

Apparel exports to US dip 0.9pc in Jan amid global sourcing shift

FE REPORT

Bangladesh's apparel exports to its single-largest overseas market, the US, faced a setback in January, as America's overall garment imports dropped significantly. Bangladesh earned \$791.77 million from ready-made garment (RMG) exports to the US in January 2026, registering a 0.9 per cent year-on-year decline, according to the latest data.

In January 2025, RMG exports to the US stood at \$799 million while the figure was \$547.95 million in January 2024.

The Office of Textiles and Apparel (OTEXA), an affiliate of the US Department of Commerce, released the data on Tuesday.

While export value dipped slightly, shipment volume told a different story. Bangladesh shipped 264.04 million square metres of apparel to the US in January 2026, representing a 1.18 per cent increase, compared to 261.29 million square metres in the same month last year.

The shipment volume was 175.11 million square metres in

US APPAREL IMPORTS FALL, BANGLADESH SLIPS

JANUARY 2026
US Apparel Imports **\$6.22b**
↓ 13.51% (YoY)

BANGLADESH EXPORTS TO US

Value	\$791.8m	0.9% ↓
Volume	264m sqm	1.18% ↑
Unit price		2.06% ↓

• Exporters earn 10% less vs EU

January 2024. Industry insiders said the January 2025 figure represented an 'unusual month', as the base in January 2024 was relatively weak due to various economic headwinds. They noted that many US importers

brought forward shipments ahead of higher tariffs imposed under the administration of Donald Trump. The reasons for past setbacks included a sluggish economy triggered by the twin crises of the Covid-19 pandemic and the Russia-

GLOBAL COMPETITORS (In percentage)



• Cambodia & Indonesia gaining share

Ukraine war, which left US retailers with excess inventory and discouraged Western buyers from placing new orders, they said. Industry experts also warned that

tensions involving the US-Israel war on Iran could create further uncertainty for the sector.

The OTEXA data reveals significant shifts in global apparel sourcing. Vietnam emerged as the top performer among major suppliers, recording 3.01 per cent growth in export value to \$1.48 billion and a 3.72 per cent increase in volume to 415.22 million square metres. Meanwhile, China experienced a steep 62.32 per cent decline in value to \$603.92 million and a 51.23 per cent drop in volume to 419.63 million square metres.

India also faced headwinds, with exports falling 18.30 per cent to \$385.41 million and volume declining 15.37 per cent to 109.24 million square metres in January 2026.

Overall US apparel imports contracted 13.51 per cent

year-on-year to \$6.22 billion in January 2026, reflecting persistent demand softness amid elevated inflation and cautious consumer spending.

Talking to The FE, Mohammad Hatem, president of the Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BKMEA), said uncertainty surrounding new US tariff regimes has dampened demand across manufacturing hubs.

The impact is almost the same for all manufacturing countries, including Bangladesh, he noted.

Asked about the growth dynamics, Inamul Haq Khan, vice president of the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA), pointed to declining purchasing power in both the US and EU markets due to high inflation. Vietnam and Cambodia are

doing better despite all the challenges, he noted. Mohiuddin Rubel, deputy managing director of Denim Expert Ltd, said overall US apparel imports have declined, which has affected Bangladesh's shipments as well.

He also said the unit price of Bangladeshi garments exported to the US fell by 2.06 per cent, compared with 0.60 per cent in Vietnam, 22.74 per cent in China, 3.45 per cent in India and 1.95 per cent in Cambodia.

Pakistan was the sole exception, posting a marginal 0.29 per cent price increase. A recent RAPID study revealed that Bangladeshi exporters receive approximately 10 per cent lower prices for garments shipped to the US, compared to EU destinations, adding pressure on already thin margins.

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