



We're open to nuclear energy deal with US

Says Shama Obaed

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka is positive about signing civilian nuclear energy cooperation with the US, State Minster for Foreign Affairs Shama Obaed Islam said yesterday.

"We are positive. If any agreement with the US is beneficial for our bilateral relations and is in the interest of Bangladesh and its economy, we will proceed. If not, we will reconsider," she told journalists.

Shama Obaed made the comment when she was asked about the government position on a US proposal for cooperation on civilian nuclear energy.

The US side shared the draft of an MoU on civilian nuclear cooperation during the meeting between Foreign Minister Khalilur Rahman and US Special Envoy for South and Central Asia Sergio Gor on July 30, said a foreign ministry official.

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Firefighters work as a wildfire burns on Mount Kithairon, Greece, yesterday. Hundreds of Greek firefighters battled a wildfire northwest of Athens for a fourth day yesterday after strong and erratic winds helped it devastate homes, pine forests and thousands of hectares of farmland, forcing emergency evacuations by land and sea. PHOTO: REUTERS

LOCAL GOVT POLLS

Jamaat, NCP solo bids question alliance's future

SHAMIMA RITA *and* MAMUNUR RASHID

The central and grassroots leaders of Jamaat-e-Islami and the National Citizen Party (NCP) have questioned the alliance's future after Jamaat decided to contest the local government elections on its own.

"Since both the parties would be competing against one another in the local polls, it's natural to question the alliance's effectiveness," said a senior NCP leader.

For instance, in the mayoral poll for Dhaka South City Corporation, Jamaat is likely to field DUCSU vice-president Abu Shadik Kayem as its candidate, and NCP will nominate Asif Mahmud Shojib Bhuyain. Both played central roles in the July Uprising.

Whether the current alliance can remain intact under those circumstances is a big question, said several mid- to senior NCP leaders on the condition of anonymity.

The issue was discussed at several meetings, including the recently held NCP Political Council, where it was decided that the matter could be settled at a general meeting after the party's July programme concludes.

"We discussed what would happen if we stayed in the alliance and what would happen if we left at the Political Council meeting," said a senior NCP leader involved with central organisational affairs.

Several NCP leaders questioned the validity of staying in the alliance.

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Suu Kyi makes first public appearance since coup

AFP, *Yangon*

Myanmar's detained democratic leader Aung San Suu Kyi met with a Red Cross representative yesterday, the humanitarian group said, her first publicised meeting with a foreign official since she was ousted in a 2021 coup.

The military deposed Suu Kyi in February 2021, jailing the Nobel Peace Prize laureate and triggering an ongoing civil war that has killed more than 100,000 people, according to monitor ACLED.

The coup leader and former junta chief, Min Aung Hlaing, was installed as civilian president in April following highly restricted elections, which did not include Suu Kyi's party.

A spokesperson for the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) told AFP that its resident representative to Myanmar, Arnaud de Baecque, visited Suu Kyi yesterday.

The visit included the opportunity to speak with Suu Kyi "in private", the ICRC said in a statement.

Suu Kyi's son, Kim Aris, has sought independently verified proof that his mother is alive after she was transferred from prison to house arrest in April following Min Aung Hlaing's change in position.

Iran denies US talks underway

Says Hormuz route with entry, exit lanes discussed with Oman

AGENCIES

Iran denied any negotiations were taking place with the United States after President Donald Trump said new talks were due to begin yesterday in an effort to end their war, now in its sixth month.

Trump said talks were due yesterday, no deal deadline

Six Saudi tankers turn away from Gulf of Aden

Oil slumps on hopes of Iran deal, yen firms

The rebuttal by the Iranian foreign ministry follows Trump saying he had held off launching new strikes on the Islamic republic to allow for further diplomatic efforts, a familiar pattern in the conflict.

Trump last week threatened to hit Iran "very hard", with the US leader reportedly considering renewed attacks including against energy infrastructure. But the president pulled back from that threat Saturday evening, saying the "perimeters" of a deal were there.

As he returned to Washington from a weekend in New Jersey, Trump told reporters on Sunday evening: "Now what we're doing is we're talking to them in the form of a negotiation. It begins tomorrow [Monday] afternoon". He declined to set a deadline for an agreement and did not provide details of the venue or participants.

Iran, however, denied there were currently negotiations taking place. "We are not currently negotiating with the United States," said foreign ministry spokesman Esmaeil Baghaei during a weekly press briefing yesterday.

Iran has been discussing with Oman creating a new route through the Hormuz that would be one path with entry and exit lanes, Baghaei added.

The Hormuz shipping route is a major sticking point in efforts to end the war. Iran has obstructed vessels attempting to

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The river took her land, her pride too



S DILIP ROY *and* DULI MOLLIK

Sakhina Begum had seen better days once upon a time. It was another life when she was part of a well-to-do family, and villagers called her *Mondol-er bou*. Now she has grown old and frail, and her husband has lost all his land to the ravenous Brahmaputra.

Under the harsh midday sun, 68-year-old Sakhina Begum was drying paddy. Beside her sat her husband, Khatib Uddin Mondol, 73. Their sunburnt bodies were bent and broken with age, yet the old couple carefully gathered each grain into a clay pot.

Midway through, Sakhina stopped. She ran her hand lightly over the drying paddy, as though returning to a field from decades past.

Then, almost in a whisper, she said, "These days I long for someone to call me Mondol's wife..."

There were no tears, only yearning in her voice. It was not just a form of address that she longed for. She was mourning the loss of an identity that had been swallowed by the river.

At 16, Sakhina was married into the Mondol family in Kachkol village, around five kilometres from Char Fakirer Hat in Kurigram. Besides a happy home, marriage also gave her a new identity. One that carried prestige and status that made her proud.

Gradually, people stopped calling her Sakhina. To the village, she simply became *Mondol-er bou* (Mondol's wife). That by itself was enough to say who she was and where she stood.

"I loved it when everyone called me that," she recalled.

Her husband was a respected farmer. The family owned 16 bighas of arable land, a sprawling 12-decimal homestead and a courtyard filled with mango, jackfruit and litchi trees. Crops grew almost year-round. Villagers knew Khatib simply as Mondol.

And she endearingly turned into *Mondol-er bou*.

To outsiders, it may have sounded like nothing more than a nickname. But within the village, it represented something much deeper -- a woman's place in the community, her dignity, trust and standing as part of a farming household.

"In the first few years after our marriage, my husband wouldn't even let me work in the fields," Sakhina said. "I was the new bride. That gave me a certain standing."

Eventually, she joined him in farming. Having grown up in a farming household herself, she knew the work well. Together

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Sakhina Begum, 68, and her husband, Khatib Uddin Mondal, 73, dry their harvested paddy on the Brahmaputra. PHOTO: S DILIP ROY

LATEST TARIFFS

25 US states sue Trump admin

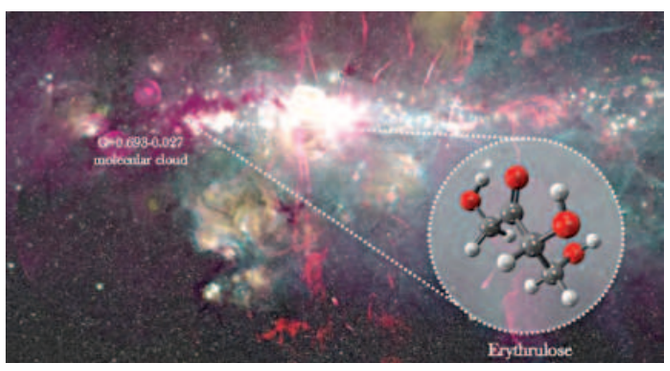
REUTERS, *New York*

A group of 25 Democratic-led US states sued President Donald Trump's administration yesterday, challenging the president's latest round of tariffs on goods from 60 trading partners, according to the office of Oregon Attorney General Dan Rayfield.

The Trump administration on July 24 imposed new tariffs of 10% and 12.5% on 60 trading partners, including the European Union, over allegations that they were not doing enough to stop the export of goods produced with forced labour. The tariffs went into effect just as a previous 10% global tariff expired.

The states' lawsuit filed in the US Court of International Trade in New York follows previous challenges by small US businesses, which sued to block the tariffs on the day they went into effect last month. States and businesses have challenged previous global tariffs imposed by Trump in his second term, but he has continued to pursue new tariffs despite a series of legal setbacks.

Sugar found in deep space linked to life on earth



INDEPENDENT ONLINE

Scientists have found natural sugars floating in interstellar space and it could fundamentally change the search for alien life.

Researchers spotted erythrulose, found on Earth in raspberries and fake tan, towards the middle of our galaxy.

It could help answer one of the biggest questions about the origins of life on Earth and how it could have formed elsewhere in the universe.

Sugars are central to living organisms: they are the backbone of the DNA and RNA that makes us up and help power key biological processes. Researchers also think they would have played a key role in the beginning of life.

But despite that importance, astronomers still do not know how those sugars could have formed, here or elsewhere. Experiments in laboratories, for instance, show that they would not form in the conditions that were around before life was.

Astronomers have previously found sugars on samples from meteorites and asteroids, suggesting that some of them might have come from the primordial molecular cloud that formed our solar system. But no samples had been found in the interstellar medium that sits between stars in space.

Mob beats man dead in Pabna

Police say he broke into shop, attacked owner, his sons

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Pabna*

A mob beat a man to death after he allegedly attacked a shop owner and his two sons with a sharp weapon during an attempted theft in Pabna's Ishwardi upazila early yesterday, police said.

The deceased, Manik Hossain, alias Sumon, 32, was of Azizulltola village in the upazila.

Officer-in-Charge of Ishwardi Police Station Asadur Rahman said the incident took place around 3:00am in the Mistripara Thandatola area, when the victim allegedly broke into the shop of Habibul Islam.

Habibul, who was sleeping in an adjacent room, heard sounds coming from his shop and rushed there to stop the intruder. During the confrontation, the suspect allegedly attacked him with a sharp weapon, leaving him injured, the OC said.

Hearing Habibul's screams, his two sons

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