

A life well lived

From architect to editor, Taslimuddin Chowdhury was a versatile figure whose creativity knew no bounds

NIZAMUDDIN AHMED

GOING down can be as arduous as going up. Treading down the stairs of the Dhanmondi Hospital on the Tuesday morning of November 14 after meeting his family on the fifth, I paused momentarily, more so mentally, when I reached the first floor, knowing that his dialysis was proceeding in some room. I made no sincere effort to look for the room or him; there was eerie trepidation lurking in the half-lit soulless space. His wife Helu and brother Dr Ramiz had said his dialysis was a 72-hour regime. Let it go on then, we can obviously meet later.

Wednesday morning, I was on my way to Sirajganj on a prescheduled visit. Amid the mizzle of an overcast day, at 10am, there was a text message from Ar Najm-ul Latif Suhayl... At around noon, his daughter Tumpa rang to confirm, "Chachchu, we are starting for Chittagong." They were taking him to his own city.

My thoughts were racing—driving from his Khulshi house to Pahartali masjid for Jumma prayers, visiting Purbokone office at midnight with the editor, long hours of gossip, sumptuous home meals, time at Chittagong Club, site visit to the new premises of Chittagong Metropolitan Chamber, stopping for photographs at famed musician Satya Saha's dilapidated but historical brick house on the outskirts of Raozan. He wanted to publish a documentation of architectural relics of his district, and knowing his expertise with the camera and no fancy talk, I believe he must have made significant progress towards that end.

We have lost a dearest friend, a Buet classmate (1974–79) bearing roll no. 1, not because he was first in class, about which he was as serious as a person with dozens of other interests could be, but because he was first in line to take admission. That was Taslim, serious about things that mattered. He almost

never missed a design submission deadline, he would never fail a library return date, and he maintained the "good boy" image at the department of architecture and his Suhrawardy Hall of residence. He knew how to walk the straight line in spite of wavering at his choice to enjoy life to the fullest till he was slowed down by Non-Hodgkin lymphoma in 1994.

I remember him breaking the news

adenocarcinoma of the stomach, the treatment for which led to his meals being administered via a tube external to his body. Whenever he came to Dhaka, especially for Newspaper Owners Association of Bangladesh (Noab) meetings, he always declined my invitations.

Once I was invited to his Dhaka Club room. As his wife and I were having dinner, Taslim poured two

with his hallmark maturity that ours was a profession that thrived only on clientele.

His family was not totally at ease with him taking up a job as an architect in distant Dhaka. His family business beckoned him, more so his parents, who, because of their close-knit family, had a stranglehold on his life plan. He soon moved to an architectural office in the port city, but despite his design dexterity he was not destined to remain—or unknown to him, that was his family's Plan A.

Banking on their family's longstanding Signet Press, and in order to fulfil somewhat of a media vacuum, the Chowdhurys moved to establish a Bangla daily, *Purbokone*, in 1986. Taking over from the first editor KG Mustafa three years later, Taslim established himself as a bold editor. His contemporary ideology, journalistic acumen, authoritative control, and innovative planning contributed towards *Purbokone* remaining the most popular newspaper in the Chittagong region for almost three decades.

In 1994 *Purbokone* was the only newspaper in the country to publish in the morning the photograph of the World Cup Finals happening the night before with the help of TV grab, a technique uncommon then to Bangladesh media circles. The newspaper pioneered computer composition and, before colour separation reached Bangladesh, printed digitally separated colours on tracing paper, combining which achieved the effect of four-colour production. No doubt his creativity was paying dividends.

He inherited his business shrewdness from his father Mohammad Yusuf Chowdhury, a quiet thinker, and forthrightness from his mother Zohra Begum Chowdhury, who held the entire family under her wings. Taslim held several important positions in business chambers and associations, but one could hardly tell from his

comportment of simplicity. His active involvement spread from Chittagonian language to stock exchange, dairy farm to veterinary and animal science, corrugated carton to diabetic association, school committees to village *samity*, press club to kidney foundation, golf to boat club. Taslim was an executive member of Noab.

Owing to his continued involvement with architecture, Taslim was nominated member of Chittagong Development Authority's (CDA) Urban Development Committee. He took his professional obligation to another level when, despite his illness, he chaired the Chittagong chapter of the Institute of Architects Bangladesh (IAB) during 2009–2016.

Taslim also had classmates at St Mary's, St Placid's and Faujdarhat Cadet College. He was president of the Chittagong chapter of Old Faujians Association, a parallel I proudly share as a former president of Jhenaidah Cadet College. He is acknowledged as the dreamer and prime mover of the recently-founded Cadet College Club of Chittagong.

Guitarist Taslim would tell stories of his association with "Souls", not boastfully though, although he was instrumental in the formation, fusion and fame of the Chittagong band in the 1970s. He blended well society and culture, commemorating, for instance, Kazi Nazrul Islam's third visit in 1933 to his village with an elegant memorial done in black granite.

A loving husband to Helu, an iconic father to Tauseef, Tumpa and Taukeer, a luminary brother to Jasim and Ramiz, and my station at Chittagong for 43 years, Dosto, saying you will be profoundly missed is an understatement. Our world changed for good since 6:45am on November 15, 2017.

Dr Nizamuddin Ahmed is a practising architect, a Commonwealth Scholar and a Fellow, a Baden-Powell Fellow Scout Leader, and a Major Donor Rotarian.

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The author (left) with veteran journalist Taslimuddin Chowdhury, editor of Chittagong-based *Dainik Purbokone*, who passed away on November 15, 2017 at the age of 63.

one late night. "I fear something has happened to me, I have not told my family yet," he said while we were in his car, Taslim driving. Once, after researching online all night, he good-humouredly announced the next morning, "I can live for another ten years," but Taslim braved it all and head held high doubled his own approximation.

Ten years later it was a different story. Taslim was then diagnosed with

bottles of liquid meal into a funnel. He did join us briefly to purse with his lips a chicken bone before discarding it.

He made public his passion for architecture early when as a student he wore an eraser around his neck, but mostly by a ragged t-shirt he had designed that said, "Consult an architect." At a time when we were more inclined to frolicking, grooving architectural studies and hunting grades, Taslim went notches higher

Waiting for a miracle

A public toilet that doesn't make you faint

NO STRINGS ATTACHED



Bangladesh) having access to a reasonably useable toilet for women is a rarity. Sometimes it is a miracle.

Not that men have a great many options when they are in the streets. The number of public toilets is pathetically low (around one toilet per two lakh people), most of them so filthy and broken that only the extremely courageous few will venture into them. A study by ActionAid Bangladesh in association with UK Aid has found 90 percent of them to be unusable with most of them being unsafe and unhygienic.

For women going to a public toilet is usually unthinkable. They also do not have the option of just relieving themselves at some corner of the street—a garbage dump, open drain or under the footbridge—something their menfolk quite unabashedly feel entitled to. This is because shame is an integral part of being female. And because of shame women will hold their bladders for hours and hours until they have access to a clean toilet—which often means until they get home.

Women and girls therefore risk getting

bladder and urinary tract infections (UTIs) and even kidney failure because they tend to drink far less water or liquid than they should.

Conditions associated with dehydration—headaches, muscle cramps, lack of energy—are common amongst women and girls. The lack of useable public toilets makes going to a public event, or even carrying out everyday errands such as going to the *bazar*, activities accompanied by the anxiety of having to hold one's bladder for long periods of time.

While there have been recent initiatives by the city mayors and some NGOs to address the problem—introducing clean, safe, well-maintained or renovated toilets—they can only serve a fraction of the city's population. In slum areas especially, the lack of basic sanitation facilities makes life for its residents, especially the women, who often must wait until darkness before relieving themselves, even more miserable. Slum-dwellers use open, makeshift latrines and latrine water often gets mixed with drinking water. The lack of sanitation also increases the risk of transmission of deadly diseases such as cholera, dysentery, hepatitis A, typhoid and polio, which affect everybody—women, men and children.

It is hard to understand why, when crores of taka are spent in so-called beautification projects to show off to foreign dignitaries who will zoom by the main streets in a matter of seconds, the authorities have not paid much attention to one of the most basic public utilities of all time: toilets. There are around 47 operational public toilets in Dhaka city that has a population of at least 18 million.

What about the toilets inside buildings—in

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the workplace and in educational institutions? Do women and girls have access to clean toilets? The answer is no in most cases. Just think of the stink while passing the toilets in any public university, hospital or office. Although we have no data at hand, it is a well-known fact that women and girls will just not go to the toilets available in their place of work or learning because they lack basic sanitation.

There is an unexplained apathy towards keeping toilets clean. Those who have had the privilege to use the washroom of Dhaka's international airport will be familiar with the shock of finding stalls without locks, the floors wet because of a broken tap, and the basins blood red—stained with betel leaf expulsions

from attendants. It is the same in most public buildings where there are apparently people employed to keep the toilets "clean" but who are either too disgruntled or too lazy to bother. Ensuring cleanliness is just not a priority.

So how would life change for people if they had access to clean, safe, usable toilets in the city? It would mean women and girls drinking more water and being spared the suffering associated with UTIs, not to mention the cost of doctor visits and medication. Women going to work and girls and women going to school or university would not have to worry about whether they will be able to wait until they reach home. Many diseases are related to poor hygiene and sanitation in public toilets which women and girls are sometimes compelled to use and this could be avoided if they were properly maintained by the authorities.

Going from point A to point B in Dhaka

city has become a major challenge thanks to the hours of choking traffic that every city traveller must consider a daily hazard. Paradoxically, no matter how slow the traffic and how congested the city, more and more people, especially women, have to go out of their homes—to work, to earn, to buy and to socialise. Thus the availability of clean, safe public toilets is directly related to the quality of life of the people of this city. This means ensuring that there are clean restrooms in all public spaces—whether they are government establishments, public spaces such as shopping malls, marketplaces, thoroughfares and so on.

For women, having access to a clean, safe washroom when they step outside their homes would certainly be something to celebrate.

Aasha Mehreen Amin is Deputy Editor, Editorial and Opinion, *The Daily Star*.

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh Skills and Training Enhancement Project (STEP)

Ministry of Education
Directorate of Technical Education (DTE)
F-4/B, Agargaon, Sher-e-Bangla Nagar, Dhaka-1207

Memo No. STEP/Procurement/11.43.3 & 11.43.4/2017-976

Date: 21.11.2017

e-Tender Notice

e-Tender Notice will be invited in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for procurement of:

Tender ID No.	Package No.	Description	Online notice publication date	Online tender closing & opening date
139038	PIU/GAF-29	Supply and Installation of Equipment for Upgradation of Welding Workshop/Lab of SSC Vocational Piloting	26-11-2017 at 20:00	20-12-2017 at 14:00
139555	PIU/GAF-30	Supply and Installation of Equipment for Tailoring and Dress-making Workshop/Lab of SSC Vocational Piloting	26-11-2017 at 20:00	21-12-2017 at 14:00

This is an online Tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender registration in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required.

The fees for last selling/downloading the e-Tender Documents from the National e-GP System Portal have to be deposited online through any registered banks branches up to 20-12-2017 at 12.00 for Tender ID No. 139038; and up to 21-12-2017 at 12.00 for Tender ID No. 139555.

Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd, +8809609112233, +8801762625528, +8801762625529).

Md. Fakhru Kabir

Project Director (In-charge)

Skills and Training Enhancement Project (STEP)

Phone: 02-8181457

GD-2556

A WORD

A DAY

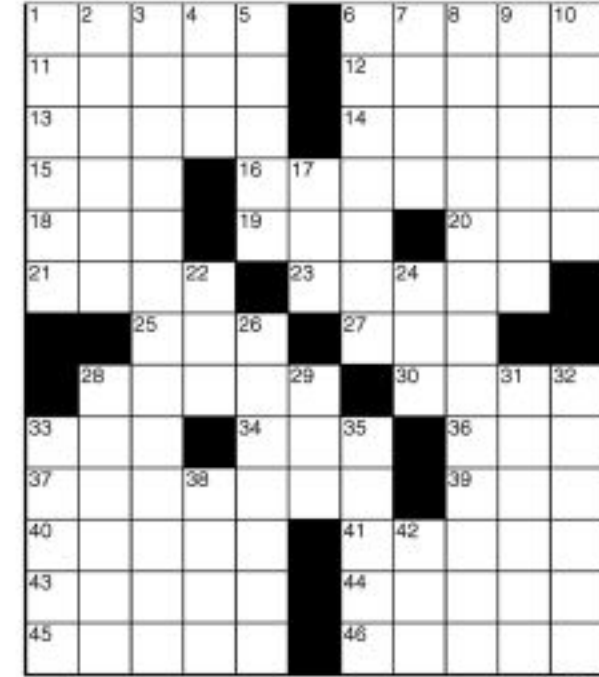


E TIOLATE
VERB

Make (a plant) pale through lack of light.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS	participant	competition
1 Book makeup	33 Boy king of Egypt	7 Balm ingredient
6 Confronts	34 Cook's measure	8 Buyers' places
11 Conspicuous	36 Afternoon affair	9 Comes onstage
12 Companionless	37 Archeological	10 Dilapidated
13 Dance for a duo	period	17 Coolio's forte
14 Course	39 "Days of -- Lives"	22 Blotto
15 Devoured	40 B, to scientists	24 Debtor's letters
16 Dressed fussily	41 Baseball's Joe	26 Allows to
18 Cigarette	43 Build	breathe, in a way
substance	44 Consummate	28 Dawn goddess
19 Carpenter's tool	45 Chores	29 Bearskin, maybe
20 Attempt	46 Choleric	31 Artist Georges
21 Advanced exam	DOWN	32 Almost never
23 Couples	1 Chip material	33 Asian land
25 Chapeau	2 Cyberspace icon	35 Compact, in
27 Artist	3 Buyers' places	Cannes
Lichtenstein	4 Bit of a joule	38 Arrow notch
28 Colorful flower	5 Desists	42 Dedicated
30 Cold War	6 Airline	



YESTERDAY'S ANSWER

