



CRUSADER IN THE FIELD OF EDUCATION - MAHBUBUL HOQUE

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Mahbubul Hoque needs no introduction in the field of Education in the North Eastern Region. Chancellor of University of Science and Technology, Meghalaya and Chairman of Education Research & Development (ERD) Foundation magnifies his personality with humility and simplicity with a strong belief that each and every citizen of this country has a right to education and does not hesitate in helping those who needs any assistance in the field.

Founder of ERD Foundation in the year 2005, Mahbubul Hoque, who started his humble beginning in the year 2001 with only 1 computer and four students, today has 2 professional colleges, 2 CBSE schools, one technical college and a newly started university with more than 5000 students to cater to the educational need of students fraternity of the north east which also boasts of quality education and alumni of these colleges have well settled in their own life either by way of business or service in organizations of repute.

A person who believes that "thinking out of the box" is the root mantra of success and chose to traverse on "The road not taken" took technical education as the field of entrepreneurship and challenged self to develop and nurture the virgin area to bring some relief to the unemployment problem in the region, to which he has been highly successful. Catering to the need based education, maintaining integrity, honesty, hospitality and expressing gratefulness is the hallmark of his personality. He has always moved ahead with blessings and advises of experienced and renowned personalities in the field of education and involving them in achieving the objectives he has set forth. He has been exceptionally gifted with patience and devotion to the spirits.

A strong motivator to his colleagues, he encourages team work and inspires them to work for excellence with honesty and dedication. As on date, more than 500 faculties and staff have joined hands under his guidance to take his mission further.

CHALLENGES:

Mahbubul Hoque boasts of a first class 2nd rank in Computer Applications from Aligarh Muslim University and immediately after passing out he was offered lucrative jobs from within the country and abroad. Thinking of bringing a constructive change to his own home land, he came back to Assam to start his own entrepreneurial venture.

Born on December 1, 1973 in a rural family of a remote village- Purbogool of Patharkandi, around 50 km away from Karimganj, to Late Ibrahim Ali & Late Khairun Nessa Begum with eight brothers & two sisters, Mahbubul Hoque had a turbulent life since his early childhood having lost his father in the year 1981, who was the sole bread earner of the family. To maintain the family at a very early age, he started with tuitions of the young children in the vicinity and went to the extent of selling home grown vegetables in the local market. Later he also lost his mother in the year 1991, when he was studying in class XII. Egged on with the inspiration of his late mother, he went on to do his degree and masters in Aligarh Muslim University.

The student's life in Aligarh was also no bed of roses and with minimal financial support from his elder brothers he met the costs again by taking up tuitions. Even today he is remembered by his juniors in the college for the helping hand he extended to every one when they were in need. Unperturbed by all the financial difficulties he went on with his studies and ultimately came out with flying colors in the year 2000.



DREAM FULFILMENT :

Keeping in line with the vision of ERDF which is compiled by himself - "promoting technological education and research and developing leadership, thereby, producing required quality manpower to uplift the region and accelerating the nation building process", he embarked on the journey of entrepreneurship by giving practical trainings to four IGNOU students along with assembling computers to generate revenues for his dream project. Starting with only one computer, he went on to buy four computers, which was the initial logistical support to the students, when he started his institute with only 14 students in a rented building in the year 2001. With hardly any response from the stakeholders in the field of education and lack of awareness in the society regarding the potentialities of the IT sector, it was not an easy task for this young and dynamic entrepreneur. But undaunted by barriers he finally got his chance to run professional courses in Computer Science and Information Technology and Management Science under the distance education scheme of Sikkim Manipal University of Health, Medical and Technological Science. The result - **Central IT College** - was established in the year 2001.

Slowly the dream grew, to include more professional courses. Today CITC is proud to be rated as the No. 1 center in North Eastern India & ranked 2nd in the country by SMU. It has also been selected as the Nodal Centre of the entire North Eastern region. SMU conferred UNIVERSITY EXCELLENCE AWARD for the last 5 consecutive years. More than 5,000 students have so far passed out from CITC and have found gainful employment in India and abroad.

Once he started on the treading on the road of his mission, he never looked back and started creating new milestones in the field of educational infrastructure. Keeping his pursuit in mind he founded Education Research & Development Foundation in the year 2005 under his chairmanship and established **Regional College of Higher Education** in 2007 - the first college under North Eastern Hill University, Shillong, creating a niche for itself by excelling and getting top positions in all the examinations conducted by NEHU.

Keeping the quality educational need of his home and border areas, he also started **Central Public School**, Patharkandi in 2008 and Central Public School, Badarpur in 2010. This also enabled the vastly rural population of the area to aspire for quality education giving Rural Education a new height in those remote part of Assam.

In the year 2009, **Regional Institute of Science & Technology (RIST)** was established which is the only Engineering College in Meghalaya approved by AICTE, New Delhi & affiliated to NEHU, Shillong. This institute imparts education in six engineering streams and has emerged as one of the very few institutes of the region with world class infrastructure. The institute also boasts of the best faculties in the subjects being imparted.

In 2010, the dream project of ERDF - University of Science & Technology Meghalaya (USTM) - came into being under the provisions of USTM Act enacted by Legislative Assembly of Meghalaya. Spread over a plot of over 400 acres, this University is unique in its own way and destined to transform the North East into a techno-savvy region.

Under his patronage, ERDF has also hosted a large number **national and international seminars, conferences and workshops** on topics of current significance.

OTHER INITIATIVES BY MAHBUBUL HOQUE

- ❖ **Prof. Qoumrul Hoque Memorial Scholarships** : Introduced in the year 2009, this merit cum means scholarship is for the BPL & rural students pursuing higher education in different reputed institutes in the name of Prof. Qoumrul Hoque Memorial Scholarships, the elder brother of Mahbubul Hoque, who died early in tragic circumstances & who was also the founder of different educational institutions in his birth place, Karimganj.
- ❖ **Khairun Nessa Memorial Womens' Endowment** : This initiative have taken from the year 2010 for poor & old aged widows giving cash of Rs.500/- per month initially for 25 women from his locality in the name of late beloved mother of Mr. Hoque.
- ❖ **Prof. S. D. Phukan Science Block** : The Science Block of Regional Institute of Science & Technology has been renamed as Prof. S. D. Phukan Science Block after his death who was the former Principal of JEC; Director of NERIST; Technical Advisor of NEC & finally devoted his efforts till death for the promotion of ERDF Institutions.



- ❖ **U. Tirot Singh Boys' Hostel** : The Boys' Hostel of Regional Institute of Science & Technology is named after U. Tirot Singh, the renowned freedom fighter of Meghalaya.
- ❖ **Prof. Qoumrul Hoque Park** : An amusement Park with fountains, natural streams, ponds with fishing facility amidst scenic beauty in the lap of nature in the hilly campus of Regional Institute of Science & Technology is being developed for the recreation of the resident students as well as staffs & outsiders which will be again named after his late Brother.
- ❖ **Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed Centre for Coaching & Guidance** : A bold initiative has been taken to introduce coaching classes for IAS & NET. Coaching for other competitive examinations will also be introduced in phased manner. Shri H. N. Das (IAS), former Chief Secretary, Govt. of Assam has joined as the Director of the IAS Coaching Centre.
- ❖ **Free Admission** : This is an unique initiative emerged from the kind hearted Hoque to give free Education & fee relaxation to meritorious students belonging to families living Below Poverty Line (BPL) & economically weaker sections specially from underprivileged rural areas. Already more than 1000 students are availing this facility studying in courses like B. Tech, BCA, MCA etc. in various institutes run by the foundation. More than 500 of these students have already passed out & are successfully placed in different organizations making the efforts of ERDF fruitful. Special relaxation in fee & free admission facility is also benefiting the deserving students in the two CBSE schools situated in rural areas.
- ❖ **33% reservation for Girl students** : ERD Foundation has been in the forefront as far as education of the girl child is concerned. This is more evident in its different Institutions mainly in Central Public Schools situated in remote rural areas of Barak Valley districts of Assam where there are lots of constraints in educating girl child as most of the families residing there are from the minority community. More than 40 per cent students are girls presently studying in these two schools. Mr. Hoque has made a special consideration for girl students reserving 33% seats for them in each and every institution under ERDF.
- ❖ **North East Graduate Congress** : The concept has been started this year and every year this will be organized by the foundation with an aim to enhance all-round development and to bring out capabilities of the future graduates through various life skill sessions which is the first of its kind in the country. This year the event was held on 29th & 30th May where senior officials, renowned academicians & stakeholders from industries participated including the Governor of Assam as the Chief Guest in the valedictory function.
- ❖ **Career Guidance Cell** : Employment generation drive has been undertaken under the School of Career Guidance by introducing various job-oriented courses for the educated unemployed youths of the region keeping in view the role of quality training in shaping the future of the coming generations.
- ❖ **Interest Free Loans** : ERD Foundation believes in better working environment by providing all kinds of necessary services to its employees. To facilitate the same & to boost the morale of its employees, the foundation provides interest free loan in case of emergency.
- ❖ **Welfare Activities** : Lots of welfare initiatives have been taken up by Mr. Mahbulul Hoque. Emergency treatment & medical assistance for the poor & economically weaker section, distribution of food materials & cloths to poor etc. are a few such activities. Under his patronage, the foundation has its Centre for Welfare Activities which organizes rallies on occasion of World AIDS Day, World PEACE Day, Street plays to spread awareness amongst the people on the occasion of World AIDS Day, World Environment Day and World Rose Day with the cancer patients of Dr. B. Barooah Cancer Institute, Doctors Day etc. He had also organized "PRARTHANA SABHA" (All Religious Prayer meeting) for victims affected by terrorism and carried out Relief Drives in ethnic clash affected areas of Darrang and Udalguri.

Collaborative initiatives :

ERD foundation has already signed memorandum of understanding with CSIR-NEIST, CRRI, New Delhi & Hi-Tech Education Centre, Ireland & different R & D organizations & Universities. Collaborations with other national & international organizations are also under process.



Member in Ministry of HRD:

Hoque's contribution for improving the plight of minority educational institutions got the recognition of Government of India when he was made the **Honorary Coordinator of National Commission for Minority Educational Institutions (NCMEI) for the North East India** in August 2010. One more feather was added to his cap in 2012 when he was made a **member of the National Monitoring Committee for Minorities' Education (NMCME)** under the Chairmanship of Union HRD Minister Shri Kapil Sibal.

He was also unanimously selected as the Founder President of North East Forum for Technical Institutions (NEFTI), a forum of all AICTE approved technical institutions of the NE region.

Struggle for Justice :

In this long journey of 11 years, he had to face lots of hurdles and in the process; he had to take many bold steps & decisions. As Central IT College is spread in different blocks in different rented buildings, he had managed to buy a plot of land in the outskirts of Guwahati to make it a full-fledged campus. Despite starting the construction due to meager response from the State Govt. and certain administrative issues, ultimately he had to move towards the state of Meghalaya & Meghalaya Govt. had appreciated his initiatives. To get approval & affiliation from the competent authorities-NEHU & AICTE was also no easy task. There were lots of struggle involved. Even he had to take the legal recourse for redressal of grievances. Finally he succeeds to get justice.

It is a universal fact that to grow in such nature one has to have funds. The fate had something else in store and whenever he approached the commercial banks, his proposals were rejected. The constant source was only the mobilization of the fees collected through the students and the well wishers in the market who wanted him to grow and deliver the education to the needy students. Only in the year 2008, the great financial Samaritan NEDFi appreciated his zeal and dedication in the field and came forward to be associated in his venture.

Visit by Dignitaries:

Many dignitaries & high officials of different national & international organizations had already visited the institutions under the foundation & were overwhelmed to see the efforts of this young man & were influenced by his dynamic personality. To name a few among them are - Prof. Marie Mc. Andrew, University of Montreal, Canada; Justice M.S.A. Siddique, Chairman, NCMEI; Dr. Shabistan Gaffar, Chairperson, Committee on Girls' Education; Dr. Liaqat Ali, Scientist from Dhaka; Prof. Ajit Verma, Amity University; Governors of Assam & Meghalaya; many former & present Vice Chancellors of different Universities; Literary Stalwarts of the state etc. They all were full of praise for him to bring at least some change to the education scenario of this region.

Many awards have come to Mahbulul Hoque over the years. The honorable Governor of Meghalaya, His Excellency R. S. Mooshahary quoted him as the **"Dynamic Educational Entrepreneur"** while Dr. Nirmal Kumar Choudhury, former Vice Chancellor of Gauhati University has spoken about him as the **"Visionary in Education"**. Dr. Kulendu Pathak, former Vice Chancellor of Dibrugarh University, has named him as the **"Educational Entrepreneur of the North East"**. A group of alumni of Aligarh Muslim University in their website has expressed the opinion that everyone praises the efforts of Sir Syed Ahmed in bringing modern education to the hitherto backward communities of the country, but if one person has emulated the example of Sir Syed, it is Mahbulul Hoque who is today working relentlessly in bringing world class education to the masses and thereby has become instrumental in the transformation and development of the North Eastern region of India.

Future Projects :

Mahbulul Hoque has a strong determination to continue his mission of spreading Education to every nook & corner of the region. Under the VISION 2020, the foundation has a plan of establishing number of CBSE schools in rural & underprivileged areas of the region, one Women's College & School of Medical Science under University of Science & Technology, Meghalaya.