

Building the future with Anwar Group, in construction and real estate

In conversation with Manwar Hossain, Managing Director, Anwar Group of Industries

SUPERCRETE
CEMENT



Starting as a business of "Hides and Skins" in 1834, the late Lakku Mia's foray into the world of business would eventually turn into a family heirloom, responsibility passed down the years and a steady expansion of efforts leading to the massive business entity that is Anwar Group today. With over a hundred and eighty years in operation, the group has gained a substantial foothold in the local economy through a wide range of local and exported goods and services ranging from automobiles to construction materials, plumbing and real estate. With such a diversified range of wares involved in the business model of Anwar Group, it is very likely that an outsider will be overwhelmed by the idea of having to focus on one particular branch of this massive corporation in the hopes of finding a picture of how things are done. One area where Anwar Group has had a leap forward in terms of innovation, unique selling points and local substitutes for foreign materials is in the construction industry and the vertical integration that resulted in significant progress in the field of real estate.

We caught up with Manwar Hossain, Group Managing Director of Anwar Group of Industries, to pick his brain on the ins and outs of being in the construction and building materials industry as well as being a major player in the local industrial sector.

What are the biggest challenges facing

the construction materials industry today?

Manwar Hossain: "The major problems we're facing in the construction materials industry is slow growth, low private sector demand, and the global downturn in real estate. For an industry like ours, there needs to be a constant flow of steady investment for the business to flourish. However, the combined effects of political chaos, lack of demand and rising levels of corruption and extortion have created a situation where people would rather invest abroad or not invest at all. We're driving the investment out of the country both in terms of real estate holdings and the obvious demand for construction materials that follow the purchases. If we can't find a way to stimulate demand and keep investment inside the country, we'll be in trouble."

Technology is evolving rapidly and its place in the economy is changing. To what extent is this happening in the construction industry?

"Like every other business, technology plays a huge role in determining the direction of the company, the extent of its operations, and the quality of the products that we produce. For a building to stand for decades requires an immense dedication in ensuring quality in the production process. For every single product produced by Anwar Group's building materials division, we make sure to keep updated with the rest of the world on the latest production technology and raw materials processing techniques. We consider it to be good investment to not keep old machines and production equipment running for years, we will usually change them all out within a year or however long it takes for the rest of the world to move on to better equipment. At a national level that gives us public trust, so technology plays a major role in the construction industry and will play an even bigger role in the future."

As one of the most renowned names in the building materials industry, how would you describe your business model?

"Find the best people, invest in the best technology, gain and retain people's trust, and keep building on reputation. It works for any business and it has worked very well for us."

What kinds of changes has your company seen that has allowed it to grow into such a major player in this industry?

"Constant diversification and sensible expansion has brought us to where we are. Recently, Dun and Bradstreet awarded Anwar Group for being the most diversified group of companies in Bangladesh. That diversification without losing the end goal of where we want to be has gotten us where we are today, and hopefully it will take us further. With new products added to our product lineup at every turn, we can also claim to be the company with the highest number of new products in the country. At present our building materials sector produces UVC pipes, fittings, thread, GI fittings, cement sheet, graded deformed bar/rod, electrical cables, and more. No other local company has this much of a focus on the building materials industry, and our vertical integration with the real estate business has left us in a unique position with which we can take our brand even further."

Your organizational culture must empower people. Will you describe your culture for us?

"Our main strength is in our ability to communicate. We do not have a corporate culture where its a top-down hierarchy and anyone who is lower down the ladder cannot speak; we give everyone equal opportunity to speak their minds and contribute ideas and help move the company forward. As long as there are good people being hired and strong inter-personnel relations and communications being developed, our corporate culture will thrive. A big part of that is hiring people who will gel with the rest of the workforce and won't be too reserved to help us grow as a company."

Can you tell us about your growth plans? What are you going to emphasise in the growth strategies of existing businesses?

"Our business is continuously growing, but at the moment we're hoping to emphasise on the growth of our cement and steel mill sectors, with an approximate three times increase in capacity. Along with that, we plan on acquiring government contracts for construction to a greater extent than at present, as we believe a strengthened presence in the infrastructure industry can help us gain an even greater foothold in the private market at the



Lafarge Surma Cement Ltd.
A company of LAFARGE and MOLINE



Meherun N. Islam
President & Group Managing Director
CEMS - Global
USA & Asia Pacific

Beauty of a country is measured with a lot of variables, aesthetics being one of them. Keeping safety in consideration, the outlook of a building always provides an insight towards the potential of a country and its infrastructure. The construction sector of a country plays a vital role in the 'destination branding' of that country. The moment someone hears Singapore, Malaysia or Dubai, the first thing most people visualize are some of the

impeccable architecture of some of their buildings. The construction sector of Bangladesh has a continual growth in terms of innovation and it can be witnessed by looking at some of our residential and commercial buildings which carry an elegant look in its architecture. In order to nurture innovations, Conference and Exhibition Management Services Ltd. (CEMS) has been organizing Exhibitions in most sectors and industries of

Bangladesh and abroad since 1992.

Exhibitions of different products for the construction sectors has been a part of the agenda of CEMS Global and the first exhibition of that sector took place in 1993 at the Ruposhi Bangla Hotel, formerly known as Hotel Sheraton. It has been 23 years since then and CEMS Global has successfully carried out this Exhibition since then. The past year featured exhibitors from Germany, USA, Malay-

sia, India, China, Taiwan, Korea and UAE and grabbed the attention of professionals from the construction industry, who visited our exhibitions and showed appreciation to our work. We believe it is our duty to create the platform where companies can bring and exhibit the latest products and services and carry on their business, in turn developing the infrastructure of Bangladesh.

Your home needs to survive earthquakes: yes, you can help



DR. M. SHAMIM Z. BOSUNIA

None or nothing on earth can really keep an earthquake from coming, such a hard and harsh natural reality it is! However, some amount of watchfulness while building a home can minimize the damage we might have to suffer. There is a strong and specific side or concept called Seismic Design in architecture that is dedicated to the structural analysis of buildings, bridges, and roads, with the aim of making them resistant to earthquakes and other seismic activities. Long story short, every aspect and department as regards erecting a particular structure should meticulously look at its optimum physical integrity. Thankfully, there are simple ways to it that you can realize by yourself and check with your architect/engineer for conformation.

The soil you choose

The structural plan of your home first depends on the type and quality of the soil that your plot has got. Get a soil test done by some reliable expert firm, for an assessment of both the soil's

ingredient-characteristics and the resultant load-bearing capacity. If you are going to have a tall building on a soft land, do use piles as per the designer's instructions.

The rod you choose

Your home basically stands on the integrated inner structure of rod and concrete. So, side by side with good cement, choosing a standard rod is just essential. Things you should consider seriously, while buying a rod, are as follow.

- A rod that is produced from billets is usually far better, while those from scraps are much inferior. So, be sure to avoid scrap ones.

- Do not use any lower grade of rod than that your structural plan actually suggests.

- And best if you can test a sample of the particular



designer for some special arrangement of rods in every junction of a beam and a column.

Building Code to follow

Do comply with the Building Code, fully and absolutely. A column should of course be 12 inches at the least in dimension for an earthquake-resistant design, as an example, according to the Building Code. One must keep in mind the criteria for bearing the loads of quakes and winds.

Hope it helps, when you are going to build your home. Wish you all the very best. And, once completed, may your peace rest on your very own home, without any heavy worries as such.

(This article is curated for public awareness by KSRM)

The writer is Professor (Rtd.), Department of Civil Engineering, BUET & President, Institute of Engineers Bangladesh



An International Exhibition on
CONSTRUCTION MATERIALS, METHODS, EQUIPMENTS & REAL ESTATE SEGMENTS
of Bangladesh

18th CON EXPO 2015

3~5 December 2015
10.30 am to 7.30 pm
International Convention City Bashundhara
Kuril, Dhaka

HOTLINE 01817044807

For more info & registration please visit www.conexpobangladesh.com

Host Country Partner: **CEMS BANGLADESH**
Silver Sponsor: **PORCELANOSA ASSOCIATE**, **Nupami BD Ltd**
Broadcast Partner: **INDEPENDENT**
Media Partners: **সব-কিনলে**, **NEW AGE**
Research Partner: **RESEARCH ENGINEERING**
Creative Partner: **ME MARKET EDGE LTD**
IT Partner: **IT PARTNER**

It's a CEMS Exhibition