For Malaysians in the Klang valley, any big event is not complete without the sumptuous meal offered by The Big Rajah caterers. The familiar taste and aroma compliments any occasion with guests going home complimenting the Host. With a clientele base of more than forty thousand and having served more than 2,000,000 plates, The Big Rajah has become synonymous for a Banquet fit for the Rajah's.

"The catering business is in my genes", says CEO of Big Rajah, Dato' Dr John William Xavier. A legacy inherited from his late father Mr. John Joseph Xavier who was bestowed the pioneer "Founding Father of Food Catering" by MICA.

His father had the idea for The Big Rajah on 1980 after many years of being in the catering industry himself.

The Beginning Of An Empire

Then in 1999, the dream became a reality when The Big Rajah started out at a modest bungalow in SS2. "We had a small crew of five people who multi-tasked and did all that was required of them. My mother was the chief cook. Back in the day, even I cooked and drove the catering lorries as well."

Dato' Dr John said that after three years they were breaking even and the business wasn't expanding. "So I started working in event planning to supplement the family income and to infuse fresh money into the business."
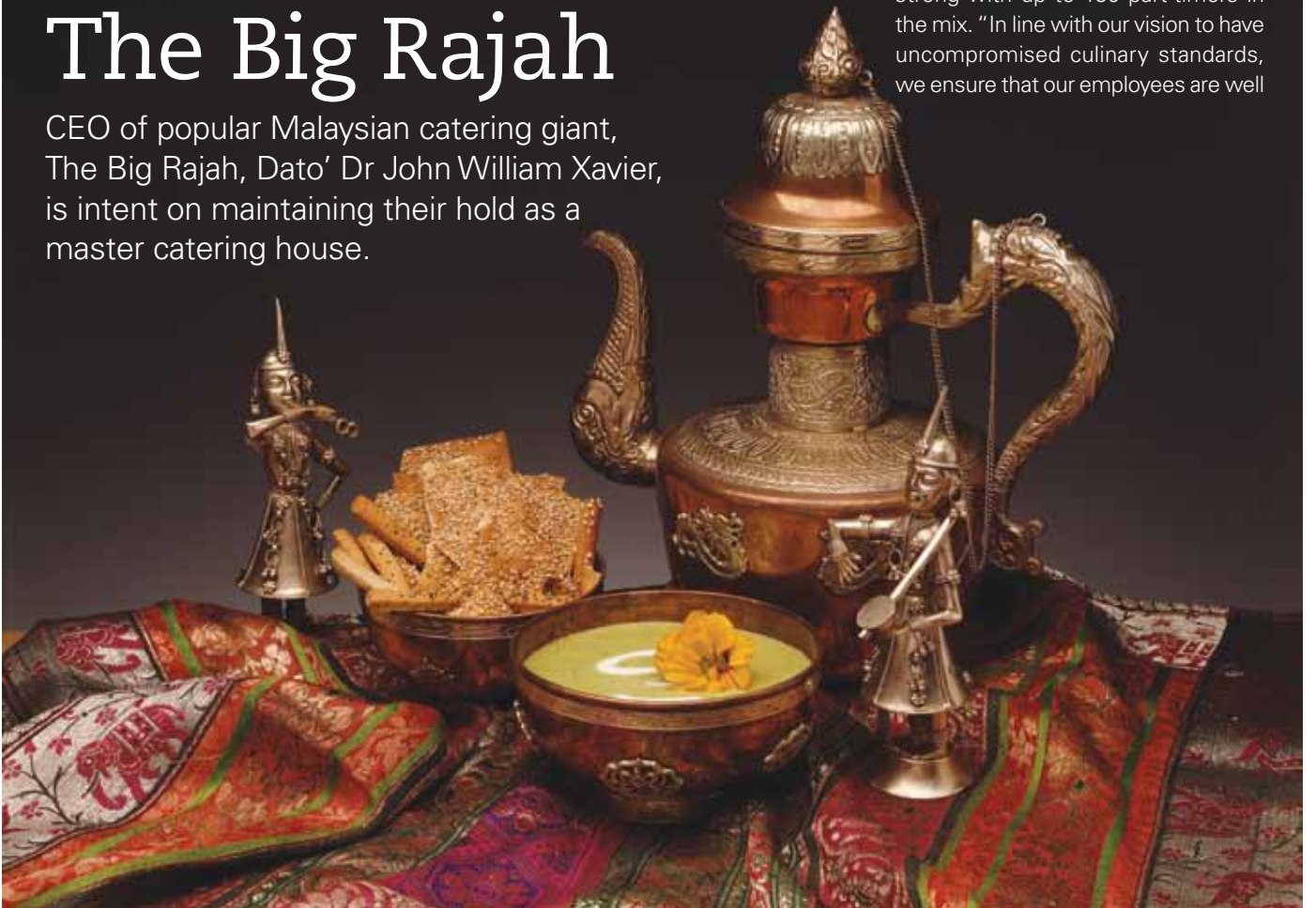
Slowly, The Big Rajah expanded their culinary reach and became a household name. "Today, we have a full service 24 hour kitchen and about 10 food trucks to transport our food across the Klang Valley and beyond." Dato' Dr John admits that the road was rough and paved with challenges. "It was a humble journey and a lot of learning knocks and curves along the way but we persevered."

The People Behind The Big Rajah

The team at Big Rajah are 45 people strong with up to 150 part-timers in the mix. "In line with our vision to have uncompromised culinary standards, we ensure that our employees are well

The Tale of The Big Rajah

CEO of popular Malaysian catering giant, The Big Rajah, Dato' Dr John William Xavier, is intent on maintaining their hold as a master catering house.

> **"Today, we have a full service 24 hour kitchen and about 10 food trucks to transport our food across the Klang Valley and beyond."**
> ~Dato' Dr John William Xavier

trained in the relevant fields to ensure our processes run smooth without any glitches." He explains that when a new employee comes on board, he or she is buddied with a senior employee so that they learn the ropes. "They then start a mentoring process of learning the trade of which they have been employed for by shadowing a more experienced member of staff in their relevant field."

"Our chefs are also exposed to expert cooking classes done by master chefs of different cuisines so that we can be relevant to the Malaysian market and our diversified cultures .We also train them in modern cooking equipment and catering sciences."

However, he also explains that one of the biggest challenges he faces is finding good, reliable employees. "One of the biggest challenges of the business is the human resource," says Dato' Dr John. He says that it can get frustrating when getting foreign workers is a problem because the government freezes permits for entry. "It is my experience that

Malaysian are not too keen on working long hours with high labour intensity, so we are forced to hire foreign help to keep the business going." Therefore, he hopes that this problem can be seriously looked at and dealt with by the relevant authorities to ensure the sustainability of small and medium enterprises in the country such as The Big Rajah.

The Future

After 17 years in the industry, for Big Rajah, the future is clear, they are intent on being a master catering house, providing good food and service at affordable prices. "Although we've been approached to participate in other F&B ventures, we have politely declined and are determined not to lose our focus." Any expansion plans will only include more employees

to meet the needs of the business. "I would like our expansion to reflect on hiring more professional staffing to make the company better equipped to function to its calling," he says.

Dato' Dr John William Xavier explains that his father's vision of service excellence and uncompromising culinary standards live on today as The Big Rajah continues to make inroads in the art and science of catering and event management to make every function, truly memorable.

"I am confident that my father's legacy lives on here, at the heart of The Big Rajah." | **UP**