



Rajan Ahluwalia stands beside a mountain of waste which will be recycled in his factory, (right). — KT photos by Mukesh Kamal

Recycling paper for charity

By Sheena Shahani

WRAPPING a gift for someone you love might also help bring cheer to victims of a life-threatening blood disorder.

If you are buying a gift at Al Ghurair City during the holy month of Ramadan you may have it beautifully gift-wrapped for a cause, as part of the charge will be donated to benefit thalassaemics.

The gift-wrapping paper, made out of recycled materials, is supplied by the Oasis Paper Industry, which will give 30 per cent of the charge to the Emirates Thalassaemia Society.

Rajan Ahluwalia, who claims to have set up the first rags-to-paper recycling plant in Dubai last year, is a green to the core. His love for the environment began when he was a child in Mumbai. As a nature lover, he'd go for long treks, mountain hiking and cycle trips.

"We were five siblings born one behind the other, and rotated our text books," he recalled. "When the school year was finished, we'd take the unused pages of exercise books and have them bound to be used for the following year."

Later in Chandigarh, he started

the Yuv Satta NGO which employs 80 ragpickers who collect rubbish from 40,000 flats each morning. The rubbish is brought to a centralised depot, where the organic and inorganic material is sorted and segregated, and sold. The society charges the householders for the collection of their garbage, and pays the ragpickers a salary, which is supplemented by the income from selling the reusable items such as glass, cans, plastic, paper, etc.

Mr Ahluwalia thought of setting up the Oasis factory in Dubai last year, because it made both environmental and commercial sense. The processes he has adopted are environment-friendly, with

nothing being wasted, including water.

A visit to his factory in Al Quoz convinces anybody that recycled paper looks and feels good, and is great to wrap gifts and to make gift boxes, envelopes and stationery items. It can even be used as art material for collage work.

Recycled paper looks classy, elegant and dressy for the festival season, and comes in various textures, thicknesses, colours and special effects such as crinkled, metallic, crushed, iceberg, etc. After dealing with piles of orders for sweet boxes, and gift wrapping paper for Diwali, the factory is now handling orders for Ramadan and Eid, and after that for

Christmas and New Year.

Corporations place orders for diaries, greeting cards, note paper, shopping bags and envelopes made from recycled paper.

Sweet shops order boxes in wholesale, while florists prefer the recycled paper for bouquets, and art material suppliers stock them for their customers. The variety of its uses are endless: picture frames, coasters, lampshades, sun screens, book marks, certificates, business cards, etc. For a minimum order, the factory undertakes to "create" — not manufacture — personalised items.

The basic raw material for Oasis Paper Industry is rags from textile mills. Mountains of rags lie inside the factory premises. "Supplies for the next 18 months", said Mr Ahluwalia.

The various steps in the process of recycled (partly handmade) paper are sorting and dusting of raw materials (rags and papers separated by colour), rag shredding, beating into a pulp with water and chemicals, moulding, dipping, colouring, drying (either under the sun or indoors) calendering or straightening and cutting.

Waste-recycling plant opened

By a staff reporter

HASSAN Makki, Head of Wastes Services Section at the Dubai Municipality, has opened a waste recycling project at Imam Malik School in Dubai recently. The opening ceremony was conducted in the presence of Essa Al Ghafari, Head of Deira Operation Unit at Wastes Services Section, and Mohammed Hassan, Principal of Imam Malik School.

The project aims at making students active participants in the community-based programmes like the wastes recycling. Mr Al Ghafari gave a speech on the ways of recycling wastes at the meeting which was attended by over 150 students and teachers.