

Professor Dr Nizamuddin Ahmed has been writing for the Star Magazine with the pseudonym Chintito. His witty and thought provoking articles have been nourishing our readers mind for more than 18 years. This week *The Star* reveals the amazing story of this thought leader through a detailed interview. Professionally Dr Nizamuddin Ahmed is the former dean, faculty of architecture and planning and

sports magazine *Krirangon* in 1972. Then I committed myself in sports reporting and editing the magazine. But one fine morning I got a call from the editor of The Daily Star, then an emerging newspaper, to join its sports section as the editor. I was hesitant but then actually was 'forced' to join and lead the team. Thus I entered into The Daily Star family to which I am still connected by heart and by my pen. Besides working for The Daily Star I was also teaching at the Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology. When I got the responsibility of the Dean of architecture faculty, I realized that it would become difficult for me to continue both the job simultaneously. So besides serving the university, I started writing editorial articles for The Daily

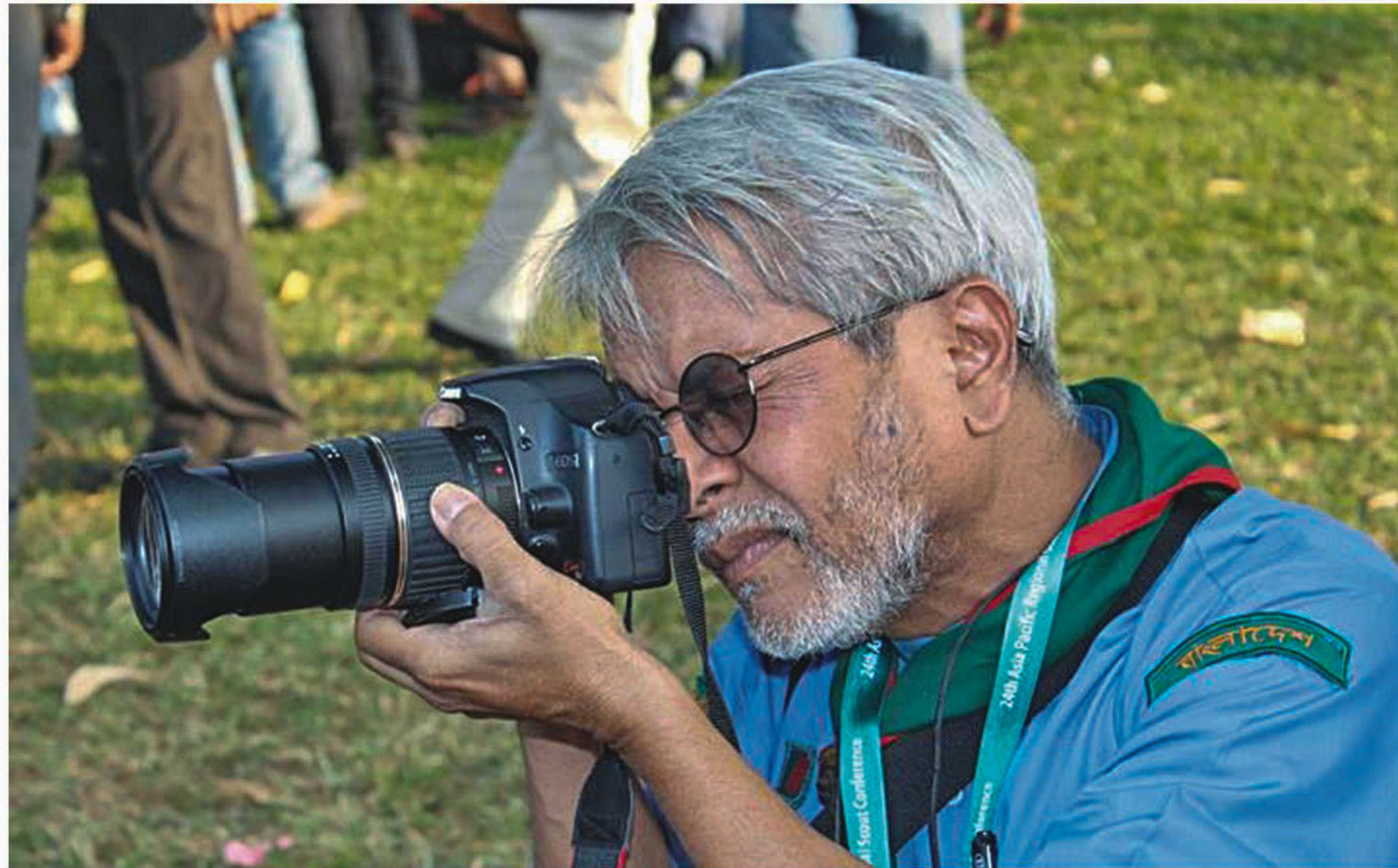


PHOTO COURTESY: DR NIZAMUDDIN AHMED

Caught focussing at a Scout camp, Mouchak, Gazipur.

former head of department of architecture, Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology. He has completed his PhD from University of Sheffield, Sheffield, England, UK. He is also the Charter President, Rotary Club of Dhaka Urbana and Asst. Leader Trainer, National Commissioner, Bangladesh Scouts. He is the founder of the GERAMfERA initiative and the CEO and Managing Director of BASHABARI architects.

With your pseudonym Chintito and humorous and thought provoking articles you have created quite a stir. How did you start writing?

Actually my writing career began as a sport journalist which was quite a different start up for a teacher of architecture of the country's largest engineering university. But I was an avid sportsman in my youth. I also participated in the Scout movement and won the Silver Tiger award (the highest award). From my enthusiasm I launched Bangladesh's first

I know Chintito from his columns and I am his regular reader. I love the way he explains the bleak and complex realities in such a humorous and simple manner. I welcome Chintito and wish him all the best that he has decided to expose himself as Nizamuddin Ahmed. But I am also afraid will it be the end of his Chintito life? Will he not be concerned anymore?

— Nawazish Ali Khan
Programme Advisor at ATN Bangla

Star. I started writing with the pseudonym Chintito and the name of my column was "Pinch of Salt".

You have been writing for the Star Magazine from the very beginning. How has that experience been?

One day in 1996, Mahfuz bhai (Mahfuz Anam, the editor and publisher of the Daily Star) told me, "Nizam we are

going to launch a Friday magazine and Aasha will be its editor. Why don't you send your articles for the magazine from now on? She will not correct your pieces but she needs to know what you have written for the magazine." I was actually a bit confused about what was going on. But when I met the magazine editor and started writing for her I started to feel like that the magazine was the appropriate place for my pieces. Thanks to Aasha's encouraging cooperation, I have been writing for the magazine for 18 years or more. She has been an inspiration for my writing. In fact when I write, I don't think about my readers rather I often think Aasha will be reading this article.

How did you come up with your pseudonym Chintito? What was the idea behind it?

I know Chintito intimately as a fellow Rotarian and a freedom fighter. I am an avid fan of his columns. He is a man of sophisticated personality and a store house of knowledge. He is great and intense. I am an ardent admirer of Chintito.

— Ghulam Mustafa

Freedom fighter and the former Governor of Rotary International, Bangladesh



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina launching Dr Nizam's book, 'Acoustics for Architects' on December 2010.

PHOTOS COURTESY: DR NIZAMUDDIN AHMED



- Dr Nizam achieved the Bangladesh Sports Writers Association Award in 2009
- He received The Rotary Foundation District Service Award in 2002-03
- Dr Nizam has been awarded Silver Tiger, the highest award conferred by Bangladesh Scouts
- He has published numerous research papers on architecture and authored five books.

Actually the word Chintito just came to my mind. I wrote my very first article with this pseudonym. I was shy about writing articles for the newspaper and expressing my thoughts publicly. That is why I chose the pseudonym. But when somebody asks me, "Are you Chintito (concerned)? What are the things you are so concerned about?" I reply, "Yes I am concerned. Everybody in Bangladesh should be concerned." But I actually try to explain the harsh realities in more accessible, humorous and sometimes in a bit satirical way. We have newspaper reports to get firsthand accounts of the real life incidents. But to make people think deeply about its social impacts I try to engage them in my writing by making it simpler and a bit witty.

You have participated in the liberation war of 1971. How did that influence your writing?

Like many others of that time the year 1971 is one of the most eventful years of my life. At that time I was a student of 12th grade

at Jhenida Cadet College. But when the war broke out I was staying with my parents in Dhaka. I was connected with my friends who decided to join the war. So with some of my friends I fled from my house and crossed the Indian border. I received training at Melaghar and participated in the war at sector 2. Sadek Hossain Khoka, former mayor of Dhaka City Corporation was one of my comrades. I took part in preparing and guarding defensive positions at Kasba. In October we started to March towards Narsingdi and from Narsingdi we started for Dhaka to attack Pakistani establishments. On the way one of our comrades fell severely ill. I was told to look after him and stay back. Then I was told to take him to Dhaka.

When I reached home my parents turned emotional after getting me back. After a few weeks my parents sent me to my aunt's place in West Pakistan to ensure my safety. I was forced to go and could not say no to my parents at that time. But I could not stay there for much longer. I managed to gather a couple of friends and again fled from my aunt's place. This time my destination was Kabul, Afghanistan. We hired a guide with 1500 rupees for crossing the border. After weeks of journey on foot, donkey and horse caravan we reached the historic and scenic Khybar pass. The guide helped us to cross the border and after crossing the border it took us some more weeks to reach Jalalabad in Afghanistan. There at first we went to the Indian Embassy. They gave us shelter and transported us to Delhi. Then with the help of the Indian government we entered into free and independent Bangladesh through the Benapole border.

My participation in the liberation war was brief but I have witnessed and experienced the struggle and oppression