

A friendship to cherish



CHINTITO SINCE 1995
NIZAMUDDIN AHMED

His could be the first cheerful wish on a birthday morning. His could be an unnecessary apology on an Eid afternoon for wishing us late.

ABDUL Qayyum was a unique person. While I tap this on my mobile sitting at a hospital in Essex, England, January 15, his Janaza could be taking place in Narayanganj. By the time I finish he would probably be resting in eternal peace. He would not like it. He would have expected me at

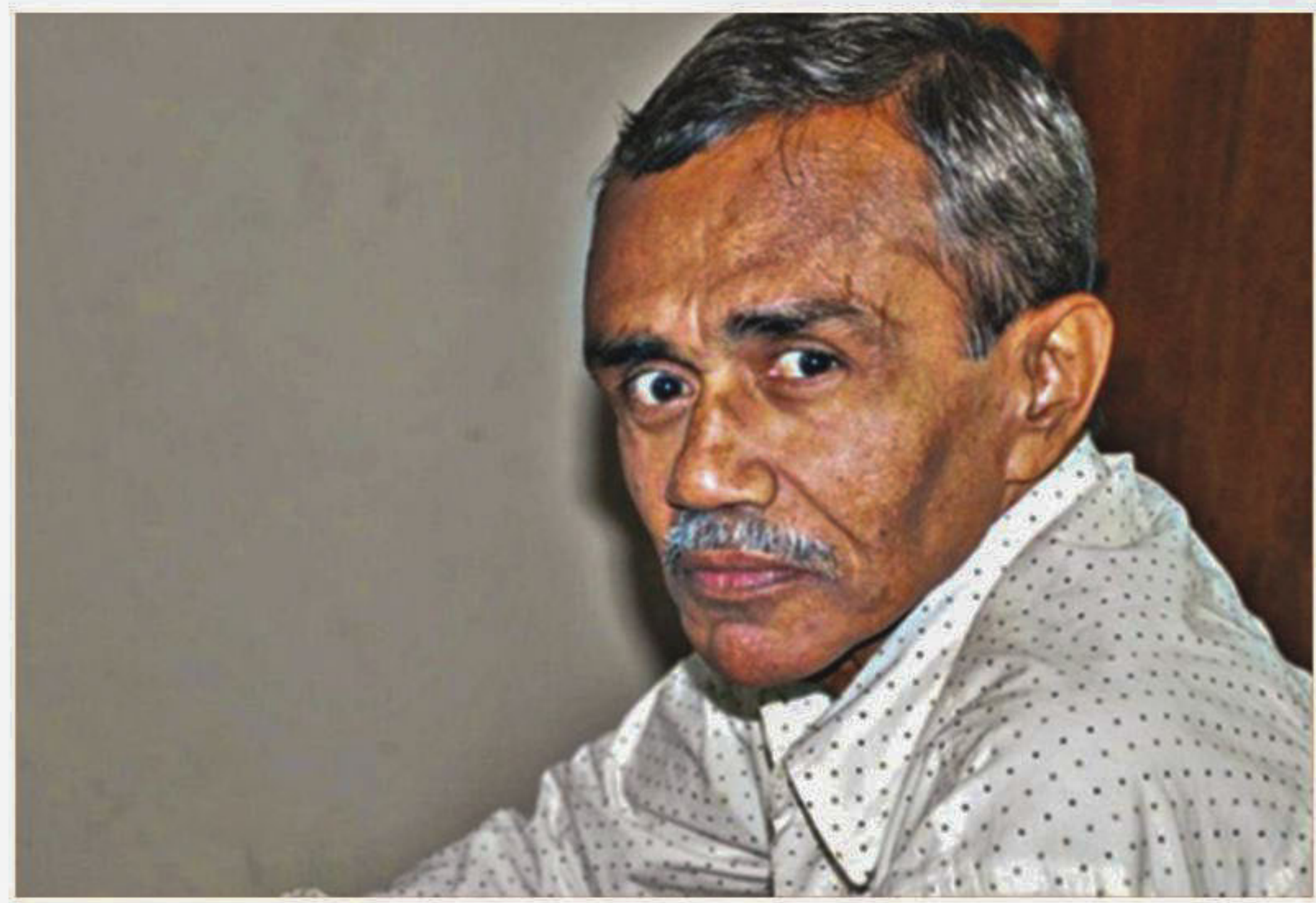
his side. A lifetime of knowing each other has come to naught, as I had flown out of Dhaka the day before.

His little room in a big house in the 1980s was an exclusive getaway for some of us to spend a night on the weekends playing cards at the lowest stake imaginable. Dinners were *deshi* and sumptuous. We tiptoed out late next morning lest we annoy his Chacha (a business giant of the yester-years) sleeping in the next room. Needless to say, we had to stifle our guffaws all night.

From driving a huge Mercedes in the late 1960s, his joint family's economic difficulties, due probably to the demise of jute, found him yet another small room when the family property was divided and subdivided. The only thing that did not change over time was the warmth of his friendship.

His could be the first cheerful wish on a birthday morning. His could be an unnecessary apology on an Eid afternoon for wishing us late. His decency would be to enquire about each member of our family by name when he rang every three to four months. That even if we had not called him over the past year. I did, last week. But, his phone was ominously off.

Abdul Qayyum was not physically mobile. From his boyhood, he suffered from a rare bone disease. It was severe enough to cut short his time at Residential Model School where I was his class-



Abdul Qayyum

mate in in grade IV in 1962—that's 55 years, brother. Being among the pioneers of the prestigious school in Dhaka's Mohammadpur, Abdul Qayyum was a resident of Jinnah House in the Junior Wing (Class I to V) and Fazlul Huq House in the Senior. His leg broke several times; once during compulsory games-time. He was left with a walking disability. His disarming smile never left him.

The name of Jinnah House was changed to Quadrat-i-Khuda House after Liberation. Abdul Qayyum held the memories of the 1971 War very close to his heart. After I was elected president of our school (college since 1968) Alumni (Old

REMIANS Welfare Association) in 2008, my friend requested me over a dozen times over telephone (he was not that mobile, remember?) to build a memorial in the premises of Dhaka Residential Model College to carry a plaque with names of all REMIANS who participated in the glorious war. Each time I assured him. He used to say, "Do it while we are alive".

The world often mistakes such proposals as one of self-adulation, but Abdul Qayyum's proposition emanated from his deep admiration of the selfless sacrifices made by freedom fighters, perhaps because he could not contribute physically, disabled as he was from the mid-1960s.

As his family of uncles, cousins and nephews began to feel the cringe of the economic constraints, it fell upon Abdul Qayyum to manage the dwindling family finances and other domestic affairs, including the reduced fleet of vehicles. He was well respected for his integrity and managerial dexterity. But, by then the ship had admitted too much water. At one stage they had to sell off two large landed properties in Dhaka's Eskaton.

Within a couple of decades, a family of jute tycoons living in opulence was reduced to abjection. Abdul Qayyum never burdened his friends with tales of his difficulties, rather he gave the impression that the banks were about to resolve all the inadequacies of his extended family. He was a bachelor, not by choice but by the compulsion of his mobility impairment.

He landed on a bed at Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical College & Hospital, Sher-e-Bangla Nagar, about a decade and a half ago. He gave up smoking after being admonished by friends and family. A couple of years ago when I saw him with a cigarette and a broad smile, he volunteered to justify, "I didn't touch it for ten years, but I knew if ever I had one, I would not be able to stop". He did not.

Never short of confidence, despite being unable to keep up with the worldly progress of his friends and others around him. He was well respected in his neighbourhood.

Never a bother to his friends, despite his resourcefulness having shrunk substantially within one generation. He lived in aristocracy, in wealth and in poverty.

Never to be left out of an intellectual conversation despite being unable to continue serious education beyond school. He was self-taught and a well-informed person. Excellent in English, he would love me saying this, that Abdul Quaiyum always "cut his coat according to his cloth". He had to.

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Challenging Rosatom's claims

MOWDUD RAHMAN and DEBASISH SARKER

ON December 25, 2017, an opinion piece was published in *The Daily Star* by Andrey Shevlyakov titled "Changing perceptions on nuclear energy." Given the author's institutional position as the acting CEO of Rosatom South Asia and their business interest, it is not surprising that he is engaged in an effort to change the public perception of nuclear power. After the 2011 Fukushima Daiichi nuclear disaster and global trend to backtrack from nuclear power projects, any company with huge investment in this industry is bound to engage in such a campaign. We appreciate the author's effort to publicly engage in discussion on the Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant; however, we write this response to his article to record our dissent to Rosatom's misinformation campaign. What Shevlyakov has written does not reflect the real scenario of the nuclear industry today, rather it was a clever attempt to justify a dangerously destructive project.

Shevlyakov talked about what all they had done to ensure public participation because, as he suggests, "public acceptance affects both the implementation of individual nuclear energy projects and our industry as a whole." Sadly, in the implementation of Rooppur project, we have not seen any public consultation. Even before starting the construction of this 2,400 MW capacity plant,



PHOTO: AHMED HUMAYUN KABIR TOPU

Our opposition to Rooppur power plant is not based on unfounded fear but on the past records of Rosatom and the nuclear industry at large.

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a plan has been formulated to install 4,800 MW capacity by 2041. It was necessary to go for a public mandate and an open discussion within various groups in the society. It seems Shevlyakov's remark on public acceptance is rather rhetorical. In reality, they are imposing their pre-conceived idea of nuclear power on us.

Shevlyakov claimed "public acceptance is promotion of direct dialogue" and that they have done so through arranging—might we say sponsoring—trips for Bangladeshi youth to Russia or journalists' visit to Ishwardi. A trip to Russia may be a long-cherished dream for many, and Rosatom has every right to enjoy appreciation from individuals who received their support to realise that dream. However, it is not clear how such trips for a small group of individuals can improve larger public perception on nuclear power. Do they have any statistics about what percentage of

people in Bangladesh actually knows about this project? Other than advertisement and propaganda, has there been any activity to count the common people's voice on this vital project? Why hasn't the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) report been made public? Without a proper information flow, how are they changing perception on nuclear energy? These overseas trips appear to be an attempt at sidestepping open and public dialogues and justifying such a complex project. The author has spent a good chunk of his column space on these trips, which is rather unconvincing.

Shevlyakov mentioned that Rosatom gives the highest priority to nuclear safety and will comply with all the necessary safety and security standards prescribed by the International Atomic Energy Agency. According to IAEA, there are two zones surrounding any nuclear reactor—the first of

which is the Precautionary Action Zone, which has a 5km radius area of any nuclear reactor and it is recommended to have evacuation facility and preparation for any emergency situation to evacuate the area within 15 minutes' notice. And, the second zone is Urgent Protective Action Planning Zone, which covers a 30km radius area and is recommended to have the facility to evacuate the area within one hour in any emergency situation. The people of Pabna, Bheramara, Lalpur, Kushtia, Ishwardi are all living within the 30km area of the proposed Rooppur nuclear power reactor. Have they been informed by the government about the possibility of an emergency situation? Is there any plan to comply with the international safety and security standards and build infrastructure to evacuate thousands of people within hours? In a densely populated region, would it be possible to build such

capacity and maintain the mechanism effectively? From our own independent investigation, we did not find the people to be aware and ready to leave their ancestral land in just 15 minutes.

Shevlyakov's piece is implicitly built on the assumption that the dissenting voice that exists in Bangladesh about nuclear energy is based on fear, and not scientific information. We want to assure him that our fear is historically and scientifically grounded. We can't help but recall the history of the Russian nuclear industry, which is built on denial—denial of truth. They have records of using substandard equipment, bypassing in-country expert community suggestion, and so on. The Kudankulam Nuclear Power Plant that they have recently built in India bears evidence of these allegations. In October 2017, a French public authority of nuclear safety and security identified a cloud of radioactive isotope ruthenium-106 in European territory which originated from a Russian nuclear facility. It is not surprising that Russia's nuclear agency has refused to accept any responsibility in this regard (*The Guardian*, November 21, 2017). Therefore, our opposition to Rooppur power plant is not based on unfounded fear but on the past records of Rosatom and the nuclear industry at large; we are expressing our concern about our future as Bangladeshi citizens.

Shevlyakov proudly announces that 3rd generation plus technology will be used by Russia at Rooppur. We all know that it is nothing but an advertising tool of the nuclear industry. Improvement of technology is a continuous process and it keeps on adding new features every day. The third-generation technology might be the latest one in their basket but surely not the last one. Fukushima, when it happened, had the most advanced technology at its disposal, yet it could not avert the disaster. Besides, averting a disaster is not the only risk involved here. Therefore, the third-generation plus technology cannot be the right answer to our concerns. They are taking cues from previous disasters to build new technology at the expense of immense loss of lives and ecology. Therefore, advanced technology could be their selling point but it does not answer our concerns.

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Quotable Quote

CALVIN COOLIDGE
30th US President (July 4, 1872—January 5, 1933)

Little progress can be made by merely attempting to repress what is evil; our great hope lies in developing what is good.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

| | | |
|-------------------------|---------------------|-------------------------|
| ACROSS | 33 Soccer legend | 9 Marshy area |
| 1 Karnak leader | 34 New York tribe | 10 Stunned wonder |
| 7 "Dancing Queen" group | 37 Tattered | 16 Detail map |
| 11 Bestow | 39 Eatery choice | 17 High points |
| 12 Get larger | 43 War of 1812 port | 18 Queeg's ship |
| 13 Eatery choice | 44 Reformer | 19 Eatery choice |
| 14 Latest fad | Bloomer | 21 Ugly monster |
| 15 Spots | 45 Close by | 22 Flair |
| 17 Play parts | 46 Teacher's unit | 24 Hang loosely |
| 20 High homes | | 25 Long, long time |
| 23 Lot sight | DOWN | 30 Track athlete |
| 24 Last course | 1 Vault part | 33 Makes roads |
| 26 Farrow of film | 2 French friend | 35 Romance lang. |
| 27 Sturgeon eggs | 3 AWOL chasers | 36 Titled woman |
| 28 Singer Orbison | 4 Fills completely | 37 Decimal base |
| 29 Competitor | 5 Screws up | 38 Iron source |
| 31 Suffering | 6 Organ part | 40 Overhead trains |
| 32 Arrangement | 7 Concurs | 41 Carnival city |
| | 8 Eatery choice | 42 Palindromic nickname |

YESTERDAY'S ANSWER

| | |
|-------------|-------|
| ARROW | SWEAT |
| CAIRO | HELLO |
| HIBERNATION | |
| ENS | SAD |
| DEPOT | |
| BACON | WANTS |
| ATOZ | XENA |
| GAPES | DITTY |
| SWAYS | |
| AHA | INN |
| CYBERNATION | |
| IDEAL | MADRE |
| DELTS | OPENS |

BEETLE BAILEY

BY MORT WALKER

SHE'S GOT HIM UNDER HER THUMB SO MUCH, SHE CAN WRITE HIS DIARY A WEEK IN ADVANCE

GREG MORT WALKER

BABY BLUES

BY KIRKMAN & SCOTT

WELL, SINCE DADDY AND HAMMIE WENT FISHING, IT'S JUST US GIRLS.

IT FEELS STRANGE WITHOUT THEM HERE

YEAH, IT'S WEIRD. THE HOUSE IS SO... SO...

PEACEFUL?

UN-GASSY.