

How shall we honour Ted Kennedy?

A proposal

His help to Bangladesh and its people both in the course of its creation and for close to four decades since then call for a much greater expression of gratitude from us. He deserves to be honoured by the entire nation as one of the greatest benefactors of Bangladesh. Only the highest honour that the country can bestow upon him, albeit posthumously, will be the fittest expression of our gratitude to this great man of our time.

PROF. HAROON-ER-RASHID, DR. SHAMSUL BARI, MUZAMMEL HUQ

THE death of Senator Ted Kennedy on 25 August 2009 is being mourned all over the world. The US President has described him as the best Senator ever in US history. His colleagues in the Congress, which he served for close to half a century, and the ordinary people of his country saw him as the staunchest defender of liberal causes in US history. His death is thus being mourned by people from all walks of life, but more particularly by the poor, the deprived and the most down-trodden in the US.

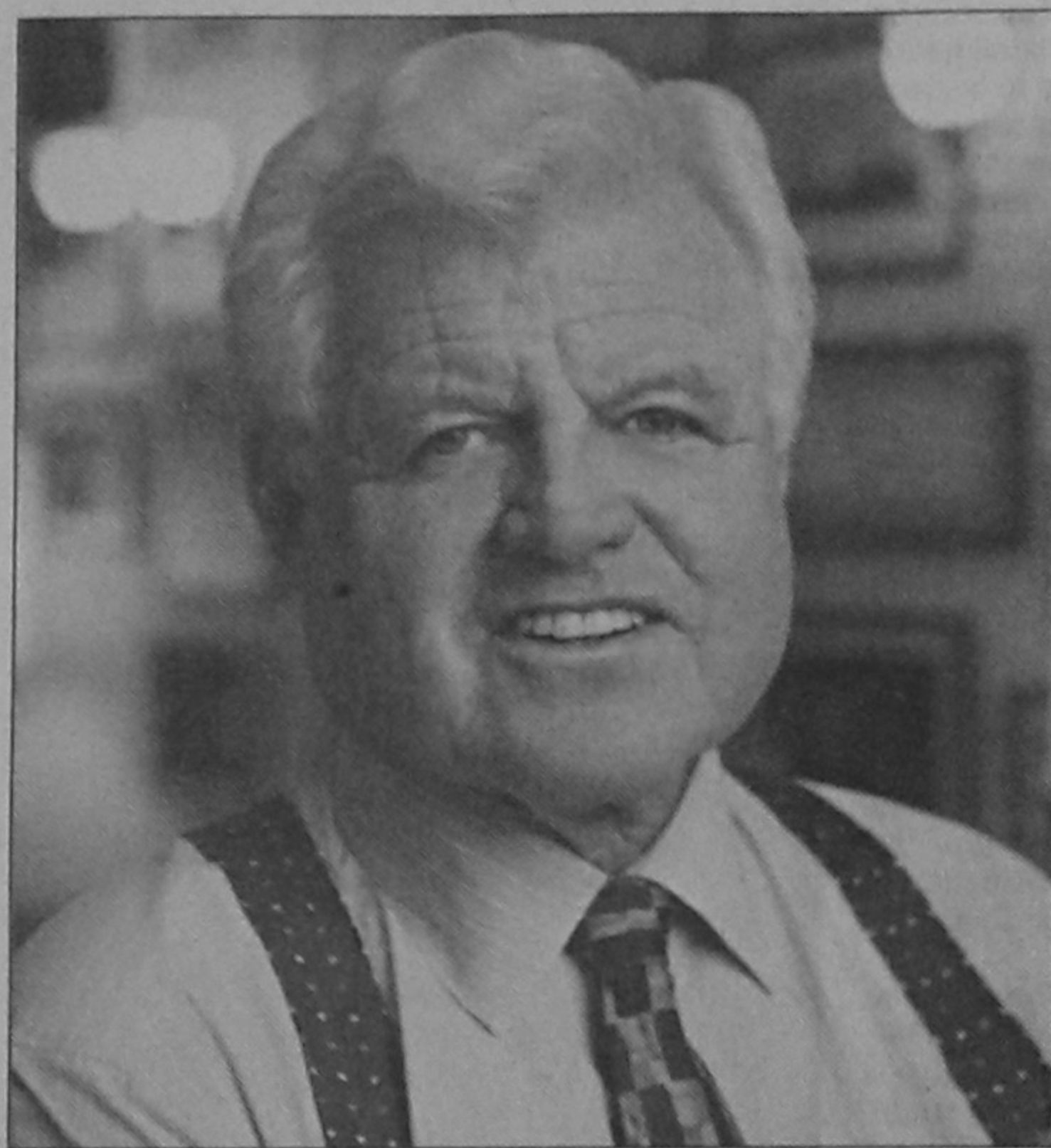
Why only the US? People all over the world have benefited from the support he gave to people's causes. He was perhaps the most loved US personality in recent history.

Among all the people of the world, it is perhaps the people of Bangladesh who have benefited the most from the support he gave to our cause in 1971. Those of us, including these writers, who worked with him and his staff in 1971, for the

independence of Bangladesh, remember the strong support he gave us in our efforts to create a favourable US public opinion to advance the Liberation of our country.

Ted Kennedy's visit to the refugee camps in India in August 1971 and the reports/statements that emanated from it exposed the Pakistani propaganda that all was well in Bangladesh. He was perhaps the first person to decry the slaughter as "genocide" and the trial of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman as a mockery. This made our task of winning over the American public to our side a lot easier.

More crucial perhaps for our cause was the fact that Ted stood as a rock to stop all US support to the war efforts of the Government of Pakistan. This led to the passage of the Saxbe-Church amendment to the Foreign Assistance Bill in the US Senate and the earlier passage of the Gallagher amendment in the US House of Representatives whose objectives were to cut off all military and economic aid to Pakistan, including the aid commitments already in the pipeline. The importance of these



efforts in hindering the genocidal war-efforts of the Government of Pakistan in Bangladesh cannot be overstated.

One can go on writing about many other aspects of Ted's crucial support to our War of Liberation. There are others who have already written about it and many others will surely write about them. But we think it is important that the government and people of Bangladesh do more than simply convey our heartfelt condolences on the death of Senator Ted Kennedy. His help to Bangladesh and its people both in the course of its creation and for close to four decades since then call for a much greater expression of gratitude from us.

He deserves to be honoured

by the entire nation as one of the greatest benefactors of Bangladesh. Only the highest honour that the country can bestow upon him, albeit posthumously, will be the fittest expression of our gratitude to this great man of our time. The government could consider bestowing such an honour through a special ceremony during the Victory Day celebrations next December to which members of his bereaved family could be invited. A declaration on this could be made at/before his funeral.

The writers, Professor Haroon-Er-Rashid, IUB (at the time with the World Bank in Washington DC), Dr Shamsul Bari, Chairman RIB (at the time with the University of Chicago), Muzammel Huq, MD, EDCL (at the time a graduate student at the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor), worked with Senator Kennedy during 1971.

Remembering Senator Kennedy

He was a bridge-builder, able to work closely with political opponents on controversial issues in ways that helped to create common ground. And last but not least, there was his tremendous humanity, his ability to care about others, never forgetting that politics is ultimately about making the world a better place.

NAZLI KIBRIA

ON August 26, 2009 in my home in Boston, I woke up to the news that Senator Ted Kennedy had died. It was of course not an unexpected passage; the Senator had been suffering from brain cancer for over a year. But as I heard repeatedly in the countless testimonials from well-known personalities that poured into the news, it was still a difficult moment for many Americans. After all, it is difficult to be prepared for the passing away of an icon, a towering figure in the American political scene who was at the heart of so much of the progressive social legislation, from immigration to health care, that has been passed in this country since the 1960s.

Those who lived through our War of Liberation in 1971 might recall the supportive role played by Senator Kennedy, who stood by the people of Bangladesh at a time when the Nixon-Kissinger leadership endorsed the policies of Pakistan. As a child at that time, I have a recollection of Senator Kennedy visiting Bangladesh after the war in 1972. I remember how my mother obtained his autograph on a dinner menu at a state reception given for him by the newly formed government of Bangladesh.

Twenty-four years later, in January 2005, my father Shah AMS Kibria was assassinated by grenade attack in Habiganj, Sylhet. Confronted with a BNP-Jamaat

government in Bangladesh that was doggedly unwilling to conduct a complete and fair investigation into the murder, our family launched a campaign for justice. Since I am based in the U.S., I contacted the offices of several U.S. legislators, seeking their assistance in my efforts to obtain a full investigation. Not surprisingly, many of my requests went unheard, pushed aside by the often harried staff who run these offices. But just a few days after contacting Senator Kennedy's office, one of his legislative staff members called me to offer assistance. I was astonished to find that she was already familiar with the details of my father's case; upon the instructions of the Senator, she had spent several hours reading up on it as well as familiarising herself with the political scene in Bangladesh.

A few months later, I was given the opportunity to meet the Senator. He was attending an event in Boston and I was told that he would meet with me before the event. After he entered the meeting room, we shook hands and he spoke fondly of Bangladesh, recalling the Dhaka University campus and a tree that he planted there in 1972. I spoke about my father's assassination and our futile efforts to ensure justice for him and the other victims of the attack. At one point I struggled to hold back the tears. He reached out to hold my hands and as his eyes filled with tears he nodded and said, "I know, I understand". I felt the enormous powers

of his empathy, his ability to make you feel that what holds us together is far greater than what separates us.

Later on, after our meeting, he took the time to personally telephone me to talk about the progress of the case. I was astonished when he remembered to ask after my children, even recalling that I had a son and a daughter and that I was struggling with the autism diagnosis of my son. I will never forget the moral support that he gave me and my family, and the prodigious efforts of his dedicated staff members to help us achieve justice.

For me, Senator Kennedy and his life of public service is inspirational in so many ways. I find myself thinking today of its significance, not only for how I live my own life but also in what I seek and indeed expect from my political representatives. Among other things, it has given me a certain vision of political leadership, of the way things can and should be in the world. He was a political leader of great privilege and power who never forgot that these were the very things that gave him the moral responsibility and indeed the obligation to look out for those less fortunate than himself.

He came from a political dynasty but yet he did not seem to take his own position for granted, working tirelessly to successfully build his own distinctive political legacy. He was a superlative manager, maintaining a highly efficient and professional team of staff members with whom he worked closely and with mutual respect. He was a bridge-builder, able to work closely with political opponents on controversial issues in ways that helped to create common ground. And last but not least, there was his tremendous humanity, his ability to care about others, never forgetting that politics is ultimately about making the world a better place.

The writer is Associate Professor of Sociology & Director, Graduate Program in Sociology, Boston University.

Beyond police's technical empowerment

As no police force can hope to perform its functions efficiently and effectively without enjoying a high degree of public support for the integrity of its operations, it is crucial to bring the police under a system of accountability that enjoys public confidence.

MUHAMMAD NURUL HUDA

MEDIA reports about the provision of high quality technical equipment for traffic and public order management of Dhaka Metropolitan Police are welcome. The issue that occupies concerned public mind is the quality of prompt and sympathetic service from our police that should logically follow such addition of gadgets. One may perhaps not be unjustifiably apprehensive about the concomitant impact of such capital equipment as in the absence of a deeper look into the core organizational deficits not much can be expected in respect of

service delivery.

This writer wishes to take such a look and as such feels that every organisation, whether public or private, can only perform well if founded on valid organisational principles. In the case of the police force of Bangladesh, these principles were ruthlessly violated over the years, resulting in corrupt, inefficient and highly politicised police forces across the country. Increasingly, the police was rendered to act as agents of the political executive rather than as instruments of a democratic state. The selective application of law against opponents, whether political or personal, at the behest of persons of influence became the norm rather than

the exception. People perceived the police as agents of the party in power, not as members of an organisation publicly maintained to enforce rule of law.

As the ground conditions that made the 1861 Police Act arrangement expedient have long ceased to exist, the police force of Bangladesh need to be urgently transformed from their colonial mould and organised on the basis of principles that govern standard, modern, contemporary police forces meant to police free societies, not natives. The key questions relevant are - what kind of organization will the police of Bangladesh need to meet the 21st century law and order challenges? Which model can be most efficient in bringing about a radical change in the existing intolerably high level of police-public estrangement? How can police be effectively brought under democratic control, yet ensuring its political neutrality?

As a first step, the responsibility of maintenance of law and order will need to rest unambiguously with the police. The police hierarchy will have to be made

responsible not merely for the organisation and the internal administration of the force, but also exclusively for all matters connected with maintenance of law and order. In short, policing operations will no longer have to be subjected to general control and direction from outside the police department.

Steps will also be required to rendering the police professionally competent, operationally neutral, functionally cohesive and organisationally responsible for all its actions which in turn will lead to efficient police operations, better decision-making, improved discipline of the force, and revamping of police accountability mechanisms. The role, duties and responsibilities of police will have to be orientated in a manner in which service function gets precedence and the prevention and detection of crime is seen to have a social purpose. The reform strategy will also seek to solicit voluntary support and co-operation of the people of Bangladesh.

Without enabling the police to function freely, justly and independently, there can

be neither justice nor an enviable order. Since the sole purpose of police is to enforce the laws of the land, without fear or favour to anybody, it is crucial to render it politically neutral. Such neutrality has been achieved in other countries by placing the police under apolitical control, thus creating a cushion between political expediency and law enforcement. In the absence of such a cushion, the persons of influence simply won't let police do its mandated duty.

As no police force can hope to perform its functions efficiently and effectively without enjoying a high degree of public support for the integrity of its operations, it is crucial to bring the police under a system of accountability that enjoys public confidence. Once the police are enjoined upon to perform a just and constructive role in the community, their work ethics would start undergoing a radical change. Being subject to law, they would strive to uphold and promote the cause of public interest and a jealous safeguarding of democratic norms based on rule of law and due process would be

their motto.

Can the police of Bangladesh be turned into a symbol of human security without organisationally gearing it towards that end? Is it possible to ensure operational neutrality of police? How can police be made effectively accountable? Can it be transformed into an instrument of law? What steps are needed to insulate the police from partisan political control? Is it possible that the empty political rhetoric of ensuring fair, just and humane dispensation at police stations becomes a reality? What should be done to raise the integrity levels of police? These are some of the critical questions that underpin the vexed police reform debate in Bangladesh.

If the police force of Bangladesh is to achieve all these, its first order of business is the enactment of a new Police Act to replace the present archaic legislation enacted in 1861. As it is, the Act is weak in almost all the parameters that must govern democratic police legislation.

Muhammad Nurul Huda is a columnist of The Daily Star.

Building our common future

At the start of the twenty-first century, it is also clear that the future prosperity and security of all peoples across the world are more closely bound together than ever before. The economic, climate and conflict crises that threaten the world's poorest people threaten us all. But working together, we can build a more prosperous, safe and sustainable world.

DOUGLAS ALEXANDER

OUR browser may not support display of this image. This is a critical time in the global fight against poverty. Millions of people have been lifted out of poverty over the last decade, thanks in part to debt relief and increases in aid. Bangladesh has enjoyed consistent growth since 1990, and poverty has declined by an average of almost 2 per cent each year since 2000.

But the global recession, the climate crisis and ongoing conflict and fragility in many countries threaten to turn back the progress we have seen. The global recession alone could trap as many as 90 million people in extreme poverty. Bangladesh has been relatively unaffected, but we know that

4.2 million more people are in poverty as a result of the global food price rises of last year. And there are 115 million Bangladeshis living on less than \$2 a day who remain extremely vulnerable should the downturn continue.

That is why the UK Government has published a new strategic vision for the way we approach international development: 'Building our Common Future'.

It shows how we will keep the promises we have made to increase aid to developing countries.

We will dedicate 0.7 per cent of national income to development assistance by 2013. By next year our assistance will be equivalent to 0.56 per cent of national income -- in line with the European Union's collective commit-

ment. And we will, by next year, have nearly trebled our bilateral and multilateral aid to Africa since 2004.

Half of our future global bilateral aid will be invested in public services. This level of investment will help children to go to school and provide other basic services such as health facilities and water and sanitation.

In the midst of this recession, we will help to protect 50 million poor people, in more than twenty countries, from the worst effects of the downturn. Because growth is the exit route out of poverty and aid dependence, we will also do more to give people economic opportunities -- for instance through our international growth centre, which will give developing countries access to global experts in

creating sustainable growth. In Bangladesh, UK aid will over the coming five years help establish 50,000 pre-schools and provide 4 million more boys and girls with 5 years of quality basic education. We will also ensure 4 million pregnant women are looked after by skilled birth attendants, preventing death or serious injury as a result of pregnancy and child birth.

The UK is also investing about £200 million over the next five years to help 6 million extremely poor people improve their livelihoods and food security. These include some of the poorest and most vulnerable groups living on chaws in the haor flood plains and coastal areas, as well as slum and street dwellers in towns and cities.

The climate crisis represents one of the greatest threats to poverty reduction. Climate change is already affecting Bangladesh, with devastating impact. If sea levels rise by just one metre, a fifth of Bangladesh could disappear under water, forcing 30 million people from their homes. By 2050, 70 million people could be affected annually by floods and 8 million by drought, with increas-

ingly intense cyclones hitting the coast. It is a bleak picture.

We will ensure that, globally, new and additional finance is made available -- over and above our aid commitments -- to tackle climate change, and we will use up to 10% of UK aid on climate programmes. We will invest in the knowledge and tools needed for adaptation, low carbon development and the protection of forests. We are already providing £75 million to support Bangladesh's national climate change strategy for adaptation and mitigation. This will help communities prepare better for disasters and will strengthen the early warning systems that already save so many lives.

The Bangladesh Government's strategy is expected to help 15 million people over the next 5 years; providing protection from floods and cyclones by building shelters and embankments, and helping them develop crops that are saline and arsenic tolerant.

One third of the world's poorest people live in conflict-affected or fragile countries. So at least half of all the UK's new direct aid will go to those

countries. We will help provide security and access to justice as basic services; we will do more to protect women from violence; and we will create jobs benefiting 7.5 million people.

Strengthening access to justice for the poorest, and helping people get the skills and opportunities they need to earn incomes, are two ways in which UK aid will support Bangladesh in the coming period. With other partners, including UNDP, and the European Commission, we aim to help 10 million people get access to community legal services over the next five years. And with IFC, we will help create 2 million additional jobs.

We will work more with international institutions like the United Nations, the European Union and the World Bank in all of these areas -- but we will demand more of them too. In Bangladesh, we will work in closer coordination and cooperation with our partners -- government, international organisations and non-government organisations -- to ensure our collective effort is efficient and effective, and ultimately helps



Succour to the cyclone affected.

Bangladesh and all its citizens.

We will work harder than ever to ensure that every pound of UK aid contributes towards direct and tangible results -- fulfilling our pledges on aid effectiveness made in the Paris Declaration and the Accra Agenda for Action, and pushing others to do the same.

We remain committed in the fight against global poverty because it is morally right. At the start of the twenty-first

century, it is also clear that the future prosperity and security of all peoples across the world are more closely bound together than ever before.

The economic, climate and conflict crises that threaten the world's poorest people threaten us all. But working together, we can build a more prosperous, safe and sustainable world.

The writer is UK Secretary of State for International Development.