

Visitors show interest in locally made products

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

As a four-day fair of plastic goods began at Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Centre in Dhaka yesterday, visitors are showing interest in locally manufactured plastic products.

Organisers said visitors are not only praising the Bangladeshi plastic items but also purchasing different household items.

They said since use of plastic goods is increasing day by day, people are enthusiastic about the fair.

"Plastic is now an alternative to wood, cane, iron, tin and aluminum. So, plastic now holds huge potential," said Mostofa Haroon, general manager (sales and marketing) of Bengal Wares.

"I am very much interested in household items manufactured by local companies," said Shefali Begum, a housewife.

"Some locally made products are really fine when it comes to quality, but prices are too high," said Hafizur Rahman, an employee of a private firm. Manufacturers should lower the prices at reasonable level, added Rahman, who went to the exhibition to buy some plastic chairs.

The fourth version of the fair have around 60 stalls where some 40 exhibitors from both home and abroad are showcasing their products including plastic furniture, toys, garment accessories, household items, sanitary fittings, spare parts of textile and jute mills, water tanks and packaging items.

A total of five foreign companies - two from Taiwan, one from Singapore and two from India -- are taking part in the fair to showcase a wide range of plastic goods.

The fair will remain open to visitors from 10am to 8pm everyday until Sunday. Entry fee has been fixed at Tk 10 a person.

On the sidelines of the fair, a seminar on plastic waste recycling in Dhaka will be held on the third day of the fair.

FLOATING HOSPITAL

Emirates Foundation signs deal with NGO

The Emirates Airline Foundation has signed a contract with Friendship, a registered non-governmental organisation (NGO), for the management of the new Emirates Friendship Hospital ship in Bangladesh, says a press release.

The steel-hulled catamaran was commissioned by the foundation, the onboard charity initiative that funds projects around the world in aid of underprivileged children.

Emirates passengers support the foundation by donating spare cash or unwanted foreign currency using envelopes supplied on board.

Due for completion in the Bangladeshi capital, Dhaka by mid-2007, the Emirates Friendship Hospital ship will be used as a floating hospital in northern Bangladesh for communities isolated by the annual monsoon flooding of the Brahmaputra River.

The low-draught vessel is specially designed to navigate the shallow waters of this specific area of over 200 kilometers, one of the most medically neglected and inaccessible areas of Bangladesh.

Saifur assures plastic goods makers of considering demands

4-day international fair of plastic goods kicks off

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Finance and Planning Minister M Saifur Rahman yesterday assured plastic goods manufacturers of considering their demands, saying the sector has a great potential for further growth.

"I will hold a meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs to discuss the matters and if we find your demands realistic, you will get all the facilities," he said. The minister was addressing the inaugural function of a four-day international fair of plastic goods at Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Centre in Dhaka.

Bangladesh Plastic Goods Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BPGMEA) is organising the fair. The Daily Star and ATN Bangla are the media partners of the exhibition.

The finance minister's assurance came after BPGMEA President Jasim Uddin raised some

demands including withdrawal of a condition to show 25 percent bank guarantee for importing basic raw materials, reduction in high import duty and lifting the ban on producing polypropylene products.

Expressing satisfaction over the sector's performance, Saifur said the plastic goods manufacturers will be allowed to import basic raw materials at a duty structure applicable for other sectors. "I will examine the issue and if it falls under the category of raw materials, you will also enjoy the facility," he assured.

On the issue of producing bank guarantee, the finance minister said if the bank guarantee is unnecessary for importing raw materials, the system will also be withdrawn.

Criticising the ban on producing polypropylene products, he said this is not fair that imported items can be used while local manufacturers will be not be given permission to produce the same product.

"I will discuss the matter with the

environment ministry," the minister told the function.

BPGMEA President Jasim Uddin said the country earned Tk 865 crore in foreign exchanges last fiscal year through direct and indirect exports and the rate of export growth was 77 percent in 2004-05.

"The country has a potential to increase export especially to the US and EU markets as the US and EU recently imposed anti-dumping measures on Chinese plastic goods," he said.

The BPGMEA president said the import duty on basic raw materials should be re-fixed at 6 percent instead of existing 13 percent.

He also urged the government to implement the decision of offering 10 percent cash incentives to the export-oriented plastic units.

Commerce Ministry Adviser Barkatullah Bulu was also present at the function.



PHOTO: STAR

Finance and Planning Minister M Saifur Rahman inaugurates the four-day international fair of plastic goods at Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Centre in Dhaka yesterday. Commerce Ministry Adviser Barkat Ullah Bulu and Bangladesh Plastic Goods Manufacturers and Exporters Association President Jasim Uddin, among others, are seen.

Bangladesh showing poor results in data management

WB country director says

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Bangladesh is still showing frustrating results in managing data, although data are the building blocks for monitoring and evaluating any development goal, said World Bank Country Director Christine Wallich.

However, she said the development partners are committed to helping the government in this regard.

Wallich was addressing the concluding session of a workshop titled 'Data Sources for Monitoring Poverty and the MDGs in Bangladesh' in Dhaka yesterday.

The World Bank country director also said actual happenings at grassroots level should be taken into account to evaluate properly the

achievements of the millennium development goals (MDGs).

Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS) in collaboration with World Bank Institute (WBI) organised the three-day workshop, which began Tuesday at BRAC centre in Dhaka.

A total of 35 participants from both government and non-government organisations took part in the workshop.

Speakers at the workshop also said coordination between government and non-government organisations in data monitoring is needed for proper evaluation of the MDGs achievements.

They said some indicators of MDGs are selected by taking data from various surveys, which provide divergent estimates. So, the reason

behind the difference of information needs to be identified and the problems emerging from this difference must be addressed for more acceptable results, they added.

An advisory committee should be formed with researchers, policy makers and professionals to stop duplication of data generation system, said Rushidan Islam Rahman, research director of BIDS.

The speakers also stressed the need for improving the standard of regular surveys by Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS).

Shahid Khondokar, consultant of World Bank, and Anil Deolalikar, professor of California University, were also present at the concluding session.

Emirates offers packages for Dubai shopping festival

Emirates is offering fantastic value for money packages for the Dubai Shopping Festival (DSF) 2006.

Emirates is one of the key sponsors of the DSF and is once again promoting the event by offering excellent value for money holiday packages for visitors from around the world, says a press release.

The price includes breakfast, transfers between Dubai International Airport and the hotel by chauffeur-driven car and personalised meet-and-assist upon arrival as well as an Arabian Adventures Welcome Pack. All accommodation-related taxes and services charges are included.

Additional 10 kg free baggage allowance on return/onward flights from Dubai are allowed to those availing the package. Stopover charges in Dubai are waived for onward bound passengers.

"With prices starting from US\$56 per person per night sharing, Emirates' exceptional value-for-money DSF packages are valid from the 4th January 2006 until the 4th February 2006.

Japan's trade surplus turns up in November on firm exports

AFP, Tokyo

Japan's trade surplus posted its first rise in eight months in November, official figures showed Thursday, confirming a steady economic recovery fueled by demand from China and other trading partners.

The surplus edged up a marginal 0.6 percent from a year earlier to 600.64 billion yen (5.1 billion dollars), with exports chalking up the strongest growth in 17 months while high oil prices kept the value of imports up.

"Japan's export activity is growing steadily while growth in imports was more modest than before as oil prices have stabilized recently," said Tatsuya Torikoshi, senior economist at Daiwa Institute of Research.

Export rises 12.47pc in four months

BONEWS, Dhaka

The country earned US\$ 3.346 billion by exporting goods in the first four months of the current fiscal year, showing a 12.47 percent growth.

Increased export of knitwear and positive growth of woven garments contributed to the growth over the corresponding period of last fiscal year, the sources at the Export Promotion Bureau (EPB) said.

The knitwear export grew by 26 percent to fetch \$ 1230 million exceeding the growth target by 3 percent set for the first four months.

EPB officials said export of woven garments increased by 0.18 percent earning \$ 1286 million in July-October period. This is for the first time woven garments showed a positive growth during the post-MFA period.

The country earned \$ 13 million

in exports of textile fabrics during the period registering the highest growth of 217 percent among the different export items.

Frozen food, the second largest foreign exchange earner, registered a 6 percent fall in growth. However, the export earnings from the sector were \$ 165.42 million in July-October, an increase by 10.86 percent from the target.

Agricultural products and leather exports fetched \$ 41.12 million and \$ 80.67 million respectively during the period showing a growth of 54.53 and 16 percent. Raw jute and jute goods exports also increased by 44 and 21.44 percent respectively and earned \$ 29 million and \$ 114 million.

Petroleum by-products, ceramic tableware, bicycle, footwear, engineering products, electronics and computer service showed an impressive growth in the current

fiscal year.

Export of tea, pharmaceuticals, melamine tableware, agro-processed food and home textile registered a negative growth.

The higher growth in export earnings was mainly due to the volume of export increased by 16 percent both in primary products and manufactured goods although price index fell by 3.89 percent.

Export of primary products in terms of price decreased by 10.97 percent and volume increased by 17.15 percent in the first four months on a month-to-month basis.

Export of manufactured goods fell by 3.31 percent in terms of price but increased by 16.33 percent in volume.



PHOTO: STAR

Mahbubur Rahman (2-L), president of the International Chamber of Commerce-Bangladesh (ICC-B), speaks at a review meeting on 'WTO Hong Kong Ministerial: Impact on LDCs' organised by ICC-B in Dhaka yesterday. (From left) Samson H Chowdhury, Square Group chairman, Faruk Ahmed Siddique, commerce secretary, and Debapriya Bhattacharya, executive director of Centre for Policy Dialogue, are also seen.