



PM Sheikh Hasina in talks with her Indian counterpart Narendra Modi at his official residence in New Delhi yesterday. Right, Hasina along with Indian President Pranab Mukherjee, Vice President Hamid Ansari, PM Modi, Congress chief Sonia Gandhi and other dignitaries attending the funeral rites of First Lady Suvra Mukherjee in New Delhi.

PHOTO: PIB, INDIA

Hasina stands beside Pranab

Attends his wife's funeral before meeting Modi in New Delhi

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

From the Indira Gandhi airport, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday went straight to the Rashtrapati Bhavan, the official residence of Indian President Pranab Mukherjee, and offered condolences for the demise of his wife.

Pranab and Hasina then went to his son's house, where Hasina placed a wreath on the casket of Suvra Mukherjee who died on Tuesday at the age of 74.

Hasina had flown to New Delhi yesterday to attend the cremation of Suvra, whose family she has deep links with for a long time.

Afterwards, the PM and the Indian president travelled in the same car to the crematorium where the remains of Suvra were consigned to flames in the presence of a host of dignitaries, including Vice-President Hamid Ansari, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, former prime minister Manmohan Singh, Home Minister Rajnath Singh, several other cabinet ministers, Congress President Sonia Gandhi and West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee.

Later in the day, Hasina had talks with Modi.

At the outset, Hasina recalled her family's deep ties with the family of Pranab Mukherjee over a long period of time, particularly during her exile in India post-assassination of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

Modi suggested a joint exercise by disaster management forces of South Asian countries for better response to natural calamities.

Hasina welcomed Modi's suggestion during their half-an-hour talks at Modi's residence, Hasina's Press Secretary Ihsanul Karim told reporters.

In the sombre background of the cremation, the meeting between Hasina

and Modi was devoid of political content, like Teeswater sharing issue.

The meeting came on a very short notice as it was only Tuesday that Hasina decided to visit Delhi and attend the cremation so there was no scope to prepare for the summit-level meeting, let alone taking up big issues, highly-placed sources said after the meeting.

Secondly, Hasina's visit was entirely about the death of Suvra.

Thirdly, no substantive issues could be discussed when Hasina met Modi in the presence of her sister Rehana and daughter Saima in what Ihsanul termed a "courtesy call".

The thrust of Modi and Hasina meeting was on issues like promoting bilateral trade for which the Indian PM welcomed a proposal of his Bangladeshi counterpart to jointly tap into big markets.

Hasina suggested that Bangladesh and India could together explore the strength of their combined market and depend less on other areas, a proposal termed "good" by Modi.

Hasina said India and Bangladesh themselves together constitute a large market combined and the countries should try to tap this cumulative market more, Ihsanul said.

Hasina and Modi expressed satisfaction over the implementation of the land boundary agreement.

They also agreed to push for transit covering Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal facilitating movement of passenger and cargo vehicles in the four countries.

Modi invited Hasina for an official visit to India as soon as possible and Hasina accepted the invitation, said a joint secretary to the external affairs ministry of India. The date would be

Justice so far away

FROM PAGE 1

As planned, the conspirators ensured a safe passage for the attackers to leave the scene. Later, they made all out efforts to derail investigations into the carnage.

Those involved are not in power for over eight years, yet the state is still struggling to bring justice for the victims of the gruesome August 21 grenade attack.

This has brought to question the state's ability to deliver justice and the efficiency of the criminal justice system.

Asked to comment, former chief justice ABM Khairul Haque said the state is fully responsible for delivering justice in each criminal case and justice means meaningful justice.

He stressed the need for increasing the number of judges to improve the criminal justice system for this.

Chief State counsel of the case, Syed Rezaul Rahman on the eve of 10th anniversary of the carnage last year had said the target was to have the trial completed by trial court before August 21 this year but the trial has not made much progress since then.

The court could record statements of 98 witnesses till August 2014. Since then 78 more witnesses have been recorded bringing the total to 176 since the beginning of the trial in 2008. The total number of witnesses in the case is 491.

If statements of the remaining witnesses were to be recorded, one might easily foresee how much more time will be required for the job.

The court held hearings once a week for around two years since the beginning of the trial. The speedy trial tribunal, however, started holding hearings twice a week since January 2013.

A lawyer said the huge number of accused, 52, is one of the major causes for the slow progress of the trial.

"Every accused has a lawyer to cross examine the witness. So, it takes a long time to complete recording statement of a witness," he added.

Suranjit Sengupta, chief of the parliamentary standing committee of

the law ministry, said his committee has been making follow ups about the trial at every meeting.

"Now the case is making progress. The law minister assured us that the trial will be completed by this year," he told The Daily Star on Tuesday.

He said the committee had asked the law ministry to arrange for the hearing of the case at least three days every week, instead of the present two days.

Suranjit however questioned the number of witnesses.

The chief prosecutor agreed with Suranjit on the number of witnesses.

"It is not necessary to record statements of all the witnesses," he told The Daily Star last week.

He said statements of some senior Awami League leaders who were injured in the attack and made witnesses in the case will be recorded. Then the investigation officers of the case will be asked to give deposition, he added.

"We hope the trial court will come up with its verdict by the end of this year," he said.

A delivery of the verdict by the trial court however will start further legal processes.

The accused, on conviction, will have the opportunity to challenge the verdict in the High Court and the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court in phases. After appeals are over, an accused may file review petition with the Appellate Division. It will require more time for disposal of the appeals.

This means there is still a long way to go to complete the trial conclusively in order to provide the victims' families with justice, according to legal experts.

Till then, surviving victims and the families of the killed will be waiting in agony for justice.

BNP GOVT TRIED TO DERAIL INVESTIGATION

The grenade attack happened during the BNP in power and the attackers left the venue without any difficulty which raised many question and suspicion about the role of the police.

After grave concerns expressed by world leaders and international pressure, the then BNP government allowed agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation and Interpol to visit Dhaka to assist the probe.

After the attack, the BNP launched a campaign blaming the AL itself for carrying out the attack on its own rally.

Through several investigations, the BNP-led alliance government tried to establish that the AL had killed its own activists to tarnish the government's image and to topple it.

As a part of the plan to put the blame on the AL, the investigators made up a story involving Mokhlesur Rahman, an AL leader and former ward commissioner of Moghbazar, in the city.

On the instructions of the government high-ups, they also attempted to feed the public with another story woven around Joj Mia, a petty criminal.

They forced Joj Mia to make a confessional statement naming Mokhlesur as one of the plotters.

The whole story turned out to be fabrication by investigators.

Through a judicial commission-led by a Supreme Court judge, it even tried to prove that "foreign enemies" had instigated the carnage, and some wanted criminals hiding in India had taken part in the attack.

Things took a different turn during the past caretaker government led by Fakhruddin Ahmed. A new CID official was given charge in July 2007 for fresh investigation into the carnage.

The CID submitted charge sheet on

June 11, 2008 accusing 22, including Huji leader Mufti Hannan and former deputy minister of the BNP government Abdus Salam Pintu. The charge sheet hinted at the involvement of some government and security high-ups in the plot.

After AL came to power the prosecu-

tion filed a petition on June 22, 2009

with the court for further investigation to identify the suppliers of Arges grenades and sources of financing. The court on August 3, 2009, ordered for further investigation. Then a new CID official was assigned to do the job. The CID submitted the supplementary charge sheet in July 2011.

According to the supplementary charge sheet the grisly attack was an outcome of collaboration between the militant outfit Huji, a section of influential leaders of the BNP and the Jamaat-e-Islami, and a section of senior officials of the home ministry, police, Directorate General of Forces Intelligence (DGFI), National Security Intelligence (NSI) and Prime Minister's Office (PMO).

Lutfozzaman Babar, then state minister for home affairs, Harris Chowdhury, political secretary to then prime minister Khaleda Zia, Ali Ahsan Mohammad Mojaheed, secretary general of Jamaat-e-Islami and the then social welfare minister, NSI director general Brig Gen Abdur Rahim and DGFI director Brig Gen Rezaqul Haider Chowdhury masterminded the attack, according to the supplementary charge sheet. Involvement of Tarique Rahman was also alleged in the supplementary charge sheet.

According to the supplementary charge sheet of the case, Huji leader Tajuddin, supplier of the grenades, and brother of BNP government's deputy minister Abdus Salam Pintu, was allowed to leave the country for Pakistan on instructions from Lutfozzaman Babar. The then PM Khaleda Zia was aware of this, according to the charge sheet.

Tajuddin was provided with a fake

passport with the name "Badal".

Khaleda's nephew and private secretary Saiful Islam Duke, his brother-in-law and DGFI official Lt Col Saiful Islam Joarder, and another DGFI high-up Maj Gen ATM Amin helped Tajuddin flee the country on October 10, 2006, at the fag end of the BNP's rule, said the supplementary charge

Bangla lesson for carbon polluters

FROM PAGE 1

"Yes, we are getting the fund under the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) for our solar home system programme," Nazmul Haque, director (investment) and head of advisory of the IDCOL, told The Daily Star yesterday.

The UNFCCC has issued 212,482 carbon credits to the IDCOL and 182,804 credits to Grameen Shakti.

The IDCOL is a state-owned development financial institution dedicated to promoting and financing infrastructure and renewable energy projects in the country, while Grameen Shakti, set up by Nobel Laureate Prof Muhammad Yunus, aims to take clean solar power systems and communication technology to villages.

Dr Shahidul Islam, who worked at Grameen Shakti from 2005 to January this year, said Bangladesh got the fund as the first country for its stellar success in installing solar home systems. Several other countries, including Senegal and India, are in line to get the fund.

Though Bangladesh is one of the lowest emitters of carbon in the world, it has set an example by embracing clean energy generated from small solar home systems.

Carbon credits are awarded to countries or groups that have reduced their green house gases below their emission quota, according to investopedia.com, an educational site on finance and investment.

For example, if an environmentalist group plants enough trees to reduce emissions by one tonne, the group will be awarded a credit. If a steel producer has an emissions quota of 10 tonnes, but is expecting to produce 11 tonnes, it can purchase this carbon credit from the environmental group, explains the site.

Supported by the Global Environment Facility and the World Bank, the IDCOL programme started in 2003 with a target of financing 50,000 systems by 2008.

The target was achieved in August 2005, almost three years ahead of schedule.

The IDCOL then revised up its target to install 2.5 million systems by 2014 and succeeded in achieving it. It has already installed four million systems across the country, covering 10 percent of the total population.

Bangladesh has one of the fastest growing solar home system projects in the world, with rural households using renewable energy for lighting, running fans and TVs and charging mobile phones.

Apart from the World Bank, Asian Development Bank, German development bank KfW, German technical cooperation agency GTZ, Islamic Development Bank and Netherlands Development Organisation SNV supported the IDCOL-led efforts.

Solar home systems are helping Bangladesh cut carbon emissions by reducing use of kerosene in rural areas.

Citing a research by the IDCOL, Nazmul said a family needs eight litres of kerosene a month for lighting up a house in a rural area.

"As we have already installed four million solar home systems, this programme is saving around 32 million litres of kerosene every month," he said.

The IDCOL programmes saves 2.7 lakh tonnes of kerosene annually, cutting carbon emission of 4.88 lakh tonnes in the process every year.

In 2007, the IDCOL signed an agreement with the World Bank on the global lender's purchase of carbon credits from the company. Its programme was registered under the UNFCCC in 2012.

As per the agreement, the WB would buy each certified emission reduction unit for €9, said Nazmul.

The CDM, a mechanism under the Kyoto Protocol, allows companies in industrialised countries to buy carbon credits from developing nations to

comply with the requirements for reducing emissions.

The installation of solar home systems has made a difference in the lives of many in rural areas of the country.

Abul Hossain, a farmer in Jhingati village of Barguna, used to buy around seven litres of kerosene every month to light three kerosene lamps in his house, as there is no electricity in his village.

But it changed after he got installed a solar panel on the roof of his house.

Like many of his neighbours, Abul now lights up his house with solar energy.

Momena Begum, a solar home system user at Musapur village on Sandweep island, said she had been using solar energy for the last one year.

"We do not have electricity here. We are happy that we have got the opportunity to use this solar home system," she said.

Talking to The Daily Star, Nurjahan Begum, managing director of Grameen Shakti, said life span of a solar home system is about 25 years, and a household usually pays off the total cost of the system within 3 years of its installation.

Grameen Shakti has installed over 1.6 million solar home systems. Besides, 47 other organisations are installing more than 65,000 such systems a month.

In 2008, the government formulated a policy to promote renewable energy sources, especially solar power.

Electricity from renewable sources accounts for 2.5 percent of the country's total power production, and the government has a target of raising it to 5 percent by this year and 10 percent by 2020.

At present, the country's installed power generation capacity is 10,341 megawatt with an average actual peak generation of 7,500MW.

Still, around 40 percent of the population does not have access to electricity, and most of them use

an Awami League rally on Bangabandhu Avenue in 2004.

At least 24 people, including veteran Awami League leader Ivy Rahman, were killed and scores of others injured in the attack. Awami League President Sheikh Hasina, also the then opposition leader of the parliament, narrowly escaped the attack.

The delay in getting justice generates in Mahbuba a psychological distress that is no less painful than her constant physical suffering.

"The splinters in my body hurt me, but the delay in punishing the people who have left me nearly dead gives me more pain," said Mahbuba, who now lives in Savar.

Justice, however, remains a far cry for all the victims of the grisly grenade attack.

Mahbuba is the woman whose photo appeared in many newspapers after the attack. She was seen lying among the corpses on Bangabandhu Avenue in a blood-stained golden, silk sari, with a black handbag lying across her chest. She had a blank, lifeless look with a slightly gaping mouth.

People thought she died on the spot. However, she started to move her limbs after being in a coma for three days, and she regained full consciousness after 25 days of treatment.

Rozi, now 40, said the prime minister has helped her family financially.