

21 April | 2025

# Bangladesh Foreign Policy Watch

CGS Centre for Governance Studies



## A Bi-Weekly Roundup of Key Events



06 April

### RWP slams India's Waqf Bill

The Revolutionary Workers Party of Bangladesh has condemned the Waqf Amendment Bill 2024, recently passed in the Indian parliament. Saiful Huq, the party's general secretary, described the amendment as an anti-Muslim move by the BJP-led government intended to further marginalise India's Muslim community. While the Indian government claims the bill will increase accountability among Muslim land-owning organisations, critics argue it is a targeted attack on a minority. Saiful stated that the bill violates the Indian constitution and endangers century-old Muslim land holdings, intensifying the community's insecurity. The party urged India to halt divisive and discriminatory actions.

### Starlink receives BIDA nod for Bangladesh

Starlink, the U.S.-based satellite internet provider, has received operational approval from the Bangladesh Investment Development Authority (BIDA). This approval follows BIDA's introduction of a Non-Geostationary Orbit (NGSO) policy on March 29. Starlink has completed the application process and is now seeking an NGSO licence to commence commercial operations in Bangladesh. Preparations are underway, including device imports and model development. A demonstration of its services is scheduled for April 9 at an upcoming summit, although it will not mark an official launch. Talks between Elon Musk and Bangladeshi representatives are ongoing to explore future collaboration and expansion.

## **BB declines IMF rate cut suggestion**

The Bangladesh Bank (BB) has turned down the International Monetary Fund's recommendation to lower the policy interest rate, citing ongoing inflationary pressure. BB stated that a rate cut would only be considered if inflation falls below 8%, whereas projections suggest it will reach 8.2% by June 2025. The central bank had earlier raised the policy rate to 10% in October 2024—the fifth increase since May 2022. BB also declined to implement a fully market-based exchange rate system, another IMF suggestion, until inflation stabilises. Talks with the IMF also covered Bangladesh's tax-to-GDP ratio and broader monetary reforms under the ongoing \$4.7 billion loan programme.

**07 April**

---

## **Bangladesh plans to send two tariff letters to US**

Bangladesh intends to send two formal letters to the United States in response to its new tariff policy, which raises import duties on Bangladeshi goods from 15% to 37%, effective April 9, 2025. One letter will be addressed to the U.S. President from the Chief Adviser, and the other to the U.S. Trade Representative from the Commerce Adviser. As the U.S. remains Bangladesh's largest export destination—with \$8.4 billion worth of exports in 2024, primarily garments officials and industry stakeholders have held consultations to devise a response strategy. Other countries affected by the policy include China and Vietnam.

## **Bangladesh students join global Gaza strike**

Students from several Bangladeshi universities joined a global strike on April 7, 2025, suspending academic and professional activities to protest Israeli military operations in Gaza. Students from institutions such as Dhaka University, BRAC University, and Daffodil International University took part, with some DU departments officially cancelling classes and exams. Student organisations including the Dhaka University Chhatra Union and Bangladesh Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal issued calls to action and statements denouncing Israeli aggression. The strike comes amid reports of significant casualties in Gaza since October 2023.

## **Nationwide protests condemn Israeli attacks**

Protests erupted across Bangladesh condemning Israeli military actions in Gaza. Demonstrations took place in cities including Dhaka, Narayanganj, Faridpur, Rajshahi, and Savar, involving students, civil society members, and political groups. In Dhaka, protest sites included Shahbagh, Central Shaheed Minar, Baitul Mukarram Mosque, and Manik Mia Avenue, with participation from major universities. In Narayanganj, protesters blocked key roads, disrupting regional traffic. Protesters denounced Israel's actions, criticised the silence of Arab leaders and the UN, called for Gaza's recognition as an independent state, and demanded international intervention to halt the violence.

## **Dhaka condemns Israeli atrocities in Gaza**

The Government of Bangladesh has strongly condemned Israel's military operations in Gaza, citing mass civilian casualties, human rights abuses, and obstruction of humanitarian aid. The government described the actions as tantamount to ethnic cleansing and demanded an immediate end to hostilities. It urged compliance with international humanitarian law and called on the United Nations and global actors to ensure an unconditional ceasefire and unrestricted humanitarian access. Reaffirming its support for Palestinian self-determination, Bangladesh advocated for a two-state solution based on pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as the capital.

## **Govt to ease U.S. exports**

To reduce the trade deficit with the United States, the Government of Bangladesh has announced it will allow 100 additional American products to enter the country duty-free, expanding the current list of 190 zero-tariff items. The government is also pursuing reforms to simplify customs procedures, strengthen intellectual property rights, and enable private-sector imports of key U.S. goods. Bangladesh plans to propose new U.S. investments in automobile manufacturing and explore long-term LNG deals. In response to the recent U.S. tariff hike on Bangladeshi exports, Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus has initiated high-level discussions with U.S. officials, including President Trump, to delay implementation and improve trade relations.



## IMF urges luxury tax hike

The International Monetary Fund has advised Bangladesh to increase supplementary duties on luxury goods, phase out tax exemptions, and implement a unified 15% Value Added Tax (VAT) rate. These steps are aimed at helping Bangladesh meet revenue targets for the current and upcoming fiscal years. However, the National Board of Revenue has expressed concern that current economic conditions make these targets difficult to achieve. The IMF also raised alarms over declining public investment, called for greater transparency in development projects, and questioned how recent U.S. tariffs might affect Bangladesh's exports and balance of payments.

## Youngone chief backs Bangladesh investment



Kihak Sung, Chairman of Youngone Corporation, has urged global investors to consider Bangladesh as a favourable destination for investment, citing the country's economic resilience and the proactive role of the interim government. He highlighted the Korean Export Processing Zone (KEPZ) in Anowara as a model private industrial zone with green-certified factories, logistical infrastructure, and strong environmental standards. The Bangladesh Investment Summit in Dhaka is showcasing opportunities in sectors such as textiles, health-care, agriculture, and the digital economy. Foreign delegations are also visiting sites like KEPZ, Mirsarai, and the Japanese Economic Zone. The government aims to enhance investor confidence through transparency and private-public collaboration.

**08 April**

## Arakan Army seizes five trawlers

Eleven fishermen aboard two trawlers were detained in Myanmar's waters near Saint Martin's Island in Cox's Bazar district. The total number of fishermen on the remaining three trawlers is yet to be confirmed. Local officials, including the Teknaf upazila nirbahi officer and Border Guard

Bangladesh (BGB), are working to verify the number of detainees. The trawlers were reportedly fishing in deep-sea waters when they crossed into Myanmar's maritime boundary.

## Navy detains 214 Rohingyas

The Bangladesh Navy detained 214 Rohingyas attempting to illegally enter Malaysia via the Bay of Bengal aboard a fishing trawler without basic safety measures. Among the detainees were 118 men, 68 women, and 28 children. The vessel, "FV Kulsuma," was intercepted 44 nautical miles south-west of Saint Martin's Island during a routine patrol. It lacked essential life-saving equipment, food, and water, posing a risk of humanitarian disaster. The boat had departed from the Shap-lapur area under Teknaf police station early in the morning. The detainees and the vessel were handed over to the Coast Guard for legal proceedings.

## Franco-Bangladeshi Cultural Week opens in Paris

The "Regards sur le Bangladesh" Franco-Bangladeshi cultural week is taking place in Paris from April 7 to 12. The event celebrates Bangladesh's cultural, artistic, and environmental identity through exhibitions, film screenings, architecture, literature, music, and public discussions. It seeks to highlight the country's resilience and urban innovation beyond its common portrayal as climate-vulnerable. Highlights include documentaries such as Bamboo Stories and Bengal Delta, architectural lectures by Kashef Mahboob Chowdhury, and a concluding collaborative concert and theatre performance. The event is being held in partnership with institutions from both France and Bangladesh.

## World Bank urges four sector reforms

At the Bangladesh Investment Summit 2025, the World Bank released a report identifying four priority sectors—green ready-made garments (RMG), middle-income housing, paint and dyes, and digital financial services—as key drivers of investment and employment. The report recommends enhancing sustainability and labour standards in the RMG sector, expanding mortgage access for housing, streamlining customs procedures for imported raw materials in the paint industry, and reforming regulatory frameworks for digital finance. These reforms aim to support job creation, boost private-sector growth,

## Dhaka invites Finnish clean energy investment

Bangladesh has invited Finnish enterprises to invest in sectors such as clean energy, green technology, digital services, e-commerce, and textiles. During bilateral discussions, both countries agreed to strengthen collaboration in renewable energy, sustainable agriculture, resource efficiency, and technology transfer. Finland expressed interest in waste management, water treatment, and circular economy solutions. Bangladesh also requested more employment opportunities for its workers, increased student scholarships, and streamlined visa processes. The two countries also discussed repatriation of Rohingya refugees and pledged to hold the next round of consultations at a mutually convenient time.

09 April

## Govt begins dialogue with Arakan Army

The Government of Bangladesh has opened dialogue with the Arakan Army under a UN-brokered initiative to restore stability in Myanmar's Rakhine state and facilitate the repatriation of Rohingya refugees. Bangladesh is considering establishing a UN-led humanitarian corridor to deliver aid to the conflict-ridden region. Since 2018, Bangladesh has submitted a list of 800,000 Rohingyas for repatriation; Myanmar has verified 250,000 and given preliminary approval to 180,000. However, ongoing armed conflict between the Arakan Army and the Myanmar military remains a significant obstacle. The issue was also discussed at the 6th BIMSTEC Summit in Bangkok, where both sides addressed regional cooperation and logistics.

## DP World CEO Meets Chief Adviser to Explore Strategic Investments



DP World Group Chairman and CEO Sultan

Ahmed Bin Sulayem met Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus in Dhaka to discuss investment in Bangladesh's port and logistics infrastructure, especially the New Mooring Container Terminal in Chittagong. The Chief Adviser invited broader collaboration in fisheries, agro-processing, and halal exports, while underscoring skills training for Bangladeshi workers. DP World proposed launching a "Bangladesh Mart" in the UAE to showcase local products. Visa facilitation and labour recruitment were also discussed. The CEO reaffirmed commitment to deepening economic ties and advancing shared prosperity through sustainable trade and infrastructure development.

## ADB forecasts 3.9% Bangladesh GDP growth

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has projected Bangladesh's GDP growth to slow to 3.9% in FY2024–25, down from 4.2% in FY2024, with a recovery to 5.1% anticipated in FY2026. Key challenges cited include political uncertainty, persistent inflation, energy shortages, industrial unrest, and declining global demand. The imposition of a 37% U.S. tariff on Bangladeshi goods has added further pressure on exports. Inflation is projected to reach 10.2% in FY2025, while the taka has depreciated 10.2%, and foreign reserves have shrunk. ADB emphasised the need for reforms in revenue collection, energy security, and investment climate, and recommended export diversification to mitigate external shocks.

10 April

## India cancels Bangladesh transshipment privilege

India has withdrawn the transshipment facility that allowed Bangladesh to export goods to third countries using Indian ports and airports. While the decision will not affect Bangladesh's trade with Nepal and Bhutan, it is expected to increase logistics costs, particularly for the readymade garments (RMG) sector. India cited airport congestion and delays affecting its own exporters, following a request from the Apparel Export Promotion Council. In response, Bangladesh is considering using its own international airports for re-export purposes. Experts have raised concerns over the impact on regional trade integration and urged renewed cooperation to resolve bilateral trade issues.



## BSF kills Bangladeshi national near border

Muradur Rahman Munna, a Bangladeshi farmer from Bijoyanagar upazila in Brahmanbaria, died near the Sejamura border with India on Tuesday evening. His family alleged that India's Border Security Force (BSF) detained and physically assaulted him while he was inspecting his paddy fields near the border. Munna was later found unconscious and died in hospital, reportedly claiming before his death that he had been beaten by BSF personnel. The Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) is currently investigating the incident, but has not yet confirmed the details of Munna's detention or assault.

## Bangladesh Investment Summit 2025 Showcases \$260 Million in Commitments

The Bangladesh Investment Summit 2025, held from April 7–10 at InterContinental Dhaka, attracted over 2,300 participants from 50 countries, including more than 550 foreign investors. Organised by BIDA and BEZA, the summit secured investment declarations totaling Tk 3,100 crore (approximately \$260 million), with significant pledges from firms like Handa Industries and ShopUp. Key sectors highlighted included renewable energy, digital economy, healthcare, and agro-processing. The event featured over 130 speakers and 150 B2B and B2G meetings, aiming to position Bangladesh as a competitive global investment

### April 13

## WCC Chief Meets Chief Adviser Pledges Support for Peace and Justice

Reverend Dr. Jerry Pillay, General Secretary of the World Council of Churches, met Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus in Dhaka on April 13. He expressed full support for Bangladesh's Interim Government and its efforts toward peace, justice, and communal harmony. Both leaders shared a vision for a "3 Zero World." Reverend Pillay also praised Bangladesh's climate leadership and reaffirmed WCC's commitment to continued collaboration and interfaith solidarity.

### April 14

## Bangladesh, Türkiye Pledge Deeper Bilateral Cooperation



A high-level Bangladeshi delegation, led by Foreign Adviser Md. Touhid Hossain and Information Adviser Mahfuj Alam, met Türkiye's Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan to strengthen bilateral ties. The meeting aimed to resolve outstanding issues and explore new areas of collaboration. Both sides expressed commitment to elevating the partnership through mutual initiatives. Türkiye pledged to grant Bangladesh access to key cooperation sectors reserved for its closest allies, marking a promising step toward expanded engagement, shared growth, and long-term diplomatic and economic collaboration between the two nations.

### April 15

## Bangladesh, Singapore Reaffirm Commitment to Deepen Bilateral Ties

On April 14, 2025, Bangladesh's Foreign Secretary Ambassador Md. Jashim Uddin met Singapore's Foreign Minister Dr. Vivian Balakrishnan following bilateral consultations between the two countries. Both sides discussed trade, investment migrant workers, healthcare cooperation, and regional issues.



Ambassador Jashim proposed concluding a Free Trade Agreement and sought increased investment in energy, ICT, ports, and agro-processing. He praised Singapore's governance and migrant worker policies and urged support for Bangladesh's ASEAN dialogue partner bid. The Singapore Foreign Minister reiterated continued support on regional matters, including the Rohingya crisis

and expressed interest in strengthening high-level political and economic engagement.

## April 17

### Chief Adviser Seeks Closer Ties with Pakista

Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus has called for strengthening Bangladesh-Pakistan relations to unlock mutual trade and business opportunities. He made the remarks during a meeting with Pakistani Foreign Secretary Amna Baloch on April 17 at the State Guest House Jamuna. Both sides acknowledged past setbacks and agreed to foster regular B2B engagements, youth and cultural exchanges, and closer collaboration through SAARC, OIC, and D-8. Baloch emphasised the need to "stop missing the bus" on regional cooperation. The Chief Adviser expressed hope that the upcoming visit of Pakistan's Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar would further revitalise bilateral ties.

### US Backs Bangladesh's Reform Agenda Praises Rohingya Efforts

A visiting US delegation expressed strong support for Bangladesh's reform agenda during a meeting with Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus on April 17.

They also discussed regional peace, security, and development. The delegation included Deputy Assistant Secretaries Nicole A. Chulick and Andrew Herrup. The US appreciated Bangladesh's generosity in hosting 1.2 million Rohingyas and recent progress on repatriation. The Chief Adviser reaffirmed commitment to close cooperation with the Trump administration on bilateral trade, connectivity, and regional stability.

## April 20

### Bangladesh, China Chart Next Steps for Strategic Cooperation

Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus met with Chinese Ambassador Yao Wen on April 20 to review the outcomes of his recent China visit and accelerate bilateral cooperation. Discussions focused on infrastructure, healthcare, trade, and cultural exchange, with both sides emphasising swift implementation. Plans include economic zone development, four new vessels, a 1,000-bed hospital, and a Kunming–Chittagong flight. Bangladesh will export mangoes to China this season, with jackfruit exports next year. The Chief Adviser also proposed Chinese investment in locomotives and water management. A mini investment summit and the Chinese Commerce Minister's visit were confirmed for the coming months.

## Contributors

### Nuzhat Tabassum

Program Assistant at Center for Governance Studies (CGS)

nuzhat@cgs-bd.com

### Bahauddin Ahmed

Digital Coordinator at Centre for Governance Studies (CGS)

bahauddin@cgs-bd.com