



**Stylish homes,  
elegant offices**

Trendy international furniture brands are setting up shop in India, as demand for home and office décor is growing at a frenetic pace.

**Nayantaraa Lama** takes a look at what's on offer.

**F**ancy furniture showrooms are mushrooming across urban India as young, upwardly mobile professionals splurge on luxurious living room sets, baroque bedroom basics and stylish kitchens. And of course, a bouncy beanbag for the balcony and a magnificent marble enclosure for the Ganesh idol.

The spurt in real estate activity and burgeoning growth in the information technology and services sectors has led to a mammoth increase in demand for furniture in India.

International consulting firm Technopak Advisors estimates that the furniture market in India is likely to witness a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of about 30 per cent over the next three years. In fact, global furniture industry research and consulting firm, CSIL Milano has classified India as one of the 14 largest furniture markets in the world.

Many new entrants have been lured by the opportunities in this fast growing sector. "We have recently diversified into making select furniture out of steel," says Deepika Jindal, managing director, Austenitic Creations, a subsidiary of Jindal Steel. "The initial response to our designs is very encouraging." Her company has been making branded steel crockery and cutlery under the Art'd'inox brand.

There exists a huge market for different types of furniture in India. "The increasing demand in this sector is encouraging many international furniture manufacturing firms to set up a base in India," notes Liyakat Ali Khan, president, Universal Expositions Group (UEG) – which organises specialised furniture exhibitions in India.

The size of the imported furniture segment is also growing rapidly. According to the UEG, imports added up to over \$150 million last year. Furniture is mainly imported from China, Malaysia, Singapore, Italy and Germany.

"While China and Malaysia cater predominantly to the middle class,

upper-end furniture for home, office and commercial spaces is sourced from Italy and Germany," adds Khan. The last fair that UEG organised in Mumbai, the Index International Furniture Fair 2007, had over 200 exhibitors, out of which 70 were international names.

According to Khan, several international brands are looking to enter the Indian market. They include Arredo Classic, Art Design Group, B.T.C. International, Bizzarri, Cantori, Desirée, Girasole, Gold Line, Presotto and Reflex.

Germany, Italy, Korea and Japan have been the major suppliers of furniture, dominating the market for many years. Now the trend has changed, with China having increased its market share significantly in recent years.

Suppliers from Thailand, Korea and the UAE have also made a strong presence in India in recent years.

India's rapidly expanding economy is seeing growing affluence, both in urban and rural areas. The tremendous growth of the mass media is also resulting in

millions of middle-class Indians aspiring for better lifestyles. Furniture-makers are catering to the urban middle class need for stylish homes in compact apartments.

The non-organised sector, which accounts for nearly 85 per cent of the furniture made in India, mostly uses wood as a raw material for the home segment, while the organised sector produces wooden, metal and plastic furniture mainly for office use. Increasingly, moulded plastic furniture, iron furniture, board furniture and even bamboo are gaining in popularity.

"The industry is expanding rapidly as consumers have started to use branded furniture," says Sachin Sharma, director, Laurelwood, a leading Indian furniture brand. Top domestic companies and international brands with a presence here include Godrej, BP Ergo, Featherlite, Hanworth, Style Spa, Zuari, Durian and Millenium Lifestyles.

The Indian construction industry, ranked twelfth in the world, is experiencing maximum growth and in turn, has created a huge demand for furniture and



**EXPLOSIVE DEMAND:** Branded furniture is increasingly becoming popular



**INTERNATIONAL STYLES:** A wide range of trendy furniture is available in fancy showrooms

allied products. In India, the home furniture segment accounts for 65 per cent of the furniture market, the office segment about 20 per cent and garden furniture the remaining.

"In general, upper class homes are

furnished in accordance with international styles," says Sharma. "The rich pay a lot of attention to design and quality and the price is rarely a factor in the consumption of top range furniture."

International furniture makers are

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increasing their spends on showrooms and other facilities in India. Many of them are setting up showrooms in the metros and major cities, targeting both the home and office segments.

Haworth, a US-based designer and manufacturer of office furniture and adaptable workspaces, set up a nearly 8,000-sq ft showroom in Pune, which won a LEED Gold for commercial interiors certification from the US Green Building Council. "Our Pune showroom LEED certification confirms that our commitment to sustainability is universal yet tailored to each specific site," says Franco Bianchi, Haworth president and ceo. "It is important for us to serve our customers effectively in this part of the world, yet we need to do so with as light an environmental footprint as possible," he adds. "Pune shows we are dedicated to 'walking the talk' in North America and beyond." Haworth's Pune facility includes a manufacturing plant as well as a showroom. The plant's design and construction reflect green building principles related to energy efficiency and improved air quality.

With the Indian economy and the real estate sector continuing to grow at a phenomenal pace, demand for office and home furniture is expected to expand.

The entry of a number of international players and the rapid emergence of domestic brands is transforming the industry, offering the discerning Indian consumer a wide range of home and office furniture to choose from. 🌿