



Words **SASKIA TILLERS COLES**

NEW BEGINNINGS

4-min read

Engineering



When he stepped into the role of CEO at IL&FS Engineering and Construction Company Limited, Kazim Raza Khan accomplished the impossible – turning around a company on the brink of closure and transforming it into a flourishing entity.

In Kazim Raza Khan’s eyes, failure is ultimately what leads to success.

“There’s a line from an old Hindi song that says, ‘*Barbadiyon ka sog manana fizul tha, Barbadiyon ka jashna manata chala gaya*’ (It was useless to mourn the failures, [so] I kept celebrating all those failures),” the CEO of IL&FS Engineering and Construction Company Limited (IECCL) explains.

“Leaders need to be good listeners because if any small person within a project, like a laborer, observes a crack and comes to you, and you scold him, next time he won’t come to you. That’s when an accident will happen.”



“We have a very good presence in India – we are now one of the biggest EPC companies here, and want to keep ourselves engaged in nation-building.”

With three decades of experience behind him, Khan’s sage advice comes from a place of absolute expertise. It’s an ethos he has lived throughout his career from the ground up – starting as a site engineer, climbing through the ranks to Project Manager and General Manager, before joining IL&FS Transportation Networks in 2005 as Assistant Vice President. By 2012, he was leading its operations across Western, Southern and Central India as Senior Vice President and Regional Head.

Then in 2019 came the defining chapter: Khan stepped in as CEO of IECCL, just as the group faced a financial crisis of unprecedented scale, followed swiftly by the global COVID-19

pandemic. The company was teetering on the verge of liquidation. But not under his watch.

“I told the board clearly, ‘I’m not here to witness the company dissolve and fall apart, I’m here to resolve it,’” he says. “Basically, that’s my unique selling point – I accept challenges and instead of waiting for somebody to act on it, I find out a way to take up the task.”

A CHANGE IN FORTUNE

The success was immediate. Khan’s first point of call was to retrain key personnel and employees, and complete the 53 existing projects in play at the time of his appointment in order to preserve the company’s value.

Given the goal of reducing debt by US\$58 million in six months, Khan exceeded all expectations by reducing it by US\$92 million in just two months.

“I decided nobody should leave the company – we’d keep on paying the salaries whether we had work or not. That was a risk I took,” Khan explains.



“Basically, that’s my unique selling point – I accept challenges and instead of waiting for somebody to act on it, I find out a way to take up the task.”

Yet the work kept flowing and the scale of projects kept increasing. Now, more than five years later, IECCL has been able to secure new projects both in India and overseas, including a US\$9 billion project in Zambia that is in the process of being signed off.

Further opportunities are brewing in Dubai, Saudi Arabia and Oman, cementing IECCL’s vision of becoming a global player in engineering, procurement and construction (EPC).

“Our future is very, very secure,” Khan says. “The world order has changed; it’s shifting from European countries to the Middle East and Africa. So that’s why we want to set up our footprint there, because there is a lot of potential. We’ve already started working on this because otherwise we’ll be left behind.

“We have a very good presence in India – we are now one of the biggest EPC companies here, and want to keep ourselves engaged in nation-building, contributing to the construction of infrastructure in this country as well.”



VISHESH INFRASTRUCTURE

EXPERTISE IN ENGINEERING

Vishesh Engineering is a pioneer in engineering, procurement and construction of bridges, highways and airports with over 17 years in the industry.

✉ visheshinfrastructurepvtltd@gmail.com

Advertisement

As technological advancements across all industries continue altering the existing modus operandi, Khan says it’s vital for companies to embrace these potential changes.

“We always welcome innovations and new technologies. We are tech-savvy; we trust that we don’t have a second option,” he reveals. “If someone brings us a module for monitoring, we allow them to perform. And if it’s not perfect, we’ll ask them to improve it more.

“We will amalgamate ourselves with the latest technology in the industry, whether it’s the equipment or plants, or the use of input materials.”



“Keep listening and unleash the talents. That’s how you build companies – and legacies.”

Given the impressive scope of IECCL’s operations, the fact that it has close to 9,000 different agencies, vendors and suppliers on its books is understandable. Of that number, however, Khan describes 30–40 of them as “key” to its ongoing success.

“We have long-term relationships with them, so for any new project, we approach them first,” he explains. “We have a vendor rating system and a committee that provides feedback from the project side.”

REPUTATION REBUILT

Today, IECCL enjoys renewed trust among public authorities, thanks to a track record of timely, quality delivery.

“We don’t treat authorities as outsiders – we consider them part of the team. If we aren’t equipped alone, we form joint ventures. The goal is to complete the work, overcome the challenge and exit with pride,” Khan points out.



SHIVA INFRATECH

Delivering
Holistic Solutions

Bharat: +91 9662 629 999 | Office: +91 7383 039 348



Advertisement

Having undertaken such an impressive revival of a [company](#) in crisis, Khan proves that under the right leadership, turning around any organization is possible.

“Wherever you are working, you should be honored to be part of that company,” he says with a smile. “You should encourage your employees to feel like they also own the company – that is most important.

“Keep listening and unleash the talents. That’s how you build companies – and legacies.”