

COMMENTARY

Published: 03:05 AM, 30 November 2019

Come Back, Annis Bhai

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Annisul Huq, besides the echelon of his mayoral designation, was extensively popular with millions of people across Bangladesh as a television anchor. He hosted a great deal of programs on Bangladesh Television (BTV) during the previous decades on various occasions which made him widely famous and applauded among the Bangladeshi audiences who used to watch BTV during those years. He was an unparalleled television presenter after Fazle Lohani.

The BTV programs Annisul Huq hosted at different times were vibrant and broadly entertaining by virtue of his own impressive accent, his eye-catching personality and his superb sense of humor. He anchored entertainment programs during Eid festivals and his spectacular physical presence on television screen on many more occasions had the power to hold everyone spellbound.

He also hosted regular weekly programs on BTV. I have myself watched a good number of programs anchored by Annisul Huq with my family members around and we all used to appreciate every bit of his anchoring and his outstanding conversations with actors, actresses, singers, intellectuals, politicians, authors, scholars and so on.

Annisul Huq had been a valued, prolific and evergreen celebrity since the beginning of his career and at the same time it deserves to be recalled that a number of cultural activists obtained prominence through attending television programs hosted by him. Moreover, he was a decorated business leader. A program to be hosted by Annisul Huq always had an exclusive jingle for the viewers which was no how to be missed.

He anchored several musical shows too on Bangladesh Television. A massive portion of my attachment with television programs and my thoughts on culture and entertainment were encompassed by the peerless performance displayed by Annisul Huq. I am sure I am not the only one who always speaks so high of Annisul Huq because I believe for sure there are countless numbers of Bangladeshi people who like Annisul Huq from their hearts.

An exhilarating, polite and workaholic person like Annisul Huq is rare to come across in a country like Bangladesh. He streamlined the trouble-ridden areas under Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC) overcoming all hurdles and his extensive drive to reduce traffic jams and clean up Dhaka city was praised by immense numbers of people from all walks of life. Annisul Huq won people's hearts by virtue of his integrity, his fearless approach to city administration and his crystalline image which is larger than life.

Annisul Huq was a successful businessman and an adulated cultural icon. At the same time his brilliant performance as DNCC mayor overwhelmed all concerned with amazement. His valiant actions at Tejgaon truck stand and some more parts of Dhaka city to liberate the city dwellers from traffic congestion, illegal settlements and other forms of perils commanded honor and admiration from all sensible citizens.

A mayor with such uncompromising devotion to his work is a person of surpassing valor beyond doubts. People of Dhaka city were grievously shocked at the demise of Annisul Huq and everyone

is missing him deeply. Such astounding popularity could only be conquered by a fabulous, monumentally impressive and heroic figure like Annisul Huq.

Annisul Huq was broadly loved by the people who knew him. He had dreams about a beautiful city and he had the power to transform his dreams into reality which is how he won a special spot in the hearts of people. It hurts us to see that our surroundings have become once again cumbersome with traffic jams, illegal truck stands, pollutions, outbreak of dengue, mismanagement, banking turmoil and many other hardships.

We wish Annisul Huq could come back and give his magical touch to the city to make it a better place. We need a superman like Annisul Huq who can remove all our woes and agonies. Annisul Huq wanted to make Dhaka beggar-free. He also wanted to free sidewalks or footpaths from hawkers and rehabilitate the hawkers in a separate market. He intended to shift Kawran Bazar from its present location but all these initiatives came to a halt after his death.

It's a rare example in our country to be so much loved by people irrespective of political ideologies which happened in Annisul Huq's case. He was a mayor of extraordinary worth and qualities. He cherished the vision of rebuilding and reorganizing Dhaka city. Annisul Huq widely emboldened the spirit of young generation with his mammoth works. His dedication, patriotism and unique traits have made him immortal.



Annisul Huq at The Asian Age office.

In a country of 16 crore people, Annisul Huq was an exceptional man scintillating with his own merit and greatness. DNCC was unbelievably fortunate to have him as its mayor. If all politicians of our country were devoted and transparent like Annisul Huq, it would have become a golden Bangladesh long back. There are many lessons to learn from his life. All political leaders of Bangladesh should work with unity moving beyond political divides for the country's advancement like he did.

At a time while the country is inflicted with widespread corruption, political activities devoid of morality, lack of good governance in the middle of which Annisul Huq appeared to be an oasis of ethical fairness and towering honesty. The cultural legacy of Bangladesh since independence is profoundly indebted to the contributions by Annisul Huq.

Today's youths should pick up constructive lessons from Annisul Huq's life-sketch. In the same way, people who are in charge of Dhaka city in his absence should follow his footsteps for the advancement and modernization of lifestyle in the capital of Bangladesh which was Annisul Huq's perennial aim and passion. His fame as a phenomenal personality has immortalized him while he acquired people's love through his service when he was alive.

Annisul Huq visited me at my office a number of times. I was personally very intimate with him. Speaking to him was always delightful. His words were all the time packed with his attachment to his duties towards the residents of Dhaka city which were often reflected through his activities.

When I went to meet him at his residence, he used to say, "My gem boy has arrived." I miss these words now when I see his pictures. We exchanged ideas about making Dhaka greener, smarter and talked about different socio-economic issues.

While concluding, the ending scene of the much acclaimed movie "Titanic" comes to my mind. Jack (Leonardo DiCaprio) was holding a piece of wood floating on the freezing water while Rose (Kate Winslet) was trying to revive him saying, "Come back Jack, come back." But Jack was dead by that time. In the same way all the well-wishers of Annisul Huq want him to come back. But Annisul Huq will never return. We pray for the eternal peace of his departed soul.

To borrow a few words from Michelle Obama, "It's like, remember who you always were, where you came from, who your parents were, how they raised you. Because that authentic self is going to follow you all through life, so make sure that it's solid so it's something that you can hold on and be proud of for the rest of your life."

The writer is a diplomat,
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