

# Bogura's handmade skullcaps see surge in exports

## OUR CORRESPONDENT

**BOGURA, Mar 03:** A cottage industry producing traditional skullcaps in northern Bogura developed into a fast-growing export sector, with handmade crochet caps from the country gaining a strong foothold in Middle Eastern markets. More than 1.2 million handmade mesh caps are exported every month, according to industry estimates. Shipments surge during the holy month of Ramadan and the Hajj pilgrimage season, when export volumes typically double. During peak periods, exports are valued between Tk 1.2 billion and Tk 1.5 billion, while annual export earnings from the sector range between Tk 1.0 billion and Tk 1.5 billion. Although skullcaps are produced in around 15 to 20 districts across Bangladesh, exporters say Bogura's handmade crochet caps dominate markets in Saudi Arabia due to their lower prices and consistent quality along with aesthetic side. Data from the "Bangladesh Jali Tupi Business Association" show that the average market price of a cap is about Tk 40. Production averages roughly 150,000 pieces per day, equivalent to Tk 6.0 million in daily output and about Tk 2.19 billion annually. Around one-third of the production is exported by 10 to 12 exporters based in Bogura. The finished caps are shipped to Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Malaysia,



Women workers busy making cap at Satra village in Sherpur of Bogura district. — FE Photo

India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Nepal. The industry is largely home-based and labour-intensive. Around 300,000 women workers across approximately 200 villages in 12 upazilas of Bogura are involved in cap-making, according to Jewel Akand, founder president of the association and owner of Jewel Cap Depot. Sherpur Upazila is the largest production hub, where caps are produced in a wide range of designs including Tahfiz, Makorsa, Biscuit, Kadam Flower, Fishbone, Pineapple and Ten-Flower patterns. The Tahfiz design is currently the most sought-after. Exporters receive advance orders from traders at home and abroad and distribute work among rural women artisans. Demand for such

- 1 Over 1.2m handmade caps exported every month
- 2 During peak periods, exports valued between Tk1.2b to Tk1.5b
- 3 300,000 women workers of Bogura are involved in cap-making
- 4 'Bogura caps are sold at nearly half the price of products from other countries'

caps rises during the month of Ramadan. The industry has become an important source of income for rural households. Belal Hossain, owner of Belal Traders said the caps were

produced through intricate needlework using thread and crochet hooks. He warned that prolonged close work often damages the eyesight of women workers and called for

government incentives and health support. Bogura is traditionally an agricultural district, particularly the riverine upazilas of Sherpur and Dhunat, where rice, jute, potatoes and vegetables are widely cultivated. However, frequent flooding and river erosion have pushed many households to seek alternative livelihoods. Local residents say the cap-making industry began to expand after the devastating floods of 1988 forced many families in Dhunat to find new sources of income. The craft later spread to neighbouring areas including Kazipur and Tarash in Sirajganj district. The industry expanded significantly in the 1990s, while export volumes began rising from 2020.

After a slowdown during the COVID-19 pandemic, exports have been growing again since 2023, said Masud Rana, secretary of the Bogura Chamber of Commerce and Industry, estimating the sector's commercial value at Tk 2.0 billion - Tk 3.0 billion. Field visits to Sherpur and Dhunat show that 60 to 70 villages have effectively developed into specialised cap-producing clusters. Saleha Begum, a 35-year-old worker from Satra village in Sherpur, said she took up cap-making after marriage to support her household. She now earns more than Tk 5,000 a month, enough to cover her children's education expenses and contribute to family costs. "It is great support for my family," she said. Another worker, Nazu Begum, 39, said income from cap-making allowed her to buy a small plot of land, build a house and marry off one daughter while supporting the education of two others. Skilled workers can produce 10 to 12 caps a day, earning Tk 300-Tk 400 daily on average. Exporters say Bogura now ships about 18 varieties of caps worth more than Tk 1.0 billion annually. Kamal Pasha, president of the local cap exporters' association said Bogura-made caps dominate markets in Mecca and other Saudi cities. "Bogura caps are sold at nearly half the price of products from other countries while maintaining good quality," he said. "That is why demand remains strong." [editorsajedur@gmail.com](mailto:editorsajedur@gmail.com)

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# War stalls 1,000 TEUs in weekly exports through Ctg port to Middle East

EXPORT - BANGLADESH

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The war in the Middle East has stalled more than 1,000 TEUs (twenty-foot equivalent units) of weekly exports from Chattogram Port after major shipping lines suspended bookings, leaving exporters facing mounting storage costs and uncertainty.

Containers carrying potatoes, agro-products, frozen foods and ready-made garments are now stranded at private inland container depots (ICDs), as exporters wait for shipping routes to reopen while absorbing additional depot and plugging charges.

One of the first casualties of the disruption is a seasonal potato shipment prepared for export to Dubai.

After processing and packaging, a 28-tonne consignment from SR Impex Ltd arrived in Chattogram from Bogura on 1 March. It was scheduled to be shipped to Jebel Ali port the following day. But the cargo never left the depot.

The container is now sitting at a private ICD after shipping lines abruptly stopped accepting bookings to Middle Eastern destinations due to security risks.

"While we were loading the cargo, the shipping line suddenly



informed us they would no longer accept bookings and cancelled the slot," said Mohammad Forkan, managing director of SR Impex Ltd and general secretary of the Fresh Food and Fruits Exporters Association.

"We somehow arranged another container from a depot and plugged it in to preserve the potatoes. Now we are paying plugging and depot charges just to store them. We do not know what will happen next," he said.

He added, "Every week, around

450 tonnes of potatoes, another 450 tonnes of agro and food products, and nearly 300 tonnes of frozen foods are exported to Middle Eastern countries through the Chattogram port and the airport. Including RMG and other exports, the total value reaches around \$17 million. Most of these shipments are now disrupted."

Exporters fear the disruption could deepen if the conflict drags on, squeezing Bangladesh's trade and raising costs across multiple industries.

raw materials, produced goods and placed orders," said garment exporter Abdus Salam.

"Our buyers need these products to stock their showrooms for Eid. Normally, shipments begin at the start of Ramadan. But the war started exactly at that time."

He added, "Our goods cannot be shipped and their showrooms are empty. At the same time, our workers expect Eid bonuses and salaries. We are facing a very difficult situation."

## Shipping lines suspend bookings

Shipping companies confirm that container bookings to many Middle Eastern destinations have been suspended.

Azmir Hossain Chowdhury, head of operations at MSC Shipping, said the company had received instructions not to accept bookings for the region and had suspended bookings from 2 March.

"Other shipping lines are doing the same. As a result, weekly exports of around 800 to 1,200 TEUs to Middle Eastern countries are being affected," he said.

## Freight costs from China rise

The crisis is also adding pressure on Bangladesh's import supply chain.

With maritime routes facing disruption, freight rates from China — the main source of raw materials for the country's industries — have already started rising.

Industry insiders say shipping costs from Chinese ports have increased by roughly \$300 per container in recent days.

Rakibul Alam, a former vice-president of the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association, said the higher freight cost is becoming a major concern for importers.

"For high-cube containers, freight from China has increased by around \$500 in some cases," he said.

"Chinese ports have resumed exports after earlier disruptions and our import flow is picking up again. But the biggest challenge right now is the higher shipping cost."

## Major carriers restrict services

Global shipping companies have begun tightening operations in the conflict-affected region.

Shipping giant Maersk has suspended all vessel transits through the Strait of Hormuz since 1 March and stopped accepting new bookings to several destinations, including the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar and Oman.

COSCO Shipping Lines has also temporarily suspended cargo services to certain ports, including Qatar, Bahrain, Iraq and Kuwait, due to security concerns and navigation restrictions.

However, COSCO said operations would continue to ports that do not require vessels to pass through the Strait of Hormuz, such as Jeddah in Saudi Arabia and the UAE ports of Khor Fakan and Fujairah.