

FBI seeks data on foreign students in US

REUTERS, Washington

The FBI is asking US colleges and universities to provide personal information about foreign students and teachers so the government can determine whether they have ties to known or suspected members of terror groups, the Washington Post reported yesterday.

"The data obtained from schools will be compared with information compiled by the Justice Department's Foreign Terrorist Tracking Task Force, which is building a classified database of suspected and known terrorists," the newspaper said, citing sources.

The report said, according to a sample copy provided to the paper, letters sent from FBI field offices beginning last month ask schools to provide "names, addresses, telephone numbers, citizenship information, places of birth, dates of birth and any foreign contact information" for teachers and students who are foreign nationals.

FBI and Justice Department officials say language in the new USA Patriot act allows schools to provide the data without notifying those involved, the report said.

The FBI declined to say how many schools have been asked for the information, or how many have provided it, but said compliance is voluntary, The Post reported.

"There's no requirement on the part of the colleges to provide this information," FBI spokesman Bill Carter told the paper. "We can request it and they can provide the information. They don't have to comply."

The newspaper said the Association of American College Registrars and Admissions Officers has told its 10,000 members that providing the information would violate federal law. It also noted that the US Department of Education indicated in an earlier general advisory that some of the information now sought by the FBI cannot be provided without a court order or subpoena.

Sheldon Steinbach, general counsel for the American Council on Education, told the newspaper that he does not see any problem with the FBI's request.

"We don't see any reason why a school should not be able to honor this request if they choose to. ... This is part of the new landscape that we're all becoming accustomed to since September 11," he said.

In the weeks following the Sept 11 attacks, about 200 colleges acknowledged in a national survey that they had turned over information about specific foreign students to the FBI, most of the time without a subpoena or court order, The Post said.

Ferry pontoon sinks, road links disrupted

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

Road communication of Kuakata, and Patuakhali and Barguna districts with the rest of the country remained cut off for hours as a ferry pontoon sank along with an overloaded truck and a private car in the early hours of yesterday.

According to the Roads and Highways Department, the incident occurred when an overloaded truck carrying iron rods and steel tried to board the ferry from the Bakerganj side of the Dapdapia ferry terminal at 1:45am yesterday. But just as the truck got on the pontoon, the pontoon sank in the Kirtankhola River along with the truck and a private car that was already on the pontoon.

The passengers of the vehicles however escaped unhurt.

Hundreds of vehicles on both sides of the river remained stranded in a long queue as ferry service remained suspended due to shortage of spare pontoon and the obstacle created in the waterways by the sunken pontoon.

Salvage ship Hamza was sent to the spot for rescue operation, sources said.

Monk's killer

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magistrate's court as an accused in an arms case on Monday and appealed for recording of his confessional statement as a shown arrestee in the monk murder case. Police also made a prayer for a 10-day remand, but the court granted three days.

On the night of April 21, according to the details by Alaich, a gang of seven led by Azizul went to the Buddhist temple and spent around four hours with the monk over tea and friendly gossip.

At midnight, the killers pretended to leave the temple and the monk sent his ten-year-old sebayet (a trainee), Mohanram Sramon, to see them off.

But two of the gang on the way out tied the trainee monk to a pillar. The gang then forced its way into the monk's bedroom and killed him with a dagger, Alaich said.

A six-member committee led by Assistant Commissioner (DB) Shafiq Uddin Ahmed interrogated Alaich. Other members are Additional Superintendent ANM Mohiuddin, also the investigation officer, another two of the CID Chittagong zone and one each from the Special Branch and the DB.

Corruption

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The rally was also addressed by, among others, former vice-chancellor of Rajshahi University Dr Khan Sarwar Murshid, educationist Nurjahan Murshid, Probat Chandra Lal, Moulana Abul Mobarak and journalist Zakir Hossain.

Although 770 audit reports have been submitted to the government over the years, more than 81 per cent of them remained without hearing, Justice Rahman said.

The participants of the citizens' rally from Dhaka visited the indigenous people in the area and expressed sympathy with them for their sufferings due to recent communal conflict.

Lankan trawler seized for illegal fishing in Bay, 4 crew held

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Navy personnel on Sunday seized a Sri Lankan trawler and arrested its four crew for illegal fishing in the Bay of Bengal.

The fishing trawler and the crew were brought to Mongla on Tuesday afternoon, police said.

The arrested Lankan crew of the seized trawler 'Blue Star Marine' have been identified as captain Meril Hardgal, 38, D Chamendra Nath, 35, AD Mangela, 32 and Lalith Joyal, 45.

The fishing trawler containing the sea fishes weighing over three maunds and 50 kgs were brought to Khulna yesterday morning and handed over to Fisheries Department. The seized fishes were sold in auction in the afternoon at the Skid Ghat.

A case has been recorded with Mongla police station in this connection.

8 bombs recovered from union office in Niphamari

UNB, Nilphamari

The members of the army-led joint forces recovered eight live bombs from RDRS Federation office of Shoulmari union under Jaldhaka upazila here yesterday.

Sources said a gang of robbers left those bombs packed in a sack inside the office Tuesday night after committing a robbery there.

During the robbery, the dacoits took away Tk 30,000, including 17 sewing machines and four bicycles, from the RDRS office.

On information, army personnel went to the spot in the afternoon and recovered the bombs.

They also picked up RDRS Federation president Mokhlesar Rahman and trainer Shyamol Kumar for interrogation.

A case was filed with police in this connection.

Rejoinder

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sold their inherited property to different persons, who built 9 to 16-storey buildings at roads 13 and 14. These include JMC, Basuti, AI Hasan, Dorin Tower, bhoirab Tower and Aboni, built as residential buildings as per plans approved by Rajuk, the rejoinder said.

Our Reply: Our story accuses Rajuk of grossly violating the law of the land. The story says that Rajuk has violated the building construction rules by approving plans for high-rise buildings in a residential area where the height limit is restricted to six-storey. The height restriction is imposed on the basis of availability of civic amenities such as roads, sewerage, water, telephone, electricity, gas, open space, parking space and air flow. By allowing these high-rise towers in Dhanmondi, Rajuk has not only flouted the rules but also made itself responsible for changing the population density of the area. Unfortunately, Rajuk has been flouting the country's laws although it has no right to do so. The Daily Star stands by its report.

Fog spell

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launches carrying thousands of passengers became stranded at the Diara channel of the Meghna near Hizla upazila on Tuesday night due to the dense fog. State Minister for Finance and Planning Shah Md. Abul Hossain was among the stranded passengers. Road and air communication was also disrupted for several hours due to the fog.

Our Gaibandha correspondent adds that the high density of fog has disrupted the rail link between the country's northern region and the capital. All the trains plying between Dinajpur and Dhaka were eight to 12 hours behind the schedule. Also, no ferry could move between Balashi Ferry Ghat and Bahadurabad Ghat.

Meanwhile, severe cold claimed four lives in the district. The victims are Radha Rani Saha, 90, of Sahapura village, Rezia Bewya, 85, of Boro Jamalpur village, Dhali Bewya, 80, of Moheshpur village and Nasir Hossain, 80, of Goyeshpur under Sadullapur upazila.

UNB adds: Due to the dense fog, no ferry could move from Daulatdia Ferry Ghat Tuesday night, forcing several thousand passengers to remain stranded for about 12 hours.

The long-route buses with passengers and trucks carrying various goods from southwestern districts had to wait till 10:00 am yesterday to be ferried across the river.

The passengers, especially women and children, had to suffer a lot in the chilly weather and fog. The long queues of vehicles also created traffic congestion at the Daulatdia Ghat.



Prime Minister Khaleda Zia listens to Chinese Vice-president Hu Jintao during a meeting at the People's Hall in Beijing yesterday.

US fears N Korea could make 50 N-bombs a yr

REUTERS, Washington

North Korea could churn out enough plutonium to build up to 50 to 55 nuclear weapons a year if all three of its frozen nuclear reactors entered operation in coming years, a US government official said on Tuesday.

The issue could be critical to world security, partly because North Korea has been developing long-range missiles possibly capable of delivering nuclear warheads.

Washington has accused Pyongyang of being the world's biggest peddler of missiles and missile production technology. North Korea on Tuesday said US hard-liners were pushing the divided Korean peninsula to the brink of nuclear war, adding its armed forces were up to the task of defeating any enemy.

In a sign of the urgency the issue has acquired, US Secretary of State Colin Powell spent a fourth straight day consulting US allies, including Japanese Foreign Minister Yoriko Kawaguchi, about North Korea.

"The secretary reiterated what we (have) said before that we are not anxious to escalate this problem but we are not going to be blackmailed," State Department spokesman Phillip Reeker said of Powell's talks with Kawaguchi. "If North Korea is looking for US support, this is not the way to do it."

The exclusive communist state's defense minister, Kim Il-chol, said his country had "modern offensive and defensive means capable of defeating" any enemy. He spoke

after US Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld warned Pyongyang on Monday the United States was "perfectly capable" of defeating Iraq and North Korea at the same time, should that ever be necessary.

Weapons potential

North Korea, denounced by US President George W Bush as part of an "axis of evil" with Iraq and Iran, triggered international fears over the weekend by removing UN monitoring equipment at a nuclear reactor capable of yielding weapons-grade plutonium.

Restarting the 5-megawatt plant at its Yongbyon complex, as Pyongyang has taken steps to do, would spin off about 6 kg (13 pounds) a year of weapons-grade plutonium, said the US official who declined to be identified.

That would suffice for just one nuclear bomb, given the rule of thumb that it takes about 5 kg (11 pounds) of plutonium per weapon. Yongbyon is about 55 miles (88 km) north of Pyongyang.

The output from two unfinished reactors a 50-megawatt unit at Yongbyon and a 200-megawatt plant at nearby Teachon could be added to generate as much as a combined total of 275 kg (600 pounds) of plutonium a year from all three plants, the official said, or enough for 50 to 55 weapons, depending on how they were configured.

"It would take several years for them to complete construction of those reactors, but if they complete the construction, that's the potential," said the official.

The United States has urged Pyongyang not to restart any of its frozen nuclear facilities.

A State Department official said on Tuesday Washington had no indication Pyongyang had gone beyond dismantling the UN monitoring devices to actually reactivate the 5-megawatt plant or that it had moved to reprocess the spent fuel rods to recover plutonium.

Keeping North Korea from extracting bomb-grade plutonium from spent fuel rods has been a top US foreign policy priority for years one that brought the Clinton administration to the brink of war before a landmark 1994 nonproliferation deal.

By that time, Pyongyang had probably already recovered enough plutonium to produce two nuclear weapons, the CIA has concluded.

Under the 1994 deal, North Korea agreed to freeze the 5-megawatt reactor plus the partially built 50- and 200-megawatt plants. Also frozen were the reprocessing facility and a fuel-rod fabrication plant at Yongbyon.

In exchange, Washington agreed to provide a \$5 billion package to include two proliferation-resistant light-water reactors and 500,000 metric tons of heavy fuel oil a year until the first light-water reactor was built. Although the light-water reactors also produce plutonium, the material is harder to extract and not as suitable for use in weapons as the materials produced at existing reactors.

Sedition law

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Dr Zahir said that this section was inserted in the Penal Code in 1889 in the wake of the general disaffection towards the British government, which began in the then Bengal and it supplemented the other section relating to war inserted in the Penal Code of 1860, enacted soon after the War of Independence in 1857.

However, during the British rule there was no Constitution or enacted fundamental rights and the British quite happily arrested or prosecuted anybody who spoke against the government.

But today, he said, Bangladesh has a Constitution and the Article 39 (1) guarantees freedom of thought and conscience.

Article 39 (2) provides that subject to any reasonable restriction imposed by law in the interests of the security of the State, friendly relations with foreign states, public order, decency or morality, or in relation to contempt of court, defamation or incitement to an offence (a) the right of every citizen to freedom of speech and expression and (b) freedom of the press, are guaranteed.

So, whereas Section 124A of the Penal Code forbids bringing into hatred or contempt or exciting disaffection towards the government.

He said Article 39 of the Constitution overrides and guarantees freedom of speech and expression as well as freedom of the press subject only to reasonable restriction imposed by law in the interest of the security of the State.

Section 124A to the extent it makes an offence to speak, or write or represent against the government is clearly overtaken by Article 39 of the Constitution which guarantees the freedom of speech, press subject to reasonable restriction for the security of the State, he added.

Dr Zahir said Section 124A of the Penal Code must be applied in the background of the Article 39 of the Constitution and any law is subject to our fundamental rights.

He said there is a difference between the government and the State. The State is the entire nation, whereas the government controls and manages the affairs of the State.

The government may change in a democratic country but the State does not. So unless there is reasonable restriction imposed by the law, which seeks to protect the security of the State, citizens or members of the press are free to express their thoughts and conscience although this may go against the incumbent government, otherwise there will be no democracy.

Citing an example, he said the freedom of press is an integral part of democracy as held by the High Court of Australia in a case where a journalist was convicted for not disclosing his source, but his conviction was set aside because the highest court of Australia observed that the freedom of press was an integral part of democracy, so that a journalist can investigate and report to the public regarding the affairs of the State.

He said it is the press, which brought the Watergate case to the public notice and this, too, against the incumbent President of the USA. It is the press, which prints

Arsenic

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pared and the national plan now being finalised would be the first government-formulated one to resolve arsenic problem. "We will invite all donors, especially those working in this field, to join us in the fight against arsenic contamination."

He said the WB and other donor agencies have appreciated the government initiative and agreed to work under the plan.

The worst affected areas would be given priority in implementation of the national plan.

The minister further said the government has also planned to ensure supply of arsenic-free water through pipeline in all villages of the country in stages.

Listed criminals

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Ahmed is a former city general secretary of the Awami League's youth front.

In Lalmonirhat, the joint forces arrested two activists of the Jatiya Party (JP), and one each of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) and the Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL), writes our correspondent.

In Rajbari, the joint forces arrested two listed criminals.

In Bhola, villagers caught red-handed a man who tried to commit robbery Sunday night in a house at Uttar Dighaldi union faking as a soldier.

According to police, Yusuf of Daulat Khan upazila was held as he stormed into the house of Azu Zafar and demanded money.

However, the residents caught Yusuf and handed him to police. He was later produced before the court and then sent to jail.

Meanwhile, police arrested 1,288 people across the country during the last 24 hours ending at 8:00am yesterday, says a press release.

The law enforcers also recovered 2,404 firecrackers and four firearms.

critical articles relating to the British Monarchy and the prime minister's family.

It is the press, which pointed out the futility of the US war in Vietnam and it is the press, which was largely responsible for the British abandoning India and the independence of Indian sub-continent, he further said.

"The less we shout about our security and devote ourselves to an impartial application of law and order, the better," he said.

Even if a few journalists write biased stories about Bangladesh, he said, this nation of 130 million people should not be unduly disturbed because the world will know and judge us for what we are and certainly in the long run no one will be fooled by any false and motivated propaganda.

"In a nation of 130 million people there may be some people who believe in fundamentalism or al-Qaeda ideals. What's wrong if anyone claims himself to be a member of Al-Qaeda or mistakenly says this? It is their constitutional right to be a fundamentalist if they so want to believe, but that does not make the entire nation or the government fundamentalist," Dr Zahir said.

Referring to news reports that linked Bangladesh with al-Qaeda, he said, "At least the US State Department does not think Bangladesh is a 'dangerous State,' in spite of all the false propaganda in a few influential international journals."

So, he maintained that a few articles here and there, even though motivated, should not irk us or the law enforcing agencies, because Bangladesh is by nature secular and peace loving.

On the other hand, he said if the press is muzzled by prosecution and detention of journalists on the ground of making false reports or conspiring to do so, then we loose much more.

"I would rather like that Bangladesh which enjoys the reputation of having a totally free press and its citizens having the freedom to speak, even though erroneously, than to be known as a nation where people are not free to speak or act," he maintained.

"Democracy thrives on a consultative procedure based upon criticism." He said

Dr Zahir said the government should learn from citizens and improve, and this is the advantage of democracy over a dictatorship, which tolerates no criticism and cannot be aware of its mistakes.

He said that the Article 39 of the Constitution must be given full effect to, if we are to have any reputation in the world as a free democratic country, and for that to happen freedom of speech, thoughts, conscience and the freedom of the press are essential.

Out to get

FROM PAGE 12
The park is a hangout for pimps and sex workers who run their business freely.

Only three guards are there to take care of the entire park, making it a security-failure. Even the guards at times are beaten up by the criminals and mugged, sources said.

Road accidents

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Shamsul Alam, 60, was crushed under the wheels of a speeding truck while crossing Chittagong-Cox's Bazar road at Muradabad of Chandanaisa thana in the afternoon.

Rafiquddin, 56, died near Chittagong College in the morning when a truck hit him. He died on the spot.

A 35-year-old woman died in the afternoon as she sustained severe injuries after being hit by a bus on Dhaka-Chittagong highway near Sitakunda.

AL council

FROM PAGE 1
the Jamaat-e-Islami, Bangladesh Jatiya Party, and Islami Oikya Jote, have been invited. The party has also invited bureaucrats, diplomats, members of civil societies, intellectuals, leading cultural personalities, university teachers, chiefs of the services, divisional commissioners, deputy commissioners and members of the donor community.

Election may take place for some important posts including that of the general secretary. So far, three aspirants - Abdul Jalil, Amir Hossain Amu and Obaidul Qader have announced their candidature for the post of general secretary.

During the working session, scheduled to be held this afternoon, some more aspirants may announce their candidature. Abdur Razzak, Tofail Ahmed and Dr. Mizanul Haq are possible candidates.

In the inaugural session, after the hoisting of the national and party flags, an obituary reference would be made. Sheikh Hasina will address the delegates and councilors and it will be followed by the welcome address of the Convenor of the reception sub-committee, Amir Hossain Amu. Zillur Rahman will place the general secretary's report before the convention.

Asaduzzaman Noor MP will lead a colourful cultural programme after the inaugural session.



President Iajuddin Ahmed and his wife exchange pleasantries with members of the Christian community during a Christmas reception at the Bangabhaban yesterday.

Khaleda-Jiang talks Tribal criminal

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Communist Party.

In all the meetings, the prime minister was accompanied, among others, by Finance and Planning Minister M Saifur Rahman, Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan, Post and Telecommunications Minister Barrister M Aminul Haque, Political Secretaries to the Prime Minister Harris Chowdhury and Mosaddek Ali, State Minister for Communications Salahuddin Ahmed, State Minister for Agriculture Fakhru Islam Alamgir, State Minister for Health and Family Welfare Amanullah Aman, Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister Dr Kamal Siddiqui, Foreign Secretary Shamsheer Mobin Chowdhury, Ambassador of

Bangladesh to China Iftikharul Karim, ERD Secretary Anisul Hoq Chowdhury, Defence Secretary KM Ehsanul Haq and Textile Secretary Syed Tanveer Hossain.

On completion of her agenda in Beijing, Prime Minister Khaleda Zia left for Hainan province in the evening.

Li Lihui, Vice Governor of the Province, received her as she flew in to Haikou, the provincial capital, about 2300 kilometres from Beijing.

In Haikou, Khaleda Zia will have meeting and lunch with the Governor of Hainan Province and visit some tourist spots.

She will leave for Kunming on Thursday where she will stay overnight. The PM is expected to return to Dhaka on Friday.

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The security forces triggering a 15-minute gun battle in which Gobinda Chakma was killed and boatman Shahidul injured. One member of the gang managed to escape by swimming away through the Mainee valley.

The wounded boatman was first taken to the Rangamati General Hospital yesterday morning and was later referred to the Chittagong Medical College Hospital.

Security forces recovered two pistols, three 303 rifles and 38 rounds of bullets from the three arrested criminals.

The arrested were being interrogated at the zonal headquarters of the 15 East Bengal Regiment stationed at Longdu till filing of this report yesterday afternoon.

The contractor has reportedly been asked to contact Longdu police station in connection with the incident, police said.