

No talks on Tifa now

Says Boucher

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

US Assistant Secretary of State for South Asia Richard A Boucher yesterday said Dhaka and Washington at this point have no active negotiations on Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (Tifa).

Emerging from a meeting with Foreign Minister Dr Dipu Moni and State Minister Dr Hasan Mahmud at the foreign ministry, he told the reporters that they did not talk about Tifa at the meeting.

"This is a framework agreement which lays down few basic ideas and principles that we can use to discuss further how to expand trade and investment," he said.

While elaborating on the US stance on the much-debated Tifa, Boucher said the new administration in Washington wants to look at various trade agreements and negotiations before they get started again with them.

"I wouldn't be too much



PHOTO PID
US Assistant Secretary of State for South Asia Richard A Boucher calls on Foreign Minister Dr Dipu Moni at her office in the city yesterday.

excited about the framework agreement," he added.

Boucher said Tifa is a simple trade agreement to which both the countries could discuss common issues to boost up trade and investment.

The US State Department official, who arrived here on Saturday to talk to the new government in Bangladesh,

said the United States likes to support strengthening democracy, moving against corruption, working hard against terrorism and bring benefits of economics and development to the people of Bangladesh.

"Those are the areas where US wants to be involved with Bangladesh. We find more and more areas where we can work

together," he said.

Replying to a question about specific issue he discussed with the foreign minister, Boucher said, "The United States is going to be very supportive of Bangladesh."

"We have talked about specific areas of development and priorities and working together against terrorism," he added.

He said US supports proposed Anti-Terrorism Task Force in South Asia which could be organised.

They also talked about climate change, which Boucher said is the high priority for the new administration in Washington as well as the new administration in Dhaka.

During his stay in the capital, Boucher had talks with the prime minister, leader of the opposition, and ministers for home and law, and Speaker of the Jatiya Sangsad.

He wound up his tour through a press conference prior to his departure for India yesterday afternoon.



PHOTO STAR
Guests observe one minute's silence at the inaugural function of the Amar Ekushey programmes at Central Shaheed Minar in the city yesterday. Sammilita Sangskritik Jote organised the event.

SAFMA confce begins tomorrow

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A two-day regional conference of South Asia Free Media Association (SAFMA) will begin at a hotel in Cox's Bazar tomorrow, says a press release.

Foreign Minister Dr Dipu Moni will inaugurate the conference, which will be attended by 250 editors and senior journalists from India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bhutan, Afghanistan, Maldives and host Bangladesh.

Noted economist Prof Rehman Sobhan will present a keynote paper on democracy and autocracy in South Asia while Prof Intiaz Ahmed of Dhaka University will speak on freedom of media in South Asia and democracy.

SAFMA President Reazuddin Ahmed will chair the conference. Jahiduzzaman Faruk, secretary general of SAFMA Bangladesh chapter, will give the welcome speech while SAFMA Secretary General Intiaz Alam will speak on the objectives of the conference.



PHOTO COURTESY
Chief Whip Abdus Shahid submits a nomination paper to Chief Election Commissioner ATM Shamsul Huda at the Election Commission office in the city yesterday on behalf of Zillur Rahman for his candidacy as the party's nominee for the presidential election. (Story on Page 1)

9th Nat'l Rover Moot inaugural ceremony held

METRO DESK

The formal inauguration of the 9th National Rover Moot was held at the Rover Scout Training Centre at Bahadurpur in Gazipur yesterday, says a press release.

Dhaka University Vice Chancellor Prof Dr AAMS Arefin Siddique inaugurated the event as the chief guest.

Md Momtazul Islam, president of Bangladesh Scouts and secretary of the government, chaired the function.

Md Abdus Salam Khan, president of the moot organising committee, delivered the welcome address. Md Abul Kalam Azad, chief national commissioner of Bangladesh Scouts and moot chief, also addressed the gathering.

It may be mentioned that the National Rover Moot began on February 6 at Bahadurpur Rover Palli. About 5000 rover scouts and leaders from all over the country are attending the moot. The theme of the moot is 'Rovering for leadership'.

HC VERDICT ON 5TH AMENDMENT

Hearing on petition challenging it today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Apprehending that the Awami League-led grand alliance government will withdraw the pending appeal against the High Court (HC) verdict declaring illegal the fifth amendment to the Constitution, three Supreme Court (SC) lawyers yesterday filed a petition with the SC seeking permission to contest the judgement at the apex court.

The fifth amendment of the Constitution approved late President Ziaur Rahman's takeover and previous acts from August 15, 1975.

The petitioners stated in the petition that they feel highly aggrieved by the HC judgment since it (judgement) has stripped the citizens of Bangladesh of the identity as 'Bangladeshis' and declared unlawful,

amongst others, the incorporation of the phrases 'Bismillahir Rahmanir Rahim' in the preamble and article 8 of the Constitution.

Munshi Ahsan Kabir, Tajul Islam and Kamruzzaman Bhuiyan filed the petition to allow them to appear as interveners to place arguments at the Appellate Division against the HC verdict.

Tajul Islam, also a supporter of Jamaat-e Islami, yesterday told The Daily Star that since some important constitutional points are involved in the HC verdict, the matters should be disposed of at the Appellate Division.

He said the hearing of the application will be held at the chamber bench of the Appellate Division today (Monday).

On August 29, 2005 the HC bench of Justice ABM Khairul Haque and Justice ATM Fazle Kabir upon a writ petition declared the fifth amendment to the constitution illegal, meaning the rules of Khandaker Mushtaque Ahmed, Abu Sadaat Mohammad Sayem and Maj General Ziaur Rahman from August 15, 1975 to April 9, 1979 were unlawful.

The Appellate Division on September 1, 2005 stayed the HC verdict and asked the government to file a regular leave to appeal with this court against the HC verdict.

The appeal was taken into the cause list for hearing on January 11. But the SC on January 11 adjourned for four weeks the hearing of the appeal filed by then BNP-led alliance government.

Recruit more Bangladeshi workforce

President urges Qatar envoy

UNB, Dhaka

President Iajuddin Ahmed yesterday said Qatar government could be benefited further by recruiting more skilled and semi-skilled workforce from Bangladesh.

He also emphasised on increasing trade between Bangladesh and Qatar as there are potentials for enhancing trade between the two countries.

The president made this remarks when the new Qatar Ambassador to Bangladesh Abdul Rahman Yousuf A-Rahman Al Mullah presented his credentials to him at Bangabhaban.

Congratulating the new

envoy, Iajuddin expressed his satisfaction at the existing warm bilateral relations between the two brotherly countries.

"Bangladesh and Qatar share similar views on the promotion of regional and global peace, stability and security," he said.

The president apprised the envoy of Bangladesh's effort to train workers to suit the requirement of Qatar specially infrastructure building.

He also sought the Ambassador's cooperation in importing more Bangladeshi world class products, including pharmaceuticals, readymade garments, melamine, ceramic and leather products at a com-

petitive price.

Iajuddin thanked the Qatar government for providing financial assistance during cyclone Sidrin 2007.

He also appreciated Qatar for their cooperation to the Islamic University of Technology (IUT) and International Islamic Women University in Bangladesh.

The president informed the envoy that Bangladesh held a free, fair and credible elections in December last year which has been highly appreciated by the world community.

He assured the envoy of all out cooperation and support from the government during his tenure here.

The newly appointed

Ambassador apprised the president that about 70,000 Bangladeshi workers have been contributing in Qatar's socio-economic development.

He also assured the president of providing his all out cooperation in recruiting more workforces from Bangladesh.

The envoy hoped that the two brotherly countries would work together for their mutual interest in the days to come.

Secretary of the President's Office Md Sirajul Islam, Foreign Secretary Md Touhid Hossain, Military Secretary to the President Maj Gen Mohammad Ruhul Amin and President's Press Secretary Abdul Awal Howlader were present.

MUKTIJODDHA SANGSAD

Call for removal of Ahad Chy

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Central Command Council of Bangladesh Muktiyoddha Sangsad yesterday called for removal of its Chairman Ahad Chowdhury.

At a press conference at Dhaka Reporters Unity auditorium, the council leaders

said Ahad was elected chairman in 2001, but soon after his takeover he started indulging in corruption and embezzlement of funds.

They said he raised the cost of ID cards for freedom fighters to Tk 150 from Tk 30 and was responsible for many such irregularities.

The district commanders throughout the country have also demanded his removal for misappropriation of funds, said the speakers.

They alleged that Ahad remained silent despite tortures on freedom fighters to stick with the BNP-Jamaat alliance.

They also claimed that he called a meeting on July 29, 2008 but no commanders were present at the meeting.

Replying to a question the speakers said if there is any corrupt freedom fighter in the country he should also be tried.

Anwar Hossain, vice-chairman, Md Salahuddin, secretary general (administration), and Ismat Kadir Gama, secretary general (planning & finance) of the council, Shamsuzzoha Chowdhury and Captain (ret'd) Md Abul Kashem also spoke at the press conference.



PHOTO PID
Carr Trevillian, director of the US International Crime Investigation Training Programme, meets Law Minister Barrister Shafiq Ahmed at his office in the city yesterday.

TERRORISM, MILITANCY

US to help strengthen law enforcement agencies

Says law minister

UNB, Dhaka

The United States offered to assist Bangladesh government in strengthening the country's law enforcing agencies, including Rab and police, under a joint action plan to control "terrorism and militancy".

A four-member delegation of the US Justice Department gave the proposal at a meeting with Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Barrister Shafiq Ahmed at his office in the city yesterday, as the two sides discussed a wide range of issues.

Carr Trevillian, director of the US International Crime Investigation Training Programme, and State Minister for Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Advocate M Qamrul Islam were present.

The meeting over, the law minister told reporters: "Discussions were held with the delegation about the work plan as to how the two countries can work together in tackling terrorism. They placed a number of proposals

with us." He said they held preliminary discussions on a number of matters yesterday and more talks to take place in this regard in the future.

Replying to a question, Barrister Shafiq said they did not have any talks on signing agreement on terrorism and militancy.

"The main subject of the discussion was to tackle terrorism and militancy," he said.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has already proposed to form a joint taskforce with other South Asian nations for a joint combat against terrorism and militancy.

Visiting at the same time, US Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs Richard A Boucher hailed the proposal and extended his government's help.

The law minister noted that the government is agreeable to the proposed US support for strengthening the law-enforcing agencies, including the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) and the police.

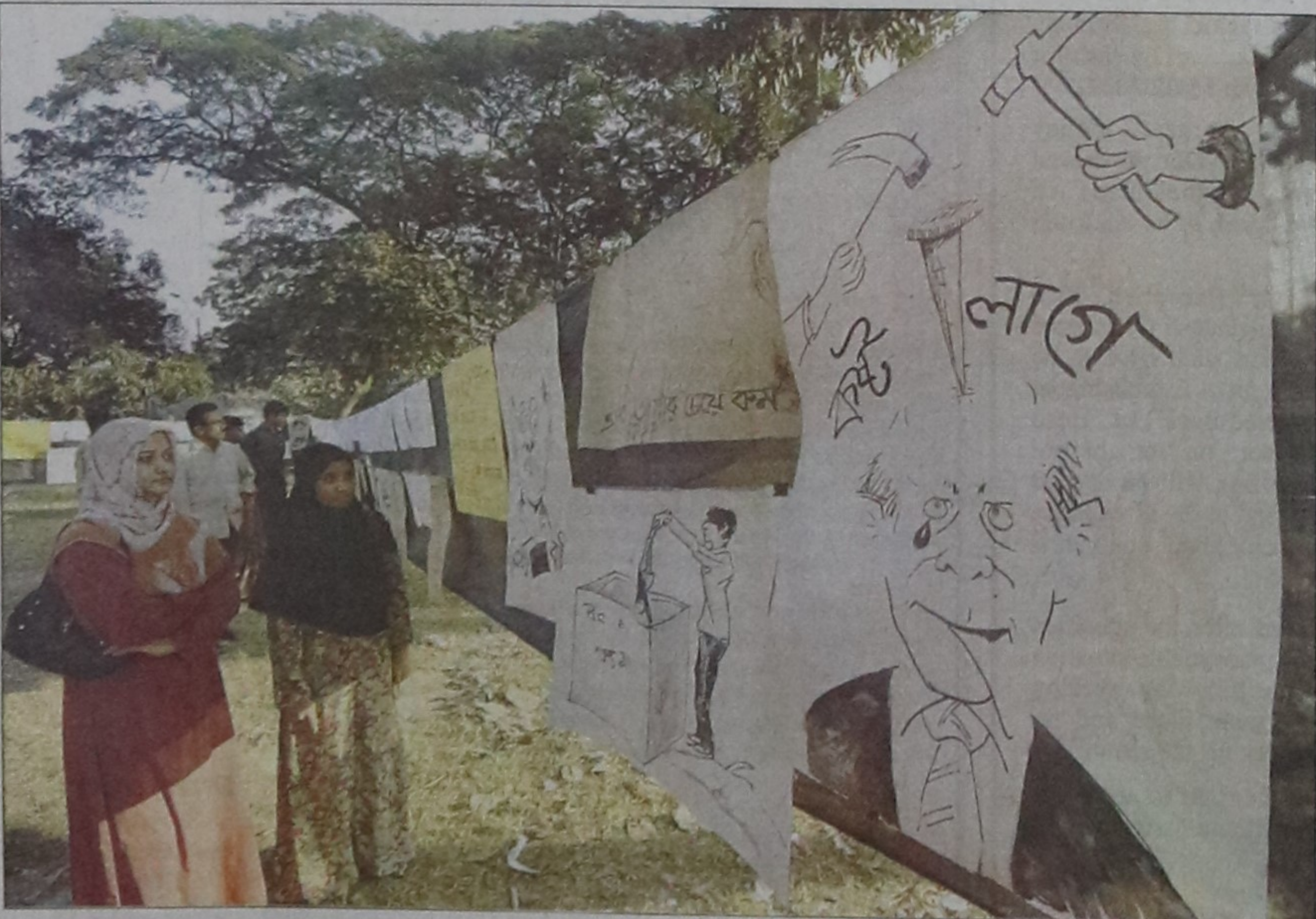


PHOTO STAR
The candidates who came out successful in the 1st phase result of the 27th BCS exams but were later dropped as per the 2nd phase result organise a cartoon show at the Central Shaheed Minar in the city yesterday demanding appointment to their respective cadres.

Inviting Nominations for:
9th Bangladesh Business Awards 2008
To Learn more visit :
www.dhl.com.bd or www.thedailystar.net
Nomination Deadline: February 19, 2009