

LOSS OF A PROMINENT MEMBER OF BANGLADESHI COMMUNITY IN DARWIN

Chowdhury Sadaruddin

On 21 January 2013 the small Bangladeshi community of Darwin lost one of their prominent members permanently. Every ones beloved uncle Nurul Huq passed away in Bangladesh in a road accident while travelling to Dhaka from Rajshahi (Inna-lila-hi-wa-inna-elahir-razeun). Mr Huq was visiting Bangladesh with his wife and was supposed to be back to Darwin on 30 January 2013. He was 83 years old. His wife was with him at the time of the accident. She had minor injuries and is now recovering in Rajshahi. On 22 January 2013 after the janza Mr Huq was buried besides his parents at his village Kundona of Noagoan. Mr Huq left behind his wife, two daughters, one son and seven grand children..



In 2000 for his service to the community, particularly through the Islamic Society of the Northern Territory, the Australian Federation of Islamic Council and as Imam of the Darwin Muslim community, Mr Nurul HUQ was awarded the prestigious Medal of the Order of Australia..

Mr Huq came to Australia to study at the university of NSW in 1965. Later on July 14, 1972 he and his wife migrated to Australia, along with their son and two daughters. He holds BSc (Hons) and two Masters degrees in Engineering Hydrology. Before migrating to Australia he was a hydrographer and hydrologist of East Pakistan Navy and Water & Power Development Authority from 1951 to 1971. After coming to Australia he worked as hydrologist in the Department of Tropical & Water Resources of Northern Territory for 14 years.

After coming to Darwin Mr Huq realised the need for an Islamic Centre in the Top End, with that goal in mind he involved himself with the recently formed and incorporated Islamic Society, which was already formed by the local Muslim families living in Darwin. During that time Muslims living in Darwin used to perform their Eid prayer and other religious festival in private houses and community halls. After the devastating cyclone Tracey in 1974 majority of Darwin population including his family was evacuated. Mr. Huq returns back to Darwin in 1977. For the significantly increased Muslim community in Darwin he realised the need for an Islamic Centre. He played the major role in convincing the Federal Government to allocate a permanent land for the Islamic Centre. In February 1978, the Commonwealth Government allocated 1.2 acres of land in the Northern Suburb of Darwin, which is the current venue of the Darwin Islamic Centre.

Though the main obstacle to get a piece of land was overcome, the hardest part was to procure financial help to build the Darwin Mosque and Islamic Centre. After lots of correspondence and convincement, financial aid was procured from the Saudi Government , Government of Pakistan, Australian Federation of the Islamic Council (AFIC) and individual contributions from the local and intestate Muslim. The construction of Darwin Mosque and Islamic centre was started in 1978. After the completion of phase 1 in 1979 the High Commissioner of Malaysia His Excellency Dr. Awang Bi Hassan opened the Centre. Various dignitaries from Northern Territory Government, Lord Mayor of Darwin, AFIC president and number of community leaders representing various Ethnic communities also attended the ceremony. In 1997 the second stage of the centre like the women praying area and a large classroom for Madrassa for the children was constructed. Mr. Shane Stone, ex Chief Minister of Northern Territory Government opened Phase II. Mr. Huq helped raising the required funding of \$150,000 and also supervised the extension. He also gave the conceptual plan of the Islamic Community Hall and actively participated in the fund raising and building of the hall. First Muslim cemetery of Darwin was also negotiated by him. Fund raising of newly formed third Mosque of Northern Territory, Palmerston Mosque also enjoyed his active participation and supports.

Mr. Huq served as the President of the centre for seven terms. He also served as Vice President, Secretary, Treasures and Executive Committee member. From 1973 to 1983 Mr. Huq was the Imam of the Centre. He also established and has taught an Islamic religious program for the children in Darwin (Madrassa). He was an active member of Australian Federation of Islamic Councils in Sydney from 1975 to 1977 and as marriage celebrant, conducted Muslim marriages between 1979 and 1997.

To preserve the history of Islamic Society of Darwin (ISD) formally known as Islamic Society of Northern Territory in 2009 Mr Huq wrote and published a book named "A Brief History of Islamic Society of Darwin".

Mr Nurul Huq always supported Bangladeshi traditional and cultural representations in Darwin. He was a common face in all our traditional cultural programs and always participated in introduction of those programs. He was also very much active in helping the small Bangladeshi migrant community of Darwin. He was the beloved uncle of Muslims of Darwin comprised of 27 nationalities not only Bangladeshis.