

ISSUES OF NATIONAL INTEREST

# Who cares what happened with Apu and Shakib?



NO STRINGS ATTACHED  
AASHA MEHREEN AMIN

**J**UST when you thought you knew what the most significant news of the day was – West Bengal Chief Minister's rejection of the Teesta water sharing deal - the only agreement most Bangladeshis were really interested in to be honest, just then you are bombarded by something much more momentous. The sudden revelations of actress Apu Biswas regarding her secret husband Shakib Khan who had apparently been keeping his wife and baby boy hidden from the world and had refused to acknowledge them in public. Please don't pretend you don't know who these individuals are if you don't want to be labelled 'unpatriotic' or 'elite' by – well – whoever. Shakib is impossible not to know, no matter how superior you may like to feel. He is practically in any Bangladeshi channel you switch to – flashing his shiny ear stud and pearly white skin - traits that have left many a Bangladeshi damsel swooning. Dancing, albeit a tad ungainly (seriously, who is his choreographer?), with various silver screen beauties (including the lovely Apu), he is hard to not remember. Hence the jaw-dropping crowds accumulating in front of the TV screens in every office or home in town, to watch with shock and awe, the melodrama of a pretty actress tearfully declaring how she and her cherubic son had been wronged by the heartthrob of Bangladeshi filmdom.

If you are conspiracy obsessed, no doubt you would think that somehow this whole Apu Biswas-Shakib Khan saga, which, after oceans of tears, ended on a happy note (just

## I married Shakib Khan in 2008

Reveals Apu Biswas; Shakib to accept son, not Apu TV interview

Staff Correspondent



Actress Apu Biswas, who had disappeared for quite some time, has emerged and revealed before the media that she married co-actor Shakib Khan and they have a son.

The sudden revelation has caught the people and those in the film industry completely off-guard.

Like many celebrities, Apu also keeps a high-profile and the media and paparazzi follow her almost everywhere. However, she disappeared last year, leaving everyone baffled as to why she left her flourishing career and took a break from the silver screen.

like in the movies), was to distract public attention from the disappointing outcome of the Bangladesh-India summit that has so far promised some vague goodies to our country despite all the hoopla surrounding the meeting of the two leaders that included *hilsa*, *roshogolla* and *kalo jaam* diplomacy, among other things. "After all," the conspiracy theorists may say, "Apu Biswas had been living in a neighbouring country where the child was born – she could easily have been 'influenced' by certain quarters to break this story at this particular time."

But whether it was by pure coincidence or some highly complex manipulation, the whole episode indicates the ease with which people move on to the next juicy thing. And celebrity saga is way more important to the public than treaties with neighbours that will have significant long-term impacts on the country's development.

Now that this highly charged real life drama has ended with a good dose of uncharitable comments made by the public, what do you think has the public or rather social media networks, going? This time it's a pond in Khansama, Dinajpur that is spewing out what smells like diesel to some eye witnesses. Has Bangladesh struck oil? Will we become an oil rich country, dishing out dollars to foreign consultants and workers to build massive highways, malls and paving our footpaths with gold? Will we start planting date trees and importing camels to fulfil the dream of many, to become a miniature of the land of the blessed and free-flowing oil? Or is this another ploy by the powers that be to divert our attention from all those friendly deals, the benefits of which are as hard to grasp as the mirage of an oasis in an unforgiving desert?

Oh sorry the 'oil in the pond' story is just so yesterday – Apu and Shakib are still stealing the show with their 180 degree turnaround from

their stance only three days ago. While Shakib now says he said he wouldn't accept Apu as his wife because he was angry and of course they will now be together forever, Apu has suddenly decided that her errant, irresponsible husband is actually her hero, that she always knew he would come around (within seven days to be specific) and that they would live happily ever after (even though her sweetheart has not called her yet at the time of this breaking news). Some people may say this was a publicity gimmick like the time Ananta Jalil and Barsha announced their divorce with the 'Dhakar Pola' going public with nasty stories of his wife's alleged infidelity. Maybe now the thousands of Shakib Khan fans will be dying to see him with his off-screen love Apu without the characteristic movie-goer's boredom of seeing real life married couples doing those excruciating dance moves that depict the euphoria of young things in love for the first time.

Oh meanwhile, in less important news, the government will from now on recognise the Dawra degree of Qawmi madrasa as equivalent to a master's degree, and public officials, who represent a whopping five percent of the working population, will get a festival bonus on the occasion of Pehela Baishakh. So what if the majority of the working population and their families will not be benefited by this generous gesture and will be the ones paying for this new perk as taxpayers? We can always be happy for others and nothing is going to stop us from wearing our Baishakhi gear to brave the suffocating heat and overflowing streets to celebrate the Bengali New Year.

Which brings us back to more vital concerns: Wonder what Apu Biswas, Shakib Khan and Baby Khan will be wearing this Noboborsho...

The writer is Deputy Editor, Opinion & Editorial, The Daily Star.

# The malaise of antibiotic overuse

MUHAMMAD NABIL

**O**VERUSING antibiotics for illnesses that do not require such medication has been on the rise in Bangladesh, indicates recent icddr,b studies.

A recent study that examined the use of antibiotics by children under two years of age in Dhaka has shown that each child has taken over 10 antibiotic courses per year on average – an alarmingly high rate compared to global standards.

In the US, children less than two take 0.9 to 1.7 courses per year, notes the study conducted on eight countries in the global South (Bangladesh, Brazil, India, Nepal, Pakistan, Peru, South Africa and Tanzania). The study found that children in these countries have taken almost five courses (4.9) a year on average primarily to treat diarrhoeal and respiratory illnesses.

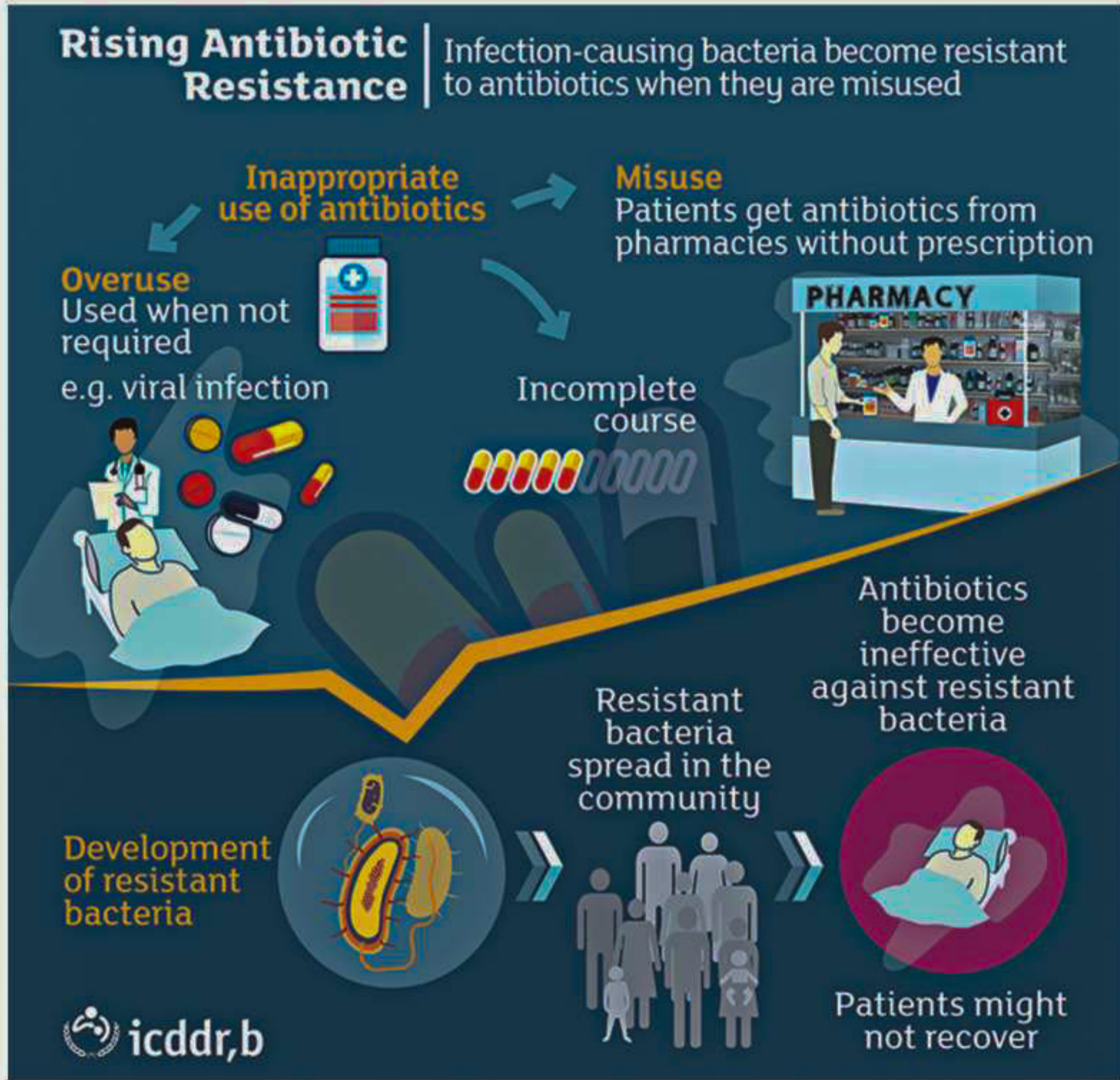
"It is a matter of worry that antibiotics are often prescribed without knowing the consequences it might lead to," says Dr Tahmeed Ahmed, Senior Director of nutrition and clinical services at icddr,b and a co-author of the study published in the *Bulletin of the World Health Organization (WHO)*.

It is now widely known that antibiotic misuse causes them to become ineffective because the infection-causing bacteria become resistant to these drugs – a phenomenon known as antibiotic resistance. Rising antimicrobial resistance (AMR) of microorganisms such as bacteria, virus, fungus and parasites is now a global concern worldwide.

Since the ill-effects of antibiotic misuse are less known, the WHO in its global action plan on AMR has advised improving awareness and understanding of antimicrobial resistance through effective communication, education and training.

"We frequently see in the community that patients bypass doctors and directly purchase antibiotics from pharmacies where it is widely available without prescription," adds Dr Mustafa Mahfuz, Deputy Project Coordinator at icddr,b and a co-author of the study.

In order to ascertain antibiotic consumption by consumers, the WHO has laid out surveillance guidelines which can be adopted at the national levels. This can help reduce over-the-counter sale of antibiotics.



When it comes to children, the WHO also has specific Integrated Management of Childhood Illness (IMCI) guidelines that prescribe antibiotics for certain health conditions, not all. "Using antibiotics in cases where it is not required can apparently cure the children but causes lifelong harm that cannot be reverted," adds Dr Mahfuz.

Poor enforcement of laws to limit access to antibiotics is one of the reasons that their abuse persists in countries like Bangladesh and Pakistan. The study also found that those who can afford these drugs have a higher tendency to overuse them.

The eight-country study, called the Etiology, Risk Factors and Interactions of Enteric Infections

and Malnutrition and the Consequences for Child Health and Development Project (MAL-ED), is carried out as a collaborative project supported by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the Foundation for the NIH and the National Institutes of Health/Fogarty International Center.

Another recent icddr,b study has found rising antibiotic resistance to bacterial pathogens which cause bloodstream infections – a condition when bacterial infection elsewhere in the body enters the bloodstream.

Dr Dilruba Ahmed, head of clinical microbiology and immunology at icddr,b, has studied over 100,000 blood samples from a

period of over ten years and tested them for the presence of pathogens and the incidence of antibiotic resistance in these pathogens. A high percentage of these bloodstream pathogens have acquired multidrug resistance (i.e. they are resistant to a number of antibiotics), according to the findings published in BMC journal *Antimicrobial Resistance & Infection Control*.

"The problem is that even if you stop using these antibiotics, the bacterial pathogens are not going to go back to their earlier state. They remain resistant to certain drugs which will hardly work for those patients," says Dr Ahmed.

She expects that the study will help healthcare professionals including private practitioners to make informed decisions while prescribing antibiotics. "A nationwide guideline for antibiotic prescription and its enforcement should be really helpful," she adds.

The study was funded by core donors including Bangladesh Government, Global Affairs Canada (GAC), Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) and the Department for International Development (UK Aid).

"Bangladesh is yet to bridge the knowledge gap regarding antimicrobial resistance," says Dr Mohammad Aminul Islam, associate scientist at icddr,b and a member of the WHO Advisory Group on Integrated Surveillance of Antimicrobial Resistance (WHO AGISAR). He is currently leading a number of studies at icddr,b to generate knowledge on AMR, considering it a One Health problem.

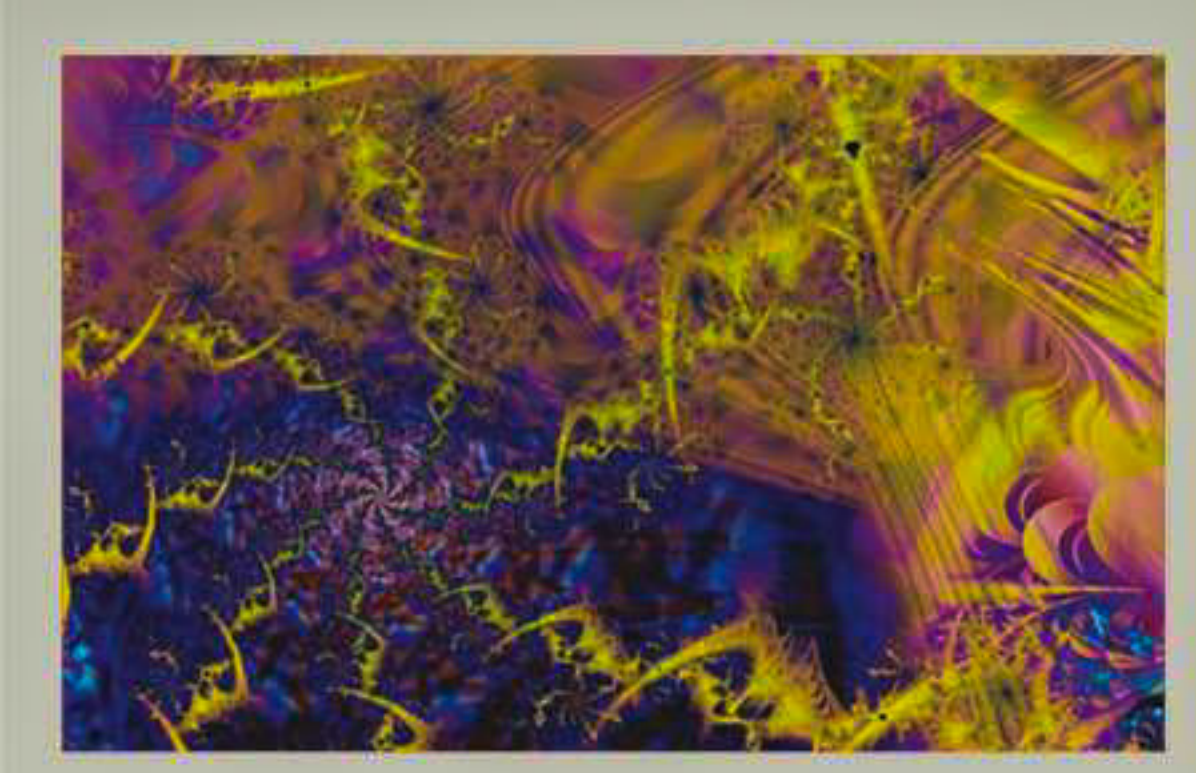
The WHO developed a global action plan and a manual for developing national action plans to address AMR in early 2016. It suggests country-specific actions to optimise the use of antimicrobial medicines in human and animal health.

"Bangladesh needs an improved surveillance of antibiotic resistance, regulation of the appropriate use of quality medicines, and education about the consequences of overuse," says Dr Amin.

Alongside ongoing research activities at icddr,b, tackling AMR in Bangladesh will also require that relevant policymaking bodies raise awareness around this issue and implement policies to regulate access to antibiotics in order to stop their misuse and overuse.

The writer is a communication specialist at icddr,b.

## A WORD A DAY

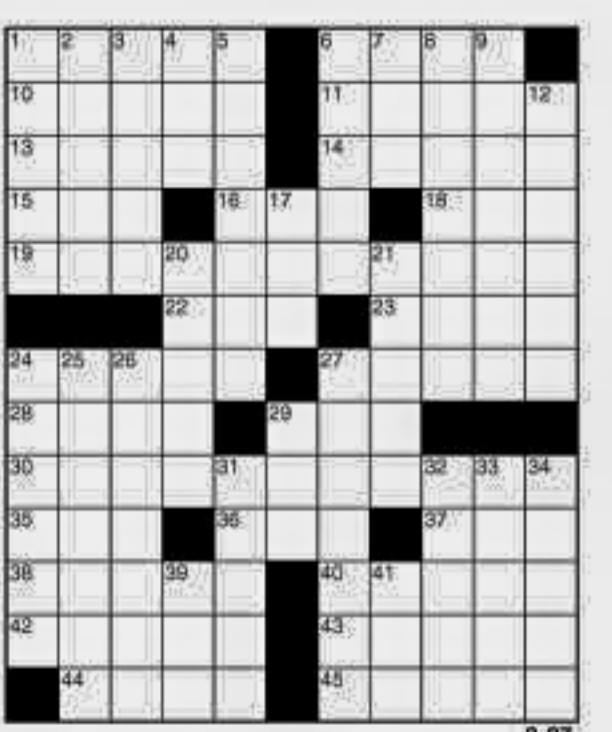


**R**AMBUNCTIOUS  
adjective

Noisy and lacking in restraint or discipline

## CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

- ACROSS**
- 1 Surgery souvenirs
  - 6 Clutter
  - 10 Custom
  - 11 Ticked off
  - 13 Pal, to Pedro
  - 14 Tier
  - 15 Dr.'s field
  - 16 Sch. support group
  - 18 Some crime evidence
  - 19 Getting rid of, as a hangover
  - 22 General at
  - 23 Leave out
  - 24 Church feature
  - 27 Counts calories
  - 28 Classify
  - 29 Wrestling win
  - 30 Clearing of dirt, as home plate
  - 35 Lyricist Gershwin
  - 36 Chick's mother
  - 37 Tell whoppers
  - 38 Great, in slang
  - 40 Writer Zola
  - 42 Eagle's claw
  - 43 Spoke wildly
  - 44 Say it isn't so
  - 45 Future flowers
  - 8 Old name of Toronto's Rogers Centre
  - 9 Deemed proper
  - 12 Preliminary versions
  - 17 Make knots
  - 20 Gladden
  - 21 On the way out
  - 24 Help
  - 25 Mean way to go
  - 26 Cloying sentiment
  - 27 Some meals
  - 29 Diner dessert
  - 31 Bogus
  - 32 Green hue
  - 33 Did clerical work
  - 34 Nourishes
  - 39 Heyerdahl's -- Tiki
  - 41 West of films
- DOWN**
- 1 Pillow covers
  - 2 Caravan creature
  - 3 Tolerate
  - 4 Outfit
  - 5 Plug
  - 6 La Scala city
  - 7 Memorable period



YESTERDAY'S ANSWER

FARR FLAG  
ROGUE ROVES  
AMEND ANITA  
CENTURY AMB  
END CENTRAL  
STATES HYDE  
ADIEU  
SPUR DAGAMA  
CENTAUR ROT  
ART CENTIME  
MIRTH EASES  
SOUSE SPENT  
DEAD TENT

## BEETLE BAILEY BY MORT WALKER



## BABY BLUES BY KIRKMAN & SCOTT

