

07 MAY 2026

Tapping into vast potential of handicraft export

Underprivileged rural women of Jhenaidah have set an admirable example of self-reliance. Instead of taking micro-credit at the risk of defaulting, they are making impressively designed handicrafts with an eye to foreign market. According to a recent report by a vernacular daily, a total of 800 women of three upazilas of the district are crafting baskets, trays, mats and showpieces with water hyacinth, rice straw and date leaf. As far as can be ascertained from the photograph in the report, the products are not only useful but also ornate and visually appealing. Working from home, they can earn around Taka 3,000 per month. And their products are finding market in as many as 82 countries including the US and Canada. The initiative, led by BD Creation in Jhenaidah, demonstrates how proper training, design innovation and market linkage can transform trashes into treasure.

If handicrafts made of such waste materials gain popularity in the markets abroad, it is a boon not only for the 800 poor women but for the whole country. Handicraft represents a country as much as its art and literature. Bangladesh, in this regard, possesses a rich and diverse tradition. The sustained interest of foreign buyers, evident in international exhibitions and export fairs, attests to the global appeal of rural artisans' craftsmanship. Among the most iconic of these is Nakshi Kantha, the intricately embroidered quilt that has long been woven into the cultural fabric of Bangladesh. Characterised by elaborate motifs, vibrant colours and meticulous needlework, each piece is both a utilitarian object and a work of art. Traditionally crafted by rural women, kantha embroidery has served as a means of self-expression as well as self-reliance. Through patience and skill, ordinary pieces of cloth are transformed into extraordinary works of art. The sheer sight of Nakshi Kantha is a kaleidoscopic feast for the eyes, for which it has been winning the hearts and minds of the people at home and abroad generation after generation. Equally noteworthy is Shital Pati, a finely woven mat made from natural fibres, widely used as a seating mat, bedspread or prayer mat. Recognised by UNESCO as an element of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, the craft of Shital Pati

Just as certain organisations are supporting the entrepreneurial efforts of underprivileged women at the grassroots level, Bangladesh's missions abroad must assume a more proactive role in promoting these products

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versatile material, jute enjoys a vibrant market in both raw and finished forms. Then there are eye-catching earthenware, stoneware and porcelain which potters skillfully produce. The products range from an assortment of pots, cups, flower vases and decorative objects. They come in all sizes and an assortment of variations, in exquisite styles, offering an artistic and brilliant way to furnish the home and office and bring what nature has to offer inside. For decades, cheap environment-threatening polythene and plastic products usurped the space of many traditional handicrafts. However, with growing global awareness about environmental sustainability, there is now a renewed demand for eco-friendly products, particularly in Europe and North America. This shift

share in this vast global market is negligible. This limited presence reflects persistent challenges such as inadequate product diversification, lack of branding and marketing, limited access to international markets, and insufficient policy support – factors that continue to constrain the sector from realising its full export potential.

It is therefore imperative to scale up such initiatives by bringing a larger number of public and private actors into the fold, while simultaneously exploring new and emerging markets for Bangladeshi handicrafts. As the government is keen to reopen state-owned factories in the textile and jute sectors through public-private partnerships, some of these facilities could be repurposed or adapted for the large-scale production and

government and the private sector, supported by research, design development and favourable policies. At the same time, just as certain organisations are supporting the entrepreneurial efforts of underprivileged women at the grassroots level, Bangladesh's missions abroad must assume a more proactive role in promoting these products. This can be achieved through greater participation in international trade fairs, exhibitions and cultural expos, as well as by facilitating access to global e-commerce platforms. Strategic branding, market intelligence and diplomatic support can significantly enhance the visibility and competitiveness of Bangladeshi handicrafts in the global marketplace. The handicraft sector thus offers

example of self-reliance. Instead of taking micro-credit at the risk of defaulting, they are making impressively designed handicrafts with an eye to foreign market. According to a recent report by a vernacular daily, a total of 800 women of three upazilas of the district are crafting baskets, trays, mats and showpieces with water hyacinth, rice straw and date leaf. As far as can be ascertained from the photograph in the report, the products are not only useful but also ornate and visually appealing. Working from home, they can earn around Taka 3,000 per month. And their products are finding market in as many as 82 countries including the US and Canada. The initiative, led by BD Creation in Jhenaidah, demonstrates how proper training, design innovation and market linkage can transform trashes into treasure.

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versatile material, jute enjoys a vibrant market in both raw and finished forms. Then there are eye-catching earthenware, stoneware and porcelain which potters skillfully produce. The products range from an assortment of pots, cups, flower vases and decorative objects. They come in all sizes and an assortment of variations, in exquisite styles, offering an artistic and brilliant way to furnish the home and office and bring what nature has to offer inside. For decades, cheap environment-threatening polythene and plastic products usurped the space of many traditional handicrafts. However, with growing global awareness about environmental sustainability, there is now a renewed demand for eco-friendly products, particularly in Europe and North America. This shift presents a significant opportunity for Bangladesh to diversify its export basket by tapping into the untapped potentials of this sector. According to estimates, the global handicrafts market is currently valued at US\$ 1,107 billion and is projected to reach US\$ 2.3 trillion, growing 10.15 per cent annually. Despite its long-standing tradition of craftsmanship and a rich heritage of handmade products, Bangladesh's

share in this vast global market is negligible. This limited presence reflects persistent challenges such as inadequate product diversification, lack of branding and marketing, limited access to international markets, and insufficient policy support – factors that continue to constrain the sector from realising its full export potential.

It is therefore imperative to scale up such initiatives by bringing a larger number of public and private actors into the fold, while simultaneously exploring new and emerging markets for Bangladeshi handicrafts. As the government is keen to reopen state-owned factories in the textile and jute sectors through public-private partnerships, some of these facilities could be repurposed or adapted for the large-scale production and processing of traditional handicrafts. The establishment of dedicated design centres and training facilities is also important to enhance product innovation, quality control and skill development. Such measures would not only generate employment but also help standardise quality and ensure a consistent supply for export markets. Ultimately, the sector's full potential can be realised through coordinated efforts between the

government and the private sector, supported by research, design development and favourable policies. At the same time, just as certain organisations are supporting the entrepreneurial efforts of underprivileged women at the grassroots level, Bangladesh's missions abroad must assume a more proactive role in promoting these products. This can be achieved through greater participation in international trade fairs, exhibitions and cultural expos, as well as by facilitating access to global e-commerce platforms. Strategic branding, market intelligence and diplomatic support can significantly enhance the visibility and competitiveness of Bangladeshi handicrafts in the global marketplace. The handicraft sector thus offers Bangladesh a strategic opportunity to promote export diversification, generate rural employment and advance sustainable development. As demonstrated by the women of Jhenaidah, craftsmanship is more than a symbol of self-help. It opens pathways for rural women to be part not only of national but global economy.

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Trade deficit widens to \$19.2b in Jul-Mar FY'26

JASIM UDDIN HAROON

Bangladesh's trade balance deteriorated significantly during the July-March period of the current fiscal year, driven by a decline in merchandise exports, according to central bank data.

The Bangladesh Bank, which compiles the balance-of-payments (BoP) data, reported that the trade deficit stood at US\$19.2 billion during the period under review.

Export earnings fell by 4.4 per cent year-on-year to \$32.3 billion, while import payments rose by 4.6 per cent to \$51.6 billion, the data showed.

Imports of fuel and fertiliser increased sharply.

Petroleum imports surged by 54.1 per cent and fertiliser imports by 40 per cent, partly reflecting price pressures linked to tensions and attacks involving Iran, the US and Israel in the Middle East, although a ceasefire is now in place.

Meanwhile, the current account deficit (CAD) narrowed on the back of strong remittance inflows during the period.

The deficit stood at \$397 million during July-March, compared with a deficit of \$878 million in the same period a year earlier.

Remittances grew by 20.3 per cent to \$26.2 billion, providing support to the external balance.

The financial account, another component of the BoP, recorded a surplus of \$3.8 billion during the period, largely due to trade credit inflows.

Trade credit posted a surplus of \$3.2 billion, compared with a deficit of \$1.6 billion a year earlier.

Economists said the improvement in the current account position was mainly driven by robust remittance growth, while the financial account surplus reflected

increased reliance on trade credit.

Dr Zahid Hussain, an independent economist, told The Financial Express that import payments rose partly due to trade credit arrangements, contributing to positive financial inflows.

According to him, some export proceeds were repatriated during the period, further supporting the balance of payments.

"Overall, the balance of payments situation remains favourable for the country at this moment," he said.

The overall balance of payments recorded a surplus of \$3.7 billion during the period under review, compared with a deficit of \$1.1 billion a year earlier.

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Commercial engagement with BD a key priority for India

Indian FS tells media team on Indo-Bangladesh ties

MONIRA MUNNI FROM NEW DELHI

India is ready to work towards constructive, pragmatic and forward-looking relationship with Bangladesh based on "mutual respect and benefits", India's foreign secretary reaffirms their position after regime changes. "We are ready to work with Bangladesh new government elected by its people in February last. We want the relationship to be constructive, pragmatic, positive and based on mutual respect and benefits," Vikram Misri told a visiting Bangladesh media team on Monday.

Explaining its engagement with governments, he says India worked with the then government led by the ousted former prime minister and with the post-uprising interim-government and now it is engaged with the elected political government.

"Government works with government," says the key official at the South Block in an indicative cryptic remark.

Foreign policy made in capital -- changes in a particular state "do not alter national foreign policy", says FS on post-poll West Bengal

SAARC could be 'restructured more positively'

'Nationality verification required, and process not yet completed'

Addressing the meeting with the media delegation at the Ministry of External Affairs in the Indian capital, Mr Misri said India wanted to be engaged with Bangladesh on the

pressing issues like Teesta water sharing, LoC (line of credits), trade restrictions and visa processing. Emphasizing India's willingness to engage with Bangladesh, he mentions the overtures like Prime Minister Narendra Modi being among the first to congratulate the new leadership and extended his best wishes to Prime Minister Tarique Rahman.

"We are in favour of strengthening relations. ... We will do whatever is necessary from our side to take bilateral ties forward," he adds. Mr Misri responded to a flurry of questions raised from the Bangladesh media delegation, recalibration of relations between the two next-door neighbours after regime changes in Bangladesh following the July-August 2024 uprising.

The queries include Teesta Treaty, projects under Indian line of credits or LoC, potential border tensions with new political developments in West Bengal, the extradition of individuals accused in the Hadi killing case and possible return of deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina with no direct replies for the last two.

To a question over 'election engineering' in Bangladesh, he said the perception of election engineering by India in Bangladesh "is not correct". Regarding the projects under LoC that are largely focused on Indian connectivity, he says Bangladesh holds the largest portfolio in concessional loans.

He says their priorities are to work on priority of host country. "And if new government rushes for new priorities, we are ready to sit

Cooperation (SAARC), he says the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) currently holds greater potential.

However, the Indian foreign secretary hints that SAARC could be restructured more positively. Terming interim period 'testing time', he says some discussions did not progress then.

Talking over trade-related restrictions, he says, "We stand ready to take forward, get commercially engaged as the livelihoods of both borders' people are affected."

Regarding the future of the long-stalled Teesta water-sharing agreement, he says a joint river commission is working to fix its scheduled meetings and they will discuss.

Speaking over the possible border tensions following political developments in West Bengal following the victory of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) over Mamata Banerjee's party, he dismisses the concerns and says:

"Foreign policy is made in the capital. Changes in a particular state do not alter national foreign policy."

He also clarifies that recent Indian media reports over the possible release of snakes and crocodiles along the India-Bangladesh border to curb smuggling and illegal crossings do not reflect government position.

He also indicates that visa restrictions for Bangladeshi citizens travelling to India would be discussed soon.

To another query, Mr Misri says: "In cases involving foreign nationals, nationality verification is required, and that process has

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team on Indo-Bangladesh ties

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A discussion between the High Commission and Bangladesh's Economic Relations Division (ERD) on LoC issues is expected to take place within the next couple of weeks. He emphasises that commercial engagement remains a key priority for India in its relationship with Bangladesh.

Responding to another question on reviving the South Asian Association for Regional

capital -- changes in a particular state "do not alter national foreign policy", says FS on post-poll West Bengal

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He adds; "So far, around 3,000 such cases over the past five years are still pending verification,"

Regarding energy, Mr Misri says India continued supplying diesel, oil to Bangladesh during the testing time of interim government and will continue it despite India itself facing difficulties.

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Mango season begins with phased harvest plan

FE REPORT

The much-anticipated mango harvesting season has officially commenced, sparking enthusiasm among farmers, traders, and consumers across the country.

According to the government's newly finalised harvesting calendar, mango collection began in early May and will continue in phases through mid-August, depending on the variety and region.

The Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE), in coordination with local administrations, implements the harvest calendar to minimise post-harvest losses and ensure safer, higher-quality fruit for both domestic consumers and international markets.

This year, the season kicked off on May 5 in Satkhira, where early local varieties such as Gobindobhog and Gopalbhog entered harvest. From there, collection activities will gradually expand to other districts as fruits reach optimal maturity. In the southwestern districts of Jashore and Chuadanga, harvesting is set to begin around May 15, featuring early-maturing varieties like Himsagar. The northwestern region – widely known as the "mango belt" – follows closely:

▶ DAE rolls out harvesting calendar

▶ Production target: 2.9 million tonnes of mangoes

▶ Proper harvesting is essential for maintaining quality

▶ Bangladesh currently exports mangoes to 37 countries



Rajshahi, one of the country's largest producing districts, starts harvesting on May 25. The same timeline applies to nearby Natore, where similar varieties are cultivated. Chapainawabganj, often referred to as the nation's "mango capital", will begin its harvest on May 26, while Naogaon will begin from June 1. These two districts play a crucial role in both domestic supply and export markets. Officials note that variations

in soil composition, microclimates, and cultivar characteristics mean mangoes in these areas require additional time to mature fully. In the northern region, Rangpur will begin harvesting from May 30. From late May through June, major varieties such as Himsagar, Langra and Amrapali will enter the market. By late June and early July, the popular Fazli variety –

known for its large size and late maturity – will become available. Gradually, other varieties, including Bari Mango-4, Haribhanga and Banana Mango will also be harvested. The season will conclude with the Gourmati variety, scheduled for harvesting from August 14, making it the last variety of the season. As a result, the country enjoys a mango supply window of nearly three and a half months, from early May

to mid-August.

The harvesting calendar was finalised following a high-level meeting chaired by the Director General of the DAE, attended by mango scientists, agricultural experts, exporters, and deputy directors from major mango-producing districts. The calendar was prepared under the Exportable Mango Production Project.

Project Director Md Arifur Rahman said mangoes must be harvested at the proper stage of maturity to ensure quality exports and maintain market stability. He said immature mangoes do not ripen properly and often lack sweetness, while proper harvesting is essential for maintaining quality in export markets.

Due to variations in climate and geography, maturity timelines differ across regions, making district-wise and variety-based schedules necessary, he noted. Bangladesh currently exports mangoes to 37 countries. Ensuring proper harvesting, handling and marketing is critical not only for domestic consumption but also for sustaining export growth and strengthening trade relations, he added. The DAE expects the country to produce around 2.9 million tonnes of mangoes this year.

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RMG WASTE RECYCLING

BD risks losing \$8.0b opportunity annually

Policy gaps, weak recycling capacity threaten competitiveness

CIRCULAR TEXTILE OPPORTUNITY AT RISK

600,000 tonnes
Textile Waste



- 30% cotton waste recyclable
- Minimal chemical recycling

Lost Value Chain



Waste

Exported to India/Pakistan

Reprocessed

Reimported as yarn

Global Shift

- EU Green Deal
- Digital Product Passport (DPP)
- Mandatory traceability
- Sustainable supply chains

- Bangladesh risks losing RMG competitiveness post-LDC graduation
- Upcoming EU regulations will require traceability, recycling and sustainable supply chains
- Most textile waste remains outside the formal economy despite rising volumes

FE REPORT

Bangladesh's textile and apparel sector risks losing a multi-billion-dollar opportunity as weak policy support and limited technological capacity hinder the transition to a circular economy.

Industry insiders estimate the economic opportunity of waste recycling to be worth \$8.0-billion annually. They warned that without urgent reforms, the country's position as the world's second-largest apparel exporter could come under pressure, particularly as key export markets move towards stricter environmental and traceability standards. Legislative changes in Western markets, especially in the European Union, will make it mandatory to ensure traceability and adopt environmentally friendly supply chains, they said. The observations were made on the sidelines of a seminar titled "Accelerating Circular Transition in Bangladesh's Textile Industry: Insights from SWITCH2CE Pilots," jointly organised by the Ministry of Commerce and the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) at a city hotel on Wednesday. Speaking to The Financial

Express, Sheikh H M Mustafiz, managing director of Cute Dress Industry Ltd and a BGMEA director, said global legislative changes are reshaping the future of the apparel industry, pushing it towards circularity and sustainability-driven compliance.

He said initiatives such as the EU's Green Deal and the Digital Product Passport (DPP) will require greater transparency, product traceability and overall supply chain circularity. This will compel manufacturers to adopt circular practices, increase the use of recycled materials, reduce reliance on virgin resources and lower the sector's overall carbon footprint.

The volume of textile waste in Bangladesh has risen sharply and now stands at nearly 0.6 million tonnes annually, he said.

A large share of this waste is reused or processed through the informal economy, but it has yet to be brought under a formal framework.

Bringing the sector into the formal economy would deliver two key benefits, he noted: reducing health and safety risks, such as fire hazards, caused by the lack of oversight, and building a

more organised and safer industrial base. Discarded fibre and textile waste offer strong potential for reuse as raw materials. While 100 per cent cotton waste can be recycled mechanically, Bangladesh's capacity for chemical recycling remains limited.

Currently, recycling is largely cotton-based, with significant gaps in handling blended fabrics and man-made fibres (MMF). However, these materials could be transformed into higher-value products through proper processing.

He warned that by 2030, rising global demand for resources and constrained raw material supply will require a shift away from dependence on cotton and other natural fibres towards recyclable alternatives. Efforts to develop a circular economy began in 2022-23, with gradual moves towards formalisation.

However, the absence of comprehensive policies and legal frameworks continues to hinder progress.

However, a significant portion of this waste is exported to India and Pakistan and later reimported as recycled yarn.

She also noted that around 17 factories in Bangladesh are currently operating under pilot projects, with an estimated value of a few hundred million dollars. Addressing the seminar, Michael Miller, Ambassador of the European Union to Bangladesh, said the country is approaching a critical milestone with its LDC graduation and needs to build a more balanced, "eye-to-eye" commercial relationship with its largest trading partner.

"We are carefully assessing the request to negotiate a free trade agreement with Bangladesh," he said, adding that regardless of the graduation timeline, the country must strengthen competitiveness, circularity and eco-efficiency.

He urged Bangladesh to use the remaining time before graduation to create an investment-friendly

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Pilot projects are underway to assess waste collection, sorting and recycling, but only a small proportion of Bangladesh's textile waste is currently recycled through the formal channels.

Echoing these concerns, Vidiya Amrit Khan, Vice President of BGMEA, said recycling the entire volume of RMG waste could generate a circular economy worth nearly \$8.0 billion.

At present, Bangladesh can recycle up to 30 per cent of cotton-based RMG cutting waste, with a value running into several million dollars, she added.

However, a significant portion of this waste is exported to India and Pakistan and later reimported as recycled yarn.

She also noted that around 17 factories in Bangladesh are currently operating under pilot projects, with an estimated value of a few hundred million dollars. Addressing the seminar, Michael Miller, Ambassador of the European Union to Bangladesh, said the country is approaching a critical milestone with its LDC graduation and needs to build a more balanced, "eye-to-eye" commercial relationship with its largest trading partner.

"We are carefully assessing the request to negotiate a free trade agreement with Bangladesh," he said, adding that regardless of the graduation timeline, the country must strengthen competitiveness, circularity and eco-efficiency.

He urged Bangladesh to use the remaining time before graduation to create an investment-friendly environment, remove trade irritants - including discriminatory practices - and ensure predictable market access to the EU.

Highlighting the circular economy, he said it is central to the EU's growth strategy aimed at decoupling economic growth from resource use and achieving carbon neutrality by 2050.

He referred to European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen's call to move away from the "take-make-waste" model towards reuse and sustainability.

He noted that circular practices such as recycling, material substitution and efficient resource use can reduce costs and drive innovation.

Turning to the textile and garment sector, he said it remains a priority due to its scale and waste



BGMEA offers to help US define cotton use rules

REFAYET ULLAH MIRDHA

Bangladesh's top garment exporters association has offered to help the United States define the rules governing a zero-tariff benefit tied to the use of US cotton and man-made fibre (MMF).

The offer was made as US officials are yet to clarify how the facilities — stated in the bilateral trade deal signed in February amid reciprocal tariff pressure — will work in practice.

Members of the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) made the proposal at a meeting in Dhaka yesterday with a delegation from the United States Trade Representative's (USTR) office, led by Assistant USTR for South and Central Asia Brendan Lynch.

The delegation arrived on May 5 and is holding meetings through May 7.

Under Article 5.3 of the Agreement on Reciprocal Trade (ART), the US committed to a mechanism allowing certain Bangladeshi textile and apparel goods to enter the American market at a zero reciprocal tariff rate, provided they are made from imported US cotton or MMF.

"We sought clarity on the whole issue of using American cotton and its benefits from the USTR officials at the meeting," said Faisal Samad, a BGMEA director who attended the meeting.

According to industry insiders, two interpretations are currently circulating among exporters.

One holds that the zero tariff would apply only to the portion of a garment's value attributable to US-sourced inputs. Since fabric and fibre typically account for 70 to 80 percent of a finished garment's cost, that would mean the remaining tariff — either the 10 percent universal rate or the 19 percent reciprocal rate set for Bangladesh — would apply only to the rest.

The other reading is that duty-free access would cover the entire garment if US cotton or MMF were used in production.

Exporters also raised questions about traceability — how authorities would verify that a garment was made using US inputs — and about whether tariff treatment would differ depending on whether raw cotton or processed fibre and fabric were sourced from the US.

The USTR delegation said they are working on the modalities and will share updates, Samad said. BGMEA offered to cooperate in developing those rules.

Around 40 percent of Bangladeshi garment exporters currently use US upland cotton, primarily for high value-added products.

The Daily Star

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After a separate meeting with the USTR team yesterday, Rashed Al Mahmud Titumir, the prime minister's finance and planning adviser, said Bangladesh's priority is expanding its market share in the US and developing new export categories beyond garments.

He noted Bangladesh wants further consultation meetings with the US on the agreement.

Stating that currently, Bangladeshi garment items are dominating in the US market, he said, "Commercial, health, education and humanitarian issues may also be discussed with the US when the bilateral discussions take place between the two countries."

Bangladesh also wants expansion of strategic assistance from the US in agricultural cooperation

and scientific research, he added.

Earlier on Tuesday, speaking after a meeting with the USTR team, Commerce Minister Khandaker Abdul Muktadir said the government intends to make full use of the agreement.

"It is a reality, and we want to make the best use of it to expand the country's trade and investment," he said.

US goods trade with Bangladesh totalled an estimated \$11.8 billion in 2025.

American imports from Bangladesh reached \$9.5 billion — up 13.3 percent from 2024 — while US exports to Bangladesh were \$2.3 billion.

The resulting trade deficit stood at \$7.1 billion, a 17.9 percent increase from the previous year. Garments account for 86 percent of Bangladesh's exports to the US.

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Lack of waste recycling threatens apparel survival: Experts

RMG - BANGLADESH

TBS REPORT

The global fashion industry is entering a new reality, as millennial and Gen Z consumers grow increasingly conscious of the environmental impact of the products they use. Clothing is now expected to be both guilt-free and pollution-free.

In this context, experts believe waste recycling has become essential for the sustainable growth of Bangladesh's ready-made garment sector, as well as for the future of the global circular economy.

The remarks came at a seminar titled "Accelerating Circular Transition in Bangladesh's Textile Industry: Insights from SWITCH2CE Pilots," jointly organised by the Ministry of Commerce and Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) at a city hotel in the capital yesterday.

Speakers at the seminar said if circular economy practices and waste recycling systems are not effectively implemented in Bangladesh's RMG sector, the long-term sustainability of the industry could be at risk.

They pointed to several challenges, including economic viability, policy inconsistencies and a constrained investment environment. Failure to address these issues, they said, could weaken Bangladesh's position as a leading apparel exporter.

Mahmud Hasan Khan, president of BGMEA, said the textile industry is among the most polluting and resource-intensive sectors, making it essential to reduce its environmental impact.

"Bangladesh is one of the largest producers of textile scraps in the world. Around 600,000 tonnes of pre-consumer textile waste is produced annually, of which only 5% is recycled locally," he said.

CHALLENGES, OPPORTUNITIES OF APPAREL WASTE RECYCLING

Country generates 6 lakh tonnes of textile waste a year

50% of this is blended fibre



Only 5% currently formally recycled



100% cotton waste can be recycled



Annual export opportunity: \$4-5B



EU's sustainability policy requires circularity in apparel

Major challenges in recycling

Economic viability
Policy inconsistencies



Limitations in investment environment

"This post-industrial textile waste, popularly known as 'jhut', has posed a different challenge to overcome in the path towards achieving circularity in the textile industry in Bangladesh," he added.

Michael Miller, the European Union's ambassador to Bangladesh, said the scale of waste generation makes circular transition a priority.

"The EU produces over 5 million tonnes of textile waste annually, while Bangladesh generates around 600,000 tonnes each year," he said. "These realities, along with concerns over social conditions and fast fashion, have driven the EU to act."

He noted that the EU's 2022 strategy for sustainable and circular textiles includes measures such as eco-design requirements,

extended producer responsibility, digital product passports and stricter rules on greenwashing. Recent sustainability directives have also embedded circularity into corporate accountability frameworks.

"These policies matter for Bangladesh, as Europe is your largest export market, dominated by RMG products," Miller said, adding that the sector contributes about 11% to GDP and employs around 4 million workers.

Bangladesh's RMG sector generates approximately 6 lakh tonnes of textile waste each year, of which nearly 50% is blended fibre.

BGMEA vice-president Vidiya Amrita Khan said responsibility for waste and pollution is shared across global supply chains. "We don't produce

garments for Bangladeshis; we produce for consumers abroad. Therefore, the outcomes – whether waste or pollution – also carry a shared responsibility that international partners must be part of," she said.

Sheikh Hossain Muhammad Mustafiz, a BGMEA director, said there is significant potential to re-use discarded fibre and textile waste to produce new raw materials. He noted that while 100% cotton waste can be recycled through mechanical

processes, Bangladesh still has limited capacity for chemical recycling. Commerce Minister Khandaker Abdul Muktadir said the shift towards a circular economy is now critical for the country's industrial future.

"The transition to a circular economy is no longer merely an environmental issue; it is now one of the key prerequisites for strengthening the future competitiveness of Bangladesh's industrial sector, ensuring sustainable growth, and reinforcing the country's position in global markets," he said.



বাণিজ্য মন্ত্রণালয় ও বিজিএমইএর যৌথ সেমিনারে বক্তারা পোশাক খাতের টেকসই প্রবৃদ্ধি ও বৈশ্বিক প্রতিযোগিতায় টিকে থাকার প্রধান শর্ত সার্কুলার অর্থনীতি

নিজস্ব প্রতিবেদক ■

বিশ্ববাজারে বাংলাদেশের পোশাক খাতের অবস্থান ধরে রাখতে সার্কুলার অর্থনীতি এখন আর তাত্ত্বিক ধারণা নয়; বরং এটি টেকসই প্রবৃদ্ধি ও প্রতিযোগিতায় টিকে থাকার প্রধান শর্তে পরিণত হয়েছে। লিনিয়ার মডেল থেকে সরে এসে সম্পদের পুনর্ব্যবহার নিশ্চিত করা জরুরি হয়ে উঠেছে। কারণ ক্রেতা ও বিনিয়োগকারীরা ক্রমেই পরিবেশবান্ধব উৎপাদন ব্যবস্থার দিকে ঝুঁকছেন। ফলে টেক্সটাইল বর্জ্যকে সম্পদে রূপান্তর করতে না পারলে আন্তর্জাতিক বাজারে প্রতিযোগিতায় পিছিয়ে পড়ার ঝুঁকি বাড়বে। রাজধানীর একটি হোটেলে গতকাল 'বাংলাদেশের বস্ত্রশিল্পে সার্কুলার (বৃত্তাকার) রূপান্তর ত্বরান্বিতকরণ: সুইচ টু সিই পাইলট প্রকল্পগুলো থেকে প্রাপ্ত অভিজ্ঞতা' শীর্ষক সেমিনারে বক্তারা এ কথা বলেন। তৈরি পোশাক শিল্পে সার্কুলার ইকোনমির প্রসার এবং টেকসই শিল্পায়ন নিশ্চিত করার লক্ষ্যে বাণিজ্য মন্ত্রণালয় এবং বাংলাদেশ গার্মেন্ট ম্যানুফ্যাকচারার্স অ্যান্ড এক্সপোর্টার্স অ্যাসোসিয়েশন (বিজিএমইএ) যৌথভাবে এ সেমিনারের আয়োজন করে।

অনুষ্ঠানে প্রধান অতিথির বক্তব্যে বাণিজ্যমন্ত্রী খন্দকার আব্দুল মুক্তাদির বলেন, 'বাংলাদেশে পোশাক খাতে সার্কুলার ইকোনমি বা বৃত্তাকার অর্থনীতি এখন আর কেবল একটি তাত্ত্বিক ধারণা বা উচ্চাকাঙ্ক্ষা নয়; বরং এটি একটি বাস্তবসম্মত ও অর্জনযোগ্য লক্ষ্য, যা এরই মধ্যে বাস্তবায়িত হচ্ছে। বৈশ্বিক ব্র্যান্ডগুলোর সঙ্গে অংশীদারত্বের ভিত্তিতে পরিচালিত পাইলট প্রকল্পগুলো প্রমাণ করেছে যে টেক্সটাইল বর্জ্য ব্যবস্থাপনা এবং রিসাইক্লিং পদ্ধতি আমাদের শিল্প ব্যবস্থায় কার্যকরভাবে যুক্ত করা সম্ভব।' দেশের পোশাক খাতে একটি পদ্ধতিগত পরিবর্তনের জন্য পুরোপুরি প্রস্তুত উল্লেখ করে তিনি বলেন, 'বিশ্ববাজারে এখন সাসটেইনেবিলিটি বা স্থায়িত্বই প্রতিযোগিতায় টিকে থাকার প্রধান শর্ত হয়ে দাঁড়িয়েছে। ক্রেতা ও বিনিয়োগকারীরা বর্তমানে এমন উৎপাদন ব্যবস্থার দিকে ঝুঁকছেন, যা একই সঙ্গে দক্ষ ও দায়িত্বশীল।' বাণিজ্যমন্ত্রী বলেন, 'টেক্সটাইল ও পোশাক খাত অত্যন্ত সম্পদ-নিবিড় হওয়ায় এখানে উপকরণের পুনর্ব্যবহার এবং রিসাইক্লিং নিশ্চিত করা জরুরি। এটি কেবল পরিবেশ রক্ষা করবে না; বরং আমাদের বৈশ্বিক অবস্থানকেও শক্তিশালী করবে।' এ রূপান্তর সফল করতে সরকার, শিল্প খাত, গ্লোবাল ব্র্যান্ড এবং প্রযুক্তি সরবরাহকারীদের একযোগে কাজ করার আহ্বান জানান তিনি। অনুষ্ঠানে বিজিএমইএর সভাপতি মাহমুদ হাসান খান বলেন, 'সাম্প্রতিক বছরগুলোয় বিশ্ব ফ্যাশন শিল্প এক নতুন বাস্তবতার দিকে মোড় নিতে শুরু করেছে। নতুন প্রজন্ম, তাদের ব্যবহৃত পণ্যের পরিবেশগত প্রভাব নিয়ে অত্যন্ত সচেতন। পোশাককে মানুষের 'দ্বিতীয় চামড়া' হিসেবে বিবেচনা করা

হয়, তাই এটি হওয়া উচিত গ্লানি ও দূষণমুক্ত।'

আন্তর্জাতিক ব্র্যান্ডগুলো এখন টেকসই পণ্যের ব্যাপারে আগের চেয়ে অনেক বেশি সোচ্চার উল্লেখ করে তিনি বলেন, 'বিশ্ব ফ্যাশন বাজারে প্রতিযোগিতায় টিকে থাকতে হলে এ বর্জ্যের একটি টেকসই সমাধান বের করা বাংলাদেশের জন্য বাধ্যতামূলক। তাই সামনের দিকে এগিয়ে যাওয়ার একমাত্র পথ হলো আমাদের ব্যবসায়িক মডেলে 'সার্কুলারিটি' অন্তর্ভুক্ত করা।' বিজিএমইএ এ পরিবর্তনের নেতৃত্ব দেয়ার দায়িত্ব গ্রহণ করেছে জানিয়ে বিজিএমইএর সভাপতি বলেন, 'আমরা বিশ্বাস করি, প্রতিযোগিতামূলক সক্ষমতা ধরে রাখতে শিল্পের দক্ষতা বৃদ্ধি করতে হবে। 'সার্কুলারিটি' প্রতিযোগিতার পথে বাধা নয়, বরং এটি প্রতিযোগিতায় টিকে থাকার একটি পূর্বশর্ত।'

অনুষ্ঠানে বিশেষ অতিথির বক্তব্যে বাংলাদেশে নিযুক্ত ইউরোপীয় ইউনিয়নের (ইইউ) রাষ্ট্রদূত মাইকেল মিলার বলেন, 'আমাদের মাটি থেকে সম্পদ আহরণ করে এমন পণ্য তৈরি করা বন্ধ করতে হবে, যা আমরা ব্যবহার শেষে ল্যান্ডফিলে ফেলে দেই। এর পরিবর্তে আমাদের উচিত সেই সম্পদগুলো পুনরায় ব্যবহার

করা। সম্পদ সাশ্রয় কেবল একটি পরিবেশগত বাধ্যবাধকতা নয়; বরং এটি একটি প্রবৃদ্ধি কৌশলও বটে।' তিনি বলেন, 'রিসাইক্লিং, উপকরণের বিকল্প ব্যবহার এবং সম্পদের উৎপাদনশীলতা বৃদ্ধি সরাসরি প্রতিষ্ঠানের খরচ কমায়ে এবং উদ্ভাবনকে উৎসাহিত করে। বর্তমানে বিশ্ব রাজনীতি ও বাণিজ্য যখন ক্রমবর্ধমানভাবে অনিশ্চিত এবং জটিল হয়ে উঠছে, তখন এ সার্কুলার ইকোনমি আমাদের সার্বভৌমত্ব এবং শিল্প সক্ষমতা রক্ষায় সাহায্য করবে।

আমরা একক কোনো দেশের ওপর নির্ভরতা কমিয়ে সরবরাহ ব্যবস্থাকে বৈচিত্র্যময় করছি।'

ইইউ রাষ্ট্রদূত আরো বলেন, 'সার্কুলার ইকোনমির ক্ষেত্রে টেক্সটাইল ও পোশাক খাত আমাদের অন্যতম অগ্রাধিকার। এ খাতে বর্জ্যের পরিমাণ বিশাল—ইইউতে বছরে ৫০ লাখ টনের বেশি পোশাক পরিত্যক্ত হয় এবং বাংলাদেশে বছরে প্রায় ছয় লাখ টন বর্জ্য তৈরি হয়। ফাস্ট ফ্যাশন এবং সামাজিক অবস্থার উদ্বেগের কারণে ইইউ ২০২২ সালে টেকসই এবং সার্কুলার টেক্সটাইল কৌশল গ্রহণ করেছে। এর মধ্যে রয়েছে ইকো-ডিজাইন, বর্ধিত উৎপাদক দায়বদ্ধতা এবং ডিজিটাল প্রডাক্ট পাসপোর্ট নিশ্চিত করার মতো উচ্চাকাঙ্ক্ষী লক্ষ্য। এছাড়া গত বছর আমরা করপোরেট স্থায়িত্ব নিশ্চিত করতে নতুন নীতিমালা গ্রহণ করেছি, যা জবাবদিহিতাকে আরো শক্তিশালী করবে।'

অনুষ্ঠানে আরো উপস্থিত ছিলেন বাণিজ্য মন্ত্রণালয়ের সচিব (ভারপ্রাপ্ত) আবদুর রহিম খান, সুইচ টু সিইর চিফ টেকনিক্যাল অ্যাডভাইজার মার্ক ড্র্যাক, চ্যাথাম হাউজের সিনিয়র রিসার্চ ফেলো ড. প্যাট্রিক শ্রোডারসহ বিভিন্ন সরবরাহকারী প্রতিষ্ঠানের প্রতিনিধি, অংশীদার ও সংশ্লিষ্ট অংশীজনরা।

