



Up to $20,000 US visa bond now mandatory

Bangladesh, 49 others put on permanent list

AGENCIES

The US State Department will make permanent a visa bond programme that could require applicants from 50 countries, including Bangladesh, to post bonds of up to $20,000 when seeking US visas, according to a federal notice posted online on Friday.



The Federal Register notice applies to B1 and B2 visas, which are issued for business and tourism travel, reported Reuters.

"Consular officers may require covered nonimmigrant visa applicants to post a bond of up to $20,000 as a condition of visa issuance, as determined by the consular officers," the notice said.

"The 2025 visa bond pilot, which provided a framework for the Department of State, the Department

SEE PAGE 9 COL 1



Students restore graffiti at Dhaka University yesterday ahead of the second July Uprising Day on August 5. The university is preserving graffiti painted across the campus during the 2024 student-led mass uprising.

PHOTO: MEHEDI HASAN

Inside house of horror

ICT travels to Aynaghar in Rab's Uttara HQ

SHARIFUL ISLAM *and* SIRAJUL ISLAM RUBEL

From the outside, the ageing two-storey building inside the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab)-1 headquarters in Uttara appears almost idyllic.

Blanketed by lush green trees whose branches swayed gently in the breeze, the building offered a rare respite from the oppressive summer heat.

Behind those walls, however, lies one of Dhaka's darkest secrets.

For the first time, local journalists were allowed inside the Task Force for Interrogation (TFI) Cell -- widely known as "Aynaghar" -- where investigators allege scores of political opponents and perceived dissenters under the Awami League government were secretly detained, tortured and, in some cases, never seen again.

Yesterday, judges of the International Crimes Tribunal-1, accompanied by prosecutors, defence lawyers, members of the Commission of Inquiry on Enforced Disappearances inspected the alleged detention centre as part of ongoing crimes against humanity trials over enforced disappearances.

The building, surrounded by nearly 10-foot-high boundary walls topped with barbed wire, contains 29 cells spread across its upper and lower floors. Prosecutors said almost all of the cells had their walls broken or removed in what appeared to be an attempt to destroy evidence after

SEE PAGE 9 COL 4

Dhaka seeks info on Bangladeshi POWs in Ukraine

Missions in Russia, Poland, Russian embassy in Dhaka contacted



Rimel Mia



Sarwar Sumon



Kamrul Hasan

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The foreign ministry has contacted Bangladesh's missions in Russia and Poland, as well as the Russian Embassy in Dhaka, seeking details about three Bangladeshis being held as prisoners of war (POWs) in Ukraine, a ministry official said yesterday.

The development came after The Daily Star interviewed the three men, whose families appealed to the government to bring them home after months of uncertainty.

"The recent incident involving three Bangladeshis being held as prisoners of war in Ukraine has come to our notice," the foreign ministry official, requesting anonymity, told The Daily Star.

The ministry has asked the Bangladesh embassies in Moscow and Warsaw, and the Russian Embassy in Dhaka, to inquire into the matter and take the necessary steps, the official said.

According to the official, the Russian Embassy informed the foreign ministry that it had alerted the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Moscow about the issue.

Speaking to this newspaper separately, a Bangladesh

SEE PAGE 9 COL 1

Escalation feared as US tells citizens to leave ME

US media say strikes could begin this weekend as Trump threatens to hit Iran 'very hard'

AGENCIES

US embassies in several Middle Eastern capitals yesterday warned American citizens to beware an "unforeseen escalation" in the regional conflict and urged them to be ready to leave hours after President Donald Trump threatened to hit Iran "very hard".

His threat came as US media reported Trump was considering renewed heavy attacks as soon as this weekend, including against energy infrastructure targets.

"Americans in the region should consider departing, or be prepared to depart should there be escalation," said a security alert, versions of which were posted on social media by the US missions in Amman, Jerusalem, Muscat, Baghdad and Beirut.

The messages urged citizens to check flight details and to follow safety advice from local authorities.

"Americans currently in the Middle East should exercise caution and heightened vigilance and should be prepared for flight cancellations, periodic airspace closures, and potential travel disruptions," it said.

After more than five months of war, which began on February 28 when the United States and Israel launched strikes on Iran, there is seemingly no end to the conflict, with resumed tit-for-tat attacks.

"We'll be hitting him very hard and, you know, at some point they're going to say, 'We just can't take it anymore'," Trump said Friday as he hosted a cabinet meeting at the Camp David presidential retreat in Maryland.

The Wall Street Journal later reported that Trump had ordered a fresh attack aimed at convincing Tehran to surrender, which could begin as soon as this weekend, citing unnamed US officials.

CBS News meanwhile reported that the United States and Israel were planning joint strikes on energy-related targets, possibly throughout the weekend. Such targets would likely be oil refineries and power plants.

Trump has repeatedly threatened to strike Iran's vital infrastructure throughout the war, vowing last week to destroy a bridge or power plant every time ships in the vital Strait of Hormuz are attacked.

The president had not yet given the green light for the campaign, but Israel and the US were coordinating, CBS said, citing multiple unnamed sources.

The report comes just days after Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu visited Washington and met with Trump and US Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth.

Some White House aides voiced strong objections to the plan at the cabinet meeting, the CBS report said.

If the plan went forward, it would mark the first time that Israel has joined in attacks on Iran since the initial phase of the war.

Reports say attacks may target Iran's energy infrastructure | Iran warns flames of war will engulf the region, US | Reports of attack come after Israel PM visits White House | Tanker struck by 'unknown projectile' off Oman

AVALANCHE ON BROAD PEAK

Famed climber Purja, 9 more die

AGENCIES

Celebrated Nepali climber Nirmal Purja, who set a record for the fastest ascent of the world's 14 highest mountains, died in an avalanche during an expedition in Pakistan, his company said yesterday.



"Today it is with profound sadness and immense heartbreak that we confirm that Nirmal 'Nimsdai' Purja tragically lost his life following the avalanche on Broad Peak," his expedition organising company Elite Exped said in an Instagram post.

"We have also received confirmation that other members of the expedition sadly did not survive," it added, without giving details.

Purja, 43, and nine others had been missing since Thursday after being struck by an avalanche on the 8,051-metre (26,414-foot) Broad Peak, the world's 12th highest mountain, a technically difficult climb in Pakistan's Gilgit-Baltistan region.

The 10 mountaineers were caught in an avalanche around midday on Thursday. Six of the 10 climbers were Nepalis, and the others were from Pakistan, Oman, the US and China.

Purja, who served with Britain's Brigade of Gurkhas before joining the Special Boat Squadron of the Royal Marines, broke multiple climbing records since becoming a full-time mountaineer and tour guide.

Purja completed the record-breaking feat in six months in 2019. He became widely known

SEE PAGE 9 COL 4

Infantino's U-turn fails to quell backlash

AGENCIES

FIFA president Gianni Infantino's leadership came under renewed scrutiny on Saturday after he abandoned plans to bring private investment into the commercial rights of the World Cup, prompting UEFA to declare it had lost confidence in the FIFA leadership.

The proposal, unveiled on Tuesday, would have seen FIFA create a new commercial subsidiary, FIFA Forward Enterprise (FFE), to manage competitions including the World Cup and Club World Cup. FIFA said selling a stake in the venture could raise up to $4.2 billion, based on a valuation of $20 billion.

Under the plan, each of FIFA's 211 member associations would have received a one-off payment of $20 million in early 2027, while funding through the FIFA Forward programme for 2027-2030 would have increased from $8 million to $20 million.

However, the proposal sparked a fierce backlash from UEFA, the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) and CONCACAF, all of whom criticised FIFA for failing to consult key stakeholders before announcing the plan.

Hours after shelving the proposal, Infantino defended his decision, saying unity remained FIFA's priority.

"Our purpose has always been -- and will always be -- to

SEE PAGE 9 COL 4



Rescuers work outside a multi-storey residential building damaged in a Russian air attack on Kyiv yesterday. Russia pounded Kyiv and the region in a heavy ballistic missile attack early yesterday, killing 10 people, as President Volodymyr Zelenskiy warned that Ukraine had run out of interceptor missiles for its US Patriot air defence systems.

PHOTO: AFP

Jamaat man arrested over child sexual harassment

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Rajshahi*



Omar Faruk

A Jamaat-e-Islami activist on Friday was shown arrested in a case over the sexual harassment of a nine-year-old girl in Rajshahi's Paba upazila.

The detainee, Omar Faruk, is a full member of Jamaat-e-Islami's Ward 4 unit of Boro Gachhi Union and works as a village doctor, police and a local Jamaat leader said.

Police detained him from Pakarmatha on Friday evening, after which the victim's mother filed a case against him under the Women and Children Repression Prevention Act.

Faruk was then shown arrested in the case,

SEE PAGE 9 COL 1