

Bangladesh, Japan conclude EPA negotiations

December 22, 2025

Online Desk : Commerce Adviser Sk. Bashir Uddin on Monday announced the successful conclusion of the Bangladesh–Japan Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) negotiations during a telephone conversation with the Foreign Minister of Japan, Motegi Toshimitsu. During the announcement, among others, Chief Adviser’s Special Envoy on International Affairs Lutfey Siddiqi, Executive Chairman of Bangladesh Investment Development Authority (BIDA) Chowdhury Ashik Mahmud Bin Harun, Secretary of the Ministry of Commerce Mahbubur Rahman, Chief Negotiator of the Bangladesh–Japan EPA Ayesha Akter, Deputy Chief Negotiator Md Firoj Uddin Ahmed and focal point Mahbuba Khatoon Minu were present, said a press release of the Chief Adviser’s press wing.

According to the release, during the early step of the negotiations, a Joint Study Group was established which published its report on 27 December, 2023. The report recommended a comprehensive approach covering 17 sectors for negotiation. Later, the official negotiations for the EPA commenced on 12 March, 2024, as per the Agreed Work Plan. The first round was held in Dhaka from 19 to 23 May 2024, but due to unforeseen challenges, the talks were temporarily paused. Finally, in response to the critical importance of the EPA for Bangladesh’s economic growth, the interim government refocused its efforts starting in November 2024, setting an ambitious goal to conclude the agreement within a year. This led to the adoption of an accelerated negotiation process, significantly speeding up the remaining rounds.

The remaining negotiations progressed as follows:

- * Second Round in Dhaka: 10–14 November 2024, marking the resumption of talks.
- * Third Round in Tokyo: 19–20 December 2024, where both sides intensified discussions. * Fourth Round in Dhaka: 2–6 February 2025, a critical moment for building momentum. Fifth Round in Tokyo: 20–26 April 2025, as both parties pushed forward with urgency.* Sixth Round in Dhaka: 21–26 June 2025, where the agreement’s details started to take shape.
- * Seventh and Final Round in Tokyo: 3–12 September 2025, bringing the discussions to a successful close. Through these seven rounds, the EPA text was finalised, adhering to the original work plan.

A crucial factor behind the swift progression of the negotiations was the direct involvement of Commerce Adviser Sk. Bashir Uddin and Special Envoy Lutfey Siddiqi, the release added. Their proactive steps included chairing multiple inter-ministerial meetings and also high-level visits to Japan, where they engaged directly with their ministerial counterparts. These visits were instrumental in reinforcing Bangladesh’s commitment to finalising the agreement. Their personal involvement highlighted the interim government’s deep commitment to securing the EPA, underscoring its strategic importance.

Upon the conclusion and signing of the EPA, Bangladesh will enjoy immediate duty-free access to the Japanese market for 7,379 products. In return, Japan will receive immediate duty-free access to 1,039 products from Bangladesh. A significant aspect of the EPA is that Bangladesh’s major export products, particularly ready-made garments (RMG), will be granted duty-free access to Japan’s market from the very first day of the agreement.

Additionally, Bangladesh will benefit from Single Stage Transformation provisions for RMG products. Besides, it said, the trade in services sector also sees a substantial commitment from both sides. Bangladesh has agreed to open 97 sub-sectors to Japan, while Japan will open 120 sub-sectors to Bangladesh across four modes of supply. This is expected to foster increased Japanese investment in Bangladesh along with greater technology transfer.

As a Least Developed Country (LDC), Bangladesh will, for the first time, sign an EPA with Japan, the world’s fourth-largest economy. The signing of this agreement is expected to bring far-reaching trade and

economic benefits for Bangladesh, including enhanced trade, investment, and employment opportunities, marking a new chapter in the nation's economic relations with Japan. "This marks the conclusion of negotiations at the negotiator level. Further steps will involve legal scrubbing and further approvals from the advisory council/cabinet on both sides," the release said.