

About The Author

Muhammed Ikram Thowfeek is a Chartered Accountant by profession and an Islamic Banker by practice. To date, he has gained a wealth of knowledge and experience over the last two decades, through his diverse positions held in various organizations, in auditing, management consultancy, financial control, strategic planning & budgeting, Islamic banking & finance, retail, commercial and investment banking, Islamic capital and global Sukuk (Islamic Bonds) markets, as well as training and career development. He is an Associate Member of the Institute of Chartered Accountants (ACA) - Sri Lanka, a Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Management Accountants (FCMA) & a Chartered Global Management Accountant (CGMA) - UK, a Member of the Institute of Financial Consultants (MFC) - USA, a Member of the Chartered Institute of Securities and Investments (CISI) - UK and a Certified Islamic Banker (CeIB).

About the Group, its subsidiaries and affiliates

First Global Group (FGG), a diversified multi-disciplined group engaged in providing Shari'ah compliant products & services. Acclaimed Islamic Banker Muhammed Ikram Thowfeek is the founder and the Managing Director of First Global Group. First Global Academy - FGA (Formerly 'First Global Knowledge Centre - FGKC) is the pioneer institution in Sri Lanka to promote training and career development programs in the field of Islamic Banking, Finance and Takaful. FGKC was the only educational institution which has been recognized as "Education First" in the first ever Islamic Finance country report 2011 by IPIFG - Sri Lanka and recently covered in the Global Islamic Finance Forum - GIFF2012 - Country and Business Guide, as a "Talent Development" institution for the Islamic finance industry, coming from Sri Lanka.

# INSPIRING ASPIRING IBANKERS

When a New Year dawns, we each dream up resolutions and ambitious targets to achieve, but this New Year 2013 is plagued with global crises stemming from the 2008 financial meltdown. The message to all of us has been to tighten the belts, as we continue listening to the struggles of developing as well as developed economies looking for solutions and battling on without any visible light at the end of the tunnel.

The other day, a dear friend of mine, asked me a question, soliciting my views as a seasoned professional in the Islamic banking & finance (IB&F) industry, trying to see what I thought the prospects were for those young people looking to enter the Islamic banking & finance industry and 'make a difference'. He said, "The story these young graduates keep telling me is that there are simply no jobs on offer - which seems to be at odds with the headlines that we keep seeing proclaiming that the IB&F industry is 'growing at 20% per year.'"

My response at the time was, "Those seeking greener pastures or opportunities in the IB&F industry are unfortunately knocking at the wrong doors or are ill equipped - the regional and global markets are opening up for Islamic banking & finance - so be ready". Further, I mentioned that, "being in the IB&F industry over the last two decades, I strongly believe that the bigger the global financial crisis is the greater the opportunities to all the stakeholders in the Islamic finance industry are, which can provide solutions to millions of people (both Muslims and non-Muslims) all over the world to improve their lives, financial and investment choices - through equity participation, risk sharing and fair dealings."

### A VISION TO BUILD FIRST GLOBAL ACADEMY BY 2015

First Global spearheads on the Islamic finance education to build on the pioneering efforts of its education arm FGKC, with a vision to build First Global Academy (FGA) by 2015 mainly to groom those aspiring to become "Islamic Bankers". This will present an 'Ultimate Learning Experience' for potential students in the field of Islamic Banking & Finance.

We at FGA are building a new breed of professional Islamic bankers and Islamic finance specialists who are inspired, creative and different. Today, you can be one of those rare breeds. FGA has developed that launching pad for

a 'lifetime career opportunity' in becoming an 'Islamic Banker' in your chosen field (sales, marketing, IT, finance, legal, auditing, banking, media, public relations etc..) equipping prospects with the ability to acquire the hands on knowledge from the practitioners, to tap into the riches of this multi-trillion dollar IB&F industry - turning you into Solution Providers and not merely Job Seekers.

First Global also had the rare distinction of being selected by the esteemed Abu Dhabi Commercial Bank (ADCB) to train its nearly 1000-strong workforce on Islamic Banking and Finance and by Doha Bank of Qatar to train its staff and equip them with an Islamic Finance Qualification (IFQ). Also, First Global has been invited to conduct Islamic Banking & Finance customized training programs in Dubai and Oman.

At the recently concluded 4th World Islamic Retail Banking Conference (WIRBC), MIT Global and First Global Academy were the "Exclusive Knowledge Partners" for the event held in October 2012, Dubai, UAE. This event created an excellent networking platform for the global Islamic retail bankers and other stakeholders. Since the first edition of this WIRBC in 2009, Founder of First Global Group, Muhammed Ikram Thowfeek has been one of the headline speakers sharing his knowledge, experience and the practical exposure gained in the industry over the last two decades.

### FIRST GLOBAL TO TAP INTO THE SOUTH EAST ASIA, MIDDLE EAST AND THE AFRICAN REGIONS

Apart from the core activities of Training, Education and Awareness, First Global aims to tap into the South East Asia, Middle East and the African markets. This will take place through Strategic Alliances to capitalize on the appetite for Islamic finance businesses, amidst the growing global financial crisis.

The most demanded 2-4 hour short-seminar by Mr. Thowfeek, titled "Solution for Turbulent Global Financial Market - from an Islamic Banking & Finance perspective" has been already launched in Dubai and in Kuwait during the month of September & October 2012 respectively. The positive and overwhelming feedback from the participants has motivated First Global to take this program to other countries through the strategic partners in these respective countries.



### FIRST GLOBAL RECENTLY SIGNED MOUS WITH STRATEGIC PARTNERS

In Singapore, India & Oman to jointly spearhead on various Islamic banking and finance proposition starting from education to setting up initiatives.

### FIRST GLOBAL GROUP FINALIZES THE RESTRUCTURING EXERCISE TO GO GLOBAL

Thowfeek has finalized the restructuring exercise to build FG into a global business company, First Global Group, using his wide network of contacts established over the last two decades by being an active player himself in the Islamic banking and finance industry.

First Global Group (FGG), is a diversified multi-disciplined group engaged in providing Shari'ah compliant products & services ranging from investments and financing (SME & Micro finance) to ICT, education, training & advisory. Headquartered in Sri Lanka since March 1999 and having pioneered a number of 'first of its kind' initiatives in the Islamic banking & finance (IB&F) industry, it now plans to 'raise the bar' and grow into a global business company building strategic alliances in UAE, Qatar, Kuwait, Oman, India, Maldives, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Mauritius, Malaysia, Indonesia etc., to move into new horizons and capitalize on the enormous growth potentials and opportunities in the IB&F industry.

"Look forward for the Book titled "Solution for Turbulent Global Financial Market - from an Islamic Banking & Finance perspective" authored by Mr. Thowfeek on the shelves by Q1/ 2013. To reserve a copy thowfeek@firstglobal-group.com