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Currency Watch			
USD	EUR	GBP	JPY
86.31	94.07	112.16	0.58

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

No	Topics
1	Euro area surplus shrinks, EU swings to trade deficit in January 2025
2	US retail sales see modest growth in Feb amid economic uncertainty
3	Ethiopia's Textile Boom: The Next Big Sourcing Opportunity?
4	Italy's exports rise by 0.6% MoM in January, imports up 3.2%
5	Tariff Ticker: Costco Seeks Discounts from China Suppliers, Industry Appeals to USTR on Forthcoming Duties
6	Fashion Dealmaking in the Age of Trump
7	Select Fashion to shut down 35 stores across the UK
8	Vietnam's VIATT 2025 expands global reach with innovation and sustainability focus
9	It's time Bangladesh built its own global apparel brand
10	Bangladesh's apparel exports to key markets rise by double digits from July'24-February'25: EPB

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NATIONAL NEWS	
No	**Topics**
1	India-Latin America & Caribbean (LAC) partnership holds immense potential for economic and trade expansion: Shri Piyush Goyal
2	India not able to strategise on Trump's reciprocal tariffs due to lack of details
3	Central banks of India, Mauritius sign MoU to promote use of ₹, MUR
4	India focusing on core trade issues in FTAs for early outcomes: Commerce secretary Sunil Barthwal
5	India may only be able to shift $3.5-5 billion worth of trade away from China, shows MC analysis
6	High base effect: On a shrinking trade deficit, rising exports
7	Govt plans to increase Chabahar Port capacity 5x in next 10 years
8	India's export of key items sees double-digit contraction, says report
9	Welspun highlights advanced bedding technologies at New York market, plans US expansion

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Euro area surplus shrinks, EU swings to trade deficit in January 2025

The euro area's trade surplus with the rest of the world dropped significantly in January 2025, falling to €1.0 billion (~$1.09 billion) from €10.6 billion (~$11.52 billion) in January 2024, according to the first estimates of Eurostat.

The decline was driven by a sharp rise in imports, which grew by 7.6 per cent year-on-year to €231.5 billion (~$251.63 billion), outpacing the 3.0 per cent growth in exports, which reached €232.6 billion (~$252.83 billion).

Compared with December 2024, the euro area's surplus fell dramatically from €15.4 billion (~$16.74 billion). The drop was largely due to declines in two key product categories. The trade balance for machineries and vehicles fell from €16.5 billion (~$17.93 billion) in December 2024 to €7.4 billion (~$8.04 billion) in January 2025, while other manufactured goods shifted from a €1.2 billion (~$1.30 billion) surplus to a €4.6 billion (~$5 billion) deficit.

For the full year 2024, the euro area recorded a total trade surplus of €173.8 billion, a significant increase from the €57.4 billion surplus in 2023. Total exports for 2024 rose slightly by 0.5 per cent to €2.86 trillion, while imports fell 3.6 per cent to €2.69 trillion. Intra-euro area trade, however, declined 2.9 per cent to €2.57 trillion, as per Eurostat.

Across the wider European Union, the trade balance swung into deficit in January 2025, recording a €5.4 billion shortfall compared with a €6.7 billion surplus in January 2024. Exports increased 4.4 per cent to €208.7 billion, while imports surged 10.9 per cent to €214.1 billion.

The EU's deficit also widened sharply compared to December 2024, when it posted a €15.9 billion surplus. The main contributors to the decline were machineries and vehicles, whose trade balance dropped from €19.1 billion in December 2024 to €9.0 billion in January 2025, and other manufactured goods, which saw a shift from a €1.7 billion surplus to a €7.8 billion deficit.

For the entire year 2024, the EU recorded a trade surplus of €147.0 billion, a major improvement from the €34.4 billion surplus in 2023. Total exports increased by 1.1 per cent to €2.58 trillion, while imports fell 3.4 per cent to €2.44 trillion. Intra-EU trade declined 2.2 per cent to €4.03 trillion.

Seasonally adjusted data for January 2025 showed a 2.1 per cent increase in euro area exports, while imports rose 2.3 per cent, causing the trade surplus to dip slightly to €14.0 billion from €14.2 billion in December 2024. In the EU, seasonally adjusted exports grew by 2.0 per cent, but imports rose 3.2 per cent, leading to a trade surplus of €10.1 billion, down from €12.3 billion in December 2024.

Over the past three months, euro area exports increased 2.7 per cent, while imports rose 1.2 per cent. In the EU, exports grew by 3.1 per cent, with imports rising 1.5 per cent compared with the period from August to October 2024.

Source: fibre2fashion.com– Mar 20, 2025

HOME

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US retail sales see modest growth in Feb amid economic uncertainty

Overall retail sales in February increased by 0.2 per cent on a seasonally adjusted month-over-month (MoM) basis and rose 3.1 per cent unadjusted year-over-year (YoY), as per the data released by the US Census Bureau. This follows a decline of 1.2 per cent MoM in January and a YoY rise of 3.9 per cent.

"Lower-than-expected consumer spending in the first couple of months of the year likely reflected payback for very strong spending in the fourth quarter and weather-related events since then. Moreover, these results show that households are apprehensive and carefully navigating lingering inflation and turmoil related to changing economic policies," said National Retail Federation Chief Economist Jack Kleinhenz.

NRF's measure of core retail sales—excluding automobile dealers, gasoline stations, and restaurants—rose by 0.9 per cent seasonally adjusted MoM but fell by 0.2 per cent unadjusted YoY. This decline is attributed to a high base in February 2024. On a three-month moving average, core retail sales declined by 1.2 per cent YoY.

Despite the current slowdown, core retail sales had demonstrated strong performance in the previous months, growing by 4.2 per cent YoY during the 2024 holiday season and recording a full-year increase of 3.6 per cent.

A separate report from the CNBC/NRF Retail Monitor, powered by Affinity Solutions, showed a slight decrease of 0.22 per cent in seasonally adjusted core retail sales in February compared to January. However, on an unadjusted YoY basis, core retail sales increased by 4.11 per cent. This contrasted with January's figures, which recorded a 1.27 per cent MoM drop but a strong 5.72 per cent YoY increase.

"Regardless of the softer spending, consumer fundamentals remain healthy and intact so far, supported by low unemployment, steady income growth and other household finances. American shoppers will likely continue to spend as long as unemployment remains low, and job growth continues," Kleinhenz said in an NRF release.

Source: fibre2fashion.com– Mar 19, 2025

HOME

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Ethiopia's Textile Boom: The Next Big Sourcing Opportunity?

In recent years, I have had the pleasure of witnessing Ethiopia's quiet rise as a manufacturing hub for fashion brands. Boasting strategic proximity to European markets, renewable energy, and a young, competitive workforce, Ethiopia presents a compelling opportunity for brands seeking sustainable and ethical production.

So as global sourcing strategies evolve, the question remains: Is Ethiopia prepared to seize this opportunity?

A promising start with clear advantages

For too long, Africa has been overlooked as a serious player in the global manufacturing landscape. But that's rapidly changing, and Ethiopia is leading the charge.

Thanks to its game-changing superpower—renewable energy—Ethiopia is emerging as a formidable competitor to established Asian giants like Bangladesh, Vietnam, and Cambodia, where coal-fired power plants still dominate. With an impressive 95 percent of its electricity generated from renewable sources such as hydropower, wind and solar, Ethiopia offers fashion brands a rare opportunity: sustainable production with a significantly reduced carbon footprint. For brands chasing greener supply chains, Ethiopia's edge is impossible to ignore.

One such brand is Decathlon. By capitalizing on Ethiopia's cost-effective renewable power, the brand enhances its sustainability credentials while reducing its carbon footprint. Given the energy-intensive nature of fashion production, this green energy profile offers a significant advantage.

Industrial parks further reinforce this sustainable positioning. Hawassa Industrial Park, for example, features a zero-liquid-discharge wastewater treatment facility that recycles 100 percent of its water. This aligns with the growing pressure for fashion suppliers to comply with stricter European Union and U.K. environmental standards—a trend that Ethiopia's eco-conscious infrastructure is uniquely positioned to support.

The Ethiopian government is also making moves to ease investment through the creation of Special Economic Zones (SEZs). By simplifying customs processes, streamlining regulations and improving export logistics, these SEZs aim to create a more stable, efficient environment for textile manufacturers. The approach reflects Ethiopia's broader ambition to position itself as a competitive sourcing hub for global fashion brands.
Logistical roadblocks and compliance challenges

For all Ethiopia's advantages, critical challenges persist. Transport infrastructure remains a key weakness. Customs delays, inefficient port operations, and unpredictable supply chain disruptions continue to undermine Ethiopia's reliability as a sourcing base. Also, high transport costs have compounded these issues, limiting the competitiveness of Ethiopian exports.

All that being said, efforts are underway to address these bottlenecks. Ethiopian Airlines has expanded its cargo network to support exporters, but reliance on air freight is expensive and ultimately unsustainable. Meanwhile, the government's Customs Commission has pledged to reduce clearance delays and penalties, but investors will need to see evidence that these promises translate into measurable improvements.

Compliance with international labor and environmental standards presents another hurdle. While some Ethiopian manufacturers have taken positive steps, introducing on-site childcare, staff training and worker welfare initiatives, enforcement across the sector remains patchy. The E.U. and U.K. are tightening rules around sustainability and labor practices, and unless Ethiopia's textile sector meets these benchmarks, the country risks exclusion from key export markets.

While Ethiopia's infrastructure remains a concern, the country's ability to position itself as a leader in ethical production could offset these disadvantages. For fashion brands increasingly prioritizing ESG standards, Ethiopia's low-emission energy and growing commitment to improved labor practices may prove a more attractive long-term investment than traditional Asian hubs facing mounting environmental criticism.

Uncertainty about the future lingers

Perhaps the greatest threat to Ethiopia's textile ambitions lies in its precarious trade position. The suspension of Ethiopia's access to the

Africa Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA)—a key U.S. trade preference program—has been devastating. Factory closures and widespread job losses have followed, casting doubt on Ethiopia's ability to sustain growth as a sourcing hub.

While alternatives like the U.K.'s Developing Countries Trading Scheme (DCTS) and the E.U.'s Everything But Arms (EBA) initiative offer some relief, these trade routes alone won't fully offset the loss of AGOA. Ethiopia must urgently diversify its export markets while reinforcing transparency and compliance with international standards to restore investor confidence.

The silver lining? Organizations like the International Trade Centre (ITC), under the United Kingdom Trade Partnerships (UKTP) program, are stepping in to help bridge this gap. By providing capacity building on how to cater to smaller orders, training on how to comply with international standards, guidance on market diversification, and market access, these initiatives are empowering Ethiopia's textile sector to regain its competitive edge.

An opportunity—if seized correctly

Despite the risks, Ethiopia's future as a major sourcing hub is far from doomed. Several Ethiopian-owned and managed manufacturers are already proving that Ethiopia's potential can be realized.

Driven by their commitment to the industry and long-term sustainability, Ethiopian manufacturers like Desta stand out as a model of this vision in action. They are a good example of a manufacturer that aligns quite well with the country's growing reputation for sustainable and ethical production. As Ethiopia seeks to capitalize on its renewable energy edge and strategic proximity to European markets, companies like Desta demonstrate the country's potential to become a competitive and socially responsible player in the global textile industry.

Another manufacturer worth mentioning is Shin Textile Solutions. They offer a different but equally instructive example. Specialising in high-tech garments, Shin has embraced a worker-first approach that includes on-site childcare and free education for employees' families. By combining social responsibility with scalable production, Shin demonstrates how brands can achieve both ethical compliance and commercial success in Ethiopia.

Meanwhile, Sabahar Handmade Textiles shows that Ethiopia's textile strengths extend beyond large-scale production. This small, artisan-focused business creates hand-spun textiles using natural dyes and locally sourced cotton. By catering to luxury and fair-trade markets, Sabahar has established itself as a leader in sustainable, craft-driven manufacturing, with around 85 percent of its products exported to Western markets.

The verdict

It is being whispered that Ethiopia stands at a pivotal moment. I believe that to restore investor confidence, Ethiopia must build a more resilient trade strategy that diversifies export markets and prioritizes transparency and compliance with global standards.

The lesson here? Ethiopia's future success is not inevitable—but it is achievable. With continued investment in infrastructure, improved labor practices, and sustained efforts to meet international standards, Ethiopia could become a vital player in the global textile industry.

For fashion brands seeking to future-proof their supply chains with sustainable and socially responsible solutions, Ethiopia offers an opportunity too significant to ignore.

But one thing is clear: the clock is ticking.

Source: sourcingjournal.com– Mar 19, 2025

HOME

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Italy's exports rise by 0.6% MoM in January, imports up 3.2%

Italy's seasonally-adjusted exports increased by 0.6 per cent month on month (MoM) in January this year, while such imports rose by 3.2 per cent MoM, official statistics show.

The country's exports rose by 1.8 per cent MoM for EU countries and fell by 0.6 per cent MoM for non-EU countries. Imports increased by 2.8 per cent MoM for EU countries and 3.6 per cent MoM for non-EU countries.

Over the last quarter, both seasonally-adjusted exports and imports increased by 2.2 per cent quarter on quarter (QoQ), a release from Istat, the official statistical agency, said.

Exports rose by 2.5 per cent year on year (YoY) and imports by 8.8 per cent YoY in January. These increased by 1.9 per cent YoY for EU countries and 3.3 per cent for non-EU countries. Imports grew by 2.2 per cent YoY for the EU area and 18 per cent YoY for the extra-EU area in the month.

The country's trade deficit was €264 million in January—€635-million deficit for EU countries and €370-million surplus for non-EU countries.

Import prices increased by 0.4 per cent MoM in January—by 0.2 per cent for the eurozone and 0.5 per cent for the non-eurozone. Over the last three months, import prices increased by 0.2 per cent QoQ—a 0.5-per cent drop for the eurozone and a 0.8-per cent rise for the non-eurozone.

Import prices rose by 1.4 per cent YoY in the month—a 0.1-per cent drop for the eurozone and a 2.7-per cent rise for the non-eurozone.

Source: fibre2fashion.com– Mar 19, 2025

HOME

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Tariff Ticker: Costco Seeks Discounts from China Suppliers, Industry Appeals to USTR on Forthcoming Duties

Weeks after President Donald Trump imposed new duties on China-made products, Costco is hitting up its suppliers for discounts.

According to a report from the Financial Times, two of the big-box stores' mainland China manufacturers confirmed that it is seeking price cuts due to the added 20-percent tariff burden.

The news comes after the wholesaler's CEO, Ron Vachris, noted on an earnings call earlier this month that Costco would weigh the possibility of revising its supply chain if the duties significantly raise prices on imported products.

Vachris said "it is difficult to predict the impact of tariffs, but... our goal will be to minimize the impact of related cost increases to our members." He also noted that only about one-third of Costco's sales in the U.S. are goods coming from outside the country, and less than half of those items are sourced from China, Mexico or Canada.

That's a different story from that of competing American retail giant Walmart, which said last month that 40 percent of its sales are generated through products like apparel, toys and electronics—many of which are sourced from China and countries that could be targeted with new duties, like India.

Wall Street analysts projected that the national chain's revenue growth will slow to 4 percent in 2025 from 5 percent last fiscal year based on the tariff anxiety. This outlook prompted the retailer to reach out to its China-based suppliers and lobby for price cuts—a prospect Chinese officials rebuked. "Walmart's demand for Chinese suppliers to bear the full tariff burden is unreasonable and disrupts fair competition and international trade order," a post on a state-sponsored social media account read.

U.S. fashion industry trade groups, meanwhile, are eager to make their voices heard in an effort to stave off new duties before the administration's self-imposed April 2 deadline. After receiving detailed reporting from Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick on America's trade deficits, the

president has said he will make moves to address any inequities through "reciprocal" tariffs.

The administration solicited public comments on the matter through March 11. The Office of the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) said it's taking stock of those responses while it's "reviewing and identifying any unfair trade practices by other countries," with the goal of "recommending appropriate actions to remedy such practices and reporting to the President proposed remedies in pursuit of reciprocal trade relations."

U.S. Fashion Industry Association (USFIA) president Julia Hughes submitted comments on behalf of the Washington trade group's members.

"We recommend that the most successful policy to achieve trade reciprocity would be for the United States to lower the tariff rates of products for which our trading partners apply lower tariff rates," she wrote. "For consumer products such as textiles and apparel, this would help combat inflation and assist consumers who struggle to afford basic necessities."

With the apparel and footwear sector already bearing the brunt of disproportionately high tariff rates, American Apparel and Footwear Association (AAFA) vice president of trade and customs policy Beth Hughes warned that layering on new duties would hurt lower-income Americans, as they'd see inevitable price increases at retail. What's more, such actions would drive up the market for illicit trade, causing bad actors to become more aggressive about evading duties through practices like transshipment.

Hughes wrote that the group was especially concerned about recent tariff threats against Western Hemisphere neighbors Canada and Mexico in light of the forthcoming review of the U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA).

"Canada is a key export market for U.S. made apparel and footwear while Mexico is a major source of a wide variety of apparel, including denim imports," he wrote. "Not only does the threat of tariffs cast uncertainty but it also undermines future investment and nearshoring opportunities."

In a rare moment of synchronicity on the issue of tariffs, National Council of Textile Organizations (NCTO) president and CEO Kim Glas agreed, saying that while the group supports tariffs that address "unfair trade," it

is advising the Trump administration to "take a targeted approach to raise tariffs on specific countries that disrupt markets through the use of blatantly unfair and often illegal trade practices," like China.

"We must preserve and strengthen existing trade relationships with U.S. free trade agreement (FTA) countries in the Western Hemisphere that offer valuable markets for U.S.-made textiles," she added. "We strongly believe that reciprocity should not mean a race to the bottom with lower tariffs on imports from other countries into our market. Rather, reciprocity should hold bad actors accountable for systemic unfair trade practices that have hurt domestic manufacturers."

The National Retail Federation (NRF) opposes broad-based duties, saying in its public comments that "high, across-the-board tariffs will undermine the economic growth signaled by the other features of the president's agenda and have lasting negative consequences for consumers and workers."

"If the goal of reciprocal tariffs is to enter into negotiations to remove barriers to trade, this will unlock economic growth and reduce prices for consumers. However, if the goal is primarily to raise tariffs, then the opposite is true," vice president of supply chain and customs policy Jonathan Gold wrote.

Gold pointed out that there are many categories where U.S. tariffs are higher than those of the country's trading partners, including low-value footwear and apparel. Should reciprocal duties be implemented, the burden of increased prices would fall squarely on the shoulders of low- and middle-income shoppers, he said.

Retaliatory duties levied by countries across the globe are also sure to follow should the administration move forward with its tariff plans, he added. "We are already witnessing our trading partners respond to strong tariff actions by the administration," Gold wrote, noting that American exporters, including farmers and manufacturers, will likely lose critical access to certain foreign markets.

Instead of wielding tariffs indiscriminately, "We need to focus on key high-priority sectors where it makes sense to return manufacturing home or areas where there is strategic competition," the NRF leader said. "High tariffs on everyday household goods, which could raise consumer prices, should not be the focus of such a policy."

Companies from across the U.S. manufacturing and retail sectors weighed in with their own varied comments, which illuminated both upsides and downsides to aggressive tariffs and trade strategy.

North Carolina-based textile maker Parkdale Mills noted that illegal shipments are making their way into the U.S. through USMCA or Dominican Republic-Central America Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA-DR) countries as the practice of leveraging fake HTS codes and certificates of origin to ship non-FTA-qualifying goods has become more common, costing domestic industry hundreds of thousands of dollars annually.

Heilig's comments focused on reforming the de minimis trade exception, which allows shipments worth $800 or less to enter the country duty free.

"Each week millions of pounds of product move through our free trade agreement partner countries illegally causing significant damage to the domestic textile industry," the group's chief executive, Charles Heilig, wrote. "These transshipments steal opportunity from the U.S. worker and hand it to a foreign entity who is not interested in following our current trade laws."

But on the other side of the issue, North Carolina-based NC Upholstery, LLC wrote to oppose the forthcoming tariffs on Canadian products and inputs, saying that it estimates 50 percent of its business is in peril due to the retaliatory duties from the Canadian government.

"This tariff on USA to Canada will devastate the furniture manufacturing industry in the state of North Carolina, the furniture capital of the world," the group wrote. The Canadian government, too, weighed in on the issue through the official channel for public comments.

"Canada-U.S. trade is fair, balanced and reciprocal, with both countries benefitting from the longstanding, tariff-free access to each other's markets that contributes to integrated North American value chains and supports the competitiveness of U.S. and Canadian businesses in global markets," the Canadian Embassy wrote. "Our trade relationship is in many ways a model for others. And we are strongly committed to reinforcing our economic partnership in ways that work for both countries."

Source: sourcingjournal.com– Mar 19, 2025

HOME

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Fashion Dealmaking in the Age of Trump

Dealmakers are an optimistic bunch it probably helps when you're betting millions or even billions of dollars on a single acquisition.

But even taking that into account, bankers, advisers and would-be buyers came into 2025 feeling pretty good after a couple of slow years.

That optimism is being tested now that President Donald Trump has unleashed a series of trade wars that are threatening to tangle supply chains and rattling consumers.

Some deals are moving ahead slowly, with strategic acquirers more likely to press on than financial players. But much is on hold.

"Bankers have told us that they had deals they were bringing to market in the first quarter," said Frank Petraglia, U.S. head of consumer and retail deal advisory and strategy at KPMG. "They did the work, they put the books together. Our private equity clients told us in December and January they had the books [detailing the financials of a company set to be sold] all ready. They were expecting those books to turn into diligence in the first quarter and deals getting signed around now.

"That hasn't materialized," he said. "This is a really difficult environment to sell a business in."

It's been a sudden change as the set up for the market was pretty good coming into the year.

Inflation and interest rates were both down, consumers were holding steady, there was pent-up demand in the deal market and Trump was expected to sweep back into Washington as president and, in his own chaotic way, push for deregulation and business-friendly tax cuts.

"That's where we were on Christmas morning with mistletoe in our dreams," Petraglia said. "We came in feeling pretty bullish about where the M&A activity was going to be."

The year also started out with a promising flurry of dealmaking.

Stella McCartney bought out LVMH Moët Hennessy Louis Vuitton's stake in her brand; Acon Investments and SB360 Capital Partners snapped up True Religion; P180 acquired Vince Holdings; Marquee Brands bought Laura Ashley, and more.

But the bullishness was also tinged with some uncertainty.

"It was hard to decipher coming out of the election cycle what actually the administration was going to do, versus say, versus plan, versus execute in the first 30, 60, 90 days," Petraglia said. "Where we find ourselves today is with a less bullish prognostication for 2025 M&A."

While Trump was seen as a friend to big business in his first term, this time through he's become a warrior for complete economic transformation. China, Mexico, Canada and Europe have all been swept up in U.S. trade wars, ostensibly intended to rebuild the American manufacturing base.

Although many economists and experts argue against either Trump's vision of the future or his approach to getting there, everyone agrees that he's pushing much harder and is more organized around his vision for America this time through.

But where Trump promised immediate economic improvements on the campaign trail, he has now pivoted and is acknowledging there would be a transition period. The president and his advisers have recently declined to rule out a recession as he remakes the economy.

That change of tone, and efforts to dramatically downsize the federal government, have set the consumer on edge. Consumer confidence has fallen by 22 percent since December, according to the University of Michigan's Surveys of Consumers.

So in the short term, it's harder for businesses to see what demand will be with consumers so skittish. And in the long term, it's harder to see what the costs of tariffs will be.

That confuses all the algorithms experts use to value companies.

"Nobody knows what's going to happen," Petraglia said. "There are management teams that believe this sort of blows over and there's a whole lot of noise that eventually will go away. There's another group of

management teams that are activating around, 'How am I going to mitigate my margin erosion if my cost structure increases.'"

The result is a period of wait and see, with some signs of dealmaking.

Brand management firm WHP Global offered to take Guess Inc. private on Monday in a deal that would value the company at just over $750 million. And on Tuesday, Beyond Inc. said it would sell 75 percent of Zulily to Lyons Trading Co. for $5 million, a quick turn considering Beyond bought the brand for $4.5 million a year ago.

The deals that seem more likely to go through are strategic in nature—where one company buys another with the same kind of business—since both buyer and seller are feeling the same kind of pain.

Investment banker William Susman, managing director of consumer, retail and e-commerce at Cascadia Capital, said: "We are actively working on late-stage transactions with two industries companies — both have strategic buyers. Conversations are moving forward, but it helps that both parties are in the same position. They understand each other's challenges."

Susman said he's advising even companies with strong performances lately to wait out the uncertainty for now.

"The dust will settle," he said. "But it's a very large assumption that the dust will settle quickly. The administration is showing no sign of listening to CEOs who have repeatedly said, 'Much of our decision-making is on hold."

Source: sourcingjournal.com– Mar 19, 2025

HOME

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Select Fashion to shut down 35 stores across the UK

Nearing complete liquidation of its operations, Select Fashion plans to shut down 35 stores across the UK. The company has reportedly engaged consultants to oversee its liquidation process.

The retailer had already shut down stores across 35 locations by March 14, continuing a process that began earlier in the year. The company's liquidation process is being managed by restructuring specialist Moorfields as per a voluntary arrangement signed last year.

The impending financial collapse of the company is likely to leave employees without severance pay. This situation follows Select Fashion's previous administration collapse in 2019, from which it was rescued by Genus UK.

Currently owned by Cafer Mahiroglu, Founder and CEO, Select Fashion reported a pre-tax loss of $1.43 million for the year ending February 2023 in its latest financial year results.

Select Fashion joins a growing list of retail failures in recent years, including Quiz, which entered administration last month. That move resulted in the loss of approximately 200 jobs and the closure of 23 locations.

Source: fashionatingworld.com– Mar 19, 2025

HOME

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Vietnam's VIATT 2025 expands global reach with innovation and sustainability focus

Record growth in attendance and exhibitors

The Vietnam International Trade Fair for Apparel, Textiles, and Textile Technologies (VIATT) 2025 concluded successfully, further solidifying its role as a key trade platform for the global textile industry. The second edition, held from 26-28 February 2025, saw over 19,000 visits, reflecting a 10 per cent rise from 2024, with attendees from 70 countries and regions. Additionally, the exhibitor count grew to 463 from 24 countries, marking a nearly 13 per cent increase. The fair introduced new zones and a pavilion, emphasizing Vietnam's advancement in textile innovation and sustainability.

Hosted by Vietnam's Ministry of Industry and Trade (MOIT), the event reinforced Vietnam's strong presence in the global textile sector. Deputy Minister Phan Thi Thang highlighted the industry's key role in exports, contributing 12-16 per cent of Vietnam's total turnover. She noted that Vietnam's 17 free trade agreements (FTAs) are expected to drive textile exports to $48 billion by 2025. Wilmet Shea, General Manager of Messe Frankfurt (HK) Ltd, praised the show's success, especially with the introduction of the European Zone and India Pavilion, which enhanced international collaboration and business opportunities.

Showcasing innovation and sustainability

VIATT 2025 placed a strong focus on sustainability and technology, aligning with global trends. The new Innovation and Digital Solutions Zone and Econogy Hub emerged as key highlights, displaying cutting-edge advancements in eco-friendly textiles. Exhibitors in the Econogy Hub reported increased interest in recycled fibres and sustainable materials, particularly from Japan and Europe.

The European Zone showcased high-quality textiles from France, Portugal, and the UK, highlighting premium craftsmanship and sustainable production. Daniel Connolly of the UK Fashion and Textile Association (UKFT) underscored Vietnam's rapid consumer growth and technological investments, citing the UK-Vietnam free trade agreement as a driving force for stronger business ties.

Exhibitors praised the fair's ability to attract serious buyers. Representatives from China's Shaoxing Sunsmile Textile Co Ltd and Vietnam's Muye Home Fashion noted the high-quality visitors and growing demand in Southeast Asia. Meanwhile, US-based Inkcups introduced its sustainable tagless printing technology, attracting strong interest from various sectors.

Global buyers and industry insights

The fair drew nine buyer delegations from Europe, the US, and Asia, with VIP buyers from major brands like Adidas, Nike, IKEA, and ZARA. Buyers highlighted the show's diverse sourcing options, with strong interest in eco-friendly materials and high-quality textiles.

Alongside business transactions, VIATT 2025 hosted 11 seminars and panel discussions, covering design trends, business strategies, and technological innovations. Key events included the Interior Design Roundtable on sustainable smart textiles and the Vietnam Investment Summit, fostering trade between China and Vietnam. A seminar on sustainable fashion, led by Redress, featured insights from enterprises like ECOSOI and Passi, emphasizing eco-conscious production.

Fashion shows and parades from Vietnamese, Thai, Taiwanese, and French designers showcased sustainable and functional fashion. Hands-on workshops, including macrame weaving, engaged attendees, reinforcing the fair's role as a hub for creativity and knowledge-sharing.

Speakers at the event echoed the industry's shift towards sustainability and digital transformation. Ngoc Thu Le of Redress highlighted the need to educate consumers on sustainable fashion, while Calvin Wong of AiDLab noted strong interest in AI-driven textile inspection solutions. With growing participation and a forward-looking approach, VIATT continues to strengthen Vietnam's position as a global textile powerhouse.

Source: fashionatingworld.com– Mar 19, 2025

HOME

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It's time Bangladesh built its own global apparel brand

Several years ago, while preparing for one of our brand management classes at Dhaka University, we searched for a suitable example of a brand that significantly contributes to a country's GDP. We found a few well-known brands from the US, such as Coca-Cola, Google, and Amazon. However, their contributions to GDP were not substantial, given the vast size of the American economy.

One brand that caught our attention in Asia was Samsung, which seemed to have a significant impact on South Korea's GDP. According to a 2015 article published in The New York Times, the Samsung brand accounted for one-fifth of South Korea's exports and contributed approximately 17 percent of its GDP.

Reflecting on the considerable impact of a single brand on a country's economy, we began to contemplate Bangladesh's RMG industry. The RMG industry contributed about 82 percent of total exports and 12.69 percent of our GDP in FY2015-16. We tried to identify notable brands from the sector, but could not find any. Consequently, we intended to raise this point during the next brand management class discussion, but unfortunately, it was unsuccessful.

After further investigation, we realised that Bangladesh primarily manufactures products for others, concentrating significantly on lower-value-added goods. While the sector does produce some higher-value-added products for major brands, the quantities are relatively small. Further analysis indicated that we have substantial expertise in both lower- and higher-value-added manufacturing, as the sector has been operating for over 35 years, and we possess the necessary hard and soft resources to produce all types of RMG products.

This encouraging discovery led to some questions: when we are highly equipped, why do we only produce for others? Why can't Bangladesh have its own global brand? We only get paid for stitching; the company that owns the brand enjoys the major share of the pie.

In 2017, Dhaka University hosted a seminar outlining the roadmap for Bangladesh to achieve its $50 billion target for the RMG sector by 2021. We posed a question to the chief guest, who was both an RMG businessman and the state minister of an important ministry. We asked

how realistic and sustainable the roadmap could be without our own Bangladeshi brand. He replied that we are not yet at a stage where we can have our own brand. This made me wonder why, despite having a mature industry and exceptional expertise in both hard and soft resources, we do not recognise the significance and necessity of establishing Bangladeshi RMG brands for the international market.

Later, while conducting an ILO-funded research in the RMG sector, we asked the same question to several decision-makers from major RMG firms in Bangladesh. Most of their responses were along the line of "creating a brand is expensive and demands a significant time commitment. It also entails considerable risks, as we are collaborating with big brands. We certainly want to avoid threatening our existing business."

The insights they shared are indeed true. However, Bangladesh has a comparative advantage over other nations from both the supply and demand sides. We have the necessary infrastructure, manufacturing efficiency, and the presence of feeder industries; thus, the upstream value chain is mostly well-established, except for occasional vulnerabilities in yarn supply.

Additionally, Bangladesh is familiar with the downstream value chain as it effectively utilises it for its buyers. Consequently, establishing this chain would be less challenging, aside from the need for acceptance from independent international retailers and their willingness to feature Bangladeshi brands on their shelves, as well as consumer preference for these brands.

Bangladesh is strongly positioned to gain preference from both retailers and consumers. This is because these key downstream actors recognise that Bangladesh can produce high-quality products as a country of origin. Bangladesh has been manufacturing top-notch clothing for brands like Tommy Hilfiger, Giorgio Armani, Hugo Boss, Zara, and H&M, with "Made in Bangladesh" tags on the clothing that customers see. Therefore, the country-of-origin-based points of differentiation are already acknowledged by both retailers and end customers. If customers encounter a new brand that is of good quality and carries a "Made in Bangladesh" tag, they are unlikely to dismiss the brand outright. Besides those who are hardcore loyal to a particular brand, many customers will certainly be interested in trying the new brand from Bangladesh.

According to Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA), our apparel exports worldwide reached $38.48 billion in 2024. Although we still have considerable progress to make to achieve the previously set $50 billion target, there are ample opportunities to extend this goal within the $1.84 trillion global market. Unfortunately, without owning brands and benefiting from the premiums that established brands command in the value chain, it will be challenging for Bangladesh to capitalise on the available opportunities in the global clothing market. Creating and sustaining a brand in the international market is an expensive endeavour. However, a few companies have the financial capacity to do so. If it seems too costly and risky for major RMG players, a consortium could be established to create and develop a Bangladeshi apparel brand, allowing for shared risks. BGMEA could lead this initiative.

Let us conclude with the Samsung story. Samsung has inspired other South Korean brands like SK, Hyundai, and LG, and nearly half of South Korea's GDP comes from Samsung and its success-inspired brands. These companies compete globally—most are going head-to-head and succeeding in their respective industries. They are sometimes viewed as the frontrunners of innovation in their fields. When will Bangladesh witness a day when it can proudly say our apparel brands are the market leaders and innovators in the global apparel industry?

Source: thedailystar.net– Mar 19, 2025

HOME

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Bangladesh's apparel exports to key markets rise by double digits from July'24-February'25: EPB

In the first eight months of the fiscal year 2024-25, Bangladesh's apparel exports to key markets like the EU, the US, and Canada registered a double digits growth as demand from major brands and retailers increased.

As per data from the Export Promotion Bureau (EPB), Bangladesh's RMG exports grew by 10.64 per cent globally, reaching $26.79 billion during the period spanning July 2024-February 2025.

Most of these exports were directed to the European Union, which absorbed 50.10 per cent of the total RMG exports, valued at $13.42 billion. Exports to the US reached $5.06 billion constituting18.91 per cent share, and Canada accounted for 3.16 per cent share with exports reaching $845 million. Exports to another significant market, the UK grew to $2.93 billion, representing 10.94 per cent of the total.

In terms of growth, EU exports rose by 11.53 per cent Y-o-Y, while the US saw a robust 16.38 per cent increase, and Canada grew by 14.12 per cent.

The UK, however, experienced a more modest 3.74 per cent growth.

Within the EU, Germany is the largest destination ($3.38 billion), followed by Spain ($2.35 billion), France ($1.43 billion), Italy ($1.05 billion), Poland ($1.13 billion), and the Netherlands ($1.43 billion). Notable growth was seen in Germany (11.03 per cent), the Netherlands (25.06 per cent), Poland (12.06 per cent), Denmark (14.58 per cent), and Sweden (21.12 per cent).

Exports to non-traditional markets also showed growth, with a 6.23 per cent overall increase, totaling $4.52 billion. Japan led these markets with $839 million in imports, followed by Australia ($582 million) and India ($478 million). Exports to Turkey ($305 million) and Mexico ($229 million) were also substantial.

Specifically, exports to India increased by 18.58 per cent, Mexico by 25.14 per cent, and Turkey by 32.20 per cent. While exports to Japan, Australia, India, Turkey, and Mexico were positive, shipments to Russia, Korea, the UAE, and Malaysia declined.

Mohiuddin Rubel, Former Director, BGMEA, attributes this growth to shifting global trade dynamics, offering Bangladesh opportunities if it strengthens its production capabilities. He emphasizes on the need to invest in backward linkages to maintain RMG sector competitiveness.

Highlighting the continued importance of the EU and US markets, Rubel points out to the potential for growth in non-traditional markets. Diversifying into these regions could lessen the reliance on traditional destinations, he emphasizes.

Source: fashionatingworld.com– Mar 19, 2025

HOME

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NATIONAL NEWS

India-Latin America & Caribbean (LAC) partnership holds immense potential for economic and trade expansion: Shri Piyush Goyal

Union Minister of Commerce & Industry, Shri Piyush Goyal highlighted thatthere remains significant untapped potential for economic and trade expansion.Shri Goyal, addressed the 10th CII India-LAC Conclave today at New Delhi, emphasizing the growing importance of India's economic engagement with the Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) region.

He said, the India-LAC partnership is not just about business but also about cultural exchanges, shared traditions, and a collective commitment to preserving heritage.

He noted that the passion for festivals, sporting spirit, and rich histories of both regions provide a strong foundation for enhanced economic collaboration. He underscored that the conclave serves as an excellent platform for fostering enduring economic ties and deeper people-to-people connections between the two regions.

He called for ambitious targets, aiming to double trade volumes in the next five years by focusing on sectors such as engineering, healthcare, renewable energy, critical minerals, tourism, agriculture, gems and jewelry, and digital services.

Shri Goyal outlined several key areas for deeper cooperation, including trade expansion through preferential trade agreements with MERCOSUR and bilateral agreements where necessary.

He emphasized the need for collaboration in renewable energy, highlighting the LAC region's vast lithium reserves and proposing joint ventures in lithium processing, battery manufacturing, and electric mobility.

He also pointed to India-Brazil cooperation in biofuels and the potential for ethanol-powered vehicles. Agriculture and food security were also identified as crucial areas of partnership, with India and the LAC region complementing each other's needs through investments in climate-resilient agriculture, post-harvest storage, cold chain logistics, and value-

added food processing. Additionally, Shri Goyal stressed the importance of improving trade infrastructure through enhanced shipping routes, direct air connectivity, and digitalizing customs procedures to streamline market access. He called for expanding sectoral engagement beyond traditional industries, urging collaboration in pharmaceuticals, artificial intelligence, digital public infrastructure, and high-end manufacturing.

Shri Goyal acknowledged the global economic slowdown and supply chain disruptions but emphasized that India remains committed to strengthening economic ties with the LAC region. He urged governments, businesses, and institutions to seize emerging opportunities and move beyond incremental progress toward transformative growth.

In conclusion, Shri Goyal reaffirmed India's commitment to fostering a dynamic and mutually beneficial partnership with the LAC region, built on trust, cooperation, and shared prosperity.

Source: pib.gov.in– Mar 19, 2025

HOME

****

India not able to strategise on Trump's reciprocal tariffs due to lack of details

India is at a loss to formulate a strategy around the threatened imposition of reciprocal tariffs on imports by the US from April 2 as the Donald Trump regime has not yet clarified whether it is going to be a country specific tariff applicable on all products or the rate of tariffs would differ according to the product category, sources have said.

"If the US is seeking to apply one standard tariff for the country as a whole, then one has to see its implication for different products. If different tariffs are to be applied on different products, then the impact would be different. Different products will have varied capacities to withstand specific tariff levels. Without knowing what the US has in mind one can't make that assessment," a source tracking the matter told businessline.

The White House clarified on Tuesday that the Trump administration still intended to impose reciprocal tariffs on other countries on April 2 following Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent's comments on calculation of tariffs which gave an impression that affected countries could get a breather and negotiate before the levies are imposed. "The intent is to enact tariffs on April 2...Unless the tariff and non-tariff barriers are equalised, or the U.S. has higher tariffs, the tariffs will go into effect," a White House official said.

Tariff scope

Sectors that could take a relatively bigger hit with US reciprocal tariffs include pharmaceuticals, gems & jewellery, speciality chemicals, auto parts and agriculture. Exports from these sectors to the US are substantial and growing and there is scope for increased tariffs because of the disparity with Washington in applied tariffs.

However, the hit they would take would depend on how US calculates the reciprocal tariffs.

"The sectoral calculations of the expected hit are being done by the commodity divisions and US division based on various tariff scenarios," the source said.

There is also no clarity on whether the US wishes to look at agriculture tariffs and non-agriculture tariffs separately or together while making the reciprocal tariff calculations. Whether the US would use simple average tariffs or trade-weighted average (tariff weighed by value of imported goods) is also something that is not clear, the source pointed out..

US' simple average tariff on imports is 3.3 per cent while India's is over five times higher at 17 per cent, per WTO figures. US' trade weighted average tariff is 2.2 per cent while India's is 12 per cent.

Average applied tariffs on agricultural goods by India is much higher at 39 per cent while the US duties are at 5 per cent.

New Delhi is hopeful that once it commits to bringing down tariffs on certain products for the US under the bilateral trade agreement (BTA) being negotiated, Trump's angst about the tariff disparity and America's trade deficit with India (at about $36 billion annually), would be assuaged.

Products identified

Trump and his officials have specifically identified products such as cars, motorcycles, wines & spirits and agricultural items as those attracting very high tariffs in India.

India and the US have started working on setting the contours of a bilateral trade agreement, the first tranche of which is expected to be implemented by fall this year.

"India's tariffs higher than the US' as it is a developing country with millions of farmers and micro enterprises to protect. But there are some tariffs that protect large businesses. The government must use its discretion while deciding on tariff cuts," a Delhi-based expert said.

The US was India's largest trading partner in FY24 with exports worth $77.51 billion and imports worth $42.19 billion.

Source: thehindubusinessline.com– Mar 19, 2025

HOME

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Central banks of India, Mauritius sign MoU to promote use of ₹, MUR

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and the Bank of Mauritius (BOM) recently signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to set up a framework to promote the use of the Indian rupee (₹) and the Mauritian rupee (MUR) for cross-border transactions.

The MoU was signed by the RBI governor Sanjay Malhotra and his Mauritian counterpart Rama Krishna Sithanen.

The MoU documents were exchanged in Port Louis in the presence of the Prime Ministers Narendra Modi and Navinchandra Ramgoolam on March 12.

The MoU covers all current account transactions and permissible capital account transactions. The framework would enable exporters and importers to invoice and pay in their respective domestic currencies.

Use of local currencies would optimise costs and settlement time for transactions, an RBI release said.

Source: fibre2fashion.com– Mar 19, 2025

HOME

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India focusing on core trade issues in FTAs for early outcomes: Commerce secretary Sunil Barthwal

India is focusing on core trade issues such as import duty and non-tariff barriers in the proposed free trade agreements (FTAs) for faster outcomes from these negotiations, Commerce Secretary Sunil Barthwal said on Wednesday. He said this approach is important as sometimes it takes "so much time" to conclude negotiations for these agreements and because of that businesses lose interests.

"...the experience has been that when we look at these free trade agreements, sometimes they are so much time taking that people lose interest, the businesses lose interest.

"So we are also reviewing some of these issues in the department (of commerce) as well, as we are talking to our partners who are doing FTAs with us that why can't we first look at the core trade issues, and even if it is early tranche, or even if it is first phase of that comprehensive agreement, but let there be some kind of outcome which should come out of these negotiations. So we are taking that approach, that let us first focus on the core trade issues," Barthwal said at CII's India-LAC (Latin America and Caribbean) Business Conclave here.

The secretary said that the core trade issues are tariffs, non-tariff barriers, SPS (sanitary and phyto-sanitary) barriers, and regulatory factors.

He added that there is a need for India and the LAC region to follow this approach.

"Look at the core trade issues with you, and start working in that direction. I think that is going to be a great way forward by which we will be able to achieve many things, and the businesses will be able to see that the outcomes are very, very fast," Barthwal said.

He added that the multi-sectoral approach, which India is talking to the US with under the proposed bilateral trade agreement is also important. In this approach, "we look at the sectors of mutual advantage, of mutual benefit", he said.

India is negotiating trade agreements with MERCOSUR (Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, and Uruguay), Chile and Peru.

"We are also thinking of how to look at this (LAC) region in terms of looking the impediments, whether it is non-tariff barriers, whether it is tariff barriers or the regulations, to see that trade grows between these two regions," he said, adding there is a target to double two-way commerce from USD 50 billion to USD 100 billion in the coming years.

The secretary said that huge potential is there to boost trade between the two regions.

LAC region imports are at USD 1.8 trillion and exports of goods and services are around USD 1.8 billion.

He also said that countries will have to cut down protectionism to increase trade because that is the need of the nations.

"You cannot grow your GDPs, unless and until the trade also grows... we are embarking upon our trade promotion mission, which would be a kind of umbrella, a kind of scheme, where we look at how to take our trade further.

"So trade is going to be an engine of growth, not only for that region, but also for India, and that is the path which we will be taking forward," Barthwal said.

He added that sectors where cooperation can be increased included automobile, medical devices and pharmaceuticals.

"So can we look at the automobile sector, in a manner in which there are gains to both the regions. Similarly, the pharmaceutical sector, again, India has developed that ability of focusing on generic drugs, which can provide affordable medicines," he said.

Source: economictimes.com– Mar 19, 2025

HOME

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India may only be able to shift $3.5-5 billion worth of trade away from China, shows MC analysis

India will only be able to shift $3.5-5 billion of trade away from its largest trading partner - China - and replace it with goods imported from United States, still running a huge trade deficit with Beijing, according to a Moneycontrol analysis.

Media reports indicate that the Ministry of Commerce and Industry had asked businesses to identify areas were imports from China and other countries can be substituted with American products. Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal had also asked exporters to move out of a protectionist mindset.

However, analysis shows that the value of trade in India that can be substituted with American goods is likely to be limited, as the cost of US products is higher across most categories. Out of the 4,251 goods imported by both countries where comparable data was available from the Ministry of Commerce, US had a price advantage in only 650 items while China's price advantage extended to 3,601 goods.

Moreover, in 92 percent of such products, American commodities were priced 50 percent higher than their Chinese counterparts. The analysis has considered a scenario where US exports at least $10 million worth of goods to India and the price difference between the two is at least 10 percent.

Only if India can bear a 20 percent premium for importing products from the US, then it can replace $5 billion worth of goods.

India's fertiliser imports from China are worth $1.4 billion while just $51 million from America. The price difference between the two in this category is 15.7 percent. India imported $700 million worth of PVC resin from China compared with $196 million from the US, with a 4 percent cost difference, while the difference in organic chemicals was nearly 30 times, with India importing $300 million worth of products from China.

Click here for more details

Source: moneycontrol.com– Mar 18, 2025

HOME

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High base effect: On a shrinking trade deficit, rising exports

India's goods trade in February saw its steepest decline in nearly two years. Exports fell by 10.9% to $36.91 billion, while imports dropped 16.3% to $50.96 billion, resulting in the smallest trade deficit in over three years (42 months) at $14 billion. While a shrinking trade deficit driven by rising exports would have been a positive development, the simultaneous decline in exports and imports is a cause for concern.

Experts partly attribute this narrowing deficit to a high base effect, as exports in February last year, a leap year, stood at $41.4 billion and imports at $60.92 billion. However, exporters also report a trend of American importers holding back on orders, fearing the reciprocal tariffs set to take effect on April 2, as announced by U.S. President Donald Trump on February 13.

This announcement came just before his meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, where they unveiled an ambitious plan to boost bilateral trade to $500 billion by 2030 and finalise a free trade agreement (BTA) in the months ahead. Despite Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal's diplomatic outreach to U.S. Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick this month, discussions yielded little beyond a commitment to continue BTA negotiations.

The looming threat of reciprocal tariffs has unsettled Indian exporters, as the U.S. is India's second-largest trading partner, accounting for $118.3 billion in trade last fiscal year. It is also the only country among India's top five trading partners with which India enjoys a trade surplus.

Imports also declined sharply, led by a 62% plunge in gold imports compared to last February. This drop is linked to domestic gold prices surging to ₹87,886 per 10 grams last week, dampening consumer demand.

Oil imports also fell nearly 30% as India diversified its supply sources in response to additional U.S. sanctions on Russian oil producers and tankers in early January.

By mid-2023, Russia accounted for over 40% of India's crude imports, a significant increase from less than 1% before western sanctions on Moscow following its 2022 invasion of Ukraine. If Washington moves to neutralise its trade deficit with New Delhi, India could face a 15% widening in its overall trade deficit, based on last fiscal year's $241 billion shortfall.

India must diversify its goods and services trade to reduce its heavy reliance on the U.S. Two potential markets are China and the U.K. While imports from China have contributed to about a third of India's trade deficit for over five years, India's trade imbalance with the U.K. accounted for less than 3% of its total deficit last fiscal year. The free trade agreement negotiations with the U.K. are an opportunity for India to shift this balance in its favour.

Source: thehindu.com– Mar 19, 2025

HOME

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Govt plans to increase Chabahar Port capacity 5x in next 10 years

Despite global trade instability amid geopolitical threats since the start of US President Donald Trump's second stint, India is looking to continue capacity building at Iran's Chabahar Port.

The Centre aims to raise capacity fivefold at the terminal over the next decade.

"There is a capital expenditure (capex) of ₹4,000 crore or so underway which will help us acquire modern cranes, leading to mechanisation and modernisation at the terminal. The current capacity at the port is 100,000 twenty-foot equivalent units (TEUs) and the target is to expand this to 500,000 TEUs," a senior government official said on the sidelines of the National Sagarmala Apex Committee meeting in New Delhi.

According to officials, the Shahid Behesti terminal at the port, operated by state-owned India Ports Global (IPGL), is expected to handle 75,000 TEUs of container traffic in the current financial year. The cranes are expected to be procured over the next three years. There have been growing concerns over the viability of the port, which India negotiated heavily to secure a 10-year deal for it in May 2024.

On February 6, Trump issued an executive order instructing the Secretary of State to "modify or rescind sanction waivers, particularly those that provide Iran any degree of economic or financial relief, including those related to Iran's Chabahar Port project."

A second official said that the situation is still uncertain and the shipping ministry and ministry of external affairs are deliberating on the potential impact of the US move.

Among the negotiations for the contract was India's request to not have a minimum guaranteed traffic (MGT), under which an operator is penalised for failing to meet minimum targets.

The signed Chabahar agreement includes a clause on cargo targets, but no penalties will be imposed if such traffic is not achieved.

The Chabahar Port was a coveted strategic interest for India. It is a critical gateway for the proposed International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC) — a multi-modal route between India, Central Asia and Russia, reducing transit time for trade between the three regions.

In the first year (FY25), IPGL is expected to bring in 30,000 TEUs worth of traffic. This number is projected to increase to 140,000 containers in the fifth year and 300,000 TEUs in the 10th year of the bilateral agreement.

These targets will be revised after five years, depending on market conditions and other factors.

Under the revenue-sharing agreement, for exports from Shahid Behesti, IPGL and Iran each retain 50 per cent of the revenue share. For imports, Iran's maritime organisation receives 60 per cent of the revenue.

Source: business-standard.com– Mar 19, 2025

HOME

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India's export of key items sees double-digit contraction, says report

India's export of key items such as petroleum products, iron ore, gems and jewellery, oil seeds, and ceramics witnessed double-digit contraction in February, which calls for 'targeted support and strategic interventions' to drive recovery, Delhi-based think tank GTRI said in a report on Wednesday.

Data released by the commerce department on Monday showed that outbound shipments from India shrank at the sharpest pace in 20 months —by 10.9 per cent year-on-year (Y-o-Y) — to $36.91 billion in February.

The contraction was driven by negative growth in several items.

Exports of petroleum products fell by 29.2 per cent in February. Exports contracted by a fourth during the 11 months of the current financial year, mainly due to softening of global crude oil prices from $83.5 per barrel in February 2024 to $77 per barrel in February 2025.

"A recovery in this sector will depend on global oil price trends and increased refining efficiency to maintain margins," the report said.

In the case of gems and jewellery, the contraction was over a fifth in February and more than a 10 per cent drop during April-February.

The sector was hit by tepid demand and high import duties on gold. According to GTRI, shifting consumer preferences and increased local production in key importing countries also contributed to the decline.

Similarly, iron ore exports were also hit by tepid demand, along with domestic mining restrictions. Exports saw a sharp decline of 53.6 per cent in February and 49.4 per cent in April-February.

"To address this, the government should speed up mining approvals to stabilise production and encourage value-added exports such as processed steel and alloys instead of raw iron ore," it said.

While export of items such as engineering goods, pharmaceuticals, plastics, organic and inorganic chemicals, leather, cotton yarn, fabrics, tea and cashew, among others, also saw contraction in February, but grew on

a cumulative basis (April-February). This indicates short-term challenges but long-term resilience. “These exports made up 47.6 per cent of total exports in February, indicating short-term challenges but long-term resilience,” it said.

On the brighter side, electronic goods, ready-made garments, rice, meat, dairy and poultry products, mica, coal and other minerals, coffee, tobacco, spices, fruits and vegetables, carpet, and jute manufacturing saw steady growth in February.

The trend is expected to continue in the long run, the report said.

Source: business-standard.com– Mar 19, 2025

HOME

****

Welspun highlights advanced bedding technologies at New York market, plans US expansion

Welspun is presenting its latest innovations in bedding products at the New York Home Fashions Market, featuring its "Better Sleep Lab" showcasing advancements in utility bedding, sleep pillows, and filled bedding.

The company's operational pillow manufacturing facility in Ohio is a key component of its strategy to expand within the North American market, with plans for additional US factories. Welspun aims to increase its market reach by leveraging both its proprietary and licensed brands.

A highlight of the display is the company's patented technologies, Hygrocotton and Gx construction, with the Gx Suspension pillow achieving a 4.7-star online rating. CEO Keyur Parekh emphasized the company's commitment to consumer-driven innovation.

Welspun is introducing a new Coco Cozy utility bedding collection and showcasing updated products from its Martha Stewart, MS Everyday, Charisma, and Allerwel lines. The showroom also features a technology wall, providing insights into various fill materials and constructions designed to meet diverse sleep preferences.

In addition to the main showroom, Welspun has expanded its presence with two new showrooms on the 12th floor, one dedicated to area rugs and flooring and the other featuring its luxury brand, Christy. Welspun's New York City showroom is located at 10 W. 33 St., Penthouse.

Source: apparelresources.com– Mar 19, 2025

HOME

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