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Counter-terrorism deal with America likely

US mum on terrorist presence in Bangladesh; Dhaka proposes joint working group

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh and the United States are likely to sign an agreement to set up a joint-working group on counter-terrorism after mulling details of a deal in the coming months in both Dhaka and Washington.

Foreign Minister M. Morshed Khan said Dhaka would consider any offer from the US in counter-terror cooperation in future, but would accept offers only after assessing Bangladesh's requirements.

"I don't want to sign any protocol right now, but we might collaborate on counter-terror programme ... that there is work to be done in Washington on a particular project I have in mind," J. Cofer Black, the US State Department's coordinator for counter-terrorism, told a press briefing at the American Centre

yesterday.

Earlier, at a meeting between Morshed and Black at the foreign ministry, Dhaka proposed a joint working group (JWG) for more effective counter-terrorist operations with the US, UNB news agency said quoting meeting sources.

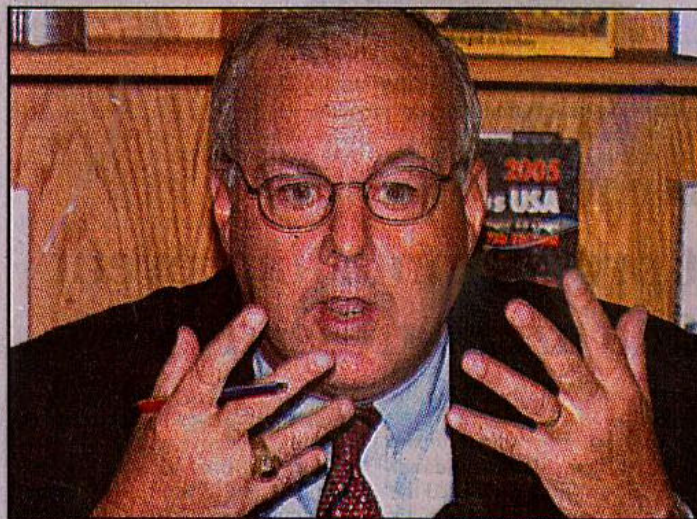
Washington has such JWG's with New Delhi and Islamabad.

Formalising counter-terror structures and more exchanges of information will be required to strengthen collaboration between the countries, Black told reporters.

Morshed hinted at such a protocol at a press conference, saying: "We already have many protocols, we will sign another." Foreign Secretary Shamsher Mobin Chowdhury also attended the conference.

"There are proposals and

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Joseph Cofer Black, US State Department's coordinator for counter-terrorism, speaks at a press conference at the American Centre in Dhaka yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Market turns into criminals' den

Outlaws, drug-peddlers thrive on poor surveillance

SHARIFUL ISLAM with HASAN JAVID TUSHER

Outlawed political outfits and criminal gangs have for long been using Aziz Co-operative Supermarket at Shahbagh as a hideout, taking

advantage of the scanty intelligence watch on it.

According to officials of intelligence agencies, members of Aziz Co-operatives Society and shopowners of the market,

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Black calls govt steps 'timely'

BSS, Dhaka

The United States yesterday appreciated the government steps in response to the grenade blasts in an Awami League rally on August 21 and assured necessary assistance in the ongoing investigation into the incident.

The appreciation and assurance came when the visiting US State Department's Counter-Terrorism Coordinator Joseph Cofer Black called on Prime Minister Khaleda Zia at the latter's office yesterday afternoon.

US Ambassador Harry K. Thomas accompanied Cofer Black.

Black lauded Khaleda Zia particularly for her determination to find out and punish the culprits responsible for August 21 grenade attacks.

He said all measures taken by the government including formation of a judicial enquiry commission to probe the incident were "timely, very appropriate and in right direction".

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia said her government would try every possible course of action to hunt down the criminals, who perpetrated the August 21 violence.

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Secular forces target of bomb attacks

Hasina tells US official

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Secular forces are the main target of bomb attacks, opposition leaders told visiting US State Department Counter-Terrorism Co-ordinator J. Cofer Black during a meeting yesterday.

"We told the US official that the

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Bomb blast at Sylhet house kills two

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Two people including an 11-year-old boy were killed in a bomb blast at a house in the city suburb of Pirerbar Kachubahar on the Sylhet-Tamabil Road yesterday morning.

Seven others -- four children and three women -- also suffered serious injuries and were admitted to Sylhet MAG Osmani Medical College Hospital where five were operated upon, hospital sources said.

The explosion occurred at around 8:55am, said Shamsul Haque, a neighbour of the house within 30 yards of the Sylhet-Tamabil Road and 10km off Sylhet city.

The dead are Anwar Hossain, a 35-year-old day worker, and his nephew Jalil alias Mona, 11. Mona

was a student of Class V of Turiananda Primary School.

Police suspect that the bomb went off because of careless handling while being taken out of the house by Anwar.

Divisional Inspector General of Police, Sylhet Range, AKM Mahfuzul Haque told The Daily Star that evidence shows the dead man was the carrier. He was also a keeper of bombs for somebody else.

(See related story on Page 12)

Soon after the blast, police, Rab, BDR, NSI, army, DGFI and detective personnel visited the place. Sylhet Mayor Badar Uddin Ahmed Kamran also went there.

An hour after the blast, the badly

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EPZ agro-based units to get cash incentive

BSS, Dhaka

The government yesterday decided to provide 30 percent cash incentive to agro-based industries in the Export Processing Zones (EPZ) to encourage export of agricultural products.

The 21st meeting of the Board of Governors of Bangladesh Export Processing Zones Authority (BEPZA) took the decision with Prime

Minister Khaleda Zia, also chairperson of the BEPZA, in the chair.

Earlier the facility of 30 percent cash incentive was available only for the agro-based industries outside the EPZs.

"This incentive will immensely encourage foreign investors to invest in the country's agro-based industries. A proposal for investment of \$8 to \$25 million to set up

SEE PAGE 11 COL 7

More bomb threats to DU, Bandarban festivals

DU CORRESPONDENT

An anonymous caller Saturday threatened to blow up Dhaka University's (DU) Science Complex Building and the intelligence agencies in Bandarban have received similar threats to the district's cultural, social and religious festivals.

Earlier on August 11, an anonymous caller threatened to blow up the same building, while an anonymous letter sent to mass communications and journalism department Friday conveyed a threat to blast the Arts Building in five days.

However, police and DU security staff carried out a thorough search at the Arts Building but found no secreted explosives.

"A person called twice at 6:00pm and 15 minutes later to university's telephone exchange. He threatened to blow up the micro-biology building," DU Proctor AK Firoz Ahmed told newsmen.

The caller asked the exchange operator to inform the proctor and

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Janmastami today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Janmastami, the celebration of the birthday of Lord Krishna and one of the biggest religious festivals of Hindus, will be celebrated across the country today.

Bangladesh Puja Uddhapan Parishad has decided to celebrate the day in a low-key manner this time considering the current flood and present political situation.

The Hindus worship Lord Krishna as an incarnation of divinity.

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