

Brand expo abuzz with visitors

ARUN BIKASH DEY, Chittagong

TOP brands are showcasing their past, present activities and future plans at the four-day Brands Expo organised by The Daily Star as part of its 12-day Odommo Chattagram Festival.

The exposition started on Saturday at MA Aziz Stadium Gymnasium.

At the BSRM pavilion, officials were seen providing information on their products to the visitors. Ripan Barua, deputy manager (sales) of BSRM, said they are making rods of width between 4.5 millimetres and 72.5 millimetres (mm).

Rods that are 72.5mm wide (500 grade) are called extreme grade, which have the unique quality of quick melting, less waste and excellent blending capability, he said.

Many think the rod is the most-expensive building material, but do not know that the cost of rod may be lower with the use of modern high-strength 500-grade rod like BSRM Xtreme, Barua said.

Builders need only 5 kilograms of rods for per square foot of floor space, he said.

Officials of Western Marine Services Ltd, a shipbuilding company located in Chittagong, also participated in the fair.

Apart from shipbuilding, they run river cruises, said Mithun Das, an executive of the company. The trips that start at Chittagong Boat Club run on two schedules from Thursday to Saturday.

The afternoon voyage takes two hours, starting at 4.30pm. It meanders through the estuary of the Karnaphuli River and No. 1 jetty and then returns to the boat club. The evening voyage sets off at 7.30pm.

The afternoon voyage costs Tk 1,000, while the evening voyage that includes dinner costs Tk 1,500, he said.

At the Grameenphone pavilion, officials gave information of the running offers. The company offers a series of packages, including Sahoj, Apon, Bandhu and Spondon.

They also provided information on the



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Visitors flock to the Brands Expo, a four-day branding event organised by The Daily Star as part of its 12-day Odommo Chattagram Festival in the port city.

company's value-added services, including mobile money, missed call alerts and welcome tunes.

Officials of S Alam Group gave information on the different products of the company. The company produces two consumable products -- edible oil and refined sugar -- and two high involvement products -- corrugated iron (CI) sheet and cement.

Mir Moinuddin Ahmed, general manager of the company, said edible oil, refined sugar and CI sheet are being marketed under the Morog brand, while the cement is marketed under the Minar brand.

He said the company uses the latest in technology while it imports the best in raw

materials as well. "We are controlling quality in every step of production and we by no means compromise on quality."

City Home Properties, a joint venture with a company from the Netherlands, also showcased its products at the fair.

Syed Sajjad Hossain, assistant manager of the company, said they offer apartments worth between Tk 4,000 and Tk 7,500 per square feet.

Officials of United Commercial Bank elaborated on their special schemes, including multi-millionaire scheme, youngster's savings account, royal savings account, FDR and DPS Plus.

Tauhidul Alam, an officer of the bank, said the bank offers home loans, car loans,

advance against salary and household durable loans.

Officials at a stall of Eastern Bank Ltd also provided information on services.

Sirajul Islam, a sales executive of the bank, explained different schemes available. The bank offers current account, savings account, confidence account, DPS, secured DPS, junior account, EBL campus account and credit cards.

Officials of TK Group displayed products including Pushti soyabin oil, pushti ata, pushti moida, pushti sji, pushti tea and TK particle board.

"We also produce industrial chemicals like hydrogen peroxide and sodium hydroxide," said Shahadat Hossain, sales

and marketing executive of the company.

Zahidur Rahman, senior area manager of the company, claimed that the TK particle board is the best in the country.

Abul Khair Steel that produces rods and corrugated iron sheets was also present.

Moin Uddin Ahmed, a senior officer of the company, said, "We use quality raw materials from reputed countries to produce the best quality products." The steel mill has a production capacity of 2,000 metric tonnes a day.

Baizid Group that is in the real estate sector and produces rod has three ongoing development projects, said Wahidur Rahman, an executive of the company.

Amzad Hossain, a senior executive, said the company now produces 75-grade thermo mechanical treatment rods. "We provide quality products at low prices."

"We also have a 25-megawatt power plant that meets demand in our own factories," he said.

In addition, Hotel Agrabad, Sun Energy, Pedrollo, Southern University, Prothom Alo Jobs and Radio Today also participated in the fair.

The companies have also put together their corporate profiles in a video at the 'Corporate Presentation' session, aiming to further strengthen their relationship with the people through mutual interaction.

Companies have an opportunity to employ eligible candidates at the Daily Star-Odommo Chattagram Career Fair, which is being supported by Prothom Alo Jobs.

Job seekers can drop their resumes at the company stalls, pavilions and mini-pavilions for spot interviews.

A human resources session will be held today. The human resources personnel of the top companies will hold a direct question and answer session with the audience.

The audience, especially job seekers, will be benefited as the session will discuss job interview preparations and other related topics.

CATERING TRAINING INSTITUTES

NRBs stress skilled workforce for service sector

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

NON-RESIDENT Bangladeshi restaurant owners have suggested the government set up catering training institutes in the country to build a skilled workforce amid growing demand for such professionals worldwide.

The NRBs who run restaurants in parts of Europe and the Middle East have to hire foreign nationals for a dearth of skilled manpower in the sector in Bangladesh, said some restaurant owners.

Currently, Bangladeshis operate around 12,000 restaurants in the UK alone, the owners said. Skilled Bangladeshi caterers have the opportunity to work for those restaurants, they said.

"The catering business is booming in the EU. We could employ more skilled Bangladeshi workers if they have required training in the related skills," Yawar Khan, chairman of the Federation of Bangladeshi Caterers in the UK.

"They have a lot of opportunities to get employed."

He spoke at a seminar on "Worldwide catering industries: Bangladesh labour market and economic prospects" at Sonargaon Hotel in Dhaka on Saturday.

The event was co-organised by the Federation of Bangladeshi Caterers in the UK and Centre for NRB.

The catering industry will grow further globally although many leading countries are facing economic troubles now, said Saad Ghazi, a non-resident Bangladeshi who lives in the UK.

Gazi said the catering sector needs a skilled workforce to provide better and quality services to customers. So, the government should set up at least one catering training institute in Dhaka, he said.

SM Nizam, another NRB who lives in the UAE, said a large number of Bangladeshis are working in catering and construction sectors in Dubai, but get lower wages than the workers from other South Asian countries due to lack of skills.

Italy has become the second destination for Bangladeshi migrant workers after the UK among the EU countries, said Nurul Amin, an NRB living in Italy.

But Bangladeshi migrant workers mainly face problems with local language and computer skills in Italy as there is no training institute in Bangladesh to train them these skills.

Around 79 lakh Bangladeshis are now working in 141 countries in the world while about 73 lakh of them are in the Middle East, the European countries and the Gulf States, said MS Shekil Chowdhury, chairperson of the Centre for NRB.

The world has witnessed tremendous growth in the services sector, especially in tourism, hotel business and healthcare, said Ahsan H Mansur, executive director of Policy Research Institute.

"So, we have to focus on these sectors to cash in on the global services business."

At the event, Railways Minister Suranjit Sengupta stressed the need for developing the tourism industry.

Inward remittances will reach \$13 billion this fiscal year, up from around \$12 billion in the last fiscal year, he said.

The minister stressed reforms in diplomacy. "It is time to focus on economic diplomacy to expand exports worldwide."

The discussants also asked the government to focus on re-branding of Bangladeshi cuisine in foreign countries and providing incentive for sending remittances.

Indian jewellers call off strike

REUTERS, New Delhi

Jewellers in India called off their three-week-old strike on Saturday, an industry official said, on assurances from Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee that the government would consider scrapping a budget proposal to levy an excise duty on unbranded jewellery.

"The strike has been called off today onwards. We will be starting our shops from tomorrow," said Kumar Jain, vice chairman of the Mumbai Jewellers Association.

The wedding season is at its peak in India, with Akshaya Tritiya, one of the biggest gold buying festivals later in the month, making the period crucial for jewellers.

Jain said the strike would resume on May 11 if the tax rollback does not materialise.

The strike was staged to protest against an excise levy on unbranded jewellery of 0.3 percent, and a tax collected at source on transactions worth more than 200,000 rupees. The annual budget also doubled import duty on gold to 4 percent.

The moves were game-changers for the \$200 billion a year jewellery industry and experts had predicted they could cut gold imports by a third to 655 tonnes in 2012, allowing China to overtake India as the biggest gold importer.

The strike by jewellers resulted in a loss of 200 billion rupees, according to industry officials.

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HSBC wishes the people of Bir Chattala and the organisers of 'Odommo Chattagram' all the success.

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