

**Footwear Exchange**



A platform of people worldwide who make the footwear, leather and allied industry work.

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**the footprint**

monthly newsletter by Footwear Exchange



## EDITOR'S NOTE

Dear Readers,

### Footprint May Edition is Launched!

As we welcome the month of May, we begin by honoring International Labor Day—a powerful reminder of the dedication and resilience of workers across all sectors, especially those in the footwear, leather, and allied industries. It's a moment to reflect on their contributions and advocate for safer, more equitable workplaces.

We also take pride in the global observance of World Leather Day, celebrated on April 26. This occasion highlighted the heritage, sustainability, and craftsmanship of leather—an industry that continues to evolve with innovation and responsibility at its core. Across the world and within our local markets, stakeholders marked the day with initiatives promoting ethical sourcing, eco-friendly practices, and skill development

In this edition, we bring you a special report on the World Leather Day Roundtable discussion and key takeaways from the programme. You'll also find highlights from the Footwear Exchange Campus Ambassador Orientation Programme, a fresh initiative to engage young minds in our industry. To mark May Day, we've included a reflective article on labor contributions in footwear and leather.

We hope this newsletter provides useful insights and inspires continued growth and collaboration within our industry

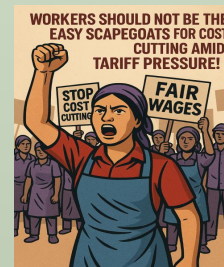
Let's continue exchanging ideas and embracing opportunities for growth.

Thank you for your ongoing support.

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Key news and Highlights of Leather and Footwear Sector

The recent tariff policies announced by the United States have caused a significant stir in the global apparel and leather goods market. While the economic implications of such trade decisions are widely discussed, the human impact often remains overlooked. However, these decisions directly affect millions of workers in developing countries like Bangladesh, Vietnam, India, and Cambodia—workers who toil day and night to produce garments and products sold in global markets.

Only 3% of the apparel sold in the U.S. is manufactured domestically, while the remaining 97% is sourced from various developing countries. Workers in Asia are already engaged in production at extremely low wages. When tariffs rise in major markets like the U.S., brands impose downward price pressure on suppliers. As a result, factories attempt to cut costs—often starting with wages, overtime pay, bonuses, and other worker benefits.

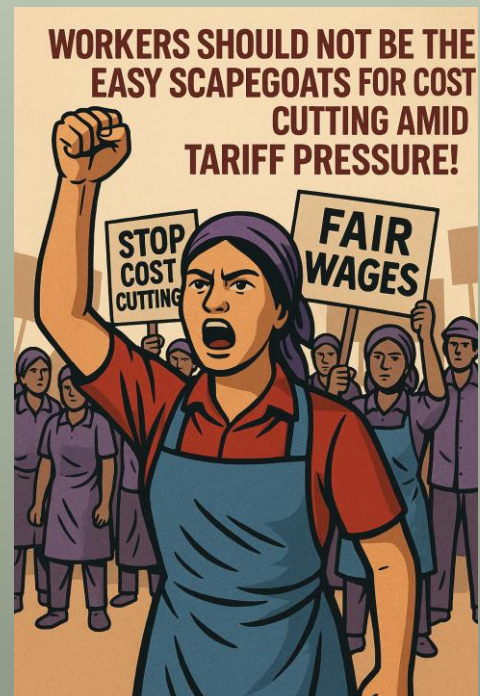
This creates a vicious cycle—brands pressure factories, factories pressure workers, and ultimately, workers are left without any safety net. To survive, factory owners stop wage increments, increase workloads, resort to layoffs, or even compromise on workplace conditions. Workers have little to no bargaining power, no voice on the global stage—yet, they are the backbone of the industry



The only way to break this cycle is through shared responsibility. Brands must integrate ethical sourcing policies that prioritize fair wages and worker protection. Manufacturers should focus on efficiency and technology to reduce costs without burdening workers. Workers must also be aware of the situation and contribute through increased productivity. At the same time, governments need to play a more proactive role in enforcing minimum wage laws, healthcare access, and labor rights.

Lastly, consumers, too, must be conscious of their purchasing decisions. If a product seems unusually cheap, we must ask—who is truly paying the price? Often, it is the worker—through their labor, sweat, and compromised rights.

A sustainable industry is only possible when profits and human values go hand in hand. If tariff pressures arise, let the burden be shared across the supply chain—not fall solely on the shoulders of the workers.



To commemorate World Leather Day 2025; Footwear Exchange hosted a dynamic roundtable discussion titled: “Bangladesh Leather – Beyond the Surface ” on 26<sup>th</sup> April held at the Dhaka Tannery Industrial Estate Waste Treatment Plant Company Ltd. (DTIEWTPCL), the event brought together a powerful cross-section of the leather ecosystem — including industry leaders, technologists, academicians, and development partners.



Mr. Golam Shahnewaz, Managing Director of DTIEWTPCL, chaired the session and underscored the need for stronger environmental compliance, technological advancement, and unified sectoral efforts. Chief Guest Mr. Shahin Ahmed, Chairman of the Bangladesh Tanners Association (BTA), echoed the urgency of building stronger alliances among tannery owners, manufacturers, policymakers, and service providers to unlock Bangladesh’s full potential in the global leather trade.



Special Guests Mr. Salauddin Mahmud Khan, Chief Manufacturing Officer of Apex Tannery Ltd. and Mr. Tariqul Islam Khan, Managing Director of Marsons Tannery Ltd. added industry depth by addressing the importance of modernization, international competitiveness, and crafting a positive narrative for Bangladesh leather on the global stage.

The roundtable also featured vibrant participation from leather chemists, academics, chemical suppliers, NGOs, and sector professionals, contributing insights on innovation, branding, workforce development, supply chain improvement, and ESG goals.

A key message from the day came from Mr. Shahnewaz himself: “The global leather market is evolving. To secure our place, we must showcase our strengths and commit to sustainability. Now is the time to be visible, vocal, and responsible.”



The session concluded with a joint pledge to raise international visibility of Bangladesh as a compliant leather exporter, advocate more assertively for the sector’s achievements, and ensure responsible practices aligned with environmental and social standards. The event reinforced Footwear Exchange’s commitment to promoting collaboration, responsible growth, and future-ready leadership in Bangladesh’s leather and footwear industries.



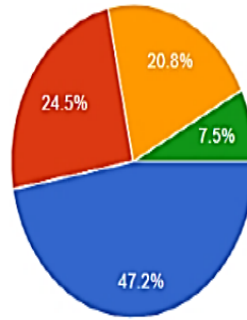
# Losing the Next Generation: Why Young Talent Is Turning Away from Leather and Footwear Sector

Joining a footwear and leather products factory is more than just starting a job—it's the beginning of a journey which opens the door to learning the art and precision behind making high-quality shoes, bags, belts, and other leather goods that reach markets around the world. From material cutting and stitching to final assembly and quality checks, every step in the production process is a chance to develop valuable skills. Junior team members gain hands-on experience with specialized tools and machinery while learning the importance of attention to detail, consistency, and teamwork in a fast-paced environment. More than just a workplace, the factory is a space of growth—where dedication, discipline, and a willingness to learn can pave the way for long-term career opportunities in the leather and footwear industry

Survey based on feedback from 54 employees across 23 factories, with 6 months to 5 years of experience.

## How do you feel about the compensation and benefits offered in factory roles?

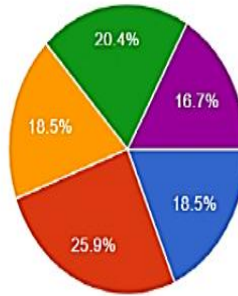
53 responses



- The pay is too low compared to the effort required
- Benefits like health insurance, PF or bonuses are missing or inadequate
- I believe better-paying opportunities exist elsewhere
- Pay and benefits are fair

## How do management and communication affect your interest in factory work?

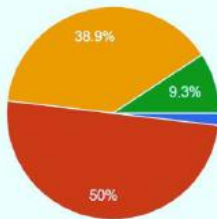
54 responses



- Supervisors don't communicate well or support employees
- There's a lack of transparency from leadership
- Feedback or recognition is rare
- Management is approachable and communicates well
- Neutral

## 1. How satisfied are you with your current role in the factory?

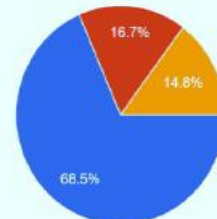
54 responses



- Very satisfied
- Satisfied
- Neutral
- Dissatisfied
- Very dissatisfied

## Do you feel your working environment is safe and comfortable?

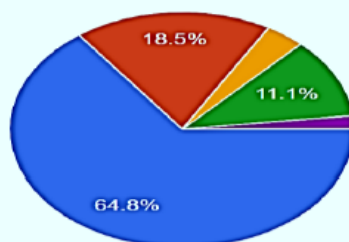
54 responses



- Yes
- No
- Somewhat

## What are your thoughts on work-life balance in factory jobs?

54 responses



- Long shifts or irregular hours make it hard to balance personal life
- Overtime is often expected without proper compensation
- There is little flexibility in scheduling
- Work-life balance is manageable
- I prefer roles with more remote or hybrid options

The survey shows that young professionals currently working in the sector feel satisfied in their roles and report a safe, comfortable environment. However, challenges remain—particularly with work-life balance and limited communication from management. Here's a detailed analysis of why many young talents are still reluctant to join factory settings, exploring key strengths, weaknesses, systemic gaps, workplace dynamics, and ways to improve the overall experience

## Strength of Young Talents

- Fast learner and able to deal foreigners
- Smart and updated communication skill
- Enjoys leadership and knowledge focused
- Able to handle pressure
- Enjoy Responsibility in friendly office culture Accept challenges with confidence
- Curious to gain practical knowledge Multitasking ability
- Might be a stepping stone for other manufacturing roles

## Opportunities Within the Sector

- Entry level employees can shift to better-paying service jobs within short time.
- Has a Versatile job access like access to government, foreign trading & buying company Jobs.

## What It Takes to Attract and Retain Young Talent in the Industry

- ✓ Minimum starting salary should be fair, e.g at least 28K
- ✓ Max 10-hour working timeline.
- ✓ Clear and practical leave policy & weekly holiday must
- ✓ Performance-based salary adjustment
- ✓ Paid for extra hours
- ✓ Mentorship and motivation support
- ✓ Friendly, team-based environment
- ✓ Recognition for good performance
- ✓ Supportive HR, no internal politics
- ✓ Simple, respectful exit process

## Challenges in Sector Employment

- Low wages compared to alternative sectors
- Few benefits: Lack of insurance, bonuses or incentives
- Poor working conditions and lack of training
- Lack of recognition and employee motivation
- No clear career growth or promotion path
- Rigid management and lack of employee voice
- Long duty hours with Limited work life balance

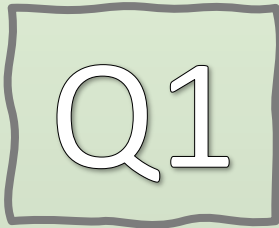
## Threats to Talent Retention in Sector

- Factory jobs are often viewed by young generations as less prestigious than corporate or freelance roles.
- Factory jobs feel less desirable when peers have modern roles.
- An authoritative and overly strict or unsupportive leadership style often leaves employees feeling undervalued and demotivated.
- Lack of feedback or appreciation can leave employees feeling disconnected and demotivated.
- Gen Z often prefers purpose-driven, creative roles over factory work.
- When factory goals don't align with personal values, motivation drops

**About the Author:** Md. Mostafizur Rahman Pintu is currently working as a QA Leader at REDTAPE, with over 5 years of experience in the footwear sector. He began his career at RUNNER Footwear Ltd., then worked as a Quality Production Leader at Chinese trading company SUNCHOOSE before moving into a brand role. His career spans factory floors, trading desks, and brand management. As a buyer representative, he has worked with 9–10 factories, gaining deep insight into production processes and employee dynamics. This article is based on both his professional experience and survey feedback collected through Google Forms.



AVAILABLE NOW



## LEATHER & FOOTWEAR HIVE Q1

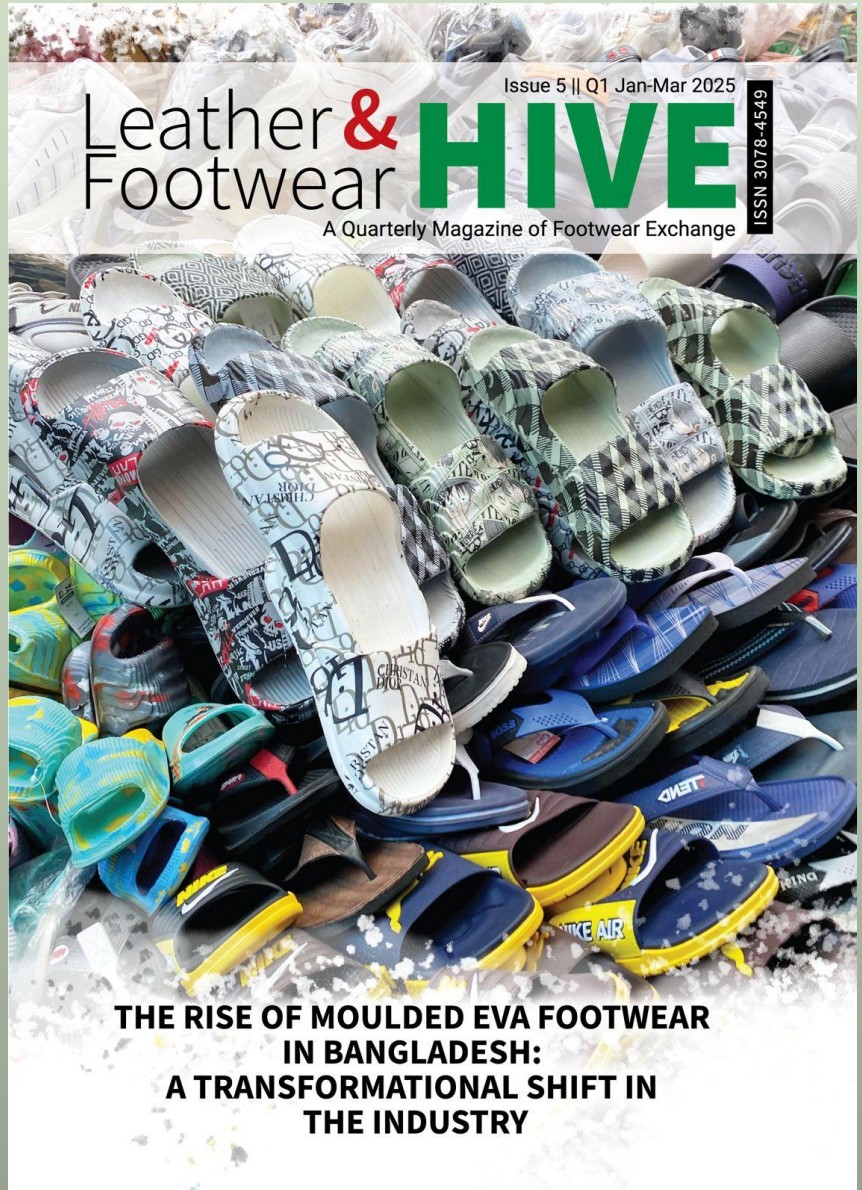
A Quarterly magazine of **Footwear Exchange**

**The Leather and Footwear Hive Q1 2025 Edition is now Published!**

We're proud to announce the release of the Q1 2025 edition of Leather & Footwear Hive, continuing our mission to foster knowledge sharing across the global leather and footwear community.

This issue dives deep into “The Rise of Moulded EVA Footwear in Bangladesh”—a transformational trend shaping the industry. Through expert insights, real-world case studies, and sector analysis, we aim to inform, inspire, and spark meaningful dialogue among professionals, entrepreneurs, and students alike.

Explore the latest trends, challenges, and opportunities — because we believe that shared knowledge is the foundation of sustainable industry growth



## Footwear Exchange Campus Ambassador Orientation 2025: Shaping Future Industry Leaders

On the occasion of World Leather Day 2025, we proudly launched the Footwear Exchange Campus Ambassador Orientation Program — a milestone initiative to connect young minds with the heart of the leather and footwear industry.

Our newly selected ambassadors kicked off their journey by attending the exclusive "Bangladesh Leather – Beyond the Surface" roundtable as observers. There, they gained invaluable firsthand insights into the sector's challenges, innovations, and future direction from some of the industry's most respected leaders.

Their learning experience continued with a guided visit to the Central Effluent Treatment Plant (CETP), where they explored the operational side of sustainable leather processing and witnessed eco-conscious practices in action.

At Footwear Exchange, we are committed to empowering the next generation through real-world exposure and meaningful engagement. This is just the beginning — and we can't wait to see these bright ambassadors grow into the change-makers and future leaders of the global leather and footwear sector!



# Latest Export Data: April Export Jump Driven by Strong Leather Footwear Performance

Leather Footwear Roared in April, Lifting Sectoral Export Growth of Bangladesh

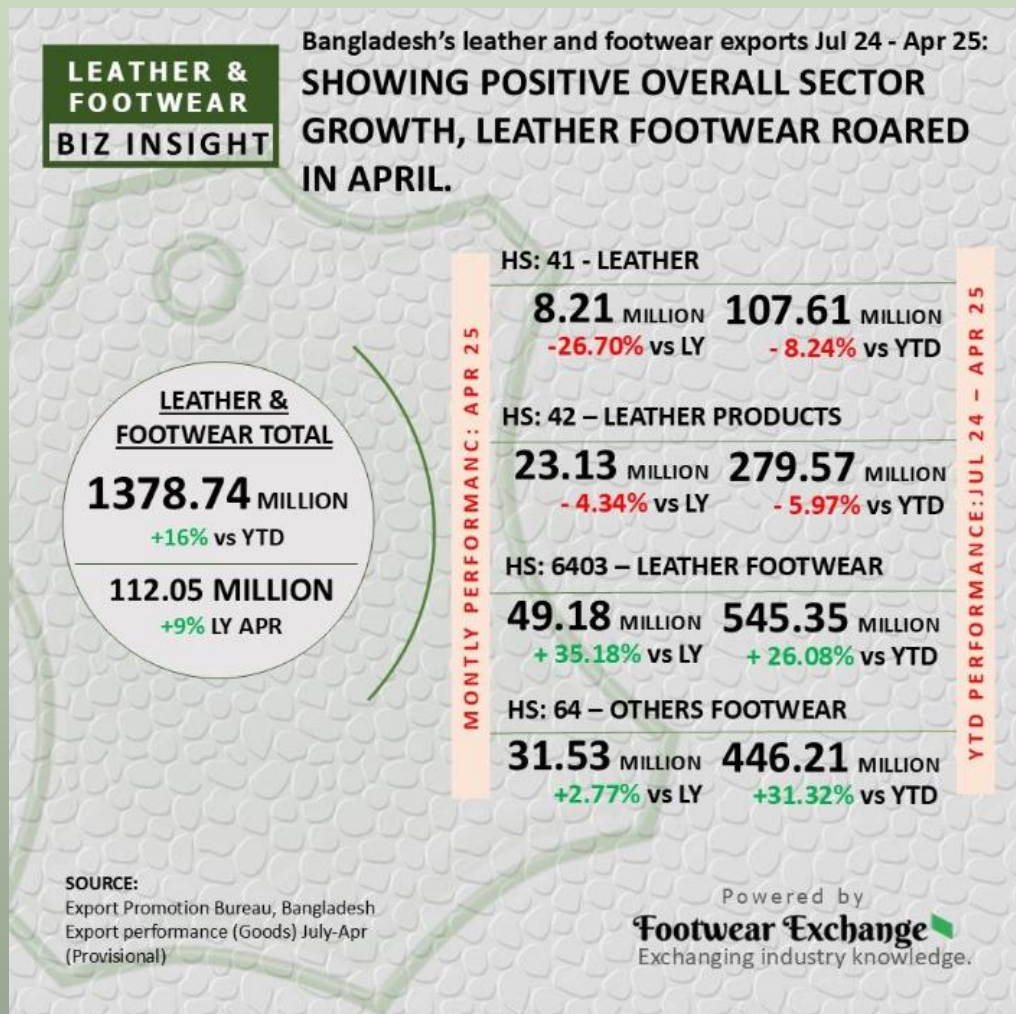
April marked a strong month for the leather sector, with overall positive growth, led by the leather footwear sub-segment, which delivered an impressive 35% monthly growth—giving a much-needed push to the sector's 2025 trajectory.

◆ Key Highlights:

Leather Footwear led the charge with 35% growth vs. April 2024 and a solid 26% year-to-date (YTD) gain—cementing its position as the sector’s growth engine.

Finished Leather and Leather Goods continue to lag on a YTD basis. After a brief rebound in March, both segments dipped again in April, underlining the need for strategic realignment.

April’s performance reflects a sector of strength with emerging imbalances. While leather footwear is powering ahead, other sub-sectors need renewed focus to reach their potential. The road to sustained industry growth lies in diversification, innovation, and adaptive strategies across the value chain.



Source: Export Promotion Bureau, Bangladesh  
 Export performance for Leather & Footwear 2024-25 July-April (provisional)

The roundtable discussion organized by Footwear Exchange on World Leather Day 2025 drew meaningful attention from both national and international media, emphasizing its relevance and timely focus on sustainability, transparency, and collaboration within Bangladesh’s leather industry.

**Channel i:** Channel i covered the event in its business news segment, showcasing key highlights and expert insights from the discussion. Watch the coverage. Please click on below link to see the full report.

<https://www.facebook.com/channelitv/videos/1202204577924018/?rdid=RwT5ucixdeZO8P2#>



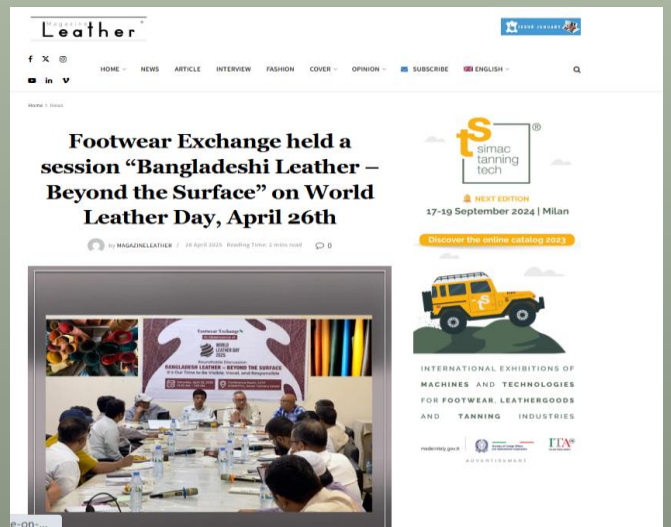
**Prothom Alo:** Prothom Alo, Bangladesh’s leading daily newspaper, reported on the roundtable, focusing on the importance of sustainability and global perception in driving the leather sector forward. Read the full article in below link:

<https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/district/zlr6kux5zy>



**Magazine Leather (Turkey):** Magazine Leather, an international publication from Turkey, featured the discussion as a significant step for Bangladesh’s engagement in the global leather dialogue. Read the full feature in below link:

<https://www.magazineleather.com/footwear-exchange-held-a-session-bangladeshi-leather-beyond-the-surface-on-world-leather-day-april-26th/>





**Apex Footwear Ltd.** At its 282nd Board Meeting on April 23, 2025, Apex Footwear Ltd. announced the appointment of Mr. Firoze Mohammad as CEO and Mr. Dilip Kajuri as Additional Managing Director, effective May 2. Mr. Golam Mainuddin was also elected as Chairperson of the Board. These leadership changes signal a renewed focus on strategic growth, operational excellence, and strong governance for the future.



**Bata** has renewed its partnership with SOS Children's Village International in Bangladesh, strengthening efforts to support youth with employability skills and provide psychosocial care for children. The signing was followed by a Code of Conduct session, reflecting both organizations' commitment to ethical practices and long-term community impact



**Meet Bangladesh** Exposition began on April 24 at ICCB, Dhaka, showcasing potential export sectors including medical PPE, leather, footwear, plastics, and light engineering. Organized by the EC4J project under the Ministry of Commerce and the World Bank, the event featured local manufacturers & international buyers from 9 countries for 2 days. Commerce Adviser SK Bashir Uddin inaugurated the fair, calling for greater investment and export diversification. Alongside exhibitions, the event includes B2B networking, factory visits, and expert sessions.



**iDEA TREE**, under the Traceable and Circular Leather Production (TCLP) Project, organized a stakeholder meeting on 8 April 2025 at the historic Pakutia Raw Hides Market in Tangail. The session explored challenges and opportunities in raw hide sourcing and building a traceable and responsible leather supply chain. The discussion was joined by Ms. Deborah Taylor (Sustainable Leather Foundation), Prof. Amin Hosseinian-Far (University of Hertfordshire), and representatives from SERA Bangladesh.



**A national consultation** on improving working conditions and productivity in Bangladesh's salt sector was held on May 2, 2025, at Hotel Amari Dhaka under the ILO-led ISEC project. Stakeholders highlighted the need for safer work environments, healthcare access, and better technology to support the over 500,000 people engaged in the salt value chain.



**Mr. A.K.M. Moshpiqur** Rahman, Managing Director of Accenture Footwear and Leather Products Ltd., has been co-opted as a Director of LFMEAB. The decision was made at the 116th Board Meeting, in accordance with the association's Memorandum and Articles of Association. He brings with him valuable industry experience that is expected to contribute meaningfully to the board's vision and initiatives.

# Grow your business by advertising

If you feel that you need to promote your business not only to **many people** but **many right people of Bangladesh leather and footwear and allied industry**, then it's time for you to advertise your business in our publications.

We ensure that all our publication (digital or printed) and activities **reach maximum number of professionals** who are either related or working with Bangladesh leather, footwear and allied industry.

For more details, write to us at  
**[connect@footwearexchange.com](mailto:connect@footwearexchange.com)**

Or

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**+880 1616-331111**