

## RFL makes foray into Tk600cr spray paint market

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

RFL Group yesterday launched Rainbow Spray Paint to grab a pie of the Tk 600 crore local market and cut the country's import dependency for the product.

Rainbow Paints is now marketing the spray paint produced in its own factory, said Kamrul Hasan, executive director of the company.

The 400-millilitre cans of the spray paint are now available at a maximum retail price of Tk 150 through 250 Rainbow outlets and authorised dealers across the country.

Rainbow Spray Paint is acrylic-based paint, which can be used on many surfaces, including metal, wood, glass, ceramics and plaster, said Hasan.

"The paint dries quickly and is easy to use. Anyone can apply it to the desired surfaces."

Bangladesh's Tk 4,000 crore paint market has a high dependence on imports to meet its annual demand. RFL Group holds a 15 per cent share of the local market, which is

**RFL is the first local company to manufacture spray paint.**

growing at 10 per cent annually.

RN Paul, managing director of RFL Group, unveiled the spray paint through a programme at the RFL office in Dhaka's Badda.

"RFL Group always gives importance to quality and demand of consumers in manufacturing products," Paul said at the launch.

"We have received good response from the customers within a short period of time for manufacturing products maintaining international standards."

"Our effort is continuing to provide the highest service to the customers through introducing new products. We hope our brand will be established as a leading paint brand in Bangladesh very soon."

There are different categories of paints in Rainbow's product line, such as decorative, floor coating, marine, car, powder coating, industrial and wood coating.

RFL plans to export the product after meeting the local demand.

Saleh Ahammad Chowdhury, general manager for research and

READ MORE ON B2



Potato farmers and traders in Dinajpur and its neighbouring districts, including Thakurgaon and Panchagarh, are suffering serious losses for the second year in a row due to poor market prices for the tuber crop. Here, a worker at Railbazarhat in Dinajpur town is seen packing potatoes into a sack after they remained unsold.

PHOTO: KONGKON KARMAKER

### UNSOLD POTATOES FROM LAST YEAR

# Farmers, traders counting losses

KONGKON KARMAKER

Md Shafiqul Islam, a potato trader in Dinajpur, kept around 2,000 bags of potatoes in cold storage this year in hopes of recovering his losses from the previous season.

However, he now finds himself deeper in the hole as current market prices for the spud have dipped below the previous levels.

So, he has registered losses of Tk 7 lakh so far this season while it was Tk 4 lakh in 2021.

As prices have been low for the past two years, wholesalers are having to sell the tuber at Tk 17-18 per kilogramme (kg), according to Shafiqul and traders like him in the Railbazarhat area in Dinajpur town.

Shafiqul collected Astrid potatoes from farmers in Dinajpur and its neighbouring districts for Tk 16 per kg between April and May this year.

He stored 2,000 bags of the crop at a local cold storage that charged him Tk 270 for each 50kg bag.

Considering all other expenses, such as transport and labour costs, Shafiqul would need to sell the potatoes for Tk 21 per kg in order to break even.

Besides, excess supply is making it difficult to offload his remaining 700 bags before



fresh potatoes hit markets in December when customers will likely prefer the new variety over those collected previously.

Sumon Islam, another wholesaler in the same market, stored around 3,000 bags of potatoes this year, including the Granola, Dimond, Holland and Astrid varieties.

"I have suffered losses of Tk 10 lakh so far and still have around 1,000 bags of potato in cold storage," he said.

Sumon was forced to take loans to stay in the business after suffering losses of Tk 6 lakh last year.

"The loan has become a burden for me," he said.

During a recent visit to various

markets, this correspondent found that potatoes are retailing for between Tk 22 and Tk 25 per kg.

Potato farmers in Dinajpur are also suffering from poor prices as they were selling the crop for dirt cheap after harvesting the crop in January.

At the time, many farmers sold their produce for as low as Tk 6 per kg, which was far below the production cost.

And although prices saw a slight bump at the end of March, farmers like Azhar Ali of Mazadanga village under Dinajpur sadar upazila incurred losses of Tk 20,000 per bigha.

Azhar had cultivated potatoes on five bighas of land at the end

of December last year.

Farmers in Dinajpur and other districts now say they will decrease cultivation from next season considering their sustained losses from the crop.

In addition, they are losing interest in the face of higher input costs this year.

"Fertiliser, pesticide, labour and transportation costs have been increased to an extent that it is unaffordable for many farmers," said Nur Alam, another farmer in Dinajpur sadar upazila.

As prices were low when the season began, many farmers and traders in Dinajpur, Rangpur, Thakurgaon, Panchagarh, Nilphamari and Joypurhat stored their potatoes in cold storage in hopes of earning better returns later in the year.

However, their decision has come back to haunt them as huge stockpiles remain still.

There are around 100 cold storages across eight districts in the Dinajpur and Rangpur regions with the capacity to store around 4 lakh tonnes of potato, of which around 40 per cent are still yet to be collected.

Similarly, there are 20 cold storages in Joypurhat but only 40 per cent of the potatoes stored have been collected so far.

Mozaffar Hossain, a farmer

READ MORE ON B2

## US continues to be key export market for Bangladeshi apparels

Says senior US official Arun Venkataraman

REFAYET ULLAH MIRDHA

America will continue to be a major export destination for apparel items made in Bangladesh as Washington is working with Dhaka to improve the condition at the factories in the country, said a senior official of the US.

The US has been the single-largest export destination for Bangladesh for decades.

Its standing has been maintained despite higher inflationary pressure on consumers stemming from the escalated commodity prices amid the Russia-Ukraine war and the fallout of Covid-19.

The overall export from Bangladesh to the US grew at 49.35 per cent to \$10.41 billion in the immediate past fiscal year of 2021-22, the highest pace of growth, data from the Export Promotion Bureau

showed. The receipts stood at \$6.97 billion in 2020-21.

Garment shipment raked in \$9.01 billion in the last fiscal year, clocking 51.68 per cent year-on-year growth compared to \$5.94 billion a year earlier.

"We are working very closely with the government of Bangladesh to address a number of issues that we have identified as well as a number of trading partners in Bangladesh to strengthen the labour rights," said Arun Venkataraman, assistant secretary of commerce for global markets and director-general of the US and Foreign Commercial Service in Dhaka last week.

He was in Dhaka to open the new US commercial service centre in the capital.

The US is working with the government, the International Labour Organisation, and the European Union to improve the labour condition and rights in Bangladesh.

"I think we can look to support Bangladesh as one of the most competitive producers of garment in the US market," Venkataraman said when asked whether America will offer duty-free export opportunities for locally made apparel items to the US markets.

"We recognise and appreciate the strong role of the garment sector in Bangladesh."

Currently, the US does not provide duty-free market access, known as the Generalised System of Preferences (GSP), to any country. The tenure of the latest GSP programme came to an end in 2020 and the US Congress has not revived it since.

The US suspended the GSP facility for Bangladesh in 2013 citing poor labour rights and poor workplace safety following two industrial disasters -- the Tazreen Fashions fire and the collapse of the Rana Plaza building.

Venkataraman said American companies are incredibly excited to invest in the energy sector.

"They are really going beyond the traditional energy to a new form of energy, renewal energy, other sustainable elements of energy, and green technology for investment in Bangladesh."

According to him, US companies see Bangladesh as a major market as the country is moving up the development ladder and millions of people are moving out of the poverty line and joining the middle class.

"Every sector is open for growth."

American entrepreneurs are keen to invest in healthcare, the digital economy, technology, infrastructure, dredging, and the expansion of the Dhaka airport.

The senior official points out that American investors want a stable and predictable regulatory environment that is shaped by the rule of law and transparency.

"They are looking for ways in which they can

READ MORE ON B2

## As clock ticks on G7's Russia oil price cap, big questions remain

REUTERS, Washington

Just a month before the Group of Seven rich countries plan to cap the price of Russian oil, officials are racing to finalise details, leaving traders, shippers and insurers with questions about the price level and how it will work.

Officials from the United States and its G7 allies plan to cap prices of sea-borne oil shipments effective December 5, with a second cap on oil products kicking on February 5.



### ANALYSIS

The unprecedented price cap aims to block Russia from profiting from high oil after its February 24 invasion of Ukraine while ensuring that most of Russia's oil continues flowing to global energy markets.

India and China have been snapping up heavily discounted oil from Russia, and G7 officials hope they will use the cap to negotiate lower prices with Moscow.

Russian President Vladimir Putin has said he will stop exporting oil to countries that enforce the cap, and even if he does not, his threat could help support oil prices.

Here are the known and unknowns so far:

READ MORE ON B2



A vessel leaves the Orlan oil platform at Sakhalin-1's offshore rig at the Chaivo field, some 11 km (7 miles) off the east coast of Sakhalin Island.

PHOTO: REUTERS

### BASIC COMMODITY MARKET

## Govt working to stop manipulators: Munshi

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

A section of unscrupulous traders has been trying to make the basic commodity market unstable by creating a syndicate after the international prices of essentials went up, Commerce Minister Tipu Munshi said yesterday.

The commerce ministry and other government agencies are working to put an end to the market manipulation, Munshi said while replying to the queries of journalists at the Rangpur Lake View City Park area.

The minister is hopeful that the country will avail of a loan from the International Monetary Fund, which will help the government build a safe stock of foreign currency.

Garment exports

READ MORE ON B2