

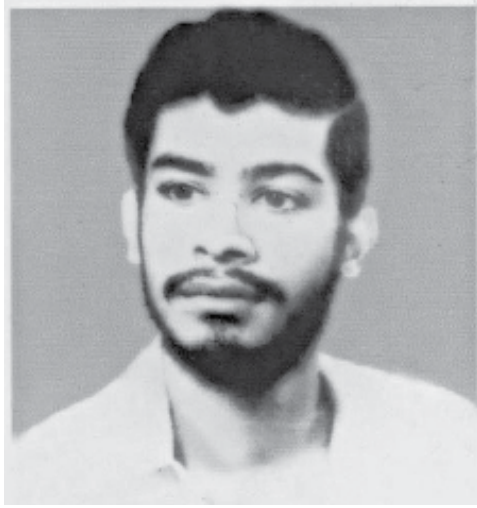
TRIBUTE

Kazi Salauddin: A warrior and a martyr

NUBAIRA FORKAN

So many of our memories of our nation's birth is tied to the people we have lost. Beyond our nation's collective joy and grief, every part of the country has a story. And even beyond that, every family has a story of a brave member who fought in the Liberation War and was lost to it. My family has such a story, a great son whose life and passing brings us grief, reverence and inspiration. His name was Kazi Salauddin, freedom fighter, leader, brother, student and martyr.

When the Liberation War began, Kazi Salauddin, my mother's oldest brother, was a second year student of ISC (Intermediate in Science). Overnight, he went from a college student to a revered warrior whose accomplishments were whispered and heralded throughout Faridpur district. He organised a group of brave hearts from different walks of life and established the "Salauddin Bahini" (Salauddin Force). Under the leadership of Kazi Salauddin, they fought skirmishes and ambush battles to cut off supplies and weaken Pakistani strongholds



Martyred freedom fighter Kazi Salauddin

across the district. From the early days of the war, Kazi Salauddin was instrumental in such battles as Chaader Haat battle, Bahirdia Operation, Barkhada Operation, Gyandia Operation, Howly Cutil Bridge (Goaland)

Operation, the Faridpur town water tank grenade attack, Nogorkhanda Thana weapon sting operation, the Padma river (Goaland) Ferry attack, operation in Momin Khar Hat, Goalertila and so on. Most notably, he was the commander in one of Faridpur's three major engagements, the Karimpur (Dhopadanga Chadpur) battle.

Around noon on December 9, 1971, Kazi Salauddin received intelligence that a Pakistani unit was entering the Karimpur area along the Faridpur-Jessore road, with a Pakistani captain at the helm. He immediately called the Salauddin Bahini to action. Along with his team, among them martyr Noufel (Salauddin's Second in Command), Kazi Farid (Salauddin's younger brother), Abdur Rahman and Khalilur Rahman, he hid along the roads and set up an ambush on the invading Pakistani unit. Kazi Salauddin was well known in the area, and so was his light machine gun (LMG). Many Pakistani soldiers fell that day, as many as 49. But word reached the Pakistani headquarters in Jessore, and within half an hour, the 36-member Salauddin Bahini was surrounded by an armoured convoy.

In the ensuing battle, six freedom fighters—Noufel, Wahab, Mujibur, Delwar, Adel and Sohrab—were martyred. The odds were now squarely in the favour of the Pakistanis; as the Bahini took cover, Kazi Salauddin decided there was only one way to save the remaining members of his unit. He jumped up and firing his LMG, pressed forward, giving his comrades an opportunity to disperse. As his ammunition was exhausted, he began to inch towards the greenery. If not for Kazi Salauddin's actions, every freedom fighter of Salauddin Bahini would have been martyred that day.

As Kazi Salauddin pressed forward firing his weapon, many Pakistani soldiers fell at his attack, but he sustained a bullet wound in his back and another bullet hit his LMG magazine. Bleeding and now without any weapons, he ran towards a house in the distance. The inhabitants of the house heard frantic knocking and yelling around the afternoon, answering the door to a wounded freedom fighter. They immediately offered assistance. However, it was to no avail. The Pakistani army followed Kazi Salauddin's trail to the house. In quick succession, they

killed the family inside the home and with the freedom fighter inside, lit the house ablaze.

Seven days later, on December 16, Bangladesh won the war and accepted the surrender of the Pakistani forces. As the new country rejoiced, the surviving Salauddin Bahini grieved the loss of their leader. On December 17, Kazi Salauddin's remains were recovered from the burnt husk of the house. He was buried in Alipur graveyard, Faridpur.

Today, Shaheed Salauddin is admired and remembered in the community he fought for. On the road to my grandfather's house in Faridpur, and town dwellers routinely refer to our house as "Shaheed Salauddin's house". A school and a road have been built in his name in the town. The Faridpur District Administration recognised December 9 as Karimpur Battle Day and the people of the district commemorate it in reverence. To our family, it is an honour to have our pain and pride so ingrained into the town around us. It is a credit to my uncle's memory.

Nubaira Forkan is currently pursuing a Doctor of Pharmacy from the University of Toronto, Canada. She is the niece of Martyr Kazi Salauddin.

INTERNATIONAL ANTI-CORRUPTION DAY

'Corruption has spread over the whole society'

Dr Iftekharuzzaman is Executive Director, Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB). In this interview with Badiuzzaman Bay of The Daily Star, he talks about distinctive features of corruption in Bangladesh, the role of the ACC, the government's anti-corruption drive, and ways to curb systemic corruption.

What questions should we be asking about corruption in Bangladesh that we are not?

Corruption challenges in certain sectors are not much asked about. Media is one of them. Media and the space for it have always faced challenges, more so in recent times, and its implications for democratic progress has been the subject of some research. We all want things to turn around so the media can play its due role. But very little is heard about corruption in the media itself.

The media as a sector and media houses as individual organisations—both conventional and nonconventional ones—are powerful entities. It will be naive to think that this power is not being abused to serve or protect corporate interests. The tendencies of some media houses to deliberately target their corporate competitors are well-known. There are examples of media houses joining the bandwagon of sycophancy not merely to survive political pressures but also to promote vested interests. That's abuse of media power, another form of corruption. There are also allegations of media houses depriving their staff of due salaries and benefits. How many of them have their account books in a state to be proud of? Aren't there examples of gender-based discrimination? Is sextortion a non-issue? One can go on.

When it comes to social media, while abuse of power including arbitrary and motivated use of the Digital Security Act to control freedom of expression is rampant, the use of the same social media for propagating religious and other forms of extremist views, including those targeting minority groups, has been enjoying unqualified freedom.

The other industry that receives scant attention in the anti-corruption discourse is defence, which is vulnerable to corruption almost everywhere in the world. In our case, the credibility of this extremely important sector of public interest could be much higher if resources and commercial enterprises at their disposal were subjected to public scrutiny.

How would you describe the nature of corruption in Bangladesh? Is there anything distinctive about it compared to other countries?

For over two decades, Bangladesh has been performing commendably in many socioeconomic indicators

like GDP, but corruption remains widespread. Corruption costs the country at least 2-3 percent of GDP. Bangladesh is no longer at the bottom of the list of countries worst-affected by corruption as it was for five successive years from 2001 to 2005. It, however, continues to rank among countries where corruption is perceived to be most pervasive, and remains second lowest in South Asia, behind only Afghanistan. Parallel with other costs of corruption, money laundering is a major concern for Bangladesh, as conservative estimates put the amount of annual illicit transfers out of the country at over USD 10 billion, most of it through improper invoicing in foreign trade.

Corruption does exist everywhere in the world. In our case, regrettably, it has spread over the whole society and nearly become a way of life. One of our recent surveys showed that 89 percent of the victims of corruption in service delivery sectors are forced to pay bribes because, without it, there would be no access to such services.

The other striking feature of corruption in Bangladesh is the dichotomy. Corruption, officially, is subjected to zero tolerance as the head of government has repeatedly pronounced it as a pledge. I have not heard such firm pledges from many of her peers elsewhere in the world. However, the irony is that little concrete actions are seen to enforce this commitment.

Corruption in the health sector has been the main talking point this year, for obvious reasons. Does it mean other sectors have been less affected?

The coronavirus has pushed the discourse on corruption in the health sector to the forefront. Corrupt practices have long been tolerated in this sector, both at service delivery and higher levels. At the high level, procurement and supplies have been fodder for a festival of corruption by a section of vendors with political linkages who were allowed to form syndicates of triangular collusion thanks to the collaboration of a section of officials and politically powerful individuals. Their peers at the lower levels didn't want to be left out, as they also indulged in various corrupt activities including theft and misappropriation of relief materials.

However, it will be naive to consider the health sector as an exception. As per

TIB's research done over the years, it is rather one of those sectors moderately affected by corruption, with others, like law enforcement agencies, ranking much higher. Therefore, I suspect that if any other sector was put under such stress as the health sector was by coronavirus, one would find similar, if not higher, levels of vulnerability to corruption.

In an interview last September, you said that what we know of graft from media reports is but the tip of an iceberg. Most cases that come out involve junior to mid-level politicians, officials, politically connected businessmen, etc.—small fries, really, in the big scheme of things. So what (or who) else does the iceberg contain?



Dr Iftekharuzzaman

The iceberg contains the heavyweights. Generally, there are two broad categories of corruption. One is petty corruption at the service delivery level, involving a two-way transaction in which one party—the collectors or duty bearers—is the gainer while the bribe-payer, as a service recipient, becomes involved as the victim. What we usually observe is that some such bribe-takers, usually low- and lower-mid-level officers or staff, are investigated, which make headlines in the media.

However, the second category of corruption involves a win-win game in public contracting, supplies and bigger deals in which the triangular collusive arrangements take place, which are hardly brought to the net of the enforcement agencies like the ACC. Even if some of them are selectively

caught from time to time, the whole syndicate remains unperturbed.

A classic example of corruption in the financial sector is that of the loan defaulters of Basic Bank where the key decision-makers in the reported illicit deals continue to enjoy impunity. The much-talked-about Regent Hospital case may take the same direction. The individuals directly involved are being investigated, but the "iceberg"—or those who are responsible for making Regent the talk of the nation—will probably enjoy the proverbial impunity!

The Anti-Corruption Commission is clearly failing to perform its mandated duty. Given how it is allowed to function, is it realistic to expect the ACC to check corruption without a major overhaul?

Indeed, it is unrealistic to expect the ACC to fully deliver its mandate without a major overhaul. The question is what such an overhaul implies. Our successive research have shown that in terms of legal provisions and institutional mandate, the ACC has the potential to successfully control corruption. But its investigating capacity leaves much to be desired—in terms of the skills and expertise necessary, honesty and integrity of the staff, and sufficient internal control and oversight to prevent lapses and irregularities. In many cases, investigation is taken as an opportunity for rent-seeking by the relevant officials through collusion and often extortion with the investigated party.

There also seems to be a self-imposed dividing line drawn by the ACC authority beyond which it is unsure, unable, reluctant, or fearful of going, depending on the identity, status or linkages of the individuals concerned. There is a perception within the ACC that it should not antagonise the powers that be. As a matter of fact, the perception problem is seen at both ends. Since the ACC has been created by the government, a section of the government considers it to be a government body, as does the ACC. What's lost on both sides is that the ACC is supposed to be a state institution serving public interests rather than that of the government.

Do you think the government's anti-corruption drive has failed?

Anti-corruption efforts, commonly touted as "drive", have not succeeded because those were destined to fail. The

prime minister's personal commitment in this context is noteworthy. She declared that no one would be spared, including those from within her party. That's also the reason why it failed to deliver.

While the PM may have meant business, those whose responsibility it is to implement the pledge couldn't serve the cause as many of them are among beneficiaries, participants, colluders, protectors and promoters of corruption. Corruption is not only deeply institutionalised, but also a way of life for them. Political or governmental position or linkage is considered as a license for self-enrichment via abuse of power. This is as such a statement of fact as a determining factor for the enforcement agencies including the ACC.

Experts often talk about the importance of depoliticising the administration which would lead to stronger mechanisms of accountability. This is easier said than done, of course. What measures should we take that can realistically help us curb systemic corruption?

I agree that dysfunctionality of institutions due to politicisation has become so entrenched that it cannot be changed overnight. But we need to get the ball rolling. This could start from ensuring open, fair and genuinely competitive processes of recruitment, transfers, postings and promotions. We have laws, rules and regulations for that. What's missing is their application. One of the powerful keys is to disclose income and wealth statements of all public officials and publicly exposed persons for scrutiny of accumulated wealth against legitimate incomes. Managing conflict of interest to prevent any business relation of publicly exposed persons with the government funds could make a difference. Equally important is the adoption of global standards for automatic exchange of information on financial accounts that could facilitate robust tracking of financial flows within and across borders preventing various forms of money laundering.

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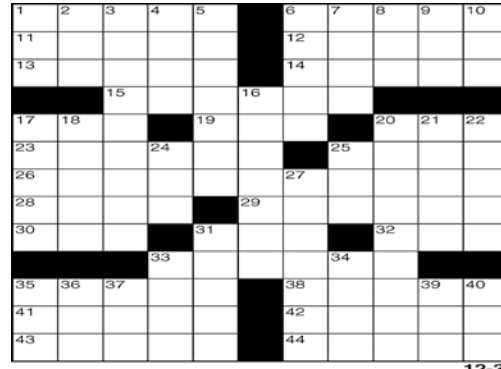


SELMA LAGERLÖF (1858-1940) Swedish author who became the first woman to win the Nobel Prize for Literature.

Never repeat a rumor before you have verified it. And if it is true, hold your tongue all the more.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

- ACROSS**
- 1 Electrical problem
 - 6 Tightfisted
 - 11 Hawaiian island
 - 12 Blood line
 - 13 Sean of "The Lord of the Rings"
 - 14 Hollowed out
 - 15 Like vehicles not made for all terrain
 - 17 Pound sound
 - 19 Singer Yoko
 - 20 CIA's forerunner
 - 23 Gangster's gun
 - 25 A lot of
 - 26 Visitor who's crossed a border
 - 28 Hearty dish
 - 29 Regal seat
 - 30 Sixth sense, briefly
 - 31 - chi (martial art)
 - 32 Nourished
 - 33 Ill-fated
 - 35 Fleece seeker
 - 38 Streetcars
 - 41 Green hue
 - 42 Illuminated
 - 43 Price add-ons
 - 44 Foe
- DOWN**
- 1 Reggae's kin
 - 2 Possesses
 - 3 Not fitting in
 - 4 Forecast word
 - 5 Shack topper
 - 6 Chocolate source
 - 7 Parka part
 - 8 Screw up
 - 9 Finished off
 - 10 Spot to jot
 - 16 Commodore's insignia
 - 17 Stood up
 - 18 One-sided wins
 - 20 Obsolete
 - 21 Play part
 - 22 Tear into tatters
 - 24 Farm grazer
 - 25 Spoil
 - 27 Prickly plant
 - 31 Melodies
 - 33 Place to put in
 - 34 "- go brag!"
 - 35 Take notes
 - 36 Imitating
 - 37 Caret's key
 - 39 Silent
 - 40 Mole, e.g.



YESTERDAY'S ANSWERS

S P A N S
E L I O T
W E L T Y
S A M E
U S E
P E N D A N T S
S T I R
W A R
O C E L O T
R U B I O
S T U N T
T E T E

R A U L
G E T T O
L A T I N
P U M I C E
B A T C A R
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F E Y R U T
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I R E N E
P E L T S

BEETLE BAILEY



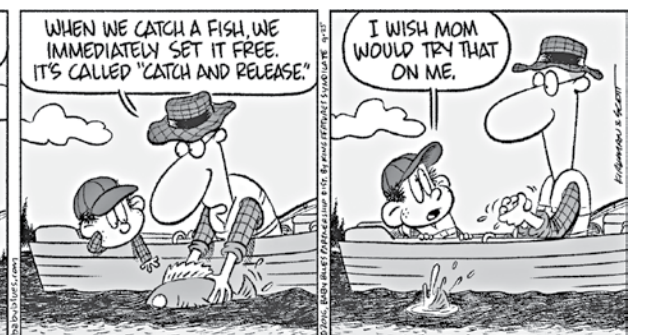
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BABY BLUES



BY KIRKMAN & SCOTT



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