and is now earning over Tk30,000 per month. PHOTO: TBS**

the quality of the product, allowing her to fetch higher prices.

## Fish scale exports

According to a survey by the Export Promotion Bureau (EPB), the export of fish scales and waste in fiscal year 2019-2020 amounted to \$14.99 million, with the majority being fish scales.

Since then, the country has been exporting an average of Tk200 crore worth of fish scales annually. However, the quantity of exports has increased since 2020. In FY24, exports reached \$17 million, which is equivalent to Tk206 crore.

For nearly a decade, Md Kamruzzaman from Jashore has been purchasing and exporting fish scales. He collects fish scales from all districts in the southern and northern regions of the country and exports at least 10 tonnes per month.

The businessman said that in the past, entrepreneurs struggled to properly process fish scales. However, after receiving various types of training, most of them can now process the scales efficiently.

Kamruzzaman said he buys these processed scales and exports them to China, Japan, and Korea through different parties.

exporters. This represents a 4% growth rate compared to the previous 12 months.

Within this period, in Jan 2024 alone, the world imported 12 fish scale shipments from Bangladesh. This marks a year-on-year growth of 33% compared to Jan 2023, and a 12% sequential increase from Dec 2024.

The world imports most of its fish scales from China, Vietnam, and India.

Globally, the top three importers of fish scales are the United States, Ukraine, and Peru. The United States leads the world in fish scale imports with 2,184 shipments, followed by Ukraine with 953 shipments, and Peru taking the third spot with 686 shipments.

## Employment opportunities

Md Shafiqul Alam, executive director of Programme for Community Development, said fish waste is generated in almost all parts of the country. Proper management of this waste helps reduce environmental pollution, he said.

"Through processing and biotechnological methods, it can be transformed into valuable products. Under the Rural Microenterprise Transformation Project of PKSf, we are supporting entrepreneurs in various ways to commercially process fish scales. This initiative is creating employment opportu-

ment and non-government training. She now sells around 150 to 200 kilograms of fish scales per month.

Alongside managing her household, Rumi earns a monthly profit of Tk15,000 from selling fish scales. She mentioned that, following her example, five more people in the area have become involved in fish scale processing.

## What is in fish scales?

Fisheries researchers say on average, 20-25% of a fish's body weight consists of waste and scales.

Agricultural scientists and fisheries researchers explain that fish scales form a protective layer covering the body of fish, which is usually discarded. Previously, this waste was dumped indiscriminately, causing environmental pollution.

However, fish scales and waste hold significant economic value. They are rich in protein and calcium. Typically, fish scales contain around 60-65% protein and 30-40% hydroxyapatite, both of which are highly beneficial for the human body.

Kazi Ahsan Habib, a professor of the Department of Fisheries Biology and Genetics at Sher-e-Bangla Agricultural University, said processed fish scales can be used to produce various high-value products, including colla-

"If fish scale processing is developed locally, it could create employment opportunities for many people and have a positive impact on the economy," Prof Habib said.

To strengthen the framework of the domestic rural economy, various NGOs are working under the Rural Microenterprise Transformation Project in 49 upazilas across 23 districts, including Pabna, Sirajganj, Rajshahi, and Naogaon, focusing on fish farming, scale, and waste management.

These initiatives aim to produce and market high-value products. Over 150,000 people are involved in this sector, with more than 50,000 of them being women. The project is financed by the International Fund for Agricultural Development, the Palli Karma-Sahayak Foundation (PKSF), and DANIDA.

Md Fazlul Kader, managing director of PKSf, said the economic market for fish scales in the country is valued at over Tk250 crore, with hundreds of entrepreneurs involved in the industry.

Fish scales are used by Chinese to produce gelatin for the food and pharmaceutical industries, he said. "Currently, we import these products at six times the cost."

He continued, "However, there is hope as plans are underway to develop medium-scale producers. Through

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Kamruzzaman said he buys these processed scales and exports them to China, Japan, and Korea through different parties.

## Global fish scale market

According to Volza's global import data, from February 2023 to January 2024, Bangladesh exported 208 shipments of fish scales to 39 international buyers, supplied by 17 Bangladeshi

exporters. This represents a 4% growth rate compared to the previous 12 months.

Within this period, in Jan 2024 alone, the world imported 12 fish scale shipments from Bangladesh. This marks a year-on-year growth of 33% compared to Jan 2023, and a 12% sequential increase from Dec 2024.

The world imports most of its fish scales from China, Vietnam, and India.

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Rumi Begum, a resident of Shantinagar in Joypurhat sadar, has been processing fish scales hygienically using new technology after receiving govern-

ment and non-government training. She now sells around 150 to 200 kilograms of fish scales per month.

Alongside managing her household, Rumi earns a monthly profit of Tk15,000 from selling fish scales. She mentioned that, following her example, five more people in the area have become involved in fish scale processing.

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Kazi Ahsan Habib, a professor of the Department of Fisheries Biology and Genetics at Sher-e-Bangla Agricultural University, said processed fish scales can be used to produce various high-value products, including collagen, collagen peptides, hydroxyapatite, organic fertilisers, medicinal capsule coatings, and cosmetics.

Collagen is a fibrous protein found in bones, skin, and connective tissues of animals, he said.

"If fish scale processing is developed locally, it could create employment opportunities for many people and have a positive impact on the economy," Prof Habib said.

To strengthen the framework of the domestic rural economy, various NGOs are working under the Rural Microenterprise Transformation Project in 49 upazilas across 23 districts, including Pabna, Sirajganj, Rajshahi, and Naogaon, focusing on fish farming, scale, and waste management.

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He continued, "However, there is hope as plans are underway to develop medium-scale producers. Through them, the goal is to produce products from fish scales locally in the future.

"Many local entrepreneurs have shown interest in this industry, and if successful, it will further strengthen the country's economy.

