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US lists actions for Dhaka to check terrorism

Suggests closure of institutions, facilities linked with extremists

BDNEWS, Dhaka

A high official of the United States government yesterday expressed 'concern' about Bangladesh's future and spelt out the measures the US expects Dhaka to take if it is to become a 'full partner' in its battle against Islamic terrorism.

Bangladesh government should close institutions, organisations and facilities linked with Islamic extremists and 'capture and prosecute Bangla Bhai and Abdur Rahman,' US State Department

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Farm output may be hit as fertiliser supply stopped

REAZ AHMAD

Uncertainty looms large over this year's agricultural production, as fertiliser importers have stopped supplying the key agricultural input to 3,000 dealers across the country protesting the finance ministry's inertia to release out-

standing fertiliser subsidies.

The strike came at a time when the farmers apply 80 percent of their yearly fertiliser requirement to their boro, potato and other winter crops.

With subsidies amounting to Tk 100 crore remaining stuck in red tapes, fertiliser importers have

been on a strike since Monday stopping supply of fresh stocks to dealers across the country forcing farmers to demonstrate demanding fertilisers while the dealers had to go back empty-handed from the market.

Amid fear of a huge yield loss in

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Final talks on Bimstec FTA start today at Kathmandu

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The Trade Negotiating Committee (TNC) of the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (Bimstec) begins a weeklong meeting in Kathmandu today to conclude negotiations on Free Trade Area (FTA) for Trade in Goods in the region.

Official sources said the TNC comprising experts from the seven member countries -- Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Thailand -- has been instructed to finalise the Agreement on Trade in Goods so

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Terror talks limp along on boycott, condition

SHAKHAWAT LITON

The national dialogue that began last week amid boycott by the opposition alliance seems to be heading nowhere as it drags on with a reported condition being applied to the invitees that Jamaat-e-Islami cannot be held responsible for the rise of militancy.

No one can say for sure when the dialogue will complete while confusion is widespread about the fate of the suggestions that had already been placed at the dialogue by political parties and professional groups.

Federation of NGOs in Bangladesh and Alem-Mashayekh (Islamic scholars) met the prime minister yesterday. But the timetable for the talks with the other political parties and groups appears to be uncertain as she will be busy for the next few days.

She will be at the grand rally of the four-party alliance in the capital today and on a visit to Jessore tomorrow. Then the weekend of December 23 and 24 will be followed by a public holiday for Christmas on December 25, making impossible any dialogue to be held before the next Monday.

Her scheduled meet with the Liberation War heroes on December 18 had been postponed for her visit to Dinajpur to attend the annual rehearsals of the army, sources at the prime minister's office (PMO) said.

Meanwhile, some civil society members have questioned the effectiveness of the dialogue, which they say is plodding along at a very slow pace. Besides, they are not optimistic about the outcome of the talks that started on December 12.

Khaleda Zia so far has had talks

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PM addresses BNP rally at Paltan today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The ruling BNP holds a grand rally in the city's Paltan Maidan today to register its protest against the militants and 'anti-democracy' forces.

The party goes for the public gathering at a time when it is faced with immense pressure from the opposition parties for its handling of the militancy.

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia,

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Textiles lost free access for high competitiveness

Claims Altaf after WTO meet; AL blasts him for letting down country's interest

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Commerce Minister Altaf Hossain Choudhury yesterday claimed that Bangladesh's textile exports were excluded from duty-free and quota-free market access in the latest WTO declaration because they are too competitive.

He said the US, Japan and some other developed countries praised Bangladesh's competitiveness and strength in the world textile economy, which prompted them to oppose Dhaka's demand for zero tariff entry of all products.

The minister, speaking at a press briefing on the just-concluded 6th WTO ministerial conference, also claimed that it was a major success of Bangladesh that its apparel

products earned the developed countries' acclaim.

Commerce Ministry Adviser Barkat Ullah Bulu, Commerce Secretary Faruk Ahmed Siddique, CPD Research Director Dr Mostafizur Rahman and Director General of WTO Cell Mohammad Nasir Uddin also spoke at the briefing.

The draft WTO declaration was released on Sunday, the last day of the Hong Kong conference where the rich countries agreed to give duty and quota-free market access of 97 percent LDC (least developed countries) products, excluding textiles.

"Similar market access for the remaining three percent goods will

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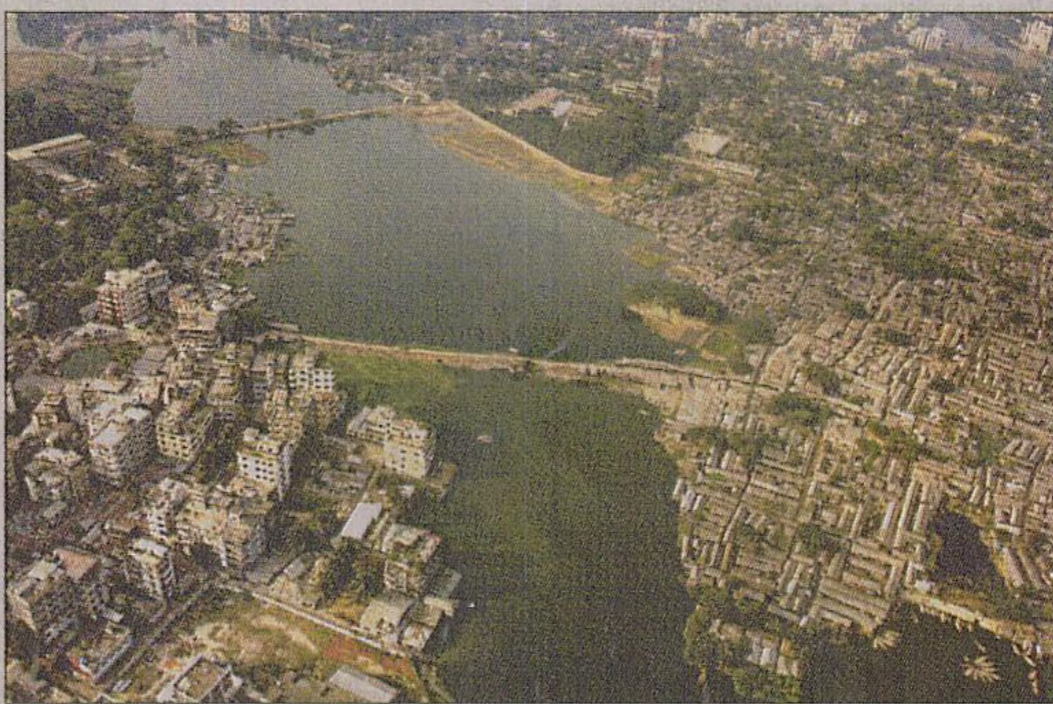


PHOTO: SYED ZAKIR HOSSAIN

This aerial photograph shows gradual encroachment of the Gulshan Lake by the residents of Korail slum in the capital. The picture was snapped on Monday.

Political promotions hamstringing admin

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Promotion of public servants on political considerations ignoring merit and seniority has bred frustration and resentment in the civil administration, resulting in inertia at different levels of the administration.

During 2001-05, more than 1,000 officials were promoted on various occasions while around 1,000 deserving ones were deprived of promotion on political grounds, sources said.

A recently retired secretary said the mess created due to biased promotions is hampering administration. A transparent promotion policy on the basis of merit and seniority is a must to ensure efficient and effective administration, he said preferring anonymity.

A number of senior ministers however said politicisation of the

administration by the previous Awami League (AL) government led to the 'promotion jam'. They cited 'Janatar Mancha' as a classic example of the extent of such politicisation.

One minister claimed that no government in the past gave such a huge number of promotions in the civil administration as the present government has given. "The present government also upgraded a large number of posts to clear the promotion jam. It is also going to give many more promotions during its tenure on the basis of the existing policy," he said.

After the present government assumed office in October 2001, 170 deputy secretaries were first promoted to the posts of joint secretary in June 2002. The promotees were from 1973, '74, '77 and '79 BCS batches.

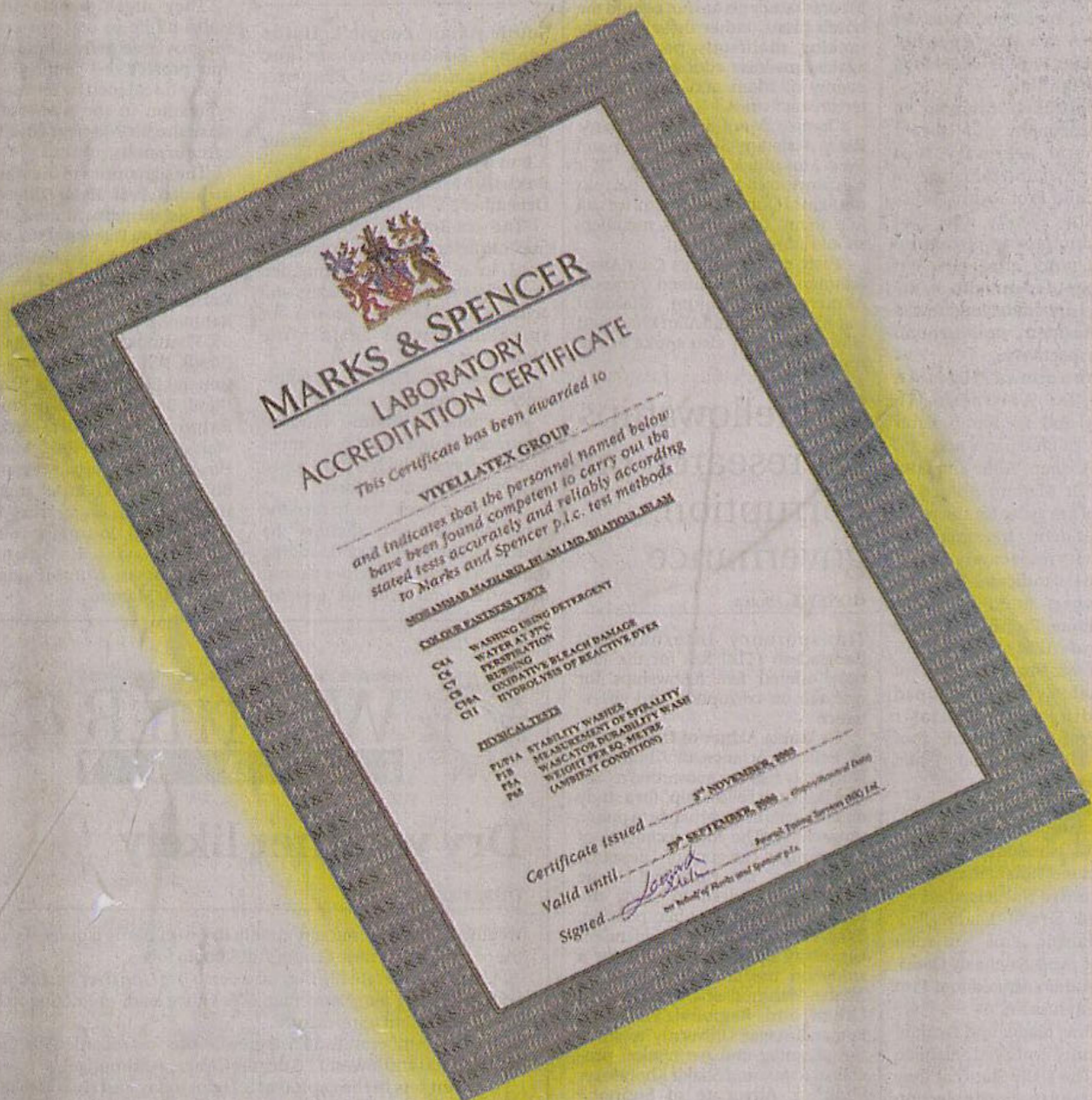
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Correction

The caption of a photograph of the widows of slain journalists, published on the front page of The Daily Star yesterday, inadvertently mentioned Manik Saha's widow. Actually the widows of journalists Harun-ur-Rashid and Dipankar Chakraborty were in the picture. We regret the error.

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