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DR. MD SABUR KHAN

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Dr. Md. Sabur Khan (CIP), a distinguished entrepreneur and educationist, has significantly impacted Bangladesh's business and academic spheres as Chairman of Daffodil International University (DIU) and the Daffodil Family. He's pioneered the IT industry, led DIU's synergy between education and business, and held key positions globally. Dr. Khan's excellence has been celebrated with numerous accolades, including the "Commercially Important Person" (CIP) status from the Government of Bangladesh, alongside a series of honorary Doctorates, D.Lit awards, and Professorships. As the Managing Director of Global Entrepreneurship Network (GEN) Bangladesh and the President of the Association of Universities of Asia and the Pacific (AUAP) for 2023-24, he continues to spearhead entrepreneurship and educational innovation. Committed to societal advancement, he's instrumental in initiatives like the Daffodil Foundation and DISS, actively developing entrepreneurs of Bangladesh. Dr. Khan's visionary leadership cements him as a driving force for change and progress.

From Business Brillianz, we had the privilege of meeting this visionary leader, and our editorial team uncovered a wealth of insightful facts.



Could you please share a story about a moment with your father that inspired you to start on your entrepreneurial journey, leading to the founding of Daffodil Computers Ltd. in 1990?

In 1990, I commenced my entrepreneurial journey by establishing Daffodil Computers Ltd. This endeavor was more than just starting a business; it was about fulfilling a dream and creating a positive impact on society. Inspired by my father's determination and driven by a vision to use technology for societal advancement, I entered the world of entrepreneurship. Witnessing my father's entrepreneurial spirit firsthand while growing up left a deep impression on me. Despite facing challenges in his own ventures, he never gave up. His honesty and resilience shaped my own character and values. My mother's patience and wisdom taught valuable lessons, balancing determination, and influencing both my personal and professional life. As I grew older, I embraced both my father's aspirations for me and my own ambitions for the future.

What motivated you to pioneer the IT industry in Bangladesh despite the challenges it posed at the time?

After completing my academic studies, I embarked on my business journey. At that moment, I pondered which sector to enter and realized that my expertise lay in computer science. With this background, I saw an opportunity to expand my knowledge in computer science and share it with others while making a living. As I achieved success in business and received encouragement from my father for leading a team and

making a positive impact, I was motivated to push through challenges and pioneer the IT industry in Bangladesh. Driven by a desire to shape a future where technology empowers younger generations and transforms our world, this passion continues to drive me today.

Could you elaborate on your vision behind expanding the Daffodil Family to encompass both education and business sectors?

In 1995-1996, Daffodil thrived in computer retail, expanded branches, and received praise. Ventured into tenders but faced corruption. Refocused on education in 2002. Continued computer business due to reputation. Aimed to integrate education and entrepreneurship. Believed in ICT's transformative power for societal progress. Empowering individuals to drive meaningful impact and excel in their fields. Commitment to shaping a brighter future through excellence in education and business sectors.

What advice would you offer to young entrepreneurs who struggle to sustain their startup businesses despite possessing MBA degrees and other skills, and what common loopholes do you perceive in their strategies?

Reflecting on my own journey, I recognize that not everyone is cut out to be an entrepreneur. Each individual, regardless of gender, has a unique purpose and disposition—some may be suited to entrepreneurship, while others may thrive in different roles. To succeed as an entrepreneur, certain criteria must be met. One must possess the qualities

of a risk-taker, patience, receptiveness to feedback, and a commitment to continuous learning. I firmly believe in the importance of acquiring new knowledge and maintaining a repository of data for future use. When selecting individuals to lead or become entrepreneurs in my ventures, I prioritize these qualities.

As a successful entrepreneur, what qualities do you believe are essential for aspiring entrepreneurs to possess in order to achieve significant growth?

In my opinion, adaptability is most important. A successful entrepreneur must be able to adapt to any situation. Personally, I have found that without this ability, it would be impossible to grow my business. I make a point of taking notes during meetings and planning meticulously to ensure I can recall important details. Additionally, patience and a willingness to take risks are crucial traits for any entrepreneur.

When you started your manufacturing business, what was the motivation behind this?

I have a keen interest in manufacturing, which is why I acquired a pharmaceutical industry. I am currently collaborating with the previous owner of the pharmaceutical business, as they possess valuable expertise in this industry. I encouraged them to continue working with me, and they are enjoying the partnership. Now, my focus has shifted to the computer industry. I intend to invest my time in this sector, and as part of this effort,

How do you view the importance of team building, and as a leader, what strategies do you employ to inspire and motivate your team to achieve success?

When it comes to team building, you have to be prepared to endure some challenges. Building a team involves working with individuals of varying levels



of professionalism, and it's important to invest time and effort into developing and monitoring their progress. As a successful leader, I inspire my team by setting a positive example, maintaining open communication, and recognizing and rewarding hard work and creativity.

What strategies have you implemented to foster entrepreneurship and educational innovation within Bangladesh and globally?

In Bangladesh and around the world, we're focused on fostering entrepreneurship and innovation in education. We've set up programs to help new entrepreneurs get started and provide them with support and guidance. We've also teamed up with top global organizations to share knowledge and work together on exciting projects.



Our online learning platforms use the latest technology to make learning more engaging and help students explore their entrepreneurial ideas. Plus, we're working closely with industries to make sure our education programs meet the needs of the job market. Our goal is to inspire and prepare the next generation of entrepreneurs and innovators to make a difference locally and globally.

Could you share some insights into your approach to nurturing entrepreneurial talent and fostering innovation within your organization?

My approach involves creating a supportive environment that encourages creative thinking, risk-taking, and continuous learning among our team members. We prioritize providing resources, mentoring, and networking opportunities to help individuals develop and execute their innovative ideas. Personally, I am deeply committed to cultivating new talent for our organization and the broader job market. By empowering more people with the skills and resources they need, we not only create opportunities for employment but also contribute to the overall growth and prosperity of our community.

Throughout my career, I have facilitated job opportunities for thousands of individuals, I view this as a crucial responsibility—one that aligns with my values of compassion and service to others. I believe that by sharing knowledge and creating work opportunities, we can collectively benefit society and foster a more inclusive and prosperous future for all.

How do you prioritize education and training within the Daffodil Group to ensure the development of a skilled workforce?

At the Daffodil Group, we prioritize investment in comprehensive training and development programs designed to enhance both technical expertise and soft skills among our workforce. Our training initiatives cover a wide range of areas, including technical skills relevant to our industry as well as soft skills such as communication, teamwork, and problem-solving.

These programs are essential for ensuring that our employees remain adaptable and well-equipped to tackle emerging challenges and technologies in our rapidly evolving business landscape. By continuously updating and expanding their skill sets, our workforce is better prepared to navigate changes in the

market, embrace new technologies, and contribute effectively to the success of our organization.

Can you tell us about some of the comprehensive CSR initiatives undertaken by the Daffodil Group and their impact on national development?

Our corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives are integral to our commitment to fostering positive change and contributing to national development. We view these initiatives as pathways to profound impact, aiming to address various social challenges and uplift communities across Bangladesh. One of our flagship initiatives is our scholarship program, which provides educational opportunities for deserving students who may not have access to quality education otherwise. By investing in their future, we empower them to break the cycle of



poverty and contribute meaningfully to society.

Our Jeebika Program is another key initiative focused on extending support to underprivileged communities, providing them with essential resources and opportunities for economic empowerment. Through this program, we aim to alleviate poverty and create pathways to sustainable livelihoods for vulnerable populations. By addressing these diverse areas of need, we strive to foster holistic development and create a more inclusive and sustainable future for all Bangladeshis.

How do you balance your roles as an entrepreneur and an educationist, particularly as Chairman of Daffodil International University?

Balancing my roles as both an entrepreneur and an educationist, particularly as Chairman of Daffodil International University, requires careful navigation and a harmonious integration of two distinct yet interconnected domains. It's about finding synergy between my entrepreneurial venture and my commitment to shaping the future of education. Achieving this balance involves meticulous planning and strategic delegation of responsibilities.



As Chairman of Daffodil International University, I prioritize fostering an environment that encourages innovation, critical thinking, and entrepreneurial spirit among students and faculty. By integrating real-world experiences and industry insights into our academic programs, we empower our students to become future leaders and change-makers in their respective fields.

How do you envision the future of Bangladesh's IT sector, particularly in terms of its global competitiveness?

I envision a future where Bangladesh emerges as a global leader in the IT sector, renowned for its innovation, skilled workforce, and competitive edge in the global market. Through continued investment in education, technology infrastructure, and industry collaboration, Bangladesh will position itself as a hub for IT innovation and

outsourcing. With a focus on nurturing talent, fostering entrepreneurship, and leveraging emerging technologies, the country will drive economic growth and create opportunities for both local and global partnerships. Ultimately, Bangladesh's IT sector will play a pivotal role in shaping the country's digital transformation and enhancing its competitiveness on the global stage.

Can you share some of the key challenges you faced during your entrepreneurial journey and how you overcame them?

Throughout my entrepreneurial journey, I encountered several challenges, including market instability, regulatory hurdles, and the need for skilled talent. To overcome these obstacles, we adopted a strategic approach that



involved meticulous planning, continuous learning, and adaptability to evolving market dynamics. By staying abreast of industry trends, leveraging technology to streamline operations, and fostering a culture of innovation within our organization, we were able to navigate through turbulent times and emerge stronger. Additionally, we prioritized building strong partnerships, both locally and globally, to overcome regulatory challenges and expand our market reach. Ultimately, it was our resilience, determination, and commitment to excellence that enabled us to overcome these challenges and achieve sustainable growth.

How do you stay motivated and resilient in the face of adversity?

My motivation stems from a firm belief in the mission and vision of our organization, as well as the profound impact our work can have on society. This unwavering belief fuels my determination to overcome adversity and challenges that we encounter along the way. Resilience, for me, is cultivated through a mindset of learning from failures and setbacks, and keep trying out our goals despite obstacles. By embracing failure as an opportunity for growth, and maintaining a positive outlook even in difficult times, I am able to stay resilient and focused on achieving our mission.

What are your future aspirations for the Daffodil Group, particularly in terms of "Going Global"?

Our future aspirations for the Daffodil Group include expanding our educational and technological services globally. We plan to establish international partnerships and collaborations to offer our innovative solutions and educational programs to a broader audience. By leveraging our expertise and experience, we aim to make a meaningful impact on a global scale, fostering innovation and knowledge exchange across borders.



Could you share some highlights from your numerous accolades and awards received over the years?

Among our array of international recognitions, the "Commercially Important Person" (CIP) status from the Government of Bangladesh stands as a testament to our commitment to driving economic growth and prosperity. This esteemed acknowledgment underscores our dedication to making meaningful contributions to the nation's development. However, the true measure of our success lies in the trust and honor bestowed upon us by the people we serve.



In addition to the CIP status, we've been honored with prestigious accolades such as the Global Inclusion Award for our Financial Literacy Campaign in Bangladesh. This accolade not only highlights our commitment to driving positive change locally but also on a global scale. Additionally, we've received recognition such as The Daily Star ICT Business Person of the Year by the Daily Star, Light of Asia Award by City Montessori School (CMS), India, and the Life Time Achievement Award by Bangladesh Computer Samity and many more. These accolades, along with leadership acknowledgments from BASIS, underscore the collective impact of our efforts at Daffodil Family. They not only recognize personal achievements but also highlight the strides we've made in fostering innovation and entrepreneurship, driving positive change, and leaving a lasting legacy.

How do you ensure continuous learning and adaptation within your organization to stay ahead in the competitive market?

We cultivate a culture of continuous learning and adaptation within our organization by prioritizing feedback, flexibility, and regular training programs. By encouraging open communication and embracing change, we ensure that our team remains agile and responsive to evolving market dynamics. This proactive approach allows us to stay ahead in the competitive market landscape, constantly refining our strategies and leveraging the latest trends and technologies to drive innovation and growth.

What role do you believe technology and innovation play in driving societal progress and development?

Technology and innovation play a pivotal role in driving societal progress by creating economic opportunities and addressing pressing challenges. Through advancements in technology, we can develop innovative solutions that improve efficiency, enhance quality of life, and promote inclusivity. Whether it's through healthcare, education, or environmental sustainability, technology empowers us to make meaningful strides towards a better future for all.

Our young generations have skills lacking compared to other neighboring countries. What should we do to overcome this?

To overcome the skills gap among our young generation compared to neighboring countries, we must embrace a culture of learning from failure and stepping out of our comfort zones. This means recognizing that failure is not the end but an opportunity for growth and learning. By encouraging a mindset that welcomes challenges and sees setbacks as valuable lessons, we can cultivate resilience and adaptability in our youth. Additionally, providing access to quality education and training programs tailored to the demands of the modern workforce is essential. This includes practical, hands-on learning experiences and opportunities for skill development in emerging industries such as technology, innovation, and entrepreneurship. Moreover, fostering collaboration between educational institutions, industry partners, and government bodies can facilitate knowledge exchange and ensure that our youth are equipped with the relevant skills and competencies needed to thrive in a competitive global environment.

What are your thoughts about the heirs of the conglomerates of this country? What they should do to maintain the business.

The heirs of conglomerates in our country must possess adaptability skills to ensure the continuity and success of their family businesses. It's essential for them to embrace change and innovation, adapting to evolving market trends, technological advancements, and shifting consumer preferences. By fostering a culture of continuous learning and growth within the family business, the heirs can effectively navigate challenges and drive sustainable growth for future generations.

What legacy do you hope to leave behind as a leader and entrepreneur in Bangladesh and beyond?

My aspiration is to leave behind a legacy characterized by profound impact, one that resonates with future generations and inspires them to embrace innovation and excellence. I envision a Bangladesh where technology and education converge to propel the nation towards global leadership. Through my leadership and entrepreneurial endeavors, I aim to cultivate a culture of innovation, empowering individuals to harness their potential and drive positive change. Ultimately, I hope to be remembered as a catalyst for transformation, shaping a brighter future for Bangladesh and leaving an indelible mark on the global stage.

What message do you have for the future generations of entrepreneurs and business leaders?

Embrace the transformative power of technology and innovation, but always remember the importance of human connections. In the fast-paced world of business, it's easy to get caught up in the allure of technological advancements, but it's crucial to never lose sight of the human element. Prioritize not only profit but also social impact, recognizing that true success is measured not just by financial gains but also by the positive change you bring to society. Furthermore, I encourage aspiring entrepreneurs and leaders to dream big and pursue their goals with unwavering determination, even when faced with uncertainty and challenges along the way. The path to success is rarely straightforward, and setbacks are inevitable, but it's through perseverance and resilience that great achievements are made.

(The interview was taken by Mirza Mohammad Ileush, Sanjida Rafia, Mehjabin Badhon & Kadiza Al Tahira with the assistance of Muhammad Toufiqul Islam & Amena Hasan Ana of Daffodil Family.)

