The Daily Star

11 JAN 2026

Garment exports to US grew 15% in Jan-Oct

Show US Department of Commerce data

REFAYET ULLAH MIRDHA

Bangladesh's readymade garment exports to the United States, the country's largest single-market destination, grew more than 15 percent year-on-year to $7.08 billion in the January-October period, according to US government data.

Local apparel makers say the surge was largely driven by front-loaded shipments ahead of the Trump administration's reciprocal tariff enforcement.

A temporary 10 percent baseline tariff was applied by the US from part of April to the entire July before higher country-specific rates took effect on August 7 last year. It added with the existing 16 percent, taking the total rate to around 26 percent.

During the low baseline tariff period, local apparel makers say American buyers brought in larger-than-usual consignments. Apparel exporters said this rush pushed overall shipments in the January-October window above normal levels, somewhat masking the basic trend for the rest of the year.

For Bangladesh, a punishing 35 percent reciprocal rate was initially announced in April last year. It was later revised to 20 percent after bilateral negotiations.

The growth came amid a largely flat US apparel market. Total imports from the world by the United States declined 0.61 percent year-on-year to $66.63 billion during the January-October period last year, according to the Office of Textiles and Apparel (OTEXA), an agency under the US Department of Commerce.

Similar to Bangladesh, most other major exporting countries also saw positive growth in the American market during the period.

Vietnam's exports to the US rose 11.5 percent to $14.16 billion, India's 8.6 percent to $4.39 billion, Pakistan's 12.3 percent to $2.02 billion, Indonesia's 10.1 percent to $3.98 billion, and Cambodia's 25.5 percent to $4.04 billion.

China was the exception, with exports to the US falling 32.4 percent to $9.49 billion.

During the period, unit prices of Bangladeshi garments declined slightly, reflecting intense competition and cautious buying by US retailers, according to OTEXA data.

The unit price for Bangladeshi items declined 0.63 percent. The decline for Vietnam was 0.46 percent and 10.47 percent for China. Cambodia's price declined by 7.26 percent, Pakistan's 6.85 percent and Indonesia's 2.72 percent, show OTEXA data.

In the case of India, the unit price increased by 1.57 percent during January-October.

Despite the strong headline growth, exporters said momentum began to ease after August. Shipments weakened in October and November, following the enforcement of the higher tariffs.

Anwar-ul Alam Chowdhury (Parvez), former president of the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA), said the January-October figures do not fully reflect the year's underlying trend.

Meanwhile, retail sales in the United States posted solid year-on-year growth in November, with early holiday-season activity keeping results on track to meet the National Retail Federation's (NRF) 2025 spending forecast, the organisation said in a statement recently.

It means the retail buying is likely to consume the fashion inventory, prompting the US buyers to place fresh orders.

"Retail sales showed healthy year-over-year gains in November, while month-on-month data was largely flat," NRF President and CEO Matthew Shay said.

For large apparel manufacturers like Bangladesh, it is positive news on the export front.

Shay said, "Shoppers looking for online deals may have held back a entire July before higher country-specific rates took effect on August 7 last year. It added with the existing 16 percent, taking the total rate to around 26 percent.

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Anwar-ul Alam Chowdhury (Parvez), former president of the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA), said the January-October figures do not fully reflect the year's underlying trend.

"The growth was concentrated in the early months, when shipments were rushed ahead of tariff enforcement," he said.

Parvez added that export performance slowed after August but expects shipments to stabilise after Bangladesh's general election next month, as international buyers are likely to place full work orders once the heated political atmosphere cools off.

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Shay said, "Shoppers looking for online deals may have held back a bit until Cyber Monday, which fell in December this year due to a late Thanksgiving, likely shifting some spending. Consumers are focusing on value and spending carefully during the holiday period, and retailers are offering products at competitive prices to fit every budget."

"We remain confident in our holiday forecast as well as our retail sales projections for the full year," he concluded.

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Driving export growth

MAMUN RASHID

The major causes of the multifaceted crises facing the country in the recent past have largely been the shortage of foreign currency and the continuous depletion of foreign exchange reserves. Recent upward trends in exports and remittances have helped ease the severity of these two pressures. While remittance inflows continue on an upward trajectory, export earnings are not showing similar momentum.

Export Promotion Bureau (EPB) data shows that export growth declined by nearly 14.25 percent in December 2025. In fact, export performance has been on a downward trend for five consecutive months in the current fiscal year. During the first six months of FY2025-26, Bangladesh exported goods worth $23.99 billion, compared to $24.53 billion in the same period of the previous fiscal year, marking a decline of 2.19 percent.

Many believe the current state of global trade, particularly the reciprocal tariffs imposed by the United States and the resulting erosion of the competitiveness of Bangladeshi products, has played a major role. Higher tariffs in the US market have pushed competing countries such as China and India to divert goods to European markets at relatively lower prices, causing Bangladesh to lose market share.

The domestic socioeconomic environment has also been unfavourable for business and investment over the past few years. The energy crisis, high inflation, elevated interest rates, the mass uprising, incidents of mob violence and other factors have slowed the pace of economic activity. Production has declined, while production costs have increased. Together, these pressures have discouraged new business ventures and fresh investment.

Adding to these challenges is the strain in relations with India. India remains a major trade partner of Bangladesh, not only for raw material imports and product exports, but also because Indian land ports have long played an important role in facilitating Bangladesh exports. The political transition following the mass uprising has affected bilateral diplomatic relations, the past few years. The energy crisis, high inflation, elevated interest rates, the mass uprising, incidents of mob violence and other factors have slowed the pace of economic activity. Production has declined, while production costs have increased. Together, these pressures have discouraged new business ventures and fresh investment.

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A major structural weakness of the export sector is its excessive reliance on a single industry. Any slowdown in garment exports has a direct impact on overall export performance. According to EPB data, garment exports declined by 2.63 percent during this period.

Analysts have long stressed the need to diversify export products, yet little meaningful action has followed.

Competitiveness is the most critical issue in export performance, and there is little evidence of effective countermeasures. While competing countries are offering substantial incentive packages to exporters to offset the impact of reciprocal tariffs, Bangladesh has withdrawn cash incentives and other support, citing various justifications. As a result, competitors have managed to reduce production costs and offer lower prices, while Bangladesh has struggled to do so.

Some experts expect the current uncertainty to ease once an elected government takes office. However, sustainable export growth requires long-term and coherent planning. Alongside policy support, the government must take steps to remove deeper structural barriers.

Export products and destinations need diversification. Both public and private initiatives are required to reduce excessive dependence on ready-made garments. Relying on a limited number of markets for export earnings is equally risky. Along with identifying non-traditional export products, greater emphasis is needed on exploring new destinations. Diversification can reduce the volatility affecting the garment sector due to higher US tariffs and help foster domestic industrial growth. Export diversification should be aligned with industrial, import and financial policies to strengthen overall competitiveness.

The writer is an economic analyst

The Financial Express

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BD may get further tariff cuts, reciprocal free market access

Proposals to be placed before president Trump: Spokesman

FE REPORT

Bangladesh advances towards strengthening its mutually beneficial trade relationship with the United States, opening the door to greater market access and new opportunities for its vital textile and apparel sector.

A spokesperson for the interim government's Chief Adviser Office Saturday broke the news in Dhaka, following a follow-up trade negotiation with the United States in the US capital.

In response to a request from National Security Adviser Dr Khalilur Rahman, who is currently on a visit to Washington, DC, US Trade Representative Ambassador Jamieson Greer has agreed to raise with President Donald Trump the possibility of reducing Bangladesh's current 20-percent reciprocal tariffs to a rate commensurate with regional competitors'.

"Even more significantly, both sides have developed an innovative and forward-looking solution to support Bangladesh's export priorities," says the spokesman about the fresh tradeoff under a proposed preferential trade scheme.

Under a proposed preferential scheme discussed yesterday (Friday) by Dr Rahman and Ambassador Greer, Bangladesh would receive tariff-free access to the US market for textile and apparel exports equivalent to its imports of US-produced cotton and man-made fiber (MMF) textile inputs, measured on a square-meter basis, he adds.

"This creative, win-win approach strengthens bilateral trade, supports Bangladeshi manufacturers and workers, and deepens supply-chain ties with US producers," it is stated.

It reflects growing momentum and goodwill in US-Bangladesh economic relations and marks a promising new chapter for Bangladesh's global trade prospects, the government notes about the latest developments in the aftermath of the Trump tariff tempest which is roiling global trade order.

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TARIFF BREAKTHROUGH TALKS

Proposal to align rates with regional competitors

TARIFF-FREE APPAREL ACCESS LINKED TO US INPUTS

Textile & apparel exports

Equivalent to imports of US cotton & MMF

Measured on square-metre basis

WIN-WIN TRADE FORMULA

Signals warming economic ties

Could offset recent tariff pressures

Garment export to US records double-digit growth

FE REPORT

Bangladesh's apparel export to the United States, its single-largest market, has been on the ascent with a double-digit growth of 15.14 per cent recorded during the first ten months of 2025.

According to US official count, the exports grew both in terms of value and volume during the January-to-October period of the bygone calendar year.

Readymade garment exports from Bangladesh during the period singly fetched US$7.07 billion, marking the 15.14 -percent growth, according to the data released on January 08 by OTEXA, an affiliate of the US Department of Commerce.

The country had earned US$6.14 billion in the same period of 2024.

During the reporting period, the growth rate also reversed the global growth which was 0.60 per cent negative, placing Bangladesh ahead of main competitors, save Cambodia, though Vietnam sustained top-exporter stand pushing China behind.

During the period, Bangladesh outpaced almost all its major competitors in export growth to the US, notwithstanding the tariff turmoil that spell an upset for many exporting countries.

However, exporters say that the OTEXA published the data of September for the shipments made two months back while reciprocal tariffs imposed by the US came into effect on August 7.

According to state-owned Export Promotion Bureau (EPB) data, published two months ahead of Otexa data release, overall RMG exports have already started facing a downtrend for the past five months since August 2025.

Meantime, during the January - October period, Bangladesh shipped 2.27 billion square meters of garments, about 15.87-percent higher than 1.96 billion square meters sent in the corresponding period of 2024.

America's overall apparel imports during the time stood at US$66.62 billion, down from $67.02 billion in the corresponding period of the previous year.

Vietnam, during the first ten months of 2025, became leading apparel exporter to the US, shipping RMG items worth US$14.16 billion, accounting for about an 11.54-percent growth.

China dropped to the second position with US$9.49 billion worth of apparel shipments with a 32.46-percent year-on-year negative growth, highlighting the effects of elevated tariff barriers and ongoing geopolitical tensions.

Asked about the industry view, Mohiuddin Rubel, former Director of BGMEA, said US overall apparel imports declined both in value and volume by 0.61 per cent and 2.24 per cent respectively while unit prices increased by 1.67 per cent.

"This is a clear signal that the market is slowing after a long period of growth, with buyers likely prioritizing value, consolidation, and price optimization," he says.

"On paper, growth remained positive and impressive in 2025, especially against a nearly flat US market."

However, the trend suggests potential headwinds ahead, with signs that momentum may slow in the near future as buying patterns shift, inventories normalize, and competition intensifies from other South and Southeast Asian suppliers.

He, however explains that these figures are based on OTEXA data, which reflects imports at US territory only.

OTEXA data are generally published with about a two-month lag, so what they see now is already slightly behind real-time market dynamics.

Sector insiders, however, note that Bangladesh is facing challenges in the EU where the economy is undergoing difficulties while major competitors like China have been focusing on that market due to high US tariff walls on China's goods.

Exporters say though Chinese orders have been shifting from the US due to high tariffs, China is increasing its share in the EU market aggressively by offering 'much lower prices' to buyers to offset US market-share decline.

Meantime, India's apparel exports rose by 8.60 per cent to US$4.39 billion during the January-to-October period of 2025. Indonesia recorded a 10.07 -percent increase in apparel shipments to US$3.98 billion, continuing its steady growth as a supplier to the US market.

Cambodia bagged 25.46-percent rise in exports, reaching US$4.04 billion, during the period under consideration.

Pakistan also recorded a growth of 12.28 per cent to bag US $2.02 billion from the US market.

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The Business Standard
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Trump tariffs trigger 11% drop in Bangladesh's RMG exports to US in October

EXPORT - BANGLADESH

TBS REPORT

Compared with China and India, Bangladesh's exports are relatively less affected

Bangladesh's ready-made garment exports to the United States fell by nearly 11% year-on-year in October as higher tariffs imposed by the Trump administration reduced consumer demand and disrupted buying patterns in the world's largest apparel market.

The impact of the Trump administration's reciprocal tariff measures is increasingly being felt across almost all apparel-exporting countries, primarily due to a contraction in US consumption driven by higher import duties.

According to the latest data released by the Office of Textiles and Apparel (Otexa), the downturn was not limited to Bangladesh, as apparel shipments from nearly all major exporting countries to the US fell.

Otexa data shows that overall US apparel imports dropped by around 19% in October, reflecting weakening demand amid rising prices. Exporters attribute the slowdown largely to higher tariffs, which have pushed up retail prices and discouraged consumer spending.

Under the new tariff regime introduced from August, Bangladeshi apparel products are now subject to an additional 20% duty, taking the total tariff burden to 36%. China and India face even higher tariff rates, resulting in a sharper decline in exports from those countries.

In October alone, US apparel imports from China plunged by 53%, while imports from India fell by nearly 29%, according to Otexa.

Demand dampens in US due to inflation

Shehab Udduza Chowdhury, vice-president of the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA), told TBS that higher tariffs have fuelled inflation in the US apparel market. "Because of higher prices, consumers who used to buy five garments may now be buying only three," he said.

Shehab added that frequent policy changes under the Trump administration have created uncertainty among US buyers and global brands, prompting them to reduce inventory levels and avoid holding long-term stock. "Many buyers also rushed to place orders before the new tariffs came into effect on 7 August, leading to a subsequent drop in shipments."

He continued, "This could ultimately create a crisis in the US apparel supply chain, which may trigger another round of price increases."

Otexa data indicates that US apparel imports recorded growth between January and July, but began to decline after the new tariffs were enforced in August. China, the largest exporter to the US, has been the worst affected by the shift.

Bangladesh is relatively less affected

Bangladeshi exporters note that, compared with China and India, the export performance of Bangladesh, Pakistan and Cambodia has been relatively less affected.

Overall, US apparel imports fell by about 1% during the first 10 months of the year, from January to October, amounting to $66.63 billion, down from more than $67 billion in the same period last year.

Despite the recent slowdown, Bangladesh's garment exports to the US still grew by more than 15% over the ten months, although this was lower than the nearly 22% growth recorded between January and July. By contrast, US apparel imports from China declined by 32% during the same period.

The Business Standard

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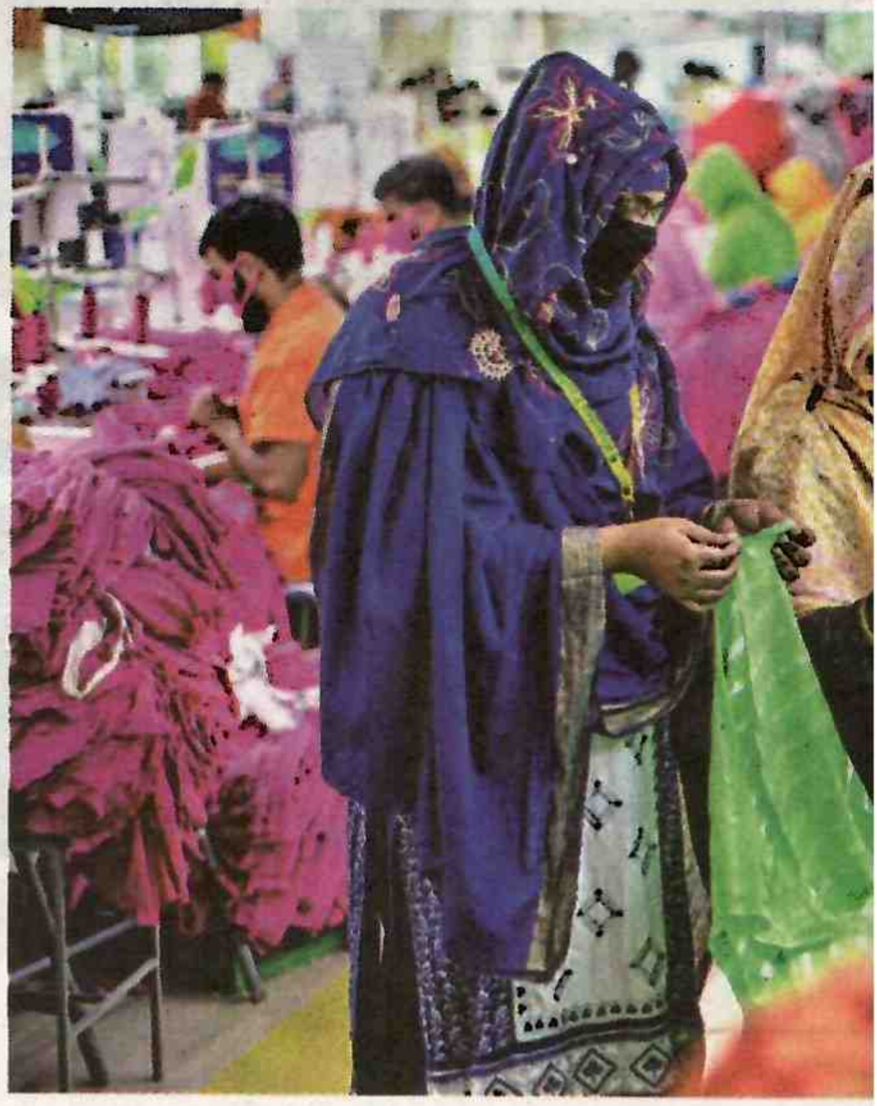
Why Bangladesh should embrace man-made fiber for sustained export growth

Man-made fibre apparel accounts for roughly 39% of the global market. Yet Bangladesh's share in the global market stands at a mere 6%, representing a significant missed opportunity for the country's apparel sector



Man-made fibre garments are more durable, moisture-wickin

Ashikur Rahman Tuhin
Managing Director, TAD Group

Bangladesh's apparel exports remain heavily concentrated in six major destinations—the United States, Europe, the United Kingdom, Canada, Japan, and Australia—and revolve around five core products: trousers, shirts, t-shirts, sweaters, and jackets. Overwhelmingly, these products are manufactured from cotton, reflecting the industry's traditional reliance on natural fibres.

The global apparel market, valued at over $500 billion, presents a revealing picture of changing material preferences. Cotton apparel constitutes approximately 40% of the market share, while man-made fibre (MMF) apparel accounts for roughly 39%. Yet Bangladesh's penetration in the global MMF apparel market stands at a mere 6%, while competitors like China and Vietnam command 40% and 10%, respectively. This highlights a significant missed opportunity for Bangladesh's apparel sector.

Worldwide consumer preferences, particularly in the post-Covid-19 era, have been shifting decisively from cotton to MMF apparel due to the latter's versatility and superior functional properties. MMF garments are more durable, moisture-wicking, wrinkle-resistant, and recyclable—attributes increasingly valued by modern consumers, especially Gen Z.

One of the most significant recent developments in man-made fibres is that, through innovation, they now offer comfort levels comparable to cotton. Advanced polyester and viscose variants have been engineered to replicate cotton's softness and breathability. Man-made fibres can now be processed and transformed much like cotton.

Cotton used in Bangladesh's apparel industry is not domestically produced, forcing the textile and garment sector to spend substantial foreign exchange on importing cotton and cotton fabrics each year. By pivoting toward the MMF segment, Bangladesh could simultaneously address two critical challenges: reducing import dependence and enhancing environmental sustainability.

MMF is more sustainable than cotton. Cotton production carries a significant water footprint—producing one kilogram of cotton requires approximately 8,000 to 10,000 litres of water in the field, and studies indicate that manufacturing a single cotton shirt can consume about 2,700 litres of water. In a world increasingly conscious of resource conservation, MMF presents a more sustainable alternative that aligns with global environmental expectations and buyer requirements.

However, Bangladesh's current policy framework inadvertently disadvantages MMF production. While the country allows duty-free cotton imports for its textile industry, man-made fibres remain subject to import tariffs. These tariffs on MMF must be eliminated to ensure the country's competitiveness in the burgeoning man-made apparel market.

Establishing robust backward linkages represents another crucial pathway to reducing reliance on MMF imports and capturing greater value within the domestic economy. Currently, the most significant obstacle to investment in MMF backward linkages is energy security. The energy-intensive nature of synthetic fibre production requires reliable, uninterrupted power and gas supplies. The government should prioritise providing dedicated gas connections to new MMF-based spinning and textile factories, viewing this as a strategic investment in seizing emerging global market opportunities.

Attracting foreign direct investment (FDI) in the MMF sector could serve as a powerful catalyst in transforming Bangladesh into a global powerhouse [cut off] apparel production. The current geopoliti[cut off] landscape has created unprecedented op[cut off] this regard. Following the imposition of s[cut off] tariffs on Chinese exports, many Chinese [cut off]

The government should conside[cut off] establishing a dedicated MMF investment promotion cell with[cut off] relevant ministries to provide o[cut off] stop services for foreign and do[cut off] investors. This cell could stream[cut off] bureaucratic processes, facilitat[cut off] land acquisition, expedite utilit[cut off] connections, and serve as a liais[cut off] between investors and various government agencies. It would [cut off] the country's seriousness about sector development and enhanc[cut off] its attractiveness as an investm[cut off] destination.

actively seeking to relocate or diversify the[cut off] bases to countries like Bangladesh, where [cut off] remain relatively favourable.

If Bangladeshi entrepreneurs forge jo[cut off] with experienced Chinese MMF investors, [cut off] would extend far beyond capital infusion[cut off] nerships could facilitate critical technolo[cut off] enabling local manufacturers to leapfrog de[cut off]

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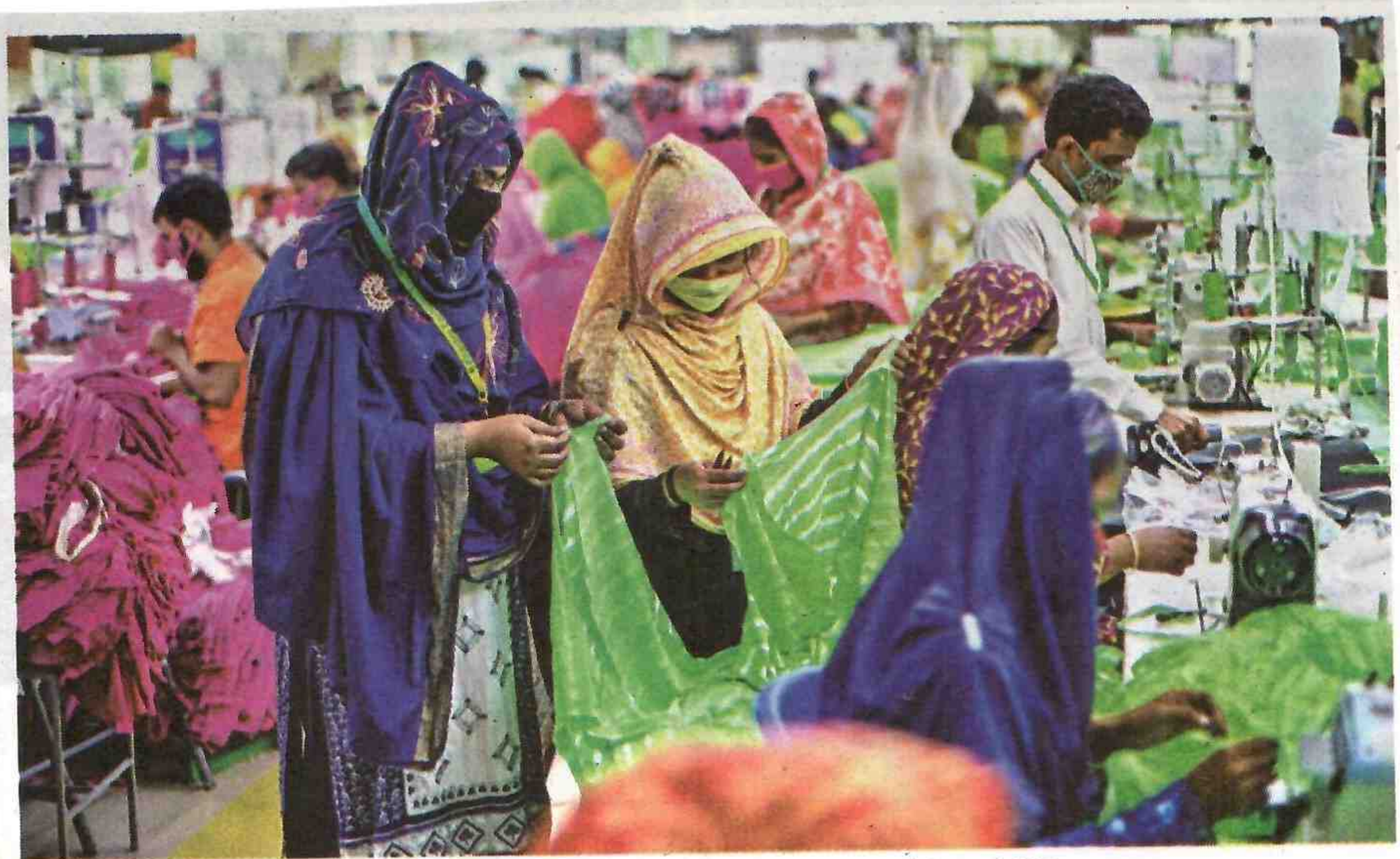

Man-made fibre garments are more durable, moisture-wicking, wrinkle-resistant, and recyclable. PHOTO: TBS

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The government should consider establishing a dedicated MMF investment promotion cell within relevant ministries to provide one-stop services for foreign and domestic investors. This cell could streamline bureaucratic processes, facilitate land acquisition, expedite utility connections, and serve as a liaison between investors and various government agencies. It would signal the country's seriousness about MMF sector development and enhance its attractiveness as an investment destination.

actively seeking to relocate or diversify their production bases to countries like Bangladesh, where US tariff rates remain relatively favourable.

If Bangladeshi entrepreneurs forge joint ventures with experienced Chinese MMF investors, the benefits would extend far beyond capital infusion. Such partnerships could facilitate critical technology transfer, enabling local manufacturers to leapfrog developmental stages and adopt cutting-edge production techniques.

The government can play a pivotal role in facilitating these business-to-business matchmaking opportunities through proactive industrial diplomacy. Organising dedicated Bangladeshi apparel and textile trade delegations to visit counterparts in China would create platforms for relationship-building and exploring collaboration opportunities.

Reciprocally, inviting Chinese apparel and textile entrepreneurs to Bangladesh for structured dialogues with local trade bodies and manufacturers could accelerate mutual understanding and deal-making. The timing for strengthening Bangladesh-China business ties could not be more opportune.

Furthermore, the government should consider establishing a dedicated MMF investment promotion cell within relevant ministries to provide one-stop services for both foreign and domestic investors. This cell could streamline bureaucratic processes, facilitate land acquisition, expedite utility connections, and act as a liaison between investors and various government agencies. It would signal the country's commitment to MMF sector development and enhance its attractiveness as an investment destination.

Bangladesh's apparel industry has demonstrated remarkable resilience and adaptability over the decades. Embracing the man-made fibre revolution is no longer merely an option but an imperative for sustaining export growth, enhancing competitiveness, and securing the sector's future in an evolving global marketplace.

ASHIKUR RAHMAN TUHIN IS THE MANAGING DIRECTOR OF TAD GROUP. HE IS A FORMER DIRECTOR OF BANGLADESH GARMENT MANUFACTURERS & EXPORTERS ASSOCIATION (BGMEA).