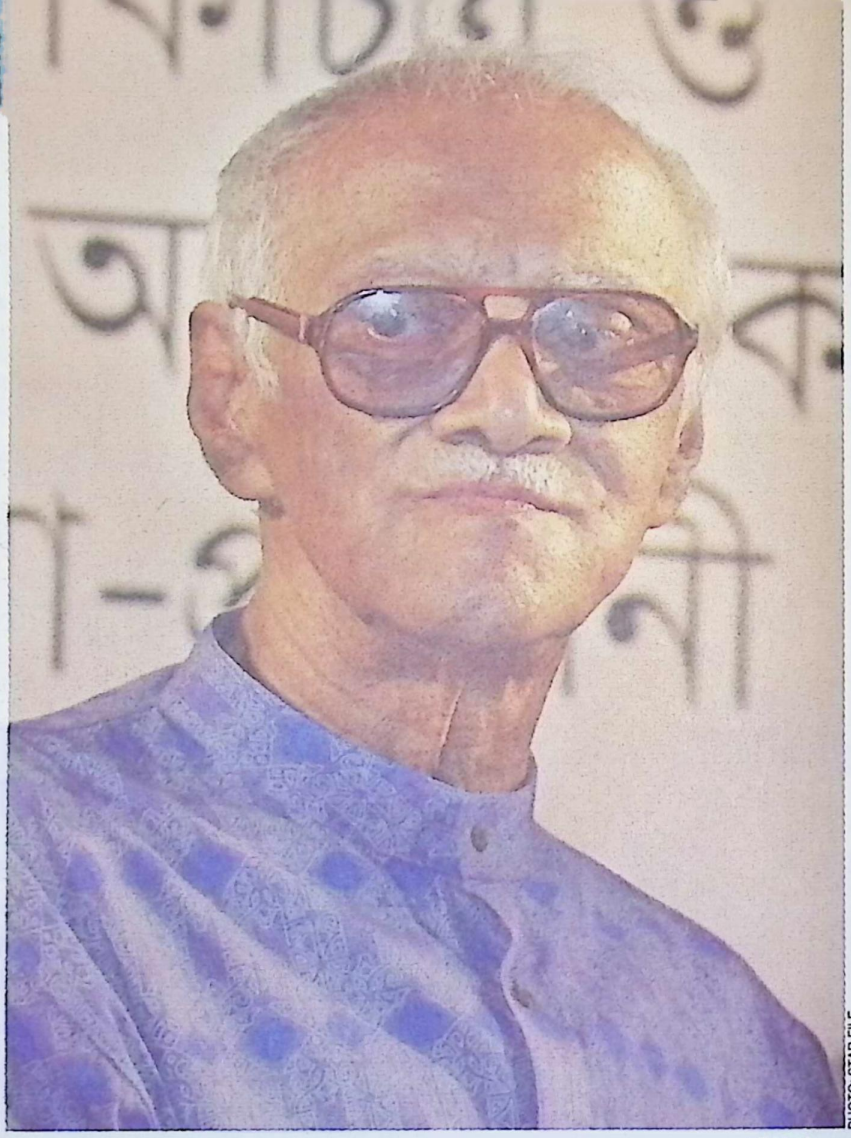


PHOTO: STAR FILE

ABM Musa

A Fearless Voice

Passionate about his work to the level of being obsessive, ABM Musa was a man who feared none

ANANTA YUSUF

Once there was a school boy who walked 10 km from his village Dharmapur to see Mahatma Gandhi in Noakhali. He walked on bare foot to hear the great leader preach against the rioting violence, returning home with an enlightened heart. Gandhi had such an impact on the young man's heart that he took it upon him to spread the great man's teachings in his village. Even as a young boy, ABM Musa knew the importance of spreading news and information. And that's probably why we mourn the loss of a man who never parted with the honour of his profession till he breathed his last at the age of 83.

The iconic journalist was born on February 28, 1931 in Feni. Musa was best known for his trenchant statements, his sharp humour, and an abiding love for his country. He was remembered for his fearless attitude, his love for his work, his generous encouragement and, most of all, his frankness.

In the centre of Dhaka lies a pitch road which leads to a big two-storied house which is the second home to many leading journalists of the city. Musa was the founder member of the National Press Club. And he was elected its general secretary thrice and its president for four times. For journalists who lived in Dhaka's charmed circle, every evening was a magical time. That was the time to visit the Press Club, to sit for a cup of tea with toast biscuits. It was a tradition that was rarely broken. In the mid-fifties, young journalists like Kamal Lohani would visit the Press Club to chat with ABM Musa and other veteran journalists.

In 1950, Musa started his career as a journalist with the then Daily Insaf. However, in the same year he moved to the Pakistan Observer as a sub-editor. Mid fifties to the early sixties was a crucial time for the newspaper business. At that time, Musa played a crucial role. He was the first person from East Pakistan who got the Commonwealth Press Union Fellowship and went to England. When he came back, he changed the entire look of the Pakistan Observer. For the first time in the history of the paper, he introduced modern printing methods, including new styles in design layouts.

At that time, newspaper houses would use the