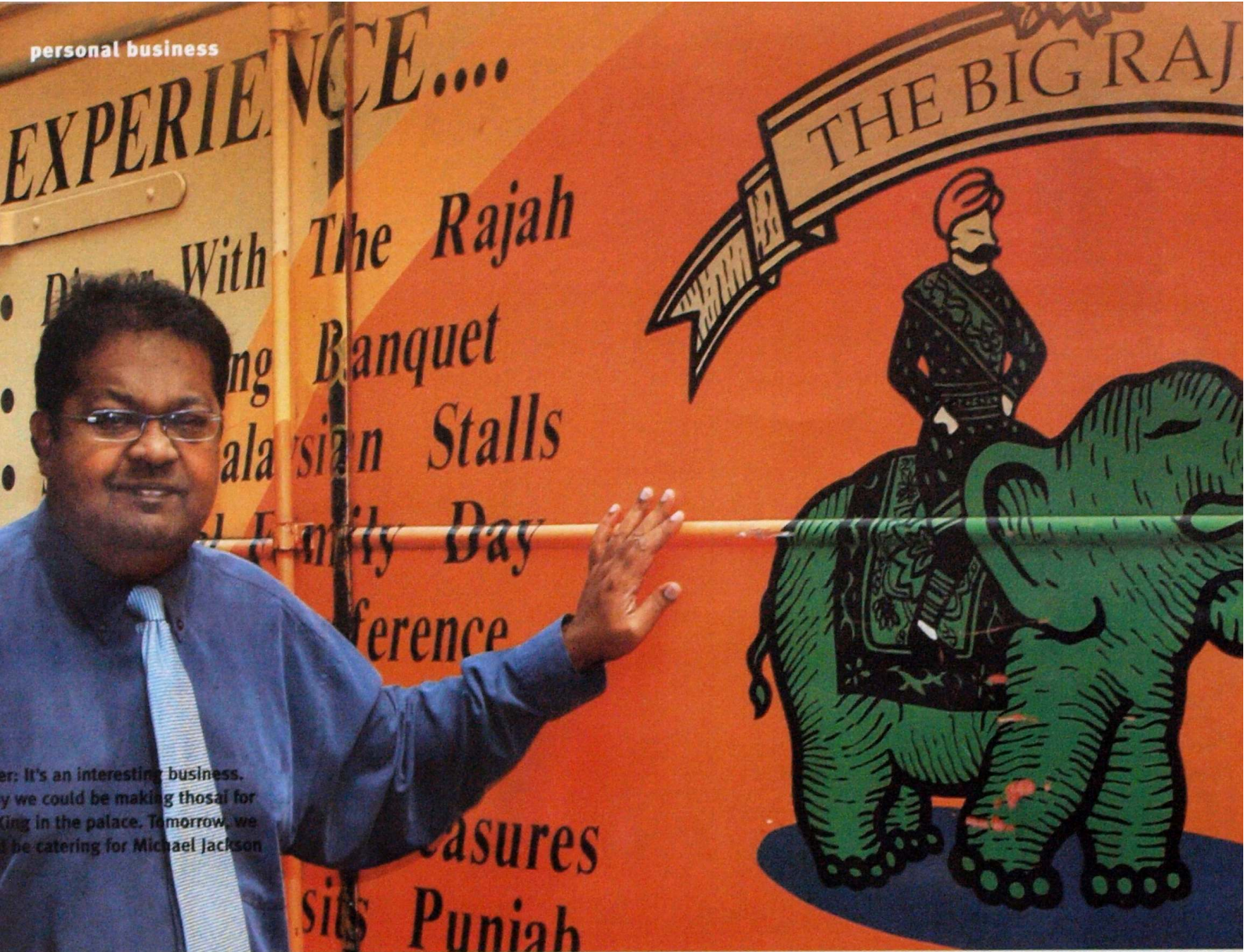




Feeding the masses

Starting your own catering company can be a fulfilling endeavour but it requires commitment and sacrifices. **Joanne R** asks three caterers for their tips on building a successful business.

IF YOU ARE going into the food catering business, you will be looking at lack of sleep, long work days and working during weekends. If the function starts at 9am, you will be up at an unearthly hour to do the cooking. And since most functions and parties are held at night or on weekends, you could be hard at work when your spouse and family are resting and having fun.

Catering is definitely not an easy business. John William Xavier,

proprietor of The Big Rajah Food Caterers, says a caterer's social life suffers. "When I started Big Rajah about eight years ago, I took no breaks at all for the first three or four years. Sometimes, I went to sleep at 1am and was up at 4am and back at work to get everybody organised for the next function," says the 20-year catering veteran.

How to start

Sam Muthusamy, proprietor of Event Caterers, says he first started catering

to groups of 10 to 20 close friends. From there, his reputation and business grew and he can cater for a thousand people today.

"You don't have to buy brand-new equipment when you start. There are a lot of second-hand shops where you can buy equipment. You can also buy from cafés that are closing down. When I started, I just needed RM100. That was to rent the equipment like stoves, van, dishes and utensils," he says.

He believes that if you do not want to rent equipment, it would take about RM30,000 to start your catering business. This would include the cost of a second-hand van, cooking equipment, cutlery and utensils.

Farit Ismeth Emir, founder and CEO of Emirex Group, invested about RM160,000 when he started the business in 1999. He spent half of the money on