



# the footprint

monthly newsletter by Footwear Exchange

January 2026  
Newsletter No 01



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



### LEATHER & FOOTWEAR BIZ INSIGHT

Bangladesh's leather and footwear exports FY 25 - 26:  
**Export posted +2.6% growth YTD;**  
**Dec weakened, mainly by Footwear decline.**



HS: 41 - LEATHER	
10.95 MILLION	61.31 MILLION
-12.9% vs LY	-1.9% vs YTD
HS: 42 - LEATHER PRODUCTS	
30.80 MILLION	193.78 MILLION
+12% vs LY	+19.5% vs YTD
HS: 6403 - LEATHER FOOTWEAR	
55.45 MILLION	354.59 MILLION
-21.7% vs LY	+0.6% vs YTD
HS: 64 - OTHERS FOOTWEAR	
38.64 MILLION	263.37 MILLION
-31.1% vs LY	-3.8% vs YTD

MONTHLY PERFORMANCE: NOV 25

YTD PERFORMANCE: JUL-NOV 25

SOURCE:  
Export Promotion Bureau, Bangladesh  
Export performance (Goods) Jul-Dec  
25 (Provisional)

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**Footwear Exchange**  
Exchanging industry knowledge.

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## EDITORS NOTE

### Footprint January Edition is Here!

A very Happy New Year to all our readers, partners, and friends in the leather and footwear sector!

As 2026 begins, we find ourselves reflecting on the remarkable journey of 2025—a year that brought both challenges and achievements. From growing export figures to inspiring career comebacks and the adoption of new technologies, the industry has continued to evolve with resilience and ambition.

This January, Footprint brings you a snapshot of the sector's pulse. We cover the latest business trends shaping 2026, highlight Forbes' career comeback stories, and provide a detailed look at the most recent export data. Our aim is to keep you informed, inspired, and ready to seize new opportunities as the market transforms.

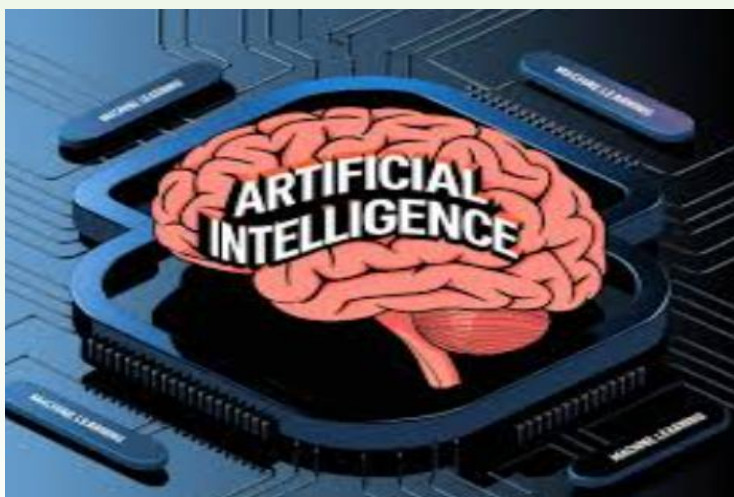
Looking forward, the year holds immense possibilities for innovation, collaboration, and growth. At Footwear Exchange, we remain dedicated to sharing insights, fostering meaningful discussions, and connecting industry stakeholders with knowledge that drives progress. Because when ideas, experiences, and perspectives are exchanged, the entire sector moves forward—stronger and more dynamic than ever.



## 2026 trends for business: Seven LBS faculty consider what the coming year is likely to hold and what this means for policymakers and leaders

If 2025 confirmed anything for the global leather and footwear industry, it is that uncertainty is no longer temporary – it is structural. From supply chain disruptions and geopolitical shifts to sustainability pressure and rapid digitalization, complexity has become the new normal. Looking ahead to 2026, business leaders should not expect simplicity, but they can prepare for clarity in decision-making. This feature highlights the key global trends likely to shape 2026 and interprets them through the lens of the leather, footwear, and allied industries.

**Digital will continue to evolve as AI matures:** As Generative AI matures, 2026 will mark a shift from optional digital tools to embedded business infrastructure. In the leather and footwear sector, AI is expected to move beyond pilots and become integrated into sourcing platforms, ERP systems, compliance documentation, demand forecasting, and product development. Rather than replacing human expertise, AI will support faster access to technical data, supplier information, and regulatory requirements. For brands and manufacturers, this means better planning accuracy, quicker decision cycles, and more efficient coordination across global supply chains. Industry communication and marketing will also evolve. High-quality, sector-specific content will become more valuable as AI-driven discovery increasingly favors trusted and authoritative sources. Trade publications, knowledge platforms, and industry networks will need to position themselves as credible destinations rather than passive content channels.



**Ongoing uncertainty will demand leaders skilled in conflict resolution:** Geopolitical instability and economic realignments will continue to affect global trade flows in 2026. For an industry as internationally connected as leather and footwear, this will demand leaders who can make long-term decisions under uncertain conditions. Trade policy shifts, regional conflicts, and political polarization may increasingly influence sourcing strategies, investment decisions, and workplace dynamics. Within organizations, disagreements around compliance costs, sustainability investments, and workforce management are likely to intensify. Effective leadership will therefore require strong conflict-resolution skills, transparent communication, and the ability to maintain organizational stability while navigating external volatility. Companies that fail to adapt risk falling behind in an increasingly competitive global market.



**Human judgement will be crucial as we figure out what AI can and can't do:** While AI can analyze large datasets and automate routine processes, it cannot replace human judgement. In the leather and footwear industry, critical decisions – such as supplier selection, environmental trade-offs, worker welfare, and long-term partnerships – depend on experience, ethics, and accountability. In 2026, professionals who can combine AI-supported insights with sound judgement will have a clear competitive advantage. Jobs may evolve, but the ability to interpret data, assess risk, and make responsible decisions will remain essential.



## 2026 trends for business: Seven LBS faculty consider what the coming year is likely to hold and what this means for policymakers and leaders



**Growth becomes realigned to climate policy:** Sustainability will move from being a compliance requirement to a central business strategy in 2026. Governments are increasingly aligning climate initiatives with productivity, energy efficiency, and industrial competitiveness. For tanneries and footwear manufacturers, this means linking environmental investments directly to operational improvements – such as water and chemical optimization, energy-efficient machinery, waste reduction, and circular production models. Transparency and credible data will become critical, particularly for exporters operating across multiple regulatory environments. Regions such as the Middle East are also emerging as influential players through state-led sustainability initiatives and investment in clean manufacturing, creating both opportunity and increased scrutiny for suppliers.



**Individuals take control of their own healthcare:** behavior is also evolving, with growing emphasis on health, comfort, and wellbeing. This shift will influence footwear design, material selection, and functional performance. Demand is expected to

grow for products that support everyday mobility, ergonomics, and lifestyle balance – particularly for ageing populations and wellness-conscious consumers. This trend reinforces the importance of user-centric design and cross-functional innovation within the footwear sector.



**Generative AI will develop relevant local knowledge and understanding:** One of the most important developments expected in 2026 is the move toward context-aware AI. Generic intelligence is no longer sufficient. To deliver real value, AI systems must understand local regulations, factory processes, material specifications, and market dynamics. This will require companies to structure and govern their internal knowledge carefully. For manufacturing economies, this presents a leapfrogging opportunity – enabling the sector to build smarter, regulation-aware systems without relying on outdated legacy models.



**Leading Through Complexity:** 2026 will not be more straightforward than 2025. However, leather and footwear businesses that embrace digital maturity, strengthen leadership capabilities, integrate sustainability with productivity, and value human judgement will be better positioned to navigate the year ahead. In an era where complexity is the norm, resilience, clarity, and informed decision-making will define success.

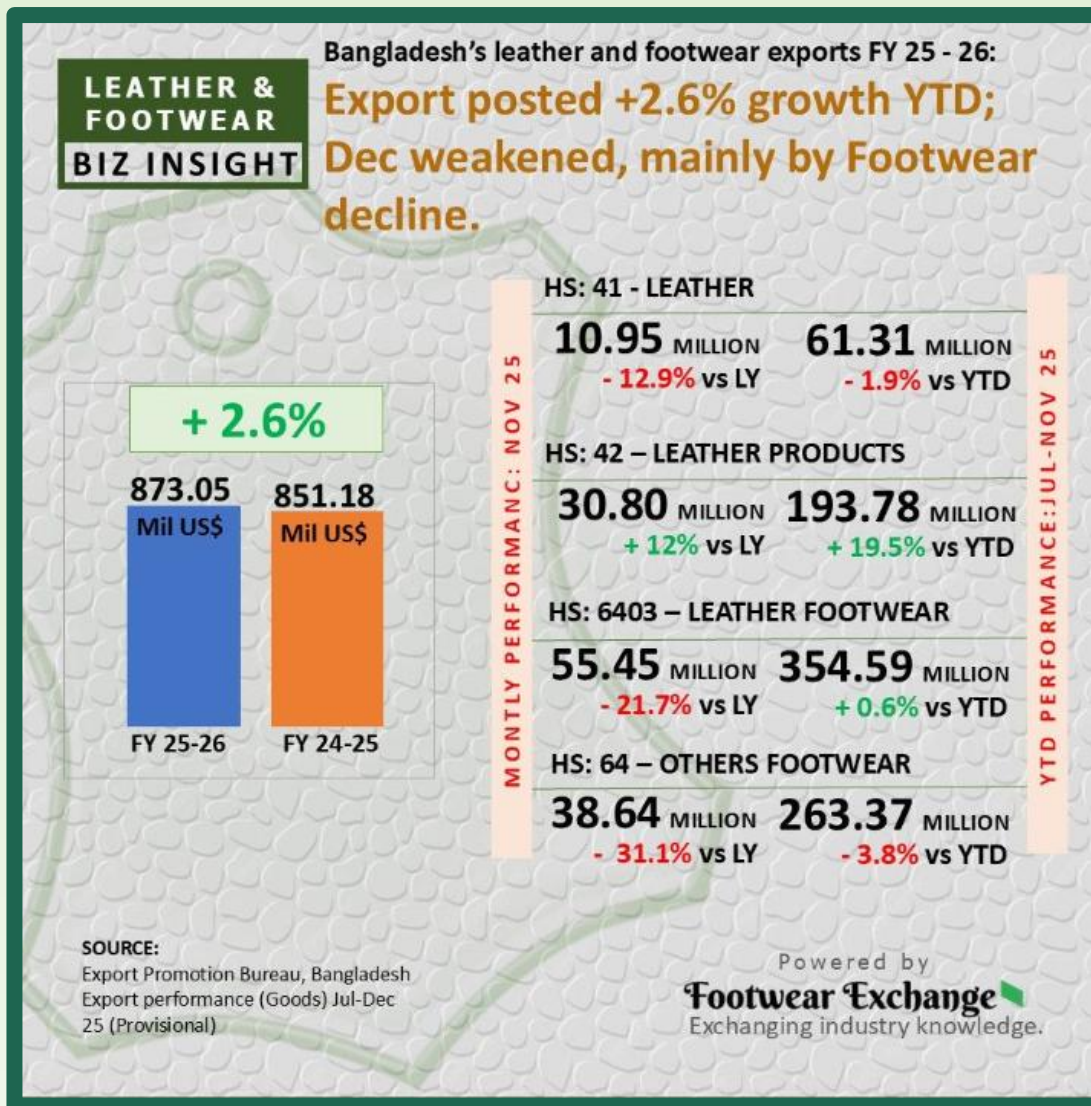


## Latest Export Data: Snapshot: YTD December 2025

**Export posted +2.6% growth YTD; Dec weakened, mainly by Footwear decline.**

Bangladesh's leather and footwear exports posted modest growth of 2.6% year-on-year during July–December FY25–26, reaching USD 873.05 million, compared to USD 851.18 million in the same period of the previous fiscal year.

However, December 2025 performance revealed clear signs of stress, particularly across footwear categories, despite continued strength in leather products.



### December 2025 (YoY):

\* Leather (HS 41): USD 10.95M | -12.9%

\* Leather Products (HS 42): USD 30.80M | +12% (only growth segment)

\* Leather Footwear (HS 6403): USD 55.45M | -21.7%

\* Other Footwear (HS 64): USD 38.64M | -31.1%

### YTD (Jul–Dec FY25–26):

\* Leather Products: USD 193.78M | +19.5%

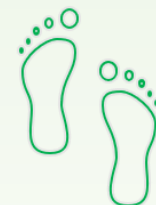
\* Leather Footwear: USD 354.59M | +0.6%

\* Leather: USD 61.31M | -1.9%

\* Other Footwear: USD 263.37M | -3.8%

### Key takeaway:

Growth is increasingly value-driven, led by leather products, while footwear faces demand pressure and delayed buying cycles. December's slowdown signals the need for sharper focus on competitiveness and speed-to-market.



Source:  
Export Promotion Bureau, Bangladesh  
Export performance for Leather & Footwear 2025-26 July-Dec (provisional)



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## The Most Notable Career Comebacks Of 2025- Forbes

Careers can collapse quickly—but they can also rebound. This year’s most notable career comebacks show how business leaders, public figures, and cultural icons have attempted to reclaim influence, credibility, and relevance. While not every comeback succeeds, a few stand out for their scale, timing, and impact

### Charles Ergen, CEO of EchoStar

Telecommunications billionaire Charles Ergen staged one of the most dramatic business comebacks of the year. After EchoStar faced regulatory scrutiny and financial distress over missed 5G rollout deadlines, Ergen met with President Donald Trump and FCC Chair Brendan Carr, triggering a strategic pivot. Instead of building the network, EchoStar sold its spectrum assets to AT&T in a \$23 billion deal. The turnaround restored investor confidence, quadrupled Ergen’s fortune to \$14 billion, and brought him back as CEO in November. He later signed a partnership with SpaceX to power direct-call services.



### Dylan Field, Cofounder and CEO of Figma

Dylan Field’s comeback followed years of uncertainty after Adobe’s proposed \$20 billion acquisition of Figma collapsed amid regulatory concerns. Investor doubts and stalled growth clouded the company’s future. In July 2025, however, Figma’s IPO raised \$1.2 billion, with shares surging on debut. Field’s net worth spiked, and the successful listing validated Figma’s independence and long-term vision.



### Liam and Noel Gallagher, musicians, Oasis

After 15 years of public feuding, Liam and Noel Gallagher reunited Oasis for their “Live 25” tour. The comeback was a commercial triumph, with sold-out shows across the UK, Ireland, and North America and more than \$405 million in ticket sales. Their return pushed Oasis back up the charts, attracted a new generation of Gen Z listeners, and revived the band’s legacy—demonstrating the power of time, nostalgia, and reconciliation.



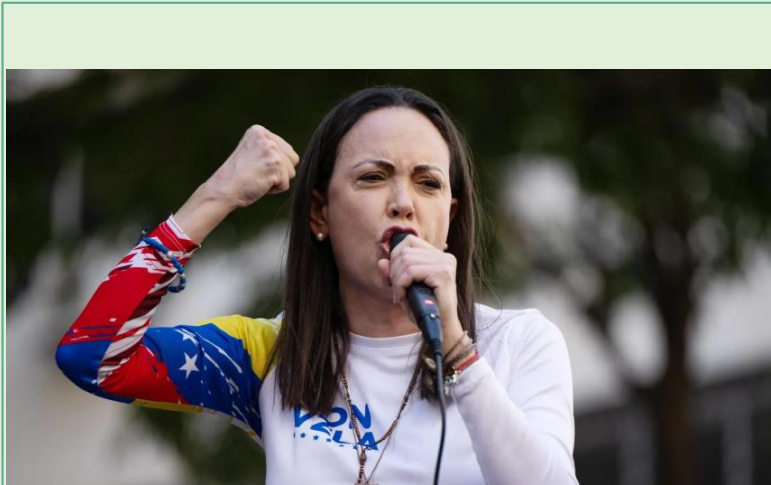
### Maria Corina Machado, Venezuelan Politician

Venezuelan opposition leader Maria Corina Machado continued her fight against President Nicolás Maduro’s regime despite being forced into hiding. Her sustained advocacy for democratic transition earned her the Nobel Peace Prize, awarded for her commitment to democratic rights and peaceful change. Though unable to attend the ceremony initially, her recognition marked a powerful form of global validation.





## The Most Notable Career Comebacks Of 2025- Forbes



**Anne Wojcicki, Cofounder and CEO of 23andMe**  
 Anne Wojcicki experienced a turbulent year as 23andMe filed for bankruptcy following years of losses and a major data breach. Forced to step down as CEO, she later reclaimed leadership by purchasing the company through her nonprofit, TTAM Research Bid, for \$305 million. The move restored her position and control over the company's future.



**Changpeng Zhao (CZ), Founder of Binance**  
 Crypto billionaire Changpeng Zhao, known as CZ, returned to the industry after pleading guilty to money laundering and sanctions violations in 2023. After paying a \$4.3 billion fine, serving four months in prison, and receiving a presidential pardon, Zhao resumed investing through YZi Labs. His re-entry underscores how legal resolution and political shifts can reopen doors—even in heavily scrutinised industries.



**The Meaning of a Comeback**  
 These stories underline a critical truth: a comeback is rarely a straight line. It is shaped by accountability, timing, credibility, and the willingness to confront past failures rather than erase them. Some attempts collapse under public scrutiny, while others succeed because circumstances change, lessons are learned, and trust is gradually rebuilt.

Across business, politics, and culture, successful comebacks tend to share common elements. Leaders who return with clarity of purpose, transparent governance, and a realistic understanding of stakeholder expectations are more likely to regain relevance. In contrast, comebacks driven solely by ambition, without reflection or reform, often struggle to gain acceptance.

In an era of constant visibility and rapid judgment, redemption is neither guaranteed nor permanent. Yet these examples show that careers and reputations are not always defined by their lowest point. With responsibility, patience, and strategic recalibration, a second act can emerge—sometimes quieter, sometimes stronger, but often wiser than the first.





## Key news and Highlights of Leather and Footwear Sector



Apex Footwear Ltd. (Unit-2) has become the first local footwear manufacturer in Bangladesh to achieve and sustain an “A” grade in the BSCI audit. Initially awarded in 2023 and successfully retained in 2025, this achievement reflects the company’s strong commitment to social compliance and ethical manufacturing. The recognition highlights Apex’s continued focus on workers’ rights, occupational health and safety, and responsible business practices, reinforcing its leadership in meeting global standards of transparency and sustainability.

At the Best Brand Award 2025, Apex Footwear Ltd. was named the Most Loved Shoe Brand for the sixth consecutive year, while Bata Bangladesh ranked second in the Retail Shoe category. Apex’s recognition reflects consumer trust and its commitment to quality and innovation. Bata, operating locally since 1962, maintains over 240 stores and 150 franchises, offering both local and international footwear brands.



Bata Wins Excellence in Lifestyle for POS Award. Bata Bangladesh received the Excellence in Lifestyle for POS award at the SKYSPHERE: EBL Digital Excellence Awards 2025, recognizing its commitment to digital innovation and enhancing the lifestyle shopping experience in Bangladesh.

**LET’S’B Grand Reunion 2026 Scheduled** The Leather Engineers & Technologists’ Society, Bangladesh (LET’S’B) has announced its much-anticipated Grand Reunion 2026, scheduled for 17 April 2026 (Friday) at the Institute of Leather Engineering and Technology (ILET) Campus, University of Dhaka. Members are requested to take note of the schedule and make arrangements to attend.



Source: Social Media and Linked In Pages





In 2025

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MEDIA



Monthly E-Newsletter

**The Footprint** is the monthly newsletter of Footwear Exchange!

It is an online publication in Bangla or/and English that publishes articles each month about leather and footwear—Bangladesh and world matters that we know and feel are important to share with you.

### 2025 Editions



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)

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