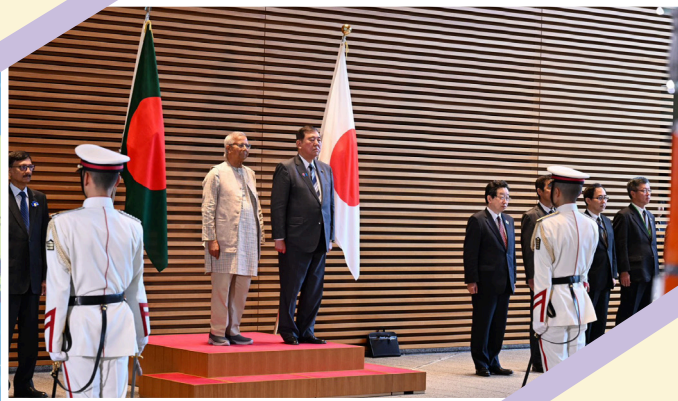


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Bangladesh Foreign Policy Watch

CGS Centre for Governance Studies



A Bi-Weekly Roundup of Key Events

May 18

Bangladesh, India Committed to Continued Trade

Commerce Adviser Sk Bashir Uddin has reaffirmed that trade between Bangladesh and India will remain uninterrupted, ensuring benefits for both consumers and businesses. Although Indian media reports suggest changes at specific land ports and border zones, Dhaka has yet to receive any official notification. Despite India's robust textile sector, Bangladesh's garment exports continue to play a significant role in bilateral trade. Reported Indian restrictions on transshipment have had minimal impact, as Bangladesh has relied on its own logistics. Temporary bans on agricultural imports are part of routine trade management on both sides, and any issues will be resolved through dialogue, the adviser said.

May 19

Kuwait Resumes Regular Visa Issuance for Bangladeshis

Kuwait has resumed granting visas to Bangladeshi nationals without requiring special permissions, confirmed Major General Syed Tareque Hossain, Bangladesh's ambassador in Kuwait. Though the process has been in place for over a week, public disclosure came only recently. The ambassador warned against fraudulent visa schemes targeting Bangladeshi applicants. Meanwhile, Adviser Asif Mahmud Sajib Bhuiyan expressed concern over irregularities by scheduled banks in foreign currency transactions, especially excessive service fees and passport endorsement charges. In response, Bangladesh Bank has capped the passport endorsement fee at Tk 300 and barred banks from charging beyond that.

Bangladeshis Redirect Card Spending Overseas

Credit card spending by Bangladeshis in India dropped by 72.26% in March 2025 compared to the same month last year, due to visa suspensions, political tensions, and border restrictions. Meanwhile, spending rose in countries like the U.S., U.K.,

and Saudi Arabia, reflecting new travel trends driven by education, healthcare, and business needs. Card transactions in Thailand also declined. In contrast, domestic credit card usage in Bangladesh increased by 26.52%, with notable spending on retail goods, bills, clothing, medicines, and transport.

May 20



Starlink Begins Service in Bangladesh

Starlink, the satellite internet venture by SpaceX, has officially launched its operations in Bangladesh. Two packages are being offered: a Tk 6,000 per month “Residential” plan and a Tk 4,200 “Residential Lite” option, both requiring a one-time equipment cost of Tk 47,000. Users will get unlimited data with speeds up to 300 Mbps. The service aims to improve internet access in remote and underserved areas, supporting sectors like education, healthcare, business, disaster response, and freelance work. The interim government has granted operational clearance to Starlink.

Proposed U.S. Remittance Tax Raises Concerns

A new bill passed by the U.S. House of Representatives proposes a 5% tax on remittances sent by immigrants, including green card and H-1B visa holders. The legislation now awaits Senate approval. Bangladeshi experts fear the move could drive migrants away from formal remittance channels, potentially increasing reliance on informal methods and reducing foreign exchange inflows. The U.S. remains Bangladesh’s top remittance source, contributing \$4.2 billion in the first ten months of FY 2024–25. While some argue the global scale of remittance flows may blunt the bill’s impact, a dip in formal transfers could still strain Bangladesh’s foreign currency reserves.

May 21

Rakhine Aid Passage Conditional on Ceasefire: Khalilur

The interim government is evaluating a UN request to send humanitarian aid to Myanmar’s Rakhine State through Bangladesh amid a growing food crisis. With 90% of Rakhine under the Arakan Army’s control, aid delivery is complex. Bangladesh has made it clear that any aid transit will require consent from both warring parties and a complete halt to hostilities. Distribution will remain under UN supervision to prevent diversion or misuse. Bangladesh is also engaging with the Arakan Army—via the UN—on potential Rohingya repatriation. Myanmar has verified 250,000 Rohingyas and expressed readiness to repatriate 180,000. A UN high-level conference on the crisis is set for September 30.

Dhaka, Delhi Engage on Border and Port Restrictions

Bangladesh is in active discussions with India over recent border push-ins and trade restrictions affecting key exports such as readymade garments and processed foods. India has clarified that the restrictions do not apply to goods transiting to Nepal and Bhutan. However, Bangladeshi garments are only permitted through seaports at Nhava Sheva and Kolkata, not land ports. Bangladesh is reviewing a list of alleged undocumented migrants provided by India and insists it will only accept those confirmed to be Bangladeshi citizens.

Only Indian Nationals Will Be Sent Back: Touhid

Interim Foreign Affairs Adviser Md Touhid Hossain has reaffirmed that Bangladesh will verify the identities of individuals pushed in by Indian forces. Those proven to be Indian nationals will be sent back. The issue of restricted imports through land ports—particularly garments and food items—has raised concern among exporters, and Bangladesh’s commerce authorities are currently reviewing the matter.

Bangladesh to Export Mangoes to China for First Time

Bangladesh will begin exporting mangoes to China on May 28, 2025, starting with a shipment of 50 metric tonnes. Talks are ongoing to expand the export volume in future seasons. The Ministry of

Agriculture is exploring new international markets, with plans also underway to export jackfruit to China. Bangladesh produces approximately 2.5 million metric tonnes of mangoes annually, although current exports remain relatively low. In March, China expressed interest in importing mangoes, guavas, and jackfruits from Bangladesh.

Tickets Go Online for Bangladesh-Singapore Match

The Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) has announced that tickets for the AFC Asian Cup 2027 qualifier between Bangladesh and Singapore will go on sale online via Tickify.live from May 24 at 12:00 PM. Buyers must use a National ID and can purchase up to five tickets per phone number and email. Ticket prices range from Tk 400 to Tk 5,000 depending on seating category, with payment options including banks and mobile financial services. The match, scheduled for June 10, marks the return of international football to the National Stadium after nearly four years.

May 22

Yunus Cancels France Visit After Snub, Heads to UK Instead

Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus has called off his scheduled visit to France for the 2025 UN Ocean Conference after Paris declined Bangladesh's request for a bilateral meeting with President Emmanuel Macron. Though Yunus had been invited to the summit and a formal dinner hosted by Macron, he will now travel to the United Kingdom for official discussions, including talks on recovering stolen assets. Bangladesh has yet to finalise its delegation for the conference, which is jointly hosted by France and Costa Rica and focuses on Sustainable Development Goal 14: life below water.

India Pushes 105 More Across the Border

India's Border Security Force (BSF) has pushed 105 more individuals into Bangladesh through several border points, including Cumilla, Feni, Panchagarh, Lalmonirhat, Moulvibazar, and Khagrachari. Since May 7, over 500 people—comprising both Rohingyas and Indian nationals—have been pushed in, reportedly linked to rising India-Pakistan tensions. Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) detained the entrants and handed them over to local police. Dhaka has urged New Delhi to halt such actions and is in the process of verifying the individuals'

nationalities. Most are believed to have entered India illegally in search of work and were later deported. Bilateral talks are underway to resolve the matter.

May 23

Bangladesh Cancels \$21M Indian Naval Deal

Bangladesh has scrapped a \$21 million contract with India's Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers Ltd (GRSE) for an ocean-going tugboat, signed in July 2024 under India's \$500 million defence line of credit. The decision follows the political shift after Sheikh Hasina's exit and comes amid escalating tensions in bilateral relations, including Indian trade restrictions on Bangladeshi garment exports. While the Bangladesh Navy and Ministry of Defence have not issued formal statements, GRSE disclosed the termination in a stock exchange filing, which briefly affected its share price. Analysts view the cancellation as a sign of further deterioration in India-Bangladesh defence and trade ties.

India Seeks Deportation of 2,300 Suspected Bangladeshis

India has formally requested Bangladesh to verify the nationality of over 2,300 individuals allegedly residing illegally in India, with some awaiting deportation for nearly five years. According to Indian foreign ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal, many have completed prison sentences but remain in India due to unresolved identity verification. The request comes amid a recent surge in pushbacks of suspected migrants through various border points, worsening already tense bilateral relations complicated by mutual trade restrictions.

May 25

Dhaka, Beijing Deadlocked Over Loan Terms

Bangladesh and China remain at an impasse over the conversion terms for development loans. China wants to shift from fixed 2% dollar loans to either higher market-based rates (3–3.5%) or yuan-denominated lending. While Bangladesh is open to yuan loans, it is seeking lower interest rates (no more than 1%) and longer repayment periods of up to 30 years. The central bank supports yuan financing to ease dollar pressure, but the Finance Division prefers dollars to avoid conversion risks.

No new Chinese loans have been signed in the past two fiscal years. Both sides aim to resolve the issue at the June 1 Joint Economic Commission meeting.

BSF Rubber Bullets Injure Two at Border

Two Bangladeshi youths were injured when India's Border Security Force (BSF) fired rubber bullets near the Khadla border in Brahmanbaria's Kasba upazila early on May 25. The injured—Robiul Islam (28) and Azad Hossain (26)—are from Shyampur. Reports suggest a group of youths crossed into Indian territory around 1:30 AM for undisclosed reasons. The incident is under investigation.

Australian MPs Urge Yunus to Announce Election Roadmap

A group of 41 Australian senators and MPs has called on Bangladesh's interim Chief Adviser, Professor Muhammad Yunus, to declare a clear electoral roadmap. In a letter, they stressed the need for free, fair, and internationally monitored elections, warning that further delays could erode public trust. The MPs cited past concerns about election credibility and referenced Human A group of 41 Australian senators and MPs has called on Bangladesh's interim Chief Adviser, Professor Muhammad Yunus, to declare a clear electoral roadmap. In a letter, they stressed the need for free, fair, and internationally monitored elections, warning that further delays could erode public trust. The MPs cited past concerns about election credibility and referenced Human

India Pushes 172 More Across Border

India's Border Security Force (BSF) has pushed 172 more individuals into Bangladesh via Sylhet, Moulvibazar, and Meherpur, bringing the total since May 7 to 700. Among them are both Rohingyas and Indian nationals. Many reportedly hailed from Kurigram and worked in various Indian states. The Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) has detained the entrants and handed them over to police. The government continues verifying their identities amid heightened tensions along the 4,156-km border.

World Bank Approves \$270M Loan for Recovery Project

The Government of Bangladesh has signed a \$270 million agreement with the World Bank's International Development Association for the Bangladesh Sustainable Recovery, Emergency Prepared

ness, and Response Project (B-STRONG). The initiative aims to rebuild infrastructure damaged in the August 2024 floods, assist affected farmers, and strengthen future flood resilience. With a 30-year repayment term and 5-year grace period, the loan carries a 0.75–1.25% annual service charge. The World Bank has committed over \$43.5 billion to Bangladesh since independence and currently supports 47 ongoing projects.

Yunnan Delegation Seeks Trade Expansion

A Chinese trade delegation from Yunnan, led by Liu Jie, met with Export Promotion Bureau Vice-Chairman Anwar Hossain to discuss strengthening cross-border trade. Proposals included establishing a warehouse and product showcase centre for Bangladeshi goods in Yunnan, facilitating Bangladeshi participation in the 2025 China-South Asia Expo, and hosting business matchmaking sessions. Discussions also focused on improving market access for Bangladeshi fruit exporters, aligning with broader Lancang-Mekong regional cooperation goals.

India Pushes 113 More into Bangladesh

Between May 24–25, India allegedly pushed 113 more individuals across border points in Jhenaidah, Habiganj, Moulvibazar, and Khagrachhari, pushing the total number since May 7 to over 800. Many had been working in Indian states like Gujarat and Haryana. Despite increased vigilance by BGB, the push-ins continue. The foreign ministry is verifying identities from a list of 2,300 individuals claimed by India to be Bangladeshi. Military officials have condemned the actions as unacceptable and warned of possible diplomatic consequences. The detainees have been placed in police or NGO custody pending further verification.

May 27

Algeria Eyes Bangladeshi Jute Products

Algeria has expressed strong interest in importing jute goods from Bangladesh amid rising domestic demand. During a meeting with Commerce Adviser Sheikh Bashiruddin in Dhaka, Algerian Ambassador Abdelouahab Saidani proposed the formation of an Intergovernmental Joint Economic Commission to boost bilateral trade. The ambassador also invited Bangladesh to participate in a major Algerian trade expo to showcase its jute and

traditional products. Bangladesh, the world's second-largest jute producer, is seeking to expand exports and attract foreign investment in its commercial sectors.

India Pushes 67 More Individuals into Bangladesh

India's Border Security Force (BSF) reportedly pushed 67 more people—including Indian nationals and Rohingyas—into Bangladesh via border points in Meherpur, Satkhira, and Kurigram. Since May 7, the number of such pushbacks has reached 880. A standoff occurred at Boraibari, Kurigram, where locals and Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) resisted the push-in, prompting BSF to fire sound grenades. The detainees are under identity verification and legal processing.

Pushbacks Trigger Sovereignty Concerns

Security experts and political observers in Bangladesh have raised alarm over India's ongoing pushbacks of undocumented individuals, calling it a violation of international norms and Bangladesh's sovereignty. Many view the actions as retaliatory diplomatic pressure following Sheikh Hasina's fall from power in August 2024. Analysts urged the government to pursue immediate diplomatic engagement with India and ensure repatriation through lawful and verifiable procedures to protect national interests and regional stability.

May 28

Dhaka Urges India to Repatriate Only Verified Bangladeshis

Home Affairs Adviser Md Jahangir Alam Chowdhury has reiterated Bangladesh's demand that India follow legal protocols and only repatriate individuals proven to be Bangladeshi citizens. Over 800 people have reportedly been pushed into Bangladesh since May 7, including Indian nationals and Rohingyas. Chowdhury assured that the border remains secure and there is no unrest in the affected regions.

CA Yunus Begins Japan Visit for Nikkei Forum and Bilateral Talks

Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus has embarked on a four-day official visit to Japan, where he will attend the 30th Nikkei Forum and hold bilateral talks with Japanese Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba. Yunus departed Dhaka on May 28

via Cathay Pacific and will be received at Narita International Airport with state honours. The visit is expected to bolster cooperation in trade, investment, and regional diplomacy.

BSF Pushes 82 More Individuals into Bangladesh

On May 28, BSF pushed 82 more individuals into Bangladesh through Sylhet and Sunamganj border points, raising the total to 962. Many detainees claimed they had travelled to India for. On May 28, BSF pushed 82 more individuals into Bangladesh through Sylhet and Sunamganj border points, raising the total to 962. Many detainees claimed they had travelled to India for

Bangladesh Begins Mango Exports to China

Bangladesh has officially launched mango exports to China with an inaugural shipment of 10 tonnes under a duty-free trade arrangement. The initiative follows Professor Yunus's recent visit to Beijing and aims to scale exports to 100 tonnes this season. Chinese authorities praised the move, which is expected to boost trade ties and reduce the trade imbalance. A Chinese business delegation led by the Commerce Minister is set to visit Dhaka soon to explore further collaboration. Bangladesh is also eyeing new agricultural markets in Japan and Europe.

Korean Envoy: No Strategic Agenda, Only Mutual Growth

At a BIISS seminar, South Korean Ambassador Park Young Sik stated that Korea has no strategic interests in Bangladesh, unlike India, China, or the US, enabling more balanced and mutually beneficial relations. Discussions covered FDI, technology transfer, and visa hurdles. Ambassador Park cited delays at Chattogram Port and NBR inefficiencies as key trade barriers. BIISS scholars and other stakeholders emphasised stronger cooperation in finance, education, and human capital development.

Bangladesh and Argentina to Deepen Trade Ties

Bangladesh and Argentina are exploring expanded trade cooperation in energy, agriculture, medical technology, and cotton. Argentine Ambassador Marcelo Carlos Cesa proposed targeted delegations and joint ventures to unlock new investment channels. Since reopening its embassy in Dhaka in 2023, Argentina has shown growing interest in Bangladesh as a trade partner. In 2022,

bilateral trade reached \$765 million, with Argentina exporting agricultural commodities and Bangladesh exporting garments and pharmaceuticals. ICC Bangladesh President Mahbubur Rahman emphasised Argentina's role in diversifying Bangladesh's global trade portfolio.

May 29

Chief Adviser Greets Mahathir Ahead of 100th Birthday



Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus congratulated former Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad in advance of his 100th birthday during a meeting in Tokyo. The two leaders reminisced about their long friendship and discussed Bangladesh's bid to join ASEAN, Rohingya repatriation, and regional ties. Yunus thanked Malaysia for employing Bangladeshi workers, while Mahathir praised Bangladeshi entrepreneurs in Malaysia. Invited to visit Bangladesh, Mahathir said he would accept if cleared by his doctors.

May 30

Bangladesh, Japan to Sign Economic Partnership Agreement by Year-End



Bangladesh and Japan will finalise an Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) by the end of this

year to boost trade and investment, announced Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus and Japanese Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba following a bilateral meeting in Tokyo. Both leaders reaffirmed their commitment to strategic partnership and regional stability in the Indo-Pacific. Professor Yunus sought Japanese support for infrastructure, energy, and skilled workforce development. He also urged Japan to provide duty-free access for Bangladeshi goods post-LDC graduation. Prime Minister Ishiba praised Yunus's leadership and pledged continued Japanese support for Bangladesh's democratic transition. Both sides expressed intent for deeper cooperation on maritime security, labour mobility, and Rohingya repatriation.

June 01

China to Deepen Cooperation with Bangladesh in Agriculture and Research

Chinese Commerce Minister Wang Wentao, during his official visit to Dhaka, pledged expanded cooperation with Bangladesh in agriculture, jute, marine fisheries, and joint research. Speaking at the China-Bangladesh Conference on Investment and Trade, he praised Bangladesh's development vision under Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus and expressed strong interest in areas like farmland development, water conservation, and deep-sea fishing. China, already importing \$100 million worth of Bangladeshi jute annually, is exploring further collaboration in product research and innovation. Professor Yunus welcomed the gesture, saying Chinese support could help transform rural Bangladesh into productive economic hubs.

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