

The quiet

He is worth a fortune but this private family man still prefers to walk to work



HOME: Khalili's mansion in the heart of Mayfair



FOR SALE AT £85MILLION: The property he developed in Kensington

A LITTLE-KNOWN property developer and art tycoon is the latest Briton to join the billionaire set – with a fortune said to be more than £2.5billion. Iranian-born Dr David Khalili, 57, is thought to have boosted his wealth by amassing an unrivalled art collection since the Seventies under the auspices of the Khalili Family Trust. He came to Britain in 1978 and now has one of the most important

By Jane Clinton

and comprehensive collections of Islamic art, featuring 20,000 pieces, including some of the most valuable Korans in the world. He also collects Japanese art. Khalili first came to prominence in 2001 after publicity about his £40million redevelopment of numbers 18 and 19 Kensington Palace Gardens. The house, which he bought in the early Nineties for £40million,

eventually went on the market for £85million, making it one of the world's most expensive properties. It boasts Turkish baths, a basement swimming pool with supporting columns inlaid with precious stones, a ballroom, an oak-panelled picture gallery and parking for 20 cars. Fellow billionaire, Formula One controller and New Labour supporter Bernie Ecclestone, was at one time reported to have been interested in buying the property,

billionaire



ART IS HIS PASSION: The silver elephant incense burner and gilded pottery are from Khalili's Japanese collection

which Khalili described as making "a major contribution" to the country. In 1980 his purchase of the 14th-century manuscript *World History* by Rashid al-Din, for £935,000 at Sotheby's, was the most expensive medieval manuscript ever sold. Despite his huge wealth, Khalili, who lives in the heart of Mayfair in a six-storey mansion house with his wife Marion, is described as a "private man" who shuns the trappings of a billionaire lifestyle. "He walks to work," said his

spokeswoman. "There are no flashy sports cars. I think he has a four-wheel drive but I have never seen him driving and there are no yachts. He has a very low profile and is a private family man whose passion is his collection. "He does not seek personal publicity. In fact he shies away from any publicity and I do not think there will be a reaction from him regarding this. "But he is resigned to the fact that when you are wealthy you will get this sort of attention." She expressed surprise as to how a

Sunday newspaper had reached the figure for Khalili's wealth. "I do not know how that figure was arrived at," she explained. "I can only assume they are looking at the collection but we have not finished publishing the catalogues." Khalili, who has three children, was not at home when the Sunday Express called. But his housekeeper explained Khalili and his wife had gone abroad. "He left this morning with luggage," she said. "He is abroad, but this trip was planned some time ago."



A PRIVATE MAN: Dr Khalili lives quietly with his wife Marion