

MY FIRST DAY IN UAE

Dubai's multi award-winning business magnate, who has been here since 1966, says the best is yet to come as he embarks upon his latest venture: Revolutionising the education scene in Dubai



Mohan Valrani during an event at Silicon Oasis (left); celebrates his birthday at Rashid Pediatric Centre, and (right) receives Lifetime Achievement Award at the Indian CEO Awards. — Supplied photos

It's back to school for Mohan Valrani

Mohan Valrani has achieved a phenomenal success in the 50 years he's been in Dubai.

Arriving in the emirate in 1966 as an eager young man with just \$10 in his pocket on a mission to expand his uncle's business in the Middle East, his chance meeting with Abdullah Al Shirawi was to make a lasting impact upon Mohan's life.

The duo formed a firm and lasting friendship which served as the basis for a joint business collaboration in the shape of Al Shirawi Trading and Contracting, which began operations in 1971.

Forty-five years on, Al Shirawi Group is one of the largest conglomerates in the Arabian Gulf comprising over 40 companies with activities spanning manufacturing, trading, marketing, distribution, logistics, contracting and service businesses, employing more than 10,000 staff and with a turnover of \$1 billion.

Having just picked up the coveted Lifetime Achievement Award by Dubai's ITP Publishing (his third to date), Mohan is gearing up to take on his latest venture – which is, in his own



words, his "true passion" – that of education.

"There comes a time when you feel the need to leave behind a legacy for future generations and for me, opening schools to give back to the Dubai community is the best way to achieve this since education is a vital means to helping solve many of the problems of the world," said Mohan.

"That's why I've decided to dedicate the rest of my life to building schools under the Arcadia brand. In the words of Nelson Mandela, 'Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world' and that's exactly what I want to achieve with Arcadia schools," he said.

To realise this vision Mohan, as Chairman of The Arcadia Schools,

Arcadia's vision is to create a school in which educators are treated with the same value and respect that they are expected to instill in their own students."

is employing the very best teachers, embracing the most advanced technological teaching aids and working closely with architects and designers to ensure all Arcadia school facilities are of an outstanding quality.

What's more, Mohan is taking a uniquely holistic approach to looking after its staff. On top of earning some of the highest teacher salaries in the emirate, Arcadia teaching staff will enjoy top-class accommodation, first-class benefits and access to the best training courses along with the latest technology at their fingertips to augment the teaching process.

"Our teacher-centric approach has been deliberately designed to ensure all our teachers feel valued and respected; indeed the Arcadia team's vision is to create a school in which educators are treated with the same value and respect

Chase your passion, age just a figure

Industrialist, entrepreneur, philanthropist, father of three and grandfather of seven, the dynamic and ambitious-as-ever Mohan of today shows no sign of easing into a more leisurely lifestyle despite being within sight of his 76th birthday.

Never one to aim for anything less than the best, Mohan Valrani's ambition is to revolutionise Dubai's educational landscape by combining the finest traditional values of a British primary education into a forward-thinking, international environment.

The first school to open under the Arcadia brand will be The Arcadia Preparatory School.

Situated in a state-of-the-art campus within the Jumeirah Village Triangle community, the school, which is scheduled to open in August this year, will offer the National Curriculum of England to pupils from Foundation Stage 1 through to Year 6.

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As for pupils themselves, a rich and diverse learning environment awaits where the highly-qualified and dedicated teaching team will use the latest resources to help propel young minds towards academic excellence.

Arcadia's unique Enrichment Learning Programme, an all-inclusive programme based on an extended school day, complements the core curriculum in harmony with an array of extra-curricular activities covering

languages, music, art and sports.

"By instilling a passion for life-long learning into our pupils and by rewarding excellence so that every deserved student can receive a high-quality British education, regardless of their financial means, we are laying the foundation for our students to evolve into intellectually-rounded, motivated and ambitious young adults and beyond. As Mahatma Gandhi said, 'Live as if you were to die tomorrow, learn as if you were to live forever.'"

(As told to Issac John)