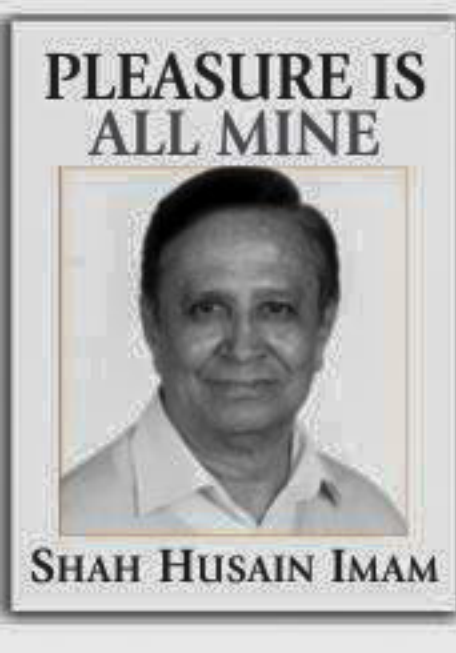


# Ershad, still an unspent political force



PLEASURE IS ALL MINE  
SHAH HUSAIN IMAM

WHATEVER may be his infamy, flippancy and punching above his weight in the eye of his critics, H. M. Ershad hardly seems ready for his swan song. On the contrary, he is fondly shedding the trappings of a maverick and transforming himself into a true pragmatist.

He explained his move to designate his brother G. M. Quader as JP co-chairman and Ruhul Amin Gazi as secretary general to replace Ziauddin Bablu in following terms: "I am 89 and Rowshan is reaching 79", implying thereby that he was setting a line of succession, not without a trace of dynasty at that!

That seems to be the real issue at hand for a party that he had fathered and which still revolves around him as the moving force whatever his opponents within may delude themselves into thinking. Nonetheless, his action has stirred up the hornet's nest, practically rattling the beehive to an unforeseen web of disturbance. His assertion that as party chairman he has the right to create a post (that of co-chairman) and choose the party secretary general has been contested by Rowshan Ershad and her confidantes, Ziauddin Bablu and Anisul Islam Mahmud. In fact, Rowshan Ershad, the official opposition leader in parliament, the three ministers and the MPs from JP seemed pitted against party chairman Ershad, his brother G. M. Quader and Ruhul Amin Gazi.

The Rowshan-led front took issue with Ershad for having announced the changes without consulting the presidium and the party council.

As before, the spat was set at rest, promising a decision through consultations. But Ershad seemingly holds his ground making a point of separating Jatiya Party parliamentary party from the JP as an organization.

One would have thought that a warpath would be avoided by both sides true to the wise words of Sophocles, the famous Greek writer: "The words should be hated only so far as one may be hated

who one day may be a friend." Ershad is trying to introduce a new element to the political equations between the ruling Awami League and the JP. He says that he needs to talk to the Prime Minister to persuade her to see the JP's potential for emerging as an opposition to BNP. With a hint of undisguised irony, he added that he might seek the Prime Minister's approval for relinquishing his position as special emissary to the PM, so that he is freed up to build the JP as an opposition party.

JP undoubtedly retains a political clout with the Awami League in a context where Jamaat-e-Islami may be effectively put out of political action

says now about recasting the JP role into a 'true' opposition. Anyway, you find him on a transformational mode vigorously asking the three Jatiya Party ministers in the Hasina-led government to quit. But they look askance at such a prospect, never really seemingly interested in attending party meetings when called to. Ershad has to reckon with that taste of power.

Even though the JP chief never tires of bargaining on the basis of the party's political capital in terms of fixed constituencies in pockets of the country, he has been susceptible to leveraging by the party in power at different times. He faced a load of court cases - 21 in total - mostly having been accused of



PHOTO: STAR

altogether. The BNP alliance would be diminished in the event this happened, another factor to be considered in the changing political dynamics.

Ershad, however, is a living illustration of this George Barnard Shaw quote: "There are two tragedies in life. One is not to get your heart's desire. The other is to get it."

The near-nongenerian Ershad never apparently got his heart's desire but eventually landed on the next best, i.e. the position of special emissary to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. Even that is smacking of uncertainty if he really means what he

corruption. He has been acquitted in most cases, either by a court verdict or by a ruling of an appellate court or by discharge.

Only three cases against him hang fire: The first one on an Uttara plot allotment is under trial, in the second, the radar purchase case argument is going on, and the last one, the Manzoor murder case awaits further investigation. Such is the remnants of legacy apparently stacked against him.

The writer is Associate Editor, The Daily Star.



## A S Mahmud The man who dreamed

ABU SAYEED

1988. Bangladesh Short Film Forum was working hard to organise the first short film festival in the country. Filmmaker Alamgir Kabir, Tanvir Mokammel and I were running to various places to collect fund for the festival. Alamgir Kabir was the president of the festival committee while Tanvir Mokammel was the convener of the finance sub-committee. Tareque Masud, the secretary of the festival committee, remained so busy that he never got involved in the financial matters of the committee. Film director Salahuddin Zaki referred us to Sayeed Chowdhury, a businessman. Similarly, Sayeed Ahmed, a former secretary and dramatist, sent us to Late A S Mahmud who was then serving as one of the directors of Transcom Group. We went to his office and immediately met him. He was so polite that he stood up from his seat to shake hands with us. When we told him we needed financial assistance for arranging the film festival, he instantly met our request. We stayed at his office for about an hour and discussed many things. We were surprised at his knowledge on films which was rare even among the people involved in filmmaking.

We made some special invitation cards for eminent personalities which we provided to them prior to the festival. We sent invitation cards to all our sponsors including the Transcom Group. During the film festival I had to stay at the venue from morning till night. I noticed that a lady was coming regularly to watch the films. One day SA Mahmud accompanied her. Later I learnt that she was the wife of A S Mahmud.

After the end of the festival, our contact with A S Mahmud never ceased. He came to the premiere show of one of my short films titled *Dhushor Jatra*. After that, I lost contact with him for some time. But in 1996, when he was planning to establish a private TV channel, our contact was restored. Then I met his son Farhad Mahmud and became close to him. Together we have produced several works.

A S Mahmud played a pioneering role in founding *The Daily Star*. He was the publisher and manager of the newspaper. *The Daily Star* has been widely recognised for providing quality news. A S Mahmud was a dreamer. He was the Chairman and CEO of Ekushey TV, which was his last venture in life.

Everyone knows that Ekushey TV caused a stir in the media world. The audience was able to view something new in both news as well as other shows. Several journalists who started their careers with Ekushey TV are now heading the news section of other major television channels. Shows like *Desh Jure* and *Mukto Khobor* created a new vision of how news programmes should be. Many established dramatists and directors started their professional journey with Ekushey TV. Even if some of them started their careers elsewhere, they flourished after joining Ekushey.

The news and programme division of Ekushey TV was headed by Simon Dring, Mishuk Munier and Nawazish Ali Khan. It was possible to bring together such a team only because A S Mahmud was the chairman and CEO of the channel; under his leadership, this team was able to do constructive and creative work.

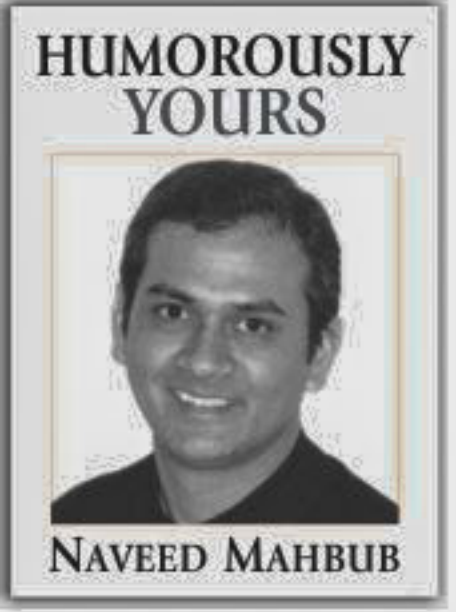
Imbued with the spirit of the Language Movement and the Liberation War, A S Mahmud named his television channel 'Ekushey.' Not only its name, but also the shows of the channels echoed the spirit of our Language Movement and the Liberation War.

A S Mahmud was a symbol of politeness and gentleness. I doubt that we will be able to find a single person who was hurt by his words or behaviour. No matter where they are now, his team at Ekushey continue to remember him with respect. I still remember when the security staff of Ekushey scrambled to make space for him in the front of the queue waiting for the lift. Instead of standing in the front, he joined the end of the line, waiting for his turn. This, apparently, was a regular scene. I also recall another day in 1993, when he asked me to visit his office in the afternoon so that he could introduce me to his two sons. After I reached the office of Transcom in Motijheel, he said that we would be lunching at Purbani Hotel where he had called Imran and Farhan Mahmud. When I approached his car after work, he himself opened the door of the car for me. I was moved by this gesture of respect he bestowed upon an ordinary young guest like me.

With a somewhat heavy heart, A S Mahmud left all of us on January 22, 2004. We all know about the events surrounding Ekushey. Does that mean he was a failure? No. He wasn't a failure. His ideals and dreams, him team and their creativity, all of it has spread over a wider canvas today. Ekushey Television was shut down, but it was not possible to shut down Ekushey and its staff's excellence, creativity and ideals.

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Translated by Editorial Team, The Daily Star

# The Evolution of WMDs



HUMOROUSLY YOURS  
NAVEED MAHBUB

ONCE upon a time, my only wish was to wear rain boots to weddings. Remember, pouring water on to the plate, rinsing the hand

rendezvous time. Another uncle seizes the opportunity, "Naveed, can you tell your auntie that I am ready to go home?" Snowball effect. I end up with a mission creep of a messenger mission turning into a search and rescue one - find eight aunties for the eight uncles. After a long and painful facial recognition exercise (ok, a few eye candies in the process), I find the eight aunties and send them to the respective uncles...I think. If there were cases of swapped couples, perhaps I am to blame.

Years go by. As I graduate to being a

"Auntie! What was that?"  
"Oh, we in the Nawab family wash our hands with *pulao*."

You want to tell me that you brush your teeth with a chicken roast and rinse your mouth with *burhani*? She sure doesn't look like a Nawab, and I'm sure this is NOT a regal ritual. Besides, some of the Nawabs have been known to 'be around' and hence she may be a 'bifurcated' descendant.

So, these are the run of the mill weddings. But there are the 'upgraded' ones at Chinese restaurants. World War II food rationing by the Nazi like

*You want to tell me that you brush your teeth with a chicken roast and rinse your mouth with burhani? She sure doesn't look like a Nawab, and I'm sure this is NOT a regal ritual. Besides, some of the Nawabs have been known to 'be around' and hence she may be a 'bifurcated' descendant.*

teenager, so does the wedding into becoming a co-ed one as the cloth wall goes down from Ronald Reagan's call: "Tear down the [Berlin] Wall!" Woo hoo! Armed with gum boots, I'm expectant to see which pretty dame sits opposite to me during dinner. So what if it's my friend's mom. As we start our hand-plate washing process (the silverware is yet to be introduced - change management must follow the *Boiling Frog Syndrome*), she takes some *pulao* on her plate, does the same exercise as us, and throws away the *pulao*.

waiter as he serves the spring chicken: "2 is to 1!"

The upgraded wedding also evolves as the glamorous Pan Pacific Sonargaon Hotel goes into action. The bride's parents come to our place and hand me the invitation card which says: "Mr. and Mrs. Mahbub Rahman and Simi". Thank you for not inviting me. Salt on the wound: "Naveed, please tell your parents to RSVP as we need an exact head count for Sonargaon." Needless to say, I gate crash.

With the advent of traffic, invitation

cards start coming via courier with a stapler pin right through the card and with a 70 percent rate of successful delivery. Oh what's that little chit inside? "Apologies we couldn't invite in person." Oh, as an afterthought, "No gifts, blessings only."

I take the latter literally. I go to the wedding with my hands empty and my heart full of genuine prayers. In fact, I am taken to the podium to actually conduct the prayers, only to be greeted by someone, "Your *munajat* was not funny at all." The occupational hazard of being a comedian.

And the decoration lights? Used to be just the house of the hosts, then the house and the gate, now the whole street is lit up. Weddings in 2020: the lights extended all the way to Kolkata.

The WMD, aka, Weddings and Marriages of December (ok, a smooth spillover to January too), has evolved over time. But what has remained constant is the 1,000 indifferent and probably socially burdened guests (mostly the same ones) attending. One guest even came and asked me at my OWN *gaye holud*, "So, how do you know the groom?"

Maybe the Matrimonial Darwin Theory predicts the WMDs of the future will be a small affair, only with close family and friends, who would truly enjoy being there. A big burden lifted from the hosts, the bored guests and the resources of the city. And the matrimonial budget surplus? Give half to the newlyweds and the other half to charity.

Win-win...

The writer is an engineer at Ford & Qualcomm USA and CEO of IBM & Nokia Siemens Networks Bangladesh turned comedian (by choice), the host of ABC Radio's *Good Morning Bangladesh* and the founder of Naveed's Comedy Club. E-mail: naveed@naveedmahbub.com

## QUOTABLE Quote

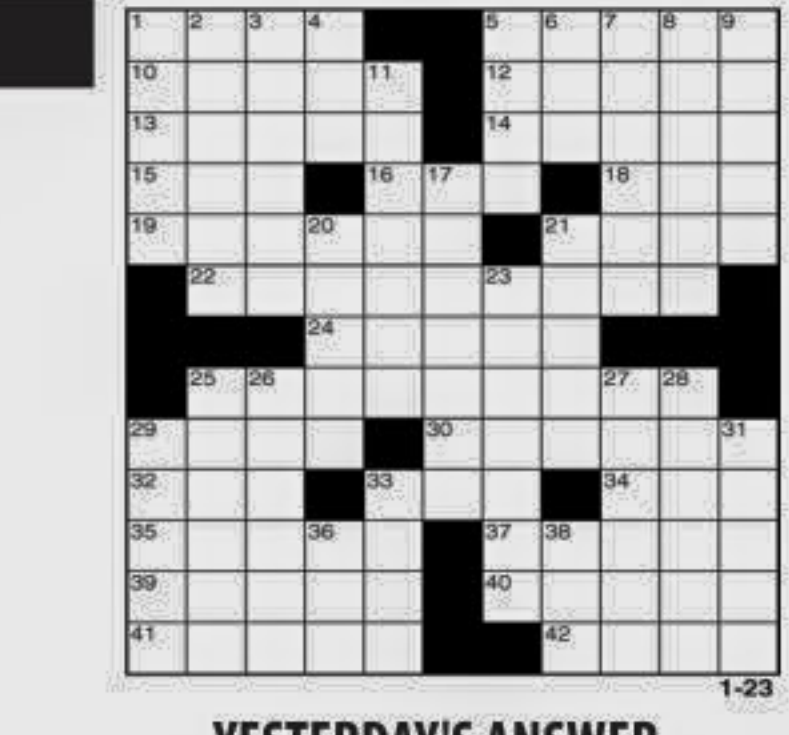


SAADAT HASAN MANTO  
WRITER AND PLAYWRIGHT

If you cannot bear these stories, then it is because the society is unbearable. Who am I to remove the clothes of this society, which itself is naked. I don't even try to cover it, because it is not my job, that's the job of dressmakers.

## CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

- ACROSS
- 1 Rough voice
  - 5 Geometry class challenge
  - 10 Stockpile
  - 12 Gold unit
  - 13 Be effective
  - 14 Sword material
  - 15 Yale rooter
  - 16 Curator's concern
  - 18 Plopped down
  - 19 Bill makers
  - 21 Stock holders
  - 22 Art director's indications
  - 24 "The Waste Land" poet
  - 25 Novelty store buy
  - 29 Locks
  - 30 Castle part
  - 32 Curry on TV
  - 33 Nile serpent
  - 34 Mess up
  - 35 Pesto herb
  - 37 Yucca's kin
  - 39 Perfect
  - 40 Sees socially
  - 41 Rotates
- 42 Garden areas
- DOWN
- 1 Sprints
  - 2 Charm
  - 3 Lustrous
  - 4 Omega preceder
  - 5 Fence feature
  - 6 Tire track
  - 7 "Be right with you"
  - 8 Fast expanses
  - 9 Soft fabrics
  - 11 Grand
  - 17 Stands up to
  - 20 "...partridge in --tree"
  - 21 Wendy's friend
  - 23 Browsing annoyance
  - 25 "Citizen Kane" estate
  - 26 Car wash device
  - 27 Invent
  - 28 Worked for
  - 29 Custom
  - 31 Lock
  - 33 "-- fair in..."
  - 36 Golfer Woodsnam
  - 38 Yak it up



## YESTERDAY'S ANSWER

MONET BANDS  
AROR ARAGORA  
REPRO SEPAL  
ALAT HESAME  
USS SIT RAM  
DESI DECKS  
IDE NOI  
GNOME ONTO  
AUG PEP GIN  
PIZARRO ZEE  
ATONE RHODA  
RANTS TONIC  
TRESS SPENT

## BEETLE BAILEY by Mort Walker



## BABY BLUES by Kirkman & Scott

