



**“I am a soldier who helps drive positive change in the industry to improve work environment.”**

**Ramzan Miah**, Plant Engineer  
VF Asia Limited, Bangladesh  
Hong Kong Polytechnic Univeristy, MSEM '15

Every Hinrich Foundation scholar paves the way for others. They lead by empowering their teams, improving their environment and building happy communities.

**Strong commitment to community**

“Success for me is defined by what I do for the welfare of my family, community and society.”

For Ramzan Miah, success is defined by the effects of his actions on his family and community. His daily accomplishments – the projects that yield satisfactory outcomes – are small steps towards his pursuit of success.

His defining strengths are his permanent state of buoyant optimism, passion for his work, strong commitment to his environment and community, and a “never say die” spirit, which permeate his teams and help them deliver positive outcomes day after day.

“My name means the celebration of an event to eradicate hunger from the world or breaking of fast in the holy month of Ramadan,” says the passionate Hinrich Foundation scholar from Bangladesh. “The least I can do is to live up to my name.”

**Making things better**

When he was younger, Ramzan saw his father struggle to raise seven children in rural Bangladesh. Being the eldest son, shouldering responsibilities became as natural as breathing. “I resolved when I was very young to make things better for my family and my surroundings. This focus is now part and parcel of my personality.”

Ramzan’s association with the Hinrich Foundation began in his final year of study at the Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET), where he was taking Industrial and production engineering. His mentor encouraged him to apply for the life-changing scholarship jointly offered

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by the Hinrich Foundation and VF Corp., a Fortune 250 company that owns globally recognized brands, including The North Face, Timberland, Nautica, Vans and Wrangler. The scholarship included a fully funded study at the Hong Kong Polytechnic University (Hong Kong PolyU) for a master's degree in manufacturing systems engineering, a program that the university implements jointly with the University of Warwick, United Kingdom.



*Ramzan is the second of seven children*

For Ramzan, traveling away from home and family was paradoxical. On one hand was the sheer anticipation of exploring a new country and campus, and on the other, there was fear of the unknown. "Although it was my first time to travel by air, first time in a foreign country, the travel experience was awesome," Ramzan recollected.

He absorbed the sights and culture of Hong Kong and the orderliness of the country. A keen observer, his first impressions of Hong Kong --- extreme tidiness and the highly organized transportation and other public systems --- left a lasting impact on him.

In his studies, Ramzan found a vast difference between Hong Kong PolyU and BUET. Whereas BUET provided foundation courses primarily focused on theories, the courses at Hong Kong PolyU were a combination of theories and actual industrial problem-solving. It was international exposure in every way; real-time learning, on-field case-studies, diverse peer groups, experienced faculty and an amalgamation of classroom and practical methodology.

"As a VF-HF scholar, I got opportunities to visit factories to see the day-to-day application of the theories we were learning and to understand how we could contribute with our knowledge," which to him, remains the best way to participate in education.

Upon graduation, Ramzan immediately joined VF Asia Ltd. as an engineer trainee. "It was a long haul from a rural area in Bangladesh to completing a master's degree in Hong Kong, but all I ever wanted was to make things better for my family [and] the people of my country, and contribute to global peace."

"A Hinrich scholar comes out of his comfort zone and keeps learning and sharing."

### **Constant improvement of work culture**

“As an engineer, to be precise as a lean engineer, I am a soldier who helps drive positive change in the industry to improve work environment.”

Manufacturing as a career option was almost pre-determined because of his family’s background in fabric manufacturing. However, Ramzan has taken his skills to another level by excelling in the quality education he has received, which allows him comprehensive career opportunities in fields related to trade, communication and development in Asia.



*Ramzan Miah (left) receives the Hinrich Foundation – VF Corp. Global Trade Leader scholarship award from then VF Vice President and Managing Director Colin Browne (center) and Hinrich Foundation founder Merle Hinrich (right) during the scholar welcome event held Oct. 21, 2014, in Hong Kong*

As a plant engineer at VF Asia Ltd., his role is to implement a culture of continuous improvement in factories through the application of lean tools and techniques. “Lean thinking is about doing more with less. It is a never-ending effort to eliminate or reduce activities that consume resources without adding any value,” he said.

“Throughout my life, I have learned – and taught what I learned. After all, that is how change begins.”

Ramzan defines resources as money, materials, staff and assets. Lean techniques involve systematic process optimization to improve efficiency, technology implementation and training, organizing engineering intelligence or available resources to implement best practices. Sometimes automation is implemented where there is a need, but the most important step is to transition from traditional work culture to a continuous improvement culture.

### **The 5S Philosophy**

Passionate about constantly improving work cultures, Ramzan has been instrumental in implementing lean philosophy at one of VF Asia’s vendor factories. The challenge was changing mindsets from traditional ways of thinking to lean thinking.

Lean production is a systematic method that minimizes waste of resources within a manufacturing system without compromising productivity. The



*Ramzan, who serves as plant engineer for VF Asia Ltd, is currently working on a project at a footwear vendor of the company in Cambodia*

way to minimize waste of resources is through process optimization. “Work environment improvement is part of process optimization. I try to implement the 5S methodology throughout the factory to create a clean, organized, efficient and safe working environment.”

The 5S rule that Ramzan religiously follows is, “Sort – removing things we don’t need; set in order – placing necessary things in their rightful place; shine – creating a cleaning habit not only to clean but inspect; standardize – creating standards so abnormalities are easily recognized; and finally sustain – clarity on how the system is intended to be operated with regular checklists and audits.

Sometimes I have had to remove unnecessary operations, reduce operators’ motions, reduce inventory, even had to go as far as changing layouts of the factory to eliminate obstacles.”

The benefits have been huge. “There is less waste of resources for the organization, which leads to enhanced productivity. And the happy workers find their environment easier to work in, more organized, standardized and safer to boot,” according to Ramzan.

“More so, because I will be at the helm, I will be able to help more students reach their goals and bringing about positive change in my country.”

### **Project excellence**

“When I heard for the first time that I had received the prestigious scholarship,” said an emotional Ramzan, “I was one of first three people from Bangladesh [to receive the scholarship] and it was a moment to rejoice.” Since then there have been several victories along the road.

“VF Asia gives 3 Star Awards every year in the category of project excellence, [with] one award each for associate, team and project categories. The moment when I heard the news that my project in the Vans shoes factory in Cambodia had received a Star Award for excellence remains a happy and victorious moment for me,” he recalled.



*One of Ramzan's memorable experiences as a Hinrich Foundation scholar is visiting the Modern Terminals in Hong Kong in 2015*

A committed family man, Ramzan also counts the happy smiles of his loved ones as winning moments to be cherished.

“Keep dreaming and pushing yourself hard. Keep learning and proactively share that learning.”

### **Synchronous time and effort**

“A great team has clarity of its goals and thorough understanding of each member's roles and responsibilities. Most importantly, members enjoy working together!”

Ramzan feels that a good team is clear about its goals, its roles and responsibilities, has self-accountability and enjoys exciting group dynamics. He has great memories of working with the team that comprised VF management and factory personnel to improve productivity of the model line in the vendor factory. “Due to great teamwork, we achieved 20 percent improvement in overall productivity of the process.” VF Asia recognized the achievements of the project with a Star Award in 2016.

### **Creating understanding amidst diverse cultures**

Intensely devout, Ramzan is most thankful to his God for giving him the talent and ability to achieve success. He also feels gratitude for his family who have always stood by him. Their belief has given him immense mental peace.

He is extremely grateful to the Hinrich Foundation and VF Asia for giving him the opportunity to pursue his master's degree in a renowned university and thereby develop his knowledge and skills in an international environment.

“The scholarship gave me the opportunity to take part in a variety of excellent programs organized by the Hinrich Foundation and VF Asia which are designed toward honing my skills as a global trade leader. Finally, the scholarship provided an opportunity to interact with diverse cultures and nationalities, and I think mutual interaction and understanding brings about global peace and prosperity.”

### **Striking the right balance between trade, peace and prosperity**

Ramzan sees a positive relationship between trade, peace and prosperity. “I strongly believe that sustainable global trade can be a key player for the world



*Hinrich Foundation team members and scholars get together during the Global Trade Leaders MBA Scholarship and VF Career Fairs held in Vietnam in March 2016*

to achieve peace and prosperity. That is what drives me to contribute more and more to the work I am doing.”

He is deeply passionate about improving work environments in his current role with VF Asia. At the same time, he wants to keep upgrading his skills so that he can easily embrace higher leadership roles. As motivating teams through changes comes easy to him, he would like to see himself mentoring employees in the future.

**Work hard and smart**

“Continue working hard as well as working smart and never quit on the way to success,” is Ramzan’s advice to future Hinrich Foundation scholars. He feels that it is important for scholars to perceive themselves as global citizens and develop themselves in ways that will allow them to contribute to their communities and lead meaningful lives.

## Read more stories of inspiration from our Hinrich Global Trade Leaders [here](#).



“A Hinrich scholar comes out of his comfort zone and keeps learning and sharing.”

**Matt Haldane**

Production Editor  
AbacusNews.com –  
South China  
Morning Post

Hinrich Foundation alumnus  
Tsinghua University, MA in  
Global Business Journalism '15



“Excel even in the small things because the quality of your work reflects who you are. Otherwise, how can you expected to be trusted with the big stuff?”

**Carmela delos Santos**

General Manager  
Genesis Quezon Tugs,  
Inc., Philippines

Hinrich Foundation alumna  
De La Salle University, BA  
Communication Arts '00



“When you view your work and everything around you with good intentions, you will bring about a positive change.”

**Khin Myat Thin Zar Tun**

Former Program Officer  
Korean International  
Cooperation Agency

Hinrich Foundation alumna  
Hong Kong Baptist University  
MAIJ Studies '12



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