# বগুড়ায় উৎপাদিত কৃষি যন্ত্রাংশ রফতানি হচ্ছে ভারত-নেপালে

এবিএস ফরহাদ ■ বগুড়া থেকে ফিরে

কৃষি যন্ত্রপাতি ও যন্ত্রাংশ উৎপাদনে দেশের অন্যতম সম্ভাবনাময় কেন্দ্রে পরিণত হয়েছে বগুড়ার হালকা প্রকৌশল শিল্প। স্থানীয় উদ্যোক্তাদের উৎপাদিত রাইস মিলের শেল, সেন্ট্রিফিউগাল পাম্প, সেচ পাম্প, টিউবওয়েল, ধান ও ভুট্টা মাড়াইয়ের মেশিনসহ বিভিন্ন যন্ত্রাংশ দেশের বিভিন্ন অঞ্চলের চাহিদা মেটাচ্ছে। পাশাপাশি ভারত-নেপালসহ বিভিন্ন দেশে রফতানি হচ্ছে। ফলে কৃষি খাতে সময় ও শ্রমের পাশাপাশি জ্বালানি সাশ্রয়ের সুযোগ তৈরি হচ্ছে। একই সঙ্গে আমদানি বিকল্প যন্ত্রাংশ উৎপাদনেও সম্ভাবনা তৈরি হয়েছে এ অঞ্চলে।

সরজমিনে দেখা গেছে, বগুড়ার ফুলতলা এলাকার রনী ইঞ্জিনিয়ারিং ওয়ার্কশপে দেশী-বিদেশী প্রযুক্তির সমন্বয়ে পরিবেশবান্ধব উপায়ে অন্তত ২০ ধরনের কৃষি যন্ত্রপাতি ও যন্ত্রাংশ তৈরি হচ্ছে। রাইস মিলের শেল, সেচ ও সেন্ট্রিফিউগাল পাম্প, পাম্পের স্পেয়ার পার্টস, মাড়াই মেশিনের পার্টস ও টিউবওয়েল-জাতীয় পণ্য তৈরিতে কাজ করছেন ২০ জনের বেশি শ্রমিক। বগুড়ার স্থানীয় বাজারের পাশাপাশি ঢাকা, রাজশাহী ও রংপুরসহ দেশের বিভিন্ন অঞ্চলে এসব পণ্য বিক্রি হচ্ছে। পাশাপাশি রফতানিও করছে প্রতিষ্ঠানটি।

রনী ইঞ্জিনিয়ারিং ওয়ার্কশপের স্বত্বাধিকারী আবু বকর সিদ্দিক রনী বণিক বার্তাকে বলেন, 'এখানে মূলত কৃষি যন্ত্রের বিভিন্ন পার্টস ও সেচ পাম্প উৎপাদন করা হয়। এর মধ্যে রয়েছে বিভিন্ন ধরনের ছোট-বড় সেচ পাম্প, টিউবওয়েল ও শেল। আগে চীন ও ভারত থেকে আমদানি করতে হতো। বর্তমানে নিজেরাই উৎপাদন করছি। প্রতি মাসে তিন-চার টন পণ্য ভারত ও নেপালে রফতানিও করতে পারছি।'

**বিশ্বব্যাংক ও পিকেএসএফের যৌথ অর্থায়নে পরিচালিত 'সাসটেইনেবল মাইক্রোএন্টারপ্রাইজ অ্যান্ড রেজিলিয়েন্ট ট্রান্সফরমেশন (স্মার্ট)' শীর্ষক প্রকল্পের আওতায় আর্থিক ও কারিগরি সহায়তা দেয়া হচ্ছে বগুড়া বিসিক শিল্পনগরীর বিভিন্ন উদ্যোক্তাকে**



বগুড়ার হালকা প্রকৌশল শিল্পের আধুনিকায়নে এ খাতের উদ্যোক্তাদের সহায়তা করছে পল্লী কর্ম-সহায়ক ফাউন্ডেশন (পিকেএসএফ)। বগুড়া বিসিক শিল্পনগরীর বিভিন্ন উদ্যোক্তাকে বিশ্বব্যাংক ও পিকেএসএফের যৌথ অর্থায়নে পরিচালিত 'সাসটেইনেবল মাইক্রোএন্টারপ্রাইজ অ্যান্ড রেজিলিয়েন্ট ট্রান্সফরমেশন (স্মার্ট)' শীর্ষক প্রকল্পের আওতায় আর্থিক ও কারিগরি সহায়তা দেয়া হচ্ছে। প্রকল্পটি বাস্তবায়নকারী প্রতিষ্ঠান গ্রাম উন্নয়ন কর্ম (গাক) ভারী যন্ত্রপাতি কেনায় অনুদান, পরিবেশবান্ধব বর্জ্য ব্যবস্থাপনা, সোলার সিস্টেমসহ বিভিন্ন সহযোগিতা দিচ্ছে। এর ফলে উদ্যোক্তাদের কর্মপরিবেশ উন্নত হওয়ার পাশাপাশি বিদ্যুৎ সাশ্রয়ও হচ্ছে। এমনই একটি প্রতিষ্ঠান সরকার এগ্রো ইঞ্জিনিয়ারিং। প্রতিষ্ঠানটিতে পাওয়ার ট্রিলার, ট্রাক্টর, পাওয়ার থ্রেসার, মেইল শেলার, ধান, গম ও ভুট্টা মাড়াইয়ের ক্রাশিং মেশিন ও ঘাস কাটার যন্ত্রসহ প্রায় ৪০ ধরনের কৃষি যন্ত্রপাতি তৈরি হচ্ছে। স্মার্ট প্রকল্পের আওতায় কারখানাটিতে ২৫০ ওয়াটের সোলার প্যানেল স্থাপন করা হয়েছে। এতে মাসে প্রায় ৫ হাজার টাকা বিদ্যুৎ বিল কমেছে। প্রতিষ্ঠানটির স্বত্বাধিকারী সাইদুজ্জামান সরকার বণিক বার্তাকে বলেন, 'স্থানীয় পর্যায়ে যন্ত্রপাতি উৎপাদনের ফলে কম খরচে বেশি পণ্য উৎপাদন সম্ভব হচ্ছে। দেশীয় প্রযুক্তির ব্যবহার ও সংস্থার অনুদানের কারণে কম দামে এসব পণ্য বাজারজাত করা যাচ্ছে।'

বগুড়া বিসিকের তথ্যানুযায়ী, জেলায় চার হাজারের বেশি উৎপাদনমুখী কারখানা রয়েছে। এর মধ্যে বৃহৎ শিল্প ১২০টি, মাঝারি শিল্প ১৯, ক্ষুদ্র শিল্প ২ হাজার ৩৫১ এবং কৃষিভিত্তিক শিল্প রয়েছে ৭৪৫টি। কয়েক দশক ধরে বগুড়ার ফাউন্ড্রি ও লাইট ইঞ্জিনিয়ারিং কারখানাগুলো কৃষি যন্ত্র, সেচ পাম্প, মোটরযানের যন্ত্রাংশসহ বিভিন্ন শিল্পপণ্য তৈরি করছে। সংশ্লিষ্টদের দাবি, দেশের কৃষি যন্ত্রের প্রায় ৮০ শতাংশ চাহিদা বগুড়ার উদ্যোক্তারা পূরণ করছেন। এ খাতে প্রত্যক্ষ ও পরোক্ষভাবে কর্মসংস্থান হয়েছে ৩০ হাজারের বেশি মানুষের।

ক্ষুদ্র ও মাঝারি শিল্প (এসএমই) ফাউন্ডেশনও বগুড়ার এ খাতকে বিশেষ ক্লাস্টার হিসেবে চিহ্নিত করেছে। এর অধীনে রয়েছে প্রায় ৭০০টি ইঞ্জিনিয়ারিং ওয়ার্কশপ, ৫০০টি কৃষি যন্ত্রপাতি ও যন্ত্রাংশ উৎপাদন কেন্দ্র এবং ৭৫টি ফাউন্ড্রি। এসব প্রতিষ্ঠানের সমন্বয়ে গড়ে ওঠা ক্লাস্টারটি দেশে আমদানি বিকল্প যন্ত্র ও যন্ত্রাংশ উৎপাদনের গুরুত্বপূর্ণ কেন্দ্রে পরিণত হয়েছে।

সম্ভাবনার পাশাপাশি সমস্যাও রয়েছে। গ্যাস-বিদ্যুতের সংকট ও কাঁচামালের মূল্যবৃদ্ধির কারণে উৎপাদন ব্যাহত হচ্ছে বলে জানিয়েছেন বগুড়ার উদ্যোক্তারা। বিসিক বগুড়া জেলা কার্যালয়ের উপমহাব্যবস্থাপক একেএম মাহফুজুর রহমান বণিক বার্তাকে বলেন, 'বিসিকে থাকা ইউনিটগুলো উৎপাদন বাড়িয়ে ভোক্তার চাহিদা পুরোপুরি মেটাতে পারছে না। আরো উৎপাদনের প্রয়োজন হলেও জায়গার সংকট রয়েছে।' এ সমস্যা সমাধানের চেষ্টা চলছে বলেও জানান তিনি।

পিকেএসএফের স্মার্ট প্রকল্পের প্রকল্প সমন্বয়কারী একেএম জহিরুল হক বণিক বার্তাকে বলেন, 'সমগ্র ক্ষুদ্র উদ্যোগ খাতই পুরনো প্রযুক্তির বেড়াজালে আবদ্ধ। ফলে উৎপাদন বাড়ছে না। এ অবস্থা থেকে উত্তরণে প্রকল্পের মাধ্যমে আধুনিক প্রযুক্তি হস্তান্তরের উদ্যোগ নেয়া হয়েছে। এর অংশ হিসেবে বগুড়ার হালকা প্রকৌশল শিল্পের উদ্যোক্তারা কয়লাচালিত ফার্নেসের পরিবর্তে ইলেকট্রিক ফার্নেস স্থাপন করেছেন। ম্যানুয়াল মেশিনের পাশাপাশি কম্পিউটার নিয়ন্ত্রিত সিএনসি মেশিন ব্যবহার করে উৎপাদনশীলতা বহু গুণ বাড়াতে সক্ষম হয়েছেন। একই সঙ্গে পরিবেশবান্ধব উৎপাদন ব্যবস্থায় উদ্বুদ্ধ করতে আরইসিপি চর্চাকারী উদ্যোক্তাদের অনুদান দেয়া হচ্ছে।'

সংশ্লিষ্টরা বলছেন, প্রযুক্তির আধুনিকায়ন, জ্বালানি সরবরাহ নিশ্চিত করা, কাঁচামালের দাম নিয়ন্ত্রণ ও পর্যাপ্ত শিল্পস্থান নিশ্চিত করা গেলে বগুড়ার লাইট ইঞ্জিনিয়ারিং ক্লাস্টার দেশের কৃষি যন্ত্রের চাহিদা মেটানোর পাশাপাশি বড় পরিসরে রফতানি বাজারও ধরতে পারে। এতে কৃষি যন্ত্রপাতির আমদানিনির্ভরতা কমার পাশাপাশি কর্মসংস্থান ও স্থানীয় শিল্পের বিকাশ আরো ত্বরান্বিত হওয়ার সম্ভাবনা রয়েছে।

The Financial Express
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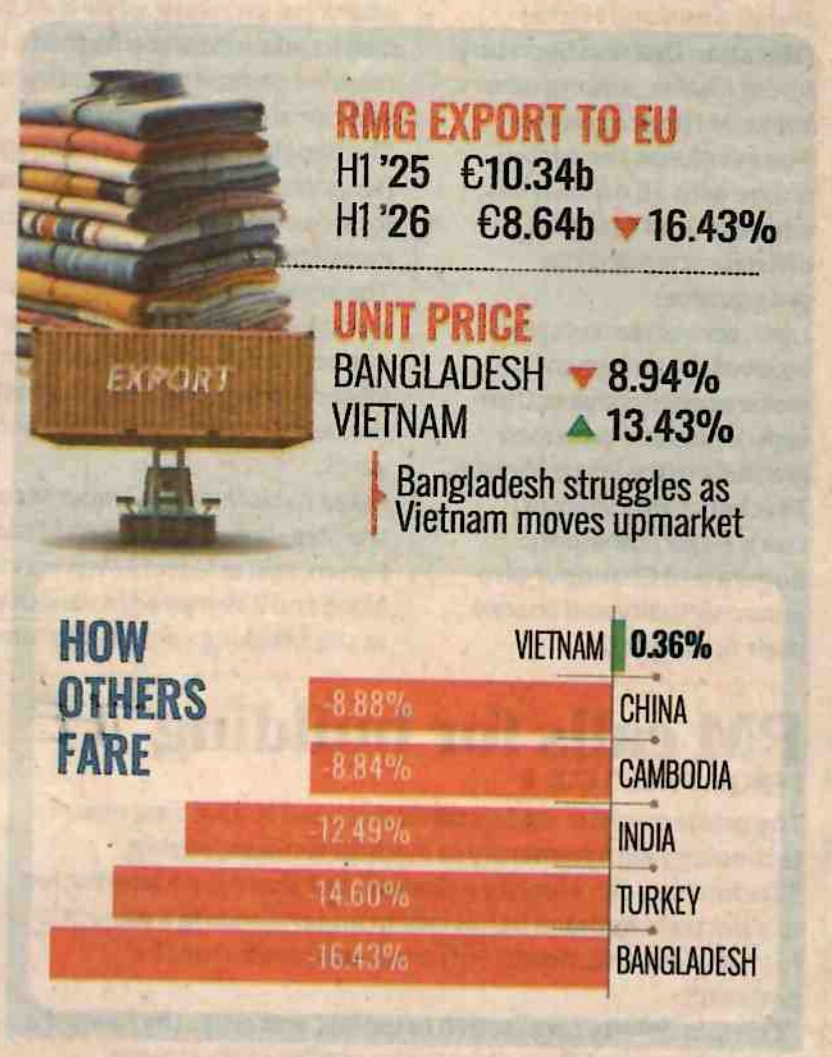
# Apparel exports to EU slide 16pc in H1

***Energy shortages, tougher competition from Vietnam and India weigh on shipments***




FE REPORT

Bangladesh's apparel exports to the European Union plunged 16.43 per cent in the first half of 2026, far outpacing the bloc's overall import decline, as an energy crisis and intensifying competition from Vietnam and India put pressure on the country's biggest export market.

Data analysis released by Eurostat showed that Bangladesh fetched €8.64 billion during the January-June period of 2026, falling much faster than the contraction in the bloc's overall apparel imports.

During the corresponding period of 2025, Bangladesh's apparel exports to the EU stood at €10.34 billion.

European Union apparel imports fell 9.70 per cent year-on-year to €41.10 billion in the first half of 2026.

Exporters said the competitive challenge was particularly significant ahead of Bangladesh's graduation from the least developed country category, as they faced uncertainty over future preferential market access.

Data analysis showed that Bangladesh was struggling on both volume and pricing, with export volumes falling 8.22 per cent in the first half, accompanied by an 8.94 per cent reduction in average unit prices, squeezing overall earnings.

June earnings, however, offered a slight recovery, rising a modest 0.87 per cent year-on-year to €1.36 billion, compared with €1.35 billion in June 2025.

When asked, Mohammad Hatem, president of the Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BKMEA), attributed the decline to the prevailing energy crisis, trade agreements between major competitors such as India and Vietnam and the EU, and uncertainty over market access and post-graduation duty arrangements.

Buyers are currently worried about timely shipments because of the severe gas crisis, while they are also concerned about trade benefits after Bangladesh's LDC graduation.

Besides, Bangladesh is facing stiff competition from India and Vietnam due to their free trade agreements with the EU, he said, adding that all these factors were prompting buyers to develop alternative sourcing destinations, with many preferring India.

Buyers are cautious about placing orders in Bangladesh, he said, claiming that the ongoing energy crisis had forced some buyers to relocate one-third of their work orders from Bangladesh as factories struggled to maintain production and ensure timely shipment of orders.

Data showed that China retained the lead, absorbing a milder 8.88 per cent decline than Bangladesh and generating €11.82 billion during January-June 2026.

China's unit prices fell 6.48 per cent to €19.83 per kg, helping protect its total export volume from a steep decline.

Vietnam, which outperformed its competitors, was the only major player to remain in positive territory, capped by a massive 21.89 per cent surge in June 2026 alone.

Vietnam fetched €2.06 billion during the first half of 2026, marking 0.36 per cent growth.

Vietnam's strategy relies on

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higher-value apparel, with the country recording the highest unit price among Asian suppliers at €29.32 per kg, a 13.43 per cent increase, the data showed.

Regional competitors such as Turkey recorded a 14.60 per cent decline, while India posted a 12.49 per cent fall and Cambodia an 8.84 per cent decline in the first half.

Meanwhile, Pakistan expanded its export quantity by 4.02 per cent, but aggressive price cuts, with its unit value falling 15.91 per cent to €10.68 per kg, ultimately drove total revenue down 12.53 per cent.

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# Adamjee EPZ sets sight on $1.5b export mark

JASIM UDDIN

Once home to the loss-making Adamjee Jute Mills, the abandoned industrial land at Siddhirganj has been transformed into one of Bangladesh's key export and employment hubs.

Adamjee Export Processing Zone (EPZ) exported goods worth $1.179 billion in FY2025-26, crossing the $1-billion mark for the second consecutive fiscal year, according to the Bangladesh Export Processing Zones Authority (BEPZA).

Spread across nearly 292 acres, the EPZ now houses 47 operational enterprises, employing 76,027 people. Total investment has reached $847 million, while cumulative exports since its establishment have stood at $11.112 billion.

Another 10 enterprises are under construction and expected to begin production by 2027. Once operational, annual exports could exceed $1.5 billion, while direct employment could reach 100,000, BEPZA expects.

However, the EPZ was originally designed to generate annual exports worth around $750 million once fully operational.

The zone produces a diverse range of products, including ready-made garments, high-end bridal wear, suits, blazers, safety footwear, military boots and automotive components. The products are shipped to Europe, the US, Japan and other major markets.

On Saturday, speaking to journalists at his office, Adamjee EPZ Executive Director Md Abdur Rahman Bhuiyan said the zone had crossed the $1-billion export threshold for the second consecutive year.

"The project proposal estimated annual exports of around $750 million once the EPZ became fully operational. But exports crossed $1 billion in FY2024-25. With the 10 factories now under construction coming into production, annual exports could exceed $1.5 billion," he said.

He said investor interest in the zone remained strong, but all plots had already been allocated.

"We are trying to expand the EPZ further to meet the growing demand from investors," he said.

During a visit to the zone, we found that it emerged as a diversified industrial hub from the site of a once-struggling jute mill. The transformation of Adamjee EPZ reflects a major shift in the use of the country's industrial land.

The zone has also emerged as a manufacturing

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destination for specialised, high-value apparel.

At German-invested UBF Bridal Ltd, workers produce bridal gowns, exclusive accessories and satin-and-lace dresses using modern technology and high-quality fabrics. The factory also supplies a leading European fashion brand.

The company started production in April 2022 with an investment of $3.66 million. It now employs 357 Bangladeshi workers and exported $5.27 million worth of products in FY2025-26.

Its product range includes wedding and evening dresses, suits, jackets, boleros, veils, petticoats and jewellery. After being shipped to Germany, the products reach around 37 countries, including markets in Europe, the US, Brazil and South Africa.

Md Rabiul Hoque Siddiqui, chief operating officer of UBF Bridal, said the company had to develop its own skilled workforce because Bangladesh had no experience in manufacturing such specialised garments.

"We started with around 130 workers. We gave them training to handle such complicated styles. As they gained experience, productivity also improved. Initially, the efficiency of local workers was around 30%, but it has now improved to 60%, and we are working to take it to 80%," he said.

The company is also working to increase local sourcing of raw materials by developing embroidery and lace-making capacity. It plans to manufacture footwear in Bangladesh in the future.

Rani Akter, a sewing operator at the factory, said she had been working there for around five years because of the favourable working environment and relatively better wages compared with many factories outside the EPZ.

High-end suits, safety footwear and auto components

The diversity of production at Adamjee EPZ is evident across its factories.

Universal Menswear Ltd, a joint venture between Romanian and Bangladeshi company Ananta Apparel Ltd, initially invested $45.91 million to build the facility, which was relocated from Romania.

The factory now employs 8,194 people, including 34 foreign nationals. The company produces tailored suits, blazers and formal trousers and exported $97.88 million worth of products in FY2025-26.

Ukrainian entrepreneur-invested Super Protective Shoes (Pvt.) Ltd has invested $13.06 million and employs nearly 1,200 people. It exported $12.78 million worth of safety footwear, industrial shoes, military boots and specialised footwear in FY2025-26.

Lavrik Andriti, chairman and managing director of Super Protective Shoes, said the company was introducing advanced machinery into its production lines.

"Some of the machines are sourced from Europe, while others come from Taiwan and China. They allow us to produce specialised footwear using relatively advanced and costly technology," he said.

"We want to invest another $10 million in this factory to increase capacity, aiming to double exports within the next two years. That will create job opportunities for another 1,000 people," he added.

Japanese-invested TS Tech Bangladesh Ltd has initially invested $4.67 million and employs 512 people. It exported $14.75 million worth of products last fiscal year.

The company manufactures trim covers for vehicle seats for Japanese automakers. Most raw materials are sourced from Japan and China, processed in Bangladesh and then shipped to manufacturing plants in Japan.

Satoru Onishi, managing director of TS Tech Bangladesh, said the company was increasingly focusing on productivity and automation.

It has introduced technologies such as 3D printing for internal production-related activities and has gradually expanded its production capacity since starting operations in January 2017.

Established in 1950 by the Adamjee family in Siddhirganj, Narayanganj, Adamjee Jute Mills was once one of the world's largest jute mills. The nearly 1,000-acre industrial complex grew into a sizeable township with workers' settlements, markets, schools and other facilities.

After independence, the mill was nationalised and brought under the Bangladesh Jute Mills Corporation (BJMC).

Years of financial losses, management weaknesses, technological limitations and labour unrest pushed the mill into a prolonged crisis. Operations were finally shut down on June 30, 2002.

The government subsequently decided to redevelop the site for industrial use. On December 30, 2004, it decided to hand over the mill's land to BEPZA.

Adamjee EPZ was formally inaugurated on March 06, 2006, beginning a new industrial chapter on the site of one of Bangladesh's once-largest jute mills.

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# RMG exports to EU fall 16.43% in Jan-Jun

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Bangladesh's ready-made garment (RMG) exports to the European Union (EU) fell 16.43 percent year-on-year to €8.64 billion in the January-June period of 2026, according to Eurostat, the bloc's statistical office.

During the six months, the volume of exports fell 8.22 percent year-on-year, while prices decreased 8.94 percent.

In June, the volume of goods shipped to the EU from Bangladesh rose 6.53 percent compared with the same month of the previous year, but export value fell 5.31 percent, according to Eurostat data.

The EU's apparel imports from the world also fell 9.7 percent year-on-year in the first half of 2026 to €41.1 billion. The volume of imports fell 6.4 percent, while the average price decreased 3.53 percent.

During the same period, exports from Vietnam to the EU grew 0.36 percent to €2.06 billion. Interestingly, Vietnam shipped 11.52 percent less goods while raising prices by 13.43 percent.

Shipments from China, Turkey, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Cambodia to the EU also fell during the period.

Bangladesh was the second-largest garment supplier to the EU in 2025, according to Eurostat data.

Earlier this month, apparel exports from Bangladesh to the US declined 5.75 percent year-on-year to $4.01 billion in the January-June period of this year, according to data from the US Office of Textiles and Apparel (OTEXA).

# Phantom exports worth Tk 24cr surface

## At least 29 consignments logged as exports, while officials allege raw materials were sold locally and incentives claimed

MOHAMMAD SUMAN

It was just before the Eid-ul-Azha holidays in May this year. Offices were racing to finish their last files before a long vacation.

Against this backdrop, Narayanganj-based knitwear maker RT Fashion told customs it was exporting garments worth around Tk 84 lakh. Its clearing and forwarding (C&F) agent filed the export declaration, which was then entered into the National Board of Revenue's Asycuda World, the web-based electronic customs management system.

Under the normal process, the cargo would arrive at an inland container depot (ICD), where customs would assess the declaration, examine the goods and verify the documents. After clearance, the container would move to Chattogram port and be loaded onto a vessel.

RT Fashion's consignment was shown as cleared in the customs system and ready to leave the country.

There was just one problem: there was no cargo!

Nothing had moved from the factory in Narayanganj to Summit Alliance Port Limited, the ICD through which the shipment was declared, or to Chattogram port, according to official documents.

Yet the consignment was recorded as an export using forged documents, signatures and seals.

RT Fashion was not an isolated case.

The Daily Star identified irregularities involving 122 consignments linked to at least seven companies. Through verification with customs officials, ICD authorities and C&F agents, this newspaper has so far confirmed 29 consignments as fake exports worth around Tk 24 crore were recorded between January and June this year.

The fake exports were linked to at least seven companies.

The companies are RT Fashion, HBS Apparels, Al Galeb Fashion Limited, Deluxe Apparels Ltd, NM Fashion, NM Knit Fashion, Bhuiyan Fabrics Ltd.

The shipments, declared for Italy, the United States, Austria, Sweden, the United Arab Emirates and Hong Kong, were recorded as exports even though the cargo never entered the designated depots.

The cases followed a similar pattern, exploiting the bonded warehouse system. Under the scheme, export-oriented garment manufacturers can import raw materials without paying duties, on condition that the finished products are exported.

Customs officials and C&F agents said some exporters instead sold the duty-free materials in the local market and then filed phantom export documents to make it appear that they had turned those materials into exported garments.

If bonded goods are diverted to the domestic market, importers must pay duties and taxes ranging from 89 percent to 159 percent, depending on the product.

By creating fictitious exports, the exporters can allegedly avoid those payments while retaining access to duty-free imports and claiming the government's 2 percent export cash incentive.

**A WEIGHT DISCREPANCY RAISED THE ALARM**

The latest round of export fraud first came to light when customs officials spotted an anomaly in an RT Fashion declaration.

On May 24, the company declared the export of 23,992kg of garments through Summit Alliance Port Limited. Officials became suspicious because the gross and net weights were identical, even though gross weight normally includes packaging.

When customs sought the original assessment documents, the exporter allegedly took advantage of the Eid holidays and the vessel's cargo cut-off deadline.

On May 26, the shipment was shown as cleared using forged seals and signatures belonging to Assistant Revenue Officer Jannatul Jannat Ivy and three other customs officials.

"My seal and signature, as well as those of my colleagues, were forged in at least four consignments, including the RT Fashion shipment," Ivy told The Daily Star.

By the time customs reviewed the paperwork after the holidays, the shipment had already been recorded as exported.

Sourav Mondal, assistant commissioner in charge of the depot, said, "The fraudsters exploited our manpower shortage by submitting the documents on the cargo cut-off day, when officials were under pressure to process shipments quickly."

Declarations of the 29 ghost exports were filed through three C&F agents -- Shahjalal Enterprise, Alpha Textile Ltd and Bangladesh Shipping Agency.

They were processed through two private ICDs -- Summit Alliance Port Limited and Port Link Logistics Centre Limited.

Customs officials say the exporters also siphoned large sums abroad through import overvaluation

READ MORE ON B3

**GHOST EXPORTS: THE NUMBERS**

Confirmed fake export consignments: **29**

Garments falsely declared as exports: **388 tonnes**

Declared export value: **Tk 24 crore**

Period: January-June 2026

### HOW THE SCHEME WORKED

**DUTY-FREE IMPORTS**
Raw materials brought in under bonded warehouse system

**LOCAL SALE**
Materials allegedly diverted to local market

**PHANTOM EXPORT**
Fake documents created to show finished goods were exported

**BENEFITS RETAINED**
Duties avoided and 2% export cash incentive claimed

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and later used fictitious exports to legitimise those transactions. Both offences are punishable under the Money Laundering Prevention Act.

"The latest round might be the tip of the iceberg," one official said.

**AN OLD FRAUD IN A NEW ROUND**

Phantom exports are not new. The Daily Star first reported it in November 2021 in an investigation titled "Chattogram Port: Phantom export raises alarm". A subsequent customs probe found that at least 20 companies had claimed incentives through more than 100 fake export consignments.

That led to another investigation in April 2022, headlined "At least 20 companies pocket incentives over 5 years through ghost shipments".

The reports prompted an Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) investigation that found evidence implicating exporters, C&F agents and customs officials. In the latest development, a court in July this year sent 11 customs officials to jail in connection with the case.

According to ACC sources, evidence has also been found implicating exporters, C&F agents and bank officials, in addition to the customs officials named in the case. The investigation is still ongoing.

The latest phantom exports are surfacing amid persistent questions about the reliability of Bangladesh's export statistics.

Since 2024, large discrepancies between figures published by different government agencies have fuelled allegations that the Export Promotion Bureau (EPB) overstated exports.

A Centre for Policy Dialogue study published on July 30, 2025 found that the mismatch was longstanding. The gap exceeded $12 billion in FY2022-23, narrowed to $3.66 billion in FY2023-24, then widened again to nearly $4 billion in the first 11 months of FY2024-25 despite reconciliation efforts.

The latest data also shows a gap of close to $4 billion between EPB and the Bangladesh Bank figures for the first 10 months of FY2025-26.

"Price discounts, order cancellations and delays in repatriating export proceeds can create some differences between the datasets. But a gap of around $4 billion is highly unusual and warrants a comprehensive investigation," said Prof Mustafizur Rahman, distinguished fellow at CPD.

He said, "Repeated incidents of phantom exports, coupled with long-standing discrepancies in export data, have raised fresh questions about the credibility of Bangladesh's export reporting system. The failure to take tough action in previous cases has allowed such fraud to persist."

Speaking on condition of anonymity, a former senior customs official said previous probe committees had recommended a forensic audit of the entire Asycuda World system, but the recommendation was never implemented.

"As long as the system logs, user access records and data alteration history are not independently audited, the real perpetrators cannot be identified. Arresting a few individuals will not dismantle the network," he said.

**COMPANIES DENY WRONGDOING**

Repeated calls to Anwarul Islam of RT Fashion went unanswered.

Abul Khayer, commercial manager of HBS Apparels, said, "To the best of our knowledge, all the documents we submitted are genuine. The ICD customs authorities have sought our explanation, and we will respond accordingly."

Nawab Ali, managing director of Al Galeb Fashion Limited, said, "We had no intention of making any fictitious export declaration. I do not understand how this happened. My commercial manager is in contact with the C&F agent concerned."

Sajjad Hossain, director of Deluxe Apparels Ltd, said he was unaware of the matter and would check with his commercial manager. He did not respond to further calls.

The Daily Star could not reach NM Fashion, NM Knit Fashion or Bhuiyan Fabrics Ltd.

Iqbal Hossain of Shahjalal Enterprise, which handled consignments for three of the companies, denied involvement.

Abul Basher Md Shafiqur Rahman, commissioner of Chattogram Custom House ICD, said customs is reviewing export records for the first six months of the year.

"We have found evidence of fake exports at two private ICDs, while investigations are continuing at the remaining depots. A probe committee has been formed, and only after its investigation will we know the full extent of the fraud," he added.

The Business Standard
16 AUG 2026

# Bangladesh apparel exports to EU fall 16.4% in H1 2026

EXPORTS – BANGLADESH

**TBS REPORT**

» Consumer demand weak in EU

» Lower prices across EU

» Broader market pressure

Exports by India, China, Pakistan, Cambodia also fall

» Only Vietnam posts growth, up 0.36%

Bangladesh's apparel exports to the European Union fell 16.43% year-on-year to €8.64 billion in the first half of 2026, amid a broader contraction in the bloc's apparel import market.

The decline was driven by an 8.22% drop in shipment volumes and an 8.94% fall in average export prices during January-June, according to Eurostat data compiled by Bangladesh Apparel Voice (BAV) founder and Chief Executive Officer Mohiuddin Rubel.

The performance improved slightly in June, when Bangladesh's apparel exports to the EU rose 0.87% year-on-year to €1.37 billion. Shipment volumes increased 6.53% that month, partly offsetting a 5.31% decline in average prices.

Overall, the EU imported €41.10 billion worth of apparel from global suppliers in H1 2026, down 9.70% from a year earlier.

The decline reflected weaker consumer I SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

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demand and lower prices across the bloc. Import volumes fell 6.40%, while average unit prices declined 3.53%.

Most major apparel-exporting countries also recorded sharp declines in the EU market.

Turkey's exports fell 14.60%, followed by Pakistan at 12.53%, India at 12.49%, Sri Lanka at 11.21%, China at 8.88% and Cambodia at 8.84%.

Vietnam was the only major supplier to post positive export growth, with shipments to the EU rising 0.36% in H1 2026.

Vietnam's export volumes fell 11.52%, but a 13.43% increase in average unit prices helped offset the decline in shipments. The price increase was the highest among the major suppliers during the period.

Indonesia and Cambodia also increased their average unit prices, but sharp declines in shipment volumes prevented them from achieving overall export growth.

The figures indicate that Bangladesh's export decline was deeper than the overall contraction in the EU apparel market, with both shipment volumes and prices falling significantly during the first six months of the year.

# Adamjee EPZ exports surpass $1b, moving towards higher-value products

EXPORT – BANGLADESH

JAHIR RAYHAN

Once home to one of the world's largest jute mills, the industrial land of Adamjee in Narayanganj has been transformed into a major export and employment hub, with Adamjee Export Processing Zone (EPZ) now generating more than $1 billion in annual exports and employing over 76,000 people.

Built on the abandoned land of Adamjee Jute Mills, the EPZ has completed two decades of operation and currently hosts 47 production units that make garments, bridal wear, safety footwear, automotive components, and other specialised products for global markets.

According to the Bangladesh Export Processing Zones Authority (Bepza), total investment in Adamjee EPZ has reached about $847 million, while cumulative exports stand at $11.112 billion. Annual exports crossed $1 billion in FY25 and reached $1.179 billion in FY26, exceeding the $750 million target set in the original project proposal.

Md Abdur Rahman Bhuiyan, executive director of Adamjee EPZ, told The Business Standard that exports had crossed $1 billion for the second consecutive fiscal year.

"The project proposal had estimated annual exports of around $750 million once the EPZ became fully operational. But exports exceeded $1 billion in FY25. With the 10 factories currently under construction coming

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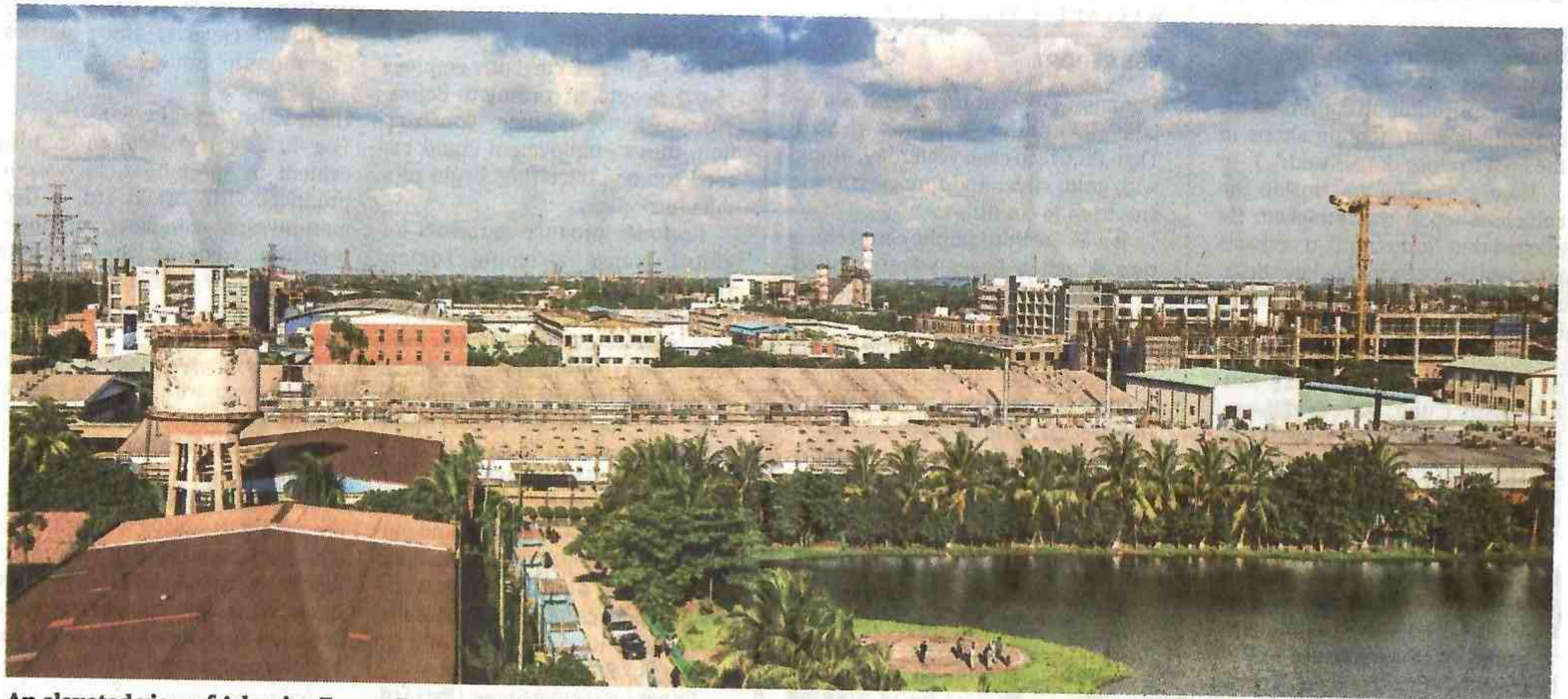
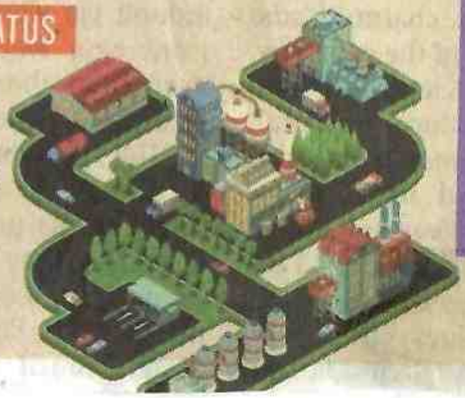


An elevated view of Adamjee Export Processing Zone in Narayanganj, built on the former site of one of the world's largest jute mills, now hosts 47 production units employing more than 76,000 people, with cumulative exports reaching $11.112 billion. PHOTO: RAJIB DHAR

## From abandoned jute mill to $1.18b export hub

CURRENT STATUS

- $1.179b FY26 exports
- 76,027 current workers
- $847m total investment



TRANSFORMATION TIMELINE

- 1950: Adamjee Jute Mills established
- 2002: Mill closes
- 2004: Land transferred to Bepza
- 2006: EPZ inaugurated

### By the numbers

| | |
|---|---|
| EPZ area | 292 acres |
| Operating factories | 47 |
| Factories under construction | 10 |
| Cumulative exports | $11.112b |
| Potential annual exports | $1.5b+ |

### WHAT ADAMJEE MAKES

- Premium garments
- Bridal & evening wear
- Safety & specialised footwear
- Automotive seat covers
- Safety equipment
- Garment accessories

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

into production, annual exports can potentially reach $1.5 billion," he said.

He said investor interest remained strong, but all plots had already been allocated. "We are trying to expand it further," he said.

### Over 76,000 jobs

The 292-acre EPZ currently employs 76,027 people, according to Bepza. With 10 factories under construction, direct employment could exceed 100,000 once they begin production.

Factories produce garments for global brands including Tommy Hilfiger, Ralph Lauren, Michael Kors and Van Heusen. The zone also makes safety equipment, footwear and automotive products, expanding beyond traditional apparel into specialised, higher-value exports.

Universal Menswear Ltd, a Romania-Bangladesh joint venture, has invested $45.91 million and employs 8,194 people, including 8,160 Bangladeshis and 34 foreign workers. It produces tailored men's suits, blazers and formal trousers and exported $97.88 million in FY26.

Super Protective Shoes (Pvt) Ltd, a Ukrainian-invested manufacturer, has invested $13.06 million and employs nearly a thousand people. It exported $12.77 million worth of safety shoes, industrial footwear, military boots and specialised footwear in FY26.

Lavryk Andrity, chairman and managing director of the company, said it was introducing specialised machinery to produce technically advanced footwear. Some machines are sourced from Europe and others from Taiwan and China.

Japanese company TS Tech Bangladesh Ltd has invested $4.67 million and employs 512 people, including 508 Bangladeshis and four Japanese workers. It exported $14.75 million last fiscal year, mainly producing automotive seat-trim covers for Japanese vehicle manufacturers.

The company sources most materials from Japan and China, processes the covers in Bangladesh and sends them to production facilities in Japan. Managing Director Satoru Onishi said the company was increasingly focusing on productivity and automation, including 3D printing for internal production work. It has gradually expanded capacity since starting operations in January 2017.

### High-value bridal wear

The EPZ's diversification is also evident in specialised, high-value products. UBF Bridal Ltd, a German-invested company, produces premium wedding and evening wear, including dresses, suits, jackets, boleros, veils, petticoats and jewellery.

The company began operations in April 2022 with a $3.66 million investment and now employs 357 local workers. It exported $5.27 million in FY26.

Khadeja Akter and Rani Akter are among its sewing workers. Rani, who has been working there for nearly five years, said the favourable working environment and higher wages than factories outside the EPZ were key reasons for staying.

Md Robiul Howie Siddiki, chief operating officer of UBF Bridal, said Bangladesh initially lacked workers experienced in producing such specialised garments. "We had to train the workers and managers ourselves," he said.

The company started with around 130 workers, and management says worker efficiency has risen from about 30% to 60% as employees gained experience.

UBF handles design, manufacturing, embellishment and finishing. Its products are exported to Germany and distributed to around 37 countries, including markets in Europe, the United States, Brazil and South Africa, while retaining their "Made in Bangladesh" identity.

The company is also developing local embroidery and lace production and plans to manufacture footwear in Bangladesh.

### From jute mill to export hub

Adamjee Jute Mills was established in 1950 in Siddhirganj by the Adamjee family and became one of the world's largest jute mills. Covering nearly 1,000 acres, it grew into a large industrial community with worker settlements, markets and schools.

After independence, the mill was nationalised and placed under Bangladesh Jute Mills Corporation (BJMC). Financial losses, management weaknesses, technological limitations and labour unrest gradually pushed it into crisis.

The mill shut down on 30 June 2002, when around 20,000-25,000 workers were employed there.

The government later decided to repurpose the abandoned industrial land. On 30 December 2004, it decided to transfer the land to Bepza, and Adamjee EPZ was formally inaugurated on 13 March 2006.

In FY2005-06, the EPZ had only $4 million in investment and $0.23 million in exports. Over two decades, modern factories have replaced the jute mill, and the same land now supports more than 76,000 jobs across 47 operating factories.

### Scope for further growth

Adamjee EPZ's strategic location between Dhaka and Chattogram, connectivity and modern facilities have helped attract local and foreign investors.

Bepza expects the 10 factories under construction to push annual exports beyond $1.5 billion and employment above 100,000.

The zone's impact also extends to workers' families. At around 5:30pm during a TBS visit, five-year-old Abdullah was leaving with his mother, Shanta. She said she could work while leaving her son at the EPZ's daycare centre, which she found highly helpful.

From a jute mill that once symbolised Bangladesh's industrialisation to a modern export hub producing high-value garments, specialised footwear and automotive components, Adamjee's industrial landscape has undergone a major transformation.

The Business Standard
16 AUG 2026

# RMG exporters seek 12-month instalments for Jul-Aug energy bills

INDUSTRIES – BANGLADESH

TBS REPORT

Garment and textile industry owners, reeling from production losses caused by severe gas and electricity shortages, have sought permission to pay their July and August utility bills in 12 equal monthly instalments instead of making the payments in full within a single month.

The Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers and Exporters Association requested this in a letter sent to Power, Energy and Mineral Resources Minister Iqbal Hassan Mahmood on 9 August.

Signed by BKMEA President Mohammad Hatem, the letter said gas and electricity shortages had severely disrupted industrial production during July and August.

"Industrial output has been severely hampered due to gas and electricity shortages," the letter said, adding that gas supplies through open-cylinder and cascade-cylinder systems were also suspended, leaving many factories unable to maintain regular production.

To keep their factories running, owners were forced to purchase diesel, LPG and other alternative energy sources, incurring additional costs that were not included in their production budgets, according to the letter.

"As a result, SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

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they incurred financial losses," it said. The association said paying the July and August utility bills in full under existing rules would be difficult for many factory owners given the financial losses they had suffered.

Meanwhile, the Bangladesh Textile Mills Association (BTMA) is also planning to raise the issue with the government.

A senior BTMA official, speaking to TBS on condition of anonymity, said the BTMA and two other garment-sector associations are considering sending a joint letter to the ministry seeking the same facility.

Mosharaf Hossain, managing director of Mosharaf Composite Textile Mills Limited, said his factory had operated at only around 30% of capacity over the past two months because of inadequate gas supplies.

"During the last two months, we were able to produce only 30% of our capacity. But we still have to pay monthly gas bills worth Tk20 crore, as we did in previous months," he told TBS.

He said allowing factories to pay their bills in instalments would provide some relief to struggling manufacturers.