



Bangladesh Ceramics Industry: The Next Manufacturing Success

"Bangladesh will soon become a top exporter of ceramics"

In conversation with M.A. Jabbar, Managing Director, DBL Group

How do you evaluate the present status of the ceramics industry in Bangladesh?

The ceramics industry in Bangladesh has experienced exponential growth in recent times. The local ceramics industries are catering to most of the needs of the country. Now we are poised to grow as a ceramics-exporting country. Since traditional manufacturers of ceramics such as Italy and Spain have moved towards high-end ceramic products, new players, particularly China, Turkey and India, are building strong presence in the global ceramics market. In terms of quality Bangladesh can easily compete with Chinese, Turkish and Indian products. We will also get the advantage of low production cost. If we can develop our raw materials and set up backward linkage then the ceramics industry will be more competitive in the global market. Our potential export destinations are European and Middle East and North Africa (MENA) countries. DBL Ceramics Ltd. is actively pursuing this goal to export quality ceramic products to these markets.

What are the unique aspects of your company?

DBL Group wants to be the pioneer of innovation in ceramic products. Besides the traditional ceramic products such as tiles, table ware and sanitary ware we are exploring new applications of ceramics. There is a huge demand of ceramic tools in the spinning and textile sector. Medical ceramics is now widely used in replacement of joints of our body parts. There are also many ceramic-made cutting tools that have high demand in the local and international market. We are investing in building capacities to manufacture these products. Currently, we are working with the Bangladesh army to develop bullet-proof jackets where the plate will be made of ceramics. BUET is providing technical support in this project.



M.A. JABBAR

What are the things that need to be improved in the ceramics industry?

Our ceramic companies should emphasise more on design and quality of products. We have to make our products more competitive through development of raw materials and backward linkage. Our garments industry is sustaining growth due to strong backward linkage. For the ceramics industry backward linkage includes manufacturing of various technical tools and raw materials such as abrasive tools, alumina grinding ball, alumina bricks or liners, frits and so on. Currently, we are importing these items which can be easily manufactured in Bangladesh.

Therefore we need to invest a lot in research and development. It is crucial for Bangladesh to create a strong linkage between industry and academic institutions that are working on

ceramics technology. DBL group is trying to bridge this gap and has already taken various initiatives. We are closely working with BUET, Bangladesh Institute of Glass and Ceramics, Rajshahi University of Science & Technology, University of Rajshahi, Institute of Business Administration (IBA) and Fine Arts Faculty of Dhaka University. Many students are doing their internship in our company. We also arrange regular visits of students to our factory and labs. Soon we are going to sign a contract with BUET to conduct research on improving quality, productivity, raw materials and design of ceramic products.

What kind of support should the government provide to the industry?

Like all other industries in Bangladesh, the ceramics industry is suffering due to the poor

condition of the port. Ceramics industry requires import of huge amounts of raw materials. The government should give the highest priority to improve the situation. Secondly, we have to develop the airport. If the government gives 25 percent incentive on export of ceramics as it gives to the garments industry, it will greatly boost the industry. They should also support in developing raw materials and backward linkages for the industry.

Please share your views about the upcoming Ceramics Expo.

Bangladesh Ceramic Manufacturers & Exporter Association (BCMEA) has been planning to hold a Ceramics Expo for a couple of years. Finally, we are doing it. This is a milestone for the ceramics industry in Bangladesh. Initially, we were a bit skeptical about participation of local and international brands in the expo. But the response we have gotten is simply outstanding. Many world-renowned ceramic companies have put up stalls in the expo and many others who don't have stalls will visit. Local and international media will also participate in the expo. DBL group has also invited local and international partners and sources of raw materials and machineries. Next year, we will organise it on a larger scale. Through this expo our consumers will get to know about the improvement of the ceramics sector. I believe it will make them interested in exploring this emerging market. It will also create an opportunity for sharing experiences and ideas among the industry operators about how to take the industry forward. This cooperation and collaboration is a must for the development of any industry. The Ceramics Expo 2017 will be a celebration of the achievements that the ceramics industry of Bangladesh has achieved over the years. It will also boost our confidence to build up a strong presence in the global ceramics market.

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