

SAMS KIBRIA: TRIBUTES

A patriot all the way

MOHAMMED FARASHUDDIN

WITH the passing away of Shah Abu Mohammed Shamsul Kibria (SAMS Kibria) in a dastardly, heinous and meanest of the mean grenade attack on 27 January, 2005, the nation has lost a great son and an outstanding freedom fighter. It is natural that emotions will flow deep at the loss of such a high profile diplomat, UN official and a former finance minister...

profile incident of the country. Since then Kibria's achievements were many and already documented. Several aspects of his role and contributions as the Finance Minister of the People's Republic of Bangladesh needed further mention. It can be stated without any fear of contradiction that as a Minister of Finance, Kibria tried to be more concerned about the welfare of the people. The vigorously followed policy of incorporating the equity aspect in the growth strategy of the government he served was greatly helped by his own enthusiasm. Kibria was in favour of economic reforms but his approach was one of patient and incremental implementation primarily with a view to minimising the 'costs' of reforms to the disadvantaged. It was not so much on the direction but at the 'slow' pace of implementation of the economic reforms that some development partners were unhappy with Kibria. That SAMS Kibria was an excellent manager of the economy should be acceptable to most people. He would not rush on a decision that would have wide-spread impact. He would rather spend time and energy in carefully examining the pros and cons of a major decision as a Finance Minister than regret its resultant adverse effects. For instance, he would not mind an increase in the price of petrol used mostly by the rich but would resist 'pressure' by the development partners to raise the price of diesel and kerosene mostly used for economic activities of the relatively poor who were numerous in number. As the Finance Minister, SAMS Kibria had a tightrope walking towards a balance between the unlimited ends and scarce resources. Equally important was

the difficult balancing act between political considerations on the one hand and evaluation of merit on the other. He was one of those who believed 'efficiency' itself was a kind of 'loyalty' which a purely 'political eye' may not be able to discern. In most of the major appointments during his tenure as the Finance Minister, Kibria would put higher weight on the qualifications of the candidate rather than his or her political leanings. However, he would insist on the nominee not being against the fundamental bases on which Bangladesh was created as an independent country. In the debate involving a trade-off between unemployment and inflation, Kibria would always vigorously support the cause of price stability. This attitude combined extremely well with his meticulous macroeconomic management in achieving impressive economic growth and yet remarkable price stability (inflation rate under two percent) during the period 1996-2001. Very particular care was taken to ensure an unhindered availability of appropriate inputs and subsidised credits for the agriculture sector which recorded self-sufficiency in food production. As the Finance Minister, Kibria was one of the rightful claimants of the success. Kibria was at the forefront of banking reforms and the fight against the large defaulters. For the first time, the equity holders of the scheduled banks were restricted to borrowing from their 'own' banks only upto the limits permitted under the Company Act of 1913 (not more than half of the equity). As many as 57 big bank defaulter-equity holders were disqualified on various counts including from being elected to the Directorship of the respective bank until the

default was cleared. It was nationally and internationally well focussed that Finance Minister Kibria actually stood up firmly in support of Bangladesh Bank decision against a big defaulter when the latter lost the court battle and went to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on the Ministry of Finance comprising of several stalwarts of both the major political parties. The Standing Committee chaired by a Parliament Member of the then ruling party was unable to dissuade Kibria from spearheading the fight against the defaulter. On the matter of macroeconomic policy framework, the finance minister Kibria subscribed to the

view that international reserve of foreign currency was not an end in itself but a resource to be used for 'development and intermediate imports' for accelerating the pace of economic growth which was the objective. That's why he would not get panicked at the occasional slumping of the foreign exchange reserves as long as these did not dip below a threshold. Notwithstanding Kibria's support for the actions of the central bank, Bangladesh Bank, his attitude and views towards its 'independence' were no different than those of all the other Finance Ministers of the Republic since its independence in 1971. SAMS

Kibria was convinced of the potential in large increases in the remittances and supported the Bangladesh Bank initiatives in this respect. However, the vital legislation process on the 'Anti-Laundering' Act took more time than it should have. It has to be particularly noted that SAMS Kibria, like a handful of others earnestly tried but failed in evolving a national consensus on major economic issues. In the large, varied and geographically widespread canvas of his workplace, Kibria demonstrated a remarkable ability to endear himself to those around him. His prompt, effective and gutsy support for the glorious war of liberation in 1971 was the result of his commitment to the just cause. Kibria became a leading organiser of the freedom fighters in USA after renouncing his post in

the Embassy of Pakistan. Be it Washington, Bangkok, Dhaka or any other of his workplaces, Kibria's residence became a home of sincerely warm hospitality and cultural activities -- thanks to the large hearted artistic personality in the person of Asma Kibria. On various days of celebrations, the invited guests of the family would feel nicely comfortable because of the affectionate and personal care of Asma Kibria. On numerous occasions in various parts of the world, Asma, my wife and I were moved by the warmth of the hospitality of this high profile family. Reza and Nazli also added to the depth of the rich tradition, values and culture in the Kibria home. As a former colleague and an ardent admirer of the views of SAMS Kibria, I wonder why a person of such extraordinary qualities of head and heart should

have incurred the wrath of the killers. He was an honest man; his voice was democratic, moderate and secular. His presence in Bangladesh (in preference to any other place in the world where the Kibrias could have easily settled) certainly helped in improving the country's politics at home and abroad. The cruelty perpetrated on Shah Abu Mohammed Shamsul Kibria and the pains he suffered before his tragic departure from his beloved and beautiful country would certainly raise many eyebrows amongst the well-wishers of Bangladesh. I pay my deepest respect to the departed soul of this great son of the soil. May his soul rest in peace in Heaven.

Mohammed Farashuddin was the Governor of Bangladesh Bank for the period 23 November 1998 to 22 November 2001.



VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT

Uniconsult International Limited (UCIL) is currently working as consulting firm for ADB funded Northwest Crop Diversification Project (NCDP), implemented by the Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE) under the Ministry of Agriculture. For selecting a few consultants for the project, applications are invited from Bangladeshi Nationals for the following project positions:

1. Position: Credit Management Specialist; Duration: 06 person-months; Duty Station: Dhaka at PMU Office. Terms of References: Develop operating guidelines for the credit line in collaboration with the participating bank and in consultation with NGOs specify the terms and procedures for on-lending and repayment, and the specific role of bank and NGOs including operational manual; Develop operating guidelines for the provision and use of revolving funds for the proposed activities under 'Partnership Marketing Model' of the Project. These guidelines should include fund disbursement and repayment procedures. The terms and conditions for the use of fund, and the model contract to be used. In preparing these guidelines, the consultant will review the procedures and conditions adopted for the provision of similar revolving funds in other projects of ADB and DAE, if any. The financial sustainability of Revolving Fund facility is to be assessed by the consultant; Provide training with other resource persons to participating bank and NGO staff in the objectives and approach of the project, and specific operating procedures; Develop monitoring and reporting formats for the participating bank and NGOs; Supervise preparation of regular progress report on rural financial services/activities by PMU for GOB and ADB; Prepare and submit all sorts of reports including interim at the end of each input and terminal consultancy report at the end of total input to satisfy donor and GOB; Any other activities assigned by the Project Director/Team Leader.

Qualification and experience: The candidate should have at least higher university degree in Economics/and, Master's Degree in Economics/Agriculture Economics/MBA and other relevant subject with minimum second class in all examinations. He/She should have at least 15 years experience including 5 years in donor funded project experience for credit operation and management. Candidates having experience in guideline preparation, training, sound working knowledge of computer, gender issues, project management and implementation will be given preference. The candidate should be capable of writing report in English independently and willingness to conduct field visit frequently. Age not more than 60 years. Remuneration would vary from Tk 50,000-60,000 per month on the basis of qualification and experience.

2. Position: Gender Specialist: 10 person-months (approx); Duty Station: Dhaka at PMU Office. Terms of References: Examine the roles of target beneficiaries (men and women) in the project area with particular attention to roles of women in HVCs selected for NCDP; Examine the role of men and women target beneficiaries in decision making for those HVCs where women can provide greater contribution; Find out the problems and prospects of women's to be selected in the production process and in the group as per criteria of group formation; Develop strategy for improving role and participation of women in HVC production, processing and marketing; Propose measures in the area of capacity building and planning including GAD orientation of project staff and relevant stakeholders; Implement the activities of 'Gender Action Plan' encompassing Training and Extension, marketing and credit operation as well as other relevant important issue for women development; Prepare and submit all sorts of reports including interim at the end of each input and terminal consultancy report at the end of total input to satisfy donor and GOB; and Any other activities assigned by the Project Director/Team Leader.

Qualification and experience: The candidate should have at least higher university degree in Social Science/and, Master's Degree in social science with minimum second class in all examinations. He/She should have at least 10 years experience in the similar field especially in gender issues. Teaching/Research/NGO/consultancy experience will be added qualification. Candidates having experience in conducting PRA and organizing rural communities, promotion of income generation activities, working knowledge of computer, project management and implementation will be given preference. The candidate should be capable of writing report in English independently and willingness to conduct field visit frequently. Age not more than 60 years. Remuneration would vary from Tk 50,000-60,000 per month on the basis of qualification and experience.

3. Position: Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Specialist: 18 person-months (approx); Duty Station: Dhaka at PMU Office. Terms of References: Assess training needs of target beneficiaries (men and women) covering at least 15% of target trainer's and trainee's; Collect information from different ongoing project working on IPM in the project area and find out the technologies applicable for HVC identified for NCDP; Compile and assess the collected information about IPM technologies applicable for NCDP HVCs and prepare comprehensive report with recommendation; Continuously collect information on the basis of feedback from trainers and trainees about the IPM training and its effectiveness. Prepare a recommendation on possible modification of course curricula and suggest a plan of work for effective implementation; Arrange field testing of proposed training materials and finalize the materials on the basis of actual needs of the target beneficiaries; Participate in the training of Trainers to be organized for IPM master trainers both for district/upazila/block level officials and staff of the implementing agencies (DAE) and participating NGOs; Monitor the activities of block supervisors to set up farmer demonstration plots on IPM technologies for NCDP HVCs in project area; Exchange experiences and views with int'l consultant and carry forward the necessary activities in absence of the int'l supervisors to set up farmer demonstration plots on IPM technologies for NCDP HVCs in project area; Exchange experiences and views with int'l consultant and carry forward the necessary activities in absence of the int'l consultant; Prepare and submit all sorts of reports including interim at the end of each input and terminal consultancy report at the end of total input to satisfy donor and GOB; Any other activities assigned by the Project Director and Team Leader.

Qualification and experience: The candidate should have at least higher university degree in Entomology/and, Master's Degree in Entomology (preferably Ph.D) with minimum second class in all examinations. He/She should have at least 15 years experience in the similar field especially in IPM issues. Teaching/Research/NGO/consultancy experience will be added qualification. Candidates having experience in organizing rural communities, working knowledge of computer, project management and implementation will be given preference. The candidate should be capable of writing report in English independently and willingness to conduct field visit frequently. Age not more than 60 years. Remuneration would vary from Tk 50,000-60,000 per month on the basis of qualification and experience.

4. Position: Market Management Specialist (Wholesale): 12 person-months (approx); Duty Station: Dhaka at PMU Office. Terms of References: Organize discussion meeting/workshop/seminars with major agencies involved with market management (DAM, Local Administration, Municipal authorities of upazila and districts) to determine the status of market management in the project area and suggest improvement thereof; Be involve in organizing study tours to relevant neighboring countries to view options in market organization and management; Be involve in formulating and develop training module through assessment of training needs of the market management personnel; Organize and help implement the training for market management personnel utilizing the training materials to be developed for the purpose; Exchange experience and views with int'l consultant and forward the necessary activities in absence of the int'l consultant; Prepare and submit all sorts of reports including interim at the end of each input and terminal consultancy report at the end of total input to satisfy donor and GOB; Any other activities assigned by the PD and TL.

Qualification and experience: The candidate should have at least higher university degree in Agriculture Economics/and, Master's Degree in Agriculture Economics/MBA/Economics/Social Science (preferably Ph.D) with minimum second class in all examinations. He/She should have at least 15 years experience in the similar field especially in market management issues. Teaching/Research/NGO/consultancy experience will be added qualification. Candidates having experience in developing market management plan, working knowledge of computer, project management and implementation will be given preference. The candidate should be capable of writing report in English independently and willingness to conduct field visit frequently. Age not more than 60 years. Remuneration would vary from Tk 50,000-60,000 per month on the basis of qualification and experience.

Interested candidates having required qualification and experience may apply with detailed Curriculum Vitae with one recent photograph and all certificates. The application should be sent to UCIL on or before 14 February 2005. Applications should be sent indicating the name of the position applied for on the envelope. Only short listed candidates will be invited for interview.

Special Note (Corrigendum): For the positions viz. one accounts Specialist and four Crop Production Specialist-Field advertised by UCIL on 5th September 2004 age of candidates should be read as 'Age not more than 60 years'. Candidates already applied need not to apply again. The last date for other candidates is 14 February 2005.

President Uniconsult International Limited (UCIL) Sena Kalyan Bhaban (7th Fl), 185 Motijheel C/A, Dhaka-1000 E-mail: info@ucil-bd.com

Sir: Some recollections

SYED MUAZZEM ALI

I have just now returned from Banani graveyard after the burial of my esteemed senior colleague Shah Abu Mohammad Shamsul Kibria. The mortal remains of my respected 'Sir' have been laid to rest. The national flag-draped coffin box had arrived at the graveyard gate and, after due national honour, his son Reza, in the presence of his relations, friends and admirers, had lowered the body into the grave. We had joined in the prayers for the salvation of his soul. Yet I could not come to terms with the fact that he was no more. I had walked away to visit the graves of my own parents, and after every one had left, I had returned to the gravesite again, as if to double check that what had happened little while ago was not a bad dream. How do I write about a man who has meant so much to me and my family? As a career diplomat I was trained to control my emotions, yet tears swell up in my eyes and emotions overwhelm me as I write this piece to pay my tributes. In his death, the country has lost one of its outstanding sons. Mr. Kibria was so many persons in one man. He was a meritorious student who topped the list in every examination, an internationally acclaimed diplomat, a brilliant political strategist, a valiant freedom fighter, a language movement activist and yet, at the personal level, a loving husband, an affectionate father, a caring senior colleague and above all, a perfect gentleman. To all my contemporaries in the Foreign Ministry, Mr. Kibria was an institution, not a mere senior diplomat. He excelled in every aspect of our profession. To work with him was indeed a rewarding learning

experience. As a close friend of my eldest brother Late S.M. Ali, Mr. Kibria was known to my family for nearly six decades, from the days when my family lived in our sleepy hometown Maulvi Bazar. I was too young at that time to remember the details. My direct association with him began in 1969 when I went to Islamabad for on-the-job training at the Pakistan Foreign Ministry. Mr. Kibria had returned to the Headquarters a few months earlier and had taken over the important job of Director (Personnel). Naturally, we had ample opportunities for close interaction with him at the Ministry. He also invited us to his house and introduced us to our dear Eva Bhabhi and his young son Reza and little daughter Nazli. In the summer of 1970 he left for Washington DC to join the Pakistan Embassy. Little did I know that within months I would be posted to the same Mission and would get to know them very closely! The stay in Washington DC turned out to be most eventful as we spent the critical days of our War of Independence together. I reached Washington DC in November 1970 leaving behind my newly-married wife Tuhfa (also known as Nishat to those close to the family) in Dhaka to complete her Masters' examination. Sir and Eva bhabhi took great care of me. After office hours, he would often take me to his house in Bethesda and after sumptuous dinner and delightful conversations, would drop me at my hotel in DC involving an hour's drive. Sometimes, he would invite me to formal dinners at their home and introduce me to high officials of State Department, US Government and Congress, World Bank, IMF as well as diplomats from other Missions and

members of the press corps. Within months of my arrival in Washington DC, the Pakistan army began the genocide on our people and naturally those of us living abroad were deeply disturbed. The Bangladeshi officials of the Embassy and other Bangladeshi expatriates living in the DC area regularly met in our senior officers' houses by turn. Mr. Kibria's contributions in these meetings were immense and largely helped in charting out a precise and concrete course of action. His ability to prioritise issues was simply incomparable. I must also make special mention of the contributions of Late Enayet Karim, the then seniormost Bangladeshi officer at the Pakistan Embassy, and Mr. A. M. A. Muhiith, the economic counsellor, during that critical juncture of our nation's history. It was the combined leadership of Mr. Karim, Mr. Muhiith and Mr. Kibria that inspired the rest of us to fight for the Bangladesh cause in the USA. These three stalwarts also showered their kindness and love on Tuhfa and myself, and their doors were always open to us. During the war Mr. Kibria and Mr. Muhiith worked tirelessly to propagate the cause of our independence. Mr. Enayet Karim had suffered two severe heart attacks during this time, but provided his senior colleagues with constant advice and guidance from his recovery bed. At that time I shared the same room with Mr. Kibria in the Bangladesh Mission in Washington DC and had the rare privilege of working very closely with him. He taught me how to mount a political campaign, convince important people in US congress and government, and how to motivate common American people to our cause. At the end of the day, I would discuss with him the course of events and he would give me his assessment. What impressed me most was the depth and dimension of his knowledge. Soon after the independence of our country, Mr. Kibria was called to Dhaka and asked to take over as Director-General (Political) in the Foreign Ministry. All Ministries--other than Foreign and Defence--of the newly-independent Bangladesh were largely set up on the existing Departments of the former East Pakistan Provincial Government. Defence ministry had the huge cantonment structures in Dhaka and elsewhere. All that the Foreign Ministry inherited was a small Coordination office headed by a Director and housed in a rented building in Dhanmondi. Mr. Kibria and our other senior colleagues set up the Foreign Ministry in the old Commissioner's building in Segun Bagicha literally from scratch. He was subsequently promoted as Secretary and served in that capacity until he was posted as our High Commissioner to Canberra. My next encounter with the Kibrias was in Geneva in 1976 where they moved from Australia. I was then posted in Warsaw, Poland. Sir and Eva bhabhi warmly invited us to visit them in Geneva. We drove down from Warsaw, and after the welcoming cup of tea Sir said, "Let me show you my garden." I was a little puzzled at his offer. As soon as we entered the garden at the rear of the residence, he put on his hand, and said, "Give me a cigarette. Eva has imposed a severe quota on my smoking." We laughed,

and joined in a smoke without the knowledge of our wives. Destiny again brought us together when Mr. Kibria was transferred as Foreign Secretary in 1978. He called me to the headquarters, and asked me to take over as Director (Personnel). Unlike my other colleagues, I was literally asked to take over my charges straight from the airport. He also told me that I should not think about leaving Dhaka in three years. He specifically advised me to deal with administration in my first year, multilateral diplomacy in my second year, and to focus on India and the other neighbouring countries in my third year. Without knowledge of these three vital areas, he told me, I would never have a full grip of the fundamental aspects of our foreign policy. In early 1979, he asked me to prepare a paper detailing the justification for a separate foreign service cadre for Bangladesh. Until then we did not have any separate foreign service cadre as such to run the foreign ministry, and the erstwhile PFS officers and people from other branches of government were being absorbed in the Foreign Ministry on an ad hoc basis. I prepared a six-page paper drawing on the experiences of our neighbouring countries. Mr. Kibria liked the report, and said that he would like to strengthen the last part of the report giving more details about our future requirements. He persuaded the government to accept his proposal without any major change. Subsequently he constituted a committee and asked us to prepare a detailed training programme for the Foreign Service officers, and played a vital role in the setting up of the first Foreign Service Academy in a rented building in Zikatala. By that time the size of the ministry had increased and it was difficult to accommodate the officers in the existing structure. Under the personal supervision of Mr. Kibria, we embarked on the proposal for the construction of the five-storied annex building. Mr. Kibria left the Foreign Ministry in mid-1981 to take over as the Executive Secretary of the ESCAP. Early next year, I left for our Permanent Mission in New York. We met the Kibrias regularly during the General Assembly sessions, and once we had the pleasure of hosting him at our home. During that time I also went to Bangkok twice on official missions, and he personally picked me up from the hotel for dinner at his residence. Eva Bhabhi and Mr. Kibria asked me sincere and caring questions about Tuhfa and my sons. I came back to Dhaka as Director-General in 1992. Mr. Kibria had also returned to Dhaka from Bangkok a few months earlier and was staying at a rented apartment in Banani. He was at that time writing regularly for The Daily Star. During one of our visits, he told me that with the UN pension he could live comfortably in any country he chose, but what would he do there when there was so much to be done for his beloved Bangladesh? During 1995-1998, I made a few official trips to Dhaka from Tehran [where I was the Ambassador]. I visited him at his home on those occasions. I remember, on one such trip before the Islamic Summit, he had enquired what my wife was doing in Tehran, and had regretted that she, as a diplomat's wife, never got the opportunity to utilise her talents. Later, during my years as Ambassador

at Paris, I met Mr. Kibria each year during the Consortium meetings. His delegations every year included senior and veteran Secretaries from different Ministries. Yet, it was Mr. Kibria who conducted most of the negotiations and was directly involved in all aspects of the Meetings. After an official reception, or on evenings when he had no official programme, he would ask my wife to prepare 'deshi' food for him, specially the Sylheti delicacy 'shatkora'. In Paris, after I had successfully piloted the adoption of the International Mother Language Day resolution at the UNESCO, he sent me an official congratulatory message, and personally telephoned me to tell me how proud he was of me. We came to Dhaka on home leave in 2000, and Sir and Eva Bhabhi hosted a feast for me, to share their pride and joy. When I returned to Dhaka to take over as Foreign Secretary in 2001, he was delighted. I deeply benefitted from his advice and guidance during the serious Bangladesh-India border crisis, the hostage crisis, the Third UN LDC Conference, and the UN Secretary-General's visit during my tenure as Foreign Secretary. On my return to Dhaka early this month after a two-and-half-year sojourn in the US, I had called his home. I talked with Eva Bhabhi and left my phone number. He called me as soon as he returned home, and we had the usual warm conversation. He told me that he would like to see me after Eid holidays, after his current preoccupations in his constituency. As Bhabhi was to tell me when we had gone to their home on Friday after the janaza, he had come home, seen my phone number and had called me immediately, without waiting to hear about my conversation with her. Alas, I did not know that this preoccupation would snatch him from us. How I wish I had met him once before the cowardly people took away the life of this illustrious son of Bangladesh! This brilliant Bangladeshi's love for Bangladesh was very infectious. In early 1972, while Mr. Kibria and his family were preparing for their return to Dhaka from Washington DC, teenager Reza and I had a conversation about driving in Dhaka. Reza had commented that he was not sure if he could drive among the rickshaws in Dhaka. Mr. Kibria, who had been packing his books at the other end of the room, had come over, and had reminded Reza that rickshaws were a part of the life of Bangladesh, and that if his father had not been a diplomat, Reza would probably have spent his entire life in Bangladesh. Imbued with such strong teachings and guidance from their parents, Reza and Nazli have grown up to be very nationalistic and down to earth, and have their feet firmly on the ground. This was one other lesson that I had learnt from Mr. Kibria. I have strived to instil in my sons this same feeling for the downtrodden of Bangladesh. May Allah rest my respected Sir's departed soul in eternal peace, and give Eva Bhabhi, Reza, Nazli, their spouses, Sir's grandchildren, and all of us who knew him so personally, the strength to bear this irreparable loss. Amen.

Syed Muazzem Ali is former Foreign Secretary of Bangladesh.

EMPLOYMENT

The following officials (foreign/local) both male and female with adequate experience and good educational background are urgently required to be employed with attractive package remuneration in head office of a Taiwanese company located at DOHS Baridhara, Dhaka. 1. Personal Secretary to Chairman/ Managing Director-MBA/Master Degree/MSc/BSc Engineer (Capable to make Self Correspondence in English). 2. Shorthand/Stenographer-Masters Degree. 3. Executive (capable of making standard draft in English/Self Correspondence)-Masters Degree. 4. Computer Operator-Graduate (English and Bengali, Capable to make Self Correspondence). 5. Assistance Secretary to Chairman/ Managing Director-Graduate. 6. Project Manger- with sufficient experience in construction jobs works (Minimum 05 years Experience)-MSc/BSc Engineer (civil). 7. Protocol Office- Masters Degree.

Candidates having requisite qualification and experience are required to apply in Post Box No. 2033 with Bio-data, necessary certificate/papers along with 2X recent passport size photograph within 10 February 2005.