

Remembering Sheikh Mujib- A Young and Dynamic Minister

An autonomous type corporate body for the development of small-scale industry was a novel idea in those days. After Sheikh Mujib made a beginning with this successful experiment in East Pakistan, West Pakistan followed suit and created the West Pakistan Small Industries Corporation.

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With the fall of United Front Government of Abu Hossain Sarkar in 1956, Ataur Rahman Khan formed the Awami League Government in East Pakistan and Sheikh Mujib, Captain Monsur Ali, Manoranjan Dhar and few other prominent Awami League leaders joined the Cabinet of Ataur Rahman Khan. Sheikh Mujib was given the portfolio of Commerce, Labour and Industries, popularly known as the Department of C L & I which also looked after power and electricity, there being no separate department for power or electricity in the then East Pakistan Government.

I was then working as Under Secretary, Department of Finance, having joined there a year earlier. I had known Sheikh Mujib as a fire-brand politician who spent years in jail for his views as an opposition activist, but had no personal acquaintance with him.

During that period, Dhaka Electric Supply Company was in private hands and was managed by Messrs Octavius Steel, a British Company with their main office in Chittagong and the commercial office of Dhaka Electric Supply located on Abdul Gani Road adjacent to the East Pakistan Secretariat. I got the first taste of Sheikh Mujib's bold decision-making style when one day, while traveling to the Secretariat in a rickshaw, I noticed a contingent of armed constables surrounding the commercial office of Dhaka Electric Supply and on reaching office learnt that Sheikh Mujib, in one sweep, has taken over management of the Dhaka Electric Supply from Messrs Octavius Steel on allegations of grave mismanagement and that I have been



Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in a Cabinet meeting with the Governor of East Pakistan Sher-e-Bangla A.K. Fazlul Huq and the Chief Minister Ataur Rahman Khan (June 7, 1957)

entrusted with the responsibility of making detailed investigation into the charges of mismanagement and corruption. It dawned on me that it was not for nothing that Sheikh Mujib had earned the reputation as a fire-brand politician who clearly knew his priorities. I was more than convinced that more such surprises are in the

offing. A few days after this episode, I was promoted as Additional Deputy Commissioner and was posted to Rangpur where I spent only six months and again was posted back to the Secretariat as Financial Adviser (Development) and Deputy Secretary, Department of Finance, a key position

created by the Government to bring sanctioning of all development expenditure under one officer in the Dept. of Finance. In this capacity, I was also responsible to handle all loan negotiations with the Government of Pakistan including release of developmental funds from the center to the provincial government.

Loan negotiation with the Ministry of Finance, Government of Pakistan, was an uphill task and obtaining release of funds was a nightmare. It was a frustrating experience for a young officer like me to take the long journey to Karachi almost every month and return most of the time empty handed.

One morning, as I was looking into urgent message from the Government of Pakistan, I got the surprise of my life with the contents of a sanctioning letter which said that the Ministry of Finance was pleased to sanction Rs. 1 crore for a Film Development Corporation and another Rs. 1 crore for creating of corporation for the development of small scale industry in East Pakistan.

It was quite clear that some unseen hands had worked behind the scene to obtain overnight sanction and simultaneous release of funds for two corporate bodies about which neither the Planning Department nor the Dept. of Finance were aware of. To me it was a miracle and I knew that none other than Sheikh Mujib was capable of performing such miracles.

The film industry in East Pakistan during that period was non-existent. One or two bold producers have tried in vain with Bengali production but with little or no success. Sheikh Mujib realized that for production of good Bengali films, the industry needed government patronage and support, needed production facilities and well-equipped studios etc. without which the field would remain wide open for Urdu films from West Pakistan.

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শুধু শোকে নও, আছো শক্তিতে
প্রেরণায়-জাগরণে-মুক্তিতে

১৫ আগস্ট জাতীয় শোক দিবসে জাতির জনক বঙ্গবন্ধু শেখ মুজিবুর রহমান
ও তাঁর পরিবারের সকল শহিদের প্রতি বিকাশ-এর গভীর প্রদ্বাঙ্গিলি

বিকাশ 

