

Formalwear market-leader East West Industrial Park diversifies products

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Dhaka : Renowned garments exporter East West Industrial Park is diversifying its product line. Since its establishment in 1985, the company has been the market leader in formalwear. However, when the "work from home culture" emerged following the pandemic, the company brought in new lines - semi-casual or semi-formal - adapting to the market demand.

"We are currently focusing on product versatility. Buyers can now get any type of clothing item from us. Multifaceted lines are being created. Besides our popular formalwear items for men and women, we are also manufacturing semi-casual or semi-formalwear as well as kids' items," said Tanvir Ziaul Rashid, Managing Director, East West Industrial Park.

The company has a unique experience in manufacturing suits and formalwear. However, during the onset of the pandemic, offices were closed globally and everyone was working from home. Therefore, orders for formalwear decreased while casualwear grabbed the market.

"That's when we realised that we cannot depend on one category of item," Rashid said, adding, "the product versatility is aimed at providing our buyers with one-stop solution. The brands who have formalwear, also do casualwear. And since the latter's demand grew amid the pandemic while the former's decreased, we were

getting less orders for suits and blazers. Hence, we attempted to cater to their casualwear demand to make up for their deficit of formalwear orders."

East West Industrial Park has always had the majority market share in formalwear exports. They are the first suit manufacturer. East West Industrial Park is also the parent company of Fit Elegance, another first and leading customised formalwear brand in the country.

"Our quality, commitment, technical and skilled manpower are unique. We offer personalised services. We always give first priority to customers," claimed the Managing Director.

Ziaul Rashid's father Harunur Rashid established East West Industrial Park in 1985 with a small factory at Mirpur in the capital. They started with one line initially. Later they changed the location to Tejgaon and now the factory is at Gazipur.

The state-of-the-art factory spans across 25 bigha land with four buildings and 3,500 manpower. Amid the pandemic, the managing director mentioned, they maintained all health guidelines at the factory.

Also, the factory is 100 per cent certified in all kinds of safety category, added the MD. There are even full time medical doctors for emergencies.

Initially, the company started with formal dress pant for the UK market. Now they have 25 lines including formal suites, blazers, trousers, semi-formal, and semi casual, among other men and women items.

"We are now exporting to Europe, UK, USA, Japan and India. However, the major market for us is Europe while the major manufacturing item is still suits and other formalwear," said the Managing Director.

In Europe, the company mostly works with H&M while in India it works with Raymond and other brands.

East West Industrial Park last year had a turnover of USD 35 million, 20 per cent less than pre-pandemic times while the company had only 5-7 per cent year-on-year growth, mentioned the MD.

However, for a few months now, the formalwear orders have again started increasing as businesses and offices globally are reopening. And in a year, East West Industrial Park, aims to recover the losses faced during the pandemic and reach a breakeven point.

Currently, East West Industrial Park is producing 3.5-4 lac pieces monthly while they are targeting to produce 6 lac pieces monthly by next year.

"We will be expanding to 30 lines and 5000 manpower with a target turnover of USD 60-65 million next year. If we are able to run the factory in 70-75 per cent efficiency, we won't need to expand further," said Ziaul Rashid.

Like all the other industries, the garments export industry was also hit by the coronavirus pandemic, in a time when Bangladesh, India, China, Cambodia, and Vietnam are trying to grab the same orders, resulting in difficulties in fixing the price for us.

Therefore, the demand of time is to have Bangladesh promoted more internationally as an exporting brand, urged Ziaul Rashid.

"Our works are world-class. The government and embassies of Bangladesh should ask other countries, specially Europe and US, to support us more as we have suffered a lot amid the pandemic," suggested the managing director.