

Global expos on RMG machinery begin in Dhaka

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Four international trade shows on garment machinery and allied products began at the International Convention City Bashundhara in Dhaka yesterday.

Four shows spread over 11 halls with over 250 exhibitors in 650 stalls offer complete sourcing solutions for the garment sector.

These four exhibitions to be held over four days until January 14 will remain open to all from 10am to 7pm every day, the organisers said in a statement yesterday.

The tradeshow are: the 20th edition of GTB 2023 (Garment Technology Show Bangladesh 2023), the 12th edition of GAP Expo 2023 (International Garment Accessories and Packaging Expo) jointly organised with Bangladesh Garment Accessories Packaging Manufacturers and Exporters Association.

The maiden edition of the ITTF Bangladesh 2023 (India Textile Trade Fair Bangladesh 2023) jointly organised with South Gujarat Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SGCCI) and the International Yarn and Fabrics Expo are the other two events.

G7 seeks two price caps for Russian oil products

REUTERS, Brussels

The Group of Seven (G7) coalition will seek to set two price caps on Russian refined products in February, one for products trading at a premium to crude oil and the other for those trading at a discount, a G7 official said.

The coalition - which consists of Australia, Canada, Japan and the United States, plus the 27-nation European Union - introduced a \$60 per barrel price cap on Russian crude from December 5, on top of the EU embargo on imports of Russian crude by sea.

From February 5, the coalition will also impose price caps on Russian products, such as diesel, kerosene and fuel oil, to further reduce Moscow's revenue from energy exports and its ability to finance its invasion of Ukraine.



A retailer in the BRTC Market in the northern district of Bogura puts on display geysers, which are increasingly becoming a common household appliance in Bangladesh amid people's rising disposable income, lifestyle changes and an improvement to power supply. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: MOSTAFA SHABUI

Geyser sales surge as consumers look to beat winter blues

JAGARAN CHAKMA

The devices were only thought to be used by higher-income groups in Bangladesh, but as people's disposable income rises, lifestyle changes and the power supply improves consumers from the middle-income groups are turning to geysers to use warm water for a comfortable bath.

And a decade ago, local entrepreneurs correctly projected that the market of geysers will expand in Bangladesh if the devices are produced domestically since it would allow them to bring down prices. So, they ventured out to manufacture them.

Accordingly, the market size of geysers has shot to around Tk 60 crore, according to market insiders.

Sales surged to 120,000 units this season as cold weather is sweeping across the country. It was 80,000 units in 2021.

Investment in the segment will not be more than Tk 20 crore as the technology is simple and the price is far lower.

Pran-RFL Group, Walton, Tropica, Gazi, Shameem, and Ariston are among the local producers, with RFL being the market leader thanks to a 35 per cent share followed by Tropica, which controls 15 per cent of the market.

"In the past, people used to think that a geyser is a luxurious item. So, the middle-income groups did not want to use it," said Kamruzzaman Kamal, director for marketing of Pran-RFL Group.

"But the perception has changed and ordinary customers now understand the utility of the products."

Per capita income rose from \$776 in 2010



to \$2,824 in the last fiscal year, data from the World Bank and the government showed.

The massive improvement in the electricity situation has driven up the consumption of geysers in the last one decade.

More than a decade ago, the power supply was not reliable. But electricity generation has quadrupled in the past 12 years, with the government bringing all households under the electricity network.

"Now geysers are becoming popular among the rural people as well, as it gives them comfort and protects them from seasonal illnesses caused by cold in the winter season," said Kamal.

Over a dozen of companies manufacture brand and non-brand geysers and 90 per cent of the market is dominated by local firms thanks to competitive prices and quality services.

Locally made geysers can be bought at Tk

3,500 to Tk 6,500 while the imported ones are costing Tk 7,000 to Tk 16,000. Around 13 types of geysers are available, with the capacity ranging from 20 litres to 90 litres.

The peak season runs from November to February and the annual sales growth rate has been 40 to 45 per cent in the past eight to 10 years, market insiders say.

A local distributor of a global company that has a vast nationwide network sells 100 geysers every day in the Dhaka city and about 250 across the country.

"The sales are very good," said a senior executive of the company. The geysers are all imported from China.

Asit Kumar Singh, a technician in the capital's Uttara area, says he has installed 30 to 40 geysers a month this winter.

Faisal Mahmud, another technician, says he installs geysers at least five times a week in various parts of Uttara.

Augustin Gomes, product manager for home appliances at Walton, says the company has sold at least 22,000 units of geysers this winter.

"The demand for our products has gone up by around 80 per cent compared to last season."

He said the sales have increased as awareness about the usefulness of the device has grown among the people.

"Local companies are now providing quality products at competitive prices. People's lifestyle is changing and their affordability has gone up. The availability of electricity has increased."

However, the market of 120,000 units is still small compared to the size of the overall market of home appliance, he added.

Brac Bank to borrow \$50m from German institution

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Brac Bank Limited will get \$50 million loan from a German development finance institution to support SMEs and women entrepreneurs in Bangladesh.

To this end, Brac Bank has signed an agreement with the Deutsche Investitions- und Entwicklungsgesellschaft (DEG) to take the long-term loan, the bank said in a press release yesterday.

DEG supports private enterprises operating in developing and emerging market countries.

Brac Bank will use the fund to provide loans to local micro, small and medium enterprises. At least half of the fund is earmarked for businesses run by women.

Selim RF Hussain, managing director and chief executive officer of Brac Bank, said institutionalising SME banking and making it financially viable required strong governance and a customer-centric business model.

"Our organisation's dynamic culture and dedicated staff drive the company to its pinnacle. However, because this is our mandate, we are unwavering in our commitment to sustain the expansion of SME lending."

Monika Beck, member of DEG's management board, said, "With our financing, we are supporting the growth of a successful financial institution so that it can reach the important target group of small and medium-sized enterprises even better."

"Our support for Brac Bank in areas such as gender finance is a good example of how we are focusing even more specifically on further increasing our customers' positive developmental impact. At the same time, we are promoting greater participation of women in Bangladesh's economic life," Beck said.

Indonesia's crypto market braces for stricter regulation

ANN/THE JAKARTA POST

The Indonesian crypto market is unlikely to improve in 2023, with investors braced for another difficult year amid a new regulatory environment.

The global cryptocurrency market capitalisation evaporated by more than 60 per cent over the past year to around US\$800 billion, CoinMarketCap data show. Several crypto exchanges have filed for bankruptcy, including the most notable exchange FTX.

In line with this bearish trend, the transaction value of crypto assets in Indonesia fell by more than 65 per cent to around Rp 300 trillion (\$19.1 billion) in 2022, from Rp 859 trillion the previous year, Commodity Futures Trading Regulatory Agency (Bappebti) data show.

Bappebti expected the value of crypto assets, especially cryptocurrencies to continue declining this year, albeit at a much slower rate, as it has already gotten close to the bottom, but the agency noted it would take quite a long time before it could make a significant rebound.

"We will continue facing extraordinary challenges in cryptocurrencies in 2023," Acting Bappebti head Didid Noordiatmoko told an audience during a briefing on Wednesday.

Cryptocurrencies had attracted massive popularity in Indonesia and many parts of the world since the pandemic began.

In Indonesia, there were more than 16.5 million cryptocurrency investors as of November last year, surpassing total investors in the capital markets, which only numbered 10 million in the same month, authorities' data show.

Fairs to promote, connect SMEs

First divisional show begins in Rajshahi today

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The SME Foundation is going to organise six divisional-level fairs to showcase the products produced by small and medium enterprises (SMEs).

As part of the initiative, the first exposition would kick off in the Rajshahi division today. The fair will take place at the Green Plaza of the office of the Rajshahi city mayor and continue until January 18.

After successfully holding the 10th National SME Products Fair 2022 in Dhaka, the SME Foundation is going to organise the exposition at the divisional level, said the agency in a press release yesterday.

The fairs aim to promote the products produced by SMEs across the country and create a network among SMEs, among other goals.

AHM Khairuzzaman Liton, major of the Rajshahi City Corporation, Md Masudur Rahman, chairperson of the SME Foundation, Md Mafizur Rahman, managing director of the foundation, Md Abdul Baten, deputy inspector

general of the Rajshahi Range of Police, Md Anisur Rahman, commissioner of the Rajshahi Metropolitan Police, Abdul Jalil, deputy commissioner of Rajshahi, and Masudur Rahman Rinku, president of the Rajshahi Chamber of Commerce and Industry, are expected to attend the opening ceremony.

Sixty SMEs would showcase and sell their products at the same number of stalls at the fair venue. The event would remain open to visitors from 10am to 9pm, said the press release.

As part of the fair, a seminar on how to develop SMEs in the Rajshahi division would be held on January 15. Besides, a workshop to bridge the gap between banks and SMEs on the availability of loans would take place on January 17.

The weeklong fair in Barisal would be held on February 1 to February 7 and in Sylhet from February 5 to February 11.

The Rangpur's divisional fair would be held in Dinajpur from February 12 to February 18. The SME Foundation also plans to organise similar expositions in Mymensingh and Khulna in March.



The divisional SME expositions aim to promote the products made by small businesses across the country and create a network among the SMEs. The photo was taken recently from the Dhaka International Trade Fair.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON