A Tribute to an Innovator

AZIZUL JALIL

The year was 1966.Qamrul Islam Siddique, a fresh graduate engineer from the Ahsanullah Engineering College, appeared for an interview for the position of District Engineer, Kushtia. He was about 23 years of age- tall, thin and fair and seemed to have an extraordinary enthusiasm for the development of the district to which he belonged. The elected Vice-Chairman of the Kushtia District Council and the Project Director of the Ganges-Kobadak Project were members of the selection committee, with me-the Deputy Commissioner and ex-officio Chairman of the District Council, as the chairman. In addition to Qamrul, there were two other candidates-- a district Engineer from a neighbouring district and the veteran assistant district engineer of Kushtia. During the interview, we got a sense of Qamrul's vision and commitment to the task he was about to embark on. Despite his inexperience, we offered him the job. Personally, it was a decision I was later to be so proud of.

He soon made his mark in planning and executing road and other development works in Kushtia. He was always ready with ideas and initiatives for fully implementing roads and other works under the district's Public Works Program. The same was true of the Sugar-Cess Funds for infrastructure development in the sugarcane growing areas of the district. He was an excellent field worker and his close supervision and monitoring of works was legendary, an attribute he maintained throughout his life as his level and area of responsibilities grew. After I left Kushtia, Qamrul went to work as the Municipal Engineer in Khulna, later going over to organise the Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) in Dhaka, which was his life's greatest accomplishment.



Qamrul Islam Siddique

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We had not met in the intervening years but I used to read and hear a lot about his drive in successfully building an extensive network of rural roads, culverts, bridges and drainage structures throughout Bangladesh. However, he remained humble, modest and low profile with a big smile always on his face. In