

## Eid Joy: Decades of Friendship and Cricket Memories at MIF's Open House



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On the evening of Eid , being at the Open House Get together at our dear Mohomed Ikhlas Farid ( MIF) and Shaista Farid Bhabi 's house is an annual affair. Thanks to our dear Farids for their wonderful hospitality – I have been attending this event at least for the last 2 and half decades and with unfailing regularity they have been hosting the open house party every year on the Eid evening .

I had gone on a picnic last evening to Dukhan Beach and returned back only at 7pm but after that somehow made it to MIF 's house to wish Eid Mubarak to him and his family and other common friends. By the time I went there last evening, most of the guests had already left , but I was happy to meet few of the Past presidents of Doha Chapter of ICAI and a long time resident of Qatar and my dear Pakistani friend for the last 3 decades Haroon Qureshi.

As always the hosts served a nice spread of yummy snacks and sweets and we all had a nice fill.

Then we all clicked pictures for our memory.

I loved catching up with Haroon who is now Editor in Chief of Rahbar Kisan International , a news paper in circulation in Pakistan and few other countries. In an hour I was there last evening, I had an enjoyable discussion with Haroon and MIF ( whom I always refer to as Don of Qatar Cricket ), treading back on the cricketing days in Doha in 1990 's when we didn 't have proper infrastructure in Qatar to play cricket , but still the passion for the game drove us to the ground every weekend

without fail.

Haroon was a great supporter of me during my early cricketing days in Qatar when I used to play for Kemco cricket team, as he loved my copy book batting and ground strokes, and fastish offspin I used to bowl. In fact in my first ever cricket match in Qatar in April 1994, it was Haroon, as the manager for Kemco cricket team, who insisted that I should bowl the first over of the innings but his decision backfired on him, as I gave away around 15 runs in that over. We had a great laugh last evening remembering that incident, apart from recollecting many injuries we used to sustain during our weekend outings to play in hardball league of QCA in the Khalifa stadium parking lot.

We also talked last evening about how we all used to enjoy playing in Qatar veteran league, when we didn't have the grading system, and there were hardly 8 teams with around 100 of us. We all knew each other very well and each Friday was full of fun pulling each others' legs playing cricket together. Once the grading system got introduced and with Division A and B etc, cricket became too competitive with lot of youngsters coming in to softball league and we lost the personal touch we had with players as the number of teams jumped to more than 25 with more than 300 players participating.

We also talked last evening about the Friendship Cricket Match between India and Pakistan we played in 2003 or so, when Haroon and MIF took the lead to host the match when Mr Assad Burney

was the CEO of United Bank Limited (UBL) – Qatar Branch (Haroon's employer) and UBL was the main sponsor of the match. I remember India won that match, but somehow we didn't get to play such a match thereafter. Cricket in Doha has given me a number of wonderful friends from Pakistan apart from few from Sri Lanka and Bangladesh with whom I still enjoy a banter on cricket. It was so much of fun last evening reminiscing the memorable cricketing days of the past.

Once again thanks Farid's for gifting us a wonderful evening – Eid Mubarak to all