

## Bangladesh on US terror-risk list

### Dhaka terms it unfortunate, urges Washington to revoke decision

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The United States has added Bangladesh to a list of countries to face stricter restrictions in the US immigration process under the post-September 11 vigilance against terrorism. Dhaka has termed the decision unfortunate and asked Washington to keep Bangladesh off the terror-risk country list. On the other hand, the country's business circle is concerned at the US decision, as it feels that exports to the largest market would be hit hard. Foreign Secretary Shamsher Mobin Chowdhury disclosed the US decision at the weekly press briefing at the foreign ministry yesterday. He received a message in this regard from the Bangladesh mission in Washington earlier on the day. Under the restriction, Bangladeshi males in the 16-45 age bracket will be required to register with the US immigration authorities in the latest expansion of the post-September 11 programme that has drawn strenuous protests worldwide. They are required to visit local

immigration and naturalisation service (INS) offices to be photographed and fingerprinted. They also will have to produce certain documents. The registration is part of a broader INS plan to set up, by 2005, a comprehensive system detailing who is entering, leaving and staying in the US. Long-term visitors to the US from Bangladesh will have to register at local INS offices from February 24 to March 28. This would not affect US citizens, diplomats, refugees or permanent resident aliens holding green cards. Most of those required to register are in the US as students or business travellers or are visiting relatives. Along with Bangladesh, four other countries - Indonesia, Jordan, Egypt and Kuwait - have also been included in a fourth "call-in group", which raised the number of such countries to 25. Pakistan and Saudi Arabia were included in the third group in December last. Some countries included in the lists are considered 'potential havens for terrorists'. Afghanistan, Algeria, Bahrain, Eritrea, Iran, Iraq, Libya, Lebanon, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Somalia, Syria, Sudan, Tunisia,

### Terror-risk bar

- Bangladeshis to register with INS during Feb 24 - Mar 28
- Applies to visitors staying more than 30 days
- US residents, diplomats, green card holders exempted
- Students, business travellers, visiting relatives to face restrictions
- Fingerprints, photos to identify suspects even if they travel on false documents
- Aimed at men from countries the US believes harbours terrorists
- Wanted criminals as well as terror suspects will be targeted
- Measures to be imposed at air and seaports

Yemen and UAE were listed in the first two groups. The only non-Muslim country included in the list is North Korea. "This is unfortunate. Our credential as a moderate, tolerant and democratic country is beyond any doubt," the foreign secretary said. "Dhaka voices deep concern and feels hurt at the US decision." "We trust and hope that it is a temporary measure and its impact will be limited in scope and form," Shamsher said. "We have already

## Police use club, water canon on AL activists

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Assault on opposition activists and use of water canons by riot police in the capital marked the Awami League-called eight-hour countrywide hartal yesterday. As usual, police laid a siege to AL's Bangabandhu Avenue central office, obstructing party workers' from gathering there, and sprinkled cold and coloured water on those who dared to bring out procession. In the city, at least 50 people were injured in baton charge by police and in a few stray incidents of stone-throwing by fleeing pickets at transports which came on streets defying the hartal call. The Bangabandhu Avenue, Russell Square-end of Panthapath, Shahbagh intersection, Motijheel, Farmgate and Mirpur areas were the main trouble spots. Windowpanes of some minibuses were damaged at Motijheel and on the North-South Road. Police picked up pro-AL female ward commissioner Syeda Tareq Dipti and 46 others from different parts of the city for picketing and assembling. Dipti was picked up from Mirpur Section-10 when she was leading a pro-hartal procession there. Police fired four blank shots and two tear gas shells following a cracker blast at Tantibazar in Old Dhaka. One Idris, who

## AL candidate ahead in Narayanganj municipal race

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dr Selina Hayat Ivy, the Awami League-backed candidate, led the race in the long pending Narayanganj municipal polls, with 44,026 votes and her rival Nurul Islam Sarder trailing behind at 27,024, said unofficial sources last night. A few incidents of fraudulence during the voting apart, the situation was peaceful.

Voters have queued up for long to cast votes in all the 45 polling stations, 18 years after the previous election in 1984. Police rounded up 55 youths from different polling stations on charge of forcing their way into the centres or of fraudulence. The election mobile courts handed down judgement of two cases convicting ten youths, official sources said.

## Panic grips Bangladeshis in US

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The State Department's decision to add Bangladesh to a list of countries to face stricter immigration restrictions has sparked off panic among non- and illegal immigrants in the United States. Some 100,000 Bangladeshis living in the US without immigration visa or illegally might come under the new law, said Lavlu Ansar, a New York-based journalist told the BBC World Service last night. They can no longer stay in the US as before and must return home



Women Awami League (AL) activists come under jets of coloured water from water cannons policemen used to break up the party processions on the Bangabandhu Avenue in the city during an AL-enforced hartal yesterday.

## Opposition blames it on govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Political parties of the opposition camp described as unfortunate the US decision on including Bangladesh in the terrorism watch list. At the same time, political leaders blamed it on the failure of the BNP-led four-party coalition government and its foreign policy. "This is very unfortunate for the country. This reflects the failure of the government in general and its foreign policy in particular," said Awami League General Secretary Abdul Jalil. President of the Gono Forum Dr Kamal Hossain said, "It's a matter of serious concern. National efforts

## US decision to hurt export

STAR REPORT

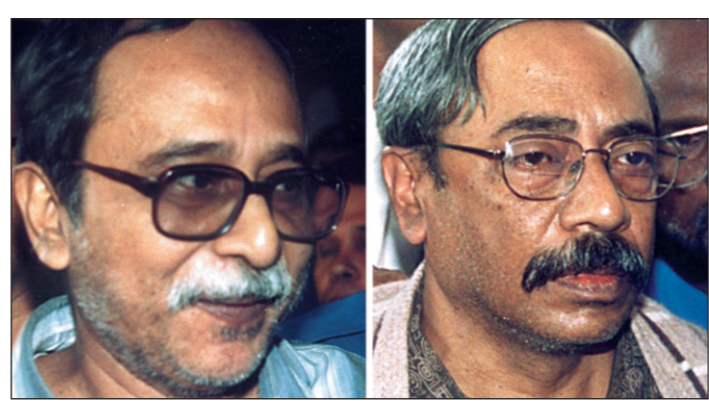
The country's business community yesterday expressed surprise at the US government's decision to list Bangladesh as a high-risk country. They said Bangladesh has always been as a moderate Muslim country. Reacting sharply to the decision, they said such branding of the country will hurt its businesses seriously, have a negative impact on its trade and discourage genuine businessmen from travelling to the US. In his reaction, President of the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) Kutubuddin

Ahmed said exporters would face problems in getting visas, attending trade fairs and meeting buyers. Inclusion of the Bangladesh's name in the group would create negative impression about it, he said. "We will write the congressional caucus to pursue the US government to withdraw Bangladesh from its list." Urging the government to take up the matter with the US, Kutub said: "If need be, we would extend all support to the government in this regard." Md Golam Mostafa, former president of the Bangladesh Frozen

## BNP terms move unjust, wants its withdrawal

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) has demanded withdrawal of stricter US restrictions on Bangladesh nationals and described the move as unjust. The demand and reactions came after the USA put Bangladesh on the immigration watch list. Under the post-September 11 programme, Bangladeshi males of the 16-45 age bracket have to appear before the US immigration authorities to be photographed, questioned and fingerprinted. BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan told The Daily Star



Muntasir Mamun Shahriar Kabir

## Days of despair

### Shahriar, Muntasir relates to their predicament

ZAYADUL AHSAN Just out of jail after weeks on detention for suspected anti-state activism, Shahriar Kabir and Muntasir Mamun have blamed the country's image crisis on the government's intolerance to divergent opinions. Both criticised the government for tarnishing the country's image through arrests without specific charges, torture in custody and violation of court orders while talking to The Daily Star on Wednesday at the Dhaka Community Hospital. The government has virtually turned the country into a prison, they said as they related their predicament - from their arrests through their recent release on High Court orders. At the dead of night on December 8, Shahriar and Muntasir were picked up from their residences. "At around 2:30am, a group of armed men came to my house and told me I was to go to police commissioner with them," recalled Muntasir, the eminent historian-columnist who has authored more than 60 books. "I was not arrested, they said, and would be allowed to come back home after meeting the commis

SEE PAGE 11 COL 7