



Exports of leather and leather goods registered year-on-year growth of 36.93 per cent and 34.51 per cent respectively in the July-April period of the current fiscal year, according to the Export Promotion Bureau.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Exports of leather, goods go past \$1b again

Shipment, however, slows in May

SUKANTA HALDER

Exporters in Bangladesh raked in more than \$1 billion in the shipment of leather, leather goods and footwear in the first 11 months of the current fiscal year despite a slowdown in May owing to supply chain disruptions and the fallout of the Russia-Ukraine war, official figures showed.

The country received \$1.16 billion from exports of leather, leather goods and footwear between July and May, already the highest in the last five years, according to the Export Promotion Bureau (EPB).

The higher exports came despite the slowdown in the exports of leather and leather goods last month.

Between July and April, the shipment of leather and leather goods had registered year-on-year growth of 36.93 per cent and 34.51 per cent respectively.

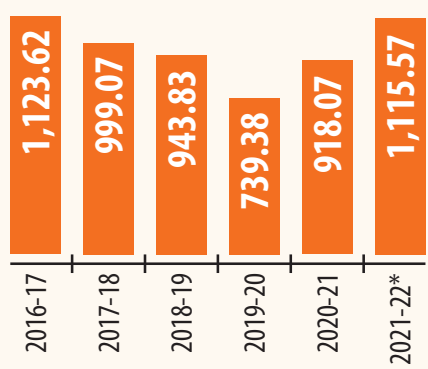
The shipment from both sectors slowed to 28.56 per cent and 34.03 per cent respectively in May. Overseas sales of leather footwear, however, grew from 31.46 per cent in the July-April period to 31.59 per cent in the July-May period.

Exporters say higher living costs in the UK, the European Union and other parts of the world are behind the lower demand for leather goods as customers prefer spending on essential commodities in the face of rising inflation.

Syed Nasim Manzur, managing director of Apex Footwear, said it is not clear how long the present situation would last as it remains uncertain when the Russia-Ukraine war might end.

EXPORT OF LEATHER, FOOTWEAR AND GOODS

In million \$; *Jul-May; SOURCE: EPB



"It is an unpredictable subject. There will be implications if the crisis continues for long. But if it is short-lived, the situation will be different," he added.

Manzur, also the president of the Leather goods and Footwear Manufacturers and Exporters Association of Bangladesh (LFMEAB), went on to say that it is very difficult to make predictions.

"Our job now is to watch and see," he said.

Considering the fact that higher prices mean nothing if export volumes drop, Manzur said manufacturers should aim to reduce the cost of doing business so that they can stay

competitive in the global market.

Ziaur Rahman, managing director of Bay Footwear, said that judging by their results in the fourth quarter of the ongoing fiscal, the company projects a 10 per cent drop in overseas orders in 2023.

"So, if we can't maintain our costs, we will lose our competitiveness in the international market," he added.

Shakawat Ullah, general secretary of the Bangladesh Tanners Association, said the Russia-Ukraine crisis has impacted the export of leather and leather goods.

"But we can overcome the problem no matter what," he added.

Leather and leather goods shipments

amounted to \$111.55 million in the last 11 months of the current fiscal year, when the country's total export receipts added up to \$846 million.

Ullah said manufacturers worked hard during the pandemic to explore new markets and protect their factories and employees, leading to the discovery of non-traditional markets such as Russia and Morocco.

Leather goods are one of the top three highest export earning sectors for Bangladesh.

There are about 60 local firms, including Apex Footwear, Jennys Shoes and Bay Footwear, that export various leather goods mainly to Japan, the EU and to some extent, the US.

Carbon debt-free future for every child

ZAVED AKHTAR

I became fully aware of the environmental challenges that we face when I visited Boracay Island in the Philippines a few years ago. The amazing picturesque beaches with white sand and blue lagoons were disturbed by the over-interest of tourists like me.

The case of Boracay Island represents the situation of our whole planet in general: Humans have unequivocally warmed the planet by more than 1.1°C since pre-industrial times and we are on track to exceed 1.5°C within two decades, if not before.



That is why global climate scientists have sounded the 'Code Red Alarm' for humanity which is true for every country, including Bangladesh. Despite contributing only 0.6 per cent to the global emission, Bangladesh ranks seventh on the list of countries most vulnerable to climate devastation, according to the Germanwatch's 2021 Global Climate Risk Index.

A 2018 US government report found that a whopping 90 million Bangladeshis, or 56 per cent of the population, live in "high climate exposure areas," with 53 million being subject to "very high" exposure. We have lost around \$4 billion in economic value since the 2000s as an outcome of climate change. We all are under threat and we need to act like that for a livable planet to be won this decade.

We all have roles to play because we are responsible at the national, organisational, and personal levels. Together, we are using more natural resources every day than the earth can reproduce, technically borrowing resources from our next generation. However, we should not use what is our children's and make them suffer.

Bangladesh could become a global waste hotspot due to rapid urbanisation and economic growth. However, the government has taken the ambitious target of reducing the waste impact to half by 2025 and achieving a global standard level by 2030

Working to improve the health of the planet is something that is not charity - rather a long-term business strategy. That is why progressive business organisations like Unilever have taken a global stance on the environment because we feel that our business will only exist if our consumers are there, and we need to help our consumers by helping them protect our planet.

That is why we have put sustainability at the core of our business and we see this beyond philanthropy. We want to work on innovation and adaptive social change by taking collective actions. We all know how collective action is rewarding if our intention is good and our strategy is right.

I would like to mention the Social and Community Forestry Activity in Bangladesh as a prime example of effective strategy and participatory development.

Back in the 1980s, we were losing around 2 per cent to 3 per cent of forest cover every year. Our government, in association with international development organisations like the Asian Development Bank, designed an intervention involving the poor, landless rural farming families to plant and take care of trees, on the roadside, and free land.

The Social Forestry project was a major

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US labour market keeps Fed on fierce rate hike path

REUTERS, Washington

US employers hired more workers than expected in May and maintained a fairly strong pace of wage increases, signs of labour market strength that will keep the Federal Reserve on an aggressive monetary policy tightening path to cool demand.

The Labor Department's closely watched employment report on Friday also showed the unemployment rate holding steady at 3.6 per cent for a third straight month, even as more people entered the labour force. It sketched a picture of an economy that continues to expand, although at a moderate pace.

The US central bank's interest rate hike campaign and tightening financial conditions have caused anxiety among investors about a recession next year.

"The economy is miles away from being wrecked on the shores of recession with the economy continuing to hire workers at this fast of a clip," said Christopher Rupkey, chief economist at FWD BOND in New York. "It is not slowing enough to put the inflation fire out. The Fed's work is not done."

The survey of establishments showed that nonfarm payrolls increased by 390,000 jobs last month. Data for April was revised higher to show payrolls rising by 436,000 jobs instead of 428,000 as previously estimated. While May's job gains were the smallest in a year, they were way above the monthly average that prevailed before the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020.

Employment now is just 822,000 jobs below its pre-pandemic level. Most industries with the exception of leisure and hospitality, manufacturing, healthcare, wholesale trade and local government education have recouped all the jobs lost during the pandemic.



Price tags are seen on the samples of rice and lentils that are kept on display at a wholesale market in the old quarters of Delhi, India.

PHOTO: REUTERS/FILE

India says no plans for now to curb food exports

REUTERS, New Delhi

India has no plans to curb food exports for now, Piyush Goyal, the Minister for Commerce and Industry, Consumer Affairs and Food and Public Distribution said on Friday, weeks after New Delhi banned private wheat exports.

"As of now we do not see the need to do it on any other commodity," Goyal said answering a query whether the government of Prime Minister Narendra Modi was considering banning the export of food products such as rice.

India banned wheat exports on May 14, just days after New Delhi forecast record shipments of 10 million tonnes this year, as a heat wave hit output and sent domestic prices to record highs.

A few weeks later, India imposed restrictions on sugar exports for the first time in six years by

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