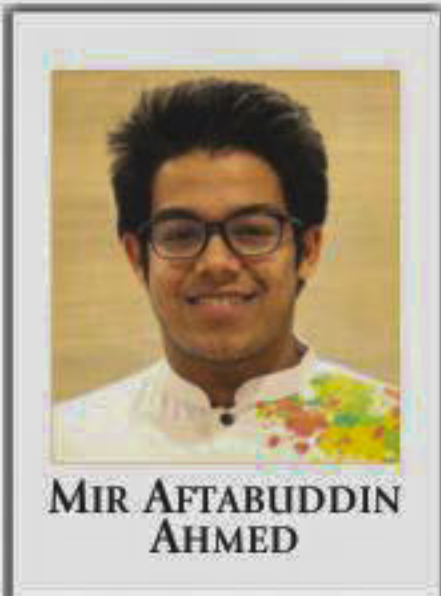


CHOLO NA GHURE ASHI OJANATE

# Goodbye to an icon



MIR AFTABUDDIN AHMED

If one goes on YouTube and types Lucky Akhand in the search box, a 30-minute video titled "Best of Lucky Akhand" pops up as one of the first results. Akhand performed his top five songs on a programme hosted by Boishakhi TV. Personally, I was quite surprised to know all five of these songs well. Being part of the so-called modern and rebellious generation of the 90s, Akhand's brand of music was more reminiscent of what my parents would listen to, rather than the Aurthohin loving and Nemesis devoted average Bangladeshi 21-year-old. Yet, there was something very special about Lucky Akhand and his music.

The 30-minute video showcased the wonders of Lucky Akhand in a single comprehensive and continuous musical soiree. Ranging from his brother's iconic *Abar Elo Je Shondhya* to Ferdous Wahid's *Aage Jodi Jantam*, the video reminded us that it was indeed Lucky who had composed these songs. And I say this with the utmost respect to Happy Akhand and Ferdous Wahid, that for whatever reason, Lucky Akhand's rendition of these songs in recent years, encapsulated a sense of soft-rock mysticism which continually enthralled his fans. If one can go beyond the 30-minute video of Akhand at his finest, and scroll down the YouTube search results, he or she may come across a much frailer, and dear I say, a gutsier Lucky Akhand. At the final stages of his battle against lung cancer, Lucky is seen wielding his magic on a harmonium, and with his dear friend Annisul Huq, singing Bangladesh's favourite *Abar Elo Je Shondhya*. Annisul Huq may be an influential public figure and the current Mayor of Dhaka North, but to Lucky Akhand, he remained a dear friend. At Huq's initiative, a forum to support cultural personalities styled Shipir Pasher Foundation was initiated at Dhaka's Westin Hotel on November 19, 2016. Again, the frail Akhand got up on stage,

and performed his beloved *Aage Jodi Jantam*. Seemingly struggling to increase his vocal range, Lucky used the genius of a musical mind that he had, to tweak his own song, and mesmerised a shuddering and captivated crowd. While we were succumbing to the realities of Akhand's health, the country's favourite composer kept on going. He sung, he sung and he sung. And we admired, and prayed to the Almighty, to give Lucky Akhand a few more years. Sadly, that was not to be. Contemporary Bangladeshi music has lost a gem, but Bangladesh in its totality has lost a national asset.



Lucky Akhand has left a legacy of unforgettable songs.

Akhand defined how public service could be done without being part of politics or national governance. Such was his reach. Whilst his greatness in music is well known, it is arguable to note that he was also a freedom fighter. A member of the 1971 Swadhin Bangla Betar Kendra, Lucky Akhand was part of a brave group of intellectuals who engaged in supporting the struggle for self-determination and freedom through patriotic songs and melodies. Today, we rightfully commemorate the power of George Harrison's Bangladesh in engaging

international support for Bangladesh, and we remember the dynamism of the political and military leadership of our heroes in 1971. Yet we forget to comprehend the critical role that the likes of Lucky Akhand played in keeping the spirits of our freedom fighters up in what was a dark and dingy climate of war. We forget that without families to converse with, without mothers to put their shoulders on and without fathers to seek counsel from, it was forums like the Swadhin Bangla Betar Kendra and brave cultural artists like Lucky Akhand who kept the morale of the young Mukti-Bahini

case, his amazing sense of patriotism through music, Bangladesh was liberated with the intention of achieving autonomy, democracy, self-determination and freedom. Bangladesh was liberated by people from all walks of life, ranging from farmers to politicians to musicians, and they surely did not do so with the desire to achieve a simple certificate and reap state benefits. And it shows why we, as people from all walks of life, can indeed dedicate ourselves to public service from whatever profession and corner of the globe we are in, to help achieve the dream of a great Bangladesh.

Lucky Akhand's selflessness was evident throughout his musical career as well. Celebrated artists like Kumar Biswajit and Samina Chowdhury remain indebted to Lucky Akhand for their respective career progressions. Akhand never chased stardom, neither did he crave attention from the media. He carried on and served this country's music industry decisively and earned the respect of people throughout the nation. It is for this reason that the entire nation, including 21-year olds like me and my parents' generation who fell in love with the Akhand brothers, will always remember his euphonious compositions and mourn the loss of a true legend.

Lucky Akhand was buried on Saturday with state honours. In a time when there is an ensuing tension regarding the role of culture in our society and what a secular Bangladesh should look like, Lucky Akhand's life should remain a timeless reminder of what people of this country can truly achieve. He was an icon of the highest order, whose love for Bangladesh and its music was showcased throughout his entire life. This country should remain indebted to him for giving it some of its most ageless melodies, but for also being a shining example of humanity and a true fighter from all senses of the word. As Akhand would himself say, *Cholo Na Ghure Ashi Ojanate* - this country hopes and prays that Akhand's journey to such an Ojanate is peaceful and transient like his gracious voice. Rest in peace, Lucky Akhand! And thank you for what you have given us.

The writer is a third year undergraduate student of Economics and International Relations, University of Toronto. Email: aftab.ahmed@mail.utoronto.ca

## REMEMBERING A FRIEND

MARCIA BERNICAT

SELFLESS, loving, inspirational: these are some of the words friends use to describe Xulhaz Mannan, a dedicated colleague, loyal friend, and fierce champion of human rights who was brutally murdered in April 2016. He was not just my colleague; he was my friend and part of the US Embassy family. Today, on the first anniversary of his death, I'd like to share the tremendous impact he continues to have on all of us who were fortunate to know him.

Selfless

Xulhaz lived a selfless life, working tirelessly to shape a society to be more diverse and inclusive. Whether at work, with friends, strangers or in the privacy of his own home, he put others before himself. Colleagues at the US Department of State and the US Agency for International Development regarded him with special affection. Even today, colleagues smile when they recall how Xulhaz worked for two years with a community organisation without compensation, recognition, or expectation of reward. The value he placed on human relationships far outweighed that of money. In fact, he shared money willingly. Generous in spirit and in kind, Xulhaz exemplified true Bangladeshi hospitality and selflessness. When he died, tributes to his loving nature poured in from around the world. A theme emerged – he welcomed newcomers to Bangladesh arriving from all corners of the globe, and took the time to introduce them to all that is wonderful about this country. We continue to hear from people whose lives he touched.

Loving

Xulhaz was also a loving person. He



Xulhaz Mannan

treated everyone with the highest amount of respect and love and showed great enthusiasm in all that he did. He loved not only his friends and colleagues, but the arts, flowers, and plants – so much so that he planted a banana tree in his basement! Xulhaz made those around him feel special without even saying a word. His actions, friendship, and almost never-ending smile instilled a sense of happiness and positivity that words alone can't describe. Xulhaz loved life, just as he loved those around him and his country.

Inspirational

Despite threats and verbal abuse by those who did not know him, Xulhaz refused to leave the country he loved or abandon the society he had fought so hard to improve. Bangladesh was his home. Friends share that during the spring of 2016, Xulhaz felt empowered and determined to bring about the change he sought. That courage lives on. Today, he inspires us to fight for what is right whatever the odds or consequences.

I'd like to close with one last word to describe Xulhaz: family.

Xulhaz is family. He was utterly devoted to his cherished mother, a friend and true confidant of his siblings, and a loving uncle to their children. As his other family, we at the US Embassy in Dhaka recommit ourselves to continue his efforts – and our collective efforts – to uphold human rights and make sure each and every person has an equal opportunity to fulfil their full potential in life, regardless of race, gender, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or personal beliefs. That is my goal, and I live every day of my life fighting for those I love: friends, colleagues, fellow citizens, and my family.

Note: Xulhaz Mannan worked at the US Embassy in Dhaka, Bangladesh for nearly a decade. He was killed on April 25, 2016 by terrorists misguided by an ideology of hatred.

The writer is US Ambassador to Bangladesh.

## Nuclear brinkmanship over the Korean Peninsula

FROM A BYSTANDER



MAHMOOD HASAN

POSSIBILITY of war in the Korean Peninsula has always been a source of deep concern. The peninsula came to be divided along the 38th parallel after the uneasy armistice of 1953, following the bloody Korean War (1950-53). Since no peace treaty was signed between the two Koreas, a state of war, technically, still exists.

The confrontation between US and North Korea (DPRK) began when Pyongyang started its nuclear programme and withdrew from the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) in 2003. The same year, six-party talks began involving DPRK, South Korea (ROK), USA, China, Japan and Russia. But after six rounds, the talks were discontinued in 2009 as no progress was being made.

Tension between the United States and North Korea grew out of Washington's conviction that North Korea's nuclear programme and missile technology is a direct threat to its security. The other worry for Washington comes from DPRK's secret sale of nuclear weapons technology to rogue states, terrorist organisations and even launching an attack on US troops stationed in South Korea. To make matters worse, Pyongyang has repeatedly threatened to attack mainland America with its intercontinental ballistic missiles capable of delivering a nuclear warhead.

Tensions rose further in October 9, 2006 when DPRK tested its first nuclear weapon.

That changed the whole security dynamics in the peninsula and led to an arms race, with America deploying advanced missiles and weapons systems in South Korea. So far, North Korea has conducted five nuclear tests – each being bigger than the previous ones.

North Korea currently feels threatened by the successive ROK-US military exercises – "Key Resolve", "Foal Eagle", "Max Thunder" – which began in March. Besides, South Korea is in the thick of political instability following president Park Geun-Hye's impeachment. Kim Jong-un fears that America may be conspiring towards a regime change in Pyongyang as well.

On April 15, Pyongyang commemorated the "Day of the Sun" – the 105th birthday of DPRK's founding father Kim Il-sung – amid a massive military parade, and threatened to test another nuclear device. That was a direct challenge to US President Donald Trump.

While tensions spiked between DPRK and US, Trump wasted no time to embark on a flamboyant showmanship. First, the US navy in the Mediterranean Sea launched a missile attack on Syria on April 7. Then on April 14, the US army dropped the 11-ton "Massive Ordnance Air Blast" (MOAB) non-nuclear bomb on Afghanistan to destroy ISIS militant hideouts. Clearly, Trump was telling the world that he was determined to take military action against wrong-doers (?).

The attack on Syria took place while Chinese President Xi Jinping was in Florida to meet Trump on April 6. Trump asked President Xi to reign in DPRK and threatened that if China did not restrain

DPRK, then "US will act alone". He then ordered warships to proceed towards the Korean peninsula.

Amid increased tensions and heated rhetoric, US Vice President Mike Pence was dispatched on April 16 on a 10-day trip to Seoul and Tokyo. Pence reassured both Seoul and Tokyo that US resolve to defend its allies was unshakable. Pence also declared that the era of "strategic patience" was over and that Washington was going to "redouble its diplomatic and economic pressures" on North Korea. He, however, did not rule out military options as a solution to the nuclear threat coming from North Korea.

Chinese Foreign Minister warned "war could break out at any moment" and "there would be no winners" if it did. Moscow is also watching the developments with deep concern. Both Beijing and Kremlin had warned Washington not to use military force on DPRK. Both have put their military on alert and moved them towards DPRK borders.

China is the closest ally of North Korea and is under tremendous pressure from America to find a "peaceful solution" to the current confrontation. But China has its own interests to protect. Though China and DPRK are close allies, relations between the two are not the best. Beijing can only apply limited pressure on Pyongyang. China can probably defuse the tension by helping to restart the 6-party negotiations.

If hostilities do break out, China will definitely step in – not to save Kim Jong-un but to save North Korea, which is ensconced under its belly. North Korea is a buffer between the Chinese military and

the American garrisons in South Korea. China certainly does not want a reunified Korea led by Seoul and its border moved up to the Yalu River. Besides, war will lead to hundreds of thousands of North Korean refugees crossing into China.

The UN Security Council in a statement has already condemned DPRK for the missile test on April 16 and threatened that fresh nuclear tests would be met with severe sanctions. It is perplexing that America and Russia are at odds at the UN Security Council over a new resolution on DPRK.

If US pre-emptively strike DPRK, it will definitely suck in China, South Korea, Russia, Japan, and others into a devastating war. Already the threat of war has had a dampening effect on the stock markets around the region.

Donald Trump wants, as did his predecessors, a complete freeze on North Korea's nuclear and missile programmes. On the other hand, North Korea wants to be treated as a nuclear armed power, retain its nuclear arsenal, have all economic sanctions against it removed and normalised international relations. Can these intractable positions be reconciled diplomatically? It would be difficult, but it is possible.

Donald Trump is now surrounded by a new crop of Neo-cons. And 'uninitiated' as he is in world affairs, a small miscalculation can indeed lead to a nuclear conflagration engulfing the entire region. It is a matter of great concern for the whole world that both these eccentric leaders are engaged in such dangerous brinkmanship.

The writer is former Ambassador and Secretary.

## A WORD A DAY



PORTMANTEAU  
noun

A word blending the sounds and combining the meanings of two others.

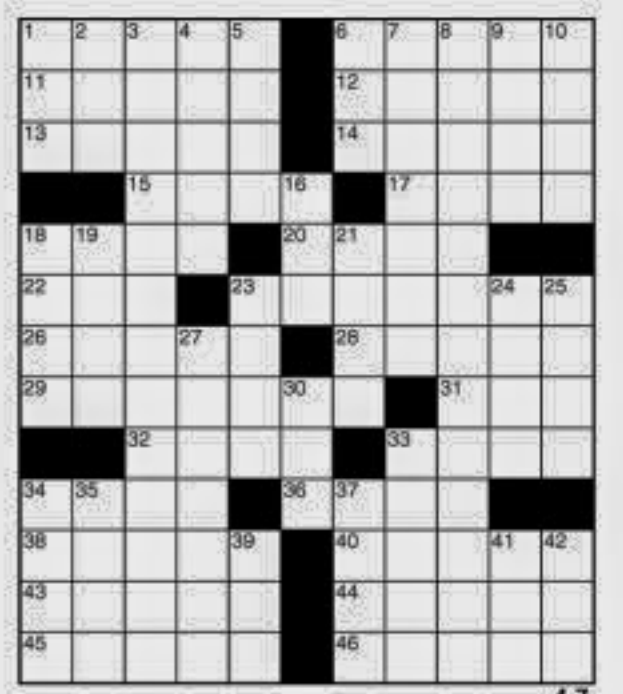
### CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

- 1 Barbecue rods
- 6 Lowly workers
- 11 Comic strip unit
- 12 Peer
- 13 Bewildered
- 14 Batty
- 15 Little devils
- 17 Tennis great
- Arthur
- 18 Sleep sites
- 20 Opposed
- 22 Clumsy fellow
- 23 Got to one's feet
- 26 Blasting stuff
- 28 Tony winner
- Worthy
- 29 One with plots
- 31 Six-pt. scores

DOWN

- 32 Tied up
- 33 Bar order
- 34 Blockhead
- 36 Postmark part
- 38 Oscar or Tony
- 40 Stately
- 43 Hardly wordy
- 44 Stay away from
- 45 Crooked
- 46 Some messages
- 1 Healthful resort
- 2 Trité
- 3 Like some homers
- 4 Abounds
- 5 Fresh reaction
- 6 Writing tool
- 7 Earth cirler
- 8 Novel way to think
- 9 "Candy is dandy" poet.
- 10 Tart fruit
- 16 Plopped down
- 18 Outlaws
- 19 Sweeping tale
- 21 Dark film genre
- 23 One or more
- 24 Take apart
- 25 Mosquito or gnat
- 27 Setback
- 30 Break off
- 33 Chef's need
- 34 Almanac fill
- 35 Has a mortgage
- 37 Med. sch. subject
- 39 Drops on the lawn
- 41 Tipsy
- 42 Mag. workers



### YESTERDAY'S ANSWER



### BEETLE BAILEY



WHAT ARE YOU LAUGHING ABOUT, SARGE?



TELL ME AGAIN WHEN YOU FOUND OUT THE GENERAL WAS CAMPING UNDER THE CLIFF WHERE YOU POURED OUT THE LEFTOVER STEW



### BABY BLUES

