

FM to ask why Dhaka on terror-risk list

Meeting with Powel in Washington on Jan 24



STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan will not request Secretary of State Colin Powell to drop Bangladesh from the terror-risk list when they meet in Washington on January 24. Morshed leaves today for the US, and says, "I am going there under the prime minister's instruction to understand the situation and to know what are the criteria the US follows to include a nation in the list. I will not request him to drop

Bangladesh from the list, as it is a unilateral decision of the US."

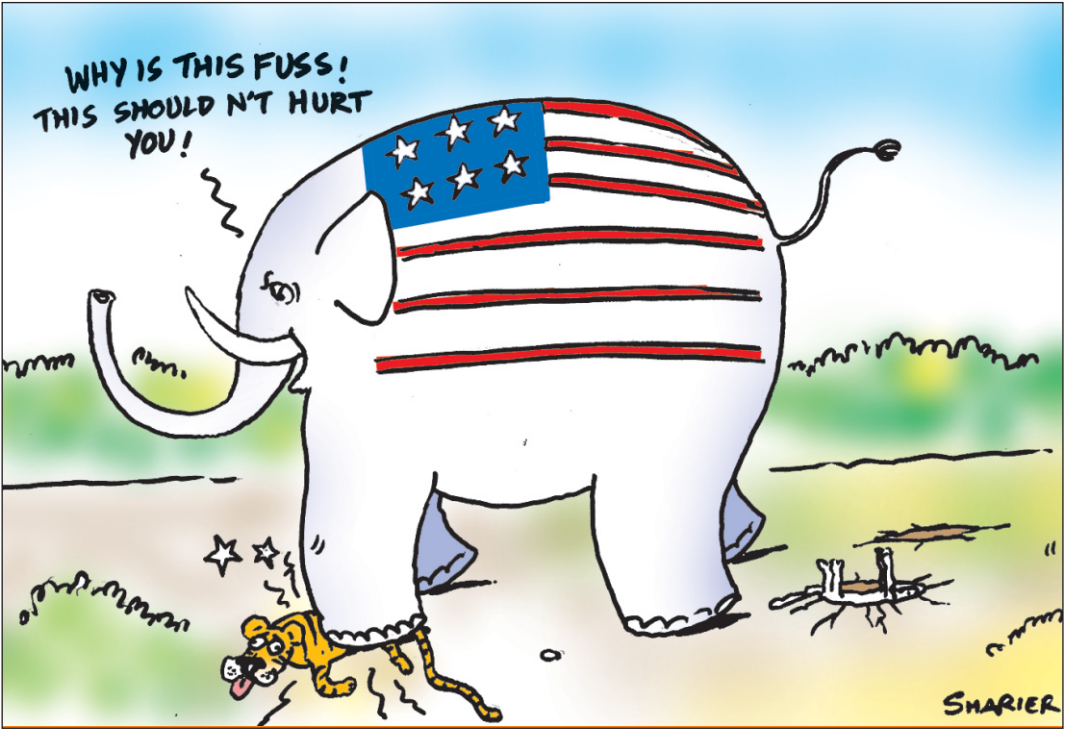
But he will meet expatriate Bangladeshis to understand the problems they might face due to the US decision and arrange counselling to help them face any difficulties.

Speaking at a 'Meet the reporters' function organised by the Dhaka Reporters' Unity at its office in the city, Morshed said he will also discuss other bilateral and international issues in Washington.

Morshed said 'an anti-government political party' was trying to portray Bangladesh as a haven for fundamentalists and the Taliban. "They even sent pictures of some Islamic jalsas (functions) and reports to the US Department of Justice."

Asked whether he blames the Awami League for the US move to include Bangladesh in the restrictive list, Morshed said, "I did not mean that."

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Petroleum dealers to go on strike tomorrow

BSS, Dhaka

Bangladesh Petroleum Dealers, Distributors, Agents and Petrol Pump Owners Association has decided to go on an indefinite strike from January 23 to press their demands including compensation for evaporation and operational losses.

Leaders of the association announced the decision at a press conference at its central office here yesterday.

The leaders, however said the door for discussion with the government will remain open.

Earlier in the day, the ministry of energy and mineral resources in a letter to the leaders said dealers' commission on depot price for octane or petrol and diesel has been fixed at 1.90 per cent and 2.06 per cent respectively from January 8. The commission was fixed in

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EC asks police to mark out risk-prone centres

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Election Commission (EC) yesterday asked the police to prepare a list of risk-prone polling centres across the country and take realistic measures to contain crime and violence before, during and after the Union Parishad elections.

The commission also requested the government not to return licensed firearms deposited with different police stations and district commissioner's offices before the elections were complete. Besides, it called for speedy trial of election-related crimes.

The requests came at a meeting, chaired by Chief Election Commissioner MA Syed, where minutes of the just-concluded training of field-level election officials were reviewed and analysed.

Election Commissioners Shafur Rahman, MM Munsef Ali and AK Mohammad Ali and senior EC officials attended the meeting.

The EC asked the police to classify polling stations into three categories on the basis of their risk-proneness and adopt security mea

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OCAB demands Free Enamul, allow legal protection

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Overseas Correspondents Association Bangladesh (OCAB) yesterday urged the authorities to free journalist Enamul Haque Chowdhury from detention and allow the legal protection he is entitled to under the laws of the land.

In a written statement, OCAB President Golam Tahaboor and General Secretary Shamim Ahmed yesterday said Enamul Haque Chowdhury, a stringer of Reuters Bureau in Dhaka and a former member of OCAB has been in detention since December 13 without any charges against him.

Urging his immediate release the leaders said, "The authorities must remember the fact that a man or woman is considered innocent until proven guilty".

The leaders expressed deep concern at some recent events involving both local and foreign media in the country and the resulting uneasy situation between a section of the media and the government.

They called upon all concerned to exercise more restraint and tolerance in discharging their respective duties. They also asked all to refrain from any action or statement that might strain the working relations between Bangladeshi authorities and particularly those representing international media in Bangladesh.

Govt to go it alone on JS bodies

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has unilaterally decided to form 41 parliamentary standing committees in the upcoming winter session of the Jatiya Sangsad.

It has already drafted lists for the committees and Prime Minister Khaleda Zia has so far approved chairmen and members of 37 of them, according to highly placed sources.

The rest would be finalised within a couple of days, they said.

The committees are being formed more than a year after the eighth parliament came into being.

The sources said the government has decided to follow the previous regime, and thus no post of chairman of any committee would be given to the main opposition Awami League.

Policy makers of the ruling alliance said although the BNP had 113 seats in parliament, the AL did not give any post of chairman to it, so the question of offering chairmanship of any committee to the AL did not arise.

Sources at the office of chief whip said the AL had not yet given any list regarding nomination of its members to be included in the standing committees.

Chief Whip Khandaker Delwar Hossain said the AL had not given the names of its members, despite repeated requests made to the concerned leaders of the main opposition.

It is learnt that the committees would be formed in the upcoming JS session keeping the posts for AL members vacant.

Sources said the lists of committees are now on the Prime Minister's

table and she had consulted with senior leaders and MPs regarding formation of the committees, particularly the nominations for chairmen.

They said the PM and the chief whip also talked with some opposition MPs before finalising the committees.

Sources within the BNP said a section of party policymakers thought that it would be wise to offer some posts of chairman to the main opposition, including the post of Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee to Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina, in order to make parliament effective.

They said it was still not clear whether the PM would agree with the idea.

PM opens new upazila in Bogra

UNB, Bogra

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia formally inaugurated Majhira upazila in Bogra district yesterday.

This is the 12th upazila under Bogra district and 469th in the country.

Laying the foundation stone of the upazila complex, the prime minister called for concerted efforts for development of the country. She advised the local leaders to focus on production-, development- and welfare-oriented politics.

"All of you have to play due role from your respective position for advancing the government's development initiatives," she told the gathering.

The prime minister said participation of all sections of people in development activities would help alleviate poverty and make the country self-reliant.

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13 more CNG stations as queues get longer

JULHAS RIPON

Thirteen new CNG stations will open in the city this year, gas companies said yesterday, as drivers' complaints about refuelling delays hit a new level.

Passengers are also complaining because they claim many of the 3,000 CNG-run autorickshaw drivers are pushing up fares to compensate for time lost queuing for gas.

At 12:30pm yesterday, 125 CNG autorickshaws, 12 taxicabs and 10 private cars were waiting at a filling station near the Dhaka Gate at Banani. Another 65 autorickshaws were waiting at Elen Bury station near the Bijoy Sharani, disrupting traffic movement on the main road.

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Sony Murder Hearing on charge framing January 26

COURT CORRESPONDENT

The Speedy Trial Tribunal, Dhaka Division, yesterday fixed January 26 for hearing on charge-framing against the accused in the Sabequn Nahar Sony murder case.

Judge Shahed Noor Uddin issued the order after the case was placed before him.

The Detective Branch (DB) of police submitted a charge sheet to the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's (CMM's) Court, Dhaka, on January 4 against Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) cadre Mokammel Hayat Khan Muki and 14 others.

The 14 others are Musfiq Uddin Tagar, Mockbul Hossain Mukul, Sirajul Islam alias Wasim, Zakir Hossain Patwari alias Munna, Nurul Islam Sagar alias Tepa Nurul Islam, SM Masum Billah, Sheikh Solaiman alias Babul, Dulal, Rafiq alias Rafiq Chacha, Mohammad Masum, Sujon, Ayub, Year Mohammad and Mohiuddin.

Of the accused, three are now on

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Delhi made mistake in accusing Dhaka of terror link: Gujral

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA, New Delhi

Former Indian prime minister Inder Kumar Gujral has said it was not wise for India to publicly accuse Bangladesh for 'harbouring terrorists'.

"The facts narrated by the (Indian) external affairs minister may be true, but hysterical outbursts do not manifest our strength. Quiet diplomacy and a helping hand is the need of the hour," Gujral said at the United Services Institution here Monday.

He said India cannot achieve its objectives in Asia unless it resolves its problems within the sub-continent.

"It will be futile to project our interests further afield if we are not able to do so in our immediate neighbourhood where our concerns are more direct and tangible," Gujral said.

The former prime minister



IK Gujral

termed Pakistan a 'failed state' and said India must actively assist the forces of modernisation there.

Pakistani journalists and intellectuals should be 'encouraged to visit India' to see for themselves the

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Five slaughtered at Joypurhat mazaar

BSS, Joypurhat

Armed miscreants slaughtered five people inside a mazar (Shrine) at Begungram village under Kalai upazila in the district Monday night.

Police said a gang of unidentified miscreants entered the mazar at midnight and slaughtered its khadem (caretaker) Noor Uddin, 60, and cooks Dulal Hossain, 35, Motiur Rahman, 28, Shafir Uddin, 70 and Afaz Uddin, 60.

The criminals broke open the locker of the mazar and looted Tk 50,000 and other valuables. They also took away 14 ceiling fans from the mazar.

On information, Kalai police reached the spot yesterday morning and sent the bodies to Joypurhat Sadar Hospital morgue for autopsy.

Deputy Commissioner Mohsin Ali Sardar (Bir Pratik) and Superintendent of Police Habibur Rahman visited the spot.

As the news of the gruesome killings inside the mazar spread, hundreds of villagers gathered on its premises. Additional police force was deployed in and around the mazar.

The mazar was built over the grave of Khwaja Abdul Gafur Chishti of Pir Kasimpur village, Muradnagar, Comilla. Khwaja Chishti died in 1974 at Begungram village in Joypurhat.

Police picked up another khadem of the mazar, Sirajuddin, 58, for interrogation.

Two killed as trawlers collide on Buriganga

UNB, Keraniganj

Two persons were killed and three others injured as two trawlers collided head-on on the river Buriganga yesterday.

Three others were missing following the collision between Bikrampur-bound trawler carrying passengers from Amin Bazar and brick loaded trawler coming from the opposite direction.

Identity of the dead could not be known.

Witnesses and medical sources said the accident took place at Telghata of Keraniganj at about 1pm.

Three other passengers - six-year old Habibur Rahman and two unidentified women - fell into the river. Divers failed to trace them till late in the evening.

The injured were admitted to Midford Hospital.

SHAZNEEN CASE

Cross-examination of Shehzi ends

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Cross-examination of Shahzreh Haq Shehzi, fourth prosecution witness in the Shazneen rape case and sister of the victim, by lawyers of three of the six accused was completed yesterday.

The three accused -- Shahidul Islam alias Shahid, Badal and Shaniram -- were in the dock during the cross-examination.

After the cross-examination for about one and a half hours, Kazi Rahamat Ullah, Judge of the Second Special Tribunal for Prevention of Women and Children Repression, Dhaka adjourned the hearing till noon today.

During the cross-examination, Shehzi told the court that investigation officers (IOs) recorded her statements in Shazneen murder

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