

# Annisul Huq: A potential unfulfilled

**PLEASURE IS ALL MINE****SHAH HUSAIN IMAM**

ANNIS had embarked upon his first wave of infrastructural improvements. A childhood friend of his calls him seeking his help for a cancer patient, the mother of an army officer. The terminally ill lady was in dire need of blood transfusion at regular intervals to maintain a proper platelet count. But with road excavation work afoot for a project somewhere between Uttara and the Combined Military Hospital (CMH), Annis' friend wondered if the mayor could somehow help facilitate movement of the patient through the rough patch en-route to CMH. Annis saw to it that the patient—at a critical position that she was in—had as easy a journey as could possibly be arranged to her destination with a responsible human touch!

Such was the good Samaritan of a

mayor we had—the sense of loss has been that much more palpable for the denizens.

When the dengue storm was at its peak, he took up the challenge unfazed and hit the nail on its head in charting a remedial pathway. The ubiquitous massive construction work what with the soaking brick tubs or wet containers or the impromptu puddles breeding, harbouring the strain of mosquito that caused the disease, made the task monumental. That is where the issue should be redressed in the first place, albeit in conjunction with spurred-on home-stead hygiene and cleanliness.

The dramatic dismantling of an illegal truck stand in Tejgaon is a lasting tribute to his courage of conviction and unflagging zeal for public service. He was determined to exercise his mayoral writ, and in doing so he wouldn't balk at the machinations of vested, entrenched quarters he knew he was arrayed against. The perennial problem of powerful syndicates occupying public spaces of which the impassable Tejgaon area with its randomly placed trucks was a testing ground to roll back the scourge, and Annis came forward to do it. What took two hours to reach the other side of the gridlock was reduced to 15-20 minutes of passage. This happened by virtue of streamlining or relocating parking and removal of unauthorised structures.

At personal risk, he was held hostage for a few hours before being rescued by the law enforcers from the reactionary elements from what by then turned into wreckage. It was also once reported that road encroachment by some for-

**Annisul Huq (October 27, 1952—November 30, 2017)**

PHOTO: STAR

eign missions were cleared by his initiative.

Having been a media celebrity and a highly successful businessman he neither had the predilection nor any need for self-promotion. Public service was the purpose of his life; he was passionately devoted to doing good for others out of a deeply felt sense of social obligation and commitment.

From his early childhood he showed some outstanding traits: First

and foremost, he was single-minded in the pursuit of the tasks he set for himself; secondly, he had a certain cultural flair; even in his school days he would raise make-shift platforms to stage a play or a cultural event. That according to his friends, sowed the seeds of his future artistic, aesthetic ventures. Importantly, he had a panache for not sticking to norms; he was always breaking conventional moulds, looking to do something

creative and new for others around him.

He was very much the people's person. What is more, not only did he have humility, he was conscious of his "vulnerability" as well. He felt no barriers to expressing his vulnerability to the right person to get the correct advice and suggestions. Open to new ideas, he scrupulously avoided "I know-it-all" pretence.

Annis had a fantastic sense of humour. Given to belly-laughter; he used to laugh and have others in stricture rolling about!

Although in his previous incarnation he was a talker and entertainer—often on a serious note—but as a successful businessman and a mayor, he turned out to be a doer.

He was very much a family man who never forgot his roots and friends irrespective of their status.

This tribute to Annisul Huq will be incomplete without placing on record the plans of action he was implementing for the orderly disposal of the humungous garbage the city generates. Collaterally, one fondly remembers his beautification campaign complemented by pulling down the unauthorised signboards and billboards that were optically hurtful as well as physically risky.

We owe a debt to the high expectations Annis had generated by his short but effective mayoral stint to fulfil his unfinished agenda building on the footprints of progress he had left for his successors.

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## The Evolution of WMDs

**HUMOROUSLY YOURS****NAVEED MAHBUB**

“BLESSINGS only” is the blessing that has been the best blessing in the blessed season of WMDs—Weddings and Marriages of December. As an engineer I am black and white—at the wedding venue I queue up with all the others who have disregarded the last line of the invitation card. My turn comes and the person receiving gifts looks at me expectantly. I close my eyes, murmur a prayer under my breath and blow a little air (“*foo dewa*”) towards the dais where the bride and groom are sitting. I am sure the person murmurs something under his breath, the content of which are not fit for print.

It's not that I'm a cheap skate. It's just that I believe in a warranty period. I do give the gift, but after the first born or the fifth wedding anniversary of the wedded couple, whichever comes first. For that is somewhat of an assurance that the matrimony will not be seeking alimony. I vividly remember racing to the airport to give the newly-weds cash dollars as gift as they leave for their new lives in the US, only to later discover that the marriage lasted three months.

Coming back to the invitation card. There is now a small baby card accompanying the main wedding card (which is sometimes more than a card—a box, a stick, a bazooka....). “Apologies for not delivering the card in person.” About time! Given Dhaka traffic and the current volume of guests in today's WMDs, delivering the invitation card in person at every guest's house would require starting the process when the bride/groom is in diapers.

The practicality of today's WMDs don't end there. Gone are the Haji Muhammad Mohsin Chaan Mia Decorator's folding wooden chairs. Those who are old enough to remember, also remembers with agony that these chairs come with a set of fangs, for there

is no one who has not been pinched on the behind by these chairs. And statistically, there was at least one at every one of those weddings of yester-years—the ear piercing *dhopash!* One of the chairs would always give in—breaking down with its payload landing on the ground, followed by expletives from the victim you would never have otherwise expected.

As a nation tuned to forming associations for every conceivable reason, I am sure there was the VODCA—Victims Of Decorator Chairs Association, which successfully mandated the introduction of 3rd generation chairs with no moving parts—plastic if on

budget or fancy ones with cushions.

But no matter what, 20 percent of these 3G chairs are not lucky enough to get the warmth of that part of the human body where the sun does not shine. For the fancily decorated round table has ten chairs occupied by Mr and Mrs Omar, Mr and Mrs Akbar, Mr and Mrs Anthony, a handkerchief, a set of keys, a bag and a mobile phone. The last occupant is closely guarded by the owner as phones at weddings tend to grow legs and walk away. As I sheepishly come to this table to satiate my hunger, I humbly ask: “Is there anyone sitting here?” I am met with a series of non-verbal responses:

“Not you again! You cheap...not bringing gifts! You were right in front of us of at the gift queue!”

“Can't you see the chairs are 'occupied'?” As the adamant me still sticks around, the response from the settlers takes a verbal (and stern) shape:

“These seats are taken.”

No “sorry”. Interestingly, many a times, those four chairs remain occupied by Mr Key, Ms Hanky, Ms Bag and Mr Mobile who happily share their chicken roasts with the Omars, Akbars and Anthonies.

The roasts are consumed not by hand, but with forks and knives. Having *kachchee*

*biriyani* with silverware is like taking a shower with your rain-coat on. But gotta go with the times—can't really pour water on our plates to rinse them and then dispose the water off under the table as the evolution of WMDs have replaced soil with cement. And thank goodness for that, for heaven knows how many weddings I had come home from with drenched shoes. And what I also don't miss is the traumatic exercise of washing my hand after dinner where a small army of well-dressed men (the hand washing ritual is gender-separated) are literally engaged in hand-to-hand combat to take possession of that precious quarter of a *Nirala Ball Shaban* (soap) as we all stand in front of the idol called a drum full of water and a basin that is merely one step larger than a tea cup. And the cup-basin somehow always has constipation, for the basin is now three quarters full of water with barely enough space in between the pond and the tap to fit a hand. And the flossam of the pond containing *kachchee* fat, pieces of mutton bones and spit (contributed by the few fortunate to have been able to get their heads within proximity of the basin) puts the waters of Buriganga to shame.

Amidst the fray, the soap gets no chance to take a breather to clean itself in the water flow from the tap while changing hands. By the time I get the soap, I get as a bonus the remnants from the hands of 15 others. Disgusted that we, the well dressed and groomed, couldn't simply form a line, I add a small step between handing the soap over to the next fittest who has survived the battle—I “accidentally” drop the soap into the pool of oily-boney-fatty water. “Oops! Sorry!!” For once, I am a remorseless liar...

I have run out of my 1,000 word-limit. The evolution of WMDs continues. Meanwhile, go catch some *kachchee* with “blessings only”...

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### ON THIS DAY IN HISTORY



December 1, 1988  
**BENAZIR BHUTTO BECAME FIRST FEMALE MUSLIM PM**

*Benazir Bhutto became the first female Prime Minister of a Muslim-majority country having won the election. That time she was also the youngest elected leader in the Islamic world and the world's youngest Prime Minister.*

### CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

**ACROSS**

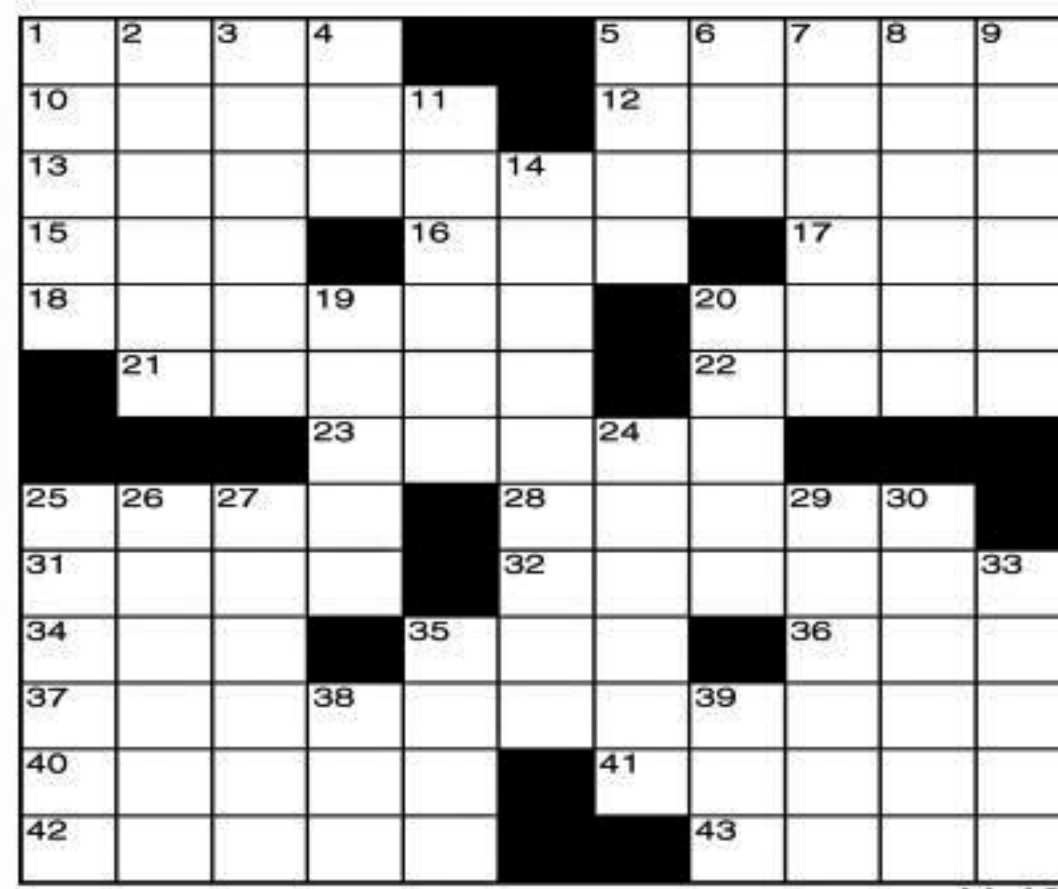
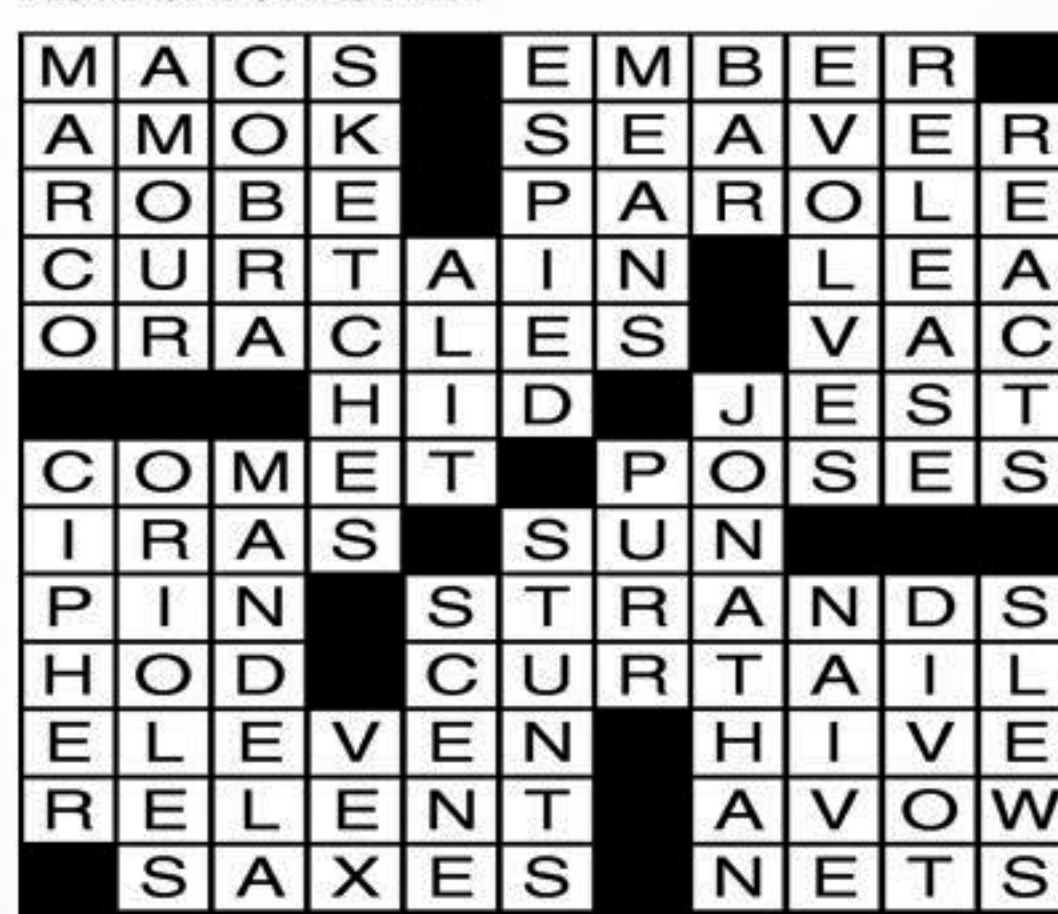
- 1 Whirl  
5 Lake makeup  
10 Euro divisions  
12 Unescorted  
13 Misleading clues  
15 Genesis woman  
16 “The Last Jedi” heroine  
17 Have lunch  
18 Like duck feet  
20 Bobsled's kin  
21 Dazes  
22 Commentary piece  
23 Printer's proof  
25 Checkout act  
28 Tirades  
31 Folder features

- 32 Address of “Dr. No”  
34 French friend  
35 Casino card  
36 Grenade part  
37 Humanitarian aid society  
40 Coffee add-in  
41 Mediation events  
42 Padlock holders  
43 Optimistic

**DOWN**

- 1 Threaded fastener  
2 Irritates  
3 Owing  
4 Utmost  
5 Cautious

- 6 Boxing great  
7 Get in shape  
8 Hire  
9 Sat for a spell  
11 Peaceful  
14 Lumber tree  
19 Sings  
20 Diving birds  
24 Least common  
25 Stiffness  
26 Phone feature  
27 Tolerates  
29 Elvis's birthplace  
30 Moves stealthily  
33 Nervous  
35 Prepares for war  
38 Topper  
39 Lot sight

**YESTERDAY'S ANSWER**

### BEETLE BAILEY



### BY MORT WALKER



### BABY BLUES



### BY KIRKMAN & SCOTT



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