

05 May | 2025

# Bangladesh Foreign Policy Watch

CGS Centre for Governance Studies



## A Bi-Weekly Roundup of Key Events

### Yunus departs for Doha Summit

Dr. Muhammad Yunus has departed Dhaka for Doha to attend the Earthna Summit 2025. His visit is happening at the invitation of Qatari Amir Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad Al-Thani. During his visit, he will meet the Amir of Qatar and Deputy Prime Minister Sheikh Mohammed. He will engage with Qatar Charity and Qatar Foundation and give an interview with Al Jazeera. Discussions on energy cooperation will be held, particularly regarding Bangladesh's LNG imports from Qatar. He will speak at an investment summit and a conference on the Rohingya issue, where global stakeholders will participate. Several high-level Bangladeshi officials are accompanying him on the trip.

### Home Adviser Seeks EU Visa Centre



Home Adviser Lt Gen (retd) Jahangir Alam Chowdhury

21 April

### Yunus urges more Bangladeshi women peacekeepers

Professor Muhammad Yunus called on the United Nations to increase the recruitment of Bangladeshi women in peacekeeping operations, reaffirming Bangladesh's strong commitment to international peace and security. Bangladesh currently contributes 5,677 personnel to 10 UN missions and ranks among the top three global troop and police contributors. UN Peace Operations head Jean-Pierre Lacroix supported broader inclusion of women in peacekeeping beyond traditional roles. Bangladesh also requested inclusion of Border Guard Bangladesh and Ansar in UN missions and advocated for more leadership roles. Professor Yunus raised concerns over regional instability linked to Myanmar and stressed the importance of resolving the Rohingya crisis.

hury requested the European Union to establish a visa center in Dhaka to facilitate access for Bangladeshi citizens currently required to travel to New Delhi for certain EU visas. EU Ambassador Michael Miller agreed to discuss the proposal with member states. The meeting addressed law and order, the Rohingya crisis, irregular migration, and Bangladesh's reform efforts. The adviser emphasized Bangladesh's status as a major manpower-exporting country. The EU proposed a trilateral dialogue with Libya to curb illegal migration and expressed interest in providing technical support and training to aid in the country's ongoing reform process.

## Yunus calls for deeper China ties

Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus reaffirmed Bangladesh's commitment to strengthening bilateral relations with China during a meeting with Yunnan Governor Wang Yubo in Dhaka. The discussion focused on expanding cooperation in youth exchange, healthcare, education, trade, and vocational training. Governor Yubo noted the adoption of Yunus's microcredit model by a Chinese bank in Yunnan. China designated hospitals in Kunming for Bangladeshi patients, and Yunus expressed interest in sending more students to China. Both parties emphasized collaboration in digital and language education. The meeting marked the 50th anniversary of diplomatic ties, with both sides expressing interest in addressing shared development challenges through deeper engagement.

## 22 April

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## Qatar to recruit 725 Bangladeshi soldiers



Qatar plans to recruit 725 Bangladeshi soldiers to work in various roles within the Gulf state. The recruitment process is set to begin within the next two months, as stated by Shafiqul Alam, press

secretary to Bangladesh's chief advisor, during the Earthna Summit 2025 in Doha. Bangladesh's Chief Advisor Muhammad Yunus is leading a delegation to the summit. Bangladesh is aiming to increase the number of soldiers Qatar hires every three years. Bangladeshi soldiers have already been working in Kuwait for an extended period, highlighting their growing demand in Gulf countries.

## Prof Yunus to attend Pope's funeral

Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus expressed condolences on the passing of Pope Francis, describing him as a global symbol of peace, unity, and compassion. Yunus acknowledged the Pope's efforts in promoting interfaith harmony, addressing climate change, and advocating for the poor. He announced his intention to attend the Pope's funeral, scheduled for Saturday at 10 a.m. in St. Peter's Square, Vatican City, with public viewing starting Wednesday. Other world leaders, including U.S. President Donald Trump and Argentine President Javier Milei, are also expected to attend. Pope Francis, the first Latin American pontiff, died at age 88 following complications from pneumonia.

## BTMA Seeks US Duty Waiver

The Bangladesh Textile Mills Association (BTMA) has approached the National Cotton Council of America (NCCA) to support negotiations with the U.S. government for duty waivers and duty-free access for ready-made garments (RMG) made from U.S. cotton. BTMA President Showkat Aziz Russell emphasized the sector's scale, comprising 1,856 mills and \$23 billion in investments. U.S. cotton accounted for 12% of Bangladesh's cotton imports in 2024, valued at \$270 million. The U.S. recently suspended a 37% additional duty on Bangladeshi exports for 90 days. BTMA proposes long-term preferential trade terms and plans to establish a warehouse in Bangladesh for U.S. cotton.

## Bangladesh, Korea sign maritime loan

Bangladesh and South Korea have signed a supplementary loan agreement worth \$6.26 million for the maritime sector under the Economic Development Cooperation Fund. The loan supports the "Establishment of Global Maritime Distress and Safety System (GMDSS) and Integrated Maritime Navigation System (IMNS)" project, which aims to enhance maritime safety and navigation. The Department of Shipping under Bangladesh's

Ministry of Shipping will oversee the project. The project involves constructing coastal radio stations at seven locations and linking them to a command and control center. This is an addition to the main loan agreement of \$37.50 million for the same project. The loan has an interest rate of 0.01% with a repayment period of 40.5 years, including a 15.5-year grace period. The Korea Eximbank, on behalf of the South Korean government, has been providing soft loans to priority development projects in Bangladesh since 1993.

## 23 April

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### **CA denounces Kashmir terrorist attack**

The Chief Adviser of Bangladesh, Professor Muhammad Yunus, strongly condemned a recent terrorist attack in Indian-administered Kashmir that claimed at least 26 lives. Prof Yunus expressed his condolences over the loss of lives through a message on his Facebook page and reaffirmed Bangladesh's commitment against terrorism. The attack occurred in the Pahalgam area, where armed men opened fire on tourists visiting the Baisaran meadow, injuring multiple people alongside those killed. The news article also mentions other recent activities of Prof Yunus, including delivering a lecture at Qatar University and encouraging Qatari investment in Bangladesh.

### **Bhutanese Businesses Urge Trade Growth**

Business leaders from Bangladesh and Bhutan emphasized the potential for expanding bilateral trade, particularly in agricultural products like fruits, vegetables, and spices. A meeting was held between the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI) and a Bhutanese business delegation to discuss unexplored and potential trade areas. Key discussions included simplifying the import-export process, improving supply chain and infrastructure, and increasing port capacity. The Bhutanese delegation was led by Dawa Dakpa of the Regional Agricultural Marketing and Cooperative Office (RAMCO), along with notable representatives from the FBCCI and the Bhutanese Embassy in Dhaka. The meeting aimed to strengthen mutual cooperation and partnership between the two nations in trade.

### **60% Japanese firms eye Bangladesh**

Over 60% of Japanese companies are considering expanding their business operations in Bangladesh, reflecting growing investor confidence.

The Japanese government reaffirmed its commitment to enhancing investment through public-private partnerships. Key discussion areas included trade, industrial development, logistics, energy transition, agriculture, and simplification of tax and customs procedures. Bangladesh presented its ongoing reforms to improve the business environment and provided updates on progress from previous bilateral dialogues. Both countries aim to finalize an Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) by the end of 2025. Senior officials and business representatives from both sides participated, underscoring a shared commitment to deepening economic ties and addressing existing challenges.

## 24 April

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### **Qatar vows stronger ties with Bangladesh**

Qatar's Prime Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al Thani pledged full support to strengthen bilateral relations with Bangladesh during a meeting with Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus. Qatar proposed appointing a liaison to enhance cooperation and invited a Bangladeshi technical team for further discussions. Talks focused on diplomatic, financial, and investment support, youth opportunities, and addressing the Rohingya crisis. Qatar committed to continued humanitarian assistance for Rohingya refugees. Both leaders also discussed the Gaza conflict. Prof Yunus requested Qatar's support for female sports athletes from Bangladesh and invited the Qatari Prime Minister for a visit, which he accepted.

### **Pakistan FM's Dhaka trip delayed**

Pakistan's Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar has postponed his scheduled visit to Dhaka on April 27-28, 2025, due to unforeseen circumstances. New dates for the visit will be decided through mutual consultations. The postponement follows a recent terror attack in Indian-administered Kashmir, which killed 26 people, mostly tourists. This incident has heightened tensions between India and Pakistan. India has taken several punitive measures against Pakistan, including suspending visa services for Pakistani nationals, putting the Indus Waters Treaty in abeyance, closing the Attari border checkpoint, and reducing the strength of diplomatic missions. Pakistan has responded by closing its airspace to Indian airlines and rejecting India's suspension of the water-sharing treaty.

## 2 Indian arrested in Chuadanga

Two Indian nationals were arrested by members of Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) in Chuadanga's Jibannagar border area. They were apprehended near the Jibannagar Bus Stand while attempting to enter India after staying in Bangladesh illegally. The arrested individuals are Putul Das (49) and Taker Das (25), both from Tilakchandrapur village under Kalinagar police station in West Bengal, India. Maheshpur Police Station confirmed that a case will be filed against them, and they will be presented before the court.

## Bangladesh signs \$850m WB loans

Bangladesh signed two loan agreements with the World Bank totaling \$850 million on April 23, 2025, in Washington. A \$650 million loan will finance the Bay Terminal Marine Infrastructure Development Project in Chattogram, intended to handle 36% of national container volumes, reduce vessel turn-around time, and save approximately \$1 million daily. A \$200 million loan will support the Strengthening Social Protection for Improved Resilience, Inclusion, and Targeting Project, benefiting 4.5 million people, including youth, persons with disabilities, women, and climate-vulnerable workers. The project aims to enhance cash transfers, livelihood services, and establish a dynamic social registry for improved targeted support.

## 26 April

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### Bangladeshi shot by BSF at border

A Bangladeshi man, Asadul Islam, was injured after being shot by India's Border Security Force (BSF) near the Akhaura border in Brahmanbaria on Friday morning. Asadul, 28, had regularly crossed into Tripura illegally for work as a day laborer, rickshaw-puller, and pickup driver in A Bangladeshi man, Asadul Islam, was injured after being shot by India's Border Security Force (BSF) near the Akhaura border in Brahmanbaria on Friday morning. Asadul, 28, had regularly crossed into Tripura illegally for work as a day laborer, rickshaw-puller, and pickup driver in

### India detains 1,000 Bangladeshi migrants

Indian authorities in Gujarat detained over 1,000 undocumented Bangladeshi migrants during a crackdown aimed at deporting illegal residents. The Gujarat home minister issued a two-day ultimatum for other undocumented Bangladeshis

to surrender voluntarily. Authorities allege involvement of detainees in narcotics, human trafficking, and other illicit activities. Investigations uncovered a network in West Bengal producing counterfeit identity documents. The Indian government often labels undocumented Bangladeshi migrants as security threats, a characterization criticized by rights groups as politically motivated. Relations between India and Bangladesh have worsened following the ousting of Sheikh Hasina, who fled to India and has resisted extradition efforts by Bangladesh.

## Bangladesh's EU garment exports soar

In January-February 2025, Bangladesh's garment exports to the European Union (EU) rose by 37% year-on-year to \$3.69 billion, supported by a 39% increase in shipment volume. However, the unit price fell by 1.46%, challenging profitability. Overall EU apparel imports grew by 17.81% to \$16.10 billion, with average unit prices declining by 8.44%. Bangladesh benefited from duty-free access, safety compliance, and the EU's economic recovery. Other major suppliers like China, India, and Pakistan also recorded growth, while Turkey experienced a decline. Bangladesh must prioritize value addition and market expansion to sustain competitiveness and profitability amid global pricing pressures and rising competition.

## 27 April

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### Bangladeshi killed by BSF in West Bengal

A 37-year-old Bangladeshi man, Obaidur Rahman, was reportedly shot dead by India's Border Security Force (BSF) early Sunday in West Bengal's 24 Parganas. Obaidur, along with others, allegedly crossed the India-Bangladesh border, where they encountered BSF personnel. While most escaped, Obaidur and another individual were detained. Reports allege Obaidur was tortured before being shot. His body was later found in Madhupur and recovered by Bagda police. Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) acknowledged the incident but stated that the identity of the deceased as Bangladeshi or Indian remains unconfirmed. Investigations by local authorities and relevant agencies are ongoing.

### Dhaka, Tokyo to boost SME cooperation

A roundtable discussion between Bangladeshi and Japanese representatives was held during the

'Investors B2B Japan' session in Tokyo on April 25, organized by the International Cooperation Organisation for Small and Medium Enterprises in Asia (ICOSA). The event explored opportunities for collaboration between SMEs from both countries. Key speakers, including Naohiro Kurose, Wada Masatake, and Mikhail Idris Islam, emphasized technology transfer, industrial policy, and regular exchanges to build sustainable partnerships. Discussions focused on fostering cooperation, regional development, and joint ventures to strengthen SME ecosystems. Both sides reaffirmed their commitment to enhancing business ties and promoting economic growth through SME collaboration.

### **Bangladesh launches freighter service amid Indian halt**

Bangladesh's first dedicated freighter flight departed from Sylhet's Osmani International Airport, transporting 60 tonnes of garments to Spain following India's suspension of third-country transshipment for Bangladesh on April 8, 2025. Operated by Galistair Aviation with ground handling by Biman Bangladesh Airlines, the initiative aims to lower export costs, reducing European shipment expenses by 13%. The cargo is destined for Spanish retailer Inditex. Authorities anticipate positive economic outcomes and plan to increase flights based on demand. A new cargo complex with a 100-tonne capacity has been established in Sylhet. Stakeholders stress the need for reliable service, competitive freight rates, and expanded air cargo infrastructure.

### **Uruguay FM, CA discuss boosting ties**



Uruguay's Foreign Minister Mario Lubetkin met Bangladesh's Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus in Rome following the funeral mass of Pope Francis. They discussed strengthening ties between Latin America and Asia, focusing on

global trade, investment, and economic cooperation. Special attention was given to enhancing trade between Bangladesh and Mercosur countries. Both sides reiterated their commitment to achieving "Three Zero" goals—zero unemployment, zero wealth concentration, and zero net carbon emissions. They also discussed promoting youth investment and social business initiatives. Professor Yunus invited Minister Lubetkin to visit Bangladesh for further high-level engagements. Officials including Bangladesh's SDG coordinator and ambassadors attended the meeting.

### **28 April**

### **Yunus concludes Doha, Rome visits**



Professor Muhammad Yunus, Chief Adviser of Bangladesh, returned to Dhaka early Monday after official visits to Qatar and Italy. In Doha, he attended the Earthna Summit and delivered a lecture on his 'Three Zero' concept at Qatar University. He also met with Qatar's Prime Minister and other senior officials. In Rome, Yunus attended the funeral of Pope Francis at St. Peter's Basilica, where he exchanged greetings with various world leaders. During his stay in Rome, he met with several dignitaries, including Cardinal Silvano Maria Tomasi and Uruguay's Foreign Minister Mario Lubetkin, at his hotel. The visits focused on diplomatic engagement and international collaboration.

### **Dhaka, Islamabad discuss trade growth**

The Pakistan-Bangladesh Business Forum convened in Dhaka on April 28, 2025, to advance bilateral trade and investment cooperation. A multi-sectoral delegation from Pakistan participated, representing textiles, sports goods, sportswear, and maize industries. Commerce Adviser Sk Bashir Uddin and Pakistan High Commissioner Syed Ahmed Maroof underscored the potential for



enhanced economic collaboration. Two memorandums of understanding were signed: one between garment associations and another between knit wear and hosiery associations of both countries. Business leaders viewed the forum as a constructive platform for removing trade barriers, fostering industrial partnerships, and generating mutual economic benefits for Pakistan and Bangladesh across key sectors.

### **Starlink License Approved by CA**



Bangladesh has entered the era of wireless internet with the approval of Starlink's satellite internet service license. Following Sri Lanka, Bangladesh is the second country in South Asia to adopt Starlink's global satellite internet services. The Chief Advisor, Professor Dr. Muhammad Yunus, approved the license on Monday, April 28, 2025.

### **ADB to connect Bangladeshi businesses globally**

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) is working to link Bangladeshi private enterprises with global investors to address the country's \$66 billion annual investment gap for achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). ADB has provided \$62 billion in support over 52 years, primarily in sovereign lending. Although the private sector contributes 75–80% of GDP and over 90% of employment and exports, it receives limited foreign financing. ADB targets investment in infrastructure, finance, healthcare, education, and manufacturing. It emphasizes improving governance, investment

climate, and risk profiles to attract foreign direct investment as Bangladesh prepares to graduate from least developed country status in 2026.

### **29 April**

### **India seeks solution on yarn exports**

Following the closure of three land ports between India and Bangladesh, Indian yarn exporters are reassessing transport logistics. Bangladesh constitutes around 45% of India's yarn exports, with 30% previously routed through land ports. The closures significantly affect northern Indian textile mills and pose risks to the broader textile spinning sector. Although 70% of yarn exports use maritime routes, exporters are now considering smaller ships from Kolkata and alternative inland waterway solutions to mitigate disruptions. A sustained export decline may lead to surplus yarn in India, influencing domestic supply, market prices, and the broader textile value chain. Strategic adjustments are underway.

### **Bangladesh engages Rakhine parties: UNHCR**

The interim government of Bangladesh is engaging with stakeholders in Myanmar's Rakhine State to facilitate a resolution to the ongoing Rohingya crisis. At a United Nations Security Council session, UN High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi highlighted the importance of dialogue and called for the safe resumption of humanitarian operations in Rakhine. Grandi acknowledged Bangladesh's support for over 1.2 million Rohingyas but noted that worsening conditions in the camps and a decline in international aid pose serious challenges. A UN-hosted conference in September 2025 in New York will seek sustainable solutions, focusing on voluntary and dignified repatriation of refugees.

### **BNP plans alliance opposing Myanmar corridor**

The Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) is opposing the interim government's decision to establish a humanitarian corridor from the Chittagong Hill Tracts to Myanmar's Rakhine State. The BNP views the move as a threat to Bangladesh's independence, sovereignty, and stability, comparing potential consequences to the situation in Palestine. The party plans to collaborate with other political parties to resist this decision and will gather information to present its stance to the

nation. BNP leaders criticized the government for not consulting political parties before making such a sensitive decision. Concerns were raised about the potential destabilizing effects of this decision on the region, including fears of military conflict and territorial integrity issues.

## **Bangladesh reduces dependence on IMF, World Bank**

Finance Adviser Dr. Salehuddin Ahmed stated that Bangladesh is moving away from dependency on loans from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, especially those involving strict conditionalities. He cited concerns over high debt servicing risks due to quick repayment schedules and foreign exchange volatility. Instead, Bangladesh is pursuing alternative financing sources such as the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), New Development Bank (NDB), Islamic Development Bank, OPEC Fund, and International Finance Corporation (IFC). Salehuddin emphasized Bangladesh's recent macroeconomic stability without IMF support and highlighted a global shift toward diversified financial partnerships beyond traditional multilateral institutions.

## **Zambia-Bangladesh Business Forum Begins**

The Zambia-Bangladesh Business Forum, scheduled for May 14–15, 2025, at the Banani Sheraton Hotel in Dhaka, aims to deepen bilateral trade, investment, and economic cooperation. Co-organized by the Export Promotion Bureau of Bangladesh, Zambia's Ministry of Commerce, and other stakeholders, the forum will include business delegations from key sectors such as apparel, leather, ICT, pharmaceuticals, agriculture, infrastructure, and renewable energy. Objectives include exploring joint ventures, signing agreements, and promoting SME development. On May 15, the Zambian delegation will visit Bangladeshi factories. The event reflects long-standing diplomatic ties since 1971 and shared membership in the Non-Aligned Movement and Commonwealth.

**02 May**

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## **BSF returns 2 but detains 2 other Bangladeshis**

The Indian Border Security Force (BSF) picked up two Bangladesh nationals near the Patgram border in Lalmonirhat while they were taking photos. Earlier the same day, the BSF and the

Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) exchanged two detainees each through a flag meeting at the Biral border in Dinajpur. Two Bangladeshi farmers were reportedly picked up by the BSF from Dinajpur in the morning, while local people detained two Indian nationals from the same area and handed them over to the BGB. A Bangladeshi youth, Riaz Hossen, was critically injured after being shot by the BSF along the Maheshpur border in Jhenaidah. He was rushed to the hospital and later referred to Dhaka Medical College Hospital for further treatment.

## **Bangladesh Improves in Press Freedom Ranking**

Bangladesh has improved its ranking in the World Press Freedom Index (WPF) by moving up 16 places in a year. Bangladesh is now 149th out of 180 countries in the WPF-2025, compared to 165th last year. Bangladesh ranks two places ahead of India, which is at 151st place in the index this year. In 2009, when the Awami League government took office, Bangladesh was ranked 121st in the index. Over 15 years, the country's ranking has dropped 44 places.

## **Govt seeks UN help to assess press freedom**

Chief Adviser's Press Secretary, Shafiqul Alam, announced that the government will seek UN cooperation to evaluate the role of Bangladesh's media and journalists over the past 16 years. He reaffirmed that the government is committed to ensuring freedom of expression and media independence. Addressing recent dismissals of three journalists, he stated that the government had no involvement in those decisions, which were made independently by the organizations. A probe body will be formed to investigate claims that certain journalists handed over student protesters to the police during the anti-discrimination movement in Chittagong. Shafiqul accused a neighboring country's media of spreading false information, allegedly in collaboration with elements supporting authoritarianism. He warned of intensified misinformation campaigns ahead of the upcoming elections.

## **Canada's Indo-Pacific trade representative arrives Dhaka**

Canada's Indo-Pacific Trade Representative, Paul Thoppil, is arriving in Bangladesh with a business delegation for a four-day visit starting Sunday.

Thoppil will meet key figures in Bangladesh's Interim Government, private sector leaders, and other stakeholders. He will emphasize Canada's support for Bangladesh amid its ongoing democratic reforms and efforts toward free and fair elections. His visit will explore opportunities to expand trade and investment between the two countries. Canada exports wheat, pulses, cereals, and machinery to Bangladesh, while Bangladesh is a significant exporter of textiles and garments to Canada. Both nations are looking to deepen economic cooperation in information technology, aerospace, agriculture, and clean energy.

### **Adani hopeful of Bangladesh to Settle Dues**

Bangladesh has significantly reduced its outstanding payments to India's Adani Power but still owes about \$900 million. The country faced difficulties in paying due to rising import costs since the Russia-Ukraine conflict in 2022 and political instability in August 2024. Adani had previously halved power supply but resumed full supply as Bangladesh's monthly payments started covering some of the outstanding amount. The company has received nearly \$1.2 billion of the roughly \$2 billion billed and is optimistic about receiving full repayment.

### **China dominates as top import source of Bangladesh**

During October–December 2024, China's share of Bangladesh's imports rose significantly, hitting 28.57% in December—up 5.51 percentage points from a year earlier—driven by growing demand for Chinese raw materials and capital machinery. The share peaked at 29.95% in October. India's import share remained steady, averaging around 13%, with a slight rise to 14.23% in December. Indonesia's share declined to 6.91% in December after a brief rise in November. Economists attribute China's rise to lower production costs, a wider export range, and deflation-driven price competitiveness. Experts caution against overdependence on China and advocate for diversifying trade sources. China's infrastructure loans and strategic outreach under BRI play a role in strengthening trade ties with Bangladesh.

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