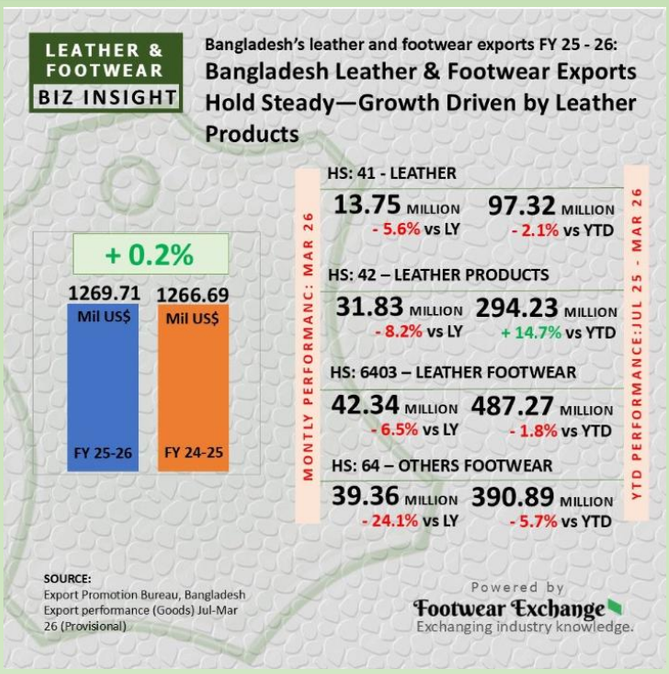
the footprint

monthly newsletter by **Footwear Exchange**

April 2026
Newsletter No 04

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





1 The Hidden Chain reaction due to Iran Israel war

2 Latest Export Data

3 Safety Shoes

The Hidden Chain Reaction: Oil, Currency, Remittance, and the Leather & Footwear Slowdown
Page 2-4

Mixed Performance Marks Bangladesh's Leather & Footwear Export Sector
Page 5

Rethinking Safety Shoes: Solving Discomfort After Long Working Hours
Page 6

Key news and Highlights of Leather and Footwear Sector
Page 7

EDITORS NOTE

Footprint April Unfolds!

As the year progresses, April brings new focus for Bangladesh's leather and footwear sector amid global uncertainty and shifting trade dynamics. Export performance remains steady, while external pressures continue to shape costs and supply chains.

In this April edition of Footprint, we present the latest export data and key news from the leather and footwear industry, offering a concise view of current market trends and developments.

This edition also highlights the impact of the Iran–Israel war on the sector, particularly in terms of raw material dependency, rising input costs, and trade uncertainty affecting Bangladesh's industry outlook.

In addition, we explore why safety shoes become uncomfortable after 4–5 hours of use and what can be done to improve long-hour comfort and performance.

We hope this edition of Footprint keeps you informed and connected with the evolving journey of Bangladesh's leather and footwear industry..

The Hidden Chain Reaction: Oil, Currency, Remittance, and the Leather & Footwear Slowdown

The Iran–Israel conflict is often discussed through the lens of oil prices and global energy markets. However, for Bangladesh's leather and footwear industry—especially its retail-driven domestic segment—the real impact runs deeper.

This crisis is not just increasing costs. It is weakening the consumer base. While exports may feel indirect pressure, the domestic footwear and leather goods market is facing a structural demand slowdown, driven by remittance uncertainty, inflation, and declining purchasing power.

While the immediate narrative focuses on energy prices, the real concern for the industry lies in a broader chain reaction that connects global conflict to factory floors, export orders, and ultimately, consumer behavior.



1. Export Market Exposure & Global Demand Slowdown:
Bangladesh's leather and footwear sector is heavily dependent on exports, particularly to the European Union and the United States. The ongoing conflict has contributed to inflationary pressure in these markets, reducing consumers' disposable income and overall spending capacity. As footwear and leather goods are largely non-essential items, buyers are becoming more cautious, placing smaller orders, delaying commitments, or shifting toward lower-priced product categories. This creates a direct demand-side challenge for Bangladeshi exporters, who rely on consistent order volumes to maintain production efficiency.

2. Oil Price Shock & Logistics Cost Escalation
Disruptions in the Strait of Hormuz have pushed global oil prices upward, significantly affecting freight and transportation costs. For exporters, this translates into higher shipping expenses, increased container rates, and rising insurance premiums for cargo moving through high-risk zones. At the same time, longer transit routes and delays are becoming more common. This combination reduces competitiveness, as buyers are often unwilling to absorb additional logistics costs, forcing exporters to operate under tighter margins.



3. Raw Material Cost Increase & Sole Industry Pressure
The footwear industry is closely linked to petrochemical-based inputs such as PU, PVC, EVA, and rubber, all of which are directly affected by oil price fluctuations. As the cost of these materials rises, manufacturers experience immediate pressure on production costs. The sole industry, in particular, is highly sensitive to such changes, as it depends heavily on imported compounds and synthetic materials. This cost escalation makes it increasingly difficult for manufacturers to maintain stable pricing while remaining competitive in international markets.



The Hidden Chain Reaction: Oil, Currency, Remittance, and the Leather & Footwear Slowdown

4. Currency Volatility & Dollar Pressure

The geopolitical tension has strengthened the US dollar, creating additional pressure on import-dependent industries like leather and footwear. While a stronger dollar may theoretically benefit exporters, the reality is more complex. Increased costs of imported raw materials, machinery, and chemicals offset any exchange rate advantage. At the same time, buyers resist price increases, resulting in squeezed profit margins. This imbalance complicates financial planning and increases working capital requirements for manufacturers.



5. Supply Chain Disruption & Lead Time Challenges

The Middle East plays a critical role in global trade routes, and instability in the region has disrupted shipping flows. Exporters are facing longer lead times, unpredictable delivery schedules, and occasional shipment delays. For an industry where timely delivery is essential to maintaining buyer relationships, these disruptions pose a serious risk. Failure to meet deadlines can lead to penalties, order cancellations, or loss of future business, making supply chain reliability a key concern.



6. China Dependency & Raw Material Price Surge

A major structural vulnerability of Bangladesh's leather and footwear industry is its heavy dependence on China for raw materials and components. From synthetic materials and footwear accessories to machinery and chemicals, a significant portion of the supply chain is linked to Chinese suppliers. In the current geopolitical climate, many suppliers have increased prices, often citing the war situation, rising oil costs, and global uncertainty. However, beyond cost factors, there is also an element of strategic pricing, where suppliers leverage market conditions to adjust prices upward. This creates additional pressure on Bangladeshi manufacturers, who have limited alternatives and weaker bargaining power, particularly smaller enterprises.



7. Remittance Uncertainty & Indirect Domestic Impact:

Although export markets dominate the industry, the domestic market remains important, particularly for local brands and lower-tier manufacturers. The Iran–Israel conflict has introduced uncertainty in the Middle East, where a large number of Bangladeshi migrant workers are employed. Any disruption in employment or income in these regions affects remittance inflows, which play a crucial role in supporting household consumption in Bangladesh. Reduced or uncertain remittance directly impacts purchasing power, especially in semi-urban and rural areas, leading to lower demand for footwear and leather goods.

The Hidden Chain Reaction: Oil, Currency, Remittance, and the Leather & Footwear Slowdown

8. Declining Purchasing Power & Consumer Shift:
Rising inflation, driven by higher fuel and food prices, is eroding consumers' real income. As a result, spending patterns are shifting. Consumers are prioritizing essential goods while postponing or reducing purchases of non-essential items such as footwear and fashion accessories. This behavioral shift leads to lower retail sales, reduced footfall in stores, and a decline in average transaction value. The industry is witnessing a transition from aspiration-driven consumption to necessity-driven purchasing.



9. Inventory Build-Up & Retail Pressure:
One of the most immediate consequences of declining demand is the accumulation of unsold inventory. Retailers and brands, having planned production based on earlier demand forecasts, are now facing slower sales. This results in increased stock holding, higher storage costs, and the need for aggressive discounting to clear inventory. Since footwear products are highly sensitive to fashion trends and sizing, prolonged inventory cycles can significantly reduce product value, creating financial strain for businesses.



10. Production Planning & Order Uncertainty:
Exporters are also dealing with uncertainty in order volumes and production planning. Buyers are increasingly adopting cautious purchasing strategies, placing smaller and more frequent orders instead of large commitments. This reduces production predictability and limits economies of scale. Manufacturers must adjust to shorter planning cycles, which increases operational complexity and reduces efficiency.



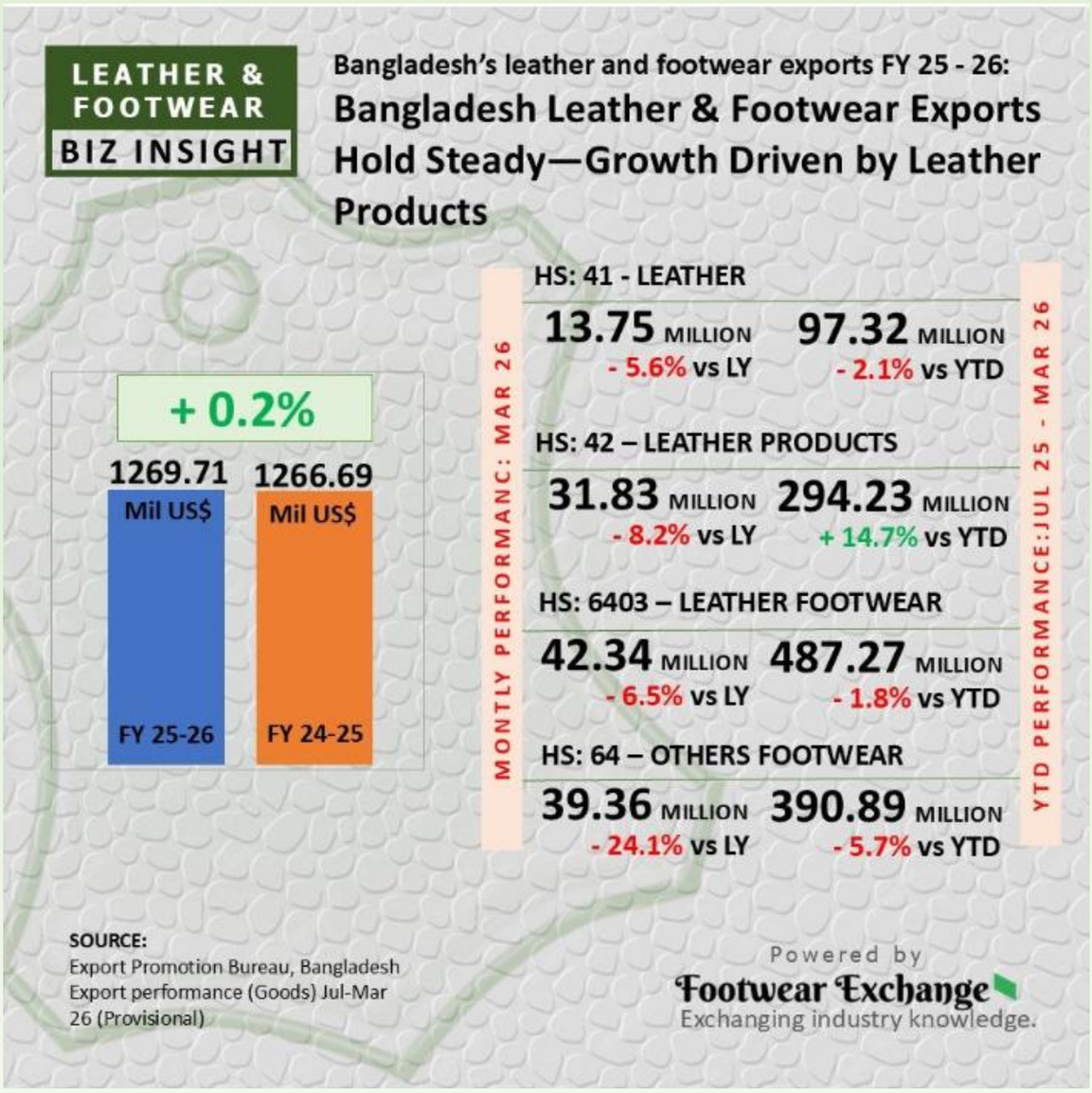
Conclusion: A Dual Impact on Cost and Demand
The Iran–Israel war is creating a dual-layered impact on Bangladesh's leather and footwear industry. On one side, rising costs—driven by oil prices, raw material expenses, and logistics—are putting pressure on production and export competitiveness. On the other, weakening global demand and declining domestic purchasing power are reducing sales opportunities.
This combination is particularly challenging because it affects both ends of the value chain simultaneously. Exporters face shrinking margins, while retailers struggle with declining demand and rising inventory.
Ultimately, the industry is entering a phase where success will depend on adaptability—managing costs, diversifying sourcing, controlling inventory, and aligning products with a more cautious and value-driven consumer base.

Mixed Performance Marks Bangladesh's Leather & Footwear Export Sector

Bangladesh Leather & Footwear Exports Hold Steady—Growth Driven by Leather Products

Bangladesh's leather and footwear exports remained almost flat but resilient in FY 2025–26 (Jul–Mar), reaching USD 1.27 billion, a +0.2% increase year-on-year.

A closer look at the segments reveals a mixed performance across categories:



* Leather Products (HS 42) continues to be the key growth driver, reaching USD 294.23 million, with a strong +14.7% YTD growth. This indicates increasing global demand for value-added leather goods.

* Leather Footwear (HS 6403), the largest export segment, recorded USD 487.27 million, showing a -1.8% YTD decline, suggesting softer demand or order adjustments in major markets.

* Other Footwear (HS 64) experienced the sharpest drop, down -5.7% YTD, while the monthly decline in March reached -24.1%, reflecting volatility in non-leather footwear exports.

* Raw and semi-processed leather (HS 41) stood at USD 97.32 million, with a -2.1% YTD decline, highlighting the continued shift toward downstream value-added products rather than raw material exports.

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

Rethinking Safety Shoes: Solving Discomfort After Long Working Hours

Most safety shoes feel fine at the beginning of a shift. But after 4–5 hours of continuous use, discomfort often starts to build. This is a common experience in industrial environments—but it is not random. It is the result of how footwear interacts with the human foot under long-duration stress.



1. The Comfort Trap: Why It Feels Fine at First
At the start of the day, the foot is rested, pressure is low, and cushioning feels adequate.

Example:

A worker in a warehouse may feel completely fine during the first loading cycle or morning shift start. The shoe feels supportive and stable.
But this "initial comfort" does not reflect long-hour performance.

2. Continuous Standing and Movement Creates Micro-Stress
Industrial work is not static. Even when workers are "standing," the body is constantly adjusting balance and absorbing impact.
Key stress factors include:

- Long hours of standing on hard floors (concrete, steel, tiles)
- Repetitive walking and lifting
- Sudden direction changes
- Uneven working surfaces

Example:

A factory operator standing on a cement floor for 6–8 hours experiences thousands of small impact loads through the heel and forefoot—even without heavy walking.

3. The Real Problem: Internal Fatigue Builds Gradually
After several hours, the foot begins to show signs of fatigue due to repeated micro-impact stress.
This typically appears in three zones:

- Heel pressure buildup – due to constant ground impact
- Arch strain – from continuous load support
- Forefoot compression – from forward body pressure during movement.

Example:

A worker on an assembly line may start shifting weight from one foot to another after a few hours, trying to reduce heel pressure without realizing it.

4. Why Safety Shoes Alone Are Not Enough
Most safety shoes are designed with a focus on:

- Toe protection (steel/composite toe caps)
- Slip resistance
- Puncture resistance
- External hazard protection

However, they often underperform in:

- Long-duration cushioning
- Energy return
- Arch support for fatigue control
- Pressure distribution over time

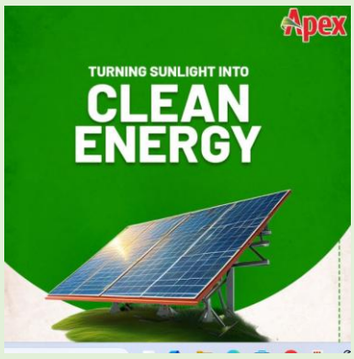
Example:

A shoe may pass safety standards but still cause foot pain during extended retail, logistics, or construction shifts.

What Actually Fixes the Problem
Reducing discomfort after 4–5 hours requires footwear designed for endurance, not just protection.
Key solutions include:
1. Better Cushioning Systems
Absorbs repeated impact and reduces heel stress over time.
2. Arch Support Design
Helps distribute body weight evenly and reduces strain buildup.
3. Energy Return Midsole
Reduces fatigue by helping the foot rebound during movement.
4. Pressure Distribution Outsole
Prevents overload on heel or forefoot zones.
5. Breathable and Adaptive Fit
Reduces swelling and discomfort during long shifts.

Safety shoes are not just about protection from external hazards. In real working conditions, their performance is equally defined by how well they manage internal fatigue over long hours.
Because in industrial work, the real challenge does not start at the beginning of the shift—it starts after the fourth hour.

Key news and Highlights of Leather and Footwear Sector



Apex Footwear Ltd. has launched a solar energy initiative as part of its ongoing sustainability efforts. Through this initiative, the company has generated 8,39,203 kWh of clean energy, reducing 497.65 tons of CO_2 emissions. This milestone reflects Apex's commitment to environmentally responsible manufacturing and its continued focus on reducing carbon footprint while aligning with global sustainability standards

Bata Bangladesh has organized a session titled "Wings to Rise – A Pathfinding Journey" in collaboration with SOS Children's Villages Bangladesh, marking International Women's Day. Facilitated by Sabnam Mostari, the session engaged adolescent girls through interactive activities focused on confidence, teamwork, and self-expression.Aligned with the theme #GiveToGain, the initiative reflects Bata Bangladesh's commitment to empowering young women and promoting an inclusive future.

Bata
BANGLADESH



BAY-Striker has announced Shekh Morsalin as its new brand ambassador, marking an exciting addition to the brand's journey. The collaboration reflects a shared vision of energy and performance, with Morsalin set to represent Striker in upcoming campaigns.With this partnership, Striker aims to strengthen its presence and connect with a wider audience as it moves toward its next phase of growth.

The Leather Engineers & Technologists' Society, Bangladesh (LET'S'B) has announced its Grand Reunion 2026, scheduled for 17 April 2026 (Friday) at the Institute of Leather Engineering and Technology (ILET) Campus, University of Dhaka. The event is expected to bring together members of the community, with organizers encouraging participation and necessary arrangements to attend.

LEATHER ENGINEERS & TECHNOLOGISTS' SOCIETY, BANGLADESH

Source:
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2025 Editions



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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.

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