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BANGLADESH ON THE WORLD STAGE

SEGMENT 1

ANNIVERSARY SUPPLEMENTS 2024

DHAKA THURSDAY FEBRUARY 15, 2024

FALGUN 2, 1430 BS

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Despite the challenges, Bangladesh's garment industry continues to exhibit resilience and adaptability. The sector's prospects for future growth are shaped by a combination of factors, including technological advancements, sustainability initiatives, and changing consumer preferences.

Bangladesh has emerged as a significant player in the global garment industry, securing its position as the second-largest garment exporter worldwide.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

BANGLADESH'S GARMENT INDUSTRY

Future growth in a changing world

MOSTAFIZ UDDIN

Bangladesh has emerged as a significant player in the global garment industry, securing its position as the second-largest garment exporter worldwide. The country's remarkable journey from economic struggles to becoming a key player in the textile and apparel sector is a testament to its resilience and adaptability.

The roots of Bangladesh's garment industry can be traced back to the 1970s, a period when the country was grappling with the aftermath of its Liberation War and the challenges of establishing a stable economy.

is its abundant and cost-effective labour force. The country's population density and low wage rates attracted international apparel brands and manufacturers seeking to optimise production costs. This competitive advantage allowed Bangladesh to offer affordable clothing to consumers worldwide, fostering sustained demand for its products.

Participation in international trade agreements and preferential market access further boosted Bangladesh's garment exports. Agreements like the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) provided the country with tariff advantages



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pressure and advocacy have since led to increased awareness and efforts to address these issues.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

The textile and apparel industry is notorious for its environmental impact, and Bangladesh's garment sector is no exception. The excessive use of water, chemicals, and energy in the production process has raised environmental concerns. Efforts are being made to adopt sustainable practices, with some manufacturers investing in eco-friendly technologies and processes to reduce their carbon footprint.



The demand for environmentally friendly and socially responsible fashion is on the rise, and Bangladesh's garment industry can tap into this trend by aligning its practices with consumer expectations.

VISUAL: STAR



In response to growing environmental awareness, there is a notable shift towards sustainable practices in the garment industry.

VISUAL: STAR

In the early stages, the industry was primarily focused on meeting domestic demand, with limited international exposure. However, a series of economic reforms and strategic decisions paved the way for Bangladesh to enter the global market.

POLICY INITIATIVES

The economic reforms initiated in the 1980s played a pivotal role in shaping Bangladesh's garment industry. The government, recognising the potential of the sector, implemented policies aimed at attracting foreign investment and fostering a conducive business environment. Incentives such as tax breaks, the duty-free import of machinery, and streamlined export procedures helped create a favourable climate for the growth of the garment industry.

LABOUR FORCE

One of the key factors that propelled Bangladesh's garment industry onto the global stage

in key markets, facilitating increased export volumes. The strategic positioning of Bangladesh in proximity to major consumer markets, such as Europe and North America, also contributed to its accessibility to global supply chains.

While the growth of Bangladesh's garment industry has not been without challenges. The sector has faced criticism and scrutiny over issues such as labour rights, workplace safety, and environmental sustainability.

The rapid expansion of the garment industry in Bangladesh has raised concerns about working conditions and labour rights. Incidents such as the Rana Plaza collapse in 2013, which claimed the lives of over 1,000 garment workers, highlighted the need for improved safety standards and worker welfare. International

The environmental impact of the garment industry is a global concern, and sustainable practices are crucial in mitigating this impact. Ethical manufacturing entails adopting eco-friendly production processes, reducing water and energy consumption, and minimising waste.

GLOBAL ECONOMIC UNCERTAINTIES

The garment industry is sensitive to global economic fluctuations and uncertainties. External factors such as economic recessions, trade tensions, and the impact of unforeseen events such as the Covid-19 pandemic can disrupt supply chains and affect demand for apparel. Navigating through these uncertainties requires resilience and adaptability.

FUTURE PROSPECTS FOR GROWTH

Despite the challenges, Bangladesh's garment industry continues to exhibit resilience and adaptability. The sector's prospects for future growth are shaped by a combination of factors, including technological advancements, sustainability initiatives, and changing consumer preferences.

The adoption of Industry 4.0 technologies is poised to revolutionise the garment manufacturing process in Bangladesh. Automation, artificial intelligence, and data analytics are being integrated into production systems to enhance efficiency, reduce costs, and improve quality. Embracing these technological advancements will not only boost productivity but also position Bangladesh as a competitive player in the evolving landscape of smart manufacturing.

SUSTAINABLE PRACTICES AND ETHICAL MANUFACTURING

In response to growing environmental awareness,

there is a notable shift towards sustainable practices in the garment industry. Bangladesh has started to embrace eco-friendly initiatives, such as using recycled materials, reducing water consumption, and implementing waste management strategies. Adopting fairer manufacturing practices is not only an ethical imperative but also a strategic move to meet the demands of environmentally conscious consumers and comply with international standards.

The environmental impact of the garment industry is a global concern, and sustainable practices are crucial in mitigating this impact. Ethical manufacturing entails adopting eco-friendly production processes, reducing water and energy consumption, and minimising waste. By embracing sustainable practices, Bangladesh's garment industry can contribute to global efforts to address climate change and environmental degradation, showcasing a commitment to responsible business practices.

Consumer preferences are also shifting towards sustainable and ethically produced products. The demand for environmentally friendly and socially responsible fashion is on the rise, and Bangladesh's garment industry can tap into this trend by aligning its practices with consumer expectations. Sustainable and ethical manufacturing not only attracts conscious consumers but also opens up new market opportunities and strengthens brand loyalty.

COMPLIANCE WITH INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS

Many global retailers and consumers scrutinise the practices of suppliers, and compliance with internationally recognised standards ensures market access and fosters trust. Bangladesh's garment industry, by prioritising sustainability and ethics, can position itself as a responsible participant in the global supply chain.

In fact, sustainable practices and ethical manufacturing contribute to the resilience of Bangladesh's garment industry. Addressing labour rights issues and ensuring workplace safety can prevent disruptions due to strikes or accidents. Environmentally sustainable practices reduce exposure to regulatory risks and enhance the industry's adaptability in the face of changing environmental regulations and consumer expectations.

INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCEMENTS

Embracing sustainability often involves adopting innovative technologies and processes. Sustainable practices can drive technological advancements in the industry, enhancing efficiency and reducing environmental impact. By investing in research and development of eco-friendly materials and production methods, Bangladesh's garment industry can position itself as a hub for innovation and sustainable manufacturing.

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