

Ticfa won't harm national security

Dipu Moni tells Sangsad the pact with US to boost trade

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Foreign Minister Dipu Moni yesterday said the signing of Ticfa with the USA would not harm Bangladesh's national security.

"The main objective of the accord is to boost trade and investment between the two countries," Dipu Moni said in a scripted reply in parliament.

Replying to lawmakers' queries, she said Trade and Investment Cooperation Framework Agreement (Ticfa) could be signed at a convenient time, as the draft of the deal had already been approved in the cabinet.

Referring to a High Court verdict, Dipu Moni said there was no obliga-

tion to place the treaty in parliament, as it was a bilateral deal.

Once signed, the agreement would be posted on the websites of foreign affairs and commerce ministries, the minister said.

In reply to another query, she said the number of deaths of Bangladeshis at the hands of BSF in border areas had come down "significantly" in recent years.

The issue had been discussed with the Indian authority to stop border killings, Dipu Moni said.

The minister said 47 people were killed in border areas in the last one-and-a-half years while the number was 79 in 2005.



A woman tries to cook lunch in a wood-burning stove in Begunbari while vehicles queue up at a natural gas filling station in Mohakhali in the capital with no gas to dispense after the country suffered a major gas production disruption yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

AMINBAZAR KILLING

Victims' parents want speedy trial of killers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two years into the killing of six students on a Shab-e-Barat night, parents of the victims yesterday demanded transferring their murder case to the Speedy Trial Tribunal for its quick disposal.

An angry mob, equipped with bamboo sticks and sharp weapons, bludgeoned the six and left one severely injured after calling them robbers.

The killing took place at Aminbazar on the outskirts of the capital on July 18, 2011.

At a press conference yesterday, the parents also expressed their frustration over the slow trial procedure as the first hearing of the case will take place at a Session Judge's Court in Dhaka today.

today.

The court fixed the hearing date after Rapid Action Battalion pressed charges against 60 people in the case on January 13 this year.

"We want quick completion of the trial and capital punishment for the killers," Beauty Begum, the mother of one of the victims Ibrahim Khalil, told reporters.

The press conference was held at Crime Reporters' Association of Bangladesh in the capital.

"We are concerned about our own security as the killers are still moving freely," said a weeping Shahnoor Begum, mother of the another deceased, Palash.

The six dead were identified as Tipu Sultan of Tejaon

College; Towhidur Rahman Palash, Kamruzzaman Kanto and Ibrahim Khalil of Mirpur Bangla College; Shams Rahim Shamam of Maple Leaf International School, and Staf Jabi Munif of Bangladesh University of Business and Technology.

AlAmin, a sales representative of a juice company, became the lone survivor.

"There were around 15 persons in the mob on that night. As their torch lights were pointed at our eyes, I could not identify them in the night," said Al-Amin at the press conference.

Parents of the victims also alleged that law enforcers put as many as 60 names in the list of the accused only to linger the case procedure.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Obama to give major speech tomorrow

AFP, Washington

US President Barack Obama will give a major speech on climate change tomorrow in which he will propose a "national plan" to curb carbon pollution despite resistance from Congress.

Obama has made taking action on climate change a key goal of his second term but will have to rely on the powers of the presidency as the Republican-led House of Representatives would likely block any fresh legislation.

"I'll lay out my vision for where I believe we need to go -- a national plan to reduce carbon pollution, prepare our country for the impacts of climate change, and lead global efforts to fight it," Obama said Saturday.

Gas shock halts life

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on Saturday. Its US operator Chevron had noticed a leaking gasket in its gas processing plant that needed urgent repair.

The Bibiyana field meets about one-third of the country's daily demand for gas.

On the shutdown, Chevron yesterday said: "After verifying the integrity of all systems, the gas plant resumed full production at approximately 6:15am Sunday [yesterday]."

Engineer Nawshad Islam, managing director (additional charge) of Titas, said since Chevron had informed about the emergency shutdown, Titas staff were busy on Saturday night managing the gas load to minimise its impact.

"Initially, it was

expected that the Bibiyana field would be up and running within hours. But it took the whole night. Therefore, the impact was great," he added.

The effect of the shutdown, however, was not felt before early morning yesterday due to Titas' load management and also because the gas accumulated in the pipeline lasted till late night. The pressure started to fall significantly after that.

Nawshad noted that the gas pressure at Tejgaon in the noon was only 20 pounds per square inch (psi) instead of 150 psi. (Even at peak hours, it drops down to 70-80 psi.)

"So this was like there is no gas," he said.

The biggest blow was suffered by the gas-powered Jamuna Fertiliser factory. To keep this fac-

tory up and running, Titas tried to divert gas from other places, but it tripped due to lack of gas pressure.

"The problem with a fertiliser factory is once it trips, it takes 8-9 days to start full production. Whereas a power plant can resume production within a short time," Nawshad said.

Power plants at Siddhirganj also went out of operation and the power generation at AES Meghnaghat and Haripur went down to a dangerous level.

At present, the country consumes around 2,250 million cubic feet of gas per day -- leaving a short supply of 500 mmcf.

The gas crisis is set to become worse in the coming days as there had been no major gas field discovery in the recent years.

GAZIPUR POLLS

AL seeks JP support

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Awami League (AL) last night sought Jatiya Party's all-out support in the Gazipur City Corporation polls scheduled for July 6.

AL presidium member Obaidul Quader and its Joint General Secretary Jahangir Kabir Nanak sought JP Chairman HM Ershad's support during a meeting at the latter's residence in the capital.

At the meeting, the JP chief expressed his disappointment, saying the AL had supported its candidates in the recently held city corporation elections without consulting its partners in the grand alliance, sources said.

The AL delegation also invited Ershad to have tea together with Prime Minister and AL president Sheikh Hasina within a couple of days.

JP Secretary General Ruhul Amin Hawlader and its presidium member Ziauddin Ahmed Bablu, among others, were present at the meeting.

Contacted Bablu, also political advisor to Ershad, told The Daily Star that it was a courtesy call on Ershad by the AL leaders.

Bad-mouthing

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Bappy's twice.

Protesting the vulgar words, AL lawmaker M Abdul Latif refrained from taking part in the budget discussion and, in an unprecedented move, walked out of the sitting.

Prime Minister and AL chief Sheikh Hasina was present at that time while Leader of the Opposition Khaleda Zia was absent.

"I felt ashamed at the way abusive and unparliamentary language was used in the sacred House. Instead of taking part in the budget discussion, I am leaving this place to protest such bad mouthing," Latif, who was elected from Chittagong, said.

As opposition MPs started clapping, a lamenting Latif told them, "Why you [opposition MPs] are clapping? I have not mentioned any particular party or any particular MPs name. You should be ashamed of what happened today in parliament."

During her speech, starting around 6:30pm, BNP MP Ranu made derogatory comments on Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, Hasina, her son Sajeeb Wajed Joy and late husband Wajed Mia.

As the Speaker requested her to speak on budget, Ranu said, "You [Speaker] shouldn't play one-sided role...you're spineless...you will not find any single word in my speech to expunge from the proceedings."

Angered at Ranu's comments, several ruling party MPs including Chief Whip Abdus Shahid, Sheikh Selim, Dipu Moni, Abdul Matin Khasru, Aslamul Haq, Joynal Abdin and Tarana Halim stood up and started shouting. It was around 6:42pm.

Aslamul Haq and Joynal Abdin even left their seats and approached the opposition bench. But other MPs stopped the duo.

Treasury bench MPs started shouting "shame, shame!"

Ranu, at one stage of her speech, said Wajed Mia had been tortured by his wife. The Speaker for the last time switched off the microphone and the stipulated 17 minutes for the lawmaker had expired.

Taking the floor around 7:15pm, Fazilatunnesa Bappy made offensive remarks on late president Ziaur Rahman, Khaleda Zia and their family. She also wanted to know about Khaleda's relationship with "the man who accompanies the opposition leader every time she goes to Saudi Arabia to perform umrah."

In protest, the opposition lawmakers staged a walkout for around 10 minutes.

BNP leader

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crimes, which left at least 50 people dead, eight others seriously injured and two women raped, the agency said.

Besides, the suspect was "involved" in forced conversion of nine Hindus, setting fire to numerous houses and two temples, and deportation of seven people, it added.

Prosecutor Muklesur Rahman Badal yesterday told reporters that they had also submitted the investigation report, statements of witnesses and other documents to the registrar's office.

On the allegations, Badal said Khokon was a "self-proclaimed Razakar" who preferred to introduce himself as a collaborator in

his locality.

Khokon's elder brother Zafar, who was also a Razakar leader, and some other Pakistani army men were killed in a battle with freedom fighters at Chandhaat on May 29, 1971, Badal said.

After Zafar's death, Khokon became the leader of the Razakar force in Nagarkanda and his force along with the Pakistani army had committed several crimes including murder, rape, and forced conversion there.

Badal said they had pressed 10 charges in connection with 13 incidents, as some of those incidents had taken place on the same day. There were 50 prosecution witnesses in the case, he added.

According to the investigation agency, Khokon, who was a close associate of Abul Kalam Azad, a condemned war criminal from Faridpur, had taken part in an election campaign for a Jamaat-e-Islami candidate in 1970, and was involved with the party. Later, he joined the BNP.

As the vice-president of Nagarkanda unit BNP, Khokon contested the municipality election in 2011 and became its mayor. After taking the oath, he went into hiding and the agency "assumed" that he is now in Sweden with his son and daughter.

The tribunal would decide about taking the case into cognisance as per relevant laws.

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Mentioning that the deposition Salauddin had given so far would not be helpful for his defence, Justice Kabir again asked him to shorten his deposition and keep it on the charges framed against him.

"I can't make it short," Salauddin said reiterating his claim that he was being tried for his father's role during the Liberation War.

The tribunal reassured him that he was not being tried for his father AKM Fazlul Quader Chowdhury's role during the war.

Since June 17, Salauddin, as the first defence witness in the crimes against humanity case against him, has been testifying and speaking largely about his family, his father, his beliefs, perceptions, and anecdotes on

British rule, contribution of Muslim intellectuals in the subcontinent, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, and the country's political situation during the last caretaker government rule.

Facing objections from the prosecution that his deposition was immaterial to the war crimes charges against him, Salauddin claimed that everything that he had said was important to prove him innocent.

Yesterday morning, Salauddin narrated how politicians were "persecuted" during the tenure of caretaker government regime that came to power after the January 11, 2007, change over, popularly known as 1/11.

"The collaborators of this unholy enterprise were the

ambitious members of the mercenary class who felt marginalised by the democratic constitutional process," he said, adding that the class included a section of the media, a section of the civil and military bureaucrats and some jurists of questionable integrity.

"The media syndicate was led by an editor of a rag sheet popularly known as The Delhi Star," he said, adding that the jurists supporting the 1/11 regime were led by an eminent constitutional expert.

In the afternoon session, prosecutor Sultan Mahmud Simon drew the attention of the tribunal by saying that the witness might have misspoken and said "The Delhi Star" instead of "The Daily Star".

Salauddin then said it was

indeed The Delhi Star and therefore the court record of his deposition was correct and that he is cautious when he talks about sensitive matters.

Defending himself, the war crimes accused said, "The current persecution of populist leaders is only a continuation of similar objectives pursued by 1/11 bandits, for example, barring populist politicians from contesting in elections."

Mentioning that the International Crimes Tribunal Act, 1973, was enacted by Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, Salauddin said the current parliament, by amending the act in 2009, superseded Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

The proceeding of the case was adjourned until today.

Shab-e-Barat

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progress of their families and relatives.

According to Muslim belief, on this night, Allah, the almighty, decides the fate of all human beings for the coming year taking into account their past deeds.

Muslims across the country would visit graves of their near and dear ones and offer special munajat on this night of fortune.

President M Abdul Hamid, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and Leader of the Opposition Khaleda Zia in separate messages greeted the Muslims on the holy occasion.

Islamic Foundation and other religious organisations have outlined elaborate programmes, including discussions, Hamd, Naat, Milad, Zikr and Doa.

Bangladesh Television, Bangladesh Betar, private television channels and radio stations will air special programmes on the occasion.

The daily newspapers will publish special articles highlighting the significance of Shab-e-Barat.

Transfer Yusuf's case to tribunal-2

Appeals war crimes prosecution

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The prosecution has appealed to the International Crimes Tribunal-1 for transfer of the war crimes case against Jamaat-e-Islami leader AKM Yusuf to the tribunal-2 for its "quick disposal".

Hrishikesh Saha, the conducting prosecutor of the case, yesterday filed a petition through the registrar's office of the tribunal seeking transfer of the case.

The prosecutor yesterday told The Daily Star that a number of cases remained pending before the tribunal-1, while the tribunal-2 was dealing with only a few cases.

"So, we filed the petition seeking transfer of the case for its quick disposal," he said.

cally known as the founder of infamous Razakar force, into cognisance.

Law enforcers arrested him on that day following an arrest warrant issued by the court. Later, the court fixed July 1 for hearing on charge framing against Yusuf.

On May 8, the prosecution pressed 15 charges against the Jamaat leader for his alleged involvement in genocide and crimes against humanity committed during the Liberation War in 1971.

Cases against war crimes accused Motiur Rahman Nizami, Mir Quasem Ali, Salauddin Quader Chowdhury and Mobarak Hossain are pending before the tribunal-1 while cases against Abdul Alim, Chowdhury Mueenuddin and Ashrafuzzaman Khan are pending before the tribunal-2.