

Leather and Footwear exhibition begins



As the Sri Lankan leather and footwear industry giants lauded the government for 'continuous and ongoing support' to the sector, Sri Lanka has been ranked as the third largest exporter of leather and footwear to the surging South Asian market.

"When it comes to South Asian Intra-regional footwear and leather exports, I am pleased to say that we claim the third place with 16% of region's total exports, closely following the leaders, India and Bangladesh.

It is also estimated that the region's leather market potential is more than \$ 2.5 Billion, three times of the actual trade levels which is encouraging news for our manufacturers. We believe that increased value addition in this sector can bridge this huge gap to a great

extent," said Rishad Bathiudeen, Minister of Industry and Commerce at the fifth Leather and Footwear show which commenced yesterday at the BMICH in Colombo.

Minister Bathiudeen has been addressing this event for the third consecutive year.

The event was inaugurated by Basil Rajapaksa, Minister of Economic Development, Douglas Devananda, Minister of Traditional Industries and Small Enterprise Development and Minister Bathiudeen. The event which is increasingly gaining international attention has been organized by Minister Bathiudeen's Industry and Commerce Ministry's EDB and co-sponsors Industrial Development Board of Traditional Industries and Small Enterprise Development Ministry.

Apart from local exhibitors, industry representatives India, Bangladesh, Poland, Iraq, Jordan and South Africa are keenly promoting their leather and footwear in Colombo this year.

"Sri Lanka has successfully taken part, in the first ever Leather Industry Association of South Asia sessions, by UNCTAD, held in Chennai. This UNCTAD facilitated forum was the first industry-specific association to be formulated in South Asia.

Our leather and footwear exports 2012, stood at \$ 31 Mn, increased by 3.3%, in comparison to 2011" Minister Bathiudeen said.

"My Ministry has taken initiatives to revive this sector in Jaffna" revealed Minister Devananda, addressing the event. "Under the far sighted vision of

President Mahinda Rajapaksa, Sri Lanka has the potential to become a leader in this industry" he added.

Sri Lanka's leather and footwear industry lauded the government for the ongoing support received to develop the sector. "With gratitude as L&F manufacturers, we salute the government for the measures taken" said Sithendra Senaratne MD, Ceylon Leather Products PLC and the Chairman of the organizing committee, said, "The reduction of import duties relevant to this sector, including machineries, has created new opportunities for not only large and medium scale but even cottage industries to enter into this sector. The industry grew because of the continuous support of the EDB, IDB and Ministry of Industry and Commerce" Sithendra said.



Some highlights of the event



Basil Rajapaksa, Minister of Economic Development left, Rishad Bathiudeen, Minister of Industry and Commerce and Douglas Devananda, Minister of Traditional Industries and Small Enterprise Development at the fifth Leather and Footwear Show 2013. Pictures by Sumanachandra Ariyawansa