

বাণিক বাজার

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# জাতীয় ফার্নিচার মেলার উদ্বোধনীতে বাণিজ্য উপদেষ্টা ফার্নিচার শিল্পের বিকাশে ব্যবসায়ীদের উদ্ভাবন বাড়ানোর পরামর্শ



রাজধানীর পূর্বাচলে আইসিসিবিতে গতকাল ২০তম জাতীয় ফার্নিচার মেলার উদ্বোধনী অনুষ্ঠানে অতিথিরা ছবি : বিএফইএ

## নিজস্ব প্রতিবেদক ■

দেশের ফার্নিচার বা আসবাবপত্র শিল্পের ব্যাপক সম্ভাবনা থাকলেও বিশ্ববাজারের তুলনায় রফতানির চিত্র হতাশাজনক। ৬০০ বিলিয়ন ডলারের বিশাল বৈশ্বিক বাজারের বিপরীতে বাংলাদেশ বর্তমানে মাত্র ১০ বিলিয়ন ডলারের পণ্য রফতানি করছে। তাই এ শিল্পের বিকাশ ও রফতানি বৃদ্ধির জন্য ব্যবসায়ীদের উদ্ভাবন বাড়ানোর পরামর্শ দিয়েছেন বাণিজ্য উপদেষ্টা শেখ বশিরউদ্দীন।

রাজধানীর পূর্বাচলে ইন্টারন্যাশনাল কনভেনশন সিটি বসুন্ধরার (আইসিসিবি) রাজদর্শন হলে গতকাল ২০তম জাতীয় ফার্নিচার মেলার

উদ্বোধনী অনুষ্ঠানে এ কথা বলেন বাণিজ্য উপদেষ্টা শেখ বশিরউদ্দীন।

'আমার দেশ, আমার আশা—দেশীয় ফার্নিচারে সাজাব বাসা'—এ প্রতিপাদ্যে আইসিসিবির গুলনকশা, পুষ্পগুচ্ছ ও রাজদর্শন হলে পাঁচ দিনব্যাপী এ মেলার আয়োজন করা হয়েছে। এতে স্থান পাওয়া ২৭৮টি স্টলে আসবাবপত্র প্রদর্শনকারী ৪৮টি প্রতিষ্ঠান তাদের সর্বশেষ নকশা ও নতুন পণ্য প্রদর্শন করছে।

উদ্বোধনী অনুষ্ঠানে বাণিজ্য উপদেষ্টা বলেন, 'ফার্নিচার শিল্পের জন্য যে ফাংশনাল (কার্যকরী) অ্যাট্রিবিউট ও এসথেটিক (নান্দনিক) অ্যাট্রিবিউট দরকার, সেটা হচ্ছে না। নীতিগতভাবে সরকার যত আধুনিক ব্যবস্থা

গ্রহণ করা দরকার; তা করছে।

তিনি ফার্নিচার শিল্পের উদ্যোক্তাদের উদ্দেশ্যে বলেন, 'এ শিল্পের বিকাশ ও রফতানি বৃদ্ধির জন্য প্রয়োজনীয় উদ্ভাবন হচ্ছে না। নীতিগতভাবে সরকার যত আধুনিক ব্যবস্থা গ্রহণ করা দরকার, তা করছে। ব্যবসায়ীদের দরকার উদ্ভাবন বাড়ানো।'

ফার্নিচার শিল্পের জন্য বাণিজ্য মন্ত্রণালয় নতুন নতুন বাজার খুঁজতে কাজ করছে—জানিয়ে শেখ বশিরউদ্দীন বলেন, 'এ শিল্পে নান্দনিকতা ও রুচির বহিঃপ্রকাশ আছে, এ নিয়ে কাজ করতে হবে। ৬০০ বিলিয়ন ডলারের বৈশ্বিক বাজার রয়েছে, আমাদের রফতানি ১০ বিলিয়ন ডলারের কম, এটাকে ১০০ বিলিয়নে নিতে চাই।'

উপদেষ্টা আরো বলেন, 'ফার্নিচারের দাম নয়, উদ্ভাবনের অভাবে আন্তর্জাতিক ক্ষেত্রে আমাদের থেকে মুখ ফিরিয়ে নিচ্ছেন। ফলে বিশ্ববাজারে প্রতিযোগিতা সক্ষমতায় পিছিয়ে পড়ছে বাংলাদেশ।'

শেখ বশিরউদ্দীন জানান, চলতি বছরের শেষ নাগাদ বা আগামী বছরের শুরুতে দেশে বিনিয়োগবান্ধব পরিস্থিতি তৈরি হবে ও অর্থনীতি যুরে দাঁড়াবে।

রফতানি আয় বাড়াতে পণ্য বৈচিত্র্য আনার প্রয়োজনীয়তা উল্লেখ করে রঞ্জন উম্ময়ন ব্যুরোর (ইপিবি) ভাইস চেয়ারম্যান মোহাম্মদ হাসান আরিফ বলেন, 'শ্রমঘন শিল্প হিসেবে গার্মেন্টসের পরই রয়েছে ফার্নিচার শিল্প। তবে নিজেদের মধ্যে প্রতিযোগিতা বাদ দিয়ে বিশ্ববাজারে প্রতিযোগিতা করতে হবে। উদ্ভাবনের মাধ্যমে সৃজনশীলতা, ডিজাইন ও পণ্যের গুণগত মান বজায় রেখে রফতানি বাজার দখল করতে হবে। সামনে যেসব খাতে সুবিধা দেয়া হবে, তাতে বেশি গুরুত্ব দেয়া হবে ফার্নিচার শিল্পে।' এসব পদক্ষেপের ফলে বিশ্ববাজারে বাংলাদেশের ফার্নিচার পণ্য সুদৃঢ় অবস্থান তৈরি করতে পারবে বলেও আশা প্রকাশ করেন তিনি।

অনুষ্ঠানে বাংলাদেশ ফার্নিচার এক্সপোর্টার্স অ্যাসোসিয়েশনের সভাপতি ড. কেএম আখতারুজ্জামান বলেন, 'রফতানি প্রতিযোগিতায় ভিয়েতনাম ও চীনের চেয়ে আমরা পিছিয়ে রয়েছি। ওরা ভর্তুকি পেত, এখন আমরাও পাচ্ছি। আশা করছি আমাদের রফতানিও বাড়বে।'



## জাতীয় ফার্নিচার মেলা শুরু

■ সমকাল প্রতিবেদক

রাজধানীর বসুন্ধরা আন্তর্জাতিক কনভেনশন সেন্টারে (আইসিসিবি) গতকাল মঙ্গলবার শুরু হয়েছে পাঁচ দিনব্যাপী জাতীয় ফার্নিচার মেলা। এবারের মেলায় মোট ৪৮টি শীর্ষস্থানীয় ফার্নিচার কোম্পানি অংশ নিচ্ছে। অংশগ্রহণকারীরা ২৭৮টি স্টলে আসবাব, গৃহসজ্জাসামগ্রী ও ডিজাইন প্রদর্শন করছে। এবারের মেলার স্লোগান—‘আমার দেশ, আমার আশা-দেশীয় ফার্নিচারে সাজাবো বাসা’। এ মেলা চলবে আগামী ১৮ অক্টোবর পর্যন্ত।

গতকাল মঙ্গলবার মেলার উদ্বোধন অনুষ্ঠানে প্রধান অতিথি ছিলেন বাণিজ্য উপদেষ্টা শেখ বশিরউদ্দীন। তিনি বলেন, আসবাব শিল্পের বিকাশ এবং রপ্তানি বাজার সম্প্রসারণে উদ্যোগ নিয়েছে সরকার। দেশের আসবাব শিল্পের বিশাল সম্ভাবনা রয়েছে। এ শিল্পের উন্নয়নে বিনিয়োগ আরও বাড়াতে হবে। দেশের সম্পদ ও সুযোগকে সঠিকভাবে কাজে লাগিয়ে দ্রুততম সময়ে বৈশ্বিক আসবাবের বাজারে বাংলাদেশের অবস্থান আরও শক্তিশালী করতে উদ্যোক্তাদের প্রতি আহ্বান জানান তিনি।

বাণিজ্য উপদেষ্টা বলেন, এ খাতের জন্য প্রয়োজনীয় সহযোগিতা দিচ্ছে সরকার। ব্যবসায়ীদের উচিত উদ্ভাবন বাড়ানো। ফার্নিচার শিল্পের জন্য বাণিজ্য মন্ত্রণালয় নতুন নতুন বাজার খুঁজতে কাজ করছে। বাণিজ্য উপদেষ্টা আরও বলেন, ফার্নিচারের দামের জন্য নয়, উদ্ভাবনে ঘাটতির জন্য বিদেশি ক্রেতারা অনেক সময় মুখ ফিরিয়ে নেন। তাই ফার্নিচার শিল্পে উদ্ভাবনী সক্ষমতা বাড়ানো জরুরি। কিছু দেশের সঙ্গে বাংলাদেশের মুক্ত বাণিজ্য চুক্তি নিয়ে আলোচনা চলছে। এটি ফার্নিচার শিল্পের জন্য নতুন সুযোগ তৈরি করবে।

উদ্বোধন অনুষ্ঠানে সভাপতিত্ব করেন বাংলাদেশ ফার্নিচার ইন্ডাস্ট্রিজ ওনার্স অ্যাসোসিয়েশনের (বিএফআইওএ) চেয়ারম্যান সেলিম এইচ রহমান। রপ্তানি উন্নয়ন ব্যুরোর (ইপিবি) ভাইস চেয়ারম্যান মোহাম্মদ হাসান আরিফ এবং বাংলাদেশ ফার্নিচার এক্সপোর্টার্স অ্যাসোসিয়েশনের সভাপতি ড. কে এম আখতারুজ্জামান বিশেষ অতিথি হিসেবে অনুষ্ঠানে উপস্থিত ছিলেন।



# Lack of lab accreditation hampers exports

## Says chairman of Pran-RFL

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Many of Bangladesh's laboratories are not internationally accredited, which creates challenges for exports, a leading food processor and conglomerate said at an event yesterday.

"When exporting to India or other countries, our goods are re-tested because our reports aren't accepted. This adds cost and complexity," said Ahsan Khan Chowdhury, chairman of Pran-RFL Group.

The Bangladesh Standards and Testing Institution (BSTI) must fast-track lab accreditation and international recognition, he added.

The event was organised by the BSTI at Krishibid Institution Bangladesh in Dhaka in celebration of World Standards Day.

He also said, "A recent example: I attempted to export fans to the Philippines. Their standards didn't align with ours, and we couldn't proceed."

"We need to align our standards internationally so that products from Bangladesh — fans, TVs, microwaves — can be sold globally," he said.

"Now, about halal certification, Bangladesh is the second-largest Muslim country, yet our halal certificates are not recognised by key Muslim markets like Malaysia and Indonesia. We must change this," he added.

SM Ferdous Alam, director general of the BSTI, said developed countries maintain exemplary standards, while many developing nations, including Bangladesh, continue striving to meet those benchmarks.

In a country of over 17 crore people, local manufacturers

have created employment for hundreds of thousands, yet they must compete not only locally but globally by meeting both national and international standards, he said.

"Entrepreneurs take risks to produce export-quality products, often facing rejection from buyers over technical issues, while also contending with counterfeit goods that harm consumers and damage reputations," he added.

Alam said a recent test revealed that some cosmetic products contained hydroquinone levels over 2,000 times the legal limit, posing serious health risks to women, including liver and kidney damage and long-term reproductive harm.

Such actions are not only unethical but also dangerous, he said.

"Our labs also conduct microbiological testing and offer garment testing services critical to the RMG sector, including tensile strength, colour fastness, and chemical residue analysis, at affordable

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rates," he added.

Abdul Hasib Chowdhury, a professor and pro-vice-chancellor of the Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology, said standards must reflect ecological and cultural realities.

"Even in the legal and ethical realm, our value systems differ from Western norms. While procedural justice dominates Western systems, our society prioritises moral justice and social responsibility," he said.

Therefore, in Bangladesh, something may be technically correct but ethically unacceptable, he mentioned.

"To address this, we must integrate ethics, values, and cultural understanding into how we define and apply standards," he added.

AHM Shafiquzzaman, president of the Consumers Association of Bangladesh, said Bangladesh's private sector has made remarkable progress and plays a vital role in driving the country's economy, creating jobs, and expanding exports worldwide.

"However, a critical challenge we face is the widespread issue of counterfeit products in the market, including well-known local brands," he said.

The BSTI and related authorities must increase their monitoring and public engagement, making consumers aware of quality standards and the risks associated with fake products, he mentioned.

Coordinated efforts between the government and the private sector are essential to protect genuine businesses, uphold product quality, and restore consumer confidence, he added.

Md Obaidur Rahman, secretary to the Ministry of Industries, said Bangladesh's export sector is growing, with companies like Pran-RFL Group and many pharmaceutical firms reaching over 150 countries.

Yet, Bangladesh's products face obstacles abroad due to the absence of agreements on mutually recognised standards, leading to rejections and financial losses, he said.



# Cap exports rise as buyers look beyond China, Korea



## JAGARAN CHAKMA

Once an overlooked corner of the accessories market, caps are now a growing contributor to Bangladesh's export portfolio, reflecting both shifting global trends and the country's ability to adapt and scale.

According to data from the Export Promotion Bureau (EPB), Bangladesh exported \$89.98 million worth of headgear in the first quarter of FY 2024-25.

This was a 12 percent year-on-year increase from the same period last fiscal year.

The goods fetched \$364.46 million last fiscal year.

The figures reflect the increasing importance of non-traditional exports like caps and headwear in Bangladesh's broader apparel diversification efforts, said exporters.

Industry insiders attribute this remarkable rise to a shift in global

of Jalal Hats & Apparels Ltd.

"Now they're discovering us," he said.

Founded with a vision to deliver premium-quality, globally competitive headwear, Jalal Hats & Apparels Ltd has emerged as a premier manufacturer, producing a range of stylish, durable, and customizable caps for international brands, retailers, and wholesalers.

"Currently, we export to countries like Italy, Denmark, Germany, France, the UAE, and the USA," Masum shared.

"The growth is happening fast—even if the export volume is still smaller than garments, the rate of expansion is impressive," he said.

Masum believes the sector holds strong potential and could play a role in Bangladesh's export diversification strategy.

However, he said, greater policy support—particularly in the form of higher cash incentives and

too. It's time to recognise this growing segment," said Masum.

Jessi Yiu, deputy managing director of Actor Sporting Ltd, sees a transformative future for Bangladesh's cap and headwear industry, as shifting global consumption patterns and sustainable practices reshape how fashion is made—and where.

Operating out of the Dhaka Export Processing Zone since 1995, Actor Sporting Ltd is a wholly export-oriented manufacturer catering primarily to clients in the US and EU.

But as the global fashion industry evolves, so too do expectations from buyers.

"We've observed a clear shift in our customers' buying practices—from mass production to smaller, more tailored orders," said Yiu.

"This reflects the rise of ethical fashion, where consumers value style alongside environmental and social responsibility," she said.

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Industry insiders attribute this remarkable rise to a shift in global sourcing patterns, with international buyers increasingly moving away from traditional suppliers such as China and Korea, many of whose factories are scaling down or shutting operations.

"Earlier, global buyers didn't know that Bangladesh had the capability to manufacture such high-quality headwear," said Md Mahbubur Rahman Masum, managing director

premier manufacturer, producing a range of stylish, durable, and customizable caps for international brands, retailers, and wholesalers.

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"The growth is happening fast—even if the export volume is still smaller than garments, the rate of expansion is impressive," he said.

Masum believes the sector holds strong potential and could play a role in Bangladesh's export diversification strategy.

However, he said, greater policy support—particularly in the form of higher cash incentives and easier access to bonded warehouse facilities—could accelerate the industry's development.

"Caps currently fall under the RMG incentive structure, but the percentage is not uniform. We believe caps deserve a higher incentive rate as this is a newer, promising export sector," he added.

"We often talk about garments, but the cap industry deserves its spotlight

sustainable practices reshape how fashion is made—and where.

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"We've observed a clear shift in our customers' buying practices—from mass production to smaller, more tailored orders," said Yiu.

"This reflects the rise of ethical fashion, where consumers value style alongside environmental and social responsibility," she said.

The shift aligns with global trends in athleisure and streetwear, which require fast adaptation to changing styles, shorter production cycles, and reduced inventory risk, she said.

"Tools like 3D design and automated sewing machinery allow us to reduce fabric waste and shorten lead times," Yiu explained.

"This makes our products more

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The Daily Star



competitive in a global market increasingly focused on sustainability and efficiency," she said.

With over two decades of experience, Actor Sporting Ltd stands as a model of resilience and innovation in Bangladesh's growing apparel diversification journey.

"The future is bright. By staying ahead of trends in technology and sustainability, Bangladesh can become a global leader in ethical headwear and sports fashion," said Yiu.

ASM Anwar Parvez, executive director (public relations) of the Bangladesh Export Processing Zones Authority (Bepza), highlighted the growing role of EPZ-based cap manufacturers in the country's export landscape.

According to Bepza data, there are four cap

factories operating inside the Dhaka and Chattogram EPZs. They collectively exported \$64 million worth of headwear products in fiscal year 2024-25.

In the Chattogram EPZ, two factories—Young An Hat (BD) Ltd and Young An International (BD) Limited—are both based on South Korean investments.

Meanwhile, Dhaka EPZ hosts Actor Sporting Ltd, a Hong Kong-based company, and Dhakarea Ltd, another South Korean venture.

These factories represent the growing presence of foreign direct investment in Bangladesh's headwear manufacturing sector, driven by global demand and export diversification.

As of August 2025, these four companies have brought in a cumulative investment of \$54 million, and together they employ

# Toothpaste, food or toys: Japanese firms bet bigger on Bangladesh

Investment from the island nation grows even as others wait amid uncertainty

REFAYET ULLAH MIRDHA

Japanese companies are showing more interest in investing in Bangladesh, expanding existing operations and launching new ventures as they tap into the country's large consumer base and competitive labour market, according to Japanese trade officials and business leaders.

They say many investors from the island nation are choosing to produce goods and services in Bangladesh for local consumers rather than exporting those to other countries.

One example is Lion Corporation, which formed a joint venture with local Kallol Group in 2022 to produce detergents. The partnership is now setting up a new factory to manufacture dishwashing soap and toothpaste.

Another Japanese company, Kewpie, is marketing food products in Bangladesh, while retail chain Miniso offers thousands of items ranging from cosmetics and perfumes to toys, electronics and stationery.

"Japanese investors are showing interest in Bangladesh because of advantages such as low labour costs, abundant human resources and a large domestic market," said Kazuaki Kataoka, country representative of the Japan External Trade Organisation (Jetro).

## JAPANESE INVESTMENT

Around 330 Japanese companies operate in Bangladesh

57.7% plan to expand operations in coming years

A 25-member JBCCI delegation recently visited Japan to promote investment

Investors are now focusing on domestic market rather than export-oriented sectors

### Investment drivers

Low labour costs, a large consumer base, and an abundant workforce

Araihazar Economic Zone and upcoming EPA trade deal are key to future investments

### EXAMPLES

Lion Corporation is building a new factory for dishwashing soap and toothpaste

Kewpie is expanding local food product marketing

### Concern

Japanese firms call for faster project completion and reduced bureaucracy

### Trade

Bangladesh's exports to Japan doubled to nearly \$2b over the past decade

of Commerce and Industry (JBCCI) led a 25-member delegation to Japan to attract new investment. The group participated in seminars in Tokyo and Osaka, where, Kataoka said, many Japanese firms expressed strong interest in Bangladesh.

Kataoka said the 20 percent tariff imposed on Bangladesh by the Trump administration provides some advantage in international trade, but it is not a decisive factor for Japanese companies since they have limited export volumes from Bangladesh to the United States.

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"Japanese investors are showing interest in Bangladesh because of advantages such as low labour costs, abundant human resources and a large domestic market," said Kazuaki Kataoka, country representative of the Japan External Trade Organisation (Jetro).

Jetro is a Japanese government body that promotes trade and investment between Japan and other countries.

The Jetro country representative said 330 Japanese companies currently operate in Bangladesh, though only a few focus on export-oriented production.

A 2024 survey by Jetro found that 57.7 percent of Japanese companies plan to expand their operations in Bangladesh.

Recently, the Japan-Bangladesh Chamber



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He said the number of Japanese companies in Bangladesh has continued to grow over the past year, even as many local and foreign investors held back amid political uncertainty.

According to him, the new entrants to the Bangladesh market believe a smooth political transition through elections would help accelerate further expansion.

Kataoka said the 20 percent tariff imposed on Bangladesh by the Trump administration provides some advantage in international trade, but it is not a decisive factor for Japanese companies since they have limited export volumes from Bangladesh to the United States.

He added that the full operation of the Japan-dedicated Special Economic Zone at Araihasar on Dhaka's outskirts Narayanganj, along with the signing of a proposed Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) between Dhaka and Tokyo, would help attract more Japanese investment.

Meanwhile, JBCCI President Tareq Rafi Bhuiyan (Jun) said they have just concluded a "highly successful" visit to Japan with the 25-member JBCCI delegation.

"We held two major seminars titled 'Business Opportunities and Investment in Bangladesh' in Tokyo and Osaka," he said.

The seminars, jointly organised by Jetro, the Bangladesh Embassy in Japan, and the Osaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry, were attended by hundreds of Japanese companies keen to explore businesses in Bangladesh, Jun said.

He mentioned both sides highlighted the importance of addressing

delays in some ongoing major projects, such as the metro rail and the third terminal at Dhaka airport, to preserve the strong partnership Japan and Bangladesh have maintained since independence.

He added that the delegation also held meetings with the Osaka Chamber of Commerce, UNIDO, Marubeni, NEXI, and Chori Co Ltd to discuss ways to increase Japanese investment and expand industrial collaboration.

JBCCI Secretary General Maria Howlader, who joined the visit, said Japanese firms view Bangladesh positively but remain frustrated by bureaucratic delays that slow decision-making.

She said Japanese

investors are particularly interested in agro-processing, light engineering and manufacturing.

Japan is the only Asian country where Bangladesh first crossed the \$1 billion export milestone about a decade ago. Exports have since risen to nearly \$2 billion, supported by growing demand for Bangladeshi-made garments that enjoy zero-tariff access to the Japanese market.

To retain this zero-duty benefit after Bangladesh graduates from Least Developed Country (LDC) status in November next year, Dhaka has completed negotiations to sign the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) with Japan.





The five-day show brings together 48 leading companies and brands, showcasing their latest designs and products across 278 stalls.

PHOTO: STAR

# Free trade deals to spur furniture exports

## Commerce adviser says as five-day show kicks off in Dhaka

### STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Free trade agreements currently being negotiated with several countries and regional blocs will open new export opportunities for the local furniture sector, said Commerce Adviser Sk Bashir Uddin.

He made the remarks while inaugurating the 20th National Furniture Fair 2025 at the International Convention City Bashundhara in Dhaka yesterday.

The five-day show, organised by the Bangladesh Furniture Industries Owners Association, brings together 48 leading companies and brands.

They are showcasing their latest designs and products across 278

stalls. The association Chairman Selim H Rahman presided over the ceremony.

Bashir Uddin said the government is taking necessary steps to boost furniture exports. However, he pointed out that the sector still lags behind in both design and functionality because of limited innovation.

"Buyers turn away from us not for the price, but for a lack of innovation. Businessmen should increase innovation," he said, adding that the commerce ministry is working to identify new export markets for the sector.

"The furniture sector reflects aesthetics and taste. We have to work on this," he added.

Local manufacturers earned

\$45 million from furniture exports in the fiscal year (FY) 2024-25. Shipments in the July to September quarter of the current FY 2025-26 fell 2.5 percent year-on-year to \$10.6 million, according to the Export Promotion Bureau (EPB).

Bashir Uddin said the furniture sector holds huge potential and called for greater investment to help it grow further.

At the event, EPB Vice-Chairman Mohammad Hasan Arif said export diversification is essential to increasing national income.

He said the furniture sector could reach international standards by making better use of local raw materials, modern technology, and skilled labour.



15 OCT 2025



Commerce Adviser Sk Bashir Uddin inaugurates the five-day '20th National Furniture Fair 2025' at the International Convention City Bashundhara (ICCB) in the city on Tuesday. — PID

# Focus on innovation and high-value products

## Commerce adviser tells furniture entrepreneurs

Commerce Adviser Sk Bashir Uddin on Tuesday urged entrepreneurs in the furniture sector to prioritise innovation, utility, and product diversity.

"The goal should be to create high-value products that inspire consumers to save specifically to purchase them, thereby generating enthusiasm among shoppers," he said.

The adviser made the remarks while speaking as the chief guest at the inaugural session of the five-day '20th National Furniture Fair 2025' at the International Convention City Bashundhara (ICCB) in the city, reports BSS.

The country's largest furniture industry event began under the slogan 'My country, my hope -- let's decorate homes with local furniture.'

Organised by the Bangladesh Furniture Industries Owners Association (BFIOA), this year's exhibition is being held on a larger scale, compared to previous years. In his address, Bashir Uddin highlighted the sector's potential and called upon entrepreneurs to increase investment for the furniture industry's development.

He urged stakeholders to consider how quickly the nation can secure a place in the global furniture market by efficiently utilising opportunities and combining available resources.

The commerce adviser, however, stated that the government inherited a deeply challenged economy marked by

years of prior mismanagement.

"When the current government took charge, the country's reserves were sufficient to cover only one month of imports, and the banking system carried a liability of approximately \$6 billion in unpaid invoices," he added. He noted that the economy has successfully rebounded, with reserves now standing at approximately \$32 billion.

While this recovery provides assurance, he admitted that these reserves have yet to translate into the level of economic activity required to generate significant investment and employment.

He further projected that the investment climate is expected to improve by late this year and early next year.

He concluded by acknowledging the furniture industry's journey and capacity but warned against complacency, noting that "there is no scope for self-satisfaction" and that the sector must strive for diversity in product, price, aesthetics, and usability. BFIOA Chairman Selim H Rahman, who presided over the inauguration event, stated that the local furniture industry currently meets 100 per cent of domestic demand while also exporting a significant volume of products abroad. The core objective of this year's fair is to further promote the growth of the local furniture industry and expand export markets, he added.

Vice Chairman of the Export Promotion Bureau (EPB) Mohammad Hasan Arif and President of the Bangladesh Furniture Exporters Association Dr KM Aktaruzzaman attended the event as special guests.

Hasan Arif acknowledged the industry's domestic success, noting that the furniture sector has gradually established itself and is now fully capable of meeting local demand.

"As a labour-intensive industry, the sector plays a critical role in creating employment opportunities for the country's vast population," he added. In 2025, the industry's focus must shift to global competition, he said.

To ensure Bangladeshi furniture remains competitive in the export market, he said entrepreneurs must focus on increasing productivity, creativity, design, and, crucially, price competitiveness.

A total of 48 leading furniture companies are participating in the fair, showcasing their latest designs and products at 278 stalls.

Notable brands present at the fair include Akhtar, Hatil, Brothers, Nadia, Ayoto, Omega, JMG, Navana, Athenas, Partex, Regal, and Legacy.

Beyond traditional furniture, the fair is also displaying home accessories and decorative items.

The event is open to all, and no tickets are required for entry. Visitors can explore the fair daily from 10:00am to 9:00pm.