

Flashy jute

Decoration pieces made of jute were a hit among visitors at the Tatthya Mela held in Dinajpur recently. It would be much help if the sector got partners with financial support and distributors in the region to promote the merchandise



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Minimal décor, an array of colours and various shades of the golden fibre -- all define an exclusive shop for jute-made toys. Dolls, bags and birds with nests were a must for showpiece lovers to see at the daylong "Tatthya Mela" held in Dinajpur recently.

Organised by PalliSree, a local non-governmental organisation, the fair was inaugurated by Shaheen Anam, executive director of Manusher Janno Foundation.

At least 20 stalls participated in the fair that was held on the premises of Dinajpur Institute. The exposition drew in a large number of visitors just because it displayed attractive and useful items made from jute.

Ruma Begum, a 26-year-old woman, was the pioneer of crafting such exquisite goods of extraordinary value showcased at the fair. She is a resident of Dinajpur town.

"I am an eco-friendly person, so much so that you will not even find

a single plastic good or toy at my place," said Ruma to The Daily Star. She also uses natural materials for finally shaping her products.

Ruma, being a young woman from a local middle class family, is struggling to market her eco-friendly jute goods. She actively takes part in every fair organised in the district to promote her products, she added.

Ruma initially tried to experiment with the biodegradable agricultural products and craft to make various useful items. Her business acumen saw commercial gain in the venture too.

"If we get partners with financial support and distributors in the region to promote the merchandise, it would be much help."

The exciting fashion range and the affordable prices persuaded her to bring this store to the fair, Ruma said. All her products are priced between Tk 20 and Tk 200.

Ruma's jute goods store has a unique blend of fashion, design and utility. Big or small, to take

shopping or to a party, classy or casual -- there is something for everyone there.

"Many people might be apprehensive about carrying a jute bag to a fashionable joint, but there are many others who are ready to experiment with the choice," said Ruma.

While leather represents class, jute, in its unique way, presents a chic and contemporary look, she added. The products are crafted by members of an in-house team under her leadership.

"You can take your pick from a variety of prints, weaves and other natural fibre blends".

Ruma makes a wide range of clutches, shopping bags, small bags in rectangular and square shapes and sling bags. Any visitor to her stall buys at least a clutch or other fancy items, like bird nests.

The hottest selling jute bags of various shapes and style here are priced between Tk 30 and Tk 300.

Ruma aspires to popularise jute goods by making extraordinary products using the fibre.

GLOBALISATION

The best of times

THE ECONOMIST

CONTINUED FROM YESTERDAY

European dreams are different from American ones, but just as important to hopes of a peaceful and prosperous future. They come in two forms: an ever deeper European Union (banishing nationalism) and ever more generous welfare states (offering security). With the break-up of the euro a possibility, and governments sinking under the burden of unaffordable entitlements as their populations age and the number of workers contracts, those happy notions are evaporating.

Shift happens

In the emerging world, meanwhile, they are not arguing about pensions, but building colleges. China's university population has quadrupled in the past two decades. UNESCO notes that the proportion of scientific researchers based in the developing world increased from 30 percent in 2002 to 38 percent in 2007. World-class companies such as India's Infosys and China's Huawei are beating developed-country competitors.

The rise of positive thinking in the emerging world is something to be welcomed -- not least because it challenges the status

quo. Nandan Nilekani of Infosys says that his company's greatest achievement lies not in producing technology but in redefining the boundaries of the possible. If people in other countries take those ideas seriously, they will make life uncomfortable for gerontocrats in China and Arabia.

But there are dangers, too. Optimism can easily become irrational exuberance: asset prices in some emerging markets have risen too high. And there is a danger of a Western backlash. Unless developing countries start taking their responsibility for global security seriously, Americans and Europeans may begin to wonder why they are policing the world to keep markets open for others to get rich.

As for the Westerners' gloom, it has its uses. There is a growing recognition that the old rich world cannot take its prosperity for granted -- that it will be overtaken by hungrier powers if it fails to deal with its structural problems. Europeans are beginning to accept that their country must become less spendthrift. Europeans are realising that they need to make their economies more agile and innovative. Both are beginning to treat this crisis as the opportunity that it is.

Nor should Westerners overdo the despair, for the emergence of new great powers will benefit them, too. True, their governments will find it harder to boss the rest of the world around; their most desirable properties will increasingly be owned by foreigners; their children will have to work harder to get good jobs in an increasingly globalised economy. But the rising number of Indians, Chinese and Brazilians who can afford to buy their products and services will help their companies prosper. The countries that have provided them with workers will increasingly provide them with customers too.

It may not feel like it in the West, but this is, in many ways, the best of times. Hundreds of millions are climbing out of poverty. The internet gives ordinary people access to information that even the most privileged scholar could not have dreamed of a few years ago. Medical advances are conquering diseases and extending lifespans. For most of human history, only a privileged few have reasonably been able to hope that the future would be better than the present. Today the masses everywhere can. That is surely reason to be optimistic.

The Economist Newspaper Ltd (Dec 16)



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