

# Potato can be a lucrative export crop

*The challenge of export diversification that Bangladesh is facing now could be met by potato, among other agricultural products*

writes  
**Syed Fattahul Alim**

While speaking at an event on the second day of the two-day (December 12-13) potato festival 2025 held in the city, experts highlighted the potential of potato as an exportable agricultural commodity of Bangladesh. Notably, the country exported over 62,000 tonnes of potato worth US\$14 million last fiscal year (FY 2024-25). Of course, the country, according to the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) experienced a record harvest of potato last fiscal year at 1.5 million tonnes, which far exceeded annual domestic demand for the tuber at around 9.0 million tonnes. Of the total domestic demand, however, 1.0 million tonnes of potato would be used as seeds, while the rest 8.0 million would go for the public's consumption. A portion of the potato is processed in the form of chips and crackers. But the surplus production has also left many farmers broke as the price of potato in the market has fallen sharply. In this harvest season, the wholesale prices of the vegetable have gone below even its production costs. The reason is, a large number of farmers had gone for cultivation of potato last fiscal year, FY 25. The previous fiscal (FY 2023-24)'s production shortfall and the consequent spike in the farm produce's price as well as last season's good weather was a reason that many farmers even borrowed money to invest in potato cultivation. Now, such low price of potato this year may have discouraged many farmers to go for potato cultivation this year. As told by the adviser to the ministries of agriculture and home affairs of the interim government at the said

festival, potato also saw bumper harvests in 2010, 2014, 2015 and 2017 overshooting domestic demands. Unfortunately, such instances of bumper harvests of potato have not been an unmixed blessing for its farmers. Reports say, farmers in the last season planted this crop on 4.92 lakh hectares, which was 8 per cent higher on a year-on-year basis. So, potato production also increased proportionately by 9.0 per cent Year-on-Year (YOY). In consequence, potato growers this year may either avoid cultivating the crop at all, or allocate fewer acreage of their lands for growing potato which might lead to production shortfall next year pushing up the tuber's price sky-high compelling the government to import potato. Such rise and fall in the production of this highly potential agricultural product has been taking place over the decades, thanks to the lack of a consistent policy of the government towards the potato growers. So, when the potato growers are in deep financial crisis due to falling price following overproduction, the government may come up with help for farmers by way of procuring

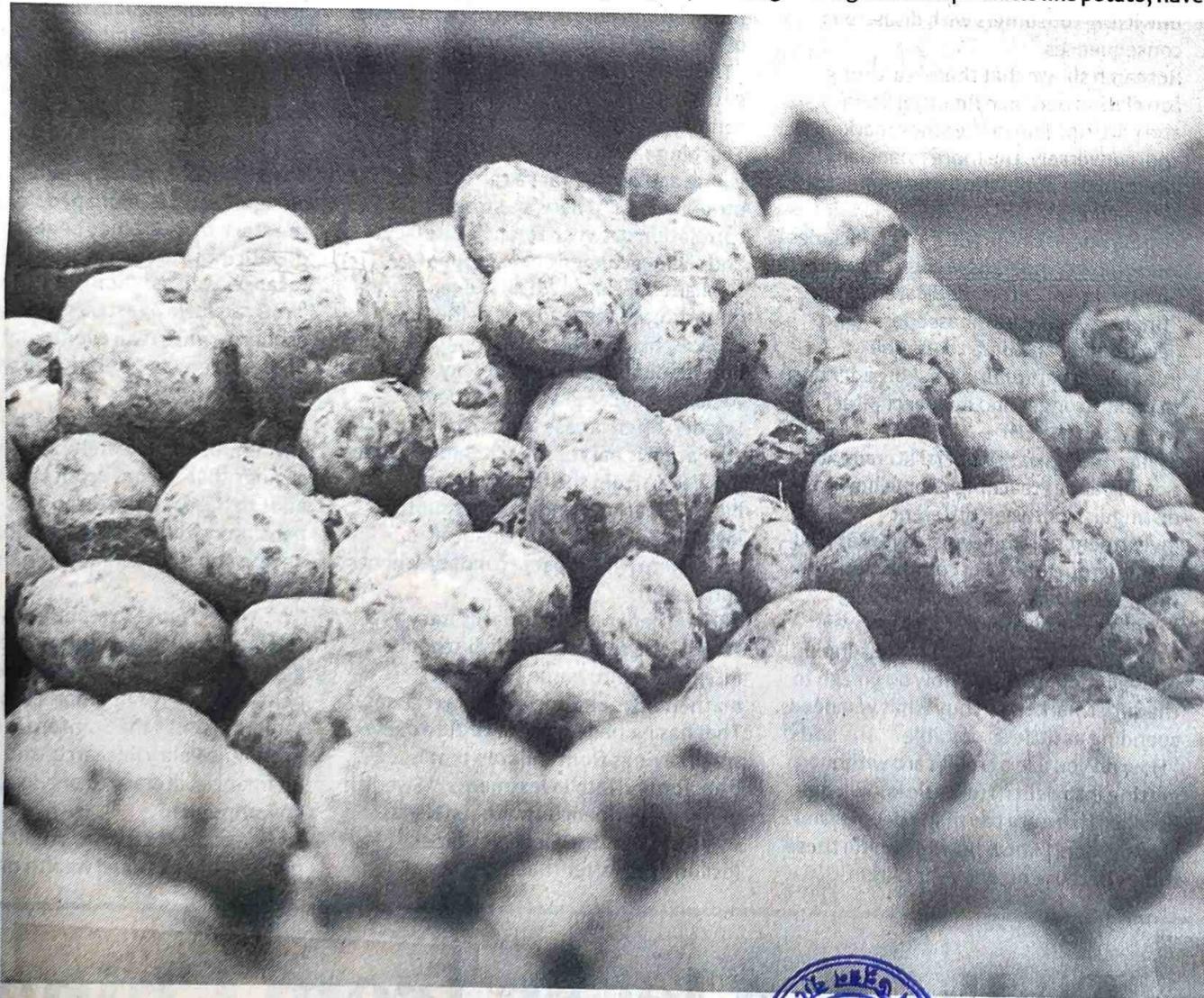
potato directly from them. Also, consumption of potato could be promoted through, say including 10 kilogrammes per household in the government's social safety net schemes. In a similar vein, its export could be encouraged by providing businesses concerned with incentives similar to those extended traditionally to the apparel sector. Experts at the said potato festival organised by the Bangladesh Cold Storage Association (BCSA) said, the global potato industry is currently valued at US\$120 billion, but Bangladesh, though an agriculture-based country has less than 0.01 per cent share of the world market. M Masrur Reaz, Chairman, Policy Exchange of Bangladesh, said during his presentation at the event that addition of processed agricultural products, such as from potato, can reduce significantly the country's reliance on a single export product and contribute to strengthening its long-term economic resilience. That would, however, require strong policy support, incentives and regulatory reforms, he added. In fact, so far the agricultural products like potato, have

not been given as much emphasis as other sectors such as the Readymade Garment (RMG) enjoy. But the challenge of export diversification that Bangladesh is facing now could be met by the potato, among other agricultural products. Globally, for instance, potato accounts for 4.0 per cent of the total crop production. In this context, Asia contributes 54 per cent to global potato production, while Bangladesh ranks among top ten potato growers in Asia, after China and India.

Given Bangladesh's extreme vulnerability to climate change, potato as a climate-resilient agricultural crop has its natural advantage over other local crops. In fact, potato was not part of the country's crops before 18th century. The Portuguese traders first brought it to India in the early 17th century. It remained mainly a curiosity during its early stage of introduction in the subcontinent. By the late 18th century, the British East India Company familiarised the crop in this part of the world. By the 1850s, it gained popularity in Bengal especially under British Kolkata. Seeing that now it has become an essential food crop in Bangladesh, it is hard to believe that potato was ever a novelty in this land.

In ancient times, however, the crop was originally grown in the high altitudes of the Andes mountains of South America where other crops could not grow. It was cultivated mainly in Peru and Bolivia during Inca civilization. Later, the Spanish conquistadors brought it to Europe in the 16th century. But it took centuries before the crop became popular in Europe in the 18th and 19th centuries. Gradually, it became the staple for the masses in Europe. Now it has been turned into a global staple. Against this backdrop, as Bangladeshi farmers can grow large quantities of this global staple that can be exported after meeting domestic demand, the government should not consider it just as another agricultural product of the country. To encourage potato growing farmers, the government needs first to dispel their fears about the hazards of overproduction they face every alternate season. When its production is prioritised as an export commodity, farmers, provided they receive the matching backing from the government, will be encouraged to grow the crop with due enthusiasm. But the government in that case cannot limit itself to just making promises of support. On the contrary, it should come up with a detailed plan on providing the support including fiscal incentives for the potato growers. At the same time, the required infrastructure for storage of potato has to be developed. Entrepreneurs in the agri-sector interested in potato crop should also be offered necessary incentives to promote its export.

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# Garment exports to alternative markets fall over 3% in FY26

EXPORTS - BANGLADESH

TBS REPORT

Bangladesh's garment exports to non-traditional markets such as Australia, India, South Korea and Russia have declined sharply, with overall shipments to these destinations falling by more than 3% in the first five months of the current fiscal year.

This comes even as shipments to some traditional markets showed slight growth.

Data from the Export Promotion Bureau (EPB) show that from July to November of the fiscal 2025-26, garment exports to non-traditional markets dropped by 3.39% compared with the same period a year earlier.

The fall has been steeper in several of the larger non-traditional destinations, such as Australia, India, South Korea, Russia, Turkey and Mexico, according to data.

Industry insiders say the slowdown in global consumer demand, weak marketing efforts by both the government and the private sector, a lack of product diversification in line with market demand, and reduced government incentives for exports to these markets have all contributed to the decline.

Around 16% of Bangladesh's total garment exports go to non-traditional markets, which include about 15 major countries outside the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada and the 27-member European Union.

These markets have long been seen as crucial for reducing reliance on traditional destinations.

**Sharp drops in key destinations**

An analysis of EPB data suggests that while garment exports to traditional markets are also facing pressure, the rate of decline has been higher in non-traditional markets.

Exports to India fell by more than 8% during

**NON-TRADITIONAL GARMENT MARKETS SEE SHARPER DECLINE**

**About 15 countries make up the non-traditional garment market**

**Non-traditional accounts for 16% of total garment exports**

Australia largest market

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Exports down 10% to \$313m



**Exports to other countries fall as well**

- Exports to India drop over 8% to \$298m
- Korea down by 12%
- Mexico 16%
- Turkey 25%
- Russia 23%

**Expert observations on the decline**



Global consumption slowdown a key external factor



Weak gov't-private sector marketing efforts a challenge



Product mix not aligned with non-traditional market demand

- ▶ Failure to match China's aggressive marketing in Asia
- ▶ Commercial wings at embassies 'not meeting expectations'

the five-month period. Bangladesh shipped garments worth \$298m to India between July and November, \$26m less than in the same period of the previous financial year.

Australia, the largest non-traditional export destination for Bangladesh garments, saw exports drop by 10% year-on-year to \$313m during the period.

Exports also fell sharply in other non-traditional markets, declining by 12% in South Korea, 16% in Mexico, 25% in Turkey and 23% in Russia.

However, garment exports increased in some newer or non-traditional markets, including Brazil, China, Japan, Malaysia, the United Arab Emirates and South Africa.

Shehab Udduza Chowdhury, vice-president of the BGMEA, told TBS, "Overall, our export performance is not good. The situation is worse in non-traditional markets mainly because of weak marketing, a lack of continuous communication and follow-up, and reduced incentives."

He said Bangladesh has been unable

to match China's aggressive marketing strategies in markets such as South Korea and Japan. He also criticised the performance of commercial wings at Bangladeshi missions abroad, saying they have not met expectations.

"There was once a 5% cash incentive to encourage exports to new markets, which has now been reduced to just 2%. This has discouraged exporters and is one of the reasons behind the decline," he added.

Former BGMEA director Mohiuddin Rubel

“There was once a 5% cash incentive to encourage exports to new markets, which has now been reduced to just 2%. This has discouraged exporters and a reason behind the decline

SHEHAB UDDUZA CHOWDHURY  
VICE-PRESIDENT, BGMEA



echoed similar concerns, saying Bangladesh's failure to develop products in line with market demand and its weak marketing efforts remain key challenges.

**Mixed picture in traditional markets**

EPB data show a mixed trend in traditional markets. Garment exports to the United States, Bangladesh's single largest destination, rose by 3% in the July-November period to \$3.22 billion, up from \$3.13 billion a year earlier.

Exports also increased by 6.51% to Canada and by 3% to the United Kingdom.

Within the EU, exports grew to Spain, Poland and the Netherlands. However, shipments declined to Germany – the second-largest single-country destination for Bangladeshi garments – as well as to France, Denmark and Italy.

# RMG exports to non-traditional markets fall in Jul-Nov

Higher US tariff is to blame, experts said

## STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Garment exports to non-traditional markets declined by 3.19 percent year-on-year to \$2.67 billion in the July-November period of the current fiscal year.

Due to higher reciprocal tariffs in the USA, other major players are exporting higher volumes of garment items to non-traditional markets, which is why exports from Bangladesh declined, local exporters said.

Bangladesh considers all markets as non-traditional or emerging markets except the EU, the USA, Canada and the UK, according to data from the Export Promotion Bureau, compiled by the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association.

During the same period, Bangladesh's RMG exports to the USA rose 3.06 percent year-on-year to \$3.22 billion, representing 19.98 percent of total apparel shipments.



PHOTO: STAR/FILE

Exports to Canada and the United Kingdom also showed positive momentum, posting year-on-year growth of 6.51 percent and 3 percent, respectively.

Around \$554.47 million worth of garments were shipped to Canada, while \$1.85 billion went to the United Kingdom.

The EU remained Bangladesh's largest export destination for RMG, accounting for 48.57 percent of total exports in this category.

Export earnings from the EU stood at \$7.83 billion, down 1.03 percent year-on-year.

According to EPB data, overall apparel exports in the July-November period reached \$16.13 billion, reflecting a 0.09 percent increase compared to the previous year.

In terms of product category performance within the RMG basket, knitwear recorded a 1 percent decrease, indicating modest but stable performance.



# বণিক বার্তা

15 DEC 2025



এসএমই খাতের সবচেয়ে বড় সমস্যা অর্থায়ন। এক্ষেত্রে ব্যাংকগুলোকে এগিয়ে আসতে হবে। এসএমই খাত টিকে থাকতে না পারলে বাজার ব্যবস্থা ভেঙে পড়বে। কারণ তারাই বাজারের প্রধান সরবরাহকারী

—মো. ওবায়দুর রহমান  
শিল্প সচিব

ছবি : নিজস্ব আলোকচিত্রী

## পর্দা নামল ১২তম জাতীয় এসএমই পণ্য মেলার বিক্রি ১৪ কোটি ৭০ লাখ টাকার পণ্য ক্রয়াদেশ মিলেছে প্রায় ১৬ কোটির

নিজস্ব প্রতিবেদক ■

সপ্তাহব্যাপী '১২তম জাতীয় এসএমই পণ্য মেলা ২০২৫'-এর পর্দা নেমেছে। এবারের আয়োজনে গতকাল দুপুর পর্যন্ত ১৪ কোটি ৭০ লাখ টাকার পণ্য বিক্রি হয়েছে। অন্যদিকে ক্রয়াদেশ এসেছে আরো ১৫ কোটি ৮৫ লাখ টাকার। রাজধানীর আগারগাঁওয়ে বাংলাদেশ-চীন মৈত্রী সম্মেলন কেন্দ্রে গতকাল সন্ধ্যায় এ মেলার সমাপনী অনুষ্ঠিত হয়। এ সময় এসএমই ফাউন্ডেশনের চেয়ারপারসন মো. মুশফিকুর রহমান এ তথ্য জানান।

তিনি বলেন, 'গত বছর এসএমই পণ্য মেলায় ১৩ কোটি ১ লাখ টাকার বেচাকেনা হয়েছিল। সেই সঙ্গে ক্রয়াদেশ এসেছিল আরো ২০ কোটি ৬ লাখ টাকার। ১২তম মেলায় রোববার দুপুর পর্যন্ত ১৪ কোটি ৭০ লাখ টাকার বিক্রি হয়েছে। আর ১৫ কোটি ৮৫ লাখ টাকার ক্রয়াদেশ পাওয়া গেছে। এছাড়া গত তিন বছর গড়ে বিক্রি ছিল ১১ কোটি টাকা।'

এসএমই ফাউন্ডেশনের চেয়ারপারসন উদ্যোক্তাদের উদ্দেশে বলেন, 'ক্রয়াদেশ পেয়েছি আর কিছু করার নেই, এটি ভাবলে চলবে না।

এর মাধ্যমে ব্যবসায়িক সংযোগ তৈরি হয়েছে। সম্ভাব্য ক্রেতাদের সঙ্গে নিয়মিত যোগাযোগ রক্ষা করতে হবে। এর মাধ্যমে ক্রেতা-বিক্রেতার মধ্যে একটি সংযোগ ও বিশ্বাসের জায়গা তৈরি হবে, যা ব্যবসার জন্য গুরুত্বপূর্ণ।' সমাপনী অনুষ্ঠানে প্রধান অতিথি ছিলেন শিল্প মন্ত্রণালয়ের সচিব মো. ওবায়দুর রহমান। তিনি বলেন, 'এসএমই খাত না এগোলে দেশ এগিয়ে যেতে পারবে না। তাদেরকে (উদ্যোক্তা) সহযোগিতা করতে হবে। এসএমই খাতের সবচেয়ে বড় সমস্যা অর্থায়ন। এক্ষেত্রে ব্যাংকগুলোকে এগিয়ে আসতে হবে। এসএমই খাত টিকে থাকতে না পারলে বাজার ব্যবস্থা ভেঙে পড়বে। কারণ

তারাই বাজারের প্রধান সরবরাহকারী।'

শিল্প সচিব আরো বলেন, 'ক্ষুদ্র উদ্যোক্তাদের সঠিক ডাটাবেজ তৈরি করতে হবে। এটি করলে তাদেরকে সহযোগিতায় পরিকল্পনা নেয়া সহজ হবে।' এসএমই উদ্যোক্তাদের সব ধরনের সহযোগিতা করতে মন্ত্রণালয় প্রস্তুত রয়েছে বলেও জানান তিনি।

অনুষ্ঠানে উদ্যোক্তাদের প্রতিনিধি হিসেবে মো. ওয়াহিদুজ্জামান বলেন, 'এ ধরনের মেলা উদ্যোক্তাদের জন্য ক্রেতার সঙ্গে পরিচয়ের সুযোগ করে দেয়। এমন আয়োজন উদ্যোক্তা ও দেশের জন্য লাভজনক। তবে মেলার ব্যাপ্তি এক সপ্তাহ খুবই কম সময়। আগামী বছর থেকে অন্তত ১৫ দিন করার দাবি জানাচ্ছি।'

এসএমই ফাউন্ডেশনের চেয়ারপারসন মো. মুশফিকুর রহমানের সভাপতিত্বে সমাপনী অনুষ্ঠানে বিশেষ অতিথি ছিলেন বাংলাদেশ পর্যটন করপোরেশনের চেয়ারম্যান সায়েমা শাহী সুলতানা, বাংলাদেশ ট্যুরিজম বোর্ডের প্রধান নির্বাহী কর্মকর্তা (সিইও) ও অতিরিক্ত সচিব নুজ হাট ইয়াসমিন এবং ইন্টারন্যাশনাল চেম্বার অব কমার্স বাংলাদেশের ব্যাংকিং কমিশনের চেয়ারম্যান



মোহাম্মদ রুমী এ আলী। সম্মানিত অতিথি ছিলেন ব্র্যাক ব্যাংক পিএলসির ব্যবস্থাপনা পরিচালক ও প্রধান নির্বাহী কর্মকর্তা তারেক রেফাত উল্লাহ খান। অনুষ্ঠানে সূচনা বক্তব্য রাখেন এসএমই ফাউন্ডেশনের ব্যবস্থাপনা পরিচালক আনোয়ার হোসেন চৌধুরী। শুভেচ্ছা বক্তব্য দেন বাংলাদেশ প্লাস্টিক পণ্য প্রস্তুতকারক ও রফতানিকারক সমিতির (বিপিজিএমইএ) সভাপতি ও ১২তম জাতীয় এসএমই পণ্য মেলার আয়োজক কমিটির আহ্বায়ক সামিম আহমেদ। অনুষ্ঠানে বিস্তারিত তুলে ধরেন এসএমই ফাউন্ডেশনের উপব্যবস্থাপনা পরিচালক নাজিম হাসান সাত্তার।



# Jute goods exports show signs of recovery after four-year slump

SOHEL PARVEZ

Jute goods exports have started to recover after four years of consistent decline, as demand for the once golden fibre in major markets has increased, raising hopes among millers of a sustained rebound.

Bangladesh recorded 1.36 percent year-on-year growth, reaching \$346 million in exports during the July-November period of the fiscal year (FY) 2025-26, according to Export Promotion Bureau.

Exporters said the recovery in demand in Turkey, the key market for jute yarn, along with the prospect of interest rate cuts by major economies, easing tensions in the Middle East, and ongoing talks to end the Russia-Ukraine war, has created optimism about economic prospects.

Recovery began in July, following an overall export decline of 4 percent in FY2024-25, after a consistent drop in shipments from a historic high of \$1.16 billion in FY2020-21.

"We see increased orders from Turkey and some other countries. This has created hopes of revival," said Tapash Pramanik, chairman of the Bangladesh Jute Spinners Association (BJSA), the trade body of yarn producers.

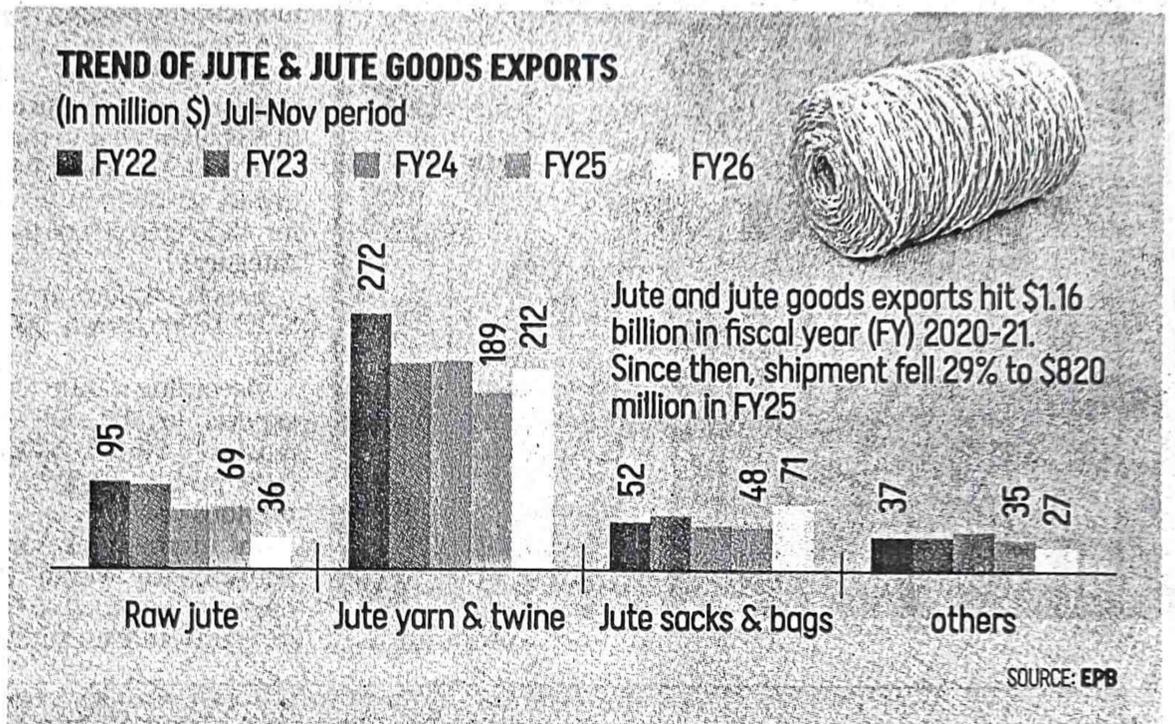
Millers said the sector suffered from sluggishness due to the continued decline in exports.

"There had been frustration among millers in the sector. It was difficult to sell jute goods," Pramanik said. "Now we see improvement in sales of hessian, sacking and yarn."

Between FY2021 and FY2025, the jute industry, built on locally produced natural fibre, lost 29 percent of exports, as many buyers switched to synthetic and regenerated cotton yarn due to high domestic prices of the fibre.

Industry stakeholders said demand for jute yarn began to decline after the Covid-19 pandemic in 2021, when prices of locally grown raw jute shot up to Tk 5,500-Tk 6,000 per maund (around 37 kilogrammes).

This year, jute prices are Tk 4,200-Tk 4,300 per maund and have remained stable



after the government in September restricted raw jute exports to contain prices that had risen owing to a fall in production.

"Because of the export restriction, we have been able to export jute goods at almost stable prices. On the other hand, as prices are high in India, exports from there have reduced," said Helal Ahmed, deputy managing director of AkijBashir Group, one of the leading jute exporters.

He added that the imposition of a 50 percent reciprocal tariff on India's exports by the United States created scope for local jute goods manufacturers to expand in the American market.

"Shipment of various types of fabric has increased in the US," he said.

With Turkey being the major buyer of carpet yarn and rope twine, the Netherlands, Italy, China, India, Uzbekistan, Indonesia, Tanzania, Sudan and countries in the Middle East have also been major buyers.

"There is demand for potato bags, hessian

bags, linoleum cloth, nursery cloth and diversified yarn/twine in mini spools and balls for decorative and gardening purposes in the European Union and the United Kingdom," he said.

"We expect the current trend to continue," Ahmed added. BJSA Chairman Pramanik said monthly average exports were 40,000 tonnes last year, and the volume of shipments is expected to rise this year.

Abdul Barik Khan, secretary general of the Bangladesh Jute Mills Association (BJMA), said exports are growing in some new markets and called for government policy support to facilitate further growth.

"Low-cost loans and incentives to explore new markets will be helpful," he said.

Pramanik added that the interest rate on loans is very high up to 15.5 percent.

"It is difficult to conduct business while paying such high interest on loans," he said.

"The government should engage with us and provide policy support so that we can increase exports."



সমকাল

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## এসএমই পণ্যমেলায় বিক্রি ১৫ কোটি টাকার অর্ডার ১৬ কোটির

■ সমকাল প্রতিবেদক

এবারের জাতীয় এসএমই পণ্যমেলায় প্রায় ১৫ কোটি টাকার পণ্য বিক্রি হয়েছে বলে জানিয়েছে এসএমই ফাউন্ডেশন। একই সঙ্গে উদ্যোক্তারা প্রায় ১৬ কোটি টাকার পণ্যের ক্রয়াদেশ পেয়েছেন বলে জানিয়েছে প্রতিষ্ঠানটি। গতকাল রোববার এসএমইএ ফাউন্ডেশনের এক খুদে বার্তায় এ তথ্য জানানো হয়েছে।

গত বছরের এসএমই মেলায় প্রায় ১৩ কোটি টাকার পণ্য বিক্রি হয়েছিল এবং ২০ কোটি টাকার ক্রয়াদেশ পেয়েছিলেন উদ্যোক্তারা। সে হিসাবে এবারের মেলায় বিক্রি তিন কোটি বেড়েছে। তবে ক্রয়াদেশে কমেছে চার কোটির টাকার মতো।

গত ৭ ডিসেম্বর রাজধানীর আগারগাঁওয়ে বাংলাদেশ-চীন মৈত্রী সম্মেলন কেন্দ্রে শুরু হয় ১২তম জাতীয় এসএমই মেলা। আট দিনব্যাপী এ মেলা শেষ হয়েছে গতকাল। শিল্প মন্ত্রণালয়ের আওতাধীন প্রতিষ্ঠান এসএমই ফাউন্ডেশনের উদ্যোগে এ মেলার আয়োজন করা হয়েছে। মেলায় শতভাগ দেশি পণ্যের উদ্যোক্তারা অংশ নিয়েছে।

এসএমই ফাউন্ডেশন জানিয়েছে, মেলায় অংশগ্রহণকারী ১০টি প্রতিষ্ঠানকে শ্রেষ্ঠ স্টলের স্বীকৃতি প্রদান করা হয়। এবারে মেলায় অংশ নিয়েছে প্রায় সাড়ে তিনশ শ্রুদ্র ও মাঝারি শিল্প প্রতিষ্ঠান, যাদের মধ্যে প্রায় ৬০ শতাংশ ছিলেন নারী-উদ্যোক্তা।



# RMG exports to EU, non-traditional markets dive

Aggressive pricing by rivals, weak global demand hit shipments

**FE REPORT**

Readymade garment (RMG) exports to the European Union and several non-traditional markets, including Australia, India and South Korea, posted negative growth during the first five months of the current fiscal year, reflecting mounting pressures from weak global demand and intensifying competition.

The slowdown contrasts with modest growth in exports to the United States, Bangladesh's single largest market, despite the introduction of new US tariff regimes.

Exporters say shifting trade dynamics have pushed major competitors, particularly China and India, to target Europe and other emerging destinations more aggressively.

Industry insiders warn that deep discounting by rival exporters, combined with Bangladesh's rising production costs and high interest rates, is eroding competitiveness and could further weigh on export performance in the coming months.

The Export Promotion Bureau

## RMG EXPORTS (Jul–Nov FY26)

US, Canada, UK & others **34.80%**

Non-traditional markets **16.6%**

European Union **48.6%**



**DECLINING MARKETS**

EU	-1.03%
Non-traditional markets	-3.19%

**GROWING MARKETS**

US	+3.06%
Canada	+6.51%
UK	+3.0%



**Export growth may weaken further without cost control, value addition and market diversification**

(EPB) data show that exports to the European Union fell by 1.03 per cent to US\$7.83 billion during the July–November period of fiscal year (FY) 2025–26, compared with US\$7.91 billion in the corresponding period of the

previous fiscal year. The EU accounted for 48.57 per cent of the country's total RMG exports, which stood at US\$16.13 billion during the first five months of FY26. Major EU markets, including

Denmark, France, Germany and Italy, recorded declines ranging from 3.56 per cent to about 9.0 per cent, according to EPB data.

Similarly, garment shipments to non-traditional markets fell by 3.19 per cent year-on-year to US\$2.67 billion during the July–November period of FY26, compared with US\$2.75 billion in the same period of FY25.

Markets beyond the traditional destinations (namely the EU, the US, Canada and the UK) are considered non-traditional and emerging markets. These include Australia, Japan, India, Brazil, Chile, China, Russia, South Korea, Mexico and Turkey.

Among these destinations, Australia, India, South Korea, Mexico, New Zealand, Russia and Turkey recorded declines ranging from 8.18 per cent to 24.55 per cent during the July–November period, while Japan posted marginal growth of 0.98 per cent compared with the corresponding period of the previous fiscal year. Industry insiders attributed the overall weakness to

subdued consumer demand in both advanced and emerging markets, driven by high living costs, sluggish global growth and ongoing geopolitical tensions.

Faruque Hasan, former president of the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA), said global demand, particularly in the EU and other emerging markets, has declined in recent months, leading to lower import volumes. He said exports from China to the US dropped sharply due to higher tariffs, prompting Chinese exporters to target the EU more aggressively by offering very low prices. India is also adopting a similar strategy, he added, while Bangladesh is losing competitiveness due to internal challenges such as high production costs and elevated bank interest rates.

Mr Hasan, who is also managing director of Giant Group, warned that garment export growth could decline further in the coming months, including shipments to the US. Mohiuddin Rubel, additional managing director

of Denim Expert Ltd, said that while traditional markets are struggling to provide stable demand, the decline in non-traditional markets highlights the urgent need for renewed focus on market diversification and value addition.

Fazlul Hoque, former president of the Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BKMEA), told The Financial Express that the muted performance reflects a broader slowdown in the global apparel market.

The global economy remains sluggish, and uncertainty and disruptions, including the impact of new US tariff regimes, have dampened demand across markets, he added. Despite the broader slowdown, earnings from Bangladesh's single largest destination, the US, rose by 3.06 per cent to US\$3.22 billion during the July–November period of FY26, according to EPB data.

Exports to Canada and the UK also grew by 6.51 per cent and 3.0 per cent, earning US\$554.47 million and US\$1.84 billion respectively over the same period.

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