

ANISUR RAHMAN SINHA - 2001



Chairman of Opex Group

On a chilly winter day in 1964, a cricket match was going on at the Dhaka Stadium. An 18-year-old boy was set to face the very first ball of the match. It was a crucial match for both the teams, Gymkhana Sporting Club and Narayanganj-based Eastern Sporting Club, as the winner was sure to get a slot in the first division.

The young man, who was also the captain of the Eastern Sporting Club, and his opening partner did not face any problem in the first few overs. But then came the blow with the change of bowling at one end. The boy lost his partner and in regular intervals wickets were falling at the other end. Then came the fiercest blow. The team captain got out scoring some 30-odd runs. At last, Eastern Sporting managed to score 130 runs, which many said was not enough for a fighting score.

Gymkhana started their innings and it was heading very steadily towards the target. At one stage, it seemed almost certain that Gymkhana would emerge as the winner. But, the young captain of Eastern Sporting had something up his sleeve. He made a bowling change, brought in his leg spinner at one end and opted for an attacking fielding. The tactic yielded good results for his side as the Gymkhana lost two wickets in that over. And then the rest of the match was a nightmare

for Gymkhana as it lost wickets in regular intervals and lost the match by a few runs.

Now that "18-years-old boy" is leading one of the leading conglomerates of the country that employs around 27,000 people and its annual turnover reached Tk 1,000 crore. It is none other than the famous apparel exporter Anisur Rahman Sinha, the Chairman of Opex Group, the largest apparel exporter of the country and arguably the biggest in South Asia.

Anisur Rahman Sinha is one of the few entrepreneurs in the country who has the skills and passion for the job he is doing that made him different from others. Business is in his blood, but he never dreamt of becoming a businessman. Yet, Sinha reached a height in business that most people can only dream of.

"Whatever I did in my life I did it with conviction," that is how he describes the magic formula behind his success.

Sinha's family hails from Bikrampur, Munshiganj. But his forefathers went to Kolkata to make a fortune. Coming back to Narayanganj in 1947, business of Sinha's father was going well. But at one stage came a blow. All the go downs of Sinha's father caught fire in 1964. After making a heavy loss Sinha's father had to quit business.

During the Liberation War in 1971, Sinha was confined in a solitary camp in Pakistan near Afghanistan border. He along with his other Bengali colleagues tried to escape through Afghanistan, but got caught. Even he was tried under martial law court. After Bangladesh emerged victorious, he was repatriated at the end of 1973.

"It was an adventure as well as a horrifying experience. I almost escaped successfully, but as one of my colleagues got caught, I went to get him free by bribing the Pakistani soldiers. But I failed and they put us

in a camp in solitary confinement," Sinha said.

Just after repatriation from Pakistan, Sinha retired from the army and set up his own business. His first venture was in construction, supply, and indenting in the mid-1970s, but later Sinha switched to manufacturing in the mid-1980s.

That proved very productive for him and for the country. But initially, when Sinha set up his first RMG unit, things were not like this. At that time, he did not have any role in management and the company ran into troubled water with huge losses. Then Sinha took over the management and over the years made it one of the biggest conglomerates in the country.

In 1991, the biggest blow came to his business career. His factory at Mirpur was damaged in a fire causing a loss of about Tk 8 crore. And worse still, he did not get the insurance money.

It was solely through his vision and sheer effort that Opex Group achieved a number of milestones. It established a solid link in the textile value chain starting from spinning to stitching including weaving, dyeing and finishing, accessories units, and washing plants that made his group the largest apparel exporter of the country.

The most crucial decision Sinha took was in the mid-1990s. As dependence on foreign fabric was making it difficult for Sinha's group to make a big push, he decided to invest in backward linkage and started his textile venture in 1997. And now his textile division supplies all the cotton fabric demand of his RMG units and also supplies fabric to other RMG units.

Even after making his company the largest exporter, Sinha still pushes to be on the top, upgrading machinery, pursuing management development, and diversifying in other areas where

the country has a competitive edge.

His latest endeavour is in agro industry. The project includes potato seed multiplication, poultry, poultry feed, and beef processing.

Even after reaching a great height, Sinha still starts his day at 7 in the morning and works till 9 at night. His first task, almost every day, is to contact his Hong Kong office and at night when he ends his work, he contacts his US office to keep himself updated about the latest development in the global textile and clothing trade.

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He goes to office at 9am and the first thing he looks for is the overall production status of his factories. "By the time I reach my office the overall production status and financial

statement of the other day is ready on my table. I made it mandatory so that I can be aware of every little detail," Sinha said.

Sinha as the chairman of Opex has received the annual National Export Gold Trophy for five consecutive years since 1996. For good performance, quality control, and reliable supply record Opex also received awards from its buyers like Sears, Levi's, and Mervyns.

Sinha is a different breed of entrepreneur. He loves to dream and make that dream come true. He is very much a down to earth man, who feels for his fellow man. He has set up a high school at Kanchpur, Narayanganj serving the wards of workers and local people. The current enrolment is over 700. A night school has also been set up to serve senior citizens of the community. The infrastructure facilities of a college at Kanchpur have been completed and the session will start from March 2002. A full-fledged 100-bed hospital at Kanchpur, to be run by a team of professional medical staff, is rapidly nearing completion to serve people of the locality. There are many such projects in planning stages that include a residential school cum college on the outskirts of Dhaka and a specialised hospital with all sorts of modern facilities.

A successful entrepreneur, Sinha also showed his quality as a business leader. He was the BGMEA president for the period 1998-2000. He is also president of Eastern Sporting Club, Narayanganj.

One has to live with globalisation whether one likes it or not, Sinha thinks, but he also has his own views on the most "controversial" issues. "Globalisation should not be a one-way street. It should benefit all the nations and to be precise should pave the way for a better share of global trade for the poor nations," Sinha said.



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