

Turn dreams into reality  
with Bank Asia  
**Personal Loans**

16205

Bank Asia

mastercard.

\*T&C Apply

SAIL BEYOND

Use your **Dhaka Bank Mastercard** and win a luxurious cruise experience and more exciting prizes

**DHAKABANK**  
PLC.

‘Most difficult time in 34 years’  
Says former MCCI president  
Syed Nasim Manzur

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Consumer confidence in Bangladesh is at a low level, while investor confidence is negative both domestically and internationally, said a former president of the Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MCCI) yesterday.

“The economy is under severe stress. I have been doing business for 34 years, and this is the most difficult year I have faced in my life in Bangladesh,” said the former MCCI president, Syed Nasim Manzur.

He was addressing a symposium titled “White Paper and Thereafter: Economic Management, Reforms, and National Budget” at the Bangabandhu International Conference Centre (BICC).

The symposium was organised by a committee that prepared a white paper on the state of Bangladesh’s economy in association with the Citizen’s Platform for SDGs, Bangladesh.

“I have no other passport and no intention of going elsewhere, but our business is under stress. We feel a lack of confidence and support,” said Manzur.

“We have a misconception that there is no other country apart from Bangladesh for investment. However, our foreign investors are telling us to consider investing in Indonesia due to the ease and cost of doing business there,” he said.

He highlighted three key challenges—the increase in the minimum wage without a corresponding rise in productivity, the rising cost of energy, and the soaring cost of finance.

“If Bangladesh Bank keeps raising the interest rate to 25 percent to control inflation, businesses will shut down because they need affordable financing.”

READ MORE ON B3



Bangladesh sees  
window of opportunity  
in Trump’s trade war

TAKEAWAYS

95% of Bangladesh's exports to the US are RMG

US is Bangladesh's largest RMG export destination

Import duties to US

Bangladesh: 15.62%

China: 25%

Now China tariff may rise to 60%

Apparel timeline

June 2013: Obama administration suspended Bangladesh's GSP

Nov 2013: Bangladesh and US signed TICFA

2013: US issued 16-point action plan for Bangladesh to regain GSP

2016-2017: Bangladesh submitted reports, awaiting review

2023: Bangladesh stopped double fumigation of US cotton

Garment exports to US

In billion of \$; SOURCES: OTEXA AND BGMEA

Year	Exports (Billion \$)
2014	4.83
2015	5.4
2016	5.3
2017	5.06
2018	5.39
2019	5.92
2020	5.22
2021	7.13
2022	9.72
2023	7.28
2024	7.2

REFAYET ULLAH MIRDHA

US President-elect Donald Trump’s trade policies towards China and Mexico could ultimately benefit Bangladesh, according to local apparel exporters.

In recent months, Bangladesh’s garment exports to the US market have been improving gradually as more American clothing retailers and brands arrive with increased work orders, mainly shifted from China, they said.

The exporters said that punishing tariffs as high as 60 percent on Chinese goods will drive more international clothing retailers and brands to Bangladesh in the future.

Bangladesh is already a preferred destination for American buyers because of competitive prices, its capability to churn out huge export volumes, and improved workplace safety at local factories.

For these reasons, they said Bangladesh has performed strongly in US markets over the years, even with a 15.62 percent duty to the US market.

The US government allows zero-duty

benefits on imports of 97 percent of products from the least developed countries (LDCs).

The US government has not included garment items in the 97 percent package, and local garment exporters have urged the government multiple times to negotiate with the US to reduce tariffs on Bangladeshi goods.

AK Azad, chairman and managing director of Ha-Meem Group, who exports the majority of his garment products to the USA, said, “The imposition of high tariffs on China and Mexico will create an opportunity for Bangladesh. A lot of apparel work orders are expected to be shifted from China and Mexico to Bangladesh, India, and Pakistan.”

He added that some US-based retailers and brands that shifted work orders away from Bangladesh because of the political crisis and labour unrest last year “are now coming back with increased work orders”.

**FIRST, BANGLADESH SHOULD GET READY**

Azad said Bangladesh should first “do some homework” so that the opportunity can be utilised.

For instance, adequate supplies of utilities such as gas and power need to be ensured for industrial units to run at full production, he added, noting that gas prices are already high for industrial use.

MA Jabbar, managing director of DBL Group, echoed Azad’s views.

“The buyers are preferring Bangladesh now as Trump in his speeches said he would impose a high tariff on Chinese and Mexican goods,” he said.

In recent years, some basic garment orders were shifted to Mexico but are now returning to Bangladesh, he said, calling for adequate energy supplies to industrial units to enable them to run at full capacity.

The law and order situation should be improved, and investment in man-made fibre, garment, and backward linkage industries needs to be developed soon to capture more of the American market, he said.

Faruque Hassan, former president of the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA), said, “So far,

READ MORE ON B3

GREEN DELTA INSURANCE | MetLife

Eastern Bank PLC

দেশের  
সর্বপ্রথম

লাইফ ও  
নন লাইফ  
ইন্স্যুরেন্স সেবা  
নিয়ে এলো  
ইস্টার্ন ব্যাংক

16230

16230

Motorcycle sales hit five-year low

JAGARAN CHAKMA

Motorcycle sales in Bangladesh hit a five-year low in 2024, in continuation of a downward trend emanating from economic instability, inflation and political transitions, according to industry experts.

An overall market assessment by ACI Motors states a 2 percent year-on-year decline from the 392,610 motorcycles sold in 2023. The fall exceeded the downturn experienced during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Subrata Ranjan Das, deputy managing director of ACI Motors, attributed the slump to economic challenges.

“Motorcycle prices also increased significantly due to the ongoing US dollar crunch and rising inflation,” he explained.

Interestingly, the premium motorcycle segment bucked the trend, showing significant growth in 2024.

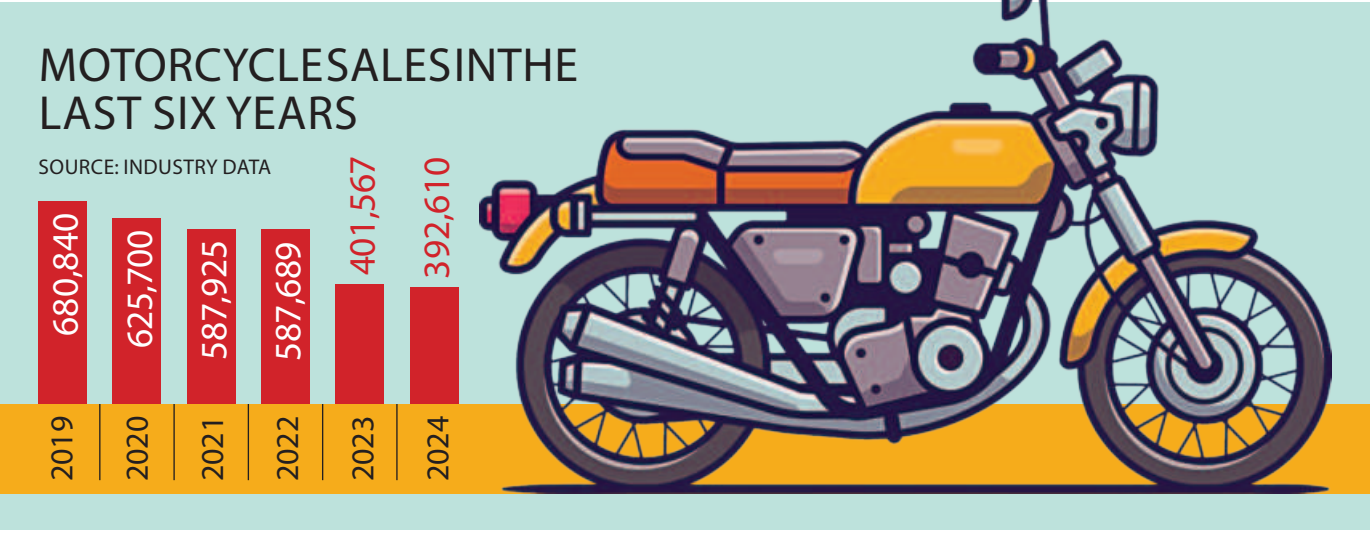
Das noted that affluent buyers remained unaffected by economic pressures, driving demand for high-end models.

However, Das warned that the broader market faces limited opportunities for growth.

“With the economy under strain, manufacturers and retailers have little scope to expand until conditions improve,” he added.

According to the latest sales data, the motorcycle market in 2024 has seen a mix of surprises and setbacks.

While some brands experienced noteworthy growth, others faced a decline, reflecting shifts in consumer



preferences and market dynamics.

Among the brands, Hero Motorcycles emerged as a strong contender, recording the highest growth rate of 19 percent in 2024, according to the ACI report.

Hero’s sales soared to 58,189 units, boosting its market share to 14.8 percent, it added.

This surge apparently reflects the brand’s strategic focus on affordable models and fuel efficient designs, which resonated well with budget-conscious consumers.

Meanwhile, Suzuki and Yamaha also posted positive growth rates of 8 percent and 11 percent respectively, according to the ACI report.

Both brands now hold an equal market

share of 19.3 percent, closely competing in the mid-range segment, it added.

Yamaha’s aggressive marketing campaigns and innovative features have played a pivotal role in driving demand while Suzuki’s consistent reliability continues to win over buyers.

In stark contrast, Bajaj, once a leader in the motorcycle market, experienced a significant 10 percent decline in sales, the report said.

The company sold 85,696 units in 2024, causing its market share to fall to 21.8 percent, though it remains the dominant player, it added.

Industry insiders suggest that rising competition and limited new launches may have contributed to this slump.

Another notable trend is a slight dip in sales for Honda, which recorded a 1 percent decline year-on-year. Honda’s market share now stands at 15.2 percent, a minor decrease.

Analysts believe the brand needs to revamp its lineup to cater to evolving customer expectations.

Overall, the motorcycle market reflects a dynamic landscape where brands are vying for a larger share through innovation, pricing strategies and targeted promotions.

The total market sales figures reveal that consumers are increasingly prioritising value-for-money options without compromising on style and performance.

READ MORE ON B3

Over half of  
spices, dry fruits  
imported illegally

Govt report says

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The abundance of foreign spices and dry fruits in the market suggests that illegal imports are playing a significant role, as imports through formal channels are substantially lower than the demand in Bangladesh.

A review of import data for the fiscal year 2023–24 reveals that more than 50 percent of most products are being imported illegally or through misdeclarations, according to a report by the Bangladesh Trade and Tariff Commission (BTTC).

The annual demand for cumin in the country is 60,000 tonnes. About 34,000 tonnes were imported legally in the fiscal year 2023–24, the report stated.

Since cumin is not produced domestically and there was no shortage of cumin in the country, this indicates that 26,000 tonnes were imported illegally, it said.

Like cumin, three other spices—cardamom, cinnamon, and cloves—have also been imported in quantities insufficient to meet demand for years.

The BTTC noted that the import deficit for these four spices combined is 43 percent of their total demand.

In addition to spices, the BTTC also highlighted informal trade involving five types of dry fruits.

These five dry fruits are raisins, cashew nuts, peanuts, pistachios, and prunes. These dried fruits are in demand for enhancing the flavour of food and are valued as healthy food items.

The BTTC report revealed that the combined demand for nine spices and dry fruits is 1.24 lakh tonnes, while only about 68,000 tonnes were legally imported last fiscal year.

READ MORE ON B3

A Comprehensive Banking Solution for Academic Institutions,  
Teachers, Students and Parents for the first time in Bangladesh

**primeacademia**

\*Available in both Conventional & Islamic Banking

Fees collection at premises and online; Attractive Interest/Profit bearing account and Loan/Investment facility for Academic Institutions; Payroll Banking with attractive features for all Employees

Savings Account facility with Insurance Coverage and Personal Loan/Investment for Teachers

Savings Accounts with great benefits for Students; Student File Service for higher studies abroad

Loan/Investment facility for Parents to provide financial support

**Prime Bank**

24/7 Helpline  
**16218**  
primebank.com.bd