

Bangladeshis won't get US visas if found undermining election process: Blinken

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Online Desk: The United States will impose fresh visa restrictions on Bangladeshis who will obstruct or undermine holding free and fair parliamentary elections under a new policy. US Secretary Antony Blinken has announced the new visa policy to “ensure the upcoming general elections in Bangladesh become free, fair and peaceful.”

The Bangladesh government was informed about the new visa policy on May 3, US Secretary of State Blinken said in a press statement on Wednesday. “Today, I announced a new visa policy to promote free and fair elections. Under this policy, the United States can 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,” he said.

This includes current and former Bangladeshi officials, members of pro-government and opposition political parties, and members of law enforcement, the judiciary, and security services. Actions that undermine the democratic election process include vote rigging, voter intimidation, the use of violence to prevent people from exercising their right to freedoms of association and peaceful assembly, and the use of measures designed to prevent political parties, voters, civil society, or the media from disseminating their views, the statement said.

“Holding of free and fair elections is the responsibility of everyone — voters, political parties, the government, the security forces, civil society, and the media. I am announcing this policy to lend our support to all those seeking to advance democracy in Bangladesh,” Blinken added.