

Sheltech thrives on ethical business

Says its managing director

JAGARAN CHAKMA

Integrity, quality construction and timely delivery of projects can bring lasting success and reliability in the real estate business, said Tanvir Ahmed, managing director of Sheltech Group, one of the leading realtors in Bangladesh.

"Taking shortcut in business is not sustainable and ethical. Integrity is the best policy for achieving outstanding success in business," the young businessman said.

Sheltech is one of the pioneers in the real estate and housing industry in Bangladesh and has been delivering quality projects since its inception in 1988. It develops residential flats, shopping centres and commercial buildings.

Till date, Sheltech has completed 170 projects and handed over more than 4,200 flats to customers. It has 25 ongoing projects in different parts of the capital city.

Ahmed took the helm of the company eight months ago after its founder and then managing director Toufiq M Seraj passed away in June.


He is also a director of Envoy Group, which has interests in textile and garment business and boasts the first denim factory in the world that obtained LEED Platinum certification, the highest certification awarded by the US Green Building Council.

"Since the beginning, Sheltech has been committed to quality design and construction. All the buildings of Sheltech have been designed as per the national building codes," Ahmed told The Daily Star in an interview at their corporate office at the Envoy Building on Panthapath recently.

"We have emphasised building structures with quality raw materials and maintaining integrity. The company has been committed to providing quality housing solution from the



Tanvir Ahmed



AT A GLANCE

Founded in 1988

Develops residential flats, shopping centres and commercial buildings

Completed **170** projects so far

Handed over more than **4,200** flats

25 ongoing projects in Dhaka at present

Flat size ranges from **1,300** to **1,500** square feet

Prices range from Tk **5,500** to Tk **6,000** per sqft



beginning. This is the strength of the company."

Each building is capable of withstanding code-specified natural disasters such as earthquake. Not only that, each building is equipped with an emergency fire exit to protect residents from an unlikely event of fire.

In its 32-year business history, Sheltech hasn't received complaints from clients and has no history of lengthy process of delivering projects or flats, Ahmed said.

Sheltech's flat size ranges between 1,300 and 1,500 square feet with prices from Tk 5,500 to Tk 6,000 per square feet, or Tk 80 lakh to Tk 1.5 crore in total.

The company, which caters to the middle income and higher middle-income people, also constructs high-end flats priced Tk 10 crore to Tk 12 crore, although their number is low.

Sheltech is also the pioneer in flat-sharing concept with land-owners in Bangladesh, said Ahmed, who holds a master's degree from Cardiff University, a Bachelor of Arts degree with honours from Kingston University and a diploma from the London School of Economics, all based in the UK.

His area of expertise is business management, administration and finance, while his entrepreneurship involves not only real estate, textiles and garments but also hospitality service, financial trading, aviation and ceramics.

Sheltech began its journey when the real estate business was at a nascent stage in the country, but the sector has flourished a lot in the last three decades.

Before undertaking a project, its experts conduct a market survey to find out whether

the project will be feasible.

The realtor does not go for small projects such as those on a land of five katha – rather it prefers at least 10-katha plot to ensure quality and make the projects environment-friendly.

However, it depends on location. For example, in Gulshan and Banani, where land is very scarce and expensive, it builds projects on seven to eight kathas of land, he said.

He referred to his father, Kutubuddin Ahmed, also the chairman and co-founder of Sheltech as well as the founder of Envoy Group, when it comes to giving somebody a steer on entrepreneurship or how to start a business.

"My father had no business experience but he had a dream. He worked hard and finally he became successful. Success in business results from hard work, integrity, big dream and idea," he said.

According to Ahmed, if somebody has no capital to start a business but has good ideas or strong mentality to work hard, he will definitely come out successful. "Capital is not a major factor for doing business."

New entrepreneurs should find out new business ideas or the scope in the existing business, he noted.

As a young businessman, he too faced challenges as he could not perform like his predecessor or his father who built up the group.

"I had to work hard and learn a lot for further improvement," Ahmed said.

"If a businessman thinks that he knows everything, he will never succeed. A businessman always has to learn."

Success of a business also depends on team

work, as a single person can't run an enterprise, Ahmed said.

Businessmen have to mix with a wide variety of people and treat employees as family members so that a sense of ownership grows within the staff.

"Punctuality, connection with stakeholders and treating employees well help grow businesses from strength to strength."

Sheltech celebrated its founding anniversary on March 12. On the occasion, it has organised Sheltech Anniversary Housing Fair 2020.

The company is giving special offers to prospective buyers. Clients who will buy flats in Dhaka will get land for free in different sites of Sheltech located outside of the capital during the month-long fair.

Although Sheltech started as a developer, it has branched out to other related businesses such as construction and real estate consultancy.

It employs more than 300 professionals, including architects and engineers, who have been picked on the basis of excellent technical and management skills. Additionally, a well-trained pool of 3,000 workers is employed at various projects of Sheltech.

"Dedication, hard work and experience of the Sheltech team have made it one of the top real estate companies in Bangladesh," said Ahmed, currently an executive committee member of the Bangladesh Employers' Federation and a director of the India-Bangladesh Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

Sheltech is also one of the founding members of the Real Estate & Housing Association of Bangladesh.

Car manufacturing in Bangladesh: preparing for the next biggest industry after apparel



Nazbul H Khan

Bangladesh will soon start manufacturing cars, that too electric ones, according to a news report published in The Daily Star with the headline "Local firm to set up a \$200m plant to make electric vehicle" in July last year.

Presently the country has 12 million people of the medium-income generating affluent bracket and this segment of the population is growing very fast -- by 10 per cent a year.

Meanwhile importing automobiles requires paying import duties ranging from 130 per cent to 850 per cent. This inevitably results in some consumers not getting their desired vehicles within their affordability.

Automobile density, which is the number of vehicles per unit length of the roadway, in Bangladesh is as low as 0.5 per cent, when the global average is 12 per cent.

Moreover, heavy reliance of fossil fuels and the resulting carbon emissions are working against the country's fight to adapt and mitigate the impacts of climate change.

Bangladesh's initiative to manufacture electric vehicles (EVs) is what present times require and will broaden the economy. The large Chinese and Indian markets with duty-free access for Bangladeshi products will be an added advantage soon, once the sector thrives like that of apparel. The manufacture and export of cars are about to unveil a new horizon for Bangladesh.

There is no substitute for industrialisation for accelerating sustainable development but not at the cost of losing farmland and food sufficiency.

The government has also declared that they would create all kinds of infrastructure at designated places for the establishment of industries that could be availed by local and foreign investors.

The Bangladesh Economic Zones Authority (Beza) has been selecting locations in different districts all over the country for special economic zones.

Bangabandhu Industrial Park is an industrial

town being built on 30,000 acres of land by the river Feni. This industrial city is being set up on the west side of Mirsarai. This industrial park is expected to generate 1.5 million jobs.

The BEZA executive chairman laid the foundation stone of Bangladesh Auto Industries (BAIL) in the zone a few months back.

The EVs are said to reduce fuel cost by up to 90 per cent and cut down maintenance cost to 10 per cent only.

With zero emissions its carbon footprint is even lower. While electric vehicles made in

\$30 trillion.

While the BAIL is preparing to manufacture two, three and four wheeler EVs, its sister concerns are gearing up to manufacture lithium-ion batteries, motors, controllers and chargers. These are crucial components of EVs. Thus, it is a 360-degree EV manufacturing ecosystem in development.

The question has arisen as to why the BAIL has taken up such an ambitious plan when this country lacks efficiency in many sectors. The answer lies in the initiators of the BAIL having transformed the internet sector earlier and now



People work in a factory of Bangladesh Auto Industries inside Bangabandhu Industrial Park.

Bangladesh are expected to cost half that of current market prices, BAIL will ensure after-sales service and spare parts. This guarantees resale of their vehicles, an important factor for the Bangladeshi market which gives a lot of emphasis on resale value.

Mir Masud Kabir, managing director of the BAIL, explained the opportunities of manufacturing environment-friendly automobiles in Bangladesh by leveraging on the fast-growing market and supportive government policies and incentives.

In the next 25 years, 1.5 billion new generation smart vehicles will be manufactured in the world. The smart vehicles' market size is

seeing the automobile sector as the next frontier with a lot of promise and a success story for Bangladesh after apparel.

So how will this industrial city will be getting a supply of 1.5 million skilled people when these industries will be technology-based? The formation of National Skills Development Authority (NSDA) is a possible answer.

However, the NSDA should prepare plans not only for the human resource just entering the job market but also those intending to make a switch over apprehensions their existing sector might come to be abandoned eventually.

The writer is CEO and founder of PART II

VIRUS GRIPS THE BOURSE

DSEX, the benchmark index of the Dhaka stock Exchange, lost 255 points last week, which is the second biggest single week plunge in the index's seven-year history. Investors, frightened by the blistering pace at which coronavirus is spreading around the globe, dumped shares to escape further losses, like their global counterparts. Besides, the macroeconomic indicators including the falling credit and deposit growth in the private sector and the declining export earnings also led the shaky investors to liquidate their holdings.

DSEX fell to **4,129.96** points (down **254.52** points, or **5.81%**)

Average turnover fell to Tk **417**cr (down Tk **65**cr, or **13.37%**)

TOP FIVE GAINERS		TOP FIVE LOSERS	
Company	Gain (in %)	Company	Loss (in %)
Kohinoor Industries	22.8	Central Pharma	21.6
BIFC	21.7	Saiham Textile	19.1
International Leasing	17.7	Progressive Life	18.9
Apex Spinning	16.3	Standard Ceramic	18.3
Sea Pearl Hotel	12	Mithun Knitting	17.7

TOP SECTORAL CONTRIBUTION		TOP TURNOVER	
Sector	Change in market cap (in %)	Company	Turnover (in crore Tk)
Textile	9.7	Square Pharma	12.7
Insurance	9.1	Orion Pharma	9.3
Engineering	9.1	Orion Infusion	8.7
NBFI	6.9	LafargeHolcim	8.7
Bank	5.8	GP	8.6

