The Daily Star
21 MAY 2026

LESS THAN 3% of manufacturing units use computers

MAHMUDUL HASAN

Fewer than 3 percent of manufacturing units in Bangladesh use computers or information technology (IT) in their production work, according to the latest Economic Census 2024.

The census shows that only 2.44 percent of 11.19 lakh manufacturing units in the country use computers or IT in the production processes.

Use varies by type of establishment. Among permanent units, 4.74 percent use computers in production. The rate falls to 1.36 percent for temporary units and just 0.80 percent for economic households.

There are also wide regional differences. Dhaka division records the highest rate of ICT use in production at 5.65 percent, while Barishal division has the lowest at 1.14 percent.

According to sector-wise data, 9.06 percent of establishments in electricity, gas, steam and air-conditioning supply use computers in production. In construction, the rate is the lowest at 0.92 percent.

Across industrial units as a whole, the rate stands at 2.41 percent.

There are also wide regional differences. Dhaka division records the highest rate of ICT use in production at 5.65 percent, while Barishal division has the lowest at 1.14 percent.

Location also matters for computer use by businesses. In urban areas, 4.03 percent of businesses use computers in production, while the rate drops to 1.60 percent in rural areas.

The figures come after years of Digital Bangladesh campaigns by the previous Awami League government. Yet technology use in productive work remains limited, especially outside large cities.

The contrast is stark because manufacturing contributes about 21.9 percent to GDP. Even so, most factories and business units still depend on manual processes.

A 2021 World Bank study found that more than 40 percent of firms in Bangladesh still use handwritten records for business administration. Nearly three-quarters carry out quality checks by hand. The report said that the country risks losing competitiveness unless firms adopt better technology and raise productivity.

Over the past decade, internet access has expanded quickly in the country. Bangladesh now has more than 130 million internet subscribers.

In fiscal year 2024-25, 53.4 percent of the population was online, according to the latest survey by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS). That still leaves nearly half the population without internet access.

Experts say wider connectivity has not led to greater use of technology inside factories, workshops and small businesses. According to them, access to the internet alone does not improve productivity.

Other countries in the region have moved faster. Vietnam and India have introduced more automation, software systems and digital supply tools in manufacturing. This has helped them attract higher-value investment.

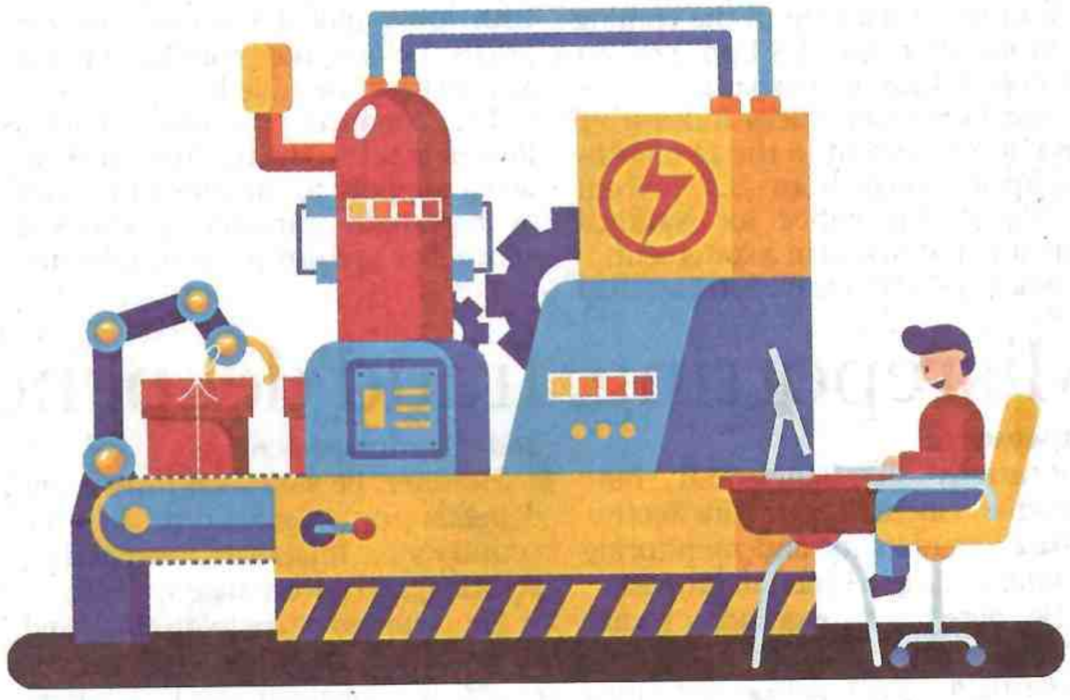
Fahim Mashroor, founder and CEO of BDjobs.com and former president of Bangladesh Association of Software and Information Services (Basis), said Bangladesh should now focus less on expanding access and more on using technology effectively in production, logistics and business management.

Greater use of software and digital systems could reduce productivity losses across industries, he said.

"We have a large number of SMEs in the country, but technology adoption remains concentrated among bigger firms," he said. "The more businesses become mechanised, computerised and automated, the more productivity will improve."

He said wider use of ICT is essential if Bangladesh is to remain competitive in global markets.

"Without wider adoption of digital tools in businesses, particularly among small and rural enterprises, Bangladesh may struggle to improve productivity," he added.



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Sunshine Outdoor to invest $15m in Bepza EZ

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Sunshine Outdoor (BD) Co Ltd, a British Virgin Islands- and Hong Kong-based company, will invest $15 million to establish a tent and camping products manufacturing facility at the Bepza Economic Zone in Mirsharai, Chattogram.

The factory will manufacture a wide range of outdoor products, including tents, canopies, backpacks, duffel bags, sleeping bags, tarpaulins, waterproof dry bags, inflatable pillows and mattresses, mosquito nets, carpets, mats, folding chairs, and storage baskets.

The facility is expected to produce 1.5 million units annually and create employment opportunities for 2,975 Bangladeshi workers.

Md Tanvir Hossain, executive director for investment promotion at the Bangladesh Export Processing Zones Authority (Bepza), and Liang Difa, chairman of Sunshine Outdoor (BD) Co Ltd, signed a lease agreement at the Bepza Complex in Dhaka yesterday, according to a press release.

Major General Mohammad Moazzem Hossain, executive chairman of Bepza, attended the signing ceremony and said the investment would support the country's export diversification efforts and strengthen industrial activities at the economic zone.

He also assured the investor of Bepza's full support in ensuring smooth business operations.

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The Daily Star

Bangladesh, Morocco discuss free trade pact

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh and Morocco are considering a free trade agreement (FTA) to deepen bilateral trade and economic engagement.

The issue came up during a meeting between State Minister for Foreign Affairs Shama Obaed and Morocco's Minister of Industry and Trade Ryad Mezzour in Rabat on Tuesday.

The state minister is currently visiting Morocco after concluding a trip to Washington to attend the Second Ministerial Conference on Peacekeeping in a Francophone Environment, which opened yesterday.

During the visit, she also held meetings with Morocco's Foreign Minister Nasser Bourita and Minister of Economic Inclusion, Small Business, Employment and Skills Younes Sekkouri.

Highlighting Bangladesh's improved investment climate, Shama Obaed proposed exchanging business delegations to boost commercial engagement between the two countries.

According to officials, bilateral trade between Bangladesh and Morocco currently stands at around $1.15 billion, although trade remains heavily tilted in Morocco's favour.

Bangladesh exports goods worth around $81 million to Morocco, while imports from Morocco amount to approximately $1.07 billion.

Ryad Mezzour expressed interest in sending a business delegation to Bangladesh by the end of this year.

The two sides also discussed strengthening cooperation in agriculture, particularly through government-to-government collaboration to ensure a stable supply of phosphate exports to Bangladesh.

Shama Obaed reiterated Bangladesh's interest in promoting eco-friendly jute and jute goods in the Moroccan market.

Both countries also pledged deeper cooperation in innovation, industrial training, ICT and artificial intelligence.

During her meeting with Nasser Bourita, Shama Obaed said Bangladesh is keen to deepen engagement with African countries and elevate relations with Morocco.

The two leaders stressed the importance of regular high-level exchanges in strengthening political ties.

They also reaffirmed their commitment to expanding cooperation in trade and investment, textiles, pharmaceuticals, ceramics, sports, culture, agriculture, education, women's empowerment, shipbuilding and people-to-people connectivity.

The Daily Star

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Bangladesh needs stronger intellectual property rules

US diplomat says at roundtable

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

As Bangladesh prepares to graduate from least developed country (LDC) status, the country needs to modernise its intellectual property (IP) laws to attract more foreign investment, especially from the United States, and strengthen confidence among global businesses, a US diplomat said yesterday.

Shilpi Jha, senior commercial specialist and IP policy advisor for South Asia at the US embassy in New Delhi, made the comment at a roundtable titled "Advancing the IPR Framework and the Way Forward".

The American Chamber of Commerce in Bangladesh organised the event at The Westin Dhaka.

Stronger and internationally aligned intellectual property protection is no longer just a legal requirement, but an economic necessity, the diplomat said, adding that an updated IP framework would help Bangladesh integrate more effectively into the global economy, boost exports, encourage innovation, and attract foreign direct investment.

Design Act. However, further reforms are needed to align the country's intellectual property system with international standards and best practices, she said.

Bangladesh currently enjoys certain flexibilities under international agreements because of its LDC status, which has delayed the full implementation of some reforms.

Nevertheless, policymakers and businesses increasingly recognise the importance of stronger IP protection for long-term economic growth, the diplomat added.

Under the Design Act, innovators can now register original industrial designs not previously available in the market.

At the same time, efforts are underway to update trademark laws to meet international standards.

Experts believe these reforms could pave the way for Bangladesh to join major international IP systems such as the Madrid Protocol and the Patent Cooperation Treaty (PCT).

Joining the Madrid Protocol would allow Bangladeshi businesses and entrepreneurs Nepal, through a simplified process from within Bangladesh.

Similarly, becoming a member of the PCT would enable Bangladeshi inventors to seek patent protection in numerous countries through a single international application.

Industry insiders argue that effective intellectual property protection is not only important for attracting foreign investors but also essential for supporting local industries, encouraging innovation, and helping businesses compete globally.

Weak enforcement, they warn, discourages multinational companies from introducing advanced technologies and premium products in Bangladesh due to fears of counterfeiting and misuse.

Syed Ershad Ahmed, president of the American Chamber of Commerce in Bangladesh, underscored the strategic necessity of robust IPR enforcement for the nation's future.

He emphasised that a secure IPR framework is vital to attracting increased foreign direct investment

The Financial Express

21 MAY 2026

BD to export organic meat in next three years, says minister

Fisheries, Livestock and Agriculture Minister Mohammed Aminur Rashid has said Bangladesh will export certified organic grass-fed meat within next three years, reports BSS.

"The country will export 100 per cent natural grass-fed or non-GMO meat in future while many livestock animals eat feed containing genetically modified soya or corn", he said.

The minister said this while addressing a seminar titled 'Australia-Bangladesh Research Showcase' held at a city hotel on Wednesday.

Financed by the Department of Foreign Affairs of the Australian government, the programme was jointly organised by Bangladesh Livestock Research Institute (BLRI) and Australian leading Charles Sturt University.

The main theme of the seminar was "Climate-resilient food systems-practical solutions and partnerships".

The minister said, safe and nutritional food now becomes very much important in the present world.

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The Financial Express

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DCCI urges New Zealand to invest in agriculture, energy sectors

Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry (DCCI) has urged New Zealand to expand its investment footprint in Bangladesh, particularly in agriculture, renewable energy, and ICT sectors, as both sides explore stronger bilateral trade and economic cooperation, reports UNB.

The appeal came during a meeting in Dhaka between DCCI leaders and New Zealand's Non-resident High Commissioner David Pine at the DCCI Gulshan Center on Wednesday, said a press release.

DCCI President Taskeen Ahmed highlighted New Zealand's strong global standing in dairy, dairy processing, advanced agriculture, and food safety, saying there is significant scope for the country to support Bangladesh through experience sharing in dairy processing, livestock feed production, dairy farm modernisation, improved cattle breed development, fisheries, and veterinary training.

He urged New Zealand's private sector to come forward with both joint and independent investments in Bangladesh's agriculture, food processing, consumer goods, food supply chain management, water and climate management, and renewable energy sectors.

The DCCI President also called on New Zealand entrepreneurs to increase imports of Bangladeshi readymade garments, leather goods, and ICT-enabled services to further strengthen bilateral trade ties.

David Pine offered a significant reassurance to the Bangladesh business community, saying New Zealand will continue to provide duty-free and preferential market access for Bangladeshi goods even after the country graduates from the least developed country (LDC) status.

The Financial Express

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BEPZA secures $15m investment to establish tent & camping factory

Sunshine Outdoor (BD) Company Limited, a British Virgin Island and China (Hong Kong)-based company, will invest US$ 15 million to establish a tent & camping manufacturing industry at the BEPZA Economic Zone (BEPZA EZ) in Mirsharai, Chattogram.

In this connection, an agreement was signed between the Bangladesh Export Processing Zones Authority (BEPZA) and Sunshine Outdoor (BD) Company Ltd at the BEPZA Complex in Dhaka on Wednesday, said a press release.

The lease agreement was signed by Md Tanvir Hossain, Executive Director (Investment Promotion) of BEPZA, and Liang Difa, Chairman of Sunshine Outdoor (BD) Co, Ltd. BEPZA Executive Chairman Major General Mohammad Moazzem Hossain witnessed the signing ceremony.

Md Tanvir Hossain, Executive Director (Investment Promotion) of BEPZA, and Liang Difa, Chairman of Sunshine Outdoor (BD) Co Ltd, signed the agreement at the BEPZA Complex in Dhaka on Wednesday. BEPZA Executive Chairman Major General Mohammad Moazzem Hossain witnessed the signing ceremony.

The company will produce annually 1.5 million pieces of outdoor products like tent, canopy, bag, duffel bag, waterproof dry bags, and sleeping bag, back pack, tarpaulins, inflatable pillows and mattresses, air pillows, mosquito nets, carpets, mats, folding chairs, and different types of bins & baskets.

The company is expected to create employment opportunities for 2,975 Bangladeshi nationals.

BEPZA Executive Chairman emphasized that this investment would further accelerate BEPZA's efforts toward export diversification.

The ceremony was attended by Abdullah Al Mamun, Member (Engineering); Md Khorshid Alam, Executive Director (Enterprise Services); and Samir Biswas, Executive Director (Administration); of BEPZA and representatives of Sunshine Outdoor (BD) Co., Ltd.

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The Business Standard
21 MAY 2026

Govt plans higher value-addition rules for exports

PROPOSED IMPORT POLICY ORDER

- Knit, woven garment value addition requirement may rise from 20% to 30%
- Children's garment threshold may double to 30%
- Ban on knitted fabric imports proposed
- Exporters warn fabric bans could hurt competitiveness
- Imports from Israel and Israeli-flagged vessels to be prohibited

Export product	Minimum value addition rate
RMG, woven & children's wear	30%
Undergarments & other specialised synthetic fibre products	40%
Shoes & leather goods	30%
Non-leather shoes	30%
Ships	40%
Furniture	50%

CURRENT IMPORT POLICY ORDER

Product	Minimum value addition rate
All woven, knit garments exported at a value up to $60 per dozen	20%
All woven, knit garments exported at a value exceeding $60 per dozen	10%
All types of children's wear exports	15%

TBS Insights by IPDC FINANCE

TRADE – BANGLADESH

ABUL KASHEM

Exporters may need to add more value – at least by 50% – to products as the government drafts a new policy with a stronger push for reduced reliance on imported inputs and the development of backward linkage industries.

One of the biggest changes proposed in the draft Import Policy Order 2026-2029, seen by TBS, is a sharp increase in the minimum value-addition requirement for garment exports made from imported raw materials.

Officials say if an exporter fails to meet the requirement, it will not receive any cash incentive and the duty benefits on raw material imports.

For children's garments, the minimum value addition requirement may double from 15% to 30%. For all knit and woven garments made from cotton and man-made fibres, the threshold could rise from the existing 20% to 30%.

A stakeholder meeting is scheduled for today, where Commerce Minister Khandakar Abdul Muktadir is expected to discuss the draft policy with industry representatives ahead of finalisation.

If approved and implemented, the comprehensive new trade directive will remain effective until 31 December 2029.

Higher value addition requirements

Under the current import policy, there is no minimum value-addition requirement for the export of goods, except for knitwear, woven garments, and children's clothing.

However, under the draft policy, stricter value addition thresholds have also been proposed for several other export sectors. Underwear and other synthetic fibre-based specialised garments may be required to meet at least 40% value addition.

Footwear, including leather

The Business Standard
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and non-leather products, may be subject to a 30% requirement. Ship exports could be subject to a 40% threshold, while wooden furniture exports may be required to achieve 50% value addition.

The draft policy also proposes a ban on importing knitted fabrics, a move that has drawn criticism from industry leaders who argue that domestic production is insufficient to meet export demand.

Exporters warn against higher thresholds and fabric bans

Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association President Mahmud Hasan Khan told TBS while a 30% value addition is achievable for the knitwear sector, it remains entirely unrealistic for the woven garment segment under present market conditions.

Echoing these concerns, Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers and Exporters Association President Mohammad Hatem said while the government's targeted thresholds might be feasible in isolated cases, the prevailing international market dynamics make them impossible to implement across the board.

Apparel leaders heavily criticised the clause in the draft policy that seeks to enforce a blanket ban on the import of knit fabrics.

The BGMEA president argued that Bangladesh must maintain open channels to import specialised knit fabrics that are not locally manufactured, warning that failing to do so would severely cripple export competitiveness.

Adding to this, Hatem explained that halting knit fabric imports would require massive immediate investments in the domestic dyeing sector alongside guaranteed gas supplies.

The BKMEA president warned that banning fabric imports would derail crucial product diversification into high-value knitwear when "the government is currently unable to ensure consistent gas distribution and the broader economic climate is unsuited for heavy capital expenditure."

Preventing money laundering

Md Hafizur Rahman, former director general of the WTO Cell under the commerce ministry, told this newspaper that the value addition rate might be increased to prevent exporters from repatriating lower export proceeds as a means of money laundering, despite exporting at higher prices. "At the same time, encouraging exporters to use local materials could also be an objective."

However, he noted that since Bangladesh's primary goal is job creation, raising the minimum threshold for value addition is not logical. "This could hamper exports from smaller factories, which would ultimately shrink employment opportunities."

Hafizur added, "Vietnam does not have such stringent value addition requirements. Many small factories in that country import from China, add a minimal amount of value, and then export."

Changes in import entitlement rules

While the import of used vehicles, motor cars, passenger cars, and trucks older than five years remains prohibited as before, the draft import policy proposes to allow the import of electric vehicles that are up to 10 years old.

The policy also proposes changes to export-linked import entitlements under free-of-cost arrangements. The existing entitlement of up to 50% of the previous year's export value for garments, woven and children's clothing would remain unchanged. However, for man-made fibre products and synthetic underwear, the limit may be increased from 50% to 70%.

For footwear and leather goods, the proposed import entitlement is 60% of the previous year's export value. Ship imports would be allowed up to 60% of the export letter of credit value. Furniture-related import limits have been proposed at 40% for wooden furniture, 20% for fabric-based furniture and 10% for parts and accessories.

Trade facilitation and sector-specific reforms

The draft order removed the existing $5,00,000 ceiling on imports under sales or purchase contracts without opening letters of credit, expanding flexibility for businesses.

It also proposes eliminating fixed time limits for shipment after opening letters of credit, which currently stand at 24 months for machinery and nine months for other goods.

The threshold for personal imports by non-registered importers has been proposed to be doubled from $10,000 to $20,000.

For expatriate Bangladeshis, the duty-free limit for sending goods to family members has been proposed to be raised from Tk10,000 to $1,000.

Export-oriented garment manufacturers may also see an increase in the annual import quota for samples, rising from 1,500 to 3,000 items per category. Similar increases have been proposed for the footwear and leather industries, while tanneries may see their sample import limit rise from 300 to 3,000 pieces.

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The Business Standard

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Md Tanvir Hossain, executive director (Investment Promotion) of Bepza, and Liang Difa, chairman of Sunshine Outdoor (BD) Co Ltd, are signing the lease agreement while Bepza Executive Chairman Major General Mohammad Moazzem Hossain along with senior officials from both organisations attended the signing ceremony. PHOTO: COURTESY

Bepza secures $15m investment to establish tent, camping factory

INVESTMENT - BANGLADESH

TBS REPORT

Bangladesh Export Processing Zones Authority (Bepza) and Sunshine Outdoor (BD) Co Ltd have signed an agreement for a $15 million investment to establish a tent and camping goods manufacturing facility at the Bepza Economic Zone in Mirsharai, Chattogram.

The agreement was signed at the Bepza Complex in Dhaka by Md Tanvir Hossain, Executive Director (Investment Promotion) of Bepza, and Liang Difa, Chairman of Sunshine Outdoor (BD) Co Ltd. Bepza Executive Chairman Major General Mohammad Moazzem Hossain witnessed the signing ceremony.

The company, a British Virgin Islands and Hong Kong-based entity, will produce around 1.5 million units annually, including tents, canopies, backpacks, duffel bags, waterproof dry bags, sleeping bags, inflatable pillows and mattresses, mosquito nets, mats, folding chairs, and various types of bins and baskets.

The project is expected to create employment for 2,975 Bangladeshi nationals. Officials said the investment will contribute to export diversification and strengthen the manufacturing base in the EPZs.

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