

STUDYING ABROAD Bangladeshi students need not worry about US visa policy Says Dipu Moni

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Education Minister Dr Dipu Moni said the US visa policy will not affect the students who want to study at US universities.



She also said the government is not feeling any pressure because of the visa restrictions imposed on some Bangladeshis.

She made the remark while talking to the journalists after the inauguration ceremony of the 50th National Summer Sports Competition in Sylhet yesterday.

"The [US] visa policy will not affect students going abroad [for

"Many of their [US] universities depend on foreign students' fees,"

Education Minister Dipu Moni

studies]. Because they want our students to go to their country. Many of their universities depend on foreign students' fees," the minister said.

She also said, "The government is not feeling any pressure. We are committed to conducting a free, fair, neutral and transparent election under the leadership of Bangabandhu's daughter Sheikh Hasina."

The minister added, "We have an independent Election Commission, and it will conduct the election. According to the constitution, the government will give full support to the commission and the people of Bangladesh will elect their next government through a free and fair election."

Washington on September 22 said it had begun applying the visa restrictions the US announced on May 24 this year. It said it imposed visa restrictions on members of law enforcement, the ruling party, and the political opposition.

On May 24 this year, the US said it would impose visa restrictions on individuals and their immediate family members "if they are responsible for, or complicit in, undermining the democratic election process in Bangladesh."



Even footpaths are not spared from traffic jam, as motorcycles and bicycles illegally occupy the space meant for pedestrian movement. The photo was taken near the capital's Bangla Motor yesterday.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

India to look into any 'specific' info

Says Jaishankar on Sikh leader's murder in Canada

REUTERS

India's Foreign Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar said on Tuesday that India has told Canada it was open to looking into any "specific" or "relevant" information it provides on the killing of Sikh separatist Hardeep Singh Nijjar.

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said last week that Ottawa had credible intelligence linking Indian agents to the murder, prompting an angry initial reaction from New Delhi, which denies the allegation.

Asked about the allegations at a Council on Foreign Relations event in New York, Jaishankar detailed India's response in diplomatic engagements.

"One, we told the Canadians that this is not the government of India's policy," he said. "Two, we told the Canadians saying that look, if you have something specific, if you have something relevant, you know, let us know - we are open to looking at it."

India last week suspended new visas for Canadians and asked Ottawa to reduce its diplomatic presence in the country, citing

what it called a deteriorating security environment.

India had been "badgering the Canadians" about its claims that organized criminals are based there, a reference to separatists like Nijjar, he said, adding that India had made "a large number of extradition requests."

"The picture is not complete without the context," he added. "You also have to appreciate that in the last few years, Canada actually has seen a lot of organized crime, you know, relating to, you know, the secessionist forces, organized-crime, violence, extremism, they're all very, very deeply mixed up."

Allies of Canada, including the United States, have cautiously expressed concern over the claims and urged India to cooperate with Canada's investigation.

The US ambassador to Canada told Canadian television that some information on the case had been gathered by the Five Eyes intelligence alliance, which includes the US, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, the UK.



US VISA CURBS

Inclusion of media not 'a right choice' Says Shahriar Alam

UNB, Dhaka

State Minister for Foreign Affairs Shahriar Alam yesterday said the inclusion of media under the US visa restrictions does not seem to be "a right choice, or right thing to do or say."

"There, you have a say, too. We expect they will not take any steps that interfere in the freedom of the media or limit its freedom," he told reporters.

The state minister hopes that the US administration will look into why the US ambassador in Dhaka, Peter Haas, mentioned the media when talking about visa restrictions.

He said this was not an issue that should worry general people.

Bangladesh expects the new US visa policy will not be applied arbitrarily or in a non-objective manner, he added.

The United States has said its visa restriction policy can be applied to anyone "found to be undermining" democratic elections in Bangladesh.

Bodies of mother, 2 sons recovered from river

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

The bodies of a woman and her two children were recovered from the Tinnoi river in Thakurgaon's Ranisankail upazila yesterday.

The deceased are Nasiman Begum, 35, wife of Abdur Rahim of Kashidanga village, and her two sons Shawon, 8, and Sifat, 4.

Quoting locals, UP Chairman Atiqur Rahman said that Nasiman went to the river with her two sons in the afternoon.

The bodies of the boys were later found floating about 200 yards away from the spot where they were last seen. Nasiman's body was also later recovered.

Contacted, Inspector Mohosin Ali of Ranisankail Police Station confirmed the deaths and said, "We are investigating the matter."

The bodies will be sent to the morgue for autopsy, the inspector said.

The reason behind their death will be ascertained after investigation, he added.

Truck helper, biker killed in road crash

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Chattogram

Two people were killed after a bus hit a motorcycle and a mini truck on the Chattogram-Cox's Bazar highway in the Ansar camp area of Chattogram's Patiya upazila early yesterday.

The deceased were identified as Azizur Rahman Khokon, the motorbike rider, and Syed Azam, the helper of the mini truck, Patiya Highway Police Station Officer-in-charge (OC) Snehanshu Bikash Sarker told The Daily Star.

The accident happened around 1:00am when the mini truck was taking a u-turn on the highway with the motorcycle stopped behind it.

At that moment, a Chattogram-bound Eagle Paribahan bus ramed both the motorcycle and truck from behind, leaving Khokon and Azam dead on the spot.

On information, police rushed to the spot and recovered the bodies. Both bodies were handed over to their respective families after completing legal procedures.

4.5 tonnes government rice seized from UP chairman's relatives

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

A total of 135 sacks containing 4.5 tonnes of government rice were seized from the houses of two relatives of a union parishad chairman in Lakhai upazila of Habiganj late Tuesday night.

The upazila administration found the rice sacks while raiding the kitchens at the houses of Churuk Molla and Ismail Molla, cousins of Morakari UP Chairman Abul Kashem Molla Faisal, said Lakhai Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) Nahida Sultana.

The rice was supposed to be distributed to poor people through the Vulnerable Women Benefit (VWB) programme.

Upazila Women's Affairs Officer Piara Begum filed a case against Churuk and Ismail following the raid.

UNO Nahida, who led the operation, said, "Legal action will be taken against the UP chairman if there is any evidence of his involvement found in the incident."

BB moves to stem slide in reserve

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gross foreign currency reserves stood at \$21.15 billion, which is enough to meet four months' import bill at best.

"We forecast foreign exchange reserves to stay under pressure, driven by rising imports and foreign currency intervention by the central bank," Fitch said in a report earlier this week.

Reserves cannot be allowed to drop any further, said Mansur, also a former economist of the International Monetary Fund.

"There are both short-term and long-term issues with reserves. In the short term, which is until the election, you have to monitor it very closely and you cannot let it fall too far such that market sentiment is disturbed. If needed, you send teams to monitor in both morning and evening."

The government has already failed to maintain the minimum net international reserves of \$24.46 billion at the end of June to get the second tranche of its \$4.5 billion loan from the IMF sanctioned.

While not much can be done before the polls, after the election various measures must be taken to reform the banking sector, particularly the state banks, said Mansur, also a former chairman of Brac Bank.

The government will have to cut its expenditure so that the central bank would not need to print fresh money, he said.

Last fiscal year, the government took a record Tk 98,000 crore in loans from the BB to run its operations.

The injection of such funds, known as high-powered money, stokes inflationary pressure and Bangladesh is already witnessing an extended run of elevated inflation because of that.

Inflation advanced 23 basis points

in August to 9.92 percent propelled by food inflation, which hit a 12-year-high.

"The central bank officials have informed us that they have already stopped funding to the government by printing fresh money," Mansur said, adding that the BB is prepared to take a raft of measures for the betterment of the banking sector.

23 types

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Turkey's Armed Personnel Carrier (APC) and Multiple Launch Rocket System (MLRS), Singapore's Automatic Grenade Launcher (AGL), Serbia and Turkey's Regimental Field Artillery Weapon System, Spain's Fixed Wing Medium Utility Aircraft, South Africa's Semi-Automatic Grenade Launcher (SAGL), Turkey's Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV), and China's Surface to Air Missile (SAM) System.

Eight types of combat equipment have been added to the navy. These include Khulna Shipyard- and China-made Patrol Craft (PC), Chinese frigate, various types of Chinese missiles and accessories, Italian utility helicopters, and Landing Craft Tank (LCT) made in Khulna Shipyard.

Four types of combat equipment have been added to the air force. These include the UK's MK-5 aircraft, France's air defense radar, Italy's Fixed Wing Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) and Germany's primary trainer aircraft.

Standing committee members Muhammad Faruk Khan, Motahar Hossain, Nazmul Hasan, Nasir Uddin, Mohibur Rahman and Naheed Ezaher Khan attended the meeting, with committee Chairman Muhammad Shubid Ali Bhuiyan in the chair.



PHOTO: REUTERS

Rescuers remove debris from a house heavily damaged by recent shelling in the course of Russia-Ukraine conflict in Donetsk, Ukraine yesterday.

Hasina's birthday today

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among its grassroots, Hasina emerged as a symbol of party unity. She was elected unanimously as the AL president while living in exile in New Delhi.

On her return home on May 17, 1981, Hasina was greeted by a mammoth crowd in the capital. She addressed a public rally.

The leaders and activists of the party were invigorated upon her return to the country.

Hasina, who then focused on reorganising the party, made numerous visits to the rural areas, talked to the grassroots leaders, and encouraged them to be united.

She also waged a movement against the then autocratic government to restore democracy in the country.

With hard work and perseverance, Hasina helped the party assume power. She became the prime minister for the first time in 1996.

Hasina is now serving a fourth term as the PM. She has been in charge of the prime minister for three consecutive terms since 2009.

Despite her many achievements, some controversies and initiatives take some shine off the PM's glorious legacy. She faces the biggest criticism over the growing lack of public trust in

the electoral system and rule of law. The weakening of the country's democratic institutions and enactment of laws shrinking the freedom of expression and the media have also been criticised.

Hasina is now in the USA. She had left the country on April 17 to join the 78th United Nations General Assembly in New York.

In her absence, the AL and its associate and front organisations, including Chhatra League, have drawn up elaborate programmes to observe the day.

The AL will organise a milad and dua mahfil marking the premier's birthday and Eid-e-Miladunnabi at the party headquarters on the capital's Bangabandhu Avenue today.

Special prayers will be held at mosques across the country, including the Baitul Mukarram national mosque, and other places of worship seeking good health and long life of the PM.

Marking the occasion, a discussion will be held at the Bangabandhu International Conference Centre at 3:00pm tomorrow.

Meanwhile, President Mohammed Shahabuddin yesterday in a message wished sound health, long life, peace, progress and continued wellbeing of PM Hasina on the occasion of her 77th birthday anniversary, reports BSS.

Nasty game, not injury

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I returned at the request of the prime minister.

Tamim, who is carrying a recurring back injury, said he worked very hard for the past two months to get fit.

"Those who were involved in the process, physios and trainers, will all agree that there was no session or exercise that they wanted me to do which I did not comply with," he said.

He said the New Zealand series was a real test for him to see how his fitness had improved.

After missing the chance in the first game due to rain, Tamim scored a fluent 44 in the second match.

"After that game I was very happy mentally. I was looking forward to playing again and I was looking forward to the World Cup," said the 34-year-old batter.

He said that the pain was still there after both games and that he had informed the physio and the selectors about it.

"I want to clear one thing: I never at any moment or time said that I would not be able to play more than five matches (in the World Cup). I don't know who fed this lie to media or how."

"What I told the selectors is that my body would be like this. Pain will be there. So, when you select the team, keep that in mind," he said, adding that he communicated it in good faith to avoid another controversy such as the one during the Afghanistan series, when it was circulated in the media that if someone is not fit, he should not play.

"I was surprised at that time because I played that game (first ODI against Afghanistan) after agreement with the coach and physio."

He said he would challenge anyone regarding his current medical report, which he claimed to have seen.

The report said if Tamim was rested for the third ODI against New Zealand and played the second warm-up game in India on October 2, then he would have completed his 10-week rehabilitation.

"Nowhere in the report was it said

that I would not be able to play more than five games.

"I don't think injury played a big role in my exclusion from the World Cup. I have pain but I'm not injured," he stressed.

When told to bat down the order or sit out games, Tamim responded: "I told him that we have another 12-13 days and that I would be in good condition by then. Why won't I play?"

Tamim said that such incidents made him feel that someone was intentionally putting obstacles in his path to dishearten him.

"What I said to him is that if you have such a plan then don't send me to World Cup. I don't want to be part of this nasty thing," Tamim said, adding had those terms been presented differently, his reaction perhaps would have been different.

"I'm not sure how fair it is," he said, adding that one or two episodes can be a misunderstanding, but when seven episodes happen to one cricketer in the last three or four months, it is done intentionally.

"That is what I felt."

Miladunnabi today

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On the occasion of the holy Eid-e-Miladunnabi, Islamic Foundation has drawn up different programmes.

State Minister for Religious Affairs Md Faridul Haque Khan will inaugurate the programme today at Baitul Mukarram national mosque, said a press release.

Prior to this, the state minister will inaugurate the month-long Islamic book fair outside the national mosque after Asr prayers.

The other programmes of the Islamic Foundation include recitation of the holy Quran and doa mahfil, holding a seminar, and arranging Islamic cultural competition.

Besides, various programmes will be organised in all divisional and district offices of Islamic Foundation, 50 Islamic missions and seven imam training academies on the occasion of the Eid-e-Miladunnabi.