

Expo Freight warns of dual pressure from US tariffs, rising local costs

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The logo for Expo Freight is displayed in white text on a solid magenta background. The word "expo" is in a lowercase, sans-serif font, followed by a small upward-pointing arrow above the letter 'o'. The word "freight" is in a larger, bold, lowercase, sans-serif font.

Dhaka : As Bangladesh braces for a potential economic jolt from the incoming US reciprocal tariff, Expo Freight Limited's Managing Director Mahbubul Anam has voiced grave concern about the double blow facing the country's trade sector: escalating logistics costs at home and looming trade barriers abroad.

In an exclusive interview with The Bangladesh Monitor, Anam warned that Bangladesh's export-oriented economy-especially its USD 50 billion garment sector-is standing on uncertain ground.

"We are between two swords," Anam said. "On one side, we have the Trump-era tariff threat that could strike at the heart of our export market."

"On the other, our logistics costs are skyrocketing due to unchecked

rate hikes by local ports and private operators."

Garment sector at risk

The US is Bangladesh's single largest export market, accounting for nearly 20 percent of total outbound shipments.

While 55 percent of garment exports go to Europe, Anam noted that the fallout from an unfavorable US tariff deal would shake the very foundation of the country's export machinery.

"If the RMG sector slips, the entire economic ecosystem will feel the tremor-from backward linkages to banking and insurance," he cautioned.

Surging logistics costs undermining competitiveness

Adding to the uncertainty, Anam said the domestic cost of doing business is becoming unsustainable.

"Port charges have gone up by 60 percent, and regulatory agencies are increasing rates by 40 percent. Biman has imposed arbitrary new fees at the airport, including a royalty charge on chartered cargo flights-a move unheard of in export-friendly countries," he said.

He called for urgent policy intervention and greater collaboration between the government and private sector to stabilize logistics costs and improve infrastructure efficiency.

Expo Group's resilient growth, global integration

Despite these headwinds, Expo Freight Ltd has maintained its position as a leading 360-degree logistics provider.

Established in 1993, the company now operates five offices across Dhaka and Chattogram with over 500 staff.

"We've built our business on strong global partnerships, customer-centric services, and a robust network," Anam said.



Mahbulul Anam, Managing Director, Expo Group

In 2023, Expo Freight recorded USD 65 million in revenue, handling 40,000 TEUs in ocean freight and 35,000 tons in air cargo.

During the Covid-19 period, the company reached a revenue high of USD 100 million.

"Our business spans import and export, trucking, customs brokerage, and multimodal logistics. We're not asset-heavy, but our technology and agility set us apart," he said, noting that the company is ISO-certified and runs its own IT systems.

Anam pointed out that global freight forwarders typically avoid large capital investment in Bangladesh-something he hopes will change.

"We need to see more investment in warehousing, infrastructure, and

automation from global players. Bangladesh is ready."

Innovative strategies amid disruption

Recalling last year's internet shutdown during political unrest, Anam shared how Expo Freight adapted on the fly.

"We sent our staff to neighboring countries to relay shipping information to buyers. You have to be innovative and quick. Logistics is the lifeline of global trade."

To keep clients informed, Expo sends out a weekly market update to all global partners and customers, flagging any disruptions or changes that could impact operations.



Anam elaborated further on the company's history, partnerships, technology investments, and strategic direction.

- **On company origins:** "Expo Freight started in 1993. From modest beginnings, we've grown into one of the top logistics providers in the country."
- **On global integration:** "Our global network gives us access to pricing advantages, a wider range of services, and seamless cross-border operations."
- **On competitive edge:** "We're known for operational excellence, agility, and deep industry knowledge, especially in apparel and fashion."
- **On airline partnerships:** "Representing top airlines like Cathay Pacific, KLM, and Lufthansa allows us to secure space and offer competitive rates, even in volatile times."
- **On technology:** "We've implemented EDI, MIS systems, and client-facing portals that ensure transparency, speed, and efficiency."
- **On air cargo:** "Air freight is crucial, especially for high-value and time-sensitive shipments. Our airline partnerships are key to providing reliability and reach."
- **On cost management:** "Through volume deals and strategic routing, we maintain quality while keeping prices competitive."
- **On sector trends:** "E-commerce, pharmaceuticals, and electronics are driving new demand. We're ready with specialized services."
- **On future plans:** "We're expanding in warehousing, automation, and multimodal logistics. Over the next five years, we aim to be the most tech-enabled, customer-driven logistics firm in Bangladesh."

Road ahead

As global supply chains remain volatile and geopolitics increasingly shapes trade policy, Anam believes Bangladesh must act fast to preserve its edge.

"We must diversify beyond garments-into sectors like pharmaceuticals, perishables, and footwear-but that takes policy support and infrastructure. Right now, the export ecosystem is under threat," he warned.

The message is clear: logistics is no longer just a support function-it's a strategic pillar of national trade.

Unless addressed urgently, inefficiencies at home and trade tensions abroad could erode Bangladesh's hard-won export momentum.

The logistics arm of Expo Group is Expo Freight Limited.

It also has several other verticals in engineering and tech, energy, leisure, and research and development.