প্রথম আলো

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সংক্ষেপে

বেপজা অর্থনৈতিক অঞ্চলে চীনা বিনিয়োগ

চট্টগ্রামের মিরসরাইয়ে বেপজা অর্থনৈতিক অঞ্চলে ফ্লিজ জ্যাকেট, সফট শেল জ্যাকেট, কটন কোট, লেদার জ্যাকেট, আন্ডারওয়্যারসহ বিভিন্ন পণ্য তৈরি করবে হংকংভিত্তিক প্রতিষ্ঠান ফ্লারিশ গার্মেন্টস বাংলাদেশ কোম্পানি। এ জন্য প্রতিষ্ঠানটি ১ কোটি ৫৩ লাখ মার্কিন ডলার বিনিয়োগ করবে এবং দুই হাজার জনের কর্মসংস্থান হবে। এক বিজ্ঞপ্তিতে গতকাল রোববার এ তথ্য জানিয়েছে বেপজা কর্তৃপক্ষ। এদিন রাজধানীর গ্রিন রোডে বাংলাদেশ রপ্তানি প্রক্রিয়াকরণ এলাকা কর্তৃপক্ষের (বেপজা) প্রধান কার্যালয়ে দুই প্রতিষ্ঠানের মধ্যে বিনিয়োগ চুক্তি স্বাক্ষরিত হয়। বেপজার পক্ষে নির্বাহী পরিচালক (বিনিয়োগ উন্নয়ন) মো. তানভীর হোসেন এবং ফ্লারিশ গার্মেন্টস বাংলাদেশের ব্যবস্থাপনা পরিচালক হ্যান জানজিয়াও চুক্তিতে স্বাক্ষর করেন। বেপজার নির্বাহী চেয়ারম্যান মেজর জেনারেল মোহাম্মদ মোয়াজ্জেম হোসেন এই চুক্তি স্বাক্ষর অনুষ্ঠানে উপস্থিত ছিলেন।

অর্থ-বাণিজ্য ডেস্ক

The Daily Star

09 MAR 2026

Chinese firm to invest $15.34m in Bepza EZ

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Flourish Garments Bangladesh Co Ltd, a China (Hong Kong)-based company, will invest $15.34 million to set up a high-end garment manufacturing factory at the Bepza Economic Zone (Bepza EZ) in Mirsharai, Chattogram.

The factory will annually produce four million pieces of garments, including fleece jackets, soft-shell jackets, down jackets, cotton coats, leather jackets, underwear, T-shirts, polo shirts, shorts and parkas.

The product range will also include long pants, ski suits, ski pants, windproof jackets, fishing suits, hiking suits, yoga suits, running suits, jeans, knitted shorts, faux leather clothing, deer-skin velvet clothing, golf clothing and casual skirts.

The investment will create job opportunities for 1,988 Bangladeshi nationals.

Md Tanvir Hossain, executive director (investment promotion) of the Bangladesh Export Processing Zones Authority (Bepza), and Han Junxiao, managing director of Flourish Garments Bangladesh Co Ltd, signed the agreement at the Bepza Complex in Dhaka yesterday, according to a press release.

Major General Mohammad Moazzem Hossain, executive chairman of Bepza, attended the programme. Speaking at the signing ceremony, Hossain assured the company of Bepza's full support to ensure smooth and successful business operations in the zone.

He noted that Bepza continues to expand its facilities and develop new zones to accommodate growing investor interest and further strengthen Bangladesh's export-oriented industrial base.

The Bepza executive chairman also urged the new investor to encourage and attract more high-quality and responsible investors to Bepza zones, contributing to sustainable industrial growth and export diversification in Bangladesh.

Abdullah Al Mamun, member (engineering); ANM Foyzul Haque, member (finance); Samir Biswas, executive director (administration), and ASM Anwar Parvez, executive director (public relations), along with senior officials of Bepza and representatives of the company, were also present.

The Financial Express
09 MAR 2026

Export slump a cause for concern

The country's export has declined by more than 12 per cent in February 2026 compared to the same period in 2025. Since the dependence of overall exports is about 80 per cent on RMG, it is indeed a matter of great concern. Even the total exports from July to February have reduced by 3.73 per cent compared to the same period of the previous year.

Moreover, the carrying cost has increased due to the change of routes to Europe and the USA over the last three to four years, along with a delay of 10 to 15 days. High dependence on the EU and USA markets is alarming. Also, export diversification is now a must to sustain a healthy export trend in the future.

The margin of profit has been reduced significantly and the garments sector is suffering from a huge cashflow crisis for this reason. Even during Eid, they have to pay wages from bank loans. Recently, Bangladesh Bank issued a circular for the allotment of term loans for a maximum of one year, including a three-month grace period, for these entities to pay the salaries and wages of workers and staff. Undoubtedly, this is a great initiative to provide breathing space to the RMG sector, but if the export trend continues to decline, the repayment of these loans will face vulnerabilities due to the cashflow crisis.

It is now necessary for banks to think about the future of the RMG sector, since approximately 12-15 per cent of overall loans are apparel-affiliated. Though many of those have recently availed policy support, strong monitoring is needed.

Kawsik Azad Pronoy
A Banker

The Financial Express

09 MAR 2026

US envoy, BGMEA leaders discuss trade issues

FE REPORT

The body seeks clarity on US cotton usage for duty waiver

The apparel-sector apex body-BGMEA-has requested clarification on the mechanism of duty exemption facility for garments made using US cotton, saying such an initiative would further strengthen the bi-lateral relation between the two countries.

Highlighting investment potential in LNG infrastructure as a short term solution, Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA), also sought more US investment in the country's energy sector to meet the needs of the growing industrial sectors.

BGMEA president Mahmud Hasan Khan made the request and observations on Sunday during a meeting of the US Ambassador to Bangladesh Brent T Christensen met with BGMEA board of directors at the trade body's Uttara office in the city, said a statement.

The meeting discussed various issues relating to bilateral trade between Bangladesh and the United States, US investment in Bangladesh's energy sector, various labour-related aspects and expansion of economic cooperation.

The US delegation included Labour Attaché Leena Khan, Agri Attaché Erin Covert, Commercial Attaché Paul Frost, Political and Economic Officer Srini Sitaram, and Labor Specialist Saifuzzaman Mehrab.

In response to BGMEA's request, the US Ambassador said the United States Trade Representative is currently working on the matter, according to the statement.

He also said the recent trade agreement is very positive for Bangladesh and Bangladesh is the first country to get this special opportunity.

The US ambassador expressed the hope it would increase cotton exports from the United States to Bangladesh.

During the discussion, BGMEA Senior Vice President Inamul Haq Khan drew the attention of the Ambassador to the issue of business confusion caused by frequent tariff changes in recent times.

The statement citing Mr Christensen as saying that such a situation has arisen in the context of a recent ruling by the US Supreme Court. He further expressed optimism that such complications would be resolved very soon and stability would also be restored in tariff matters.

Highlighting the importance of US investment in the energy sector, the BGMEA president said US technology and investment in domestic gas extraction is needed to address the country's long-term crisis.

Mr Christensen responded positively to the proposal, saying the US investors will be interested in coming forward in this sector provided long-term and stable policies are formulated in Bangladesh.

The meeting also discussed in detail the labor law and the new ordinance.

The ambassador said labour sector reform is a long-standing and important issue in the trade between Bangladesh and the United States.

The BGMEA President said discussions are underway on the proposed labour ordinance with 145 specific points and further clarification is needed on some issues for transparency.

The BGMEA also proposed relaxation of visa bonds and issuance of long-term visas for garment sector entrepreneurs.

During the meeting, BGMEA Director Sheikh Hossain Mohammad Mostafiz said the United States can play a greater role in the sustainable development of Bangladesh's apparel sector, which has the highest number of 'LEAD' certified factories under the US Green Building Council (USGBC).

BGMEA vice presidents Md Rezwan Selim, Mizanur Rahman, Vidya Amrit Khan, Md Shihab Uddoza Chowdhury, directors Shah Raed Chowdhury, Faisal Samad, Mohammad Abdus Salam, Nafis-ud Daula, Sumaiya Islam, Kazi Mizanur Rahman, Joarder Mohammad Hosne Qamar Alam and former director ANM Saif Uddin, among others, were present in the meeting.

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The Financial Express

09 MAR 2026

BGMEA for continuation of EPB services during Eid holidays

FE REPORT

The country's apparel makers have urged the Export Promotion Bureau (EPB) to keep its services continuing during the upcoming public holidays from March 17 to 10 next for facilitating shipments of garment products.

Bangladesh Garments Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) President Mahmud Hasan Khan recently made the request in a letter to the Vice Chairman of the EPB.

"... you are requested to take necessary steps to continues the EPB's services during the public holidays on the occasion of Eid-ul-Fitr (from March 17 to 19) for the sake of uninterrupted export-import activities of the country's readymade garment industry," the BGMEA leader said in its letter.

He further said it is important to keep the customs stations, banks, and EPB offices operational for the timely shipments of apparel products, as per the buyers' demand.

Maintaining the lead-time is crucial for timely supplying the products to the buyers, according to the trade body.

The BGMEA leader further said missing the shipping deadlines can lead to the cancellation of export orders, resulting in massive financial losses and decreasing the country's foreign exchange earnings.

The president also mentioned that the RMG sector had already been facing a changing situation. Keeping this in view, the exporters are trying to sustain their shipments amid the volatile global condition.

He believes that it is impossible to continue the export capacity without supporting all including banks, EPB, customs, and ports.

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The Business Standard

09 MAR 2026

Hong Kong firm to invest $15.34m in garment factory at Bepza EZ

INVESTMENT - BANGLADESH

TBS REPORT

Flourish Garments Bangladesh Co Ltd, a China (Hong Kong)-based company, is set to invest $15.34 million to establish a high-end garments manufacturing facility at the Bepza Economic Zone (Bepza EZ) in Mirsharai, Chattogram.

An agreement to this effect was signed on 8 March at the Bepza Complex in Dhaka between the Bangladesh Export Processing Zones Authority (Bepza) and Flourish Garments Bangladesh.

Md Tanvir Hossain, executive director (Investment Promotion) of Bepza, signed the agreement on behalf of Bepza, while Han Junxiao, managing director, signed on behalf of the company. Bepza Executive Chairman Major General Mohammad Moazzem Hossain witnessed the signing ceremony.

Officials of Bepza and Flourish Garments Bangladesh attend the signing ceremony for a $15.34 million investment agreement to establish a garments manufacturing facility at Bepza EZ in Mirsharai, Chattogram, at the Bepza Complex in Dhaka on 8 March. PHOTO: COURTESY

The company plans to produce 4 million pieces annually, including fleece jackets, soft-shell jackets, down jackets, cotton coats, leather jackets, underwear, T-shirts, polo shirts, shorts, parkas, trousers, ski suits, ski pants, windproof jackets, fishing suits, hiking suits, yoga suits, running suits, jeans, knitted shorts, faux leather garments, deer skin velvet clothing, golf wear and casual skirts. The project is expected to create employment for 1,988 Bangladeshi nationals.

Speaking at the ceremony, the Bepza Executive Chairman welcomed Flourish Garments Bangladesh Co, Ltd as a new member of the Bepza family and assured full support to ensure smooth business operations in the zone. He noted that Bepza continues to expand its facilities and develop new zones to accommodate growing investor interest and strengthen Bangladesh's export-oriented industrial base.

He also encouraged the investor to attract more high-quality and responsible companies to Bepza zones, contributing to sustainable industrial growth and export diversification.

The ceremony was attended by Abdullah Al Mamun, member (Engineering); ANM Foyzul Haque, member (Finance); Samir Biswas, executive director (Administration); ASM Anwar Parvez, executive director (Public Relations); along with senior officials of Bepza and representatives of the company.

The Business Standard
09 MAR 2026

Why Bangladesh cannot afford a long US–Israel–Iran war

Wars in the Middle East arrive quietly in Bangladesh—through fuel invoices, shipping delays, pricier food imports, squeezed export margins, and anxious calls from migrant workers abroad

M Kabir Hassan
Academic

A full-scale confrontation involving the United States, Israel, and Iran would not simply be another geopolitical headline; it would transmit powerful economic shocks to Bangladesh's fragile recovery. This would occur at a time when inflation remains sticky, foreign exchange reserves are under pressure, and export competitiveness is already being tested.

Bangladesh is structurally exposed to external disruptions. The economy depends heavily on imported energy, industrial raw materials, fertiliser, edible oil, wheat, and capital machinery. Meanwhile, export earnings remain highly concentrated in ready-made garments (RMG).

This combination—high import dependence and narrow export diversification—makes the country particularly vulnerable when a global conflict simultaneously disrupts energy flows, shipping routes, insurance markets, and financial settlements.

Energy: The first and hardest blow

Energy would be the most immediate casualty. The Strait of Hormuz, a narrow maritime corridor bordering Iran, carries roughly one-fifth of global oil and a significant share of liquefied natural gas (LNG). Any sustained military confrontation in the region would disrupt tanker movements, drive up freight and war-risk insurance premiums, and sharply raise crude oil and LNG prices.

For Bangladesh, the implications would be severe. The country imports most of its petroleum products and an increasing share of its natural gas as LNG. Higher global prices would inflate the cost of electricity generation, industrial fuel, irrigation, and transport. The government would face a difficult choice: pass the higher costs on to consumers and industries—fueling inflation—or expand subsidies and strain an already tight fiscal position.

Energy shocks do not remain confined to power plants; they cascade across the economy. When electricity becomes expensive, factories lose competitiveness, transport costs rise, irrigation for agriculture becomes more costly, and food supply chains weaken. Inflationary expectations then build, eroding household purchasing power and complicating monetary policy.

Supply chains and sectoral import costs

Beyond energy, the war would disrupt global supply chains in ways that raise import costs across multiple sectors.

Fertiliser and agriculture would be highly exposed. Fertiliser production depends heavily on natural gas. Any rise in global gas prices—or a shift in domestic gas toward power generation—would reduce local fertiliser output and force more expensive imports. Higher fertiliser prices raise cultivation costs for rice and other staple crops, feeding directly into food inflation. At the same time, Bangladesh's heavy reliance on imported wheat and edible oil means higher freight costs would quickly translate into higher household food bills.

The textile and garment industry, Bangladesh's export backbone, would face a dual squeeze. The sector relies on imports of cotton, yarn, dyes, chemicals, and accessories. Even when these imports originate outside the Middle East, global shipping disrup-

A gas flare burns on an oil production platform alongside
as most of Bangladesh's petroleum products are importe

The textile and garment industry, Bangladesh's export backbone, would face a dual squeeze. Longer lead times and higher input costs reduce exporters' margins, particularly when international buyers resist price increases. For an industry that competes on thin margins, even modest cost escalations can determine whether export orders are secured or lost.

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A gas flare burns on an oil production platform alongside an Iranian flag in the Gulf. Energy could be the most immediate casualty, as most of Bangladesh's petroleum products are imported. PHOTO: REUTERS

The textile and garment industry, Bangladesh's export backbone, would face a dual squeeze. Longer lead times and higher input costs reduce exporters' margins, particularly when international buyers resist price increases. For an industry that competes on thin margins, even modest cost escalations can determine whether export orders are secured or lost.

tions increase maritime fuel costs, container shortages, insurance premiums, and working-capital requirements. Longer lead times and higher input costs reduce exporters' margins, particularly when international buyers resist price increases. For an industry that competes on thin margins, even modest cost escalations can determine whether export orders are secured or lost.

Manufacturing industries such as pharmaceuticals, ceramics, steel, plastics, and consumer goods would also feel the pressure. Pharmaceuticals rely on imported active ingredients; ceramics and steel are energy-intensive; plastics depend on petrochemical derivatives. As global energy prices rise, production costs climb across the board. Domestic producers then struggle to maintain price competitiveness both at home and abroad.

Transport and logistics represent another vulnerable node. Aviation fuel costs would surge, raising air cargo and passenger fares. Shipping lines would add war-risk premiums. Trucking costs would rise domestically. The combined effect would be higher transaction costs throughout the economy, reducing efficiency and slowing trade flows.

Remittances: A fragile cushion

Remittances are one of Bangladesh's strongest macroeconomic stabilizers, and here the Middle East conflict presents both short-term resilience and longer-term risk.

Gulf countries host millions of Bangladeshi migrant workers and account for a large share of annual remittance inflows. In the immediate term, remittance flows may remain stable or even increase if migrant workers send precautionary funds home amid uncertainty. Higher oil prices can also temporarily support economic activity in oil-exporting countries, sustaining labor demand.

However, a prolonged SEE PAGE 14 COL 3

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conflict paints a different picture. Infrastructure projects could slow as governments divert spending toward security and defense. Private sector investment may weaken. Construction and service sectors—major employers of migrant labor—could contract. Wage payments may be delayed, and worker mobility restricted. Financial transfer channels might also face operational disruptions.

Such developments would directly weaken Bangladesh's balance of payments at a time when import costs are rising. A simultaneous increase in import bills and slowdown in remittance inflows would intensify exchange-rate pressures and complicate external debt management.

Inflation and macroeconomic strain

The combined energy, food, freight, and input-cost shocks would intensify inflationary pressure. Bangladesh has already experienced imported inflation following the Russia–Ukraine war. A Middle East conflict could produce a similar but potentially more persistent shock because it directly threatens global energy arteries.

Higher inflation would erode real incomes, particularly for fixed-income households and the urban poor. Monetary authorities would face difficult trade-offs between controlling inflation and supporting economic growth. If interest rates rise too sharply, private investment could slow further. If policy remains loose, currency pressure and imported inflation may worsen.

Political and diplomatic balancing

The conflict would also test Bangladesh's diplomatic agility. Dhaka maintains important relationships with the United States, major Middle Eastern economies, Iran, and multilateral financial institutions. The Middle East is not only an energy source but also a lifeline for labor markets.

Bangladesh's policy response must therefore prioritize strategic neutrality rooted in economic realism. Overly strong alignment with any one bloc risks diplomatic and economic repercussions. A calibrated approach—supporting peace, emphasizing international law, and focusing on citizen protection—best serves national interests.

At the same time, Dhaka must intensify practical diplomacy with energy suppliers, labor-hosting countries, and development partners. In times of global instability, economic diplomacy becomes as critical as traditional foreign policy.

What should policymakers do now?

Preparation is essential. Bangladesh cannot prevent geopolitical conflict, but it can reduce vulnerability through timely policy action.

First, authorities should establish an integrated economic monitoring mechanism linking finance, energy, commerce, foreign affairs, and the central bank to assess real-time risks.

Second, energy security must be strengthened through diversified sourcing, expanded storage capacity, and demand management to cushion supply shocks.

Third, advance planning for fertiliser and essential food imports is vital to prevent panic buying during global price spikes.

Fourth, Bangladesh Bank should prepare contingency measures to manage exchange-rate volatility and external financing pressures.

Fifth, export-oriented industries, especially garments, require logistical facilitation, faster port clearance, and working-capital support to remain competitive amid rising costs.

Sixth, overseas missions must strengthen migrant worker protection, ensure continuity of remittance channels, and develop evacuation or emergency response plans if instability spreads.

A war that becomes an economic test

Bangladesh has demonstrated resilience against global shocks before. But resilience should not be mistaken for immunity. A prolonged US–Israel–Iran conflict would transmit economic stress through energy markets, trade routes, labor flows, and diplomatic channels, testing Bangladesh's macroeconomic stability and policy agility.

This is not merely a foreign policy concern. It is an inflation challenge, an energy security threat, a trade-competitiveness issue, and a remittance-stability risk rolled into one.

For Bangladesh, the real battlefield would not be in distant deserts or contested sea lanes. It would be in managing fuel prices, stabilizing food markets, protecting export industries, safeguarding migrant workers, and maintaining diplomatic balance.

The prudent response is neither panic nor passivity, but preparation.

Because in an interconnected global economy, distant wars rarely remain distant for long.

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