

Bangladesh's RMG market share in EU rises to 21.57%

REFAYET ULLAH MIRDHA

The market share of Bangladesh in the European Union's (EU) apparel market increased to 21.57 percent in 2025 from 20.78 percent in 2024 thanks to the rising demand for locally made apparel items in the EU.

In 2025, Bangladesh retained its position as the second-largest garment supplier to the EU, shipping apparel worth 19.41 billion euros, up from 18.31 billion euros in 2024, according to Eurostat data.

China, the largest garment exporter, held a 29.54 percent market share by

exporting apparel worth 26.58 billion euros to the EU in 2025, Eurostat also reported. In 2025, the EU imported garment items worth 89.99 billion euros in total.

Turkey was the third-largest garment exporter to the EU in 2025, while India ranked fourth.

Govt to launch 'Probashi Card' soon

Will take steps to reopen closed labour markets, minister says

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The government will soon introduce a "Probashi Card" for expatriates, as promised in the election manifesto, and will take coordinated steps involving multiple ministries to reopen closed labour markets, Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment Minister Ariful Haque Choudhury said yesterday.

The expatriates' welfare, foreign affairs, and home ministries will work together to find a quick solution to legalise around 25,000 undocumented Bangladeshis currently living in Spain, he said.

As per the prime minister's guidelines, the government has adopted a 180-day priority action plan to reopen closed labour markets, especially in the Middle East, Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, and other countries where recruitment is currently suspended, he added.

The minister made the remarks while answering questions from journalists at the Sylhet Circuit House.

He further said that, under the prime minister's instruction, a standing committee has been formed on this issue, with the education ministry also included in the committee.

In response to another question, the minister said that within one month, the media will receive feedback regarding the reopening of the closed labour markets.

At the same press briefing, Commerce Minister Khandaker Abdul Muktadir said



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PHOTO: STAR/FILE

that the market for essential commodities is currently stable and the government hopes to keep it stable in the coming days.

Water Resources Minister Shahiduddin Chowdhury Anee noted that Sylhet is one of the zones under the water resources ministry,

comprising four districts: Sylhet, Habiganj, Moulvibazar, and Sunamganj.

He explained that this border area often experiences flooding as water flows in from across the border. Keeping the region free from floods is a major challenge.

Private investment hits 11-year low

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"It is very concerning, especially at a time when we need to accelerate investment to create employment and boost exports," said M Masur Reaz, chairman and founder of Policy Exchange Bangladesh.

The investment-to-GDP ratio comes alongside an estimated economic growth of 3.49 percent, the lowest since the Covid year 2020, driven mainly by private consumption. The decline suggests overall investment has not kept pace with the growth of the economy.

Reaz attributed the fall in private investment to three main factors.

"Our investment environment is weak, and it was identified nearly a decade ago," he said, citing Bangladesh's ranking in the World Bank's ease of doing business at 176 out of 190 economies.

"From that day, comprehensive and targeted reforms were necessary. But they were implemented in an isolated and fragmented manner."

The economist added that investment depends on multiple factors, including licensing, policy predictability, land, energy, and trade facilitation.

The macroeconomic

crisis that began to unfold from 2023 further dampened investment sentiment, he said. Weak domestic demand, import contraction caused by the dollar shortage, and political instability ahead of the election all played a role.

"Foreign investors perceive a country as high-risk when a country suffers from a macroeconomic crisis," he said, noting that uncertainty increased after the mass uprising in July 2024 that led to the ousting of the Sheikh Hasina government.

"We have seen demonstrations and unrest, and they have affected the policy environment too. The whole fiscal year 2024-25 was full of uncertainty. The declaration of the general election date came in August of this fiscal year."

Reaz added that the recent demonstration at the Bangladesh Bank over the removal of the central bank governor could create a negative international perception, signalling fragility in decision-making and discipline.

Ashikur Rahman, principal economist at the Policy Research Institute (PRI) of Bangladesh, identified a weak business climate, infrastructure

bottlenecks, and waning competitiveness in international markets as production costs rose amid supply-side constraints.

He said governance breakdowns in the banking sector since around 2020 has severely distorted credit allocation.

"Instead of channelling funds toward productive small and medium-sized enterprises, the financial system became increasingly captured by entrenched economic oligarchs. Large-scale loan irregularities and weak oversight eroded confidence and crowded out genuine entrepreneurs."

Rahman added that small and mid-sized firms, traditionally the backbone of employment generation, found themselves sidelined from access to affordable finance.

"This created a perverse incentive structure in which politically connected borrowers benefited, while real sector innovators were marginalised."

He added that the decline in private investment as a percentage of GDP has profound implications for the country's economic development.

"Investment is the engine of productivity growth, job creation, and

structural transformation. A sustained decline weakens the economy's capacity to generate employment, particularly for a young and expanding labour force."

Rahmansaid it also limits technological upgrading and diversification beyond traditional sectors.

"Moreover, without robust private investment, growth becomes increasingly consumption-driven and fiscally strained. This is not sustainable, especially as Bangladesh approaches LDC graduation and faces tighter external financing conditions.

Weak investment today translates into slower growth tomorrow, and slower growth amplifies challenges such as unemployment, underemployment, and poverty," he added.

Syed Akhtar Mahmood, former global lead for regulatory reforms at the World Bank Group, said the low investment rate is caused by a mix of short and long-term issues. While governments have tried to improve the investment climate, many fundamental problems remain, including regulatory hurdles and limited access to credit.

High interest rates, bank liquidity issues, and greater

risk aversion have reduced the supply of credit.

"Even if investors were willing to borrow at the higher interest rates, they are not getting financing. Many investors, especially some large ones, have over-leveraged themselves by borrowing heavily when interest rates were low. These companies may not be in a position to take on large loans even if they see good investment potential," he said.

Mahmood added that energy shortages and political uncertainty have further dampened investor confidence.

"Low investment means our production capacity is not being augmented while our existing capacity is under-utilised," he commented.

According to Mahmood, this affects both current growth and future growth prospects. It also limits technological upgrading, research and development, skills development, and new product creation, all of which are necessary to enhance productivity and diversify the economy, including exports.

"When investors are struggling to carry out even basic investments, they are unlikely to invest in things that make our economy more competitive," he said.

contractary monetary policy, deteriorating law and order, illegal extortion, corruption and bureaucratic complexities," said Taskeen Ahmed, president of DCCI. He urged the new government to prioritise trade and investment facilitation.

Abul Hashem, president of the Bangladesh Sugar Traders Association; Md Golam Mowla, president of the Bangladesh Edible Oil Traders Association; and Mohammad Ali Bhutto, president of the Moulvibazar Traders Association, among others, also spoke at the event.

He added that DNCRP has taken up a project under the commerce ministry to develop a digital monitoring system that will integrate complaint data and e-commerce transactions.

"The private sector has faced setbacks in recent years due to

End LNG reliance

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proposing higher LNG imports and expanded LNG infrastructure, he warned that such moves would delay domestic gas exploration and pile up the country's financial burden.

Moazzem described the government's renewed interest in domestic coal exploration as "the most concerning issue" of all.

Both the BNP's manifesto and the new government's 100-day plan list coal extraction as a priority, which he said signals that Bangladesh is moving backwards on energy transition.

The CPD research director urged the government to immediately put a halt to any discussion or initiative on domestic coal extraction.

Instead, he recommended that the government adopt a decarbonisation plan that phases out previously contracted fossil-fuel power plants and commits to no further expansion of coal-based power generation.

END RELIANCE ON EXECUTIVE BRANCH

On governance, Moazzem said Bangladesh has long been "limping on one leg" - relying almost entirely on the executive branch while parliament remains largely sidelined.

"Unfortunately, the executive branch often tries to avoid its accountability and responsibility to the parliament," he said.

The policy expert urged the new government to make full use of the national parliament, strengthen parliamentary standing committees, and transform the bureaucracy from a "law-and-policy-making agency" into an effective implementing body.

He also flagged decentralisation as essential, noting that government decision-making and development

activities should be pushed beyond Dhaka "through participatory local government elections".

REMOVING MANSUR AS GOVERNOR A "WEAK STEP"

Moazzem also criticised the government's recent decision to remove Ahsan H Mansur as the central bank governor, stating that excluding a figure of his experience and competence was a "weak step".

Even if political differences existed, he said the appointment and removal process lacked transparency, and that "better options" were available.

The CPD research director called for a transparent, criteria-based process for appointing the Bangladesh Bank governor, including an independent selection committee that would recommend candidates to the government.

There are no defined selection criteria for appointing a governor at present.

INVESTMENT, TAX, LABOUR REFORMS

To boost investment, Moazzem recommended that the Ministry of Commerce and Bangladesh Investment Development Authority (Bida) operationalise a unified digital interface by integrating existing databases.

In addition, regulatory bodies - such as the National Board of Revenue (NBR), Department of Inspection for Factories and Establishments (DIFE), and Registrar of Joint Stock Companies and Firms (RJSC) - should develop a common document management framework to cut duplication in business licensing.

The NBR should move away from a blanket flat corporate tax rate for listed companies and instead link tax benefits to performance indicators such as capital

investment, export growth, or employment generation, he added.

He suggested that NBR establish an expert committee comprising tax professionals, chartered accountants, and business representatives to regularly review and update the list of allowable deductions, expenditure caps, and definitions related to taxable income, ensuring they reflect current business realities.

He also called on the government to prioritise the recovery of assets laundered over the past decade through stronger legal, investigative, and diplomatic efforts.

On labour rights, Moazzem recommended creating a dedicated government fund to protect workers from abuses by state-owned or state-controlled enterprises, and mandating six months of fully paid maternity leave across all sectors.

He also proposed that the government's "Family Card" scheme prioritise households with working children, with cash transfers set above a child's average monthly earnings, on the condition that the child returns to school.

The Ministry of Social Welfare should lead the implementation of the scheme, supported by NGOs for identification and monitoring, he added.

DIGITAL INTEGRATION FOR FARMERS, EXPATS

For migrant workers, Moazzem called for a single digital compliance framework integrating certification, emigration clearance, and recruitment oversight, led by the Bureau of Manpower Employment and Training and the Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare.

The framework should include mandatory digital skill verification linked to passports, visas, contracts, and financial records.

AHQ, E IN C'S BRANCH, WORKS DIRECTORATE, DHAKA CANTONMENT
INVITATION FOR TENDERS

Notice no. 300/Ad/68/E-3/29 Dated: 22 February 2026.

MILITARY ENGINEER SERVICES

1. Ministry/Division	Ministry of Defence				
2. Agency	Military Engineer Services				
3. Procuring Entity Name	E in C				
4. Procuring Entity District	Dhaka				
5. Procurement Method	Open Tendering Method (OTM)				
6. Budget and source of Funds	GOB				
7. Development Partners (if applicable)	None				
8. Project/Programme Name (if applicable)	Development of Garrison Engineer's Office and residential area				
9. Selling of tender will commence from	01 March 2026 (During Office hour).				
10. Selling of tender will Close on	11 March 2026 (During Office hour).				
11. Last date & time of submission of Tender	12 March 2026 at 1200 hours.				
12. Date & time of opening of Tender	12 March 2026 at 1230 hours.				
13. Name & Address of the Office(s)	- Selling Tender Document Tender Selling & Information Centre at GE (Army) Central Dhaka & AHQ, E in C's Branch, Works Directorate, Dhaka Cantonment. - Receiving Tender Document Tender Selling & Information Centre at GE (Army) Central Dhaka - Opening Tender Document Tender Selling & Information Centre at GE (Army) Central Dhaka				
14. Eligibility of Tenderer	a. MES enlisted contractors Class 'C' & 'D' for lot no. 15(a). b. On receipt of DGFI clearance with others Department (equivalent classes) contractors may also apply for tender. c. Contractors having experience in similar works with enlistment in other Govt., Semi-Government & Autonomous Organization may also apply. d. Having experience of similar work mentioned in Lot No 15(a) amounting Tk. 35,70,000.00 in a single tender during last 05 (Five) years.				
15. Brief Description of Works	Identification of Lot	Location	Price of Tender Document (Non Refundable)	Tender Security in the form of Bank Draft/ Pay order in favour of AHQ, E in C's Branch, Works Directorate, Dhaka Cantt. (Taka)	
Lot No				Completion Time in weeks/ Months	
1	2	3	4	5	
a.	Manufacture & Supply of Furniture for Development of Garrison Engineer's Office & Residential area (GP-03).	Project site & GE (Army) Chattogram, Ramu, Jashore & GE (Navy) Khulna	2000.00	1,50,000.00	04 (Four) Months
16. Name of Official Inviting Tender	Director of Works				
17. Designation of Official Inviting Tender	Director of Works				
18. Address of Official Inviting Tender	Army Headquarters, E in C's Branch, Works Directorate, Dhaka Cantonment. Web address : www.army.mil.bd				
19. Contact details of Official Inviting Tender	Tel No. 9832870	Fax No. 9832882	e-mail- wksdts@army.mil.bd		
20. The procuring entity reserves the right to accept or reject all tenders					

XEN E/M
For Director of Works
Works Directorate
Engineer in Chief's Branch
Dhaka Cantonment
Tel: Mili: 8711111 Ext: 2886
Civil: 9832886

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