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> **"Leadership is defined by more than market share; it's about innovation and trust. Berger is transforming the industry from selling colour to providing essential protection for a resilient Bangladesh.**

DRIVING INNOVATION IN THE PAINT MARKET

Berger Paints Bangladesh Limited leads the market by providing innovative coating solutions to safeguard national infrastructure. In this interview Md Mohsin Habib Chowdhury, COO and Director of Berger, explains how they enhance living spaces through sustainable, customer-centric and professional home improvement services and expertise.

The Daily Star (TDS): Bangladesh's paint industry is closely linked with construction, housing and infrastructure. How would you assess the current state and long-term potential of the sector?

Md. Mohsin Habib Chowdhury (MMHC): Bangladesh's paint industry, valued over Tk 6,000 crore, is vital for protecting physical assets against deterioration. Despite current economic pressures, supplementary duty increases, and inflationary challenges, the long-term potential remains immense. Bangladesh's per-capita paint consumption is under 2 kg, significantly lower than regional neighbours like India and Sri Lanka. As urbanisation accelerates, Berger aims to drive growth by raising application standards, strengthening backward linkages, and promoting paint as an essential protective tool for sustainable development.

TDS: How has consumer buying behaviour changed in Bangladesh's paint market recently?

MMHC: Painting has transitioned from a functional necessity to a lifestyle choice. Consumers are value-conscious and design-orientated, seeking personalised living spaces that reflect their personality, taste, and sense of identity. Homeowners now prioritise trusted brands that offer durability, professional guidance, and seamless, end-to-end service experiences. They seek an accountable, one-stop solution for colour selection and application rather than dealing with separate parties for different tasks.

TDS: How has Berger responded to this shift from paint as a product to painting as a complete solution?

MMHC: Berger has built a holistic ecosystem through "Berger Experience Zones", offering one-stop painting solutions. We provide professional services like Express Painting, Illusions for artistic finishes, and FurniFab for furniture finishing solutions at the customer's premises with professional handling. Our Berger Design Studio offers interior solutions led by architects. By integrating high-quality products with expert application, we transform painting into a professional experience that enhances the longevity and aesthetic value of homes.

TDS: What are the most important innovations Berger is investing in right now?

MMHC: We are investing Tk 980 crore in a third automated factory at Mirsarai to boost efficiency and supply reliability. Innovation also includes creating our own emulsions and special textile chemical solutions to help the ready-made garment (RMG) sector. Berger pioneered lead-free paints and introduced EcoCoat, an anti-pollution paint. We are also professionalising the trade through the Berger Training Institute and the Shomporko Painters Club, reducing import dependence while supporting manufacturing resilience and national industrial growth.

TDS: Berger is the market leader in Bangladesh's paint industry. How would you describe the company's current position and portfolio?

MMHC: Holding a lion's share in decorative paints, Berger's leadership is defined by innovation and distribution strength. One of our significant investments is the Tk 980 crore factory at the National Special Economic Zone. Our portfolio serves both B2C and B2B segments, including specialised marine, industrial, vehicle refinish, and powder coatings. The Shomporko Painters Club, with over 65,000 registered painters, allows us to deliver value. We shape industry trends by offering integrated, service-led solutions to consumers.

BERGER'S CAPACITY BUILDING

- Investing Tk. 980 Cr. (approx.) to build a state-of-the-art 3rd factory.
- Investing in a new plant for Ink manufacturing.
- Opened a new production line for powder coating.
- Investing in a new plant for packaging under J&N.
- Working on emulsion technology as part of backward integration.

TDS: Bangladesh still depends heavily on imported raw materials for paint manufacturing. What needs to happen to reduce this dependence?

MMHC: Reducing import dependence requires a robust industrial ecosystem, including local production of resins, pigments, additives, and speciality chemicals. It necessitates national policy support for petrochemicals, resin manufacturing, and testing infrastructure. Following the success of the textile sector, developing backward linkages should be a priority. Localising the supply chain will reduce foreign exchange pressure, create employment, and enhance the overall competitiveness of Bangladesh's manufacturing sector as a whole.

TDS: Looking three to five years ahead, what would make you say Bangladesh's paint industry has truly matured?

MMHC: A mature industry will see paint recognised as a value-preserving material rather than just decoration. We expect standardised application methods, skilled professionals, and mainstream sustainability with eco-friendly products. Finally, a mature sector will feature strong backward linkage industries. Berger remains committed to leading this transformation, moving the industry toward national value creation, from colour to protection, and helping build a more sustainable and resilient Bangladesh with end-to-end solutions.

Interview conducted by **Tagabun Taharim Titun**

Coatings for a new era

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To mitigate these risks, players are doubling down on backward linkage. Shayaan Seraj, Group Director of Aqua Paints, notes that global volatility in oil and freight prices has made local manufacturing essential. "Aqua Paints mitigates this through backward linkage—manufacturing resins and emulsions locally, which improves supply reliability and margin control," Seraj explains. He adds that for the industry to truly mature, policy support must favor raw material imports over semi-finished products to encourage true local value addition and technical self-reliance.

THE SHIFT TO SOLUTION-CENTRIC CONSUMPTION

One of the most notable trends in recent years is the change in how Bangladeshis buy paint. Exposure to global design trends through social media and rising income levels have turned painting into a lifestyle decision. Consumers are moving away from dealing with separate parties for products and labor, seeking instead a seamless one-stop experience.

Asian Paints, the second-largest player in the market, has seen this shift firsthand. KSM Minhaj, Country Director of Asian Paints Bangladesh, observes that paint is now viewed as an "emotional investment." According to Minhaj, "Consumers are no longer just buying a flat; they want to create a space that reflects their identity, comfort, and taste. This shift has directly changed buyer expectations, moving from basic decorative paints to advanced, functional coatings."

To meet these needs, Berger has introduced "Experience Zones" and interior design studios, while Asian Paints leverages a global research division of over 200 scientists to introduce innovations like "Nonstick Paint" and advanced waterproofing solutions (WPCC). This service-led model is reflected in Asian Paints' high Net Promoter Score (NPS) of 93%, indicating that brand trust is now driven by the quality of the end-to-end service rather than just the product in the tin.

SUSTAINABILITY AND THE DIGITAL FRONTIER

As the industry looks toward the next five years, sustainability and technology are becoming the new benchmarks of maturity. The market is gradually transitioning toward eco-friendly, lead-free, and low-VOC (Volatile Organic Compound) products. Berger, which pioneered lead-free paints in 2012, continues to innovate with anti-pollution coatings like EcoCoat.

Innovation is also taking a digital turn. Aqua Paints has introduced the AI-powered ColorSense platform to simplify color selection for consumers. "We focus on anti-corrosive steel coatings, flexible elastomeric roofing for waterproofing, and high-performance binders," says Shayaan Seraj, highlighting how advanced chemistry is being blended with digital tools to improve user experience.

Ultimately, a mature industry will be judged by its ecosystem. This includes standardised application methods, a professionalised workforce of skilled painters, and a robust local supply chain. As Minhaj concludes, success in this evolving landscape depends on delivering solutions that enhance visual appeal while ensuring long-term durability and surface protection. For Bangladesh's paint giants, the mission has moved beyond selling color into building a resilient, sustainable future for the nation's physical assets.