

JS okays 90-day leave for ailing Syed Ashraf

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Parliament last night approved 90 days' leave for ailing Public Administration Minister Syed Ashraf Islam, who is undergoing treatment at a Bangkok hospital.

Chief Whip ASM Feroz, on behalf of Syed Ashraf, also a lawmaker, placed an application before Speaker Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury to grant the leave for the next 90 consecutive House sittings from September 18.

The Speaker moved it to parliament and read out the application.

The House granted the leave by voice vote.

According to the application, Syed Ashraf, elected from Kishoreganj-1 constituency, is now undergoing treatment at the Critical Care Medicine Unit of Bumrungrad Hospital in Bangkok. He underwent a surgery on Monday and it would take days for his further treatment.

Delhi to keep backing Dhaka

Says Shringla about humanitarian assistance for Rohingya refugees

UNB, Cox's Bazar

Indian High Commissioner in Dhaka Harsh Vardhan Shringla on Monday said India will continue to extend humanitarian assistance to support the government of Bangladesh in its efforts to provide succour to the Rohingyas.

"We understand the plight of the displaced persons and Bangladesh's support to the displaced persons under trying circumstances deserves appreciation," he said while addressing a function to hand over humanitarian assistance from India.

Disaster Management and Relief Minister Mofazzel Hussain Chowdhury Maya attended the function as the chief guest.

Secretary, Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief Md Shah Kamal, Additional Secretary, Refuge, Relief and Repatriation Commissioner Mohammed Abul Kalam, Chairman, Bangladesh Red Crescent Society Hafiz Ahmed

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Trial completes after 14 years

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One case is for murder and the other for grenade blast.

"I've tried to give you all the opportunities that law permits during this long trial ... I have to write judgment giving legal explanation bringing the total fact into the fore," said Judge Shahed Nuruddin before fixing the date for judgment.

The court set up at a building near the old central jail in the capital cancelled bail of eight accused in the cases and ordered sending them to jail immediately.

Now, 30 accused including Babar, former state minister for home; former deputy minister Abdus Salam Pintu and three former IGP are now in jail while 19 others including Tarique are on the run.

Wrapping up their arguments, the prosecution sought the highest punishment to all the accused, saying it has been able to prove all charges beyond reasonable doubt.

But the defence counsels said the prosecution failed to produce evidence to prove the charges and sought acquittal of their clients.

A total of 24 AL leaders and activists, including Mohila Awami League president Ivy Rahman, were killed and more than 300 others were injured in the grisly attack on Bangabandhu Avenue.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, who was the opposition leader in parliament at that time, narrowly escaped the attack with an ear injury.

The grenade attack, allegedly masterminded by some BNP leaders, is one of the most shocking political crimes in the country's history.

The attack, aimed at assassinating Hasina, and the steps taken by the then government in its aftermath left a deep scar in the country's politics as it sharpened the division among the two archrivals -- AL and BNP.

The BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami, the parties that shared power at the time, had allegedly made efforts to bury the truth and protect the masterminds by derailing the investigation. It even tried to put the blame on the AL.

But further investigation into the cases revealed that the attack was an outcome of collaboration between the militant outfit Huji, influential leaders of the BNP and Jamaat, and a band of senior officials of the home ministry, police, Directorate General of Forces Intelligence (DGFI), National Security Intelligence (NSI) and Prime

Will work together for development

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videoconference from the Gono Bhaban while Modi from his office in New Delhi.

The two leaders also inaugurated the construction of the third and fourth dual gauge rail lines of Dhaka-Tongi and Tongi-Joydevpur sections of Bangladesh Railway.

Hasina said the economic development was the biggest challenge for the South Asian countries. "The prospects for economic development will substantially be enhanced through undertaking bilateral projects like this."

She mentioned that the bilateral cooperation between Bangladesh and India has reached a new height over the past few years.

"We're working and will work collectively for the development and prosperity for the people of both countries in new areas, including energy, power, road and rail communications," she said.

Referring to the inauguration together with Modi of the supply of 500MW electricity and two railway projects on September 10 and today's joint projects, Hasina said, "This intermittent contact between us, I believe, will further cement the ties of cooperation between Bangladesh and India."

She mentioned that an excellent environment of bilateral cooperation has prevailed between the two neighbouring countries since she assumed office in 2009.

She said the train communication in the south-western region through Padma Bridge and in the northern region through Bangabandhu Jamuna Bridge, and on Chattogram-Sylhet routes from Dhaka would be easier and faster once the work on the 3rd and 4th Dual Gauge Line on Dhaka-Tongi section and Double Line on Dhaka-Joydevpur section was completed.

The PM also mentioned that a total of 96kms of dual-gauge tracks along with other necessary infrastructures would be constructed from Kamalapur to Joydevpur railway stations under the project.

About the pipeline, the PM said it was a new milestone in the history of cooperation between the two countries.

"This will be the first such pipeline through which refined diesel will be supplied to Parbatipur depot from Numaligarh of Assam in India."

She mentioned that Bangladesh would initially receive 2.5 lakh



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina speaks at a programme at the Gono Bhaban yesterday, marking the inauguration of the construction of 130km Bangladesh-India Friendship Pipeline between Siliguri of West Bengal and Parbatipur in Dinajpur. Hasina and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi jointly launched the construction through videoconferencing.

PHOTO: PID

tonnes of diesel every year and it would gradually be increased to 4 lakh tonnes.

She also said the first consignment of diesel from India reached Bangladesh in March 2016 through rail wagons.

Hasina expressed her gratitude to her Indian counterpart for his active role in implementing these projects.

Modi said the two countries implemented a number of projects within a short time which were the symbols of good relations between the two countries. "We're not only neighbours, we're also a family. We always extend our hands in our happiness and sorrow. We've proved that we could solve problems if we wish."

He said these projects initiated a new chapter in the bilateral relations between the two countries. "It'll play a significant role in Bangladesh's development as fuel oil could be supplied to the northern region at a low cost," he said.

About the railway projects, he said the schemes would not only help carry passengers but also transport goods.

Highly appreciating Hasina's leadership, the Indian PM said these projects could not be implemented without her dynamic leadership.

"These projects are very important for people-to-people contact between the two countries. I hope such cooperation between Bangladesh and India will continue," he said.

Modi also said the growth of relations in the last few years showed the world what can be achieved on the bilateral front if two countries make up their minds, reports our New Delhi correspondent.

He said India and Bangladesh have not only resolved territorial disputes but also achieved "unprecedented" progress in developmental cooperation in the last few years.

"For this, I give credit to your leadership," Modi told Hasina.

"It is a matter of joy that the pipeline, on completion, will be dedicated to the government and the

people of Bangladesh," he said and expressed the confidence that the pipeline would energise India-Bangladesh relations and bring India closer to the economy of Bangladesh.

Currently, imported oil is stored in Chattogram depot after unloading it from the ship at Chattogram Port. Later, the oil is brought to Khulna Daulatpur depot through coastal tanks and carried to Parbatipur again through rail wagons.

This requires additional time and money as well as transport. The pipeline will solve these problems.

Through the cross-border pipeline, India will supply fuel oil from its Numaligarh Refinery Ltd (NRL), located at Golaghat in the northeastern state of Assam, while Bangladesh will receive the oil at Parbatipur depot of Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation (BPC) in Dinajpur. India will supply 2.5 lakh tonnes of diesel in the first three years.

BIRTHDAY GREETINGS

During their speeches, the two prime ministers greeted each other on their birthdays. The birthday of Modi was celebrated on Monday while that of Hasina will be celebrated on September 28.

Modi extended in advance birthday greetings to Hasina saying the people of India "wish you a long life, good health and success." The Indian PM also acknowledged with gratitude Hasina's greetings on his birthday.

Earlier, Hasina had sent a letter greeting Modi on his 68th birthday and commended Modi's "keen desire and commitment to promote all-round cooperation with Bangladesh" saying it will take the bilateral relations to "newer height".

The letter, along with a bouquet and "mishti doi" and other sweets on behalf of Hasina, was delivered to the official residence of Modi at 7 Lok Kalyan Marg (formerly called Race Course Road), said an official, reports our New Delhi correspondent.

The sweets were brought from Chittaranjan Park area, a Bangalee-dominated locality of south Delhi, the official added.

Accused, charges and punishment

CHARGE: CONSPIRACY AND APPROVING THE PLAN

Accused: Tarique Rahman, Lutfuzzaman Babar, Abdus Salam Pintu, Abul Harris Chowdhury, former political secretary to prime minister Khaleda Zia, Kazi Shah Mofazzel Hossain Kaikobad, a BNP lawmaker, Brig Gen (retd) Rezaqul Haider Chowdhury, then DGFI director, Brig Gen (retd) Abdur Rahim, then NSI DG, Mohammad Hanif, owner of Hanif Paribahan, and BNP leader Ariful Islam Arif, also a former councilor of Dhaka City Corporation. The nine have been charged with conspiring and approving the plan of the attack executed by Huji men and their accomplices. If found guilty, they may be awarded up to death sentence.

CHARGE: GRIEVOUS HURT, ATTEMPT TO MURDER, MURDER, ABETMENT & CRIMINAL LIABILITY

Accused: Huji founder Abdus Salam, Huji leaders Maulana Sheikh Farid, Maulana Abdur Rouf, Maulana Abdul Hannan Sabir, Kashmire-based Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) leader Abdul Malek alias Golam Mohammad, Pakistan-based LeT leader Yusuf Butt alias Majid Butt, Mufti Shafiqur Rahman, Mufti Abdul Hai, Hafez Maulana Yahya, Babu alias Ratul Babu, Mohibullah alias Mafizur Rahman alias Ovi, Maulana Abu Sayed alias Dr Abu Zafar, Abul Kalam Azad alias Bulbul, Jahangir Alam, Maulana Abu Taher, Shahadatullah Jewel, Hossain Ahmed Tamim, Mufti Moinuddin Sheikh alias Abu Zandal alias Masum Billah, Arif Hasan Sumon, Rafiqul Islam Sabuj, Mohammad Ujjal alias Ratan, Maulana Tajuddin, Maulana Liton, Anisul Mursalin and his brother Mahibul Muttakin, Md Iqbal, Maulana Abu Bakar alias Selim Howlader, Jahangir Alam Badar and Khalilur Rahman.

The twenty-nine have been charged with causing grievous hurt, attempt to murder, murder, abetment and criminal liability. If convicted, they may get maximum death penalty.

CHARGE: FINANCIAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE HELP TO THE KILLERS

Accused: Former ICPs -- Ashraful Huda and Shahidul Haque -- have been charged with assisting the killers financially and administratively to execute the attack. If found guilty, the two may face up to death sentence.



SOME OF THE ACCUSED

Minister's Office (PMO).

The development in the much-talked about cases comes just three months before the next parliamentary elections.

LONG ROAD TO JUSTICE
A day after the attack, police filed a case with Motijheel Police Station against unnamed accused.

The then government formed a one-member judicial inquiry commission led by a High Court judge. Besides, the US Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) came to Dhaka to probe the grenade attack.

But, a few months later, senior CID officials made up the farcical Joj Mia story and detained him along with 20 other petty criminals. Joj Mia and two others were forced to give statements confessing their "involvement" in carrying out the grenade attack.

The real identities of the detainees were later revealed by the media and the ludicrous nature of the investigation was exposed by the end of 2004.

After a caretaker administration took over, the CID submitted two separate charge sheets in June 2007, accusing 22 persons including Mufti Hannan and Abdus Salam Pintu. The charge sheet hints at the involvement of some high-level government and police officials in the plot.

The re-trial in the two cases started concurrently in March 2012. The prosecution produced 225 witnesses to prove the charges while the defence produced 20.

The court yesterday completed the trial after hearing the closing arguments for 119 days. Defence counsels Khandaker Mahbub Hossain, Abdur Rezak Khan and SM Shahjahan placed their submission while Chief Prosecutor Syed Rezaur Rahman appeared for the state.

"We have reached the final stage of the procedure after a long time ... I am grateful to all of you for your kind

cooperation," the judge said. ARGUMENTS

According to the prosecution, the grenade attack on Awami League rally was the outcome of a criminal conspiracy which was finalised at Hawa Bhaban, and at the residence of the then deputy minister Abdus Salam Pintu with Tarique Rahman giving the ultimate endorsement.

Hawa Bhaban, the BNP chief's political office during the four-party rule in 2001-06, had become the alternative centre of power of the government.

The accused came together to have their common interest served by killing the AL chief.

Tarique and his cohorts intended to assassinate Hasina and other AL leaders so that the then government could remain in power "permanently", the prosecution said.

The purpose of Mufti Abdul Hannan, executed leader of militant outfit Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami Bangladesh (Huji) and also an accused, and his cohorts was to establish "fanatic Islam" in the country.

The ministers or lawmakers involved in the plot wanted further promotion and police and intelligence officials looked to be in the government's good books.

They said the grenades were brought from Pakistan by Maulana Tajuddin, brother of Pintu. Before the attack, the accused held meetings in

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