

The concept of democracy is ever-evolving since the Greco-Roman experiments with the idea of allowing a group of people to decide how to govern themselves. Of course, from its European beginnings, this right to govern oneself was not available to everyone- it started with men of Greek or Roman descent, leaving out women, and people from other ethnicities. The experiment gained traction in 17th century England when a rising group that called themselves the bourgeoisie began to curtail the power of the monarch. Since then and until now, democracy has yet to find a practical manifestation of all of its ideals. But over time, it has been made abundantly clear that a democracy cannot function without an informed citizenry- and an informed citizenry is only possible through a rigid and unbiased media.

The Daily Star has now served as a prominent member of the fourth estate of media for 25 years, starting soon after our own experimentations with democracy began in 1991. The ideals behind this institution of journalism were a lot similar to those of democracy itself- that it would transmit the news that is required by the populace to make informed decisions about their own governance. Beyond that, there was also a concerted commitment towards bringing into public discourses instances of wrongdoing, corruption and social oppression. At the moment of its inception, there was a lack of a strong media presence in the English language in the country. Slowly, The Daily Star became a leading voice in mainstream print journalism.

At the end of the day, a newspaper is evaluated based on the positive impact it has had in shaping the collective consciousness of the populace. In that vein, The Daily

THE FOURTH ESTATE

AHMAD IBRAHIM

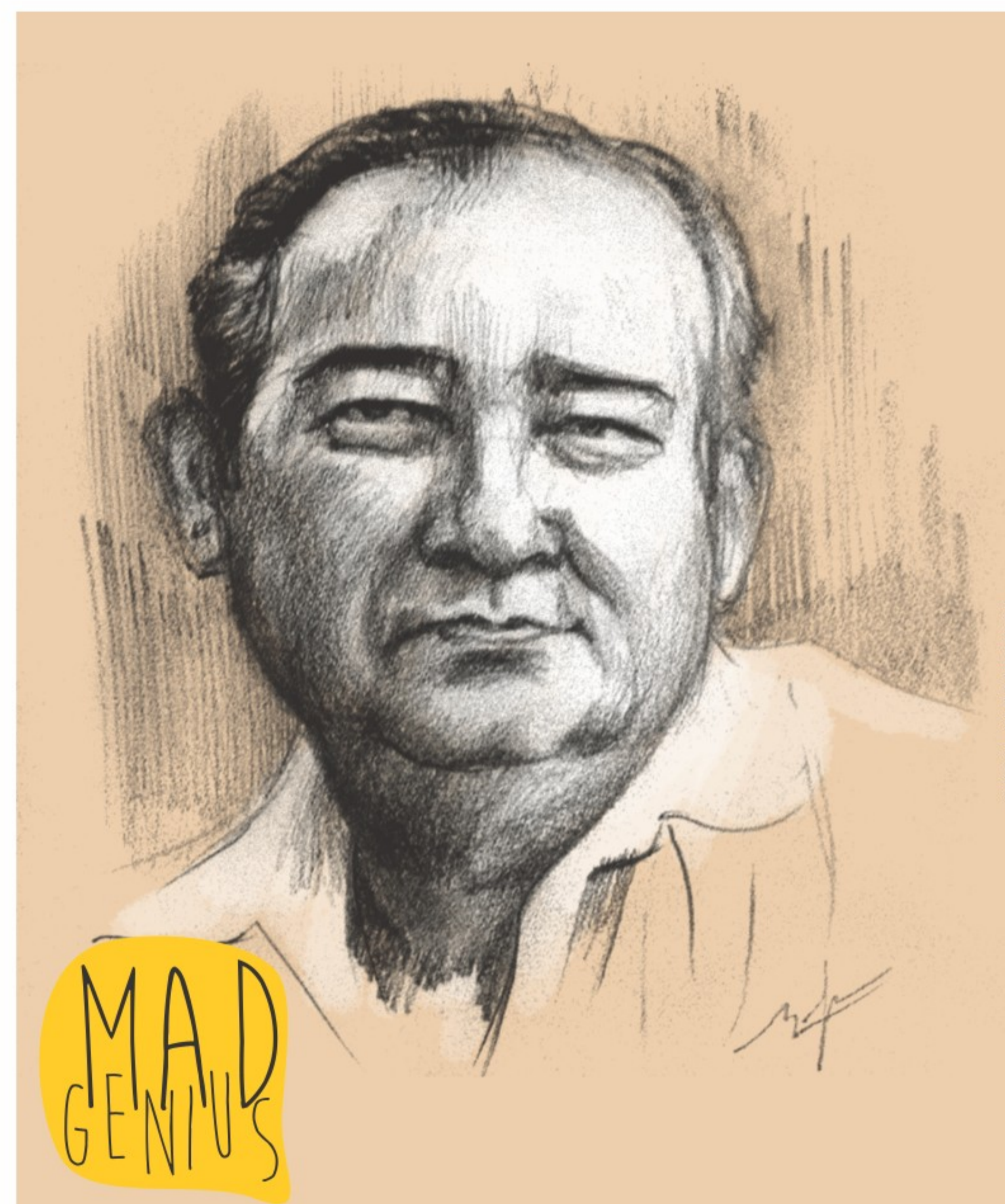
PHOTO: PRABIR DAS



PERSPECTIVE

Star has taken a very strong stand on several important issues that the country has dealt with- from bringing into public discourse the issue of violence against women, the issue of marginalising of religious minorities and the indigenous populations of the country and how energy and chemical proliferation has degraded the environment. Politically, The Daily Star has been one of a handful that have extensively reported on the Padma Bridge scandal and the recent incongruities with elections in the country. If we look towards the nationalist movement in Shahbag and the private university students' movement against VAT, the newspaper was present to catalogue the facts. In recent times still, The Daily Star has done a commendable job in highlighting the issue of communal tension and the dangerous possibility of religious extremism.

A quarter of a century is a long time. And yet, in the context of nation building, it is but a fraction of a second. As we watch our country go through tumultuous changes, with a developing industrial base, a burgeoning labour force and the imminent risk of climate change, our political apparatus is shifting, too. It is here that the fourth estate of the media has perhaps its biggest challenge. Aiding and encouraging the implementation of democracy in a third-world country. And so, at a time when non-mainstream information sources (the so-called 'Fifth Estate') are readily available thanks to the internet, it is doubly important that an institution such as The Daily Star continues to adhere to its founding ideals of creating an informed populace. After 25 years, the job looks set to be as challenging as it has always been. But then, many would argue that that is the hallmark of good journalism. ■



SKETCH: YAFIZ SIDDIQUI

SYED MOHAMMAD ALI

(December 5, 1928- 1993)

Syed Mohammad Ali is a legendary name in the history of journalism in Bangladesh. Popularly known as S M Ali, his contributions in national and international dailies and magazines made him a popular intellectual figure in South and South East Asia. He has served in editorial positions of renowned dailies like The Pakistan Times, The Bangkok Post, The Asia Magazine and The Bangladesh Observer. He was the founding editor of the country's largest and most circulated English daily, The Daily Star. By launching this daily in 1991, he has made exemplary changes in the traditional practices of journalism.

“IT MAY BE NOTHING UNUSUAL FOR A JOURNALIST TO PURSUE AN IDEA FOR RESEARCH FOR MONTHS AND EVEN FOR YEARS. HOWEVER IT IS UNIQUE WHEN HE STAYS WITH THE PROJECT FOR DECADES AND EXPANDS THE AREA FOR HIGHER STUDY AND TURNS IT INTO A REGIONAL VENTURE.

PERHAPS AN UNSEEN HAND IN ALL THE TIME IS TRYING TO ENSURE THAT NO MATTER HOW DIFFICULT THE SITUATION IS GOOD WILL ULTIMATELY TRIUMPH OVER EVIL.

THE PROFESSIONAL TRAINING FOR JOURNALISTS CARRIES A PRICE TAG. IT ALSO INVOLVES A COMMITMENT TO FREE PRESS, CAREFUL PLANNING AND MINIMUM POSSIBLE INTERFERENCE FROM THE GOVERNMENT.”

STAR DIARY

JUAN MORE TIME

When I started out on Rising Stars, I was big into album reviews and music. One of those was a profile on the band Big Sir. The band consisted of stars such as Lisa Papineau, Cedric Bixler-Zavala from The Mars Volta/Antemasque and my favourite bassist Juan Alderete. His bass playing followed me pretty much throughout my life as he played in bands such as Paul Gilbert's Racer X, The Mars Volta and the Omar Rodriguez-Lopez Group. People, especially guitarists, rarely shut up about Paul Gilbert and the bassline of Scarified to this day remains one of the fastest grooves ever. When I followed Juan Alderete and ended up with Big Sir, I couldn't help but write the profile of one of the most underrated trip-hop bands ever. After getting published, I decided to message Big Sir on Facebook with the link to the profile. There was literally nothing to lose apart from being seanzoned by the bassist you idolise. A few days later, I woke up, Facebook and right there, the first thing on my newsfeed, is Big Sir sharing the link to the article I wrote. Not only that, Juan Alderete, himself, replied to my message thanking me. No other profession can offer you this much satisfaction, that's all I can say.

Rumman R Kalam

Sub-editor at SHOUT and when he's off-duty, he likes to be a goat with opposable thumbs at Rantages.



PHOTO: STAR FILE

THE BIZARRE, THE WEIRD AND THE FANTASTIC

In my two years working with *The Star*, I had the opportunity to contribute to this wonderful magazine in a number of capacities. I wrote features, often helped with the editing and collected the entries for *Star Diary* and *Write to Mita*. Of all these responsibilities, I felt a particular affinity toward *Star Diary*. Our readers shared their stories and their experiences on various issues. It helped the magazine team to relate and connect to the readers in a more personal manner. As is the case with most publications, while all of our readers' submissions were definitely heartfelt and more than welcome, there were some that left us puzzled or in splits. We could never understand why a reader was insistent on sending 'jocks' to us, for instance. Until a wise colleague identified that the poor man only wanted to submit (his idea of) funny 'jokes' to the magazine and not enthusiastic sportsmen who are too consumed in their popularity to be interested in something else.

It wasn't that we fumed or seethed when we found such emails in our mailbox. We did laugh a bit at the expense of the poor reader but we loved our contributors just the same. They are what made us and continue to make us what we are. On the 25th anniversary of The Daily Star, I'd sincerely like to thank our crazy, fantastic, weird, wonderful people for your love and support.

Upashana Salam

Senior Editorial Assistant of TDS' Editorial team, who worked at The Star magazine from 2012 to 2014. She likes to scream at the top of her voice and tear paper when she's not working.