

IN MEMORIAM

A S Mahmud: A visionary's dream

January 22nd was the 13th death anniversary of Mr. A S Mahmud. He was the founding Managing Director of Mediaworld, the owning company of The Daily Star and one of the driving spirits behind launching of this paper. We, in The Daily Star, recall with profound respect his immeasurable contribution to this paper.

SYEDA MUNIR KHASRU

THE journey of *The Daily Star* started with two competent and committed men. One was an internationally known and well-respected journalist and the other was an entrepreneur cum visionary who not only dared to dream, but rather dreamed too big, going by the standards of print and electronic media prevailing at that time. I had earlier shared my insights into the journalist Mr. S M Ali, the founder editor of *The Daily Star*. Being the editor, obviously, Mr. S M Ali was known better to all than the equally strong driving force behind the most successful English daily of today. The gentleman I am talking about is Mr. A S Mahmud, the founding Managing Editor of Mediaworld, the owning company of *The Daily Star*.

In addition, Mr. Mahmud was the pioneer of initiating the move to open the world of private TV channels in Bangladesh. When today's youngsters sitting on the sofa couch keep on conveniently switching between the so many options of private channels, very little they know of the time when BTV was the only option available to the people of this country. Through the launch of Ekushey TV, Mr. Mahmud opened an entirely new horizon in the arena of news and entertainment. Today, access to the private channels is expanding rapidly into the rural areas after the urban



A S Mahmud

areas have been mostly covered. Sometimes when we are spending the evenings outside the cities where the only option is BTV, we realise how life would have been had the era of private channels not arrived. It is on those reflective moments, we come to appreciate better the contribution of people like Mr. A S Mahmud who challenged the status quo.

On a personal level, both Mr. S M Ali (we used to call him "Khasru Mama") and Mr. A S Mahmud (we used to call him "Noni Mama") are my maternal uncles coming from the bigger clan of families that have had the privilege of having literary giants like Syed Mujtaba Ali who himself was the uncle of these two gentlemen. If Mr. S M Ali had the intellect and journalistic

aptitude, Mr. Mahmud had the entrepreneurial ambitions and visionary instincts to foresee a time for Bangladesh when people's insatiable hunger for reliable news and objective reporting would have to be met from the dynamic private sector. Although driven in his professional pursuits, Mr. Mahmud was an unassuming man with a gentle demeanor. He was as respectful and affectionate to everyone, regardless of his relationship to them.

Mr. Mahmud was a man with a modern outlook towards life and living which enabled him to look beyond the conventional wisdom and traditional values to be able to connect to the younger generation. His ability to mix with people of any age and background at ease, explains the reason why he was so successful in assembling a group of bright young professionals for jump starting ETV.

Many of today's media stars in the private TV channels have had their initial training and orientation through the well developed professional culture that Mr. Mahmud was able to nurture in the ETV. Had it not been for the initial success of ETV, there would not have been so many entrepreneurs and professionals investing in and joining the private television channel industry which was still at its infancy stage at that time.

The first movers always take the bigger portion of the risk and face the accompanying uncertainty. The thriving private TV channels of

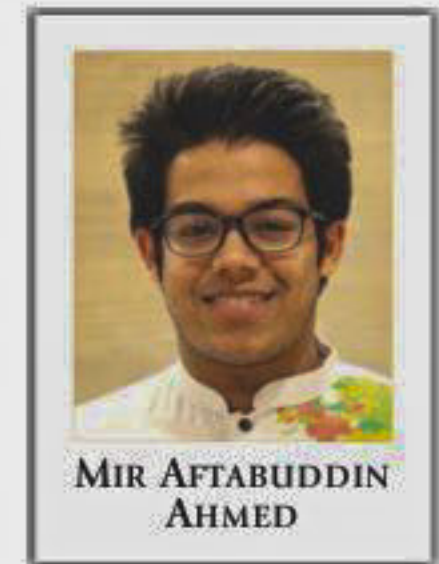
today have been rewarded most by the risk Mr. Mahmud undertook at that time when there were very few to do that. Unfortunately, the uncertainty entailing the risk and the corresponding price was paid mostly by none other than Mr. Mahmud as he spent his last few years in a foreign land far distant from the land which he wished to serve and which he felt betrayed him most. I guess for those dreaming big and dreaming much, the potent hard reality in a volatile country like us gets obscured in their missionary zeal to succeed. Well, then again, if there were no such risk takers, then never would have made any progress as well.

Today, Mr. Mahmud's success is in the pleasure made available at our finger tips as we surf from one private TV channel to another and can make choices as rival channels compete to get our time and attention. Hence, even in the lonely days Mr. Mahmud spent away from home and in "obhiman" with his motherland, the gentle breeze of freedom of choices and the era of enlightenment that he championed have continued to serve us well far beyond his times and much beyond his expectations. A big thanks to the pioneer and may his soul rest in eternal peace.

This article was previously printed in 2011.
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NATIONWIDE CONSENSUS ON CLIMATE CHANGE

Why we need it now



MIR AFTABUDDIN AHMED

GLOBALLY acclaimed scientific institution, the National Geographic Society, ranks Bangladesh as the most vulnerable nation to the impacts of climate change in the coming decades. We are observing the negative effects of climate change with the ever-altering nationwide weather patterns, the water stress in the low-lying coastal regions, regional sea level rises and the prevalence of cyclones in southern Bangladesh. It is therefore an accepted fact that climate change is surely a legitimate socio-economic concern, and needs to be addressed not only at the state level, but across the entire Bangladeshi diaspora.

In terms of institutional responses to climate change in the past decade or so, the Government of Bangladesh has taken various measures of mitigating the ever-growing crisis. The "Bangladesh Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan" of 2009 aims to reduce carbon emission throughout the nation, whilst promoting country-wide social development through eco-friendly mechanisms. Whether it be the "Green Banking" initiatives promulgated by the Bangladesh Bank or the formation of the \$315 million-worth "Bangladesh Climate Change Resilience Fund", there is little reason to doubt the government's integrity in tackling climate change. Nevertheless, the problem arises when the macro-economic objective of environmental protection is in conflict with the concurrent aim of achieving the kind of fast-paced economic growth, which Bangladesh is currently witnessing. In economic terms, the opportunity cost or trade-off for achieving increased growth levels seems to be sacrificing the needs of the environment, amongst other phenomena such as growing price levels and increasing regional inequality. Thereby, it should not come as a huge surprise when the government gave the green signal to the Rampal Power Plant project near the Sundarbans area. Prioritising growth over protecting our climate seems to

have taken precedence. Yet if one is to go by traditional methods of nationwide development, this entire Rampal scenario should not seem surprising or out of the ordinary at all. Rampal will indeed provide much-needed electricity to a large portion of southern Bangladesh. Investment, jobs and economic growth as a cumulative outweighed the feasibility of environmental protection. Yet, this Rampal case showcases what the society requires to truly address the problems of climate change. The Government of Bangladesh and

generations defenceless to a situation which has no clear-cut solution. The political deadlock we have will ultimately be resolved through inter-party collaboration. We have seen this in the past. Corruption and inequality can be tackled via public policy. But if we fail to imminently act to save the environment, then there will be no environment to protect. When scientists warn us of the erosion of coastal Bangladesh, of the danger Chittagong faces as a region due to climate change and the severe impact of atmospheric adjustments on food production, they are not joking. If we

businesses operating both with high revenues whilst supporting the protection of the environment. This means investing in renewable sources such as solar power and biofuel, a process which has been initiated in many parts of rural Bangladesh via public investments. It also means that manufacturing business and tanneries need to significantly reduce the discharge of impure materials to rivers, decrease overall carbon emissions and promote eco-friendly platforms.

To the credit of both the government and our businessmen, the process of addressing climate change through fail to realise the magnitude of these issues to their long-term profitability and sustainable survival, then it will be catastrophically detrimental to Bangladesh's socio-economic future. The people's opposition to the Rampal Project is based on their desire for protecting the Sundarbans. It is not a political issue; neither should it be. The Sundarbans is a national asset as amongst other things, it acts as a natural barrier to environmental calamities. On a broader scale however, Bangladesh needs a revolution in its efforts to protecting the environment. It starts at households when we decide to turn off the extra lights that we do not need. It matures when the entire business family in Bangladesh accept the need for investing in clean-energy projects, both as a matter of sustainability and economic viability. It strengthens when our government takes a bold leap and prioritises the environment side by side with its interest of generating growth and employment. Climate change is a problem that Bangladesh is not solely responsible for. In fact, one may even argue it is an entirely foreign creation, affecting developing countries such as ours. Yet it is a problem that we need to address. No foreign power is going to come and curtail the impacts of climate change on behalf of Bangladesh. Climate change is, in no uncertain terms, one of the issues that needs total prioritisation from all actors within the Bangladeshi diaspora.

More than ever before, Bangladesh truly needs to work towards a sustainable economy, one where profitability and environmental protection go hand in hand. Due to our poor political culture, the term consensus seems to be floating around the media these days. Let the citizens show politicians the power of such a consensus. Let us have a national consensus regarding climate change. The process for addressing Bangladesh's climate needs has begun, but it surely has a long way to go. It is time that we as citizens make an impassionate plea to one another and shoulder the responsibility of protecting a vulnerable Bangladesh from the devastating horrors brought forth by climate change.

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More than ever before, Bangladesh truly needs to work towards a sustainable economy, hand in hand. political culture, the term consensus seems to be floating around the media these days. Let the citizens show politicians the power of such a consensus.



Do we care enough about this?

PHOTO: STAR

the country's citizens surely feel that our climate is worth saving. Nevertheless, does Bangladesh consider climate change to be present in the list of our top tier problems? Would we go out of our way to reduce wastage and curtail pollution? One has doubts. And herein is where our problem lies. If Bangladesh does not truly realise the gravity of the climate change crisis, something that is to have an overarching negative impact on our day to day lives in the coming decades, then as citizens we are leaving our future

fail to realise this, then we might as well continue to prioritise short-term unsustainable development schemes.

Again, it is important to remind ourselves that the current government has indeed invested in sustainable platforms. But the state is not the only actor in Bangladesh's economy. We need the private sector to support eco-friendly projects and we need them to do it now. If profitability is a big question-mark, then we can learn from the Nordic countries of Denmark, Sweden and others, a large proportion of which have

policy instruments, legislation and practice has begun. However, the reach of these schemes remain limited to the bigger firms. Small and medium sized businesses, which define a majority of the Bangladeshi market, are unfortunately out of the picture when it comes to addressing climate change. Poor garbage disposal schemes, country-wide drainage issues and littering are simultaneously hurting the needs of the environment. In its totality, all the above are of immense macroeconomic consequence. If businesses and citizens

QUOTABLE Quote



ANNA JULIA COOPER
AMERICAN AUTHOR, EDUCATOR AND SPEAKER

The cause of freedom is not the cause of a race or a sect, a party or a class — it is the cause of human kind, the very birthright of humanity.

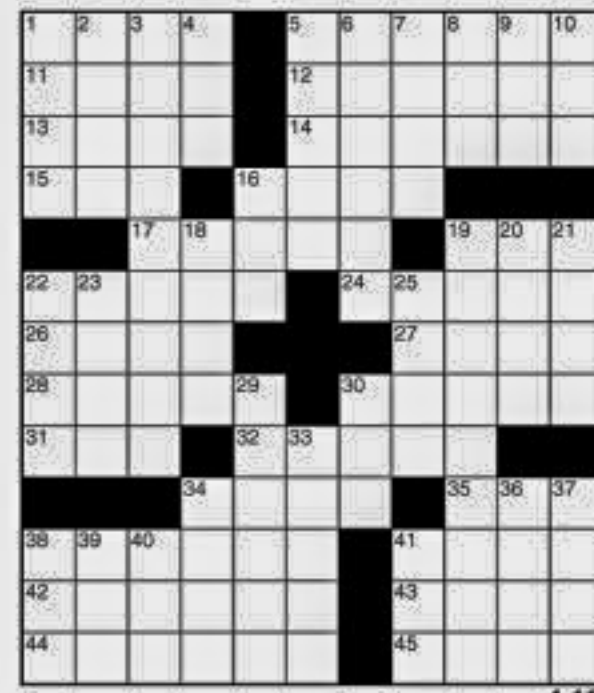
CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

- 1 Dollop
- 5 Be frugal
- 11 Dance party
- 12 High-protein grain
- 13 Kitchen fixture
- 14 Postal truck words
- 15 Simple card game
- 16 Move slowly
- 17 Senor's squiggle
- 19 Be decisive
- 22 Hockey need
- 24 Relish
- 26 Tortoise's rival
- 27 Fallon's predecessor
- 28 Wild, as power
- 30 Bookish, perhaps
- 31 Slight, in slang
- 32 Toss out
- 34 Defect
- 35 Diamond worker
- 38 Pacific nation
- 41 Opera solo
- 42 Electric eel's home
- 43 Spring period
- 44 Gizmo protector
- 45 Inquires

DOWN

- 1 Get bigger
- 2 Hot flow
- 3 Exhausts
- 4 Dramatist Jonson
- 5 Football team
- 6 Uses blue language
- 7 Frost
- 8 -- big way
- 9 Me, to Michel
- 10 Buddy
- 16 Antlered animal
- 18 Bakery worker
- 19 Musical intros
- 20 Tadpole's home
- 21 Hector's home
- 22 Storage site
- 23 Head for the hangar
- 25 Guinness of film
- 29 Rat out
- 30 Original
- 33 Quick trip
- 34 Disconcert
- 36 Fancy fur
- 37 Light touches
- 38 Light touch
- 39 Thurman of film
- 40 Big tub
- 41 -- mode



YESTERDAY'S ANSWER

DUPE SNAGS
UNITE PILOT
STEAMROLLER
TIM PET USA
SEALIN CROP
SNORT LENS
CEASE
PORK LEAPS
APES CANAPE
WIT SADERA
PATRIOTROLLER
PATRIA GOLLAN
WEEPY PADS

BEETLE BAILEY

by Mort Walker



BABY BLUES

by Kirkman & Scott

