

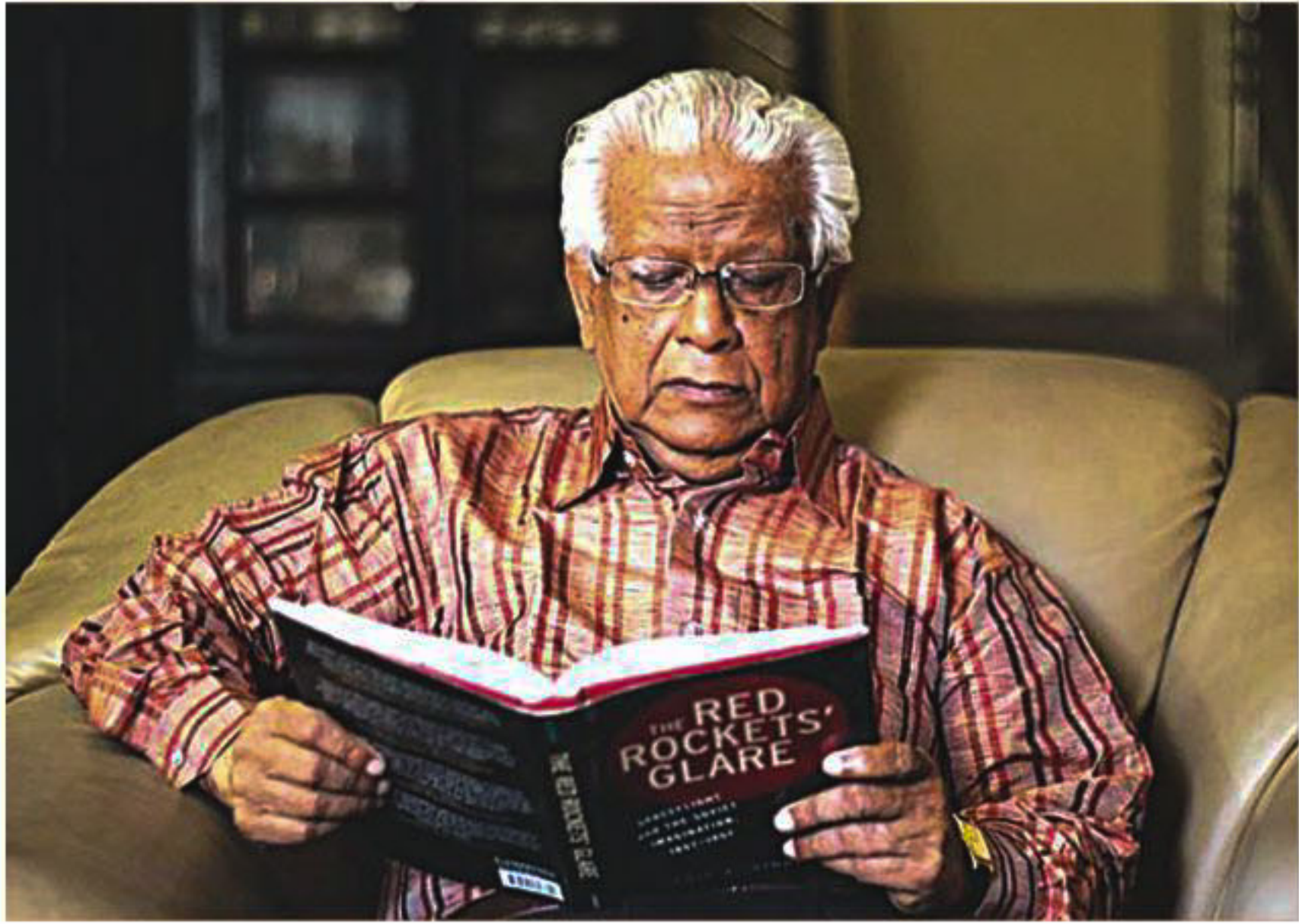
Our beloved VC Sir

ELITA KARIM

THE last time I met Dr Hafiz GA Siddiqi was at a seminar or a conference. VC Sir, as many of us still refer to him, was surrounded by crowds of his former students, ranging between the ages of 27 and 50. Everyone was trying to shake hands with him, take selfies or simply talk to him—it was like trying to reach out to a super star! He remembered all his students. “Do you still take photographs?” he asked a gentleman in his 40s, who was probably seen around campus carrying a camera with lenses of all sizes and shapes. “I saw you sing on TV the other day!” he told me excitedly. “But please never stop writing. I like reading your articles.”

Soft-spoken, always smiling, and a lot of fun—this is how many of us still remember Dr Siddiqi. A passionate educator, a powerful mentor and immensely popular amongst students, Dr Siddiqi breathed his last on May 22 at 3:30pm, at the United Hospital in Gulshan 2. He was admitted to the hospital two weeks ago for complications related to old age. He is now resting at the Banani graveyard.

Born in the 1930s in Hazaribagh, Dr



Dr Hafiz GA Siddiqi

Siddiqi earned the title of Hafiz because he memorised the Holy Quran, and that too at a very young age. He would tell us the story of how he had decided to memorise the Quran when he was a mere student of class 4. He used to be an excellent student and would always win government scholarships at school.

After finishing class 4, he decided that he would memorise the Holy Quran, which meant dropping out from regular school. It was four years before Dr Siddiqi went back to regular school.

Dr Siddiqi's contribution to education in Bangladesh has been immense. He was a professor at the Institute of

Business Administration (IBA). After teaching in the US 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. As a pro-VC and VC, Dr Siddiqi contributed immensely to NSU, thus establishing it as one of the leading private universities in Bangladesh. The professor had also joined Brac University as Professor Emeritus.

Dr Siddiqi would often talk to us about practising tolerance. We should be able to accept the different, respect all religions, try out new food, and learn new cultures and languages, he would say, while mentioning how his family was a multi-cultural one and he had so much to learn every day.

VC Sir would always make an effort to keep in touch with his students, no matter where they would be. “Send me an email,” he would say. As I think about him and say a small prayer, I can't help going through the last few email exchanges that we had. In the last email conversation that we had a year back, he wrote to me about how happy he was to be in touch. He asked about the group from my batch at North South University, who were popular

because of the events they would organise and also the performances they would showcase. A contributing columnist for the paper, he had also written about how he was too weak to write for *The Daily Star*. “I could not write for DS. In a sense, I am out of circulation!” was what he wrote. “However, I have completed a book which has been published just today. The title of the book is *Private Universities in Bangladesh: The Dynamics of Higher Education*. Today I am very happy.”

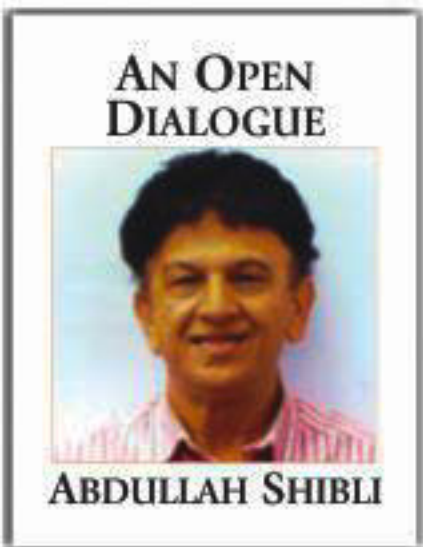
In a nutshell, Dr Hafiz GA Siddiqi was a father figure to many of us. He would often joke about his age and how he was actually older on paper but looked way younger! VC Sir had a way of winning over the hearts of young people and was very proud of his students.

In an interview with *The Daily Star*, he had said, “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?”

Farewell to a mentor. Here's to the end of an era.

Elita Karim is Editor, Arts & Entertainment and Star Youth. She tweets @elitakarim.

Air pollution hurts the poor disproportionately



AN OPEN DIALOGUE

ABDULLAH SHIBLI

THE photograph accompanying an editorial in *The Daily Star* on April 21 spoke eloquently of the hazards facing the average citizen in Dhaka. The title

“Steep rise in air pollution” raised the issue of air pollution in urban pockets, and the photo caption, “Pedestrians cover their noses as dust shrouds a dilapidated part of Rampura-Banasree Road,” graphically described the perils of breathing the dust-laden Dhaka air. In a more recent piece, *The Daily Star* reported that Dhaka's air quality has been ranked as the third worst, behind New Delhi and Cairo, according to data compiled by the World Health Organisation (WHO) for megacities with a population of 14 million or more.

Air pollution affects our socio-economic groups differently. “Air pollution threatens us all, but the poorest and most marginalised people bear the brunt of the burden,” said Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO director-general. WHO's measures of air pollution focus specifically on concentrations of fine particulate matter (PM2.5), which are linked with diseases including stroke, heart disease, lung cancer, COPD (chronic obstructive pulmonary diseases), and respiratory infections. Besides ambient (outdoor) air pollution, the new figures emphasised the problem of household air pollution from cooking with highly polluting fuels and stoves.

WHO data shows that there are 4.2 million deaths every year as a result of exposure to ambient (outdoor) air pollution, and that another 3.8 million die from faulty, smoke-emitting stoves. Around 91 percent of the world's population lives in places where air quality levels exceed WHO limits. Statistics reveal that 50 percent of pneumonia deaths in children under five are due to household air pollution. Millions others face impaired lung function and asthma.

While ambient air pollution affects developed and developing countries alike, low- and middle-income countries shoulder the highest burden,

particularly in the Western Pacific and South East Asia regions. Professor Anthony Frew, a respiratory medicine specialist at Royal Sussex County Hospital in UK, noted that the population in richer countries is largely spared the worst health effects of air pollution. He also noted the developing world is bearing the brunt of air pollution in part due to consumer demand from wealthier nations.

Professor Frew's finding reminds me of an interesting dialogue that took place a quarter century ago. In 1991, Professor Lawrence Summers, my former boss at Harvard, had written an internal memo “tongue-in-cheek” to address a thorny issue debated then, i.e. environmental equity. Summers, who was the chief economist of the World Bank then, alluded to “proposals for more pollution in LDCs (Least Developed Countries)”, and weighed in on the option of “encouraging more migration of the dirty industries to the LDCs.” Many took Summers' comments at face value and suggested that LDCs, which at that time had less pollution than the industrialised countries, could be compensated to take on the role of global “carbon sink”. Referring to developing countries, he continued, “Their air quality is probably vastly inefficiently low compared to Los Angeles or Mexico City. Only the lamentable facts that so much pollution is generated by non-tradable industries (transport, electrical generation) and that the unit transport costs of solid waste are so high prevent world-welfare-enhancing trade in air pollution and waste.” The WHO report only confirms that the hypothetical scenario conjured up in Summers' memo has come true!

Air pollutants come in various shapes and sizes, and are broadly divided into three groups: criteria pollutants, air toxics, and biological pollutants. The major criteria pollutants that affect air quality are nitrogen dioxide, ozone, particles (PM10 and PM2.5), sulfur dioxide, carbon monoxide and lead. WHO Air quality guidelines offer global guidance on thresholds and limits for the first four. Air toxics, sometimes referred to as “hazardous air pollutants”, include “gaseous, aerosol or particulate pollutants that are present in the air in low concentrations” and come from motor vehicle emissions, solid fuel combustion, industrial emissions, and materials such as paints and adhesives

in new buildings. Finally, biological pollutants “arise from sources such as microbiological contamination, e.g. moulds, the skin of animals and humans, and the remains and dropping of pests such as cockroaches.” Biological pollutants can be airborne and can have a significant impact on indoor air quality.

Coming back to the issue of equity, if the air quality of poorer countries currently is materially worse than that of the affluent ones, do we have an ipso facto stronger case to ask the developed countries for an equitable distribution of the burden of air pollution?

for resource transfer is complementary to the traditional argument for “climate change” funds.

Pending the availability of the promised “climate funds”, Bangladesh needs to gear up on its own with attention to fuel efficiency, vehicle inspections, conversion of brick kilns, inspection of construction sites, and adoption of best practices in municipal waste management, among others. For example, tariffs on imported motor vehicles could be lower for electric and hybrid, and based on MPG. All major automakers, including Toyota, VW and GM, have embraced fuel efficiency

standards, and standards for fuel economy performance.

Admittedly, Bangladesh is caught in a bind. Projections show that if demand for electricity grows at 7-10 percent rate a year, the power sector will need to more than double power generation to over 30,000 megawatts by 2030. If our future economic growth is based on fossil fuels, we need to address policy areas such as geographical location of industries, costs and benefits of ultra-supercritical turbines for power plants, and a regulatory framework to ensure a “clean coal” chain. In this respect, we might learn a lesson or two from China



Dhaka's air has been ranked as the third most polluted in the world, according to an air quality data compiled by the World Health Organisation for megacities with a population of 4 million or more.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

Primarily, in the post-Paris Accord era, it is time for the developed countries to own up to their promise of a “global fund” which will allow developing countries to not only mitigate and adapt to climate change, but enable technology transfers for a smog-free urban environment.

Climate funds would not only support adaptation and mitigation efforts to combat the effects of past CO2 emissions, but simultaneously allow newly emerging nations to explore cleaner fuel options and embrace “sustainable development”. This appeal

as it pulled back from the brink of ecological disaster. To quote *The Daily Star* editorial, “Policies and investments supporting cleaner transport, energy-efficient housing, power generation, industry and better municipal waste management can effectively reduce key sources of ambient air pollution” and also lead to improved indoor air quality.

Dr Abdullah Shibli is an economist, and Senior Research Fellow at the International Sustainable Development Institute (ISDI), a think-tank in Boston, USA. His new book *Economic Crosscurrents* will be published later this year.

QUOTABLE Quote



AMARTYA SEN (b. 1933)

Indian economist and philosopher

“Poverty is not just a lack of money. It is not having the capability to realise one's full potential as a human being.”

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

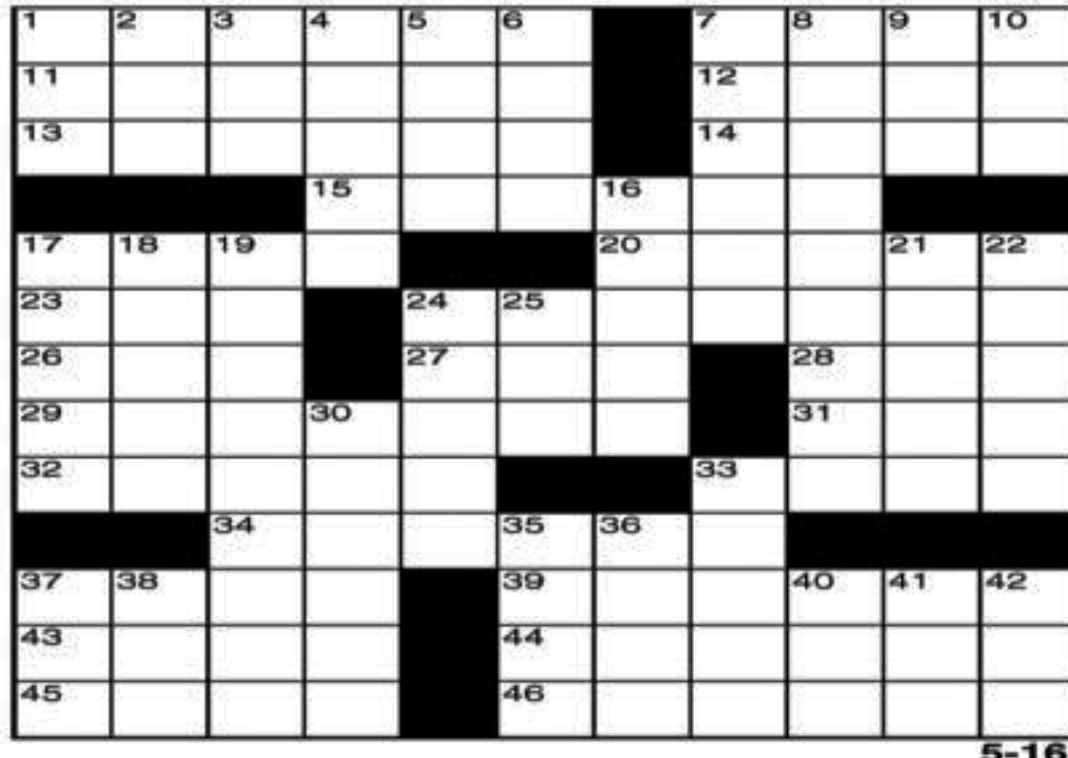
ACROSS

- 1 It turns red in acid
- 7 Bloke
- 11 Set straight
- 12 Hindu hero
- 13 Capitol group
- 14 Give off
- 15 Polite denial
- 17 Stocking stuffers
- 20 Exorbitant
- 23 “Not -- dare!”
- 24 Sicilian city
- 26 Sleep state
- 27 LAX guess
- 28 Bar rocks
- 29 Month of fasting
- 31 Fishing aid
- 32 Justice Kagan
- 33 Historic times
- 34 Big wave

DOWN

- 1 -- Alamos
- 2 Fury
- 3 Badge metal
- 4 Where-withal
- 5 Golden Rule word
- 6 Goblet part
- 7 Invent
- 8 Carpenter's work
- 9 French friend
- 10 Light touch
- 16 Narnia lion
- 17 Baseball's Joe

- 18 Basket-ball's Shaquille
- 19 Going on and on
- 21 Game host
- 22 Verse writers
- 24 Bike part
- 25 -- glance
- 30 Battery ends
- 33 Stand
- 35 Pool-swimming count
- 36 Malevolent
- 37 King Kong, for one
- 38 Dusting cloth
- 40 Had dinner
- 41 Young one
- 42 High trains



YESTERDAY'S ANSWER



BEETLE BAILEY

BY MORT WALKER



BABY BLUES

BY KIRKMAN & SCOTT



Write for us. Send us your opinion pieces to dsopinion@gmail.com.