

From A Supervisor To A Plantation Owner

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Prologue

The looming financial crisis threatened to transform Mr. Rostam's thriving agribusiness into a sinking ship, casting a shadow of uncertainty over his entrepreneurial dreams. The once-promising future now appeared murky and fraught with challenges, leaving him to navigate the business desperately to keep his venture afloat. It is a test of resilience, innovation, and unwavering determination as he grapples with the harsh realities of an uncertain market. With limited resources, he coped with more of the challenges of a struggling business. The road ahead seemed daunting, with uncertainty lurking at every turn. Mr. Rostam pondered over the situation, feeling the weight of responsibility on his shoulders; he muttered,

"The business has reached the critical point, and failure was not an option".

Mr. Rostam has to look for the right opportunity and decide about taking the next big leap of faith to start his next agriculture business venture.

Terengganu Agrotech Development Corporation Sdn. Bhd. (TADC) looking for proposals to develop a large palm oil plantation farm in Terengganu state. Mr. Rostam has to develop the right plan with a partner that can invest in the proposed corporate farming project.

Early life and background

Mr. Rostam Affardi bin Abdul Rahman was born in 1972 in Perak, near a rubber plantation field. His father was a rubber tapper who wandered through the dense plantation, tapping the rubber trees for their precious sap. The rhythmic sound of the machete hitting the tree trunk echoed through the jungle, a melody that had become a part of his life. With the calloused of his father's hands and a weathered face, he moved with a sense of purpose and determination, knowing that his hard work would provide for the family, especially the seven siblings who were growing up.

As the sun set behind the towering trees, casting long shadows across the forest floor, his father would return home, carrying the fruits of his labour. The small gesture of love and sacrifice for those

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he held dear plantation has built Mr. Rostam's passion and dream to own an estate of himself one day.

Mr. Rostam's dedication to helping his father at the rubber farm was unwavering. Despite Rostam's busy schedule, he always contributed to the family business and well-being. The bond between father and son grew stronger as they worked side by side, tending to the rubber trees and sharing moments that would become cherished memories for years. Rostam's father always reminds him to understand that the success of the plantation depends on the well-being of the land and the people who work on it. One not only takes care of the farm but must also take good care of the worker, especially their livelihood. While listening to his father's stories about the plantation, Mr. Rostam has always been fascinated by the idea of owning a piece of land and turning it into a thriving business on the plantation. Therefore, Mr. Rostam studied hard during his primary and secondary education until he successfully entered college.

Mr. Rostam immersed himself in the world of agriculture at the college, where he diligently pursued his studies. With each lecture and practical session, he delved deeper into the intricate science and art of farming, sowing the seeds of knowledge that would one day bear fruit in his career. Rostam also studies animal husbandry, which involves learning about livestock care, breeding, and management. Rostam learned that animal husbandry plays a crucial role in agriculture and food production, significantly contributing to sustainable farming practices. He was deeply engrossed in his studies of agricultural business, spending countless hours poring over textbooks, research papers, and discussions with lecturers. The fields of crops and livestock held a particular fascination for him, and he dreamt of revolutionizing the plantation industry with his innovative ideas.

In 1991, Rostam went to his internship in an agribusiness company, where his first step in practicing agricultural business began. During a six-month internship at the plantation company, Rostam immersed himself in several agricultural activities. Each day brought new challenges and experiences as he learned the intricate workings of the palm oil plantation industry. Rostam grew professionally and personally, from tending to the crops under the scorching sun to understanding the delicate balance of sustainability and profit. Rostam started a small business selling fresh fish part-time during his internship. That venture allowed him not only to gain valuable work experience but also to elevate his entrepreneurial skills. As Rostam juggled his internship responsibilities and managed a fish-selling business, Rostam learned the importance of time management, customer service, and financial planning. With dedication and hard work, Rostam was able to grow his small business. As the internship ended, Rostam gained a wealth of knowledge and a newfound respect for the hard work of cultivating the land.

Mr. Rostam narrated his experience as *"The world is full of possibilities, each opportunity waiting to be discovered."*

Mr. Rostam graduated in 1991 and kept doing part-time business while searching for a job. Armed with his agricultural degree, business experience, and determination, Rostam set out to navigate the twists and turns of the job market, seeking a path that would lead him toward his dreams. Little did

he know that with each application submitted and interview attended, he got a job in a livestock company that was a step closer to the beginning of his business journey. Mr. Rostam felt a surge of pride as he stepped into his new role as a supervisor at the company. With a determined look in his eyes, Mr. Rostam set out to make his mark in the company. Mr. Rostam quickly familiarized himself with the operations, getting to know the workers and the ins and outs of the daily routines. Mr. Rostam's leadership skills began to shine as he guided his team with patience and understanding, always ready to lend a helping hand or offer words of encouragement.

Mr. Rostam's dedication and hard work did not go unnoticed. The livestock company flourished under his supervision, with productivity soaring to new heights. Thus, he was promoted to assistant manager of marketing. For Mr. Rostam, this job was not just a means of earning a living but a passion that fuelled his drive to succeed in both his job and his current business. Consequently, with a heart full of gratitude and determination, Mr. Rostam embraced his role as assistant manager with unwavering dedication, ready to face whatever challenges lay ahead in the marketing team.

Mr. Rostam found himself in unfamiliar territory as he was transferred to the marketing department. However, he makes sure to adapt to thrive in this unique environment quickly. With determination in his heart, he rolled up his sleeves and embraced the challenges ahead, ready to cultivate success in agricultural marketing.

Meanwhile, Mr. Rostam kept running his small business smoothly during that time. The steady flow of customers, positive feedback, and efficient operations have all contributed to Mr. Rostam's sense of accomplishment and pride. With the current working environment, he has accumulated business networks that provide business growth and success opportunities.

Mr. Rostam reflects on the journey as *'I always look forward to the future with optimism and determination. The business has transformed from just a small venture selling fish, but now the shop is getting bigger, selling chicken and vegetables. I feel confident about taking up the full-time business.'*

Taking the next big step

In early 1997, Mr. Rostam took the bold step of founding his inaugural agribusiness company. His family vehemently opposed the plan to get involved in agribusiness full-time, especially his father. Mr. Rostam's father believed that Mr. Rostam's future lay in his current career path, but Mr. Rostam was determined to follow his dreams. Despite the family's disapproval, Mr. Rostam knew and was willing to take the risk and pursue his passion for entrepreneurship. Little did they know that Mr. Rostam's decision would eventually lead to great success and prove the other wrong. With experience, knowledge, technical skill, vision in mind, and a spirit of entrepreneurship driving him forward, Mr. Rostam believed that this decision would mark the beginning of a remarkable chapter in his life, shaping his future in ways he could have never imagined. From humble beginnings to eventual success, this milestone laid the foundation for his enduring legacy in the agricultural business world.

By the end of 1997, Mr. Rostam embarked on a journey filled with problems and issues when the economic crisis struck him hard, casting a shadow over his thriving business and plunging it into trouble. The once bustling business now stood quiet, its future uncertain as he grappled with the trials ahead. Amidst the storm of financial turmoil, business was going down, and unexpectedly, Mr. Rostam lost his job. Being unemployed brought new challenges and obstacles, testing his resilience and determination to the core. As the days passed, he grappled with the uncertain future that loomed ahead, wondering if he could revive the fading glory of his agribusiness. He still tended to his agribusiness, watching over the sprawling fields that once teemed with life. The once vibrant business now seemed to struggle against unseen forces, casting shadows over his once prosperous livelihood. Despite his efforts, the land appeared weary, mirroring his heart's weariness. He found himself searching for a glimmer of hope to navigate through the toughest times ahead.

Looking for an alternative business opportunity

As the pressure mounted and uncertainty loomed large due to the economic meltdown 1997, Mr. Rostam refused to back down. He delved deep into his reserves of strength and courage to navigate the treacherous path ahead. Mr. Rostam sat at his kitchen table, his laptop opened in front of him, his brow furrowed in concentration. That is when the idea of gold trading struck him. With a background in finance and a keen eye for market trends, Mr. Rostam felt confident in his ability to succeed in this new gold trading business. He spent hours researching the gold market, studying charts, and learning the ins and outs of trading to generate income and sustain. He gained valuable experience with each trade and slowly started to see a profit. As days turned into weeks, Mr. Rostam's determination only grew stronger. Finally, after months of hard work and perseverance, Mr. Rostam's gold trading business began to flourish. What started as a way to earn money had turned into a passion, a new chapter in his life filled with excitement and possibility.

'The opportunities are always around us, but one needs to act according to the circumstances and resources within the given time. However, playing according to one situation is necessary. Mr. Rostam explains his thoughts on business problems and dealing with difficult times.

Besides working in the gold business, Mr. Rostam finds a managerial-level job in the power sector to deal with the economic difficulties. Mr. Rostam keeps doing his business and job simultaneously to get through the difficult times. Mr. Rostam worked for 12 years in the power company.

Rostam reflected on his journey, saying that *one has to understand that sometimes, losing one job could lead to discovering a whole new world of opportunities. One has to scout the market for another chance at success, eager to uncover a new business opportunity that would lead him toward prosperity and fulfillment.'*

During that period, Mr. Rostam began actively seeking a business partner and investor to acquire additional resources to expand his agribusiness. As Mr. Rostam had always been fascinated by the

vast plantations of palm trees, he had experienced during his internship and past job experience in managerial and marketing. Now, he was determined to start his own palm oil business. Excited and determined, he began researching everything he could about the industry and searching for a business partner.



Epilogue

Mr. Rostam got the information that the Terengganu Agrotech Development Corporation Sdn. Bhd. (TADC) offering support to develop the agriculture farms in Terengganu state. Having a large agricultural farm is a dream that Mr. Rostam has always wanted to achieve. Mr. Rostam needs to plan and look for the right partner (investor) to develop the partnership in the palm oil plantation at the corporate level.

Mr. Rostam is planning to develop the 140-hectare palm oil plantation farm and needs to have more than 200 farmers. Developing corporate farming is not easy as it is associated with allied challenges and requires consistency and passion for bringing success to the business.

The right resources and partners are necessary to bring success; looking for and developing the best option is necessary for the success of grand ventures. Vision and determination are vital to take a leap of faith in the passion that one believes in.

