

Jarwa House grows on innovations

Now being run by its fourth generation, the jeweller eyes expansion

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NOT many businesses in Bangladesh have survived for four generations.

But Jarwa House, the country's oldest jewellery store, has been a household name among the affluent for the last 116 years, growing from strength to strength, thanks to its high-quality and diversified products.

Badal Roy, managing director of Jarwa House, said the brand has always strived to introduce women to the latest trends in jewellery.

"Both in terms of design or store layout, Jarwa House has always tried to be fashion-forward."

Badal represents the third generation of a family business whose roots date back to 1900; his grandfather Nittaya Gopal Roy first began work as a jeweller at home in Wari, Dhaka.

Badal's uncle KC Roy and father SC Roy grew the business by establishing a shop and a factory at their ancestral home.

KC Roy managed client relations and specialised in selling to the rich buyers, while SC Roy looked after design and manufacturing. The business survived the 1947 partition of the British Indian empire and kept growing since.

Among a few jewellers around East and West Pakistan, SC Roy gained recognition for his ability to craft the finest gold settings and had clients from all across Pakistan coming in.

His wife, Lilaboti Roy, was the only woman at that time in East and West Pakistan who was well-known for her flawless and perfect work with real pearls.

Together, her work on jarwa sets and SC Roy's unmatched ability in jewellery settings helped them garner more clientele every day and everyone began recognising them as Jarwa House.



Badal Roy

In the 1960s, the number of clients was small. The business was largely family-oriented and they provided home delivery services.

The business enjoyed some monopoly in the jewellery setting segment, but after the independence of Bangladesh in 1971, the business was reregistered as New Jarwa House and reached new heights.

Badal entered the business in 1978 and took over manufacturing and quality control.

Many of their clients who used to buy ornaments from Jarwa House before 1971 have still maintained their loyalty.

Badal's son Avi Roy, who is also a director of the company, said a customer came to the store a few days ago with a memo dated back to 1965.

Badal now designs products with his son, and daughter Anindita Roy.

The number of clients is increasing in line with people's growing purchasing

capacity, he added.

"As a result, the business is growing like many other sectors of the economy."

Fifty years ago, people used to consider jewellery as assets and purchased ornaments for major social events, such as a wedding.

"But things have changed now. People buy jewellery on various occasions, such as weddings, birthdays, anniversaries and other social events."

Badal said the business of Jarwa House is growing steadily, like that of other jewellers in the country. Jewellery made in Bangladesh can compete with those made in other countries in terms of quality and design, he added.

The 61-year-old businessman is now grooming his son and daughter in the trade, so they can take over.

Avi, 31, attended a two-year course on gemology in Canada and has already started to understand the nitty-gritty

aspects of the business.

He oversees the production side, while Anindita, 26, looks after marketing.

Badal said the government can look at ways to reduce the value added tax on jewellery from 5 percent at present, to boost local sales.

The VAT on jewellery in many countries in South Asia is below 5 percent, and as a result, they can easily attract Bangladeshi customers.

A number of companies have set up jewellery stores in recent years, making huge investments in the sector, he said.

The government should extend more support to the sector as it employs a large number of people, he added.

There are 700 enlisted jewellers under the Bangladesh Jewellery Association. There are an additional 7,000 jewellers that are not the members of the association.

The sector's annual turnover would be no less than Tk 700 crore, according to Badal.

The prices of jewellery are a bit higher in Bangladesh as jewellers cannot import the precious metal. An individual can import 100 grams of gold at a time. The jewellery sector here mainly runs on recycling.

The country also does not officially export gold items although there is demand among non-resident Bangladeshis.

A training institution should be set up for the jewellery artisans, said Badal. There are about 80,000 artisans across the country.

Apart from its flagship store at Molly Capita Centre in Gulshan, Jarwa House has a store at Radisson Blu Chittagong Bay View.

Badal plans to open a branch in Dhanmondi within a couple of years.

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UK banks set for grim results showing size of turnaround task

REUTERS, London

Britain's top banks are set for one of their worst first-quarter earnings seasons since the financial crisis, adding to their struggle to win over investors against a backdrop of misconduct charges, a weak economic outlook and uncertainty over Brexit.

Despite shoring up their capital bases and paying out strong dividends, the five biggest banks - HSBC, Barclays, Standard Chartered, Lloyds Banking Group and Royal Bank of Scotland - have collectively seen their shares fall about 11 percent this year against a 1.5 percent rise in the FTSE 100.

The costs of laying off staff, compensating customers missold loan payment protection insurance and stockpiling cash to settle outstanding lawsuits and regulatory investigations are all expected to compound the hit to quarterly profits from record-low interest rates.

Most analysts expect earnings to fall at the big five banks, with Barclays, HSBC and Standard Chartered thought most likely to suffer the biggest hits because of their large investment banking operations.

The turmoil in global equities and commodities markets this year made it harder for investment banks to make money in traditional business lines such as trading and advisory. Barclays warned investors this month that its first-quarter investment banking earnings were likely to fall.

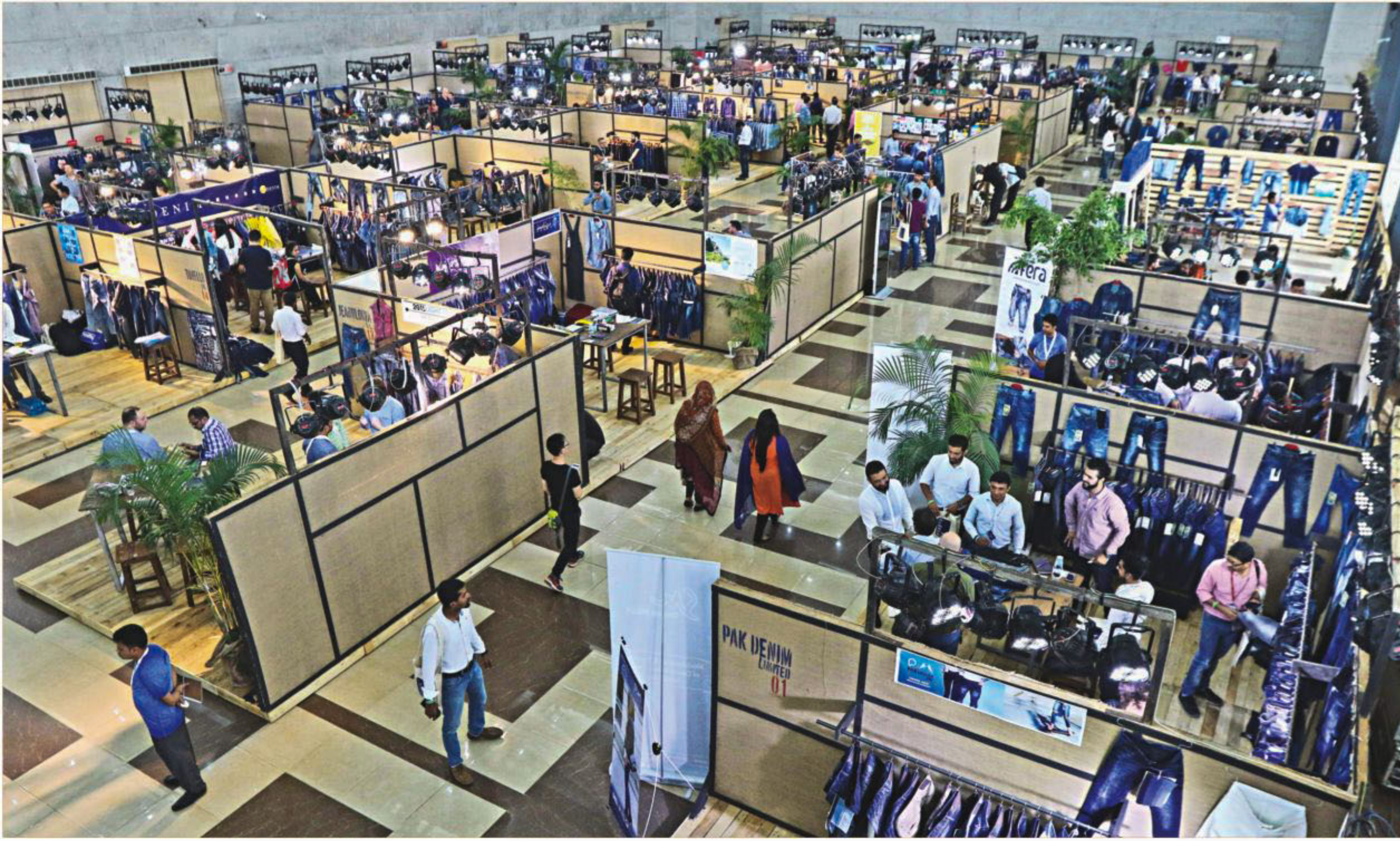
"Expectations for Q1 results are rock bottom," Bernstein analysts said of big British banks, and posed the question: "Will this be a one-off ugly set of results or is it setting up the table for a very bleak 2016?"

Standard Chartered will be the first UK lender to report results, on Tuesday, two months after announcing its first annual loss in 26 years after slashing jobs and selling unwanted businesses in a bid to cut costs.

Such restructuring exercises by other top UK banks like HSBC and Barclays have helped to control costs but left analysts uncertain as to where growth will come from given the global economic outlook and regulatory problems.

The major U.S. banks have this month set the tone for a dismal quarter, with Goldman Sachs last week joining peers in reporting plunging profits as market volatility hit its bond trading and investment banking businesses.

Many British banks are struggling to boost profits with interest rates at a record low.



A GLIMPSE OF DENIM SHOW

The fourth edition of Bangladesh Denim Expo began yesterday at International Convention City Bashundhara. Forty-nine companies from 13 countries are showcasing their products at the two-day fair. Of the participating companies, 37 are from India, Pakistan, Thailand, Brazil, China, Germany, Italy, Japan and Singapore, and the rest are local firms. "Bangladesh has become a lucrative destination for denim buyers due to competitive prices and high quality of products," says Mostafiz Uddin, organiser of the show and managing director of Denim Expert Ltd.

