FarEastern Economic









NOORUL QUADER

Noorul Quader, former civil servant, industrialist and a visionary. He has been described as the "father of the Bangladesh garment industry."

Occupation. Chairman and managing director of Desh Group of Industries.

Most remarkable development over the past 50 years. The withdrawal of the imperial powers from South and Southeast Asia and the economic emancipation of several countries within the region, including Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan, Malaysia; the emergence of Japan as an economic superpower and China as a potential world leader.

Most surprising development. Retaining Oriental values in spite of induction of Western technology and lifestyle in the region. Embracing martyrdom by Bangladeshis to earn Bangla as a state language, as opposed to the imposed Urdu in 1952, and sovereignty through war in 1971.

Most vivid personal memory. Atrocities of Pakistani junta aided by a cross section of civilian Bangla- and Urdu-speaking collaborators. Direct engagement in as many as 17 combats in the liberation war and liberating the first territory. Taking train-loads of provisions for the liberation army and commandeering truck-loads of money to sustain the liberation war. Founding of the government-in-exile as the secretary to the government and the transfer of the government of Bangladesh to Dhaka after liberation in December 1971.

Greatest achievement. To be able to earn the confidence of Daewoo Chairman Kim Woo Choong and enter into the first-ever joint venture. The transfer of garment-manufacturing know-how through the training of 130 Bangladeshi workers and technicians in Daewoo's factory in Korea. The setting up of the first 100% export-oriented, ready-made-garment industry in Bangladesh which eventually earned the country a place on the industrial map of the world. The opening of a back-to-back letter-of-credit system—a non-funded financing mechanism for import of raw materials on deferred payment and generation of working capital.

Greatest missed investment. Losing association with Daewoo due to Chairman Kim leaving South Korea after political changes in the country in 1981.

Advice to government for the next 50 years. Develop human resources through education and leave the private sector alone.

REVIEW reader since 1968.