



The Faizal & Shabana Foundation believes in making a qualitative difference to society.

A helping hand

Listening to an inspiring story is always a delight. It can trigger a tiny wave of hope even in a hardened cynic. When Faizal Kottikollon, the owner of the UAE-based business empire KEF Holdings, decided to give something back to his hometown, one such story was born. “A story I hope would inspire more businessmen to give back to society,” he says.

In Kochi to receive the ‘Dhanam NRI Businessman of the Year Award for 2012’, Faizal shares his dreams for Kerala. “There are so many rich businessmen living abroad. The State needs their unconditional support,” he adds, “in terms of quality education and infrastructure”.

The Faizal & Shabana Foundation he set up with his wife Shabana has just completed the renovation of a -120year old Government Girls’ High School in Nadakkavu in Kozhikode. The school, which has about 2,000 students, had very few facilities.

“The building was extremely run down and the entire school complex had only about eight toilets. Though it had students representing the State in various sports at the national level, the school did not have decent equipment and facilities for training,” says Shabana, who has been involved in the Human Resources wing of Faizal’s business group.

Faizal had his early education in Kozhikode and felt his philanthropic activities have to start at his birth place. In less than three-and-a-half months, the foundation completed the upgradation of the school, with classrooms, toilets, a multi-purpose hall, interactive science centre and library for about Rs. 14 crore.

The project was part of the PRISM (Promoting Regional Schools to International Standards through Multiple Interventions) initiative, a partnership with the Government of Kerala.

The technology used in the reconstruction of the school (precast), could revolutionise the construction business in the State, Faizal points out. “Precast technology is best suited for Kerala because it is factory-controlled and is energy and material efficient. Initially we had to talk to politicians, policymakers and the PWD officials to educate them on the possibilities of precast technology.”

MOU with Government

The school upgradation was undertaken as a pilot project. After the second phase that will be completed in July, Faizal will sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the government to identify similar schools that need help in other parts of the State. “It is a collective effort to create awareness about the condition of education and healthcare facilities in the State and to rope in like-minded social entrepreneurs,” Faizal says.

The foundation has spent Rs. 60 crore on its various social projects. One of its first initiatives in Kerala was an autism centre in Mahe. The KE Safiya Autism Centre rehabilitates people with the developmental disorder and offers vocational education.

An engineer, industrialist and entrepreneur, Faizal has won several awards for business excellence. His company, KEF Holdings, has a number of plans for Kerala especially in the infrastructure, education and healthcare sectors. Other areas that the company is looking at are agriculture, hospitality, metals and sports, too. One of his immediate plans includes a multi-speciality hospital in Kozhikode.