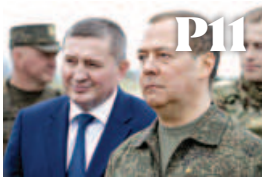




Paperfly may shut down operation



P15 Improved Mahedi offers Tigers variety



P11 Moscow may annex more Ukrainian regions



P5 Academic activities in jeopardy due to flood, erosion

US VISA POLICY Some officials in admin, police ill at ease

PARTHA PRATIM BHATTACHARJEE and MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

A section of officials in the administration and police have a feeling of unease over the US visa curbs, but they would not publicly admit it.

High officials who have their children studying abroad, especially in the US and Canada, and field-level officials who would be directly involved in conducting the next polls are uncomfortable, sources said.

The Daily Star talked to around a dozen bureaucrats and law enforcers who said they are looking at all available information regarding the matter meticulously.

On May 24, the US said it would impose visa restrictions on individuals and their immediate family members "if they are responsible for, or complicit in, undermining the democratic election process in Bangladesh".

On September 22, it said it started applying the curbs.

Some officials believe the visa restrictions could be applicable to some senior officials and that around 6,000 bureaucrats and 2.12 lakh law enforcers need not worry.

A number of bureaucrats said that only officials from the public administration and home ministry are involved in the election process and that officials of other ministries should be safe.

Top officials of police and bureaucracy said the visa

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A walkway is being built taking up and filling up the Turag near Goran Chotbari Beribandh Road in Mirpur. The red-tipped pillars mark the area of the river which the BIWTA placed. Locals say the BIWTA could have easily built the walkway outside the river's area. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

US visa curbs will help amp up movement

BNP leaders believe

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

BNP leaders believe the US decision to implement its visa policy will create a more favourable climate for their campaign to force the government to step down before the election.

Top leaders of the political party are of the opinion that the US decision will smoothen the path towards a non-partisan polls-time government.

As the party plans to step up its demonstrations from October 5, the leadership feels that the visa restrictions vindicate their stance that a free and fair election, needed to save the country, is not possible with the Awami League in power.

The 2014 and 2018 elections held under the AL government were widely criticised at home and abroad due to numerous allegations of irregularities.

"The US sanction is helping boost the democracy-loving people's morale to bring changes to the country."

The US State Department maintains that it is taking steps to impose visa restrictions on Bangladeshi individuals,

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Stakes too high not to reach consensus

The ruling Awami League and the opposition BNP remain at odds over the polls-time administration. Meanwhile, to put pressure on both parties, the US has started enforcing a visa ban on people found undermining democracy and the EU has decided not to send a full-fledged election monitoring team. With all these developments, how will the political situation ultimately pan out in the coming months? Porimol Palma spoke with three analysts to learn about the possible scenarios.



M HUMAYUN KABIR

M Humayun Kabir, former ambassador and president of the Bangladesh Enterprise Institute, believes both AL and BNP will shift their stances on the polls-time administration.

"AL speaking aloud that the elections will be held only under the current administration is meant to demonstrate its strength

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SHANTANU MAJUMDER

Political rhetoric and demonstrations are normal in democracy as long as they don't lead to violence, said Shantanu Majumder, a professor at the University of Dhaka's political science department.

"I don't think the situation has reached a deadlock yet. The ruling party is being cautious while the opposition's

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SHAHAB ENAM KHAN

The political deadlock came amid economic volatility, thus becoming a social and economic burden, said Shahab Enam Khan, a professor at Jahangirnagar University's international relations department.

Increasing external pressures, including the US visa policy, are intended to ensure that there is no violence and intimidation

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TREATMENT ABROAD There could be a legal way out

Say experts

PARTHA PRATIM BHATTACHARJEE

After Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina said BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia needs to return to jail first for a court to accept her application for treatment abroad, some experts said the government could still let her go abroad.

There is an example of such a thing happening in the past, they said, adding that legal barriers are being put with political intent.

Senior human rights lawyer ZI Khan Panna told The Daily Star that in 1979, president Ziaur Rahman allowed Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal leader ASM Abdur Rob, who was in jail serving a 10-year sentence at the time, to travel to West Germany for treatment.

Though the Appellate Division rejected Khaleda's bail plea, suspension of her sentence and her release from jail were made by an executive order

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Khaleda must return to jail if she's to go abroad

PM tells VoA; questions US visa policy

STAR REPORT

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia would have to return to jail and get permission from the court if she wanted to go abroad for treatment.

Hasina, who was in the US then, made the remarks in an interview with Voice of America (VoA) Bangla.

Asked if Hasina would reconsider sending Khaleda abroad for better treatment, the premier said, "I ask which country in the world was able to send a convict abroad for treatment. Will any country allow it?"

"If they [BNP] want to [take Khaleda abroad], they'll have to go back to the court. They will have to get permission from the court. There is no scope for us to interfere in any operation of the court," she said.

"But yes, what I could do for her was suspend her jail sentence and allow her to stay at home and arrange her treatment. She's now receiving treatment at the most expensive hospital in Bangladesh."

"But if she has to go abroad, now that I have given her permission to stay home, I will have to withdraw it. She has to return to jail and go to court. They have to appeal to the court. If the court rules, she can go. That's the reality."



"But if she has to go abroad, now that I have given her permission to stay home, I will have to withdraw it. She has to return to jail and go to court."

In response to a question on the US visa sanction, Hasina said she questioned the logic behind the move when her government ensured all rights, including the voting rights of the people, reports UNB.

"We, the Awami League, have fought for the right to vote; the people of our country shed blood to establish their right to vote. We have taken all the necessary measures to ensure a fair and free election."

"Today, they [US] are imposing sanctions; they may impose more sanctions in the future It's up to them. The rights of our country's people -- their voting right, fundamental rights, and the right to live -- have been established," she said.

Hasina also said there is no problem if the US prevents the people's entry to the country, as

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US VISA POLICY Editors' council's concern and US ambassador's clarification

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Editors' Council has recently written to US Ambassador Peter Haas expressing concerns with reference to his recent remarks in a TV interview that media in Bangladesh may also come under the purview of US visa restrictions.

The US ambassador in his reply reiterated his government's commitment to staunchly defend press freedom and the "right of journalists and media outlets to exercise their right to freedom of expression".

Following is the full text of the statement:

In response to a letter from Sampadak Parishad (Editors' Council) expressing concern over a recent remark about applying US visa policy on the media in Bangladesh, US Ambassador Peter Haas has reiterated his government's

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PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

The mosaic in front of Shahnewaz Bhaban, a dormitory on Dhaka University campus, is not visible because of the makeshift tea and snacks shop. The Liberation War-inspired sculpture seen behind is also not maintained properly, as evidenced by the growth of moss on it.

‘What was my son’s fault?’

Says mother of teen who died after getting caught up in political clash

ARUN BIKASH DEY, Ctg

Khaleda Akter can't help repeating, "What was my son's fault?"

She has been haunted by the question since her son Raihan Hossain Ruman was killed in a clash between BNP and Awami League activists in Chattogram's Mirsharai on Friday evening.

Though she remains inconsolable and her questions are unanswered, she continues asking, "My son was not involved in politics, why did they kill him? What was his fault? Why did they take him away from me?"

After losing her husband a decade ago, Khaleda sent her 15-year-old son to her parents' home so that he could continue his studies for a good future.

"That future is lost now," she whispered hopelessly.

Ruman's maternal uncle Yunus Nabi runs a small tea stall in the bazar and his grandfather Abul Kalam, 70, who was taking care of him, was there when the clash broke out.

Kalam said, "My grandchild was standing in front of the stall with a friend when the clash ensued ... I asked Yunus to close the shutters and call Ruman inside."

Yunus said as Ruman did not come, they looked for him after the clash.

"We were searching for him when some locals found him senseless in a nearby pond. We rushed him to the upazila health complex ... We could not save him."

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Ruman