

Trade fair stirs urban spirits

People in charge of sales at different outlets that represent companies, said their main objective are to showcase their products to buyers

SOHEL PARVEZ

THE young lovebirds walk towards the extension road feeling giddy pleasure over the day they spent at the 16th Dhaka International Trade Fair (DITF-2011). They leave behind the colourful billboards, parked cars, howling microphones and the balloons buoying in the sky above the fair premises.

For today, their trip to the fair is over. They bought chutney, some snacks and candyfloss, and spent the day walking around in leisure, a day for quality time.

"It's just an outing to pass time by ourselves," says 22-year old Mizanur Rahman Imon, as he walks past at midday. Keya Akhter, who is carrying a schoolbag in one hand and the

candyfloss in the other, accompanies him.

In the backdrop, there is an increasing flow of men and women, advancing to the ticket counters, all in a hurry to enter the fair premises that are circled by corrugated iron sheets.

The month-long fair opened on New Year's Day. Spread on 2.29 hectares at Sher-E-Bangla Nagar, 531 large and small pavilions, with stylish decor, display various consumer goods.

Organised by the Export Promotion Bureau, the biggest annual show has been taking place in Dhaka since 1995. It offers tens of thousands of visitors scope to browse through the stores for new, unique and household items.

The show offers most visitors, mostly women, a chance to plan a



AMRAN HOSSAIN

Customers visit a stall for different lamps at the month-long Dhaka International Trade Fair that started on January 1.

day-out with family members.

They browse around the stores to check for new arrivals and buy products by taking advantage of the various discounts on offer.

For the participating companies, the fair gives a chance to introduce products directly to local consumers and foreign buyers, and popularise the brands to accelerate sales at both home and abroad.

Last year, nearly 60 lakh visitors, including foreigners, visited the show; local companies logged Tk 21.53 crore in export earnings.

But major proceeds come from sales to local consumers.

In the last 17 days since the start of the fair, the daily average visitor turnout hit one lakh, according to Abu Mukhles Alamgir Hossain, office secretary of the DITF-2011.

Stalls display consumer goods such as kitchenware, home appliances, clothes and home textiles, jewellery, cosmetics, handicrafts, foods items, ceramic ware, leather goods and furniture.

A majority of the visitors gather over counters displaying home appliances, kitchenware and textiles or clothing items.

"I come here for two reasons: an outing with the family and buying items at a discount," says Dil Mahfuza Rawshon Bithi. She is here with her husband.

Bithi's list of purchases includes non-stick cookware, shatranji (traditional handicrafts like table, floor or wall mats) and Pakistani salwar-kameezes. And if anything else catches her attention, she would most probably get it too.

For Sajuti Sharmin, who runs a boutique from home, the fair is something she waits for the whole year.

"Every year, I wait for the fair to begin and buy household necessities because I get discounts here," she says, paying the bill for plastic tiffin boxes, soap cases and buckets at RFL (Rangpur Foundry Ltd) pavilion. Hundreds of customers had gathered there to buy plastic items for households.

"If I buy these items outside the fair, I will have to pay more," says Sharmin. "The items are displayed in such a way that there is not chance you will forget the items you need to get."

Altaf Hossain Selim, general manager of Karupannya Rangpur Ltd, which makes and sells traditional handmade Satranji, said sales are good.

This is the first time Karupannya

joined the fair with products like satranjis and carpets.

"We usually focus on exports. But we are here to introduce our products and our heritage to the people."

People in charge of sales at different outlets that represent companies, said their main objective are to showcase their products to buyers. But many of the stalls offer discounts.

"Visitors expect to get discounts from us during the fair. That's why we are offering a 10 percent discounts," said Habibur Rahman, pavilion in-charge of Kiam Metal Industries Ltd that makes non-stick cooking wares, pressure cooker, hot pot and aluminium pots.

He said sales are higher this year than a year ago.

On Sunday, Anwar Hossain and his wife Sonai Akhter bought a microwave oven at Tk 17,450 and got a basket of items for free, like a hot pot, pressure cooker, rice cooker, non-stick cookware from a stall called Alif Crokeries.

Hossain thought that they did not win.

"We did not require a microwave oven. If we buy these items separately, I would have saved more," he says, looking for a CNG autorickshaw to transport these items home.

However, Mohammad Masud Rana, a stock market investor, feels good after buying a dinner set from Farr Ceramics Ltd at Tk 2,000 at a discount of Tk 100.

"I got the confidence to buy because the company itself is present here. Outside the fair, you will have to look for where the company's showroom is."

sohel@thedailystar.net



A customer checks a set of utensils.



Visitors at a stall of furniture maker Otobi.

AMRAN HOSSAIN

Electronics sales heat up

SUMAN SAHA

SALES of electronic gadgets such as televisions, refrigerators, irons and washing machines are upbeat at the 16th Dhaka International Trade Fair-2011, said participating companies.

"We have so far gotten positive responses at the fair," said Nur Alam Khan, sales officer of Walton Hightech Industries. "We are selling nearly 15 units of LCD TVs and 10 units of refrigerators a day on an average."

The price of a Walton Brand LCD television ranges between Tk 30,000 and Tk 75,000. The company is also offering a discount of 6 percent at the fair.

"We are registering sales of 10 units of LCD TVs a day on average," said Rejaul Karim, desk executive of Electra International that retails the Samsung brand.

Electronics retailers said the market for LCD televisions has been growing fast in the last two years, encouraged by falling prices and increased availability.

"We are selling an average of 6 units of Transtec LCD TV a day. The televisions are available within Tk 19,000 to Tk 50,000," said Anisur Rahman, showroom manager of Transtec Electronics.

Electronics retailers are also find a link between high sales and the upcoming ICC World Cup Cricket matches. Customers are buying LED (light-emitting diode) 3D televisions, which range between Tk 2.40 lakh and Tk 6 lakh, to watch the cricket matches on large screens with better picture quality.

"I brought a LCD television from the fair to watch the cricket matches with 3D view," said Sakib Hossain, a business executive at a leading multinational company.

The cash discounts and the gifts upon purchase are also motivating customers to buy electronic items from the fair.

"We are offering a discount of Tk 3,000 discount on refrigerators at the fair," said Rahman. Transtec customers will enjoy 5 years service warranty and 2 years of free service on panel and spare parts, said Rahman.

According to distributors, businessmen and corporate executives are the main buyers of large LCD televisions in Bangladesh.

At present, the largest LCD television, also known as a 3D television, is on offer by Philips that measures 56 inches and comes with a price tag of Tk 5.95 lakh.

"The ongoing trend looks good this year because we are selling on 8 units of washing machines, 2 LCD TVs and 10 irons a day on average," said



Visitors look at a Philips television at a Transcom showroom.

AMRAN HOSSAIN

Kamrul Hasan Bhuiyan, territory officer of Butterfly Marketing Ltd that retails the LG brand.

"We offer cash discounts of Tk 900 to Tk 1,500 on LG washing machines, which cost around Tk 13,000 to Tk 33,000 at the fair," said Bhuiyan.

The price of Samsung double door refrigera-

tor is Tk 80,000 to Tk 125,000.

"Microwave oven sales are also high," said Karim of Electra International. "We are selling an average of 12 microwave ovens a day at the fair."

suman.saha@thedailystar.net

Electronics retailers said the market for LCD televisions has been growing fast in the last two years, encouraged by falling prices and increased availability