

Update : 2018-12-09 00:00:00
 City father missed everywhere



Annisul Huq had taken the responsibility of realising the collective dream of Dhaka City dwellers of turning the city green and humane. He took it into his own hands like a one man army after winning the Dhaka North City Corporation polls in 2015. Many supposed the promises that Annisul Huq made during the campaign would be forgotten, as it happens in most cases. But he did not forget his promises and upheld them till the last, making an enduring impact in the heart of millions of people. But while the dream of the city father was still in the making, the dreaming hero made an early departure on November 30, 2017. Before the dream could fully turn into reality, his exit left fans and peers heartbroken. Just a year has passed since, citizens and admirers of the energetic city father still have fond memories of him and harbour the hope of turning into reality the dreams of his mayoral lifetime. On the first anniversary of his death, city dwellers, peers, fans, colleagues of Dhaka North City Corporation remembered the deceased mayor and paid homage to him and his work both offline and online. The colourful personality had started his career as an anchor of magazine programmes of Bangladesh Television, which were popular among viewers in the 80s. He was also a successful businessman par excellence. But he will be remembered mostly as the city father as showcased in just two and half years of his stint as mayor. We are living in the age of science and information technology. We approach thousands things in a minute and forget thereafter, but we still remember him as he was worthy of being remembered. Though bodily disappeared, he is still a household name in the city. He was attached to different initiatives taken during his tenure. Of the many initiatives he had undertaken, some are underway, some half done, some completed and not surprisingly some died with him. The mayor started his mission of beautifying the capital by removing eye-sore overhead billboards that overwhelmed and distorted its charm for many years. He drew attention to another monstrous menace that not only disturbed but also threatened our lives by embarking upon the anarchic transport sector. For that he had to defy the reddened eyes of mighty goons of the sector, more often than not, backed by ruling party members. He wanted to introduce bus route nationalisation by picking 4000 buses in the public sector which would be brought under a several companies to end muscle-power and monopoly. As a pilot project of introducing the system, he launched “Dhaka Chaka”, a circular bus service which now moves in the capital bearing his lasting mark. But the process had stopped on his death. Now a ray of hope rises as the government has decided to revive the leftover

initiatives of Annisul Huq in the backdrop of the totally paralysing movement of the tender age school and college goers demanding safe roads in the capital. Assuming office, he took a lot of pain seeing the commuters suffering in the vital Tejgaon-Satrapata road, losing valuable time on the road, as truckers choked the vital road link using it as a parking lot. He went on the spot and freed the road from the clutch of unruly truckers. He was not one to yield to the whim of unscrupulous truckers despite that at a point he was under virulent attack by them which could have killed him. Hero never bows down to devils, so he returned to his workplace only after freeing the vital link to ease the traffic movement. The incident is ever fresh in our mind till date and we are proud of him for it. In terms of accountability and transparency, he never lagged behind like others; the tech-savvy mayor had innovative ideas to maintain accountability and transparency. He launched a mobile application by which a conscious citizen could let the mayor's office know of inconveniences faced by city people, as well as, they could get important information on different necessary issues like location of playground, parks, toilets, bus stops, passenger sheds, etc. But the question arises how did he want to make the capital green, clean and humane? The answer is attached to the action he executed in his short stint. As part of making the city green, he took a step of modernising 24 parks and playgrounds after fully retrieving them. For that, a project named "city covered with green" was undertaken, by which parks and playgrounds were to be renovated in such a way that every park and playground would have a kid's zone, women's zone, library, walkway with trees, etc. He planned to plant 500,000 trees, but barely could plant 70,000 trees. He also planned to plant trees on the median strip of the roads and install modern public toilets to ease the suffering of pedestrians on the roads. A city that he wanted to build would not allow wastes to collect anywhere, for which he planned 50 secondary transfer stations to better manage the waste. He dared to construct new roads, footpaths and drains with a project of tk 1,026 to make the city more people-friendly as the capital has grown unplanned. But he could not see his dream completed. Many stories could be told regarding his dreams, but many are in the process of vanishing like a project similar to Hatirjhil, the Jalnisharga at Diabari mouja due to the whims of bureaucratic red tape process. Besides, for implementing many initiatives we need someone like Annisul Huq to be in charge. Otherwise, like the initiative of recovering water bodies and creating 23 u-loops with a hope to ensure smooth traffic movement without traffic signal would be covered with uncertainty. If we want to remember him and his great works, we need someone like Annisul Huq as city father, who has vision of his magnitude and energy that never ends. Rashidul Hasan, The writer is an apprentice reporter of daily sun

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