

Bond boom contributes half of bank income

Lenders raked in Tk 12,332cr more from govt securities in 2024

Part 1

INSIDE BANKING

AHSAN HABIB

Fifty banks saw a 45 percent, or Tk 12,332 crore, surge in income from treasury bonds last year, as they turned to risk-free, high-yield investments and stepped back from core lending amid economic headwinds, a review of their financial statements shows.

The 50 banks collectively earned Tk 39,958 crore from treasury bonds in 2024, up from Tk 27,626 crore in the previous year, according to an analysis of their audited financial statements.

Treasury bonds, issued by the government, are considered a safe investment option that now appears to be a mainstay in bank portfolios.

The analysis by The Daily Star covers 50 out of the 62 scheduled banks, as some are yet to publish their financial reports for 2024. Islami Bank Bangladesh, the largest Shariah-based lender in the country, was among those not included.

The total income of these banks from interest, investments, and commissions stood at Tk 78,663 crore in 2024. Of this, 51 percent came from investment income, mostly through treasury bonds and bills.

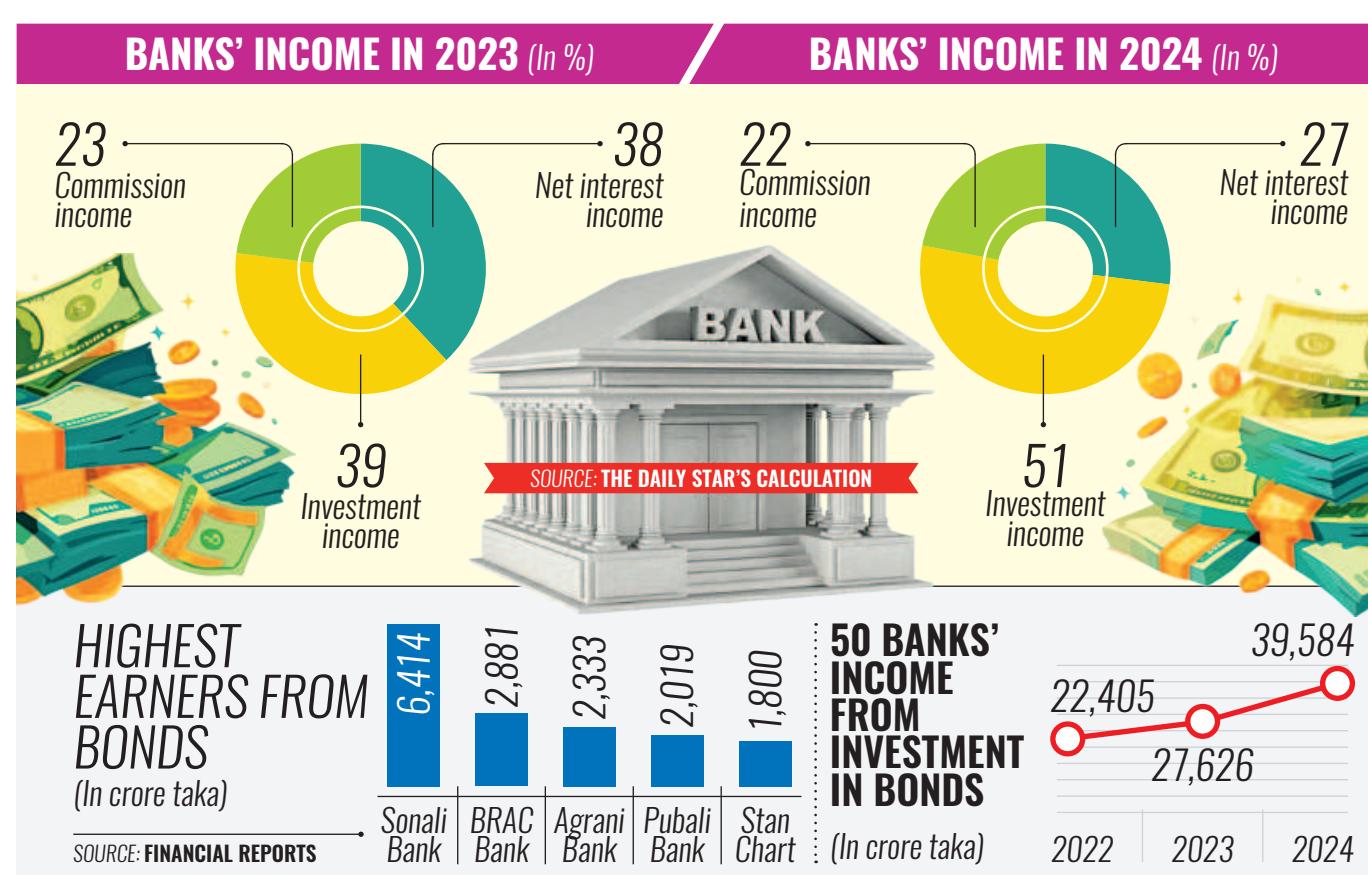
Senior bankers and investment analysts say the shift towards government securities indicates a cautious approach, prioritising guaranteed returns over traditional lending.

Banks do invest in the stock market as well, but most of them recorded no income from that avenue last year.

Instead, many had to set aside provisions to cover unrealised losses from a lacklustre equity market. Without those losses, their investment income could have been even higher.

Although the central bank removed the cap on interest rates, net interest income by the 50 banks dropped by 20 percent year-on-year to Tk 21,723 crore in 2024.

It accounted for 27 percent of their total income. Meanwhile, commission



earnings edged up 6.5 percent to Tk 16,982 crore.

Commenting on the trend, Anis A Khan, former chairman of the Association of Bankers Bangladesh (ABB), said the shift in banks' income sources shows the broader economic stress following the political changeover last year.

Many firms shut down. Many entrepreneurs fled the country, and the rest of the people went into 'hibernation', resulting in a decline in investment demand," he said.

Khan added that banks, being profit-driven, have naturally turned to government bonds to sustain growth.

"On the other hand, the government's tax collection is low amid the business and economic situation, so it needs a higher amount of budgetary support," he commented.

Well-capitalised banks, he said, are stepping in to fill that gap.

Over the past year,

bank investments in treasury bonds and bills grew by nearly 32 percent, reaching Tk 98,948 crore. With the yield on such instruments touching 12 percent during the year, 12 banks each earned more than Tk 1,000 crore from bonds.

Leading the pack was Sonali Bank, which made Tk 6,414 crore, followed by BRAC Bank at Tk 2,881 crore, Agrani Bank at Tk 2,333 crore, Pubali Bank at Tk 2,019 crore, and Standard Chartered Bank with around Tk 1,800 crore.

The former ABB chairman said that banks have to maintain a 1 percent provision against loans but need not do so for treasury bonds. "So, the investment in government treasury is most profitable for them," he said, adding that lending also incurs higher operating costs.

Asif Khan, president of CFA Society Bangladesh, a platform for investment professionals, said, "Banks bought treasury bonds, which is logical, and it was expected by the central bank's contractionary monetary policy."

According to Khan, who is also

chairman of EDGE AMC Limited, this approach carries multiple implications. "It would contribute to making higher profits, and higher profits will contribute to strengthening the capital base of the banks," he said.

Some banks, he said, are struggling with a large volume of hidden non-performing loans (NPLs). The increased income from bonds allows them to cover provisions for these distressed assets more comfortably.

He, however, said that the current "abnormal" spread between deposit rates and treasury yields will not continue forever.

Already, the foreign exchange reserves have started to rise. Last week, they surpassed the \$25 billion mark, according to the BPM 6 count, marking a much-anticipated development for the first time in over 2.5 years.

"This could mean that the central bank's tight monetary stance may ease before long, and with that, treasury bond rates may begin to fall," he added.

Bangladesh needs more time for fully flexible exchange rate, says IMF

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Bangladesh is currently going through a transition towards a fully flexible exchange rate regime, and the process may take time, said the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

But both the authorities and the market must brace for the change, said the multilateral lender at a virtual press briefing yesterday.

Chris Papageorgiou, IMF mission chief for Bangladesh, said the country had entered a transitional phase as part of its economic reform commitments under the IMF credit programme.

In May, the Bangladesh Bank introduced a more flexible exchange rate system to meet conditions tied to the IMF's \$5.5 billion loan package. However, an unofficial band continues to run in the foreign currency market.

"The design of this crawling peg with a band aims to provide the flexibility that is needed right now," said Papageorgiou.

Chris Papageorgiou, IMF mission chief for Bangladesh, said the country entered a transitional phase as part of its economic reform commitments under the IMF credit programme

The IMF arranged the briefing following the Executive Board's completion of the combined third and fourth reviews of Bangladesh's reform programme.

The support comes under three arrangements – the Extended Fund Facility, the Extended Credit Facility, and the Resilience and Sustainability Facility.

Asked about the new exchange rate mechanism, Papageorgiou described the crawling peg with a band as a stopgap measure.

"It is not a fully flexible exchange rate; it is a system designed to gradually achieve full flexibility in the future," he said.

"The reason for designing the reform this way is that we recognise Bangladesh is at a stage in its development where a transitional regime is beneficial."

He said the end goal is to achieve a fully flexible exchange rate as the economy continues to mature.

"Of course, all of this needs to be part of a strategy that we will support, but which must ultimately be owned by the Bangladesh Bank," he added.

Regarding inflation, Papageorgiou said taming rising prices had been a key focus since the beginning of the IMF programme, as consumer inflation had remained stubbornly high.

"We saw food inflation reach 14.5 percent and overall inflation near 12 percent."

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Trade halts as customs shutdown paralyses sea, land ports



Activities at Chattogram port came to a complete standstill yesterday as customs officials suspended operations during their shutdown. The photo was taken from the CPAR gate of the premier seaport yesterday.

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Export and import activities at sea and land ports across the country ground to a near halt, as a nationwide shutdown by revenue officials entered its second day yesterday.

Under the banner of the NBR Reform Unity Council, customs officials suspended assessment, inspection, and clearance of goods across all ports, leaving external trade in limbo.

Chittagong port, the country's main maritime gateway handling 80 percent of foreign trade, saw no container movement in or out for a second consecutive day.

Container transport between the port and 19 private inland container depots (ICDs), along with deliveries from port yards, remained suspended due to the absence of customs approvals.

At least three vessels deferred their scheduled departure after a large chunk of export boxes failed to reach the port from ICDs. More than 3,500 TEUs (twenty-foot equivalent units) of export containers were scheduled to be shipped on those vessels yesterday.

One of them, the Singapore-bound MV Hong Da Xin-68, had bookings for over 1,600 TEUs.

Md Saiful Islam, head of the

Chattogram branch of the vessel's local agent Sea Consortium Ltd, said the departure of the ship was postponed as 636 TEUs failed to arrive by Saturday night.

Shipping agents fear these delays may cause feeder vessels to miss mother ships at transhipment ports, jeopardising shipments bound for the US and Europe.

Md Omar Faruk, secretary of the Chittagong Port Authority (CPA), said cargo delivery has come to a complete standstill as customs officials abstained from examination, scanning, container unstuffing, and issuing exit approvals.

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The Emerging Credit Rating Ltd. (ECRL) has rated Dhaka Bank PLC. based on the Audited Financial Statements of 2024, valid up to April 07, 2026. A brief information of the rating is presented here:

Year 2024	Year 2023	INTERPRETATION
Long Term AA+	Long Term AA+	The rating "AA+" in the long-term category indicates below strongest credit quality to assess the likelihood of timely repayment of principal and payment of interest over the term to maturity of the Bank's debt.
Short Term ST-2	Short Term ST-2	The rating "ST-2" in the short-term category is characterized with more than average ability to meet short-term financial commitments and to assess the likelihood of timely repayment of principal & payment of interest within one year of maturity of the Bank's specific debt instruments.
Outlook Stable	Outlook Stable	"Stable" indicates that a rating is likely to remain unchanged.



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Rancon Auto Industries unveils locally manufactured Mitsubishi Xpander

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Rancon Auto Industries Limited has launched the locally manufactured Mitsubishi Xpander-- a seven seater family SUV equipped with a 1.5-litre MIVEC engine, blending legendary Japanese reliability with home-grown innovation.

Saida Shinichi, the Japanese ambassador to Bangladesh, inaugurated the new Mitsubishi Xpander as the chief guest, according to a press release.

In his remarks, Ambassador Shinichi lauded the growing strategic partnership between Bangladesh and Japan.

"This launch is not merely about introducing a vehicle; it symbolises deeper technical collaboration, value creation, and a strengthening bilateral friendship that paves the way for our shared future," he stated.

The event was also attended by Romo Rouf Chowdhury, group managing director of Rancon Holdings Limited, and Farhan Karim, managing director.

In his keynote speech, Chowdhury expressed his pride in the company's longstanding relationship with Mitsubishi: "For the past 50 years, we've proudly served as the official distributor of Mitsubishi Motors in Bangladesh."

Thanks to this enduring partnership and the government's progressive manufacturing policies, we've cultivated an ecosystem capable of producing vehicles that meet the highest global standards, all while remaining competitively priced."

He further highlighted the company's



Saida Shinichi, the Japanese ambassador to Bangladesh, and Romo Rouf Chowdhury, group managing director of Rancon Holdings Limited, pose for photographs during the launch of the locally manufactured Mitsubishi Xpander at a ceremony in Dhaka on Saturday.

PHOTO: RANCON AUTO INDUSTRIES

manufacturing capabilities: "We have established state-of-the-art paint shops, assembly lines, and a team of professionals trained directly by Japanese experts. Each Xpander comes with a five-year warranty and two years of complimentary servicing."

"With 11 after-sales service touchpoints across the country, we are committed to ensuring safety, quality, and value for the people of Bangladesh," he added.

Delivering a special address from Japan, Takao Kato, CEO of Mitsubishi Motors Corporation, commended the

successful collaboration with Rancon: "This marks only the beginning of a promising journey."

Equipped with dual AC and designed specifically for ASEAN markets, the Xpander has received an overwhelmingly positive response across the region, and Bangladesh has consistently proven its potential.

"Together with Rancon, we are committed to building a future defined by excellence and reliability through the Bangladeshi-made Xpander," he added. Rancon Industrial Park-- spanning 52

acres -- now manufactures for a range of globally renowned brands including Mitsubishi, Suzuki two-wheelers, Mercedes-Benz bus chassis, Proton, JAC, LG and Toshiba.

Yutaka Yano, division general manager of Mitsubishi Motors Corporation, and Siam Ahmed, a film star and brand ambassador of Mitsubishi Motors Bangladesh, along with senior officials from Mitsubishi Motors, and dignitaries and prominent figures from both the public and private sectors, were also present.

BRAC Bank, Visa team up to launch 'Visa Direct for Account' for remittances



Sabbir Ahmed, country manager for Bangladesh, Nepal and Bhutan at Visa, and Md Shaheen Iqbal, deputy managing director and head of treasury and financial institutions at BRAC Bank, shake hands and exchange signed documents of the agreement in Dhaka recently.

PHOTO: BRAC BANK

STAR BUSINESS DESK

BRAC Bank has entered into a strategic partnership with Visa, a global leader in digital payment solutions, to introduce "Visa Direct for Account," a faster, more reliable, and cost-effective solution for outward international money transfers.

Md Shaheen Iqbal, deputy managing director and head of treasury and financial institutions at the bank, and Sabbir Ahmed, country manager for Bangladesh, Nepal and Bhutan at Visa, signed the agreement in Dhaka recently, according to a press release.

Commenting on the initiative, Iqbal said, "This partnership underscores BRAC Bank's strong commitment to enhancing customer experience and driving innovation in financial services."

"We are redefining global money transfers, making them more accessible,

affordable, and secure for our valued customers. It marks a significant step towards modernising Bangladesh's outward remittance ecosystem," he added.

Sabbir Ahmed added: "By simplifying global money movement, this solution provides tangible benefits from lower transaction fees to near real-time transfers."

"It is a significant advancement in modernising Bangladesh's cross-border payment infrastructure and expanding access to digital financial tools for both individuals and businesses," he further said.

As an API-based solution, Visa Direct for Account facilitates secure, efficient, and near-instant global payments. Compared to conventional methods, transactions via this platform are notably faster and more cost-effective due to its streamlined processing framework.

Kaiser Ahmed Chowdhury re-appointed as chairman of Nagad

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Kaiser Ahmed Chowdhury has been re-appointed as the chairman of Nagad, the country's mobile financial service (MFS) operated under the Bangladesh Postal Department.

The newly constituted board also includes Prof Niaz Asadullah, a development economist at Monash University in Kuala Lumpur and honorary professorial fellow at North South University; Bazlul Haque Khondker, research director at the Policy Research Institute; Md Anwar Hossain, former executive director of the Bangladesh Bank; and Barrister Tanim Hossain Shawon, a lawyer at the Supreme Court of Bangladesh.

In addition, the director general of the Directorate of Posts and the joint secretary of Debt Management at the Finance Division of the Ministry of Finance have been appointed as ex-officio members of the board, according to a press release.

The reconstitution of Nagad's management board was approved by Bangladesh Bank on June 23, under the authority granted by Section 18(4) of the Payment and Settlement Systems Act, 2024.

Going forward, this management board will be responsible for formulating operational strategies and overseeing the institution's strategic direction.



Kaiser Ahmed Chowdhury

US inflation edges up

AFP, Washington

The US Federal Reserve's preferred inflation measure logged a mild uptick Friday while spending weakened, triggering another tirade by President Donald Trump against the central bank chair for not cutting interest rates sooner.

"We have a guy that's just a stubborn mule and a stupid person," Trump told an event at the White House, referring to Fed Chair Jerome Powell. "He's making a mistake."

With Powell's term as Fed chief coming to an end next year, Trump hinted at his choice of successor: "I'm going to put somebody that wants to cut rates."

The president's remarks came after government data showed the personal consumption expenditures (PCE) price index climbing 2.3 percent last month from a year ago in May.

This was in line with analyst expectations and a slight acceleration from April's 2.2 percent increase, but still a relatively mild uptick.

Mastercard holds workshop on cybersecurity solutions



Rajesh Chopra, senior vice-president, advisers and consulting services for South Asia at Mastercard, poses for group photographs with participants of the workshop titled "Next Generation Analytics, Insights & Cyber Security Solutions" under the theme "Innovation X Impact" at a hotel in Dhaka recently.

PHOTO: MASTERCARD

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Mastercard, a global leader in digital payment solutions, recently organised a workshop titled "Next Generation Analytics, Insights & Cyber Security Solutions" under

the theme "Innovation X Impact" at a hotel in the capital.

The event convened senior executives from leading banks and fintech partners to explore data-driven strategies and cutting-edge security tools designed to foster

growth and enhance operational performance, according to a press release.

Rajesh Chopra, senior vice-president of advisers and consulting services for South Asia at Mastercard, attended the

programme as the chief guest. Key topics discussed during the workshop included debit and credit transformation strategies, return-on-investment (ROI)-focused analytics, and Mastercard's connected intelligence approach to cybersecurity.

The programme also highlighted advanced fraud and risk management solutions such as decision intelligence, RiskRecon (a cybersecurity service), and identity theft protection tools.

Syed Mohammad Kamal, country manager for Bangladesh at Mastercard; Mohitt Deggan, senior managing consultant of services business development; Joy Sekhri, vice-president; and Shitz Puchnanda, director of products and solutions; Zakia Sultan, director; and Sohail Alim, director of account management; along with senior representatives from Mastercard south region, were also present.

Shameem Hussain elected president of Dhaka Club

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Shameem Hussain, director of Robin Printing & Packages Limited, has been elected as the president of Dhaka Club Limited for the 2025 2026 term.

The election took place during the club's annual general meeting (AGM), held on its office premises on Saturday, according to a press release.

Before taking up this new role, Hussain served as president of Uttara



Shameem Hussain, the newly elected president of Dhaka Club Limited, along with the 10-member executive committee, poses for group photographs following the election held on the club's premises on Saturday.

PHOTO: DHAKA CLUB

Oil price steadies

REUTERS, Houston

Oil prices edged up slightly on Friday, recovering from a midday drop into negative territory following a report that Opec+ was planning to hike production in August, but tumbled about 12 percent in the week in their biggest drop since March 2023.

Brent crude futures settled at \$67.77 a barrel, up 4 cents, or 0.1 percent. US West Texas Intermediate crude finished up 28 cents, or 0.4 percent, at \$65.52 a barrel.

Four delegates from Opec+, which includes allies of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries, said the group was set to boost production by 411,000 barrels per day in August, following a similar size output increase

already planned for July.

"The report about an Opec increase came out and prices cratered," said Phil Flynn, senior market analyst with Price Futures Group, about the midday slide.

Crude prices were already headed for a 12 percent decline for the week following the cease fire between Israel and Iran.

During the 12-day war that started after Israel targeted Iran's nuclear facilities on June 13, Brent prices rose briefly to above \$80 a barrel before slumping to \$67 a barrel after US President Donald Trump announced an Iran-Israel ceasefire.

"The market has almost entirely shrugged off the geopolitical risk premiums from almost a week ago as we return to a fundamentals-driven market," said Rystad analyst Janiv Shah.

IFIC Bank arranges workshop on financial literacy

STAR BUSINESS DESK

IFIC Bank PLC, in collaboration with the Department of Anthropology at the Shahjalal University of Science and Technology (SUST), recently organised a workshop on financial literacy on the university campus.

The initiative aimed to equip students with practical knowledge of personal financial management while fostering their professional development. Khaled Ahmed, executive director of the Bangladesh Bank Sylhet office, attended the event as the chief guest, according to a press release.

The workshop was presided over by Md Mokhlesur Rahman, proctor of SUST, while Fariha Haider, head of centralised retail marketing at IFIC Bank, served as the resource person.



Khaled Ahmed, executive director of the Bangladesh Bank Sylhet office, poses for group photographs with participants of the financial literacy workshop jointly organised by IFIC Bank and the Shahjalal University of Science and Technology on the latter's campus premises recently.

PHOTO: IFIC BANK

Olympic Industries to buy Tk 21cr lands

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Olympic Industries Ltd will spend a total of Tk 21.17 crore to purchase land in Gazipur and Narayanganj as part of its plan to expand operations.

According to a disclosure on the Dhaka Stock Exchange website yesterday, the company's board approved the acquisition of four separate plots.

Of these, 460 decimals of land in Kaliganj upazila of Gazipur will be purchased for Tk 13.7 crore from SEAM Agro Foods Ltd, represented by its chairman Nasir Mohammed Helal.

In the same area, the company will also buy 208.5 decimals for Tk 6.3 crore from five individuals.

In addition, Olympic will purchase two plots near its Lolat factory in Sonargaon upazila of Narayanganj.

One plot, measuring 25.83 decimals, will be acquired for Tk 90.40 lakh at a rate of Tk 3.5 lakh per decimal.

The second plot, measuring 7.75 decimals, will be bought for Tk 27.13 lakh.

The company said it would also bear all associated registration costs, including VAT, tax, and other charges.

The land acquisitions take place following Olympic's purchase of five plots of land in Narayanganj in April for a cost of Tk 22.25 crore.

The company reported a net profit of Tk 42.98 crore for the January-March quarter of 2025, marking a year-on-year increase of slightly more than 1 percent.

As of May 31, foreign investors collectively held the largest portion of Olympic's shares at 34.21 percent, closely followed by the sponsor/director group with 32.38 percent. The rest are owned by institutional investors and the general public.

Titas Gas to convert Tk 282.74cr deposit into preference shares

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Titas Gas has decided to convert a deposit of over Tk 282.74 crore into non-cumulative preference shares in favour of the government.

According to a disclosure on the Dhaka Stock Exchange (DSE) website yesterday, the company's board approved the conversion of Tk 282.74 crore into 28.27 crore non-cumulative preference shares, each with a face value and issue price of Tk 10.

The shares will be issued in favour of the Finance Division under the



Hossain Zillur Rahman, executive chairman of the Power and Participation Research Centre (PPRC) and chairperson of Brac, and Sameer Karki, country director of iDE Bangladesh, pose for photographs with other participants of the summit titled "Catalysing Markets: iDE Bangladesh Private Sector Engagement Summit 2025", organised by iDE Bangladesh, at Le Méridien Dhaka yesterday.

PHOTO: iDE BANGLADESH

iDE Bangladesh launches private sector engagement strategy

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Non-governmental organisation iDE Bangladesh unveiled its "Private Sector Engagement Strategy 2025-2030" yesterday, stating that it aims to promote inclusive, resilient, and market-driven development across the country.

The strategy is said to build on iDE Bangladesh's decade-long track record of partnering with businesses to develop scalable and inclusive solutions in agriculture, sanitation, clean energy, and climate resilience.

It also reaffirms iDE Bangladesh's commitment to adaptive, results-driven collaboration with enterprises of all sizes – from global corporations to local micro-entrepreneurs – to unlock sustainable innovations that benefit underserved communities and ensure that markets work for all.

The strategy was made public through a "Catalysing Markets: iDE Bangladesh Private Sector Engagement Summit 2025" at Le Méridien Dhaka.

Hossain Zillur Rahman, executive chairman of the Power and Participation Research Centre, chairperson of BRAC, and a former caretaker government adviser, inaugurated the summit.

He described the strategy as a timely and visionary initiative aligned with national development priorities and critical for fostering sustainable and inclusive growth.

"By integrating innovation into market systems and empowering local entrepreneurs, iDE is demonstrating how development can be effective, sustainable, and scalable – driving entrepreneurship and expansion," he said.

Rahman further noted that collaboration between development partners and the private sector is essential to building a resilient society and advancing equity.

Collaboration between development partners and the private sector is essential to build a resilient society, said an expert

"This strategy is more than just a document – it reflects iDE's commitment to working in partnership with the private sector to co-create solutions that drive both commercial success and social impact," said Sameer Karki, country director of iDE Bangladesh.

"It outlines a shared vision for how businesses and development actors can collaborate to unlock new opportunities, strengthen market systems, and uplift underserved communities," he said.

"This summit marks the beginning of a more strategic, inclusive, and collaborative chapter in our journey toward sustainable development," he added.

Speakers shared insights on the evolving role of the private sector in addressing development challenges and building more

equitable economic systems.

Among them were Uzma Chowdhury, director (finance) of PRAN-RFL Group; Mohammad Mohiuddin Ahmed, additional general manager of Social Marketing Company (SMC); Kazi Md Safayet Kabir, senior executive vice-president of NRBC Bank PLC; Sadid Jamil, managing director of Metal Private Ltd; and Nitai Pada Saha, CEO of Rural Services Foundation.

Key features of the summit included discussions on market systems development, and the signing of several memoranda of understanding with private sector partners to foster shared value and inclusive business growth.

An exhibition was also held through 14 booths, showcasing innovations co-developed with iDE and featuring companies from sectors such as agriculture, WASH, renewable energy, nutrition, and fintech.

Around 200 participants, including government officials, academics, business leaders, and representatives from development partners and NGOs, attended the summit.

Prominent private sector entities such as PRAN-RFL Group, ACI, SMC, Lal Teer Seed Ltd, NRBC Bank, Rural Services Foundation, Rahimafrooz, Ispahani Agro, BRAC, Grameen Danone Foods Ltd, Care Nutrition Ltd, and Safepad were among those represented.

International development partners, including the World Bank, FCDO, UNICEF, GIZ, UNDP, the European Union, and the Italian and Danish embassies, were also present.

Social business is a social movement: Yunus

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus yesterday said social business is not merely an idea, but a growing social movement.

He made the remarks in a special video message at a programme titled "Social Business Academia Dialogue", organised by North South University (NSU), in collaboration with Yunus Centre, on the NSU campus in Dhaka.

At the daylong event, three centres – the NSU Social Business Centre, NSU Social Impact & Sustainability Centre, and NSU Climate & Disaster Resilience Centre – were launched.

Yunus said, "We are moving forward to achieve the three zeros: zero poverty, zero unemployment, and zero carbon emissions. Through this, we aim to build a liveable and equitable world for all."

He added that social business was no longer just a concept. "It is now a social movement. NSU has long been a pioneering academic institution for social business in Bangladesh."

By hosting social business forums and fostering a culture of innovation, NSU has set a strong example for others to follow, he said.

At the event, Nurjahan Begum, adviser to the health and family welfare ministry, stated that to achieve sustainable growth, it was essential to address the three zeros by setting aside profit motives and personal interests.

"Our focus needs to be on creating social impact, fostering environmental sustainability, and ensuring the well-being of our communities. Therefore, promoting accessible healthcare and prioritising public health must be integral to our growth strategy," she added.

Sharmeen Soneya Murshid, adviser to the social welfare ministry, and Ismail Serageldin, co-chair of the Nizami Ganjavi International Center (NGIC), also spoke.

Murshid said social business belongs to the care community, adding, "It is driven not by greed, but by compassion. It's not about what we can take from vulnerable people, but how we can uplift and support them."

"The vision of the three zeros is not a utopia; it is a practical path towards shared dignity, meaningful work, and a healthier planet," she added.

Lamiya Morshed, principal coordinator of SDGs affairs at the Chief Adviser's Office, said, "Professor Yunus' work has inspired millions around the world."

Aziz Al Kaiser, chairman of the Board of Trustees at NSU and chairman of City Bank PLC, remarked, "The challenges the world faces today require innovative solutions."

"That is why socially conscious businesses and the concept of the three zeros resonate so strongly. The road ahead won't be easy, but with unity of purpose and shared ideas, there is nothing we cannot overcome," he added.

Erik Solheim, former Norwegian minister of climate and the environment and former executive director of UN Environment, said, "For the first time in human history, we no longer have to choose between economy and ecology; we can achieve both. Bangladesh is in a strong position to lead the way in implementing this balance."

Trade halts as customs shutdown paralyses

FROM PAGE B1

He added that container handling at the jetties had also slowed down with a lower-than-usual flow of export boxes to the port.

Only 139 TEUs of import-laden containers were delivered from the port in the 24 hours till 8:00 am yesterday. The daily average stands at around 4,500 TEUs.

Port officials also feared that queues of vessels might grow longer, as many incoming ships were yet to receive registration numbers from customs – a prerequisite for container handling.

The Bangladesh Inland Container Depots Association (BICDA) issued an advisory informing clients that all operations at ICDs had come to a complete halt.

Md Ruhul Amin Sikder, secretary general of BICDA, said private ICDs were unable to unload export cargoes from factory-covered vans, stuff containers, or transport containers to and from the port owing to the suspension of customs work at container freight stations.

Meanwhile, business leaders sounded the alarm over increasing financial losses and the potential damage to the country's reputation among international buyers.

"This shutdown is sending the wrong message to our international clients," said a garment exporter, speaking on condition of anonymity.

"They will think Bangladesh is not a stable place to do business."

Syed M Tanvir, managing director of Pacific Jeans, said, "Foreign buyers do business on strict timelines. Missing shipment deadlines erodes their confidence in Bangladeshi suppliers."

"What's worse, exporters may have to bear demurrage charges for delays they didn't cause," he added.

SIMILAR DISRUPTIONS AT OTHER PORTS

Export operations at Dhaka airport were also hit. Mohammed Abul Hossain, a fresh vegetables and fruits exporter, said nearly 100

tonnes of produce could not be shipped yesterday due to the customs work stoppage.

At Akhaura Land Port in Brahmanbaria, all trade came to a halt. A handful of consignments had cleared the port on Saturday using pre-approved documents, but no such activity was seen yesterday.

"Due to the ongoing stalemate, no traders have brought in goods. As a result, all trading activity has stopped," said Nesar Ahmed Bhuiyan, a local importer and trader.

Benapole Land Port, operations remained suspended for a second straight day.



Customs officials abstained from examination, scanning, container unstuffing, and issuing exit approvals.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

Burimari Land Port in Lalmonirhat and Sonahat Land Port in Kurigram also remained closed, causing trade losses since Saturday.

Faruk Hossain, a trader at Burimari port, said five of his trucks carrying imported goods were stranded at India's Changrabandha port.

"If I fail to bring in the goods on time, I will incur huge losses," said Hossain. Several trucks loaded with export cargo were also stuck on the Bangladeshi side.

Niaz Ahmed, another trader, expressed frustration, saying, "This is the first time port operations have been paralysed due to protests by government officials. We are facing losses, and no one seems to care what we are going through."

On average, 300 trucks pass

through Burimari daily, 260 to 270 of them with imports.

At Sonahat Land Port, the situation was no better. Bahar Uddin, a local trader, said around 40 trucks carrying stones were stranded on the Indian side.

"If these raw materials don't enter the country in time, several construction sites could face a shortage," he said.

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Logistics costs remain alarmingly high: DCCI



PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

Business leaders and experts emphasised that Bangladesh must urgently revamp its logistics sector to sustain growth and remain competitive in the post-LDC era.

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Logistics costs in Bangladesh remain high, at an estimated 15 percent to 20 percent of the GDP, far above the global average of 8 percent to 10 percent, according to the Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry (DCCI).

The logistics sector in Bangladesh requires rapid transformation to ensure sustainable economic growth as the country prepares for status graduation from the group of least developed countries," said Taskeen Ahmed, president of the DCCI.

He was speaking at a discussion titled "Enhancing Bangladesh's Logistics Sector for Sustainable Economic Growth" organised by the DCCI on its premises in Dhaka yesterday.

He proposed six major reforms—digital platforms to connect shippers and transporters, warehouse automation, seamless multimodal transport networks, modernised ports, digital customs solutions, and greener logistical practices.

Besides, business leaders and experts emphasised that Bangladesh must urgently revamp its logistics sector to sustain growth and remain competitive in the post-LDC era.

They cautioned that high transport costs, poor infrastructure, and gaps in policies could hurt the country's export plans and overall development.

"Although Bangladesh's private sector-led growth has been globally exemplary, our heavy reliance on readymade garments and limited export markets poses risks," said M Masrur Reaz,

chairman and CEO of the Policy Exchange of Bangladesh, while presenting a keynote paper at the event.

Against this backdrop, he stressed the urgent need to diversify export products and expand into new markets to protect the economy.

"To survive in global competition, we must strengthen trade cooperation and logistics capabilities," Reaz said.

He highlighted that reducing logistical costs by 25 percent could raise exports by about 20 percent, while even a 1 percent cut in transportation costs could boost exports by 7.4 percent.

Addressing the event, Sheik Moinuddin, special assistant to the chief adviser for road transport and bridges, said Bangladesh's global competitiveness post-LDC graduation depends on an integrated transport ecosystem covering roads, rail, waterways, aviation, ports, and digital networks.

Drawing on his experience in California and Hawaii, he stressed long-term planning over 25 to 50 years, warning that fragmented responsibilities across ministries hinder progress.

Moinuddin noted the lack of a comprehensive master plan as a major obstacle to logistics growth.

Abul Kasem Khan, chairperson of Business Initiative Leading Development (BUILD), said Bangladesh's logistics sector was stagnating, hampering economic goals.

He stressed that annual investments of 8 percent to 10 percent of the GDP, or around \$20 billion, were needed in infrastructure and logistics, and the

country was still lagging behind others in this area.

Although foreign direct investment in the country currently stands at around \$1.5 billion, there is vast potential for more, he said. Khan urged the formulation of a 50 year master plan and a dedicated logistics ministry or authority.

He also suggested declaring 2026-2035 the "Decade of Logistics" to drive transformative growth.

Salim Ullah, chairman of Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Corporation (BIWTC), underscored the urgent need for a master plan to boost the multimodal transport system, calling it vital for the logistics sector's future.

Experts cautioned that high transport costs, poor infrastructure, and gaps in policies could hurt the country's export plans and overall development

Ullah added that a government committee was reassessing the logistics policy, while the BIWTC would soon draft a master plan to improve inland water transport management.

Speaking at the event, he said while the 2024 logistics policy proposed actions, it lacked a time-bound roadmap.

Ullah welcomed the government's fresh initiative to revise the policy under a new committee led by the railways adviser.

Md Habibur Rahman, member (admin and planning) of Chattogram Port Authority, said that by 2030, the capacity

of the country's seaports, including the Matarbari deep seaport, would reach 10 million TEUs (twenty-foot equivalent units).

He said the private sector would need to significantly increase import and export activities to ensure the utilisation of this capacity.

He said railway services could become the most cost-effective and suitable option, especially in the logistics and transportation sector.

He opined that constructing a specialised expressway exclusively for trucks and lorries from the Chattogram port to Sitakunda could bring positive outcomes in the transportation process of import and export goods.

Alamgir Morshed, executive director of the Infrastructure Development Company Limited (Idcol), said long-term financing for the development of logistics infrastructure was a major challenge.

This was due to the fact that Bangladesh's financial sector is not in a very strong position, he said.

He proposed introducing multiple bond instruments to facilitate long-term financing in the infrastructure sector.

He also said that the gaps in capacity and expertise in the logistics sector create significant opportunities for foreign investors, which he believes should be seen in a positive light.

Humayun Kabir, senior project officer (transport) of the Asian Development Bank (ADB), said the ADB would extend technical assistance to help implement Bangladesh's logistics policy and was working closely with the government in this regard.

Digital ID overhaul needs local expertise

M MANJUR MAHMUD

Bangladesh stands on the brink of a major digital transformation, poised to overhaul its citizen identity system.

This crucial national undertaking, encompassing everything from foundational National IDs to sensitive applications like driving licences and banking e-KYC, has naturally attracted considerable international interest. As we embark on this journey, it is vital to recognise and champion the unique advantages offered by our own local IT talent.

While foreign players certainly bring valuable expertise, the long-term success, security and contextual relevance of a complete digital citizen ID ecosystem hinge on empowering Bangladeshi companies. Our local IT professionals possess an inherent understanding of our socio-economic landscape, cultural nuances and specific challenges -- knowledge often beyond the grasp of external entities. This deep familiarity translates directly into solutions that are not only functional but genuinely optimised for the Bangladeshi population.

Consider the impact a locally built ID management ecosystem could have on our financial system. The benefits are immense: from efficient loan approvals to significant improvements in operational efficiency and, critically, stronger fraud detection. Imagine a system where the intricacies of local financial practices are seamlessly integrated into its design,

where common fraud patterns in our context are intuitively recognised, and where user experience is tailored to the digital literacy levels of our diverse population. This kind of responsive development is a game-changer that only local talent can consistently deliver.

Beyond contextual understanding, the cost-effectiveness of local IT solutions cannot be overstated.

Engaging foreign firms often involves high costs, including expatriate salaries, international travel and complex contractual arrangements. In contrast, investing in domestic talent channels funds directly into our economy, creates jobs and fosters a self-reliant IT industry. This approach reduces initial implementation costs and significantly lowers long-term maintenance and upgrade expenses, as support and development remain within the country.

Long-term sustainability is another vital concern for an infrastructure as critical as a national identity system. When foreign companies develop such systems, we risk becoming dependent on their proprietary technologies and continued support. This makes us vulnerable to geopolitical shifts, changes in corporate strategy or rising service fees. A locally built system, however, ensures national ownership of intellectual property, allowing for continuous innovation, timely adaptations and reliable maintenance by those invested in the country's progress.

Bangladesh boasts a thriving IT sector, with skilled professionals who have already made their mark on the global digital stage. Our experts have developed ID solutions for over 10 countries, and local firms currently manage banking client IDs for more than 150 million unique users. By prioritising these proven Bangladeshi companies in the development of our national ID systems, we are not merely awarding contracts; we are making a strategic investment in national capacity building, technological sovereignty and a generation of experts ready to lead Bangladesh's digital future.

The overhaul of our citizen identity system is more than a technological upgrade; it is a nation-building endeavour. Let us choose the path that strengthens our capabilities, empowers our people and lays the foundation for a secure, efficient and locally owned digital future.

The writer is the president of DataSoft Systems Bangladesh Limited and can be reached at manjur@datasoft-bd.com.

Dollar gains

REUTERS, New York

The dollar retraced earlier losses against the euro on Friday after US President Donald Trump said the United States was ending trade talks with Canada and that he would consider bombing Iran again, denting risk appetite and sending stocks lower.

"Taken together, both messages highlight how erratic Trump is and that any assumptions built into markets can be instantly undermined," said Adam Button, chief currency analyst at ForexLive.

"The knee-jerk has been to buy the US dollar but once the smoke clears, that's likely to retrace. The trade war has been a dollar drag all year," Button said.

US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent said earlier on Friday the Trump administration's various trade deals with other countries could be done by the Sept. 1 Labor Day holiday.

The Canadian dollar extended losses on the day, however, after Trump said the US is immediately ending trade talks with Canada in response to the country's digital services tax on technology companies. It was last down 0.5 percent versus the greenback at C\$1.37 per dollar.

Trump also sharply criticized Iran's Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, dropped plans to lift sanctions on Iran and said he would consider bombing Iran again if Tehran is enriching uranium to worrisome levels.

The dollar dropped to a three-and-a-half-year low against the euro earlier on Friday as traders bet that the Federal Reserve will cut rates more times and possibly sooner than previously expected as some US data points to a weakening economy.

A report on Friday showed that US consumer spending unexpectedly fell in May as the boost from the pre-emptive buying of goods like motor vehicles ahead of tariffs faded, while monthly inflation increases remained moderate.

Trump metal tariffs wreak havoc on US factory

AFP, Belcamp

In the sweltering US summer, metal containers decorated with snowmen and sleighs are taking shape -- but temps are also rising as their manufacturer grapples with President Donald Trump's steep steel tariffs.

At Independent Can's factory in Belcamp, Maryland northeast of Baltimore, CEO Rick Huether recounts how he started working at his family's business at age 14.

Huether, now 73, says he is determined to keep his manufacturing company afloat for generations to come. But Trump's tariffs are complicating this task.

"We're living in chaos right now," he told AFP.

Since returning to the presidency in January, Trump imposed tariffs of 25 percent on imported steel and aluminum -- and then doubled the rate to 50 percent.

This has weighed on operations at Independent Can, and Huether expects he eventually will have to raise prices.

With the steady beat of presses, steel plates that have been coated with tin -- to prevent corrosion -- are turned into containers for cookies, dried fruit, coffee and milk powder at Huether's factory.

But there is not enough of such American-made tinplate for companies

like his. "In the United States, we can only make about 25 percent of the tinplate that's required to do what we do," in addition to what other manufacturers need, Huether said.

"Those all require us to buy in the neighborhood of 70 percent of our steel

outside of the United States," he added.

While Huether is a proponent of growing the US manufacturing base, saying globalization has "gone almost a little bit too far," he expressed concern about Trump's methods.

Trump has announced a stream of



A general view of the manufacturing facilities of the Independent Can Company in Belcamp, Maryland, on June 25.

major tariffs only to later back off parts of them or postpone them, and also imposed duties on items the country does not produce.

For now, Independent Can -- which employs nearly 400 people at four sites -- is ruling out any layoffs despite the current upheaval.

But Huether said one of the company's plants in Iowa closed last year in part because of a previous increase in steel tariffs, during Trump's first presidential term.

With steel tariffs at 50 percent now, Huether expects he will ultimately have to raise his prices by more than 20 percent, given that tinplate represents a part of his production costs.

Some buyers have already reduced their orders this year by 20 to 25 percent, over worries about the economy and about not having enough business themselves.

Others now seem more inclined to buy American, but Huether expressed reservations over how long this trend might last, citing his experiences from the Covid-19 crisis.

"During the pandemic, we took everybody in. As China shut down and the ports were locked up, our business went up 50 percent," he explained.

But when the pandemic was over, customers turned back to purchasing from China, he said.

Brushing Bold Strokes

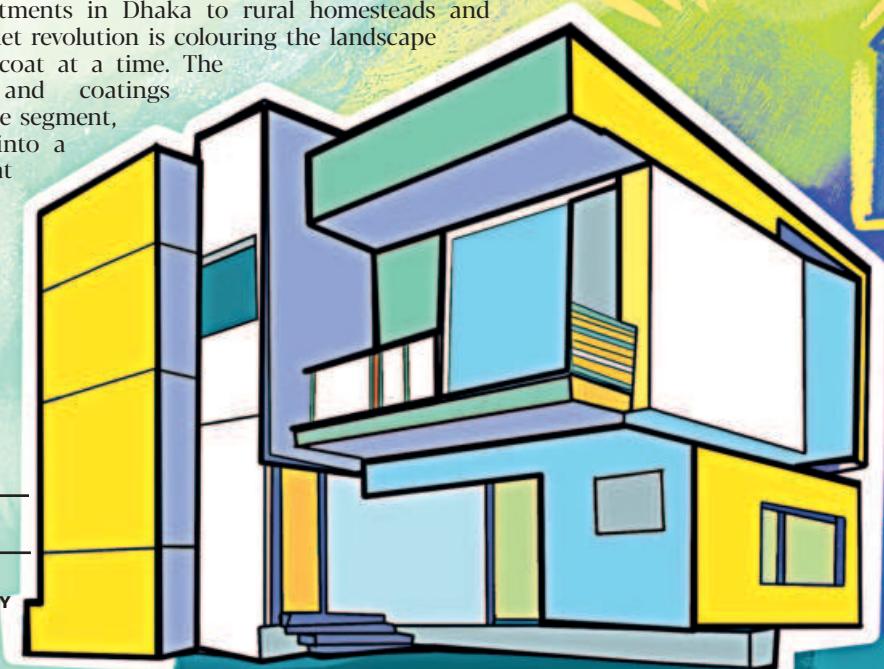
INSIDE BANGLADESH'S BURGEONING PAINT INDUSTRY

PRIYAM PAUL

From high-rise apartments in Dhaka to rural homesteads and factory facades, a quiet revolution is colouring the landscape of Bangladesh—one coat at a time. The country's paints and coatings industry, once a niche segment, has steadily grown into a vibrant sector that straddles both decoration and durability. And behind every freshly painted wall lies a story of economic transformation, consumer aspiration, and industrial innovation.

SEE PAGE J2

ILLUSTRATION: SOJIB ROY



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নতুন **BERGER**

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এর APH প্রযুক্তি ৯০% পর্যন্ত বাতাসের দৃষ্টি গ্যাস শোষণ করে *

ঘরের বাতাস সুস্থ হোক



TESTED BY



*কার্ডত ডাই-অক্সাইড, কার্বন মনোক্সাইড, মিথেন ইত্যাদি

A Complete Solution for ALL YOUR PAINT NEEDS

The Daily Star (TDS): How would you assess the current state of Bangladesh's paint industry, and what policy or market-level interventions are essential to unlock its next phase of growth?

Md. Mohsin Habib Chowdhury (MMHC):

The paint industry in Bangladesh is currently navigating a period of stagnation, shaped by broader economic challenges.

and real estate – key sectors that drive paint consumption. Revisiting the fiscal framework, especially duties on essential building inputs, would ease the burden on end-users. At the same time, building local supply chain resilience and expanding domestic raw material sourcing will be essential to enhance long-term competitiveness.

Berger Paints, despite various challenges, continues to invest in innovation, capacity building, and skill development to stimulate industry momentum.

A key pillar of this strategy is the Berger Experience Zone (BEZ) – a network of dedicated outlets that function as design consultation hubs, offering homeowners personalised and immersive painting experiences. Currently operating across 17 locations, with plans to expand to all 64 districts, these centres offer a unified platform for expert colour advice, surface evaluation, and access to our complete Express Painting Service. From shade selection and surface preparation to professional application using advanced tools, this service ensures a cleaner, faster, and high-quality finish for both walls and furniture. Additionally, customers can

to inclusive market leadership. In a diverse and evolving economy like Bangladesh, where purchasing power varies widely across consumer segments, the ability to serve both value-conscious buyers and discerning premium customers is central to long-term competitiveness. Berger addresses this through a carefully tiered portfolio that spans economy, mid-range, and high-end categories – each product line engineered to deliver performance and durability suited to local climate conditions and usage patterns.

Maintaining affordability, however, in the face of rising input costs – particularly from imported raw materials – requires operational discipline and innovation

flagship innovation, EcoCoat – South Asia's first anti-pollution paint. Developed with advanced Air Purifying Hybrid (APH) Technology, EcoCoat actively absorbs and neutralises harmful airborne pollutants such as CO₂, NO_x, SO₂, methane, hydrogen sulphide, and formaldehyde, thereby improving indoor air quality by up to 90%. The product is entirely lead-free and formulated with green-certified biocides, making it a safe and environmentally responsible choice for both interior and exterior applications.

Beyond this, Berger is leading a strategic transition towards safer, low-VOC, and APEO-free formulations. We are phasing



MD MOHSIN HABIB CHOWDHURY

COO & Director, Berger Paints Bangladesh Limited

After experiencing negative growth in the previous fiscal year, the sector recorded a flat performance last year – a clear reflection of subdued demand. Persistent inflation, foreign exchange instability, import constraints, and policy uncertainty have collectively damped investment appetite and delayed consumer spending, particularly on construction and home improvement.

The recent increase in Supplementary Duty on paints from 5% to 10% has further eroded affordability, while ongoing geopolitical tensions continue to raise the cost of raw materials and logistics. These factors have intensified pressure on operational margins and slowed overall industry momentum.

To stimulate recovery, a coordinated response is required. Stabilising the macroeconomic environment is critical, as is targeted policy support for construction

But for the sector to recover and thrive, a coordinated and forward-looking policy environment is imperative – one that enables businesses to operate with confidence and consumers to engage without hesitation.

TDS: How is your company responding to the growing demand for personalised and aesthetic paint solutions?

MMHC: Consumers are no longer simply purchasing paint – they are investing in meaningful experiences that express personal identity and elevate living spaces. The demand for personalisation, functionality, and design integrity is redefining the way homeowners and developers approach home improvement. In response, Berger Paints has evolved its value proposition beyond products to become a complete solutions provider, offering seamless, end-to-end services that combine aesthetic excellence with professional execution.

explore our Illusions range of designer textures at these centres – curated options that transform ordinary walls into striking accent features, enabling deeper expression of individual taste and spatial aesthetics.

In parallel, our Berger Design Studio (BDS) delivers comprehensive interior design services, guiding customers from vision to execution. Through BDS, we aim to democratise access to high-quality design by making it both affordable and aspirational. These integrated offerings reflect Berger's broader commitment to delivering not just products, but transformative experiences – empowering consumers to turn their homes into meaningful reflections of personal style and modern living.

TDS: How do you balance affordability and quality for different market segments?

MMHC: Affordability and quality are not opposing priorities – they are twin imperatives that define Berger's approach

across the value chain. To this end, Berger has implemented lean manufacturing practices, energy-efficient production systems, and optimised logistics frameworks to reduce overheads without compromising product integrity. We have also undertaken formulation re-engineering to incorporate locally sourced alternatives wherever feasible, allowing us to maintain consistent quality standards while insulating against global supply shocks.

TDS: What key innovations is your company prioritising to maintain a competitive edge in the rapidly evolving paint and home improvement sector?

MMHC: In an industry increasingly shaped by climate imperatives and conscious consumer behaviour, we are reimagining not only what paint can do, but what it should stand for – as a product, a process, and a platform for responsible progress.

At the forefront of this vision is our

out non-green preservatives and replacing solvent-based paints with water-based alternatives that reduce carbon footprint and support healthier indoor environments.

This commitment extends across operations. Berger has launched a circularity initiative that converts Effluent Treatment Plant (ETP) sludge into raw material for bricks, supporting waste minimisation and the circular economy.

We also recognise that innovation must empower people, not just products. The Berger Training Institute (BTI) was established to professionalise the painting application sector in Bangladesh and uplift associated livelihoods.

To expand impact and reach, BTI has partnered with BRAC, Save the Children, BMET, Probash Bondhu Limited, and the World Bank's ASSET project to offer migrant-bound crash courses preparing painters for overseas employment opportunities.

Inside Bangladesh's Burgeoning Paint Industry



construction and home improvement."

Still, the broader picture remains one of resilience. The industry, composed of some 42 local firms and five multinational giants, now generates over BDT 100 crore in annual revenue and directly supports employment across the value chain – from factory floors to retail showrooms and painter communities.

The paint sector as a whole produces nearly 33 crore litres of paint annually, with industrial applications accounting for 65 percent and domestic use for the remaining 35 percent.

The sector's strength lies not just in quantity, but in its ability to innovate. Companies are pushing the boundaries of what paint can do – introducing eco-friendly formulas, AI-based shade recommendations, and immersive digital tools for home customisation.

"Innovation at Berger is deeply rooted in our commitment to sustainability and environmental stewardship," adds Chowdhury. "It's about offering value beyond the product."

That sentiment is echoed by others in the field. Shayan Seraj, Director of Aqua Paints, part of the Elite Group, explains how technology is reshaping customer experience: "Our InstaColor machines offer thousands of shades, with AI-driven mood and lighting suggestions. We provide on-site sampling, 2D/3D mock-ups, and even textured finishes like exposed brick to cater to contemporary interior trends."

But painting walls isn't just about

what's in the can. It's also about the hands that apply it. That's why companies are increasingly investing in the professional development of painters – offering training in techniques, safety, and even colour psychology.

"At Dulux, we're going beyond product sales," says Syed Salahuddin Abu Naser, Business Director of Dulux Paints Bangladesh under ACI Formulations. "We train painters and contractors not just in application but in providing aesthetic guidance – so that from mixing to finishing, expertise is embedded at every stage."

Despite the enthusiasm, challenges loom large. The industry is highly import-dependent, with nearly all raw materials sourced internationally. That makes it vulnerable to global price fluctuations and currency crises – issues that have intensified over the past two years.

Another concern is market maturity. With per capita paint consumption still hovering around 1.4 kilograms – well below neighbouring countries – companies are focusing on affordability to drive volume.

"We maintain a tiered product portfolio to serve every income group," says Budhadiya Mukherjee, Regional Head of Asian Paints International. "From economy emulsions to premium finishes, our commitment to quality remains constant."

While most of the current production serves local

demand, there are growing ambitions to turn Bangladesh into a regional manufacturing hub for paints and coatings. Some firms are already gearing up for export.

"We've got the infrastructure to serve both domestic and industrial segments – whether it's powder coating for machinery or colour for living rooms," says R. N. Paul, Managing Director of RFL Group, which owns Rainbow Paints. "We're optimistic that Bangladesh can become a global supplier in the near future."

Meanwhile, Nippon Paint Bangladesh is blending Japanese precision with local relevance. "We see this market as dynamic and full of potential," says Rajesh Sircar, the company's General Manager. "Our role is to empower people to realise their dream spaces – whether through colour, protection, or inspiration."

As Bangladesh continues to build upwards and outwards, the paints and coatings industry remains a quiet but critical partner – adding more than just colour to the nation's development. It adds confidence, creativity, and a finishing touch to the country's growth story.

KEY STATISTICS

Total market size of paint and coating industry

BDT 6,000 crore

Annual growth

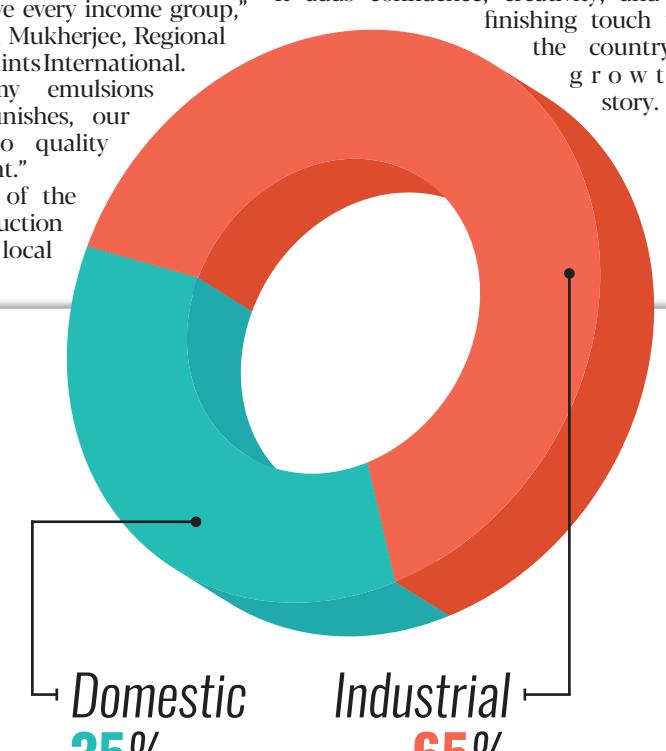
6%

Per capita consumption

1.4 litres

Annual total production

33 crore litres



SEGMENT-WISE USAGE OF PAINT

Though officially classified as a luxury item, paint is no longer seen as a mere aesthetic add-on. It has become essential to modern construction – shielding structures from the elements, improving longevity, and defining the character of homes and workplaces alike.

FROM PAGE J1

Though officially classified as a luxury item, paint is no longer seen as a mere aesthetic add-on. It has become essential to modern construction – shielding structures from the elements, improving longevity, and defining the character of homes and workplaces alike.

That evolution is no accident. As Bangladesh strides toward middle-income status, spurred by rapid urbanisation, infrastructure megaprojects, and a property boom, the demand for paints has surged. Or at least, it did – until recently.

"We're now navigating a period of stagnation," says Md. Mohsin Habib Chowdhury, Chief Operating Officer of Berger Paints Bangladesh Limited and President of the Bangladesh Paint Manufacturers Association. "Last year we saw flat growth following a negative trend the previous fiscal year. Persistent inflation, foreign exchange instability, import constraints, and policy uncertainty have all combined to delay consumer spending – especially in

WE WILL BEGIN EXPORTING

Paint from Bangladesh

The Daily Star (TDS): How would you assess the current state of Bangladesh's paint industry, and what policy or market-level interventions are essential to unlock its next phase of growth?

R. N. Paul (RNP): First of all, paint serves two major purposes—domestic and industrial. I would say that the demand for paint existed in the past, still exists, and will continue



products in their entirety. Then, we began importing some components and manufacturing others locally. Especially in the automobile sector, the industrial requirement for paint has grown significantly—and this trend is expected to continue. Our goal now is to establish a fully integrated manufacturing process in Bangladesh, excluding some electronic components.

liquid coatings, automotive paint, as well as domestic paint. We are equipped to meet the needs of all types of industries. Looking ahead, we are hopeful that we will begin exporting paint from Bangladesh.

TDS: How is your company responding to the growing demand for personalised and aesthetic paint solutions?

RNP: We have introduced some specialised interior paints that are more sophisticated and require skilled workers for proper application. Only those with adequate expertise can handle such finishes. Some of the more established companies in the market already have trained professionals

additional margin—instead, we can offer our products at more competitive prices while maintaining quality.

We've recently initiated a new process involving backward linkage. Previously, we imported alkyd resin in its processed form, which increased our costs by around 10%. Now, instead of importing the finished resin, we import its raw materials and produce the resin ourselves.

For us, the first priority is price affordability. Next comes value for money—we aim to offer the best possible quality that the customer can afford.

TDS: What key innovations is your company

the outset.

Unlike many companies that discharge treated water into rivers, we do not. Instead, we reuse the treated water. We adhere to a strict zero-discharge policy—nothing from our factory is released into rivers or the external environment.

Moreover, we avoid using chemicals in our paints that are harmful to the environment. Most of the ingredients we use are globally recognised and eco-friendly. The strong chemical odour often associated with painting—we are actively working to reduce that. We are incorporating fragrance, making our

R. N. PAUL

Managing Director,
RFL Group

to exist in the future. Domestic usage, in particular, is not affected by political situations. If someone constructs a new building, it must be painted. If the real estate sector slows, consumption might decline slightly, but the underlying requirement for paint will persist.

Secondly, from a financial perspective—Bangladesh's economic reform is indeed progressing; it is not regressing.

There was a time when automobiles were imported fully assembled. Now, we are manufacturing many of their components—including the bodies—here in Bangladesh. Two-wheelers, three-wheelers, and various other vehicles are now being produced locally, and their bodies require painting. Industrial demand for paint is gradually increasing. Moreover, Bangladesh is steadily advancing towards industrialisation.

Previously, we imported finished

Once this is achieved, demand for industrial paint will rise further.

Now, let's talk about marine paint. Ships are now being built in Bangladesh, and some of us are already involved in painting them. In some cases, we collaborate with foreign partners. We are actively pursuing partnerships with globally renowned companies that manufacture marine paint for ocean-going vessels. For instance, Rainbow Paint is preparing to begin joint manufacturing with a well-reputed international company to produce marine paint in Bangladesh.

Industrial paint is already a well-developed segment. One major area within this segment is powder coating—both liquid and powder-based—and the demand for these is high and steadily growing in Bangladesh. The strength of Rainbow Paint lies in its broad capacity across multiple segments: industrial powder,

for this type of work, and we are also in the process of building our own skilled workforce.

Developing this skill base takes time, but we are making consistent efforts. We aim to offer a full range of variants in interior paints. Several products have already been launched, and more are in the pipeline.

TDS: How do you balance affordability and quality for different market segments?

RNP: When we first entered the market, we imported raw materials and conducted the blending ourselves. Now, we produce many of the raw materials in-house. This represents significant progress and has allowed us to better manage our costs. For example, when we imported pre-packaged materials, we had to factor in a 10% margin. By manufacturing locally, we save that 10%. We do not need to make that

WHY CHOOSE RAINBOW PAINTS?

1. Superior adhesion, UV resistance, weather resistance, corrosion resistance, and long-lasting performance

2. Smooth, elegant finish with easy cleaning and high coverage

3. Environmentally responsible: hazard-free, lead-free, and VOC-free

4. Effective waterproofing and resistance to efflorescence

5. Odour-free and safe for sensitive indoor environments



MORE THAN COLOUR

How to choose paint that fits your life

AYMAN ANIKA

In Dhaka's ever-expanding skyline, where apartments compete for light, heat, and breath, paint is not just the final touch—it's the invisible layer that makes a house livable. However, we don't talk about it enough. We obsess over floor tiles and kitchen backsplashes but settle for "off-white" on every wall. Yet paint touches everything. It colours our moods. It shapes our air. It either soothes us or suffocates us.

The mistake most people make is thinking paint is just colour. It's not. As Gazi Md. Saiful Alam, Brand Executive at Dulux Paints Bangladesh, puts it, "Paint today is more than just colour; in reality, it's chemistry. The kind you choose isn't just about the finish. It's about fit."

Hence, understanding the role of paint, room by room, can make all the difference in creating a home that's not just stylish but healthy, functional, and expressive.

When colour has to care

Children's bedrooms are often painted with pastel optimism, chosen more for aesthetics than function. Yet this is the one room where paint does more than beautify—it protects.

Alam advises parents to opt for water-based acrylic emulsions, which are breathable, low in odour, and safe for sensitive users. "They're often preferred in bedrooms, living rooms, and children's spaces where comfort and safety matter most," he says.

Soft greens, light blues, and dusty pinks offer

a comforting palette while calming the nervous system. Nadia Rahman, who frequently designs nurseries and kid-friendly spaces, notes, "Comfort has a colour language. And it can be both soothing and imaginative when used intentionally."

Rajesh Sircar, General Manager of Nippon Paint Bangladesh, adds that modern concerns have shifted toward wellbeing. "Our Spotless Plus range includes antiviral and antibacterial properties that address the need for healthier indoor air quality, especially in spaces used by children," he explains.

The teenage room: Where mood meets paint Teenagers often want black walls and dramatic colours. While many parents hesitate, design experts say it's about finding a balance and controlled expression.

Dark greens, deep blues, and clay-inspired earth tones often strike the right balance between personality and longevity. Alam advises testing such tones under natural daylight, as Bangladesh's overcast monsoon light can dramatically alter how paint appears indoors.

Shayaan Seraj, Director of Aqua Paints, notes that their InstaColor system and AI-based shade recommendations help teenagers and homeowners alike visualise colours in their actual environment. "We're empowering homeowners with tools that make colour personal. Whether it's a soft grey for sophistication or a rich maroon for drama, the idea is to help people connect with their space," he says.

SEE PAGE J5

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EMPOWERING HOMEOWNERS

with Tools that Make Colour Personal

The Daily Star (TDS): How would you assess the current state of Bangladesh's paint industry, and what policy or market-level interventions are essential to unlock its next phase of growth?

Shayaan Seraj (SS): Bangladesh's paint market is valued at over BDT 6,000 crore, led by Berger (65%),

Middle East, and Africa if duty structures allow.

TDS: How is your company responding to the growing demand for personalised and aesthetic paint solutions?

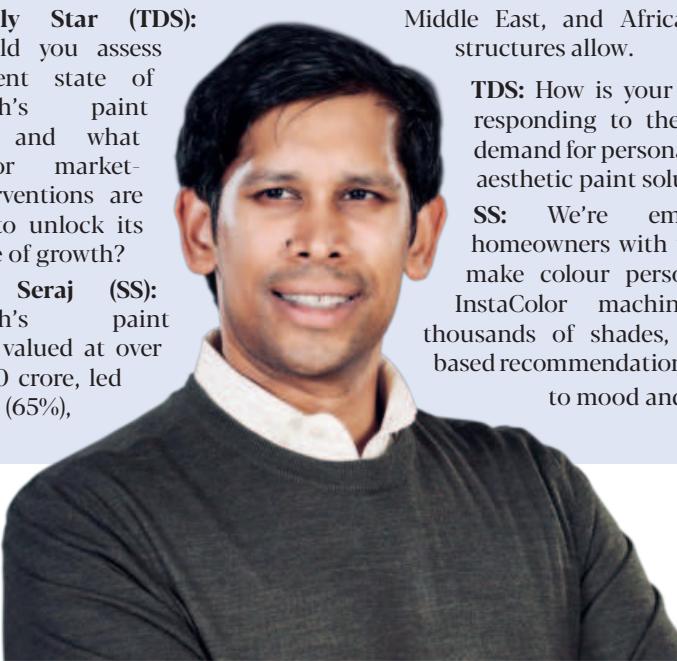
SS: We're empowering homeowners with tools that make colour personal. Our

InstaColor machines offer thousands of shades, with AI-based recommendations tailored to mood and lighting.

from 8 to 16 taka. We see demand across the spectrum, and we've built a portfolio that offers quality at every price point—from entry-level economy paints to ultra-premium emulsions.

What matters is reliability. Whether applied in a city apartment or a coastal home, our paints are made to perform and endure.

TDS: What key innovations is your company prioritising to maintain a competitive edge in the rapidly evolving paint and home improvement sector?



SHAYAAN SERAJ

Director of Aqua Paints, Octagon Fibres & Chemicals, a unit of Elite Group

Asian Paints (15%), Nippon and Nerolac (5% each), and others including Aqua Paints at around 2%.

Despite growing urbanisation and housing demand, per capita paint use remains just 1.2 to 1.5 kg—far below India's 4.2 kg or the global average of 15 kg.

The World Bank's GDP growth forecast signals a positive outlook for construction and renovation activity. For local manufacturers, real growth will come from policy reform. Aqua Paints, through Aqua Resins and Emulsions, produces high grade binders that can support exports to South Asia, the

We also provide on-site sampling, 2D/3D visual mock-ups, and textured finishes such as fairface or exposed brick to support modern interior trends.

Our aim is to help customers express identity through colour—whether it's sophistication in grey, serenity in the many shades of white, or warmth in rustic tones.

TDS: How do you balance affordability and quality for different market segments?

SS: Our products range from 6 to 24 taka per square foot, while labour costs vary

SS: We're advancing eco-conscious options like low-VOC paints, anti-saline coatings for coastal zones, and elastomeric roof compounds that reflect heat and resist monsoons. To elevate the customer experience, we envision using Oakley smart glasses and Oculus headsets for immersive pre-paint simulations.

Internationally, we are pursuing certification through Malaysia's SIRIM QAS and collaborating with experts such as Professor Ian Hamilton of UCL to align paint performance with sustainable building design.

Our InstaColor machines offer thousands of shades, with AI-based recommendations tailored to mood and lighting. We also provide on-site sampling, 2D/3D visual mock-ups, and textured finishes such as fairface or exposed brick to support modern interior trends.

Our aim is to help customers express identity through colour—whether it's sophistication in grey, serenity in the many shades of white, or warmth in rustic tones.

WHY CHOOSE AQUA PAINTS?

1. InstaColor Tinting – Thousands of colours instantly available, with AI-powered shade recommendations.

2. High-Emulsion Primers & Sealers – Enhanced surface bonding and protection, particularly effective in humid regions.

3. Eco-Friendly Formulations

- Low-VOC paints made with safer materials, supporting greener buildings.

4. Durability by Design – Lifespan of 5-10 years, depending on application and surface condition.

5. Specialised Coatings – Includes anti-saline solutions, elastomeric roof paints, textured decorative finishes, and thermoplastic hot-melt road markings.

"Driven by rapid urbanisation and a growing appetite for global design, homeowners are moving away from functional painting toward thoughtful expression," said Syed Salahuddin Abu Naser, Business Director of Dulux Paints Bangladesh, ACI Formulations Limited. "Today's question isn't just 'what colour to use'—it's 'what feeling should this wall evoke?'"

Getting expert help without breaking the bank

A growing number of consumers are turning to professionals or digital tools to help choose colours and finishes.

Berger Paints' Experience Zone (BEZ), currently operating in 17 locations with plans to expand nationwide, serves as a one-stop hub for expert guidance. "These centres offer a unified platform for colour advice, surface evaluation, and access to our Express Painting Service," said Md Mohsin Habib Chowdhury. "From shade selection to surface preparation and professional application, we ensure a cleaner, faster, and higher-quality finish," he added.

Asian Paints, too, offers end-to-end solutions. "Through initiatives like Beautiful Homes and ColourNext, we provide end-to-end solutions from selection to execution, helping customers visualise and realise their dream spaces," said Budhaditya Mukherjee of Asian Paints.

And these services aren't reserved only for the wealthy.

"Though they may seem like a luxury, many are free or come at a nominal cost with paint purchases, ensuring even budget-conscious customers benefit," added Md Mohsin.

Digital tools are also transforming the consumer experience. The Dulux Visualizer App, a global benchmark in AR-based colour previewing, is being assessed for a local rollout—customised for Bangladeshi homes, habits, and hardware. Similarly, Nippon Paint's i-Colour App allows users to digitally preview colours on their own walls, making the selection process more personal and confident.

With increasing access to digital tools, professional services, and diverse product lines, homeowners no longer have to compromise. In a world where every colour tells a story, your walls deserve the right voice—one that speaks to your lifestyle, lasts through the seasons, and stays within your means.

Choosing the Right Paint for Your Budget and Style

But affordability doesn't always mean going cheap. A common mistake is choosing the lowest-priced option without considering long-term costs," said one industry expert. "A basic paint may need reapplication in two years, while a premium coat could last five or more."

SAHIBULLAH AFSARI

Painting one's home is no longer just about freshening up walls. In today's world—where a vibrant cultural legacy intersects with modern living—choosing paint has evolved into a personal, emotional, and financial decision. Whether it's a modest flat in Dhaka or a family home in the countryside, homeowners are increasingly weighing budget constraints against aesthetic ambitions to make smarter, longer-lasting choices.

Budget first, brand later

The cost of painting a home varies widely, depending on paint type, surface area, and labour charges. For many middle-income families, setting a budget is the starting point. Responding to this reality, brands like Berger, Aqua, Asian Paints, Aqua Paints, Nippon, and Roxy have developed tiered product portfolios, ranging from economy options to premium finishes—ensuring homeowners can find solutions that match both their tastes and their means.

But affordability doesn't always mean going cheap. "A common mistake is choosing the lowest-priced option

without considering long-term costs," said one industry expert. "A basic paint may need reapplication in two years, while a premium coat could last five or more."

Md Mohsin Habib Chowdhury, COO & Director of Berger Paints Bangladesh Limited, emphasised the importance of innovation in keeping quality affordable. "Maintaining affordability amid rising input costs requires operational discipline and innovation across the value chain. Our goal is to make quality paint accessible to every homeowner, reinforcing our commitment to dependable, high-performance solutions that enhance living spaces across all income levels," he said.

Budhaditya Mukherjee, Regional Head of Asian Paints International Limited, echoed the sentiment: "We maintain a tiered product portfolio that caters to diverse income groups. From economy emulsions to premium finishes, we ensure that quality is never compromised. This approach allows homeowners across the spectrum to access durable, aesthetically pleasing solutions that fit their budgets."

Rajesh Sircar, General Manager of Nippon Paint Bangladesh, added that

the company's wide range addresses everyone from price-sensitive buyers to those seeking high-end finishes. "We offer a broad portfolio catering to every budget—value-for-money options to premium solutions," he noted.

Shayaan Seraj, Director of Aqua Paints (Octagon Fibres & Chemicals, a unit of Elite Group), added practical numbers. He said, "Our products range from Tk 6 to Tk 24 per square foot, while labour costs vary from Tk 8 to Tk 16. We've built a portfolio that offers quality at every price point."

Understanding paint types and their purpose

In a country where humidity, salinity, and seasonal extremes affect wall health, choosing the right paint type is crucial. Emulsion paints are widely recommended for their durability and smooth finish—ideal for living rooms and bedrooms. However, they're pricier than distempers, which remain a cost-effective option for low-traffic areas.

To meet diverse needs, paint companies now offer specialised solutions—from anti-saline coatings for coastal areas and low-VOC (volatile organic compound) paints for eco-conscious consumers, to elastomeric

room of paints that reflect heat and resist monsoon wear.

"What matters is reliability," said Shayaan Seraj. "Whether it's a city apartment or a coastal home, paints should be made to perform and endure."

Weather-resistant acrylics, though costlier, are the go-to for exterior walls due to their longevity and ability to resist fungal growth. For interiors, low-VOC or odourless paints are gaining popularity—especially among families with children or elderly members—for their health benefits.

The psychology of colour meets personal taste

Paint is also an emotional choice. Colour can define a room's mood and a homeowner's personality. While practical concerns like durability and maintenance play a role, personal expression has become a central theme.



LIFESTYLE-DRIVEN PAINT

Solutions Combining Style and Function

The Daily Star (TDS): How would you assess the current state of Bangladesh's paint industry, and what policy or market level interventions are essential to unlock its next phase of growth?

Rajesh Sircar (RS): The paint industry in Bangladesh is growing steadily due to urbanisation, infrastructure projects, and a rising middle class investing in quality homes and commercial spaces.



as Spotless Plus (antiviral), Q-Glo, and Easy Wash provide beautiful, easy-to-maintain finishes. The i Colour App allows customers to visualise colours digitally on their own walls, enhancing personalisation. On the exterior, Weatherbond Ultimate, WB Solareflect, and WB Dirt Shield deliver both aesthetics and durability, including heat-reflective and self-cleaning benefits.

TDS: How do you balance affordability and quality for different market

Our WPCC waterproofing range complements all tiers with solutions ranging from cost-effective to premium, ensuring waterproofing protection across all customer segments.

TDS: What key innovations is your company prioritising to maintain a competitive edge in the rapidly evolving paint and home improvement sector?

RS: Innovation lies at the heart of our strategic approach. Our Spotless Plus product is designed with advanced antiviral and antibacterial properties, addressing the growing demand for healthier living environments. We are committed to promoting well-being through low-VOC and

Innovation lies at the heart of our strategic approach. Our Spotless Plus product is designed with advanced antiviral and antibacterial properties, addressing the growing demand for healthier living environments.

Demand for both decorative and protective coatings is expanding rapidly.

Key factors for growth include innovation in product performance (functionality, warranty, aesthetics, durability, waterproofing, eco-friendliness), skilled applicators, sustainable practices, wider distribution, and regulatory compliance to boost consumer confidence and enable export potential.

TDS: How is your company responding to the growing demand for personalised and aesthetic paint solutions?

RS: Nippon Paint Bangladesh offers lifestyle-driven solutions that combine style and function. Premium interior options such

segments?

RS: We offer a broad portfolio catering to every budget:

- Price-sensitive customers can choose Easy Coat distemper and Nippocem Cement Paint—reliable and affordable options that offer good basic protection.
- The value-for-money segment is served by Smart Coat, Sakura, and Samurai—offering enhanced performance and attractive finishes at accessible prices.
- For premium buyers, products like Spotless Plus, Q-Glo, Weatherbond Ultimate Shine, and WB Solareflect deliver advanced features, durability, and beauty.

lead-safe formulations, ensuring safer indoor air quality.

For exterior applications, products such as WB Solareflect help reduce heat absorption, enhancing energy efficiency, while WB Dirt-Shield offers superior resistance to dirt, keeping surfaces cleaner for an extended period.

Waterproofing innovations include Flex 200 Fibre Pro, Elastex 3-in-1, CMFlexible 2K, and Salt Wash, Damp Proof Sealer & Putty—all designed to address Bangladesh's climate challenges. Digital tools like the i Colour App and extensive painter training programmes ensure a better customer experience and improved application quality.

WHY CHOOSE NIPPON PAINTS?

1. Durability & Weather Resistance - Nippon's flagship exterior system, WB Basecoat + Weatherbond Ultimate Shine, offers up to 15 years of performance warranty.

2. Heat-Reflective & Energy-Saving - With WB Solareflect and Flex 200 Fibre Pro, Nippon reduces surface temperatures by up to 5-10°C.

3. Anti-Microbial Protection - Interior paints—Spotless Plus, Q-GLO, and Easywash—are formulated with anti-

viral and anti-bacterial properties.

4. Anti-Dirt & Anti-Carbonation Technology - Weatherbond Dirt Shield features an anti-carbonation and dirt pick-up resistant formula.

5. Comprehensive Waterproofing System - Nippon's waterproofing products, featuring hydroflex technology, fibre-reinforced coatings, cementitious barriers, and moisture-blocking sealers, offer multi-layered defence against damp, cracks, leaks, and salinity.

More than colour: How to choose paint that fits your life



The smartest homes don't follow colour trends. They follow context. They consider light, air, function, and feeling. And once you begin to see paint not as decoration but as a living part of your space, you'll approach it with the respect and curiosity it deserves.

FROM PAGE J3

The bedroom: A private retreat

Bedrooms demand rest, and paint choices should encourage that. Cool tones like powder blue, lavender, or warm grey promote calm. Matte or eggshell finishes create a soft, tactile quality that feels restful at the end of the day.

Rahman advises clients to avoid glossy finishes here. "Bedrooms should feel like retreats. You don't want your walls bouncing light and energy when you're trying to wind down."

For those sensitive to odours or allergens, low-VOC or VOC-free paints are a must. "A freshly painted room should feel like a fresh start—not a health risk," Alam warns.

Paint that does more

In a tropical country like Bangladesh, paint must perform under stress. High UV, heavy monsoons, and urban pollution put walls under pressure year-round.

Seraj says Aqua Paints is focusing on "elastomeric roof compounds that reflect heat and resist monsoons," while Sircar

highlights WB Solareflect, a heat-reducing exterior paint by Nippon that helps reduce energy use by minimising heat absorption.

Alam adds that premium paints are built for endurance. "They contain finer pigments, stronger binders, and additives that turn a painted surface into a performance surface. The cheapest paint often becomes the most expensive over time once you factor in repainting and maintenance."

Avoiding common paint mistakes

Experts agree that poor application ruins good paint. Skipping primers, ignoring surface preparation, testing shades under artificial light, or choosing colours based on memory are common errors.

Rahman stresses that supervision is crucial. "If your painter is choosing the paint and mixing colours from memory, you've already lost control of your project."

Alam adds, "Without proper oversight, shortcuts become standard practice—and they'll show up on your walls soon enough."

What a wall says about a home

Every wall in your home tells a story—not just to guests, but to the people who live there every day. Children touch it. Teens lean against it. We hang memories on it. And when we get it wrong, we feel it—even if we can't name the discomfort.

The smartest homes don't follow colour trends. They follow context. They consider light, air, function, and feeling. And once you begin to see paint not as decoration but as a living part of your space, you'll approach it with the respect and curiosity it deserves.

As Alam says, "Paint isn't just how your home looks—it's how it breathes, protects, and nurtures your family through every season. In Bangladesh's demanding climate, that's a decision worth mastering."

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Water-Based Technology

Instead of harsh chemical solvents, eco-paints use water as the base, making them safer to apply and quicker to dry.



Odour-Free Application

Release minimal chemical fumes, making them low-odour and ensuring a more pleasant experience both during and after application.



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Leading brands ensure recyclable packaging and energy-efficient manufacturing processes to minimise environmental impact.



GHG & Formaldehyde Absorption

Actively absorb greenhouse gas (GHG) and formaldehyde from the air, purifying indoor environments.



Low-VOC Content

Made with low or zero volatile organic compounds (VOCs), reducing toxic fumes and improving indoor air quality.



Durable & Long-Lasting

Many sustainable coatings are resistant to stains, dust, and moisture, reducing the need for frequent repainting and waste.

MIFTAHL JANNAT

In a country like Bangladesh, where urban air pollution is already a growing concern, what if the walls inside your home were contributing to the problem too? Unbeknownst to many, traditional paints can silently release harmful chemicals into indoor air, sometimes for years after application.

Eco-friendly paints are emerging as the new standard within the paint industry, driven not by aesthetics alone but by the urgent need for safer indoor environments. "Paint is still perceived primarily as decorative, when in fact it can contribute to air quality, surface protection, and long-term structural value," said Syed Salahuddin Abu Naser, Business Director of Dulux Paints Bangladesh.

Shades of care

As awareness grows around healthier living environments and sustainability, more Bangladeshi homeowners, architects, and developers are turning to eco-friendly paints, and the paint industry is responding with greener alternatives. Leading brands have embedded health benefits into its products.

For instance, Nippon's Spotless

Plus, Q-Glo, Easywash interior paints boast antiviral and antibacterial properties. For exteriors, they offer WB Dirt Shield, specially designed with superior dirt resistance to help maintain the cleanliness and hygiene of your home's outer surfaces. "We are committed to promoting well-being through low-VOC and lead-safe formulations, ensuring safer indoor air quality," added Rajesh Sircar, General Manager at Nippon Paint Bangladesh.

Berger Paints Bangladesh is taking this one step further. "We are reimagining what paint should stand for—as a product, a process, and a platform for responsible progress," explained Md Mohsin Habib Chowdhury, COO & Director of the company. Berger's flagship innovation, EcoCoat, is marketed as South Asia's first anti-pollution paint.

Using advanced Air Purifying Hybrid (APH) Technology, EcoCoat actively absorbs and neutralises pollutants like carbon dioxide, nitrogen oxides, and formaldehyde, which results in up to 90% improved indoor air quality, according to the company's research. The paint is entirely lead-free and formulated with green-certified biocides, offering safe choice for families

conscious of the air they live in. Similarly, companies like Aqua Paints, Asians Paints and Dulux are also increasingly advancing low-VOC content paints focusing on indoor wellness. This shift from traditional to eco-conscious solutions is a response to both consumer awareness and scientific evidence.

Paints containing volatile organic compounds (VOCs), formaldehyde, and heavy-metals such as lead, mercury have long been associated with health risks, ranging from headaches and nausea to long-term respiratory and neurological issues. Eco-friendly paints offer a viable alternative, reducing exposure to these invisible but harmful chemicals.

Good for your walls, great for the planet

Sustainable paints go far beyond being health-friendly, they are engineered for durability, climate resilience, and environmental protection. These next-generation coatings are ideal for Bangladesh's weather extremes, from scorching summers to relentless monsoons.

"We're advancing eco-conscious options like low-VOC paints, anti-saline coatings for coastal zones, and elastomeric roof compounds that reflect heat and resist

monsoons," shared Shayaan Seraj, Director of Aqua Paints. Such innovations not only protect homes from environmental wear and tear but also help regulate indoor temperatures, reducing the need for air conditioning and promoting energy efficiency.

Nippon's WB Solareflect line echoes the same principles. Its Sunblock Technology offers significant heat resistance, helping to lower surface temperatures by up to 5°C. The paint is also twice as resistant to UV damage, dirt, fungus, algae, flaking, and efflorescence. With no added lead or mercury, it balances high performance with environmental safety.

Berger's EcoCoat adds another dimension to sustainability, actively capturing harmful greenhouse and toxic gases. This contributes directly to mitigating climate change. Berger is also phasing out non-green preservatives and transitioning from solvent-based paints to low-VOC, APEO-free, water-based alternatives. "Increasing the share of water-based solutions across our portfolio is a key priority as we align with global sustainability standards and evolving consumer expectations," said the company's director.

Durability also means fewer repaints and reduced environmental strain. Asian Paints Bangladesh's Ultra Nonstick exemplifies this principle, offering a premium dirt-repelling, anti-stain polymer technology that reduces the need for frequent cleaning and repainting. This indirectly supports a healthier indoor environment by minimising chemical use.

Echoing these values, Dulux Paints is expanding its range to include washable, humidity-resistant finishes and eco-conscious ingredients. "Our mission is to make homes in Bangladesh last longer, look better, and breathe safer," said Naser of Dulux Paints. "The Weather Shield Max line is purpose-built—resisting monsoon moisture, urban grime, and fading sunlight."

From heat-reflective coatings to gas-absorbing formulations, sustainable paints are proving to be more than just a green choice, they're a smarter investment for homeowners and the planet alike.

Still unsure? Feel the finish firsthand

Paint companies are also crafting immersive experiences that allow customers to visualise colours on their walls long before a brush ever touches the surface. "We envision

using Oakley smart glasses and Oculus headsets for immersive pre-paint simulations," mentioned Seraj from Aqua Paints. This push for technology-integrated service aims to help customers preview the final outcome more realistically.

Similarly, Nippon Paint is using digital tools to enhance personalisation. "The i-Colour App lets customers visualise colours digitally on their own walls, enhancing personalisation," explained Sircar of Nippon Paint Bangladesh.

Dulux has also enhanced the customer journey with bilingual shade guides and doorstep sampling, making the process intuitive and inclusive. Additionally, the Dulux Visualiser App—an AR (augmented reality) based colour preview tool—is being evaluated for localised rollout in Bangladeshi homes.

As more people embrace green living, eco-friendly paint is no longer a niche market. It's becoming the new standard. And in a country like Bangladesh—where every square foot counts, and every breath matters—it's a welcome change worth spreading.

HEALTH UPSIDES OF ECO-PAINTS

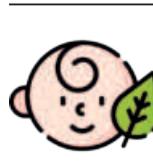
Cleaner Indoor Air

Low or zero-VOC paints reduce airborne toxins and absorb pollutants, making indoor spaces healthier.



Reduced Health Risks

Eco-paints minimise health risks linked to inhaling harmful emissions from traditional paint, which can lead to headaches, dizziness, and respiratory issues.



Child-Safe Environments

For nurseries, schools, or children's rooms, eco-paints provide a safer alternative.



Sensitive by Design

People with asthma or skin sensitivities benefit from the reduced chemical load of green paints.



ILLUSTRATION: SOJIB ROY

BLENDING INNOVATION

with Durability, Aesthetics, and Practicality

The Daily Star (TDS): How would you assess the current state of Bangladesh's paint industry, and what policy or market-level interventions are essential to unlock its next phase of growth?

Budhaditya Mukherjee (BM): Bangladesh's paint industry has grown

in local manufacturing, R&D, and expanding into semi-urban and rural markets.

TDS: How is your company responding to the growing demand for personalised and aesthetic paint solutions?

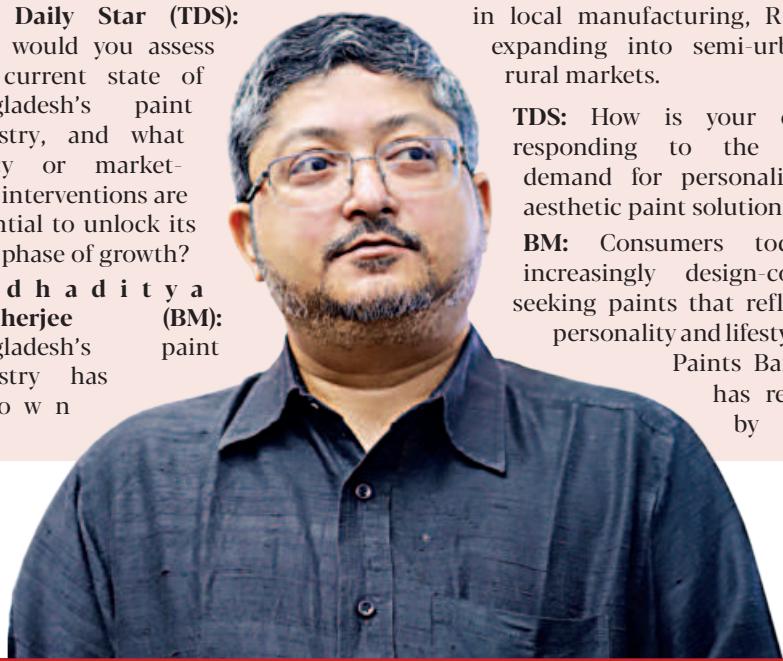
BM: Consumers today are increasingly design-conscious, seeking paints that reflect their personality and lifestyle. Asian Paints Bangladesh has responded by offering

diverse income groups. From economy emulsions to premium finishes, the company ensures that quality is never compromised. This approach allows homeowners across the spectrum to access durable, aesthetically pleasing solutions that fit their budgets.

TDS: What key innovations is your company prioritising to maintain a competitive edge in the rapidly evolving paint and home improvement sector?

BM: Asian Paints Bangladesh has redefined the premium segment with the launch of Ultra Nonstick—the

Through initiatives like Beautiful Homes and ColourNext, the company provides end-to-end solutions—from colour selection to execution—ensuring that customers can visualise and realise their dream spaces.



BUDHADITYA MUKHERJEE

Regional Head, Asian Paints International Limited

steadily and is now valued at around BDT 6,000 crore, with a projected annual growth rate of 6%. This expansion is fuelled by rapid urbanisation, infrastructure development, and a rising middle class. However, the sector still faces challenges such as high dependency on imported raw materials and limited local production capacity.

To unlock further growth, the industry must focus on increasing per capita paint consumption—currently lower than that of regional peers—while also investing

curated colour palettes, textured finishes, and personalised consultation services. Through initiatives like Beautiful Homes and ColourNext, the company provides end-to-end solutions—from colour selection to execution—ensuring that customers can visualise and realise their dream spaces.

TDS: How do you balance affordability and quality for different market segments?

BM: Asian Paints Bangladesh maintains a tiered product portfolio that caters to

country's first nonstick paint—available for both interiors and exteriors. The interior variant offers Anti-Stain Polymer Technology, a 5x smoother finish, and 2x more sheen for a refined, easy-to-maintain look. The exterior version features Dirt Pick-Up Resistance and Weather Guard Technology, protecting walls from dust, algae, and harsh weather. Both come with a 5-year performance warranty, reflecting our commitment to innovation that blends durability, aesthetics, and everyday practicality.

WHY CHOOSE ASIAN PAINTS?

1. Advanced Non-Stick Technology – Asian Paints' latest interior and exterior range features cutting-edge anti-stain and dirt-repellent technology, ensuring surfaces stay cleaner for longer with minimal maintenance.

2. Weather Guard & Self-Cleaning Exterior – Powered by UV cross-linking and DPUR technology, the exterior variant forms a durable shield that resists dirt adhesion, enables water beading, and provides long-lasting

protection against harsh weather conditions.

3. Superior Aesthetic Finish – With a soft sheen and ultra-smooth finish, the interior paint offers some of the brightest shades in the premium category.

4. Maximum Coverage & Hiding Power – Designed for efficiency, both interior and exterior variants outperform regular plastic paints by offering greater coverage and superior opacity, reducing the number of coats needed.

5. 5-Year Performance Warranty

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