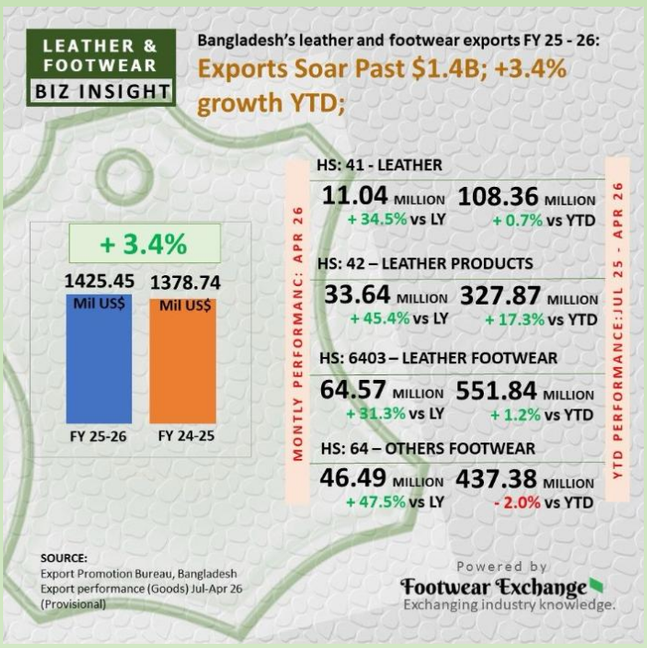
the footprint

monthly newsletter by **Footwear Exchange**

May 2026
Newsletter No 05

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





1 International May Day

2 Latest Export Data

3 World Leather Day 2026

May Day Reflection: Balancing Cost Pressures Without Overlooking Workers Page 2-3

Bangladesh Leather & Footwear Exports Cross USD 1.4 Billion surpassing the value of 2024-2025 Page 4

Globally Celebrated World Leather Day-2026 Page 5

Key news and Highlights of Leather and Footwear Sector Page 6

EDITORS NOTE

Footprint May in Focus.

As May unfolds, Bangladesh's leather and footwear sector continues to navigate a dynamic landscape shaped by strong export performance and evolving industry developments. Export figures have surpassed previous fiscal year levels, reflecting steady industry momentum despite global uncertainties.

In this May 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 reflections on International Labour Day (May Day), focusing on the role of workers in the leather and footwear manufacturing ecosystem. In this context, the discussion emphasizes the importance of balanced approaches that ensure operational sustainability while maintaining fairness toward the workforce, who remain central to production and quality.

We also explore key challenges and opportunities within the sector, offering insights into how industry stakeholders are adapting to global market demands and operational pressures.

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

May Day Reflection: Balancing Cost Pressures Without Overlooking Workers



A single pair of oxford shoe is not made from one or two inputs—it is built from nearly 30 different materials, each with its own supply chain, pricing structure, and level of uncertainty. From leather, textiles, adhesives, and soles to accessories and packaging, every component carries its own volatility in cost, availability, and delivery timelines. In addition, exchange rate fluctuations, global freight changes, and supplier delays further increase unpredictability for manufacturers.

In such a complex production system, managing cost becomes a continuous challenge. Every stage requires careful coordination to ensure quality, timely delivery, and competitive pricing in global markets. However, when financial pressure increases—whether due to raw material price hikes, inflation, or buyer-driven price negotiations—the first area often considered for adjustment is workforce-related cost.

Wage increments may be slowed, benefit structures reviewed, or hiring decisions tightened in an effort to balance rising production expenses. While labour cost is a visible and controllable component of manufacturing, this repeated reliance on workforce-related adjustments creates a deeper structural concern for long-term industry stability.

Workers are directly responsible for transforming multiple raw materials into finished products that meet international standards. Their skill, consistency, and efficiency determine not only productivity but also product quality and brand reputation. Yet, they are not the source of volatility in raw material markets or global supply chains.

The Pressure of a Multi-Material Industry

Footwear manufacturing is inherently complex. Unlike simpler production systems, it depends on a long chain of inputs where delays or price changes in any one material can disrupt the entire workflow. This complexity forces manufacturers to constantly adjust cost structures and manage tight margins.

In this environment, cost optimiszation becomes essential. However, when the focus of cost balancing repeatedly shifts toward worker compensation, it creates an imbalance between operational challenges and human contribution. The effort to manage material uncertainty should not disproportionately translate into limitations on workforce growth or benefits.

The Role of Workers in Value Creation

Workers in the footwear industry are not passive participants; they are central to value creation. From cutting and stitching to assembly and finishing, their work transforms raw inputs into finished products that enter global markets. Efficiency improvements, reduced defects, and production stability are directly linked to their performance and motivation.

When workforce-related investments are restricted as a first response to financial pressure, the impact often extends beyond immediate cost savings. It can affect morale, productivity, and long-term skill development. Over time, this may influence quality consistency and operational efficiency—key factors in a highly competitive export market.

Rethinking Cost Adjustment Approaches

A more balanced approach is needed to manage the complexity of footwear production without over-relying on labour cost adjustments. Several strategic shifts can help create this balance:

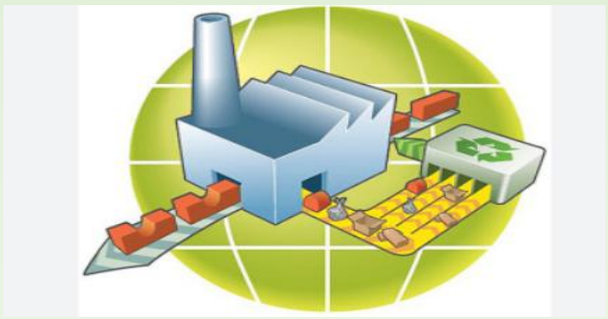


May Day Reflection: Balancing Cost Pressures Without Overlooking Workers

1. Strengthening Supply Chain Control
Better forecasting, supplier diversification, and long-term procurement planning can reduce uncertainty across the 30+ material inputs.



2. Improving Material Efficiency
Reducing wastage, standardizing inputs, and improving design-to-production alignment can help control rising costs without affecting workforce stability.



3. Enhancing Productivity Systems
Investment in machinery, training, and process optimization can increase output per worker, creating room for cost absorption without limiting wages or benefits.



4. Shared Cost Responsibility Across the Value Chain
Price pressures should be distributed among buyers, suppliers, and manufacturers rather than concentrated at the production workforce level.



5. Structured Workforce Development
Continuous skill development ensures that workers contribute more value over time, strengthening both productivity and product quality.



On May Day, it is important to recognise that industrial success is built on the collective effort of a highly complex ecosystem involving materials, systems, and human skill. With nearly 30 materials involved in every pair of shoes, uncertainty is inevitable. But how that uncertainty is managed defines the fairness and sustainability of the industry.

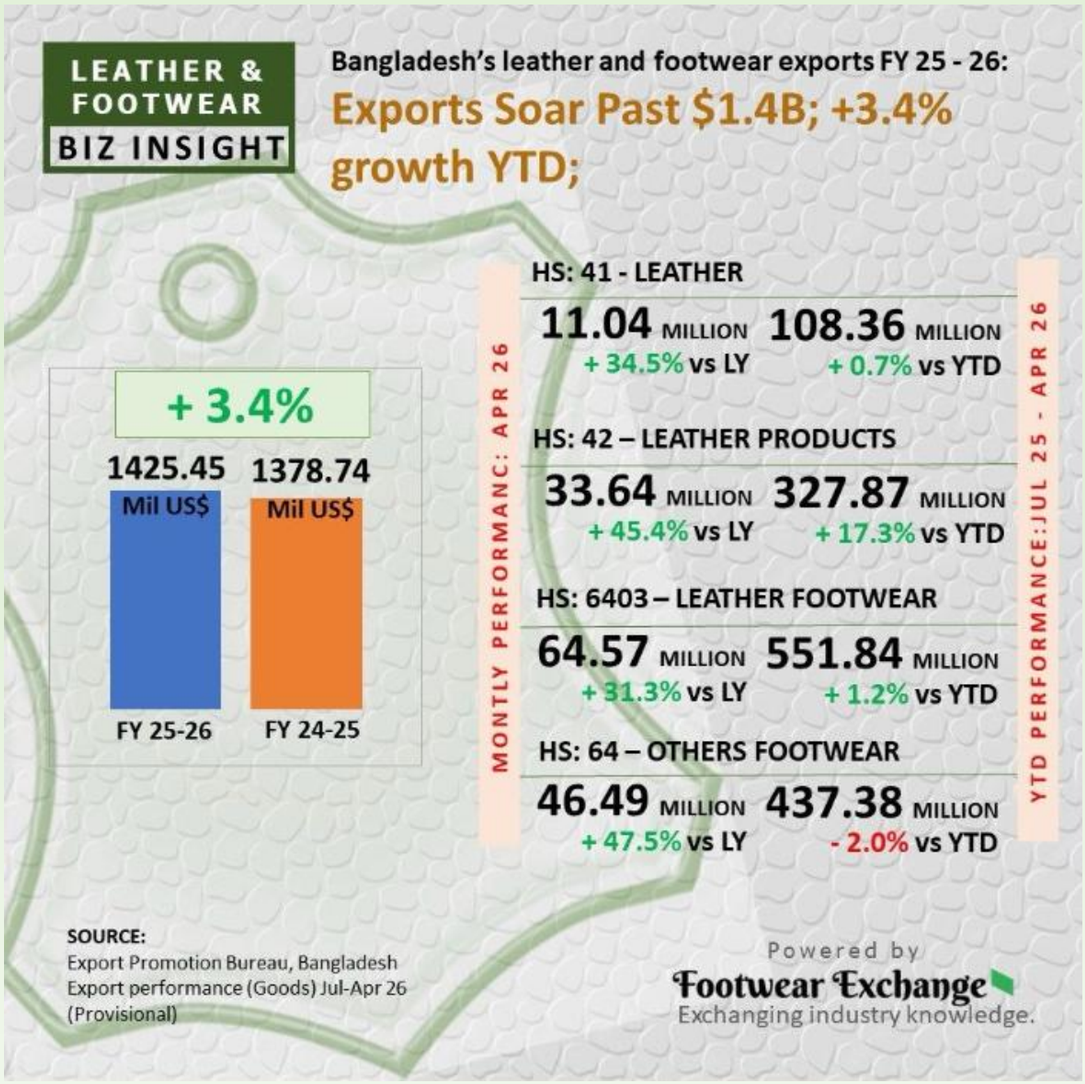
A balanced approach ensures that while material and operational challenges are addressed through efficiency and planning, workers remain supported, valued, and fairly treated as essential contributors to growth.

Bangladesh Leather & Footwear Exports Cross USD 1.4 Billion surpassing the value of 2024-2025

Bangladesh Leather & Footwear Exports Cross USD 1.4 Billion surpassing the value of 2024-2025 with Steady Growth in FY 2025–26

Bangladesh's leather and footwear exports continued their positive momentum in FY 2025–26 (Jul–Apr), reaching USD 1.43 billion, marking a +3.4% year-on-year growth.

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



* Leather Products (HS 42) remained the strongest growth contributor, reaching USD 327.87 million with an impressive +17.3% YTD growth. The segment also posted a remarkable +45.4% rise in April alone, highlighting strong global demand for value-added leather goods.

* Leather Footwear (HS 6403), the largest export segment, recorded USD 551.84 million with a +1.2% YTD increase, while monthly exports in April grew by +31.3% compared to last year.

* Raw and semi-processed Leather (HS 41) reached USD 108.36 million, showing a modest +0.7% YTD growth, supported by a strong +34.5% increase in April exports.

* Other Footwear (HS 64) stood at USD 437.38 million. Despite a strong +47.5% growth in April, the segment still remained slightly negative overall with a -2.0% YTD decline, indicating continued market volatility.

Overall, the latest export data reflects gradual recovery and resilience in Bangladesh's leather and footwear industry, with value-added leather products continuing to drive sectoral growth.

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

Globally Celebrated World Leather Day-2026



World Leather Day 2026 was observed globally on 29 April through a wide range of industry events, sustainability campaigns, exhibitions, and educational programs aimed at promoting responsible leather production and long-lasting materials. This year's theme, **"Make It Leather,"** was celebrated by leather associations, fashion brands, tanneries, manufacturers, and designers across Europe, Asia, North America, and Latin America.

In Italy, several leather and fashion organizations hosted seminars and design exhibitions highlighting premium leather craftsmanship, circular economy practices, and sustainable luxury manufacturing. Major leather districts in Milan and Tuscany organized factory visits where students and buyers were introduced to modern tanning technologies and environmentally responsible production systems.

In the United Kingdom and Germany, industry groups arranged panel discussions focusing on traceability, carbon reduction, and the future of sustainable materials in fashion and automotive industries. Universities and design institutions also joined the celebration through workshops and awareness campaigns on leather innovation and repair culture.

Across Asia, countries including India, Pakistan, Vietnam, and Bangladesh marked the occasion through trade meetings, awareness programs, and social media campaigns. Leather manufacturers and exporters used the day to promote environmentally compliant production and discuss opportunities in premium footwear, leather goods, and global exports. In several countries, local industry bodies emphasized the importance of improving sustainability standards and increasing value-added leather manufacturing.

Internationally, many global brands participated online through digital storytelling campaigns using the hashtag **#WorldLeatherDay**, showcasing artisan craftsmanship, durable leather products, and recycling initiatives. Several tanneries and manufacturers also opened their facilities virtually for consumers and students to demonstrate cleaner production technologies and responsible waste management systems.
Industry leaders stated that World Leather Day 2026 was not only a celebration of leather craftsmanship but also an opportunity to strengthen public awareness about sustainability, durability, and circular economy practices within the modern leather sector

Key news and Highlights of Leather and Footwear Sector



At Apex Footwear Ltd. Unit-2, a dedicated Rubella Awareness Program was organized for mothers as part of the company's commitment to employee well-being and workplace health compliance. The session was conducted by the Factory Doctor, who provided important information on Rubella, including its health risks, preventive measures, and the importance of early medical consultation, especially during pregnancy.

Panos Mytaros, Global CEO of Bata, along with Faria Yasmin, Managing Director of Bata Bangladesh, met the Honorable Prime Minister of Bangladesh, Mr. Tarique Rahman, and held a constructive discussion on the company's growth and future plans in the country. The meeting was also attended by senior officials of Bata Bangladesh. During the meeting, the Honorable Prime Minister appreciated Bata's long-standing contribution to the economy and encouraged further expansion of export potential.



Apex Footwear Limited organized a grand celebration with its loyal shoppers as part of its ongoing campaign. Key collaborators, including representatives from Novoair, Grameenphone, bKash, Suzuki, Singer | Beko, GoZayaan, and bdtickets, joined the event and were recognized for their partnership.Winners of the "Shop Big Win Big" and "SchoolSmart Art Fest" campaigns were also celebrated during the program. Apex Footwear Limited expressed appreciation to its partners for their continued support to its rewards family.

The Leather Engineers & Technologists' Society, Bangladesh (LET'S'B) organized its Grand Reunion 2026 on 17 April 2026 (Friday) at the Institute of Leather Engineering and Technology (ILET) Campus, University of Dhaka. The programme was inaugurated by Nasim Manzur, President of FLAXA and Managing Director of Apex Footwear Ltd.The event brought together members, alumni, and stakeholders of the leather engineering community.

Source:
Social Media and Linked In Pages

In 2025

2500+

DIGITAL EDITIONS DISTRIBUTED

4000+

AVERAGE VIEW THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA

the footprint

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

Or

Call us at

+880 1616-331111