

An old friend lost

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exposed to the world communities the brutality of the Pakistani occupation forces after his visit to the refugee camps in India in August 1971. "Sen Edward Kennedy (D-Mass) charged today that Pakistan had committed genocide in East Pakistan and called for a complete cutoff of American military and economic aid to Pakistan until the strife in the eastern part of the country ends," the Washington Post reported on August 17, 1971 about the senator's visit.

Also known as Ted Kennedy, the Democrat senator has been considered a true friend of Bangladesh since 1971, extending his support towards the country whenever needed. He also became a big critic of the role of the then US government led by Republican president Richard Nixon.

The Washington Post report headlined "Kennedy Charges Genocide in Pakistan, Urges Aid Cutoff" said, "Kennedy also criticised the secret trial of Sheikh Mujibur which is currently under way, saying the only crime he was guilty of was to win an election. The sheikh's [sic] election victory preceded the takeover of East Pakistan by the West Pakistani army."

"The senator said the secret aspect of the trial is an outrage to every concept of international law," said the report dated August 16, 1971.

Kennedy also criticised the US policy of supplying arms to Pakistan and appearing to side with Pakistan as "injurious to Indo-American relations", the report added.

Millions of Bangladeshis had to leave the soil during the country's Liberation War and take shelter in West Bengal of India as refugees.

Edward Kennedy visited the refugee camps as the chairman of the Senate subcommittee on refugee affairs. The report said, "...he would recommend an aid cutoff until there is a 'political solution' that would include the release of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, leader of the banned Awami League."

Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was arrested by the Pakistani military on the night of March 25, 1971 and was released from a Pakistani prison on January 8, 1972 following Bangladesh's victory in the nine-month long Liberation War.

When Kennedy addressed the media exposing the genocide, British newspaper the Daily Telegraph observed it, saying, "It is understood that the Senator...intends to make a major political issue out of the continuing American support for President Yahya Khan's Government."

"In his tour of refugee camps, he was visibly shaken both by camp conditions and the extent of injury and sickness among the refugees," said the Telegraph.

"He has been angered by President Nixon's decision to deny him access to official documents such as diplomatic cables relating to the Pakistan situation while he has been staying at the American Embassy in New Delhi," it added.

On August 17, 1971, the New York Times in its report titled "Kennedy, in India, Terms Pakistani Drive Genocide" said, "Mr Kennedy—who spent most of his time here visiting the squalid border camps that hold East Pakistani refugees, seven million of whom are said to have fled—said President Nixon's policy 'baffles me—and after seeing the results in terms of human misery, I think it's an even greater disaster'."

It is evident in the New York Times report that Kennedy had planned to visit "both East and West Pakistan and had obtained a Pakistani visa", but the Pakistani government cancelled his visit after watching his stand against the genocide.

After his visit to the refugee camps, Kennedy continued raising his voice against the genocide of Pakistan and strongly criticised the then US stand in favour of Pakistan administration. He continued his multifarious campaign for Bangladesh, even delivering speeches in the US congress.

In his congressional speech in May 1971, Kennedy said, "Whatever the politics involved in this region, I firmly believe that one of the human tragedies of modern times may be in the process of being created."

On June 29, 1971, The New York Times also reported that Kennedy issued a statement claiming that a hearing before his subcommittee had indicated that the US policy on military assistance to Pakistan was "misleading and contra-

dictory". With reference to Kennedy's disclosure of the contents of confidential messages from US diplomats in Pakistan, a report published on August 2, 1971 in the Newsweek under the headline "Bengal: The murder of a people" said, "Kennedy's clear implication was that Nixon Administration was seeking to cover up the magnitude of the Bengali tragedy."

Another report headlined "Bangladesh: Out of war, a nation is born" in the Time Magazine on December 20, 1971 elucidated Kennedy's strong stand in support of the independence of Bangladesh.

Under the sub-head "The US: A policy in a shambles" the report said, "Senator Edward Kennedy declared that the administration had turned a deaf ear for eight months to the brutal and systematic repression of East Bengal by the Pakistani army, and now was condemning 'the response of India toward an increasingly desperate situation on its eastern borders'."

A compassionate Kennedy was also found in the concluding two paragraphs of his statement after his visit to the refugee camps in India. H Leslie Kirkley compiled the statement under the title "The testimony of 60 on the crisis in Bengal."

"The tragedy of East Bengal is not only a tragedy for Pakistan. It is not only a tragedy for India. It is a tragedy for the entire world community, and it is the responsibility of that community to act together to ease the crisis."

"Simply humanity demands that America and the United Nations must accept the truth that this heavy burden should be borne by the entire international community, and not by India alone," Kennedy said in the statement.

In 1972, Edward Kennedy visited the newly born Bangladesh. He planted a banyan tree at the famous "Bottola" on Dhaka University campus.

VGF cards

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3600 VGF cards have been distributed through 12 councillors while 600 cards through local lawmaker Zaindra Lal Tripura, 600 cards through Municipality Mayor Mohammad Joyal Abedin and 200 cards among the freedom fighters and orphans. "We have issued the cards considering the economic background, social and poverty status of the helpless, landless and hopeless people," he said.

On the other hand, some cardholders alleged that the municipality authorities are also cheating with them by giving lesser quantity against a card as they are getting 8/9 kgs of rice on an average instead of 10 kgs against a VGF card.

"Even, the municipality authorities have not maintained accurate weight while giving rice against a VGF card and the rice is being weighed in a bucket, said VGF card holder Ershad Ali of Shantinagar area.

Ershad Ali, also the leader of municipality BNP, has been awarded the card as blessings from the mayor and district BNP joint secretary Mohammad Joyal Abedin.

Though 200 cards are reserved for orphans and freedom fighters, most of the vulnerable freedom fighters did not get the VGF card, deprived freedom fighter Mohammad Fazlul Haque said yesterday.

It was also learned that most of the cardholders are selling their rice just hundred yards away under the nose of both municipality authorities and local administration while a section of rice traders are buying those rice at a low price.

Wishing anonymity, an indigenous cardholder said she took rice against a VGF card of his brother who is a leader of Jubo League.

Municipality Councillor Mohammad Zuber Ahmed said most of the vulnerable families under his ward got VGF cards but sometime accurate amounts are not given due to negligence of his men responsible for weighing.

Asked about the financial condition of VGF cardholders, Municipality Mayor Joyal Abedin said most of the people of his areas are involved in politics and admitted that cent percent cardholders belong to major political parties—Awami League and BNP.

He also admitted that most of the cardholders are middle class citizens of the municipality and number of poor people is negligible.

Firearms seized from criminals' hideout in CHT

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bandarban

Security forces in a drive seized four arms and ammunition from a criminals' hideout in Alikadam upazilla of the district yesterday morning.

Other recovered items are four cartridges, four mobile phone sets, one set of olive coloured military uniform, one national identity card of a Bangladeshi national, two rubber stamps and some cash money.

Acting on a tip off, a special team of Alikadam army zone led by its commander Lt Col Faizur Rahman started the operation at Alikadam upazilla, about 8km away from the upazilla, on Tuesday night.

At one stage of the drive, they found the hideout in a Jhum house (temporary house in hilly paddy field) early morning. Sensing presence of the forces, the miscreants fled the scene. Later, they recovered the arms and ammunition and other items kept in the house, official sources said.

The ID card belongs to Smriti Chakma of Panchhari upazilla in Khagrachhari district while two rubber stamps belonged to Baishari union parishad chairman in Naikhangghari upazilla of Bandarban district and Dr Ahasanul Hoque of Chittagong Medical College Hospital, Chittagong.

Security forces suspected that at least four criminals had taken shelter in the house and they might have been involved in abduction of Naikhangghari PHP rubber garden supervisor Hefajetur Rahman.

Hefajet was abducted on August 16 and he was set free at Alikadam on August 24.

Nazrul

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through his powerful poems had inspired the people to fight against all kinds of bondage and injustice and repression during the colonial rule.

Nazrul's songs and poems were also a great source of inspiration for the freedom fighters during the country's liberation war in 1971.

The poet passed away on August 29 (12th Bhadro of Bangla calendar) at the age of 77 after suffering long from a debilitating disease.

Different government and non-government cultural organisations have chalked out special programmes to mark the occasion.

Dhaka University authorities will observe a daylong programme in remembrance of the great poet.

Students, teachers and employees, led by Vice Chancellor Professor AAMS Arefin Siddique, visited the mazar of the poet beside the central mosque and placed wreaths and offered feteha in the morning.

On the occasion, Bangla Academy will organise a discussion session at its seminar room at 11:00am.

Swine flu

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beds. The government has stocked anti-viral drugs and arranged training programmes for health professionals centrally and also in districts.

Patients with fever above 104 degrees Fahrenheit, cough, respiratory problems, runny nose, and pneumonia are presumed to carry the virus.

The H1N1 virus spreads mainly through coughing and sneezing. Touching a surface or object with flu viruses on it and then touching the mouth or nose may infect people.

Experts suggest people to keep at least an arm's distance from people with the symptoms.

"Do not shake hands or hug. Do not spit outdoors. Cover the nose and mouth with tissue paper when coughing or sneezing. Avoid touching the eyes, nose or mouth. Wash hands often with soap and water, especially after coughing or sneezing," they say.

Prof Mahmud urged people, who have been sneezing and coughing for more than seven days, to consult doctors and limit their interaction with others. Children might be contagious for longer, he added.

The H1N1 virus, widely known as swine flu, is a new contagious influenza virus first detected in the US in March. It consists of genetic materials from influenza viruses of birds, humans and pigs. A human body has no protection against it.

The virus has spread to 177 countries leaving more than 1799 people dead. Another 1.82 lakh cases has been confirmed up to August 13, according to the Global Alert and Response of World Health Organisation website.

Shopping time

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of electricity. As promised, they will keep air-conditioners switched off for one hour from 7:30pm during the whole of Ramadan.

They will shun excessive lighting and beautification at the shopping malls and markets, make best effort to use generator after the evening hours, and ensure use of energy saving bulbs at all the shops.

The shop owners also agreed to identify illegal electricity connections and inform the government about the power pilferage.

During the two-hour long meeting, the PM urged the authorities of the shops and markets to make area-based business plan for keeping the markets open on particular days of the week.

The businessmen hailed the government's daylight saving measure advancing the clock by an hour and assured the prime minister of extending all cooperation to the government.

They made the commitment to the PM that they will themselves monitor whether the promises made by them are being practiced by the shop owners at the malls and markets.

Following a suggestion from them, Hasina said the government's directive for keeping the industries shut during the rush hours in the evening needs to be complied with completely.

She further emphasised informing the people about the timing of load shedding by miking and on television and radio channels on a regular basis so that they themselves can be ready to pass the time during outages.

Urging the authorities of the shops and markets to maintain area based routine for keeping the markets open on particular days of the week, Hasina said, "This will help in reducing traffic congestion of the city as well as family members of you and your employees will get their nearest ones for some more time."

The PM lamented that it is a bad luck for Bangladesh Awami League that whenever it comes in power, it gets the country in a bad condition.

"When we were voted to power in 1996, the situation of gas and electricity was also bad. Making hectic efforts throughout the whole five years, we had been successful in increasing power generation significantly. But, during the last seven years after that, the situation again turned for the worse."

Hasina deplored that the governments in the last seven years were so reluctant towards electricity sector that they even did not develop power transmission lines.

"They have made the situation so bad that even though we are now able to generate more power, we will not be able to supply the additional power to many areas," she said.

The premier said the present government has found the electricity sector in such a sorry state that it has to shift gas from fertilizer factories to power plants to generate electricity.

"But, inshallah, we will be successful again in removing the electricity crisis. We just need cooperation of people of all walks of life."

The prime minister also reiterated her belt tightening call for government officials to wear shirt and pants instead of

suit at offices in the March-November period and not to take the air-conditioner below 24 degrees Celsius as these austerity measures will help save electricity.

About the prices of essentials, the PM said production of food-grains will have to be increased as well as regular smooth supply have to be ensured for better market management.

"There must be governmental intervention in the market. Otherwise, the market cannot be kept under control," Hasina opined.

One of the businessmen from Rajshahi division explained to the PM how price of a vegetable item becomes much more in city markets than the price at a rural market.

Hasina said she has already ordered the communications ministry to attach at least two compartments with every passenger train for carrying vegetables.

"I have been informed that compartments have been added to the trains coming from northern region. However, I will look into the matter."

Eva

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Administration was supposed to file a case under the Special Powers Act in association with the home ministry, it is yet to be lodged.

Anwar Hossain Munshi, joint secretary (Public Health) of health ministry, yesterday told The Daily Star that an autopsy is done after the victim's guardian files a case.

Legal experts said instead of compensating the poor parents of the victims, the government is shifting its responsibility onto them. It is impossible for many parents to pay Tk 40,000 as court fee for filing cases, they said.

"Manufacturing poisonous drug is a criminal offence. It is the government's duty to try the offenders, ensure withdrawal of the products from the market and compensate the families of victims. The government's failure to control and monitor the drug market led to such deaths," said advocate Alena Khan of Bangladesh Society for the Enforcement of Human Rights.

Every time, it is the non-governmental organisations that initiate legal fights to ensure the rights of the people deprived of justice, Alena Khan said.

"Since many cases are still pending with the High Court, it will not be possible to ensure justice to the victims' families, if the government does not take necessary steps in this regard," she added.

A total of 37 children were admitted to Dhaka Shishu Hospital and Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University with renal failure since June. Of them, 28 died.

In 1992, at least 339 children died after taking toxic paracetamol, prompting the government to cancel registrations of five pharmaceutical companies.

But the victims' families have not yet received any compensation and the Drug Administration is unaware whether any of them has resumed operation changing its name.

BDR mutiny

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under the military law since the BDR is not a disciplined force like the army.

The 11-member full court of the Appellate Division, headed by Chief Justice MM Ruhul Amin, is hearing the president's reference seeking the Supreme Court's opinion on whether the accused BDR personnel can be tried under the military law.

The court adjourned the hearing until 9:30am today. During his submission on the second day of the hearing, barrister Rafique-Ul Haq yesterday told the court that the BDR director general, who is the chief of the paramilitary force, is appointed from the army, not from the BDR, and the BDR members serve under his command. So, the accused BDR jawans can be tried under the Army Act 1952.

Rafique, however, said the trial of the case filed in connection with the mutiny can also be held under the existing laws since the case was filed under the existing laws. He added that the investigation officer of the case has even reportedly said the charge sheet would be submitted to the court in October this year under the existing laws.

The government has sent the reference to the Supreme Court, apparently deciding to try the accused under the army

10 drown

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night while five others yesterday. The rest travelling by the motorboat managed to swim ashore after the mishap.

In another incident in Sunamganj, two students were drowned when their boat hit a broken electric pole of the Rural Electrification Board in Noagao canal and got electrocuted before being capsized in Doara Bazar upazila Tuesday afternoon.

The deceased, whose bodies were recovered on Tuesday, were identified as Josna Begum, a student of class ten of Mitali Katakola High School and Md Nurul Islam of class five of Chandipur Government Primary School.

Both of them hailed from Chandipur village of the upazila.

Fifteen other passengers of the boat also sustained injuries while the two other students were feared drowned in the incident.

The body of two other students Abdul Wahid and Raju Ahmed remained untraced till filing this report yesterday.

3 killed

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Rab personnel Nizam Uddin sustained injuries during the gunfight. He was later treated at Savar hospital.

Locals alleged that the gang regularly realised toll form the factory and industry owners as well as local residents.

Our staff correspondent from Khulna reports that a regional leader of Lal Pataka faction of the BPCP was killed in a shootout between his cohorts and policemen at 2:30am yesterday at Dearha village under Rupsha upazila in Khulna.

The deceased was identified as Rahat Khan alias Nipu alias Zia, 32, son of Abdul Karim of the same village under the same upazila. He is wanted in six cases including two for murder and two for robbery.

Khulna Police Super Md Shamsuddin said the police received information that the outlawed outlaw was to hold a secret meeting with his cohorts at the Agradut School ground at Dearha village. As the police approached the school premises, Rahat and his cohorts opened fire. Police fired back and the ensuing gun battle lasted for almost 15 minutes.

At one stage, the gang fled the scene leaving injured ringleader behind. When taken to Khulna Medical College Hospital, doctors declared Rahat dead on arrival.

Police recovered a gun, four rounds of ammunition and some leaflets from spot.

An FIR has been lodged in connection with the incident.

Mamun

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agnisance and fixed September 7 for next hearing of the case.

The court directed the jail authorities to produce Mamun on the scheduled date. Mamun is at present in jail custody.

In her complaint, Ayesha mentioned that Mamun, director of Intex Apparels Ltd, had evaded Tk 14 crore in income tax from an income of Tk 54 crore from the company for the fiscal years 2000-2007.

According to the case, Mamun repeatedly gave "false" information about his real income and expenditure to the Income Tax Department and did not show his return on income tax. He also "used his position to conceal information about his real income", the complainant alleged.

Mamun did not submit statement of the money earned from the company to the NBR for the fiscal year 2000-2007, the complainant said.

Mamun, a close friend and business partner of former BNP Senior Joint Secretary General Tarique Rahaman, was arrested from his house at Banani DOHS on March 26 of 2007.

Later, police seized a .22 bore pistol and eight bullets from his house.

Mamun, an accused in a dozen extortion cases, was sentenced to a total of 23 years' imprisonment in separate cases for possessing firearms and ammunition, for not submitting his wealth statement, and for amassing wealth through illegal means.

Truck bomb

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The Taliban had pledged to disrupt the election, the second of its kind in the history of Afghanistan, the focus of Western efforts to implant democracy.

The Taliban denied involvement in Tuesday's attack. The militia, which ruled Afghanistan from 1996 until the 2001 US-led invasion, are known to exaggerate their claims as well as deny attacks involving civilian casualties.

"It was a truck bomb. In total 40 to 41 people have been killed and over 65 other people have been wounded," Wahdat told AFP.

The interior ministry said 43 "innocent Afghan citizens" were killed. A wedding hall and a dozen civilian houses "were totally destroyed" it said.

Afghan and foreign forces sealed off the site in the troubled city, which was an old Taliban regime powerbase, as they sifted through the rubble from more than 10 buildings destroyed in the explosion, an AFP photographer said.

Dazed and panicked Afghans, some covered in blood, joined security forces to search for victims through the debris, he said.

The killings made it the deadliest explosion in Afghanistan since a suicide car bomber killed more than 60 people, including two senior diplomats, in an attack on the Indian embassy in Kabul on July 7, 2008.

Kai Eide, UN envoy to Afghanistan, condemned Tuesday's attack and offered his condolences. "The disregard for civilian lives shown by the perpetrators of this attack is staggering," he said.

Although the West praised election day for taking place amid less violence than expected, officials said there were more than 300 incidents ranging from small explosions to rocket attacks and gunbattles that killed 26 people.

After less than nine months, 2009 is also now on record as the deadliest year for foreign troops in the country since the US-led invasion.

Partial results from last week's ballot gave Karzai a two percent lead over his main rival, former foreign minister

Abdullah Abdullah. Further results were due to be released later Wednesday.

Figures released to AFP by Karzai's campaign office put him on track to win between 55 and 62 percent of the vote, but with turnout at less than 5.5 million of up to 17 million registered to vote.

Analysts have said that such a low turnout -- one of the aims of the Taliban intimidation campaign -- could raise questions about the legitimacy of the victor, possibly leading to widespread unrest.

The neck-and-neck race between the two increasingly bitter rivals has been tainted with claims of fraud and ballot-stuffing, most of it in favour of Karzai, whose camp has been claiming victory since shortly after polls closed.

A bomb attack on Wednesday in Kunduz killed the head of the justice department in the northeastern province, Qari Jihangir, said police.

"The bomb was placed in his car. We're investigating the incident right now," said regional police chief Abdul Razaq Yaqoubi.

5 injured

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from public administration department, injured.

Another supporter of Mithu group was injured as police rushed to the spot and charged baton to disperse the clash.

Critically injured Ashis was rushed to the university medical centre and later he was shifted to the Rajshahi Medical College and Hospital (RMCH) in unconscious.

The other activists from both factions were admitted to the university medical centre.

RU proctor, assistant proctors and other teachers went to the RMCH to visit critically injured Ashis.

BCL RU unit general secretary Ayeen Uddin said action will be taken against those unruly BCL activists who tried to destroy the environment on the campus.

RU Proctor Prof Chowdhury Zakaria told additional police forces were deployed on the campus to avert further clash.

Ted Kennedy

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centre of our family and joyous light in our lives, but the inspiration of his faith, optimism, and perseverance will live on in our hearts forever," his family said in a statement.

"We thank everyone who gave him care and support over this last year, and everyone who stood with him for so many years in his tireless march for progress toward justice, fairness and opportunity for all. He loved this country and devoted his life to serving it."

Kennedy, also widely known as "Teddy," had fought brain cancer for more than a year.

The youngest of the Kennedy sons, Ted was left to take up the helm of the storied political dynasty after tragedy struck the family with the assassinations of President John F Kennedy in 1963 and another brother, Robert, while on the presidential campaign trail in June 1968.

As history has it, Ted was the only one of the Kennedy sons to not die violently. Joe Kennedy, a pilot, died in World War Two.

But he never fulfilled what many had seen as his political destiny, his White House hopes dashed after a series of embarrassing episodes.

In 1969, Kennedy accidentally drove off a bridge at Chappaquiddick in Massachusetts, killing a female companion, Mary Jo Kopechne.

The scandal deepened when it emerged that Kennedy had swum to safety from the car, leaving Kopechne, then waited until the following day to report the incident.

He was given just a two-month suspended sentence for leaving the scene of the accident but his presidential aspirations never recovered and lost the Democratic nomination to Jimmy Carter in the 1980 election.

Nevertheless, he made it big on the other side of Pennsylvania Avenue, winning easy re-election to the Senate throughout a 47-year tenure.

During an emotional speech at the Democratic National Convention in August 2008 during which he threw his weight behind then-candidate and now President Barack Obama, Kennedy described his lifetime com-

mitment to realizing healthcare reform.