

An example of brilliance

DR A.F.M. SAIFUL AMIN

My classes in BUET began in 1991, and I first met Professor Choudhury in 1995, during the fourth year of my undergraduate studies. He taught our Structural Engineering course. His most impressive features as a teacher were his punctuality and spontaneous mathematical prowess with neat blackboard handwriting. Although I was the first boy, I could never secure good marks in his course. Still, down the line, he relied on me for many important analyses and decision-making related to infrastructural projects. For instance, when cracks were discovered in the Bangabandhu Bridge, Professor Choudhury entrusted me with the task of analysing and later repairing them. Since Professor Choudhury had such in-depth knowledge of engineering, he was able to find simple solutions to complex problems. He was a great source of guidance in any project, be it the Padma Bridge, the Expressway, or any large-scale infrastructural project.

Some of my fondest memories of him were when we went on site visits together. More followed, especially while working with him closely at the Board of Accreditation for Engineering and Technical Education of the Institution of Engineers, Bangladesh. Professor Choudhury was an excellent travel companion. Although he was quite serious in class, he was fun-loving on journeys. We had an age difference of 29 years; yet I never felt disconnected when interacting with him.

While he was an adviser to the Caretaker Government of Bangladesh, he contributed to bringing internet to the country through the VSAT terminal. Although his career achievements are awe-inspiring, above all, he was a humanitarian. He shared stories about how, during the 1970 Bhola cyclone, he rushed to the affected site with relief and later worked to establish cyclone shelters and concrete houses to help save the people.

His long, stellar career started in around the 1970s after he completed his PhD. I was lucky to have been able to work with him during the latter stages of his career



as they were his most mature and rich. After independence, Professor Choudhury and other faculty members helped the BUET Civil Engineering Department grow, almost from nothing. He was able to develop its strength to the point that BUET's recommendations are considered a national point of reference today. Professor Choudhury later became the first vice-chancellor of BRAC University and the vice-chancellor of the University of Asia Pacific. However, he always had a special place in his heart for BUET. He formed the largest engineering alumni association in the country, called BUET Alumni. Today, this network is so strong that it can utilize global knowledge to solve local problems through the expertise and talent of the alumni spread worldwide.

Professor Choudhury was the director of the computer centre in BUET and introduced computerisation when there wasn't even a computer science and

engineering department in the country. Early design and analysis computations of massive projects such as the East-West Interconnector, airport hangar complex, and national billing system were accurately performed in the BUET computer centre. While he was an adviser to the Caretaker Government of Bangladesh, he contributed to bringing internet to the country through the VSAT terminal.

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A visionary leader

PROFESSOR DR MD TAREK UDDIN

It is rare to find a university classroom where there is pindrop silence when the lecturer is speaking – not because the students are scared of being admonished by the teacher but because they are listening with keen interest and completely immersed in the topic. One such lecture was delivered by Dr Jamilur Reza Choudhury. Everyone in the room was completely present at that moment because they were afraid that they would miss a key detail if they got distracted at any minute.

The untimely demise of National Professor Dr Jamilur Reza Choudhury has left a chasm in the civil engineering community which cannot be filled by anyone else. His first death anniversary is an important occasion, not just for the civil engineers but also for the citizens of Bangladesh. Dr Choudhury, the great academician, contributed greatly to this country through the mega infrastructural projects that he worked on, such as the Padma Bridge, Dhaka Metro Rail, and many others.

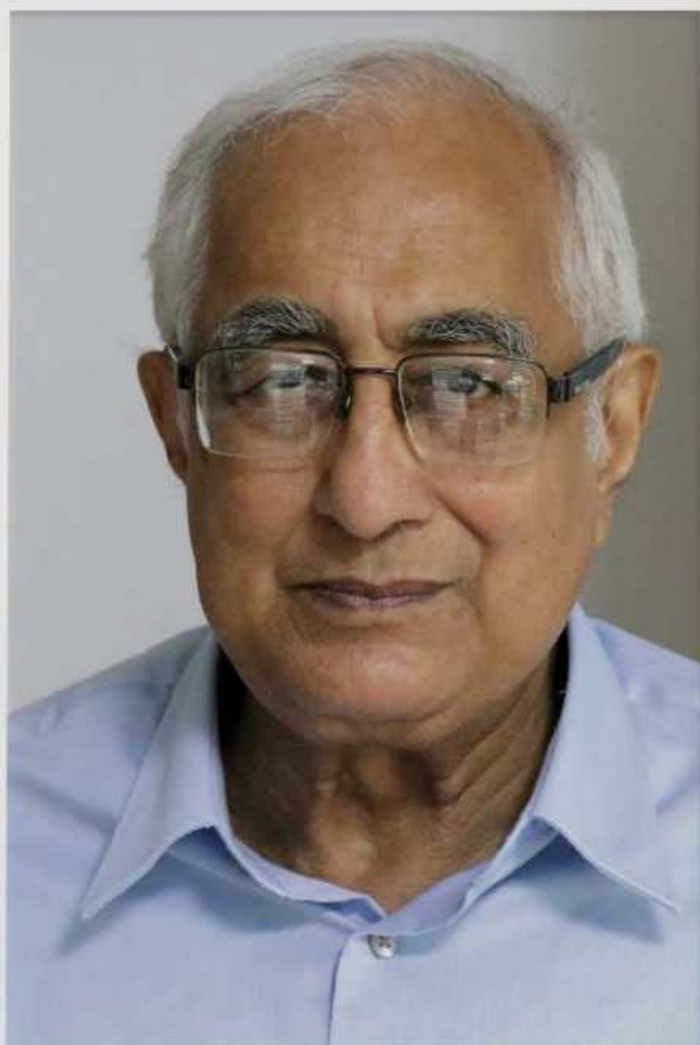
It was while studying at BUET, in the year 1987, that I had the opportunity of interacting with Professor Choudhury for the very first time. He was a renowned academician at BUET long before I was a student there. But, my relationship with him developed slowly.

As a student, I was more of a quiet listener and never participated much in class. Hence, I was not able to build a close relationship with him in my time as his student. As a result, it took me by great surprise when I met him after more than a decade and he instantly recognised me. I was an associate professor at the University of Asia Pacific (UAP) then and we were both attending a programme organised by UAP. I was further taken aback when he brought up one of my research projects on recycled aggregates and asked me questions about it. I realised at that moment that he had an incredible memory. He never forgot about any of the graduates.

Soon after, I had a great opportunity to work with him. From being his student, I had graduated to being his colleague. But he was still my mentor. I was working as a professor in the Department of Civil Engineering at UAP then and Professor Choudhury had joined as our Vice Chancellor. We are all well aware that it is because of his leadership that UAP is now one of the most respected universities in Bangladesh. At UAP, we had worked on solving various infrastructural problems together – one of them being an issue with the concrete mix of the foundation of the campus building.

Professor Choudhury inspired and motivated countless other engineers like myself across the country. He always believed that it was his responsibility to impart knowledge to the world. Despite his busy schedule, he would always make time for all the various engineering programmes, just to come and speak to the students. Professor Choudhury would always come to the Institution of Engineers, Bangladesh (IEB) to get together with fellow engineers. Today, without him, the place is no longer the same.

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Those who are dear will always remain near.
Prof. Jamilur Reza Chowdhury -
dearly loved, forever missed.