সমকাল

26 MAR 2026

ইইউতে পোশাক রপ্তানি কমেছে ২৫%

ইউরোস্ট্যাস্টের তথ্য

ইইউ গত জানুয়ারিতে বিভিন্ন দেশ থেকে ৭০৩ কোটি ইউরোর পোশাক আমদানি করেছে, যা গত বছরের একই সময়ের তুলনায় সাড়ে ১৫ শতাংশ কম।

- গত জানুয়ারিতে বাংলাদেশ রপ্তানি করেছে ১৪৩ কোটি ইউরোর তৈরি পোশাক।
- গত বছরের জানুয়ারিতে রপ্তানি হয়েছিল ১৯১ কোটি ইউরোর তৈরি পোশাক।

নিজস্ব প্রতিবেদক, *ঢাকা*

ইউরোপীয় ইউনিয়নভুক্ত (ইইউ) দেশগুলোয় তৈরি পোশাক রপ্তানিতে চলতি বছরের শুরুটা ভালো হয়নি। গত জানুয়ারিতে ইইউতে বাংলাদেশের তৈরি পোশাক রপ্তানি প্রায় ২৫ শতাংশ কমেছে। বাংলাদেশের পাশাপাশি এ সময়ে ইইউতে বাংলাদেশের প্রতিযোগী দেশগুলোর রপ্তানিও বিভিন্ন হারে কমেছে।

ইউরোস্ট্যাস্টের পরিসংখ্যান অনুযায়ী, ইইউভুক্ত দেশগুলো চলতি বছরের জানুয়ারিতে বিভিন্ন দেশ থেকে ৭০৩ কোটি ইউরোর তৈরি পোশাক আমদানি করেছে। এই আমদানি গত বছরের একই সময়ের তুলনায় সাড়ে ১৫ শতাংশ কম। যদিও পরিমাণের দিক থেকে তৈরি পোশাক আমদানি কমেছে ৮ দশমিক ৩৬ শতাংশ। জানুয়ারিতে ৩৮ কোটি কেজির সমপরিমাণ তৈরি পোশাক আমদানি করে ইইউভুক্ত দেশগুলো। তার বিপরীতে গত বছরের জানুয়ারিতে আমদানি করেছিল ৪১ কোটি কেজির সমপরিমাণ তৈরি পোশাক।

ইইউর দেশগুলোয় তৈরি পোশাক রপ্তানিতে চীন বরাবরের মতো শীর্ষস্থানে রয়েছে। জানুয়ারিতে এই অঞ্চলে ২২২ কোটি ইউরোর তৈরি পোশাক রপ্তানি করে চীন। এ রপ্তানি গত বছরের একই সময়ের তুলনায় ৬ দশমিক ৯০ শতাংশ কম। জানুয়ারিতে চীনের প্রতি কেজি পোশাকের দাম কমেছে ৮ শতাংশ।

বাংলাদেশ ইইউর বাজারে দ্বিতীয় শীর্ষ তৈরি পোশাক রপ্তানিকারক দেশ। জানুয়ারিতে বাংলাদেশ রপ্তানি করেছে ১৪৩ কোটি ইউরোর তৈরি পোশাক। এ রপ্তানি গত বছরের একই সময়ের তুলনায় ২৫ দশমিক ২৫ শতাংশ কম। গত বছরের জানুয়ারিতে রপ্তানি হয়েছিল ১৯১ কোটি ইউরোর তৈরি পোশাক। পরিমাণের দিক থেকে চলতি বছরের জানুয়ারিতে বাংলাদেশের রপ্তানি কমেছে সাড়ে ১৭ শতাংশ। সেই হিসাবে জানুয়ারিতে রপ্তানি করা তৈরি পোশাকের দাম কমেছে ৯ দশমিক ৪১ শতাংশ।

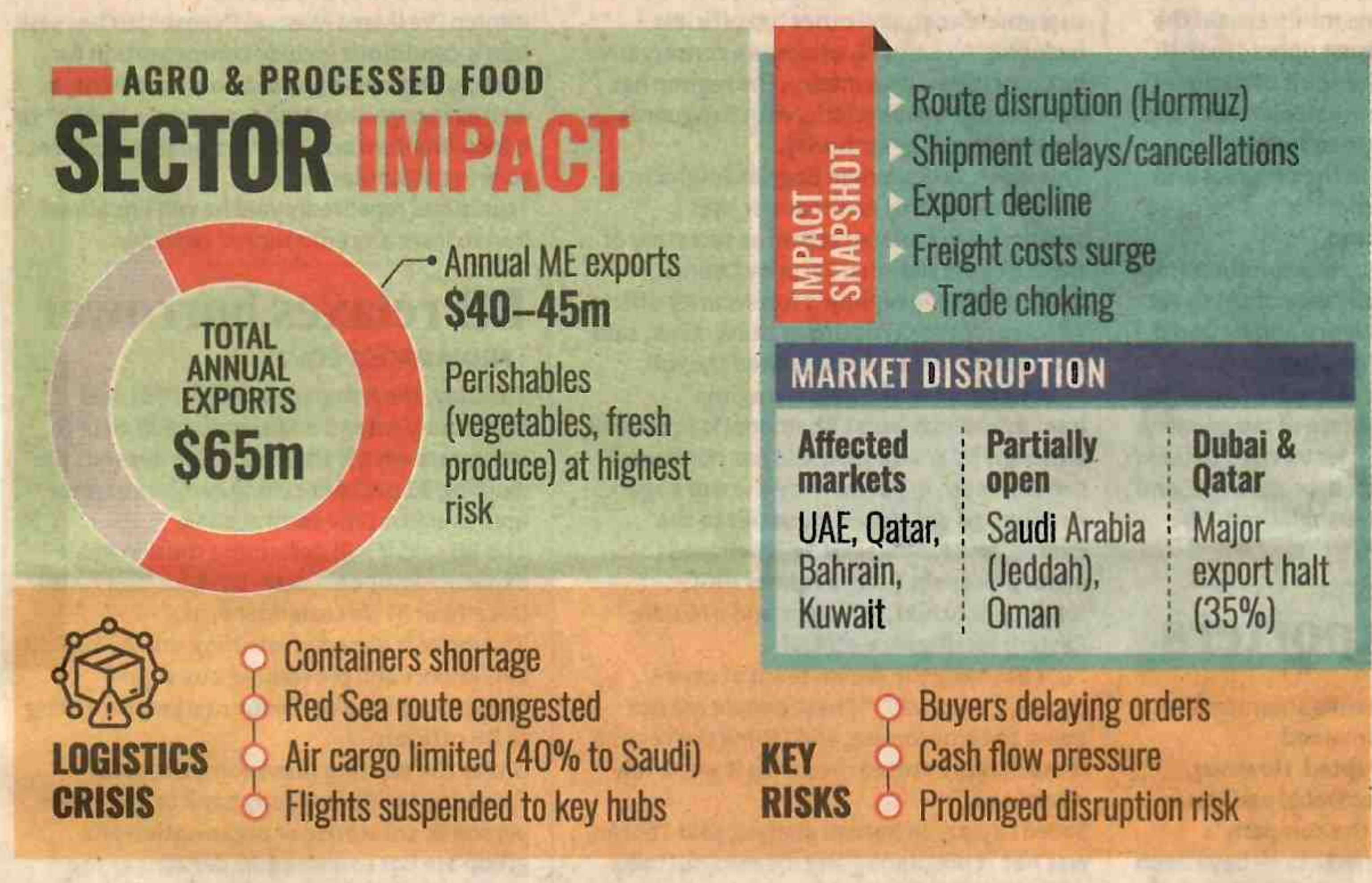
ইইউতে তৃতীয় সর্বোচ্চ তৈরি পোশাক রপ্তানিকারক দেশ তুরস্ক। এই বাজারে জানুয়ারিতে ৬২ কোটি ইউরোর তৈরি পোশাক রপ্তানি করেছে তুরস্ক। এই রপ্তানি গত বছরের একই সময়ের তুলনায় ২৯ শতাংশ কম। অবশ্য দেশটির রপ্তানি করা তৈরি পোশাকের প্রতি কেজির দাম জানুয়ারিতে ৩ দশমিক ৭২ শতাংশ বেড়েছে।

ইউরোস্ট্যাস্টের তথ্যানুযায়ী, ইইউতে তৃতীয় ও চতুর্থ শীর্ষ তৈরি পোশাক রপ্তানিকারক দেশ যথাক্রমে ভিয়েতনাম ও ভারত। জানুয়ারিতে ভিয়েতনাম রপ্তানি করেছে ৩৬ কোটি ইউরোর তৈরি পোশাক। এই রপ্তানি গত বছরের একই সময়ের তুলনায় ৭ শতাংশ কম। অন্যদিকে ভারত জানুয়ারিতে ৩৪ কোটি ইউরোর তৈরি পোশাক রপ্তানি করেছে। এই রপ্তানি গত বছরের জানুয়ারির তুলনায় ১৫ শতাংশ কম। চলতি বছরের প্রথম মাসে ভিয়েতনাম ও ভারতের প্রতি কেজি তৈরি পোশাকের দাম যথাক্রমে ৬ দশমিক ৫০ শতাংশ ও ১ দশমিক ৮৩ শতাংশ বেড়েছে।

The Financial Express
26 MAR 2026

Agro, vegetable exporters hit hard, seek market diversification

Freight charges on risky routes more than double



JASIM UDDIN

Bangladesh's agro-processed food and vegetable exporters lament irreparable business losses as the ongoing Middle East war chokes key Gulf trade routes, halts shipments and drives up freight costs.

Industry insiders say exports to major destinations in the Arab world such as the UAE, Qatar, Bahrain and Kuwait have plummeted, following shipment delays and cancellations.

Facing mounting uncertainty, some leading agro-based food companies have begun restructuring operations to contain losses and maintain liquidity.

One such exporter has suspended product supply to the domestic market, too, amid fuel shortages and fears of power outages, while advising all business units to revise pricing and prioritise high-margin essential products.

Production of non-essential items is being scaled back, with a stronger focus on preserving raw materials and avoiding wastage during the ongoing logistical crisis.

The company has also instructed its units to accelerate the recovery of outstanding payments and rely on existing inventories to keep markets supplied until the situation stabilises.

Seeking anonymity, a senior official has said business-unit heads have been asked to reassess available raw materials and determine production priorities in line with market realities.

"Raw materials should be preserved rather than used for non-essential products. We are focusing only on basic items with better margins, while avoiding low-margin production given the severity of the crisis," the official said.

He added that unsold goods produced at earlier prices are being released quickly into the market to maintain cash flow, while distribution channels are being kept active using existing dealer stocks.

Industry insiders warn that prolonged disruption to Gulf trade routes could lead to significant export losses, particularly for perishable agro-and vegetable products unless alternative logistics and market-diversification measures are put in place quickly.

Talking to the FE, Proshanta Kumar Ghosh, DGM (Export) of ACI Foods Limited, said most carriers are now unwilling to accept containers that usually move through the Strait of Hormuz -- a hotspot in the US-Israel war against Iran -- forcing exporters to halt shipments or seek alternative routes.

"As a result, our key markets in the Gulf are now fully stocked," he said, adding that shipments via the Red Sea route through Jeddah are continuing, though under significant constraints.

Freight costs have more than doubled amid the disruption. The average cost of shipping a 20-foot container to Jeddah has surged to $5,000 from around $2,000.

"Even our previously negotiated rate of $1,900 per container is no longer being honoured, and we are now shipping at $5,000," he added.

Exporters are also grappling with an acute shortage of containers as most shipments are being diverted to the Red Sea corridor, further straining logistics.

Buyers in the region have turned cautious, delaying import decisions due to uncertainty over supply chains and the potential escalation in the crisis, exporters said.

Kabir Ahmed, former president of BAFFA, says Bangladesh's general trade with the Gulf has effectively stalled due to the disruption to the Strait of Hormuz, a critical maritime route linking the region with global markets.

However, he notes that fuel shipments are continuing partially, while some trade with Saudi Arabia is being maintained through air freight -- accounting for up to 40 per cent of usual volumes -- as a limited airport, while shipments to Oman remained uninterrupted. However, exports to Dubai and Qatar -- two of the company's largest markets -- have been halted, accounting for nearly 35 per cent of its regional exports.

The disruption has been particularly challenging for vegetable exporters, as delays and logistical bottlenecks increase the risk of spoilage and financial losses.

According to industry estimates, Bangladesh exports agro- and processed-food products worth around $40-45 million annually to the

TOTAL ANNUAL EXPORTS
$65m

$40-45m
Perishables (vegetables, fresh produce) at highest risk

Trade choking

MARKET DISRUPTION

Affected markets	Partially open	Dubai & Qatar
UAE, Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait	Saudi Arabia (Jeddah), Oman	Major export halt (35%)

LOGISTICS CRISIS
- Containers shortage
- Red Sea route congested
- Air cargo limited (40% to Saudi)
- Flights suspended to key hubs

KEY RISKS
- Buyers delaying orders
- Cash flow pressure
- Prolonged disruption risk

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Kabir Ahmed, former president of BAFFA, says Bangladesh's general trade with the Gulf has effectively stalled due to the disruption to the Strait of Hormuz, a critical maritime route linking the region with global markets.

However, he notes that fuel shipments are continuing partially, while some trade with Saudi Arabia is being maintained through air freight -- accounting for up to 40 per cent of usual volumes -- as a limited number of airlines remain operational.

Air connectivity with Dubai, the UAE, Qatar, Oman and Bahrain has, however, remained largely suspended in recent days, further affecting bilateral trade, particularly for perishable items such as vegetables and fresh produce.

Eleash Mridha, Managing Director of PRAN Group, says export to Saudi Arabia is continuing through Jeddah airport, while shipments to Oman remained uninterrupted. However, exports to Dubai and Qatar -- two of the company's largest markets -- have been halted, accounting for nearly 35 per cent of its regional exports.

The disruption has been particularly challenging for vegetable exporters, as delays and logistical bottlenecks increase the risk of spoilage and financial losses.

According to industry estimates, Bangladesh exports agro- and processed-food products worth around $40-45 million annually to the Middle East, while the broader agro-sector earned about $65 million in the last fiscal year.

Stakeholders warn that if the disruption persists, it could have a prolonged impact on exporters, particularly those dealing in perishable and fast-moving consumer goods. They have urged support measures and market diversification to mitigate risks.

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WTO-MC14 and the LDCs in the disruptive trade environment

DEBAPRIYA BHATTACHARYA AND **MAMTAJUL JANNAT**

Never in the history of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) have the least developed countries (LDCs) approached a Ministerial Conference with such a dim outlook. The 14th Ministerial Conference (MC14), set to open in Yaoundé, Cameroon, on 26 March 2026, takes place against a backdrop of deepening unilateralism, institutional paralysis, and an increasingly hostile global trade environment. Of the 44 LDCs, 37 are WTO members, four are in the process of acceding. These countries account for less than one per cent of the global trade. For these countries, which depend most on the rules-based multilateral trading system, MC14 is not routine business. It is an existential moment.

The disruption of the global trade order

The most disruptive force reshaping global trade today is the unilateral trade policy of the United States. Since early 2025, Washington has imposed sweeping tariffs invoking reciprocity, national security, and industrial competitiveness. The US Supreme Court struck down the IEEPA-based tariffs in February 2026, ruling that the International Emergency Economic Powers Act does not authorise the President to impose tariffs. But the reprieve was brief. The administration

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shifted to Section 122 of the Trade Act, announcing a 15 per cent global tariff for 150 days. Within weeks, the administration launched Section 301 investigations into 16 economies for structural excess manufacturing capacity — two of which, Bangladesh and Cambodia, are LDCs — and a separate probe into 60 economies over failure to enforce forced labour import bans.

What does this mean for LDCs? The weighted average US tariff on their exports has tripled to over 28 per cent. Yet LDC exports account for less than one per cent of total US imports. In goods trade, the balance is currently positive for LDCs and growing — reaching $26 billion in 2025, driven largely by apparel exports from Cambodia and Bangladesh — while the US runs a surplus in services. Washington's fixation on the goods deficit, without accounting for

discussion. And critically, food insecurity, gender, climate, digital trade, and policy space for industrialisation remain absent from the multilateral trade agenda. The WTO is being weakened not only by external assault but by the failure to make it relevant to the challenges that actually define our time.

A relatively weak collective position of LDCs

LDCs enter MC14 from a position of structural weakness. Their share of global exports has stagnated at just over one per cent since 2011. Thirty-eight of the 44 LDCs remain commodity-dependent. Their productive capacities, as measured by UNCTAD's index, score 23.6 out of 100, compared to 32.4 for other developing countries and roughly 70 for developed economies. The Doha Programme of Action's ambitious

it has diplomatic relations, while actively investing in critical minerals across the continent. The EU-India Free Trade Agreement, recently concluded, includes duty-free textile access for India, directly eroding preference margins that LDC exporters depend on. The EU's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism entered its definitive phase in January 2026, adding compliance costs that LDC exporters are poorly equipped to bear.

Meanwhile, the US is linking resource access in LDCs to peace deals and sanctions policy, brokering mineral extraction agreements through Rwanda in the DRC and lifting sanctions on Myanmar's military-linked companies to access rare earth deposits. The climate-trade interface remains an unresolved policy challenge, with green conditionalities multiplying but no commensurate support for LDC

without being subject to dispute proceedings, concrete commitments on smooth transition support, and protection of the special and differential treatment provisions that graduating countries will shortly lose.

What MC14 must deliver

Expectations for MC14 are muted, and perhaps rightly so. But low expectations should not become an excuse for inaction. For LDCs, a ministerial conference that produces no meaningful outcome is not a neutral result — it is a step backward. Six priorities should guide LDC delegations at Yaoundé and beyond.

First, defend consensus-based decision-making, the single undertaking, and the MFN principle. Push for restoration of the dispute settlement mechanism.

Second, secure binding extensions of

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The gradual withering of the WTO

The crisis is not limited to US unilateralism. The WTO itself is being hollowed out. Its negotiating function has stalled, with no major multilateral agreement concluded since the Trade Facilitation Agreement in 2013. The dispute settlement mechanism — the crown jewel of the system — remains paralysed after years of blocked Appellate Body appointments, leaving members without recourse against rule-breaking. The US has suspended its financial contributions, accumulating significant arrears. Its December 2025 communication to the WTO General Council explicitly challenged the most-favoured-nation principle, arguing that countries must be able to treat different trading partners differently, and that the WTO's future lies in plurilateral, not multilateral, negotiations.

The three reform tracks heading into MC14, covering governance, fairness, and so-called issues of our time, have generated more process than progress. Notably, the EU, China, India, and the UK have all centred their MC14 statements on WTO reform — a rare convergence that underscores the depth of the institutional crisis even as these members differ sharply on what reform should look like. The level playing field debate, conspicuously excludes unilateral tariffs from the fairness discussion. And critically, food insecurity, gender, climate, digital trade, and policy space for industrialisation remain absent from the multilateral trade agenda. The WTO is being weakened not only by external assault but by the failure to make it relevant to the challenges that actually define our time.

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The LDC Group at the WTO, coordinated by The Gambia, faces an unenviable task. Twenty-six of the 30 holdover LDCs are in Africa, and for them the lapse of AGOA and the simultaneous expansion of Chinese duty-free access to all 53 African countries with diplomatic relations create a geopolitical tug-of-war over market alignment. On the e-commerce moratorium, LDCs risk losing tariff revenue and digital policy space if it is made permanent at MC14, yet they lack the collective weight to block it. Building coalitions within this group, and with the broader developing country membership, has not been easy — 44 countries spanning three continents, with vastly different trade profiles and immediate priorities, do not naturally speak with one voice.

The new scramble for LDC economies

The pressures on LDC economies are not coming from one direction alone. The African Growth and Opportunity Act lapsed in September 2025 and was extended only through December 2026, the shortest renewal in its 25-year history, with the US demanding alignment with its America First Trade Policy. China, meanwhile, has expanded duty-free quota-free access to all 53 African countries with which it has diplomatic relations, while actively investing in critical minerals across the continent. The EU-India Free Trade Agreement, recently concluded, includes duty-free textile access for India, directly eroding preference margins that LDC exporters depend on. The EU's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism entered its definitive phase in January 2026, adding compliance costs that LDC exporters are poorly equipped to bear.

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What this means for Bangladesh

Bangladesh approaches MC14 with what might be called a trinity of identities: it is an LDC until November 2026, a graduating LDC that has formally requested a three-year deferment from the UN Committee for Development Policy, and a future developing country that will need to navigate the post-preference landscape. Each identity carries different types of challenges.

The US-Bangladesh Economic Partnership Agreement, signed in February 2026, offers a window into what bilateral trade relationships look like when the multilateral framework recedes. In exchange for a reduction in tariffs to 19 per cent, Bangladesh committed to purchasing Boeing aircraft, $15 billion in energy imports over 15 years, opening its agricultural market to US products, and buying US military equipment, with restrictions on imports from so-called non-market countries. This is not trade diplomacy as LDCs have known it. It is a transactional arrangement that narrows policy space and constrains foreign relations.

For Bangladesh, and for graduating LDCs more broadly, the asks at MC14 must be defined through the LDC lens: binding extensions of duty-free quota-free market access beyond graduation, preservation of TRIPS flexibilities for pharmaceutical production, continued access to subsidies without being subject to dispute proceedings, concrete commitments on smooth transition support, and protection of the special and differential treatment provisions that graduating countries will shortly lose.

What MC14 must deliver

Expectations for MC14 are muted, and perhaps rightly so. But low expectations should not become an excuse for inaction. For LDCs, a ministerial conference that produces no meaningful outcome is not a neutral result — it is a step backward. Six priorities should guide LDC delegations at Yaoundé and beyond.

First, defend consensus-based decision-making, the single undertaking, and the MFN principle. Push for restoration of the dispute settlement mechanism.

Second, secure binding extensions of international support measures for graduating LDCs, including DFQF, TRIPS waivers, and SDT flexibilities. The MC13 three-year transition period is insufficient.

Third, challenge the reframing of development tools such as export subsidies as trade violations, and demand that unilateral tariffs be included in the level playing field debate.

Fourth, insist that food insecurity, gender, climate, digital trade, and policy space for industrialisation be placed on the multilateral trade agenda.

Fifth, strengthen South-South coalitions through the G-33, the African Group, and regional platforms such as AfCFTA.

Sixth, prepare for life beyond preferences by accelerating smooth transition strategies, pursuing bilateral and regional trade agreements, and investing in productive capacities, export diversification, and services trade.

The multilateral trading system was built, in principle, to protect the interests of its weakest members. Whether it can still do so is the question MC14 must answer. LDC ambassadors heading to Yaoundé must be clear-eyed about the environment they are walking into, and equally clear about what they intend to secure.

DR DEBAPRIYA BHATTACHARYA IS A FORMER AMBASSADOR AT THE WTO AND A DISTINGUISHED FELLOW AT THE CENTRE FOR POLICY DIALOGUE (CPD). MS MAMTAJUL JANNAT IS A SENIOR RESEARCH ASSOCIATE AT CPD.