

In a Nutshell

ELITA KARIM

This is a short profile on Dr Hafiz GA Siddiqi, a passionate educator, a powerful mentor and immensely popular amongst students for his soft spoken nature and jovial personality. It is probably next to impossible to fill up the allotted space with Dr Siddiqi's activities, his contribution to education in Bangladesh, the positive impact that his words have had on students in the last many decades and of course the eventful life that he led growing up in Dhaka, after his birth in the 1930s in Hazaribagh.

Dr Siddiqi has been a professor at the prestigious Institute of Business Administration (IBA) and has been involved with the institute for decades now. After teaching in the USA for a while, he returned to Bangladesh to join North South University, the first private university to be established in the country, in the early 90s. "I was thrilled at the idea of establishing a private university in Bangladesh," says Dr Siddiqi. "When Mr Muslehuddin Ahmad, the founding VC of NSU, shared this idea with me over dinner, I immediately told him that I would like to be involved with the university." As a pro-VC and VC of, Dr Siddiqi has contributed immensely to NSU, thus establishing it as one of the leading private universities in Bangladesh.

After an early retirement in 2010, Dr Siddiqi joined Brac University as Professor Emeritus. "Sir Fazle Hasan Abed, very dear to me, requested me to join the university, and I could not refuse," explains Dr Siddiqi. "I don't teach, but I mentor other professors, teachers also students. I am also continuing with my research activities. I have an office there; Abed was nice enough to give me one. And I am not doing this for a salary. At this age, I don't want to be accountable to anybody, I told Abed. I want to do what I like to do in a relaxed manner."

Dr Hafiz GA Siddiqi earned the title of Hafiz because he memorised the Holy Quran, and that was at a very young age. "I was a very good student and would always win the government scholar-

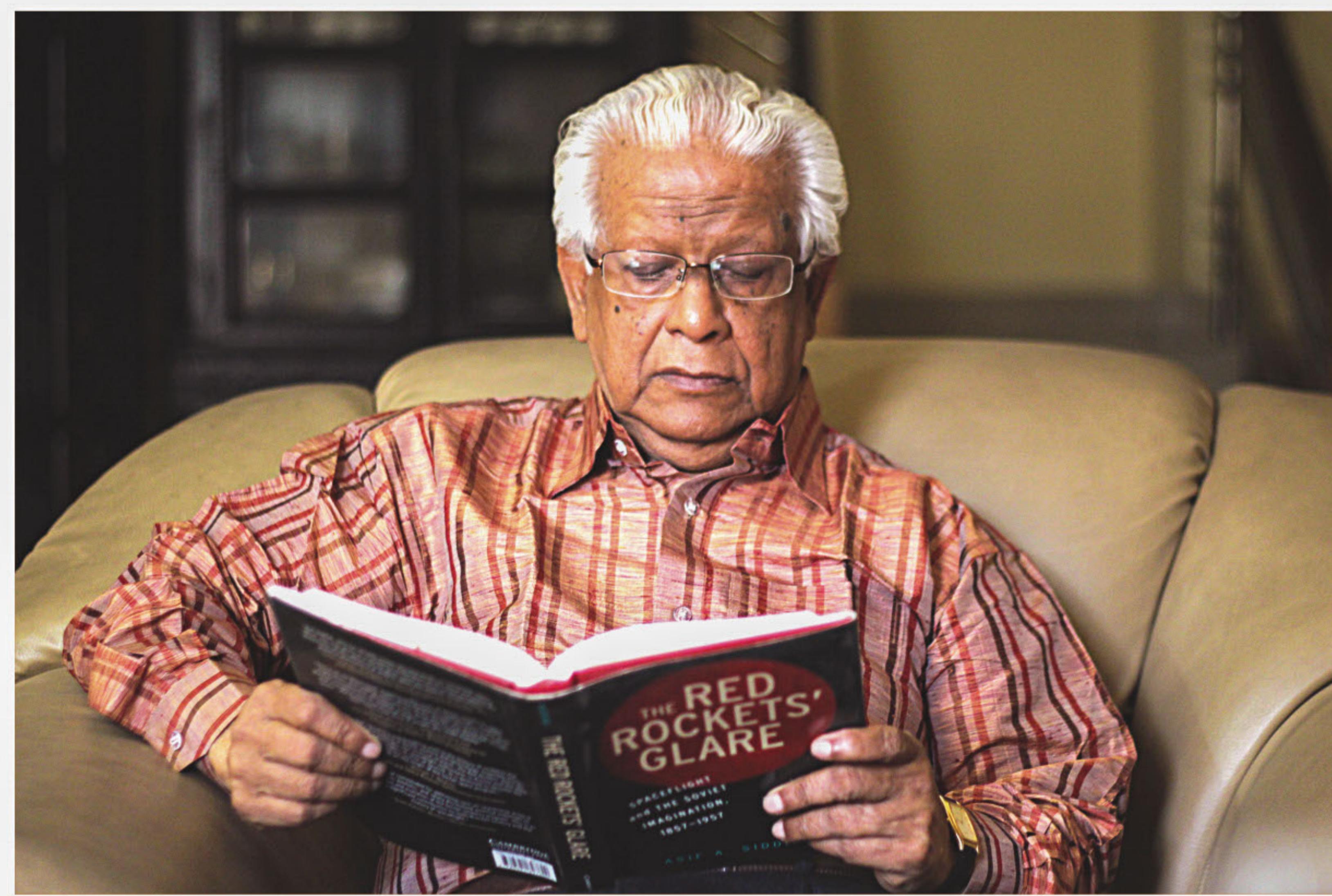


PHOTO: KAZI TAHSIN AGAZ APURBO

ships at school," says Dr Siddiqi. "After finishing class 4, I suddenly decided to memorise the Holy Quran, which meant dropping out from regular school. My teacher was upset and wanted me to change my mind. He wanted me to stick to studies, since I was doing very well. But I would not listen and went for the title of Hafiz." It was four years before Dr Siddiqi went back to regular

school. In his early 80s now, Dr Siddiqi is an active policy builder in the field of corporate finance, a passionate educator and a popular mentor amongst his family, friends and colleagues. "I was born in 1931, but one of my teachers in school changed it to 1937!" he laughs. "I must be 82-83 at least, or more." Clearly, he has a way of winning

over the hearts of young students, and surprisingly enough remembers each and every one of them. "I am very proud of my students," he says. "Most of my students are doing very well -- in finance, education even in writing. As I always say, half of this country is run by my students! What do I have to worry about?" says Dr Siddiqi, all swollen with pride.



PHOTO: MIR MUKARRAM HOSSAIN

Click by Click

NAZIBA BASHER

Mohammad Rakibul Hasan graduated in Film and Video Production from UBS Film School at the University of Sydney, Australia, where he was inspired into photography. "While studying there, I realised that not only motion pictures are strong visuals, still pictures can also deliver a compelling message," says Hasan. Through this realisation, he had then embarked upon a journey that took him to great heights and he has never looked back since.

"In 2011-12, I was granted a full scholarship to pursue a Post Graduate Diploma in Photojournalism at Konrad Adenauer Asian Center for Journalism (ACFI) at Ateneo de Manila University, Philippines," says Hasan. Mastering his course there with the highest grades in class, he is currently studying History of Art, an online programme, through the University of Oxford.

Hasan works as a freelance photographer, represented by an Australian photo agency called Falcon Photo Agency. "It has been over ten years since I got into photography but my knack for film hasn't died out. Along with photography, I shoot documentary films every now and then as well," explains Hasan.

Mohammad Rakibul Hasan also founded Bangladeshi Photographers (BP) in 2005 as an online platform for amateur photographers mainly, along with two other photographers- Mohammad Moniruzzaman and Kazi Tahsin Agaz Apurbo. "Many others joined later in the group. We have successfully encouraged many young hopefuls who are now practicing photography, some professionally while others became great enthusiasts," says Hasan.

According to Hasan, winning awards cannot be a parameter for measuring the overall

achievement of a photographer. "Awards are a sort of recognition that definitely helps bringing exposure in the industry. I have won several accolades in the field of photography. But as a documentary photographer my greatest achievement is whenever my photographs play a part in the betterment of society," explains Hasan.

Hasan gets most of his inspiration from the experiences he faces throughout his life. But there are quite a few photographers who have played a role in making Hasan the photographer he is by motivating and inspiring him. "Some of the Bangladeshi photographers who have influenced me are Hasan Chandan, Anwar Hossain, GMB Akash, Abir Abdullah, Munem Wasif, Andrew Biraj and so on. There are also a lot of foreign master photographers like Eugene Smith, Henri Cartier-Bresson, Sebastião Salgado, Man Ray and more," says Hasan.

Hasan is well known as an advertising and documentary photographer, but before he found his forte he experimented with everything that caught his interest. Hasan says, "I used to shoot anything I found. In fact, it helped me in exploring a wide variety of genres in photography. I shoot documentary films every now and then as well," explains Hasan.

Currently working on a project called 'Dystopia', Hasan has no intention or plan of moving away from the field of photography. What he does plan on is to further and improve his style and take on new challenges. "My style in documentary photography is a continuation of classicalism or conventionalism from the past. The style and movement is rapidly changing, and there is always a hunger for new creation in terms of style, form, subject matter and presentation. I am in the process of exploration and experimentation on creating new visuals. I want to experiment with conceptual photography," says Hasan.

Pushing the boundaries

ANIKA HOSSAIN

Charismatic and lively are the words that come to mind when one thinks of the Station In-Charge of Radio Shadhin and actress Sriya Sharbojoya. With a BA in Anthropology and a minor in Economics from Smith College in the USA, Sriya returned to her home country to do something fresh and different that would help influence the society for the better.

She started working behind the scenes at the Asiatic 360 group doing production related work, after which she moved on to advertising. During this time she was also working as an RJ for the ABC Radio. "I have always loved performing during my school days and college days," says Sriya, "Most of them were stage performances, but when I came back, I didn't have the interest or the confidence to perform in front of the camera, so I thought one interesting and exciting space would be the radio because you are performing with your voice which I found challenging. It's a creative outlet where I create a world without people seeing me."

Soon, during this stint, she met her future husband, Mir Rabby, with whom she started a new project- Radio Shadhin, a sister concern of Asiatic. "We thought that there is scope for something different in the radio scene, for example, our philosophy is to encourage people to think outside the box. The radio itself can be a brand that stands for something. We encourage people to look at life differently, push the boundaries," she says. "We want to rid the impression that a youthful radio station is all about fun and games, we want to talk about serious issues as well. For example a youngster can talk about women's issues like breast cancer in a direct way," she tells us.

Aside from her career in Radio Shadhin, Sriya has taken up various acting stints, "I first started acting in school productions and was involved in the drama club," says Sriya, "I also did a few stage performances in college, and my group theatre experience began after that, but my first TV appearance happened about two or three years ago when I acted in a natok that my mother, Sarah Zaker had written for Desh TV, called Oshomo," she continues.

After this stint, she appeared in a natok under the direction of Ratan Pal. An interac-

tive cooking show came next followed by a two year gap during which she strived to achieve the physical fitness required for stage performances and long hours of television shootings. "Recently, I have acted in a stage play with Usha Ganguly, from the Indian theatre group Rangkarmi in collaboration with the Nagorik theatre group in Dhaka," says Sriya, "And it was an exhilarating experience!"



PHOTO: COURTESY

Sriya enjoys working on the stage as well as on television, and believes both provide a different kind of learning experience and appeal to different senses. In the future she would like to take Radio Shadhin flourish further and be a large part of it and at the same time keep acting on stage, TV and films if the opportunity arises. "I would like to do my higher studies abroad, but I have a deep connection to Bangladesh and see myself living and working here in the future, the opportunities available here can hardly be found elsewhere."