

RECYCLED AND LOCALLY sourced materials must be prioritised

Mohammad Khourshed Alam, Chief Operating Officer, AkijBashir Group



The Daily Star (TDS): What key measures do you recommend to ensure the sustainability of construction materials during the building process, and which areas require the most urgent attention?
Mohammad Khourshed Alam (MKA): To ensure the sustainability of construction materials, we need a multifaceted approach that balances environmental, economic, and social responsibility. One of the most critical measures is the adoption of lighter and more efficient materials. For example, modern construction now

Auto Bricks and tunnel kilns, are already making a significant impact by reducing the need for firewood and lowering emissions. The most urgent areas needing attention are:

- Supply chain sustainability—ensuring materials are sourced responsibly.
- Energy-efficient manufacturing processes.
- Wider industry awareness and education on sustainable alternatives.

Ultimately, sustainability in construction is not just about materials—it's about mindset, innovation, and long-term responsibility. **TDS: What type of products does your company offer, and how do you ensure they are both fit for purpose and aligned with sustainability priorities?**
MKA: AkijBashir offers a wide range of modern building materials designed to meet both performance and

technology, sourcing raw materials from Italy, Spain, China, and partly from India. We are the only company in Bangladesh to export sanitary products in Europe. We've been doing this for the last six years. We use Hypetia casting in our sanitary products, ensuring fully automated production. Additionally, we employ robotic glazing and state-of-the-art kilns to guarantee uncompromised product quality. Our faucets are comparable to any other globally made faucets due to the main component—the cartridge—sourced from a Hungarian company called Kerox, the largest cartridge manufacturer globally. We use three-layer electroplating, which ensures the product's longevity. When it comes to the board, we have German Siempelkamp ContiRoll technology where no pressure is applied, and this plant is the largest in South Asia. We also offer products under the super high gloss to super matt zero gloss products. We operate three ceramics factories—tableware, sanitaryware, and tiles. Our tableware division uses the highest-grade ceramics, allowing us to recycle waste materials from tableware production and repurpose them in our sanitaryware and tile sections. While others have struggled to achieve effective recycling, this capability gives us a distinct advantage.

All our production facilities have environmental sustainability in mind. 40% of the energy comes from solar in our ceramic factories. We export electricity in the national grid by net metering from our facilities. We also recycle wastewater and are aiming to become a zero-discharge company. We are particularly focused on materials that reduce the weight of structures, which not only lowers construction costs but also reduces the consumption of raw materials

and energy throughout the building's lifecycle. For instance, our upcoming introduction of 4–5 mm ultra-thin tiles is a step forward in minimising material usage while maintaining durability and visual appeal. To ensure all our products are fit for purpose, we follow strict quality control processes and test for strength, longevity, and performance under local climate conditions. At the same time, we evaluate their environmental footprint, choosing solutions that reduce emissions, conserve natural resources, and support circular economy practices—such as recycling and reuse. Sustainability isn't an afterthought for us—it's built into our supply chain, product innovation, and even our partnerships with local suppliers. Our goal is to offer building solutions that support both functional excellence and a greener future.

TDS: What technological advancements have you adopted to enhance the quality and efficiency of your products? What future plans do you have for innovation and sustainability?
MKA: We've made substantial investments in automation and advanced European technology to ensure consistency, efficiency, and premium quality across all our factories. The technology we use matches the standards of global leaders in Germany, Spain, and Italy. Automation allows us to minimise errors and maintain uniform quality. Each factory is equipped with in-house laboratories for both online and offline inspections, while our R&D teams continuously explore improvements in product design, durability, and sustainability. Looking ahead, innovation is central to our growth. In tiles, for example, we are preparing to introduce meter-by-meter formats and 900x1800 mm

products, along with advanced surface structures. Energy security is another focus. The industry heavily depends on natural gas, and Bangladesh is facing supply shortages. To address this, we've built LPG storage systems and developed hot air generation technologies as alternatives to natural gas. Combined with our solar initiatives, these measures ensure that our factories remain operational even during crises. **TDS: What forms of policy reform or government support would help make sustainability efforts in the construction sector more effective and long-lasting?**
MKA: Regarding our expectations from the government for the establishment and sustainability of our business, we seek a consistent and reliable supply of natural gas. We recognise that our internal reserves are insufficient; therefore, timely and adequate imports of LNG must be ensured. The government should be prepared to support the industry at any time and under any circumstances, so that investors can feel confident and secure when committing to this sector. Secondly, port operations remain a major barrier. Port management must be efficient, customer-friendly, and customer-centric. Unfortunately, this is not the current reality. The ports need to recognize that the industry is their customer—and the customer is always king—so they must treat us accordingly. Otherwise, business growth will be severely hindered. Thirdly, we expect the National Board of Revenue (NBR) and customs authorities to adopt a more business-friendly approach regarding VAT and other regulations. Policies must be applied consistently and fairly across the sector. We seek proper guidance, transparent assessment, and uniform implementation of rules for all industry players.

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favours glass and lightweight tiles over traditional heavy materials, reducing the structural load and overall resource consumption. Internally, the shift from solid wood to engineered boards significantly reduces the need for deforestation. We must also prioritise the use of recycled and locally sourced materials. Recycled materials reduce environmental waste, while local sourcing minimises the carbon footprint associated with transportation and supports the local economy. Our company is actively exploring technologies such as thin tile manufacturing (as thin as 4–5 mm), which reduces material use without compromising durability or aesthetics. Furthermore, eco-friendly innovations in brick production, like



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sustainability standards. These include tiles, sanitaryware, faucets eco-friendly boards for interiors, high-efficiency glass solutions and kitchenware produced through advanced, energy-efficient methods. Each product is selected or developed with a clear focus on reducing environmental impact without compromising on quality or design. In tiles, we are the best brand for the last 6 years in a row. We mainly focus on large tiles that are visually appealing and enhance spaces. We use European



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