

US adds seven countries to full travel ban list

Expanded ban goes into effect Jan 1

REUTERS, Washington

US President Donald Trump on Tuesday expanded a list of countries subject to a full travel ban, prohibiting citizens from an additional seven countries, including Syria, from entering the United States.

The White House said in a statement that Trump signed a proclamation "expanding and strengthening entry restrictions on nationals from countries with demonstrated, persistent, and severe deficiencies in screening, vetting, and information-sharing to protect the Nation from national security and public safety threats."

Tuesday's move banned citizens from Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, South Sudan, Syria and those holding Palestinian Authority-issued travel documents. The action also imposes a full ban on Laos and Sierra Leone, which had previously only been subject to partial restrictions.



These vehicles have been lying abandoned on Narinda Road in Wari for years now, slowly rusting away. Originally seized by police, they have been kept here without any due process, hampering pedestrian movement. The photo was taken yesterday.

Growing global focus on February 12 vote

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Ivars Jijabs, a member of the European Parliament, will serve as the chief observer of the EU delegation.

In an October 21 meeting with Yunus, an IRI delegation confirmed that the American non-profit organisation will send at least 10 international observers for Bangladesh's national election.

"We will have robust election observation in February," said the delegation head, Christopher J. Fussner, also an IRI director.

Deployment of election observers is expected to help mitigate the chances of violence during the vote, he said.

An IRI pre-election team visited Bangladesh in October and submitted

its report.

The total number of observers from the US, including the IRI delegation, is expected to be about 50, according to EC and foreign ministry officials.

The Commonwealth mission, meanwhile, is likely to comprise about 30 observers. Its pre election team also visited Bangladesh in October.

The Bangkok-based ANFREL conducted a pre-election assessment mission in Bangladesh from November 21 to December 5.

"We will deploy an international election observation mission for the parliamentary election, but the number is yet to be finalised," said Afsana Anayat Amey, programme associate — Bangladesh Elections and

Democracy Programme of ANFREL.

Meanwhile, the EC yesterday instructed all educational institutions designated as polling centres to ensure that their existing CCTV cameras remain operational.

The directive further states that at centres without CCTV coverage, the managing committees or authorities should be requested to make arrangements for CCTV installation for polling day.

The commission has also instructed the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting to ensure equal opportunities for all candidates in election campaigns broadcast on Bangladesh Television (BTV) and all private TV channels ahead of the polls.

India advising on our polls 'unacceptable'

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Was not the case in the last 15 years," he added.

"They [India] know that they had a very good relationship with the previous government in the last 15 years. They [India] didn't utter a single word when the elections were a farce at that time. Now we are moving towards a good election, there is no need to advise us at this moment."

Asked about similar advice from other countries or blocs, including the European Union, Touhid said the situations were not the same. "We always have some communication with them [EU and others], and they also have communication with the Election Commission, because we want them to send their observers here."

Besides issuing the statement, the MEA summoned Bangladesh High Commissioner to India Riaz Hamidullah to express "strong concerns about the deteriorating security environment" around the Indian High Commission in Dhaka.

India's move came amid protests in Dhaka yesterday, when police stopped several hundred people under the banner of "July Oikya" from marching towards the high commission.

The demonstrators demanded the return of deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina and others who fled to India during and after the July uprising last year. An announcement to lay siege to the mission prompted the Indian Visa Application Centre at Jamuna Future Park to close at 2:00pm.

Bangladesh's relations with India have remained strained since the fall of the Awami League government on August 5, 2024. Dhaka has for several times demanded Hasina's repatriation to face justice over killings during the uprising. She has been sentenced to death in a case over crimes against humanity.

On Sunday, Bangladesh's foreign ministry summoned Indian High Commissioner Pranay Verma to convey Dhaka's "strong concerns over India allowing Hasina to continue

making incendiary statements from Indian soil".

The ministry said Hasina had been calling on her supporters to engage in terrorist activities aimed at destabilising the country and derailing the upcoming parliamentary elections.

Dhaka also sought New Delhi's cooperation in preventing suspects in the recent attempted assassination of Sharif Osman Hadi, an independent aspiring candidate for Dhaka 8, from fleeing to India. Bangladesh urged their immediate arrest and extradition should they enter Indian territory.

The Indian MEA yesterday rejected what it called a "false narrative on extremist elements" surrounding recent events in Bangladesh.

"It is unfortunate that the interim government has neither conducted a thorough investigation nor shared meaningful evidence with India regarding the incidents," it said, adding that India's ties with Bangladesh are rooted in the Liberation War and strengthened through development and people-to-people exchanges.

The MEA also said India expects the interim government to ensure the safety of diplomatic missions in line with its obligations.

Touhid said Hasina had initially limited her remarks to social media but "subsequently, her statements with a lot of provocation have appeared in mainstream media".

"We will object to this or seek their [India's] cooperation to send her back. But they have not moved in that direction," he said, while acknowledging that Bangladesh cannot stop Hasina if India does not intervene.

"We will ask India to stop her so that the environment being created here for the election is not harmed by the incendiary statements she is giving. If they do that, we will take it as a good positive step. If not, I cannot force her," Touhid said.

Asked about comments by National Citizen Party leader Hasnat

Abdullah regarding India's Seven Sisters states, Touhid said Hasnat was not part of the government.

"Bangladesh does not believe in terrorism. We have a policy on this matter. We certainly will not shelter any separatists on our land. This government will not do this, and I presume no government in Bangladesh will do this," he said.

"A political activist might say that, but that is certainly not the government's position."

Touhid also talked about Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Victory Day tweet on December 16, which made no mention of Bangladesh. Touhid said this was not new.

"They [India] always try to downplay our role in the Liberation War. And they celebrate it differently in Kolkata, observing it as their 'Eastern Command Day' because they believe their army achieved victory through warfare," he said.

He noted that Indian experts themselves have written that the war would have taken longer, caused greater destruction and claimed many more lives had Bangladesh's freedom fighters not mounted strong resistance and weakened the Pakistani military.

"Those who deny the contribution of the freedom fighters have no knowledge of military history or military science. They try to deny it, but denial is meaningless. Without the freedom fighters, this victory could not be achieved."

On whether Bangladesh-India relations had entered a new phase, Touhid said it was difficult to say.

"We have always said that we want a good working relationship, but now both sides must try to move the relationship forward. I think perhaps both sides together have not been able to progress that far."

Asked if Dhaka was considering reducing manpower at its high commission in India, he said, "If we see that there is not sufficient work for our officers, then we will try to do that."

Frauds and brokers still dominating migration

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resolve the deep-rooted migration challenges, the chief adviser said these initiatives failed to bring the expected outcome.

Many initiatives appear impressive on the surface, which are important too, but the government has so far been unable to penetrate the core of the broker-dominated system, he added.

Recalling his experience with Grameen Bank, Yunus said he first came to know about the broker syndicates when requests started to come from rural women seeking loans from the bank to send their children abroad.

"The entire world is controlled by brokers. It is nearly impossible to understand who took money from whom and for what reason," he said.

This system must be changed at any cost to take the country forward with remittances, he said.

Yunus distributed cheques of insurance benefits, medical assistance, financial aid, compensation and scholarships for meritorious children of expatriate workers at the event. Eighty-six Bangladeshi expatriates were also honoured as CIPs for direct investment in Bangladesh's industries, sending the highest

amount of remittance through legal channels and importing Bangladeshi products to different countries across the world.

Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment Adviser Asif Nazrul handed over a task force report on reforms and strategic realignment of the ministry to the chief adviser.

Yunus said his government took steps to have the Bangladeshi migrants, who were jailed abroad for staging demonstrations expressing solidarity with the July uprising, released.

He also recalled discussions with Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim during his Dhaka visit last year, including on the Bangladeshi workers who failed to travel despite paying full costs.

The chief adviser said Japan accepted immediately when he asked it to take one lakh Bangladeshi workers in the next five years during his visit to the country this year.

Referring to the visa ban on Bangladeshi by different Middle Eastern countries on allegations of document forgery, he said, "Bangladesh has become infamous worldwide for fake papers".

The chief adviser said even seafarers were barred from disembarking at foreign ports due to

mistrust of Bangladeshi documents. After his government's efforts, some countries are allowing seafarers to disembark, he added.

Yunus rejected the notion that Bangladeshi workers lack skill. He cited Bangladeshi expatriates' success stories in Italy, the UK and elsewhere.

"Bangladeshi chefs are the best. Their skills were not learned in training centers but through sheer resilience and intelligence," he said. "Our people learn languages quickly -- Italian, Russian, English. There is no shortage of talent."

Calling Bangladesh a "gold mine of youth", he said nearly 90 million people in the country are under the age of 27.

"The world is desperately searching for young people. They must come here to hire them," Yunus said.

Emphasising efforts to prepare the country's youths for fulfilling the global demands of human resources and taking the country forward with their contributions, he said the youth are more valuable than oil or rare minerals.

Yunus also said the core challenge is not money but system. "This is a question of discipline and governance. If we fail to use this gold mine, our destiny will never change."

Tougher time awaits BNP

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urged party leaders and supporters not to gather at the airport on the day of his departure.

Stating that conspiracies are underway centring the polls, Tarique called on leaders and activists to keep the people of Bangladesh aware and alert against such efforts.

"Those who plotted in 1971 and were involved in conspiracies in November 1975, 1981, 1996 and at different later times remain active."

At the event, Tarique also laid out concrete plans before the people for rebuilding the country.

"This election is not an experiment or an experience. It is an opportunity for change, and we must use it wisely."

The BNP does not believe in dreams but concrete plans, he said.

"We do not want to live in dreams. While dreaming, 16 billion has been smuggled out of the country. While dreaming, the country's economic condition, education system, agriculture system, roads have all been completely broken."

Outlining his party's plans to make

Canada will miss climate targets for 2030, 2035: PM

AFP, Montreal

Canada will not meet its targets for reducing greenhouse gas emissions for 2030 and 2035, Prime Minister Mark Carney acknowledged in an interview that aired Tuesday on Radio-Canada.

The federal government in Ottawa, under former prime minister Justin Trudeau, had set a target in 2021 of slashing total carbon emissions by 40-45 percent below 2005 levels by 2030.

Trudeau's government had also set a goal of creating a net-zero power grid by 2035.

"What's clear is that Canada is not going to reach our 2030 and 2035 climate targets with current policy," Carney, who took office in March 2025 after replacing Trudeau as Liberal Party leader, told the state broadcaster.

"We need to change that."