

## Treatment stops as fund blocked

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tance fund, and Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Memorial Trust fund. Hasina had opened mainly to finance education of 1,200 orphans and poor children on a permanent basis, according to officials of the funds.

The trust fund has also been frozen.

The maimed, mostly women, are passing a painful life with most of them having several hundred splinters in their bodies. They will have to be under treatment for life.

The victims said they used to get help from Hasina permanently but with the arrest of the former prime minister that has stopped.

An official of the Aug 21 fund told The Daily Star yesterday, "We were giving over Tk two lakh to at least 35 maimed victims every month. But after the arrest of Sheikh Hasina, we could not help them."

There is still more than Tk 1 crore in the two accounts for assisting the grenade victims, he said preferring anonymity.

"Even if the accounts were not frozen, we would not be able to operate those due to arrest of the AL president and its general secretary. "Operation of these accounts require approval of the AL Central Working Committee. But due to the ban on indoor politics, the committee cannot meet to give such

approval."

The trust fund used to help at least 20 maimed victims, giving them Tk 2,000 each per month. But they returned empty handed from the trust office at Road-32 of Dhanmondi for the last several days. Many of them broke down, said a trust official.

The victims who used to get

assistance from the trust and the assistance funds include Lutfunnesa Sonali, Nasima Ferdous, Rasheda Begum, Sajedul Alam Sabuj, Nasrat Jahan Rozli, Makhsuda Azad, Nihar Ranjan Kar, Morjina Khatun, Rasheda Akhtar Ruma, Advocate Umme Razia Kajol, Bashir Apurba Chandra Das and Mahbub. But their dream to survive through treatment is now getting shattered due to stoppage of the assistance.

Talking to The Daily Star, Nasima Ferdous, a vice-president of Dhaka City AL (north), said her treatment is about to stop as Sheikh Hasina has been detained.

"Doctors have said around Tk 35-40 lakh is needed for my treatment. But my family cannot bear such a huge expense. If Netri [Hasina] was not arrested, there was a possibility of my proper treatment with help from her and also my family," said the wheel chair bound AL leader.

Bursting into tears, she said, "Every year Netri [Hasina] expressed her sympathy to us but this year we won't get it." She demanded arrest and punishment of the culprits responsible for the heinous attack.

"We did not get justice as forcers which opposed the Liberation War were in power when the grenade attack took place. We did not even expect justice from them. But we thought the present non-party caretaker government would take steps to punish the culprits. But it is

yet to do so," she said.

"Rather, the leader who was the target of the attack and is a victim of it has now been arrested and sent to jail," Nasima regretted. Alleging that those responsible for the attack are still moving freely, the city AL leader said, "I can't understand what kind of justice is this? To whom will we seek justice?"

Nihar Ranjan Kar used to get an assistance of Tk 1,000 per month from Hasina. But with the stoppage of it, he is now more concerned about his only daughter's education than his own treatment. Nihar's right leg is in such a shape that he cannot move properly.

"I need treatment for life. But with the arrest of Netri [AL chief], I do not know what will happen to me, and my daughter's education," emotional-choked Nihar said. He mentioned that his daughter got GPA-5 in the SSC examination last year and is now a student of Rifles Public School and College in the city.

Apurba Chandra Das, who lost his job after he was critically maimed in the attack, said, "I used to get Tk 2,000 a month for my daughter's education. But it has been stopped. Apurba, who lost one leg in the grenade attack, is also concerned more about the education of her three daughters, rather than his treatment.

### France ready to help stabilise Iraq

AFP, BAGHDAD

French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner yesterday reiterated his country's readiness to help stabilise Iraq, during a flurry of talks with leaders of the country's bitterly divided communities.

"France is ready to play a role in the fight against the violence," Kouchner said at a press conference after talks with Iraqi President Jalal Talabani in Baghdad.

Kouchner arrived in Iraq on Sunday for a three-day visit, the first by a French official to the war-ravaged country since the US-led invasion of March 2003, which Paris vehemently opposed.

Describing as "unacceptable" the bitter sectarian violence, which has claimed thousands of lives in the past 18 months, he added: "We want to be at the side of this large and important country at the birth of its democracy."

## Travesty of a judicial probe

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find any evidence that supports this kind of conclusion.

The Justice Abedin probe committee was set up on August 22, 2004 and within just 40 days on October 3 he submitted a 162-page report to the Ministry of Home Affairs.

Before submitting the report in such a short time, he told The Daily Star, "I am now hopeful that the enquiry commission would be able to reach a decision on the carnage with the information and data that are on hand."

Even though in that report he drew a conclusion about a foreign link, a home ministry high official said, "The report was not at all conclusive. It was shallow. The government had a look into it, but as it lacked substance, there was nothing to work on."

During that time the probe report generated public interest. Yet, the investigators of the case are not aware of the contents of that report. The government also never shared the report with them.

Criminal Investigation Department (CID) Special Superintendent of Police Kaosar Ahmed Haydor, who is supervising the August 21 case investigation, says, "We never saw the report. The government did not inform us about it."

When asked if the investigators in the last three years found anything to suggest foreign links with the attack, Ahmed says, "Till now we found no evidence of foreign links. We did not even find any hint of involvement of the Ulfa [United Liberation Front of Assam, India]."

The name of Ulfa popped up in press reports in connection with the attack earlier this year. The press reports were based on news generated in India.

Even though Justice Abedin drew his conclusion within 40 days, the CID high official, three years after the incident, says the investigators have not yet succeeded in gathering enough evidence to submit the charge sheet. "We suspect a militants link. Our investigation is now directed to find if they were involved," he noted.

A former investigator, serving in the defence, explained why the judicial probe could not help anyone. "A one-member probe committee is a weak idea," the former investigator says on condition of anonymity. "Being alone, the investigator is afraid of pressure from all sides. That is why one member committees tend to play safe by submitting a sketchy report," the former investigator added.

A home ministry high official seconds this view, "A judge cannot carry out such an investigation in such a short time. The August 21 incident left few pieces of evidence. Due to lack of evidence, the inquiry could not go deep."

The official added that immediately after the incident unknown people deliberately destroyed evidence, some was destroyed naturally.

A former judge of the Supreme Court who headed another probe committee of a terror incident, wishing not to be named, said, "These are such big incidents that it is very hard to gather the whole picture and draw conclusion. This is the job for criminal investigators. What we generally do in case of such investigation is that we make some recommendations to the government about how to prevent such incidents in future and what should be done immediately after such an incident."

The ex-judge pointed out that even though in his investigation, he made several recommendations but to his knowledge the government implemented none of them.

biased. For instance, under the four-party alliance government regime reports of the three-member probe committee, led by Justice Abdul Bari Sarkar, on seven major bomb attacks including the Uidchi blast were more political statements than probe reports.

Joynul Abedin, now a Supreme Court judge, had reported, "The incident is a naked attack on the

independence and sovereignty of the country... The two major political parties should work only for national interests, brushing aside all differences so that the local and foreign enemies cannot create anarchy in the country."