

Spy chief behind historic meeting with North Korea

REUTERS, Seoul

Shedding tears behind South Korean President Moon Jae-in and North Korea's Kim Jong Un after the two leaders announced a historic agreement on Friday was a man who has worked for two decades to set up unlikely dialogue between old enemies.

Nearly 18 years after Suh Hoon, a South Korean intelligence official, travelled to Pyongyang to persuade reclusive North Korean leader Kim Jong Il to hold an unprecedented first summit in the North Korean capital in 2000, he watched Kim's son pledging peace on the Korean peninsula on Friday - this time just south of the heavily militarised border.

Friday was the first time any North Korean leader set foot on South Korean soil since the 1950-53 Korean War left the country divided and the two neighbours in a technical state of conflict.

The landmark encounter came less than a year after South Korea's liberal president Moon took office and quickly tapped Suh as chief of the National Intelligence Service, saying he was "the right person" to revive inter-Korean ties strained over North Korea's pursuit of nuclear-armed missiles.

"It is too premature to talk about a next inter-Korean summit," Suh told reporters last year after his appointment was announced, returning him to the agency he quit in 2008 when a conservative government was elected. "But we need it."

Suh, who personally helped arrange two previous inter-Korean summits in 2000 and 2007, is viewed as the country's top expert on North Korea. He is known as the South Korean who met with late North Korean leader Kim Jong Il the most.

Lee Jong-seok, a former unification minister who visited Pyongyang with Suh in 2003 as then-South Korean president Roh Moo-hyun's special envoys, called Suh the "No. 1 negotiator with North Korea" in his 2014 memoir.

Suh, 64, also lived in North Korea for two years in the late 1990s, involved in a plan to build a nuclear reactor as part of a 1994 international deal to freeze Pyongyang's nuclear programmes. That deal eventually collapsed.

"He came in knowing already how it works and what to do, and Moon gave him clear political guidance," said John Delury, a North Korea expert at Yonsei University in Seoul.

The presidential Blue House declined to comment on Suh's role. The intelligence service could not be reached for comment.

In March, he was part of the 10-member delegation that visited third-generation leader Kim Jong Un in Pyongyang, becoming one of the first South Korean officials to meet Kim since he took power in late 2011 following his father's death.



Suh-hoon, South Korea's chief of the National Intelligence Service, cries after delivering a joint statement, next to Im Jong-seok, chief presidential secretary, at the truce village of Panmunjom inside the demilitarised zone separating the two Koreas on Friday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

N Korea hails

FROM PAGE 16

for security guarantees, according to Seoul -- although Kim made no public reference to doing so at Friday's spectacular summit.

In a separate report, KCNA said the two leaders had a "candid and open-hearted exchange of views" on issues including "ensuring peace on the Korean Peninsula and the denuclearisation of the peninsula".

The Rodong Sinmun newspaper, the mouthpiece of the North's ruling Workers' Party, devoted the first four of its six pages to the event, carrying a total of 60 photos, 15 of them on page one.

State television broadcast several minutes of footage from the meeting, including the leaders' embrace, but with a voiceover throughout, and deployed veteran newsreader Ri Chun Hee to read out the declaration.

Yang Moo-jin of the University of North Korean Studies said the breadth of coverage was a signal the North was "sincere in its commitment".

"It is also another signal to Washington in the lead up to the US-North Korea summit that the ball is in your court now," he told AFP.

When Kim stepped over the military demarcation line that divides the peninsula he became the first North Korean leader to set foot in the South since the Korean War hostilities ceased in 1953 with an armistice rather than a peace treaty.

He then persuaded Moon to step into the North -- a fact reported by KCNA yesterday-- and the two leaders shared a day of smiles, intimate moments, and a half-hour-long one-on-one conversation.

The North has made rapid progress in its weapons programmes under Kim, detonating its sixth and most powerful nuclear test last year and launching missiles capable of reaching the US mainland, in moves that triggered increasingly strict UN Security Council sanctions against the regime.

Kim and US President Donald Trump traded personal insults and threats of war, sending tensions soaring before Moon seized on the Winter Olympics to broker dialogue, beginning a dizzying whirl of diplomacy that led to Friday's meeting in the Demilitarized Zone.

Analysts and diplomats say that a

combination of factors were behind Pyongyang's change of heart, including feeling that it was in a position to negotiate from strength, the looming impact of sanctions, and fear of potential US military action.

But KCNA gave Kim the credit.

"The historic meeting at Panmunjom came to be realised thanks to the supreme leader's ardent love for the people and will for self-determination" independent of outside influence, it said.

Washington is pressing Pyongyang to give up its weapons in a complete, verifiable and irreversible way, and analysts say that meaningful progress will depend on the outcome of Kim's much-anticipated summit with Trump in the coming weeks.

Trump yesterday said that "things are going very well" after talking with Moon about the upcoming eagerly-awaited summit.

"Just had a long and very good talk with President Moon of South Korea. Things are going very well, time and location of meeting with North Korea is being set," Trump wrote on Twitter.

In the declaration document, the two Korean leaders pledged to seek a peace treaty this year to formally declare the Korean War over, 65 years after hostilities ceased.

They will seek a meeting with the US and possibly China -- both of them signatories to the 1953 ceasefire -- "with a view to declaring an end to the war, turning the armistice into a peace treaty, and establishing a permanent and solid peace regime".

But agreeing a treaty to formally close the conflict will be complicated -- both Seoul and Pyongyang claim sovereignty over the whole Korean peninsula.

The declaration "will lead to an all-out and epoch-making progress in inter-Korean relations", KCNA said, and "relink the cut-off national blood lines" and "advance the future of co-prosperity and reunification".

Pyongyang regularly insists on the importance of reunifying the two Koreas, but opinions are divided in the democratic and prosperous South, where younger citizens have spent much of their adult lives being threatened by the North, and fear the costs and consequences of combining the countries.

Bangladeshi hacked to death in Italy

UNB, Keraniganj

Some unidentified muggers hacked a Bangladeshi expatriate to death and injured two others in Italy's Milan on Friday.

The deceased was identified as Shamsul Haque Swapan, 33, son of Abdus Salam of Bramhankhali village in Dhaka's Nawabganj.

Victim's family members said some robbers swooped on Swapan and his two friends on Friday evening with sharp weapons while they were returning from their workplace, leaving them injured.

The injured were rushed to a local hospital where Swapan died later in the day.

The muggers also snatched their monthly salary which the trio had just received.

Cigarettes

FROM PAGE 16

(letter of credit) for the consignment was opened with the Bank Asia's Motijheel branch in Dhaka.

The importer whose address was given as 24/A, Noabali Tower, Purana Paltan, Dhaka was found fake as customs officials went there on inspection.

Acting on a tip-off, the customs officials performed a physical examination and found cigarettes in the consignment.

On Saturday, in presence of all authorities concerned at NCT Yard of the port, the customs officials unlocked the containers and found the cigarettes inside.

AKM Nuruzzaman, commissioner of Chittagong Customs House, said after primary detection they visited the address given on papers.

He said they would take legal action against the banks, shipping agents and related agencies in connection with the consignment. A letter has already been issued to the banks and shipping agents seeking their explanation.

According to rules, if the cigarettes' quality is found to be perfect, the consignment will be sold to Bangladesh Tourism Corporation. Otherwise, it will be destroyed.

Her condition

FROM PAGE 16

Pointing to Khaleda's arthritis, Fakhrul claimed that the problem was also creating neuro-centric complexities, which might turn towards paralysis.

"We are urging the government once again to arrange her treatment at the United Hospital as per her wish without any delay. Otherwise, the government will have to take responsibility if anything happened to her."

Earlier in the day, three of Khaleda's doctors at a briefing at the BNP's Nayapaltan central office expressed fear that Khaleda could become crippled and lose her eyesight if she was not given proper treatment immediately in a specialised hospital, UNB adds.

At the briefing, Fakhrul alleged that Khaleda could not be taken to a specialised hospital as a file regarding the matter was stuck at the Prime Minister's Office.

Khaleda's doctor and neuro medicine expert Syed Wahidur Rahman said her left hand was becoming weak and she feels pain in her neck as she had been suffering from cervical spondylosis.

Her fingers have become swollen, causing her pain. "She can't walk due to degeneration of bones in her waist and problems in her spinal cord."

"She [Khaleda] may get weaker, suffer from paralysis and can lose control over urinating and bowel movements. She needs proper treatment, examination, healthy environment and physiotherapy right now. These are not possible to ensure in a jail," he added.

Her orthopaedic expert Prof Sirajuddin Ahmed said Khaleda could not properly move her hands and knees due to "rheumatoid arthritis" and some other physical problems.

"Madam can become crippled and lose her working ability and the energy of life if she did not receive proper treatment for a long time," he viewed.

Her eye specialist Abdul Quddus said Khaleda had been suffering from various eye-related issues.

"We've heard her eyes turned red. Once her cornea gets dried, it won't be possible to restore it even in 15 years, and she may become blind anytime."

Australia to help

FROM PAGE 16

Foreign Minister AH Mahmood Ali was present at the meeting. SUPPORT SOUGHT FOR ECONOMIC PROGRESS

Hasina yesterday sought cooperation from Australia on human resources as Bangladesh was going to the next stage of development through graduation from the group of Least Developed Country.

"As Bangladesh is going to the next stage of development through graduation from LDC, we need greater human capacity where Australia can contribute by providing training-type programmes and vocational education," she said.

While visiting Western Sydney University, the premier also sought Australia's cooperation in developing an inclusive and people-centric blue economy.

Hasina sought technical assistance for developing Bangladesh's marine aquaculture and exchanging teachers on oceanography.

She called upon Bangladeshi students at the university to take advantage of the best knowledge that the institution could offer.

She said she was deeply touched at the establishment of a bust of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman on the Sydney university campus. "The bust is rightly located in front of the Institute of Ocean Governance to recognise Bangabandhu's vision and pioneering role on maritime boundary demarcation through an act of parliament in 1974."

She mentioned that Bangladesh has been enjoying warm relations with Australia since it recognised the country on January 31, 1972. "Very fundamental of bilateral relations between Bangladesh and Australia originates from the fact that Australia was the first country from the developed world to recognise our independence."

Hasina recalled that after the declaration of independence by the Father of the Nation on March 26, 1971, he called upon the people of Bangladesh to fight for independence.

"We offer homage to the world leaders who stood by our side during our Liberation War and the early years of our nationhood. Amongst the world leaders who championed our cause for liberation is Edward Gough Whitlam. Whitlam played a leading role in building a bipartisan consensus about Bangladesh as the leader of the opposition in the Australian federal parliament in 1971," she said.

Hasina mentioned that Whitlam played an important role in lobbying with the international community for Bangladesh to be recognised by the Commonwealth and other countries.

"Edward Whitlam visited Bangladesh on January 19, 1975. It was the first and last visit [to date] by a prime minister of Australia to Bangladesh."

She also recalled with gratitude the contribution of Australian national William AS Ouderland during the Liberation War for which he was given gallantry award "Bir Protik" and awarded with "Friends of Bangladesh War of Liberation".

The premier said Australia has been a favourite destination for higher studies for Bangladeshi students and some 200 students are now studying in Western Sydney University.

"Western Sydney University's present collaboration with Bangladesh is strengthening capacity of our judiciary management and providing training programme for Department of Oceanography, University of Dhaka and Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Maritime University to enhance their knowledge and skills in ocean governance.

"The students who are here shouldn't only obtain degrees, rather they have many things to learn," she said.

Mentioning that her government solved maritime boundary disputes with two neighbouring countries, Hasina said Bangladesh has to utilise

One killed

FROM PAGE 16

when the DB team took Salam along and went to Mymensingh town's Alia Madrasa Road area to arrest Siraj Uddin, an alleged "drug trader", the DB official said.

Sensing presence of the law enforcers, Siraj and his cohorts opened fire at the detectives, forcing police to retaliate, triggering the "gunfight".

Salam was hit by a bullet on his chest, the police official said. The critically injured man was rushed to Mymensingh Medical College Hospital (MMCH) where doctors declared him dead on arrival.

Two police constables - Kawsar Habib and Shafiqul Islam - were also injured in the incident. They are undergoing treatment at Mymensingh Police Lines Hospital.

Police claimed to have seized two sharp weapons and two used bullets from the spot.

Salam's body has been sent to MMCH morgue for autopsy and a case has been lodged.

its maritime resources, which can contribute to its economic development.

The PM paid homage to Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman placing a wreath at the Bust of Bangabandhu on the University campus. The bust was unveiled by Law Minister Anisul Huq in February last year.

Leaders and activists of Australia Awami League greeted the PM with a bouquet there.

'WORK ON 2021-2041 DEV PLAN UNDERWAY'

Sheikh Hasina yesterday said her government has started the work to formulate a 2021-2041 development plan to make Bangladesh a developed and prosperous country by 2041.

The PM was addressing a civic reception in Sydney yesterday. The Australian chapter of Awami League organised the event titled "Civic Reception of Sheikh Hasina" at Sofitel Sydney Wentworth hotel.

Hasina said her government always formulates long-term plans for the country, but the BNP government used to take plans on "ad hoc basis".

She urged Bangladeshi expatriates to uphold the country's image abroad. "Wherever you stay you must have the special attention so that Bangladesh is regarded with dignity."

The PM also asked them to remain alert so that anti-liberation forces cannot come to power anymore.

Mentioning that the government is now setting up 100 special economic zones in the country, she said her government created a huge investment scope for expatriates.

Sheikh Shamimul Haque, president of Bangabandhu Council, Australia, presided over the programme.

RMIT UNIVERSITY TEAM MEETS HASINA

A delegation of RMIT University, Melbourne met Hasina at her hotel suite in Sydney yesterday.

The delegation, led by Prof Geoffrey Strokes, deputy pro vice-chancellor of the university, shared the unreleased report of a study conducted over remittances flow to Bangladesh and the way of better use of the remittances to improve economic, social and civic outcomes.

Prof Supriya Singh, Prof Shadat Khan and Prof Graham Airey of RMIT University and Prof Quamrul Alam of Central Queens University were present.

Buddha Purnima

FROM PAGE 1

Lord Buddha was born on this day of full moon in 563 BC, attained enlightenment and passed away on the same day.

President M Abdul Hamid and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, in separate messages on the occasion, greeted members of the Buddhist community as well as the countrymen.

Leaders of different political and socio-cultural organisations have also greeted the people from the community.

The day is a public holiday. On the occasion, newspapers publish different articles while Bangladesh Betar, Bangladesh Television (BTV) and private TV channels air special programmes highlighting the significance of the day.

The celebrations will start with the lighting of lamps and hoisting of the national and religious flags atop the Mohabihar and chanting of sacred verses from Tripitaka.

Bangladesh Buddhist Federation (BBF) is set to organise a day-long programmes, including a discussion meeting, at the Merul Badda International Budda Bihar in the city. The programmes would include Puja and discussion.

Xi, Modi

FROM PAGE 16

and both reiterated their resolute opposition to terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. Both committed to cooperate further in counter-terrorism, the foreign secretary said.

In a move that could upset Pakistan, the leaders agreed to undertake a joint India-China economic project in Afghanistan, reported PTI.

As per the understanding, officials of both sides will identify the project in following up discussions and work out modalities.

This will be a first such project in the war-torn country where China while trying to expand its influence has tacitly backed Pakistan, which has been accused by Afghanistan and the US of backing the Taliban and its most violent attacks in the country destabilising any attempts to restore peace.

New Delhi and Beijing would also continue to pursue informal talks, said Gokhale.

In a statement on its website, China's foreign ministry said that Xi had told Modi that "a friendly Sino-Indian relationship is a significant, positive factor in safeguarding world stability," adding that "China and India should be good neighbours and good friends".