

# Abdus Salam: The editor who laid the foundations of English journalism in Bangladesh

SYED BADRUL HAQUE

THE 44th death anniversary of Abdus Salam, editor of the English daily *Bangladesh Observer* (formerly *Pakistan Observer*), on February 13, went past quietly, unnoticed both by the press circle and civil society. This amounts to disparaging the contribution of a pioneering elder in the profession who had virtually laid the foundations of our nascent English journalism and brought it to a solid footing. It is more often than not we tend to forget our heroes, which in terms of historical perspective is an obvious fault line in our culture. Such anniversaries provide meaningful perspective to the legacies and challenges they faced in discharging their obligations to society.

Abdus Salam, formerly a member of the pre-Partition Audit and Accounts Service, joined *Pakistan Observer* as its editor after a stint at a teaching job at Jagannath College. He transformed the paper into one of the most influential dailies in the south-east region. The paper emerged as the flagship of our English dailies, its circulation soaring much higher than its peers.

He was ably served by star journalists like

Obaidul Haque, SM Ali (Founder-Editor of *The Daily Star*), Razia Khan, ABM Musa, Enayetullah Khan (Founder-Editor of *The Holiday*), Ataus Samad and Abdul Matin, amongst others. I count myself lucky to have started my career in journalism under an editor of his calibre.

Abdus Salam wore his intelligence lightly; his simple, casual way of dressing disguised a high intellect in his writings. He would never waste words or lose the thread of arguments in flowery language. He would go straight to the heart of the matter. The beauty of his writing was that he could explain issues that would not lend to readers so easily, in a language intelligible to average readers. To his job, he brought a sharp, probing intelligence and elegant prose that made him

one of the finest journalists of his generation. He was a voracious reader, contemplative and modest, whose idealism and gentle sense of humour left a lasting impression.

He was a cool operator, but this masked his passionate hatred against any injustice or inequity. He never hesitated to take up his pen to oppose any discrimination against the people by the Pakistani rulers. He was the first among the editors in former East Pakistan to court arrest and was jailed for one year for supporting the Language Movement through his writings. Beyond his calling as an editor, Abdus Salam held the post of the President of the Editors' Guild of Pakistan. He was also the Founder-Director General of the Bangladesh Press Institute.

Abdus Salam is a recipient of the Ekushey



Abdus Salam (1910-1977).

Padak for his contributions to journalism. He was combative and often misunderstood for his outspokenness—never shying away from championing the causes of the people of the then East Pakistan. The images he painted through his columns remain firmly ensconced in the popular imagination of his

readers.

SM Ali, the Founder-Editor of *The Daily Star*, rated Abdus Salam as one of the top three editors of former Pakistan, along with Altaf Hossain and ZA Suleri, and wrote separate pieces on them.

Abdus Salam's contributions to journalism, and to the founding of the National Press Club, along with co-editors Tofazzal Hossain Manik Mia, Zahur Hossain Chowdhury and Mujibur Rahman, were of great consequence. To remember his role in founding the National Press Club, it would be a welcome gesture to dedicate a section of the club in his memory. The Topkhana road in front of the National Press Club could also be renamed as Abdus Salam road, which had been suggested on the past death anniversaries of Abdus Salam.

Beyond his family circle, civil society surely has the responsibility to remember the legendary editor who served our society and the entire nation at a critical juncture of our history, with a commitment that he never compromised.

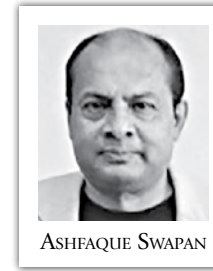
Syed Badrul Haque, formerly Press Secretary to the President of Bangladesh with a stint in print and electronic media, is a contributor to *The Daily Star*.

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## The strange kabuki of the trial of Donald Trump

*A preordained result portends an ominous political future*

"It is difficult to get a man to understand something when his salary depends upon his not understanding it."  
—Upton Sinclair



ASHFAQUE SWAPAN

THE trial of former US President Donald Trump in the US Senate had all the hallmarks of a

Shakespearean tragedy. The Democratic impeachment managers put together a chilling case proving Trump's complicity in the January 6 assault on the US Congress.

Like a Shakespearean tragedy, the end was pre-ordained—Republican partisan obduracy prevented the 67 votes against Trump that were required for impeachment. However, seven intrepid Republican senators voted according to their conscience and created history. Although Trump was acquitted, this was the most bipartisan vote for a presidential impeachment ever.

Here is an excerpt from a US senator's remarks: "American citizens attacked their own government... because they had been fed wild falsehoods by the most powerful man on Earth—because he was angry he'd lost an election... There is no question that President Trump is practically and morally responsible for provoking the events of that day."

Eloquent but also odd, because the speaker voted to acquit Trump. Those words came from Republican

acknowledge Trump's guilt would be committing political *harakiri*. The Republican base would eat them alive.

The Republican base, in fact, appears to live in a different world. *Politico* reports that a "Politico/Morning Consult poll conducted in the days following the impeachment managers' gripping presentation and video laying out Trump's role in the January 6 rampage... Republican voters got over any misgivings they had about Trump's role on January 6 very quickly. Fifty-nine percent of Republican voters said they want Trump to play a major role in their party going forward. That's up 18 percentage points from a Morning Consult poll conducted on January 7, and an increase of nine points

evoked the false impression that he was not an American and was possibly a Muslim," *The New York Times* reports.

"Few media stars were as crucial in making disinformation, false rumours and fringe ideas the right's new reality... Mr Limbaugh's willingness to indulge the paranoia among Mr Trump's most ardent supporters was especially powerful in misleading people to believe that bad news about their president—like his loss in November or his mismanagement of the coronavirus response—was simply made up by his enemies or the result of a nefarious plot (In the case of the virus, Mr Limbaugh called it nothing more than a "common cold")."

Limbaugh laughed all the way to the bank, Republicans won the



PHOTO: SAUL LOEB/AFP

from a follow-up poll on January 25, before the impeachment trial began."

There you have it. The Republican Party has gone off the deep end. It has morphed into a cult—the party of Trump. This did not happen in a day. For decades, Republicans have turned a blind eye to morally unconscionable behaviour for partisan gain.

In 2008, Republican presidential candidate and Arizona Senator John McCain chose former Alaska Governor Sarah Palin as his running mate. Palin combined ignorance with shameless mendacity. She claimed—I kid you not—that she was an expert on Russia because Vladimir Putin's planes flew close to Alaska. Later, when President Barack Obama tried to get his healthcare plan approved, she railed about "death panels" who would send elderly people to their deaths. It was a vicious falsehood, but so what? The grassroots were thrilled, and party elders looked the other way.

Take Rush Limbaugh, the recently deceased rightwing talk radio host. Over 15 million people listened to his show. Limbaugh's toxic, mendacious meanness makes Palin look like Mother Teresa. "He spun conspiracy theories about the supposed involvement of Mr Clinton and his wife, Hillary, in the death of the former deputy White House counsel Vince Foster, and spread lies about former President Barack Obama's birthplace. He... almost always referred to him on the air by using the former president's middle name, Hussein, a trope that right-wing commentators used to

presidency in 2016, and everyone was happy in the Republican Party. Until it all blew up with the January attack.

This attack is tearing apart the broader Republican coalition. College educated Republican supporters in the affluent suburbs are fed up with a grassroots untethered from reality, policy and civility. The Republican brand is tanking in popular American opinion polls.

Meanwhile, after a few days of uncharacteristic silence, Mount Trump has erupted. "Mitch is a dour, sullen, and unsmiling political hack, and if Republican Senators are going to stay with him, they will not win again," Trump said in a statement. "I will back primary rivals who espouse Making America Great Again and our policy of America First."

In 2020, Republicans lost the presidency and both the House and Senate. Just when they need to get their act together for the 2022 elections, a nasty intra-party fight looms.

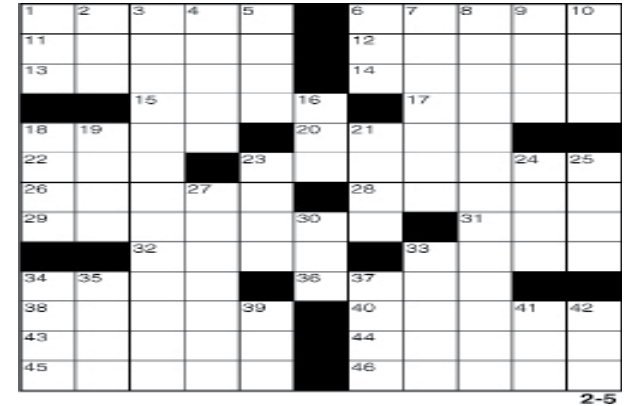
"Republicans are starting their life in the Senate minority mired in a civil war over the future of the GOP and former President Donald Trump's role in the party," *Politico* reported. "Trump's scathing attack on... McConnell... exposed rifts that could dash the GOP's hopes of retaking the Senate in 2022 if they are allowed to fester."

Republicans may well discover that political victory at any cost can turn out to be a Faustian bargain.

Ashfaque Swapan, an Atlanta-based writer and editor, is contributing editor for *Siliconer*, an online South Asian publication.

### CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

- ACROSS**
- 1 Ocean regions
  - 6 Ship poles
  - 11 Dominant
  - 12 Partners of radii
  - 13 European fashion center
  - 14 Craze
  - 15 Purposes
  - 17 Beer, slangily
  - 18 Smoke source
  - 20 Opposed
  - 22 French friend
  - 23 Like pigtail
  - 26 Plotting group
  - 28 Enterprise doc
  - 29 Try to equal
  - 31 Low die roll
  - 32 Trig function
  - 33 Army dinner
  - 34 Check mate?
  - 36 Sink problem
- DOWN**
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  - 3 Words on a dollar's back
  - 4 Aspect
  - 5 Reasonable
  - 6 Bottom-line figure
  - 7 Credit card, informally
  - 8 Words on a dollar's back
  - 9 Foray
  - 10 Neptune's domain
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  - 18 Watch part
  - 19 Mosque figure
  - 21 Newborn's need
  - 23 Scheme
  - 24 Really long times
  - 25 Colors
  - 27 Cave raider of story
  - 30 Poet Hughes
  - 33 Heat setting
  - 34 Sax great Getz
  - 35 Mator's foe
  - 37 Paper pack
  - 39 Young fellow
  - 41 Braying beast
  - 42 Belonging to thee



### YESTERDAY'S ANSWERS



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### Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Technical and Madrasah Education Division, Ministry of Education.

Office of the Project Director

Establishment of Polytechnic Institutes in 23 Districts.

Directorate of Technical Education, F-4/B, Agargaon, Dhaka-1207.

### Request for Expression of Interest for (REOI) Selection of Consulting Firm.

01	Ministry	Technical and Madrasah Education Division, Ministry of Education.
02	Agency	Directorate of Technical Education
03	Procuring Entity name	Project Director, Establishment of Polytechnic Institutes in twenty three Districts.
04	Procuring Entity Code	224273300
05	Procuring Entity District	Dhaka
06	Expression of Interest (EOI) for selection of	Consulting firm for preparation of plan, design & drawing, estimate and (of construction works of Polytechnic Institutes in twenty three districts).
07	EOI Reference No.	57.03.0000.044.07.022.20-126
08	Date	18/02/2021
09	Procurement Method	QCBS method.
10	Budget & source of funds	GoB
11	EOI Closing date and time	11/03/2021, at 2.00pm
12	EOI Submission place	Project Director, Establishment of Polytechnic Institutes in 23 Districts, Directorate of Technical Education, 5th floor, Agargaon, Sher-E- Bangla Nagar, Dhaka-1207
13	Brief Description of the Assignment	The Consulting Firm will Prepare Engineering Design & Drawing for the implementation of construction of Polytechnic Institutes in 23 Districts but not necessarily be limited to the following activities- I. Conduct Digital Site Survey, detail topographic survey, site analysis and prepare Master Plan including Landscaping. II. Prepare individual Architectural and Structural design and drawing for construction of Polytechnic Institute in 23 Districts as per requirement. III. Prepare Detailed design and drawing of Electrical, Mechanical, Plumbing, Sewerage System and Fire-fighting. IV. Construction works monitoring and reporting during construction period of the project. V. Prepare Detailed Estimate and Bill of Quantities (BoQ) for all components of the project. The detailed Terms of Reference (ToR) can be found at the following website: <a href="http://www.techedu.gov.bd">www.techedu.gov.bd</a> or can be obtained at the address given below during office hours 9.00 am to 17.00 pm
14	Required qualification, experience and capacity	<b>The consultancy firm should have:</b> a) At least 15 (Fifteen) years' experience in Architectural and engineering consultancy service. b) Up to date Trade License, Income Tax Certificate, BIN and VAT registration, Company's Incorporation Certificate c) Specific experience in similar Assignment. d) Availability of appropriate professional qualification and experiences among staffs, financial, managerial and organizational capabilities to perform the services. e) Description of similar assignments with experience.
15	Other Details	Consultants may associate with other firms to enhance their qualifications, but should indicate clearly whether the association is in the form of a joint venture and or sub consultancy. In the case of a joint venture, all the partners shall be jointly and separately liable for the entire contract, if selected. The maximum number of joint venture in 03(three) including the lead partner. Although the lead firm in the joint venture will provide the core expertise, each partner of the JV has to be reasonably qualified to take over the responsibilities and role of any of the partners that may fail to perform or withdraws.
16	Package No.	SD-2
17	Designation & Name of official inviting, EOI	Md. Jamal Hossain, Project Director, Establishment of Polytechnic Institutes in twenty three Districts.
18	Contract Details	Project Director, Establishment of Polytechnic Institutes in twenty three Districts. Email: <a href="mailto:23polyproject@gmail.com">23polyproject@gmail.com</a>
19	Particular instructions	a) The consulting firm will be selected in accordance with the provision of Public Procurement Act-2006 and Public Procurement Rules,2008 b) No application will be received after the EOI submission closing date and time. c) The procuring entity preserves the right to accept or reject all EOIs.

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Project Director  
Phone 02-58152148