

17 March | 2025

# Bangladesh Foreign Policy Watch

CGS Centre for Governance Studies



## A Bi-Weekly Roundup of Key Events

### Border Killings May Delay Indian Intruder Repatriation



The Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) chief warned that continued killings of Bangladeshis by the Indian Border Security Force (BSF) could hinder the repatriation of Indian intruders. Emphasizing that border killings cannot be a solution, he hinted at stricter measures if such incidents persist. A recent case involved Al Amin, a Bangladeshi shot by BSF at the Putia border in Kasba upazila. Bangladesh has strongly protested the killings and is working to prevent illegal crossings into India.

### LONGi Plans Solar Investment in Bangladesh

Chinese renewable energy company LONGi has expressed interest in investing in Bangladesh's solar energy sector.

## 01 March

### Bangladeshis Pay Extra for Kuwait Visas

Bangladeshi workers migrating to Kuwait are paying an additional \$150–\$300 in visa fees beyond the official rate, leading to an estimated \$30–\$37 million in extra costs since 2018. Illegal visa trading and high airfares have inflated migration costs up to six times the government-set rate. Unauthorized intermediaries and agencies exploit workers, increasing fraud risks. The Kuwait Embassy in Dhaka has not addressed the issue, while authorized agencies deny overcharging. Similar concerns with Saudi work visas led to a crackdown. With 400,000 Bangladeshi workers in Kuwait, migration costs continue to rise due to exploitation.

Senior manager Jason Zhao conveyed this during a meeting with BNP leader Dr. Abdul Moyeen Khan in Shaanxi, China. LONGi plans to establish an office in Dhaka to explore market potential, investment policies, and collaboration opportunities. The company will send technical teams to assess demand and expand existing small-scale partnerships. BNP has highlighted renewable energy as a priority for sustainable development.

## 02 March

---

### **BSCL Seeks Partnership with Starlink**

Bangladesh Satellite Company Limited (BSCL) aims to route satellite internet providers like Starlink through its ground station to enhance state revenue. However, the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) is unlikely to mandate this for non-geostationary satellite orbit (NGSO) operators, fearing it may deter global providers. High equipment costs may limit affordability, but institutional use could drive adoption. Local internet providers advocate fair competition and equal tax policies for satellite and traditional internet services.

### **Pakistani Cargo Vessel to Dock at Mongla**

For the first time since Bangladesh's independence, a cargo vessel from Pakistan is set to dock at Mongla Sea Port, carrying 25 metric tonnes of rice. The vessel, which departed from Karachi's Qasim Port, will first unload 60% of its cargo in Chittagong before heading to Mongla. This import is part of a Government-to-Government (G2G) agreement between Bangladesh and Pakistan to import 50 metric tonnes of Basmati rice through the Trading Corporation of Pakistan. The second shipment is expected by the end of the month.

### **Bangladesh Can Attract Big Investments: Norwegian Expert**



Bangladesh has significant potential to attract investment in renewable energy and the carbon market, according to a delegation led by former Norwegian Minister Erik Solheim.

During a meeting with Chief Adviser Prof. Muhammad Yunus, discussions focused on small-scale solar plants, carbon markets, agroforestry, and hydroelectricity. Prof. Yunus highlighted Bangladesh's efforts to import hydroelectricity from Nepal and Bhutan and noted growing interest from Chinese investors in relocating solar panel manufacturing to Bangladesh. The government is also exploring carbon market opportunities for revenue generation and conservation, particularly in the Sundarbans. The delegation also discussed the Rohingya crisis and developments in Myanmar.

## 03 March

---

### **Dr Yunus Stresses Strong Bangladesh-India Ties**

Chief Adviser Prof. Muhammad Yunus underscored the importance of strong Bangladesh-India relations, attributing recent tensions to propaganda. Diplomatic sources suggest a possible first in-person meeting between Prof. Yunus and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the BIMSTEC Summit on April 4, 2025. Prof. Yunus reaffirmed ongoing communication, recalling a recent conversation with PM Modi. Bangladesh prioritizes ties with India, China, and the U.S., focusing on broader cooperation. Indian External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar urged Bangladesh to clarify its stance on bilateral relations. Prof. Yunus also discussed governance, law enforcement, political reforms, and the upcoming elections under the interim government.

### **Foreign Ministry Denies Trump's USAID Fund Claim**

The Bangladesh Ministry of Foreign Affairs refuted former U.S. President Donald Trump's claim that a \$29 million USAID fund was misallocated to an organisation owned by two individuals in Bangladesh. The ministry clarified that the "Strengthening Political Landscape (SPL) in Bangladesh" project was implemented by Democracy International, a U.S.-registered organisation selected through a competitive process. The project aimed to reduce political violence, enhance internal democracy within political parties, and promote representative leadership. The ministry emphasised that USAID projects follow strict financial management and audit processes under bilateral agreements, ensuring accountability and transparency.

## Bangladeshi Asylum Requests in Europe Soar

In 2024, 43,236 Bangladeshis applied for asylum in EU Plus countries, marking the highest number in a decade, with a 96% rejection rate. Italy received 77% of applications (33,455), followed by France (6,429) and Ireland (1,006). A total of 47,778 applications remained pending, while 1,989 applicants withdrew their claims. With a positive recognition rate of only 3.9%, Bangladesh ranked second in South Asia for asylum applications, following Afghanistan (87,382) and ahead of Pakistan (23,240). The data highlights the significant rejection rate and the increasing trend of Bangladeshis seeking asylum in Europe, primarily in Italy, France, and Ireland.

### 04 March

---

#### Joint Committee to Renew Ganges Treaty

Bangladesh and India will form a joint technical committee to renew the Ganges Water Sharing Treaty, originally signed in 1996. The 86th meeting of the Joint Rivers Commission is taking place in Kolkata and Farakka, with an 11-member Bangladeshi delegation. Bangladesh aims to secure agreements for 14 rivers and develop a joint flood forecasting model with India. Despite sharing 54 rivers, the two countries currently have an agreement only for the Ganges. The Teesta water-sharing deal remains unresolved. Bangladesh will propose dam repairs, dredging at 75 locations, and approval to use 153 cusecs of water from the Kushiyara River.

#### EU Commits €68m, Pressures Myanmar on Rohingya Crisis

The European Union has pledged €68 million this year to support Rohingya refugees and the host community in Cox's Bazar. EU Commissioner Hadja Lahbib, after visiting Rohingya camps, commended Bangladesh's hospitality and vowed to pressure Myanmar for a resolution. She met with Foreign Adviser Md Touhid Hossain to discuss further cooperation on disaster preparedness and humanitarian aid. The EU also expressed support for Bangladesh's interim government and reform initiatives. Bangladesh is organising a global conference on the Rohingya crisis in New York in October 2025 to mobilise international support.

## Aramco to Provide Bangladesh LNG

Chinese Ambassador Yao Wen reaffirmed that Bangladesh's reforms are solely its internal matter while expressing hopes for the country's stability, unity, and development. He underscored China's commitment to cooperation in the digital and green economy, renewable energy, agriculture, and AI. To boost investment, 30 Chinese enterprises have pledged \$230 million. From May, China will start importing mangoes and jackfruits from Bangladesh. As the two nations celebrate 50 years of diplomatic ties, a series of events are planned. During Bangladesh's Foreign Affairs Adviser's recent visit to China, both sides reiterated support for each other's sovereignty and national interests, further strengthening economic and diplomatic relations.

#### Japan, UNICEF Partner to Assist Rohingya Children

The Japanese government has allocated \$3.3 million to UNICEF to support Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh. The funding will benefit 65,000 refugees, including 41,000 children, by providing education, health, nutrition, and WASH (water, sanitation, and hygiene) services in Cox's Bazar and Bhasan Char. Japan's Ambassador to Bangladesh, Saida Shinichi, and UNICEF Representative Rana Flowers signed the agreement. The initiative aims to address critical challenges faced by Rohingya children, including limited education, malnutrition, and overcrowding. Japan reaffirmed its commitment to supporting long-term solutions for the Rohingya crisis.

### 05 March

---

#### Foreign Adviser Optimistic About Resolving India Visa Issues

Foreign Affairs Adviser Md Touhid Hossain expressed hope for resolving visa complications with India, acknowledging that issuing visas is a sovereign right of any country. Bangladesh emphasises a balanced relationship with India based on reciprocity and mutual respect. Chief Adviser Prof. Muhammad Yunus reassured that despite occasional misunderstandings fueled by propaganda, Bangladesh-India ties remain strong. He highlighted ongoing communication between both governments, with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi inviting

Prof. Yunus to participate in the third Voice of Global South Summit last year as part of efforts to strengthen bilateral ties.

## **UN Cuts Rohingya Food Aid Further**

The United Nations will slash food rations for Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh from \$12.50 to \$6 per month starting April 2025 due to severe funding shortages. The cut raises concerns about increasing hunger among the one million Rohingya in Cox's Bazar. A previous reduction in 2023 to \$8 per month had already worsened malnutrition. Aid agencies warn that further reductions will significantly impact refugees' dietary needs. The World Food Programme and the UN continue to face donor funding shortages, exacerbated by declining US foreign aid. The funding shortfall threatens essential humanitarian assistance for the Rohingya community.

## **Bangladesh Climbs in Global Terrorism Index**

Bangladesh improved its position in the 2025 Global Terrorism Index (GTI), ranking 35th, up from 32nd last year, indicating a reduced impact of terrorism. The country's terrorism threat level is now classified as "low," outperforming regional neighbours India and Pakistan. South Asia, the most terrorism-affected region over the past decade, has seen declines in terrorist activity in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, and Sri Lanka. The GTI assesses terrorism impact based on incidents, fatalities, injuries, and socioeconomic factors. Bangladesh scored 3.03 on a scale where zero represents no impact. Despite Bangladesh's improvement, global terrorism fatalities rose by 11% in 2024.

## **06 March**

---

### **Dhaka Commits to Fair Probe into July-August Rights Violations**

At the 58th session of the Human Rights Council (HRC) in Geneva, Bangladesh's Law Adviser Asif Nazrul reaffirmed the interim government's commitment to an impartial investigation into human rights violations during the July-August 2024 protests. UN High Commissioner Volker Türk presented the OHCHR Fact-Finding Report, which identified systemic violations, some of which could constitute crimes against humanity.

The session featured testimonies from victims' families and civil society representatives, along with a forensic video on atrocities. Discussions between Bangladeshi officials and OHCHR representatives focused on future accountability efforts, with the UN pledging continued support for justice and national reconciliation initiatives.

## **Cadman Urges Bangladesh to Refer July Massacre to ICC**

Legal expert Toby Cadman met Chief Adviser Prof. Muhammad Yunus in Dhaka to discuss judicial reforms and accountability for the July-August 2024 massacre, which resulted in 1,400 deaths during a student-led uprising. Cadman recommended referring cases to the International Criminal Court (ICC) and revising the International Crimes Tribunal (ICT) to reflect a new legal direction. Discussions included cooperation with the ICC for cases involving suspects abroad, fair trial standards, and the abolition of the death penalty. Yunus emphasized the need for accountability, aligning with UN findings of potential crimes against humanity under the previous government.

## **07 March**

---

### **Bangladesh Drops 11 Projects from Indian LoC**

Bangladesh plans to drop 11 out of 40 projects under India's \$7.34 billion Lines of Credit (LoC) scheme due to delays in approval and implementation, reducing the total LoC size to \$4.68 billion. Challenges include slow disbursement, mandatory use of Indian contractors, and bureaucratic inefficiencies. A joint committee will finalize project exclusions, affecting infrastructure and rail projects. Both countries agreed to accelerate disbursements and avoid umbrella-based projects in future loans. Bangladesh faces financial burdens, repaying loans despite incomplete projects. Procurement rules have been relaxed to reduce mandatory Indian sourcing for some projects. None of the 13 projects under the third LoC (2017) have been completed.

## **US Set to Deport Undocumented Bangladeshis**

The Trump administration has informed Bangladesh of its decision to repatriate undocumented Bangladeshi immigrants as part of its stricter immigration policies.

Bangladesh's home ministry held an inter-ministerial meeting to discuss the deportation process, emphasizing the need for proper procedures, such as avoiding the use of handcuffs on deportees. While there are about one million Bangladeshi-origin immigrants in the U.S., only a small fraction are undocumented. Bangladeshi authorities noted that irregular migration to the U.S. is not a major concern compared to Europe, particularly the UK. This move is part of broader U.S. immigration reforms targeting undocumented individuals from multiple countries.

## **UN Warned Bangladesh Army of Peacekeeping Risk During July Uprising**

The United Nations warned the Bangladesh Army during the July 2024 student-led protests that suppressing demonstrations could jeopardize the country's participation in UN peacekeeping missions. UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk highlighted these concerns in a BBC "HARDtalk" interview. Following the UN's intervention, interim Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus requested a UN fact-finding mission to investigate the events. The move was seen as a step toward reform and accountability. Protesters welcomed the UN's involvement in raising international awareness of the repression they faced.

## **India Urges Democratic Solutions for Bangladesh**

India has called for resolving Bangladesh's political crisis through democratic means and ensuring inclusive elections. Expressing concerns over the deteriorating law and order situation, India highlighted the release of violent extremists as a contributing factor. During the 86th Joint River Commission meeting in Kolkata, discussions focused on renewing the Ganges Water Sharing Treaty, which is set to expire next year. Technical issues such as water flow measurements were also addressed. Additionally, India urged Bangladesh to investigate violence against minorities and ensure justice for victims.

## **08 March**

### **Bangladeshi Firms Partner with Starlink for Connectivity**

Several Bangladeshi firms have partnered with Starlink to establish ground earth stations,

supporting infrastructure and operations for satellite internet services. Starlink aims to enhance connectivity in urban and remote areas, addressing challenges related to load shedding and natural disasters. The initiative is expected to benefit entrepreneurs, freelancers, NGOs, and SMEs by improving digital accessibility. Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus has invited Elon Musk to visit Bangladesh for the service launch. Discussions on site selection and implementation are ongoing, with plans to complete the setup within 90 days. Starlink's presence could significantly impact education, healthcare, business, and disaster response efforts.

### **BSF Shoots Dead Bangladeshi Youth in Panchagarh**

A 36-year-old Bangladeshi named Al-Amin was killed by Indian Border Security Force (BSF) gunfire at the Bhitargarh border in Sadar Upazila of Panchagarh district. Al-Amin, a resident of Jinnatpara village, had been missing for three days before the incident. He was part of a group spotted by a BSF patrol, which opened fire, causing them to flee. Al-Amin was shot and his body was taken by BSF into India.

### **6,000 MT of Rice from India Arrives at Chattogram Port**

A cargo ship, MV PHU THANH 36, arrived at Chattogram Port, carrying 6,000 metric tonnes of parboiled rice from India. The shipment is part of a contract referred to as "Package-2," finalised through an international tender. Unloading will commence following sample testing, ensuring quality control.

## **09 March**

### **Government Seeks to Renegotiate Adani Deal**



A government review committee has found the 2017 Adani Power deal to be heavily skewed in favour of the Indian conglomerate, imposing financial burdens on Bangladesh.

Key concerns include excessive late payment surcharges (27% annually), tax exemptions benefiting Adani, and inflated coal pricing. The committee plans to recommend renegotiating terms with Adani Power Jharkhand Limited (APJL) to lower tariffs and revise problematic clauses. If Adani refuses, Bangladesh may pursue legal action at the Singapore International Arbitration Centre. The committee is also investigating potential corruption linked to the deal and reviewing 11 power agreements signed under the Awami League government.

### **Rohingya Killed in Cox's Bazar Camp, Two Arrested**

A 33-year-old Rohingya man, Mohammad Rafiq, was shot dead during a clash between rival groups at the Ukhiya refugee camp in Cox's Bazar. The conflict, linked to territorial dominance, took place in block B-61. Rafiq, described by his family as intellectually challenged, was caught in the crossfire and later succumbed to his injuries. Authorities arrested two suspects, whom locals claim are linked to the Arakan Rohingya Army (ARA). This marks the second murder in a week at the camp, following the killing of Mohammad Nur, head Majhi of Camp 20.

### **Yunus Urges Kuwaiti Investors to Join Investment Summit**

Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus has invited Kuwaiti investors to the Bangladesh Investment Summit (April 7–9, 2025) to explore opportunities in Special Economic Zones. In a meeting with Kuwait's Ambassador Ali Tunyan Abdul Wahab Hamadah, Yunus discussed investment prospects in halal food production, crude oil refining, and renewable energy. The two sides also addressed the welfare of Bangladeshi workers in Kuwait and potential collaboration on a joint crude oil refinery in Bangladesh. The discussion reaffirmed a commitment to strengthening economic, trade, and diplomatic ties.

### **Prof. Yunus Plans Visits to China, Thailand, Japan**

Chief Adviser Prof. Muhammad Yunus is set to visit China, Thailand, and Japan between March and May 2025 to strengthen international cooperation. His itinerary includes the Boao Forum for Asia in

Hainan and a bilateral meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping on March 28. On April 4, he will attend the BIMSTEC Summit in Bangkok, where a potential first in-person meeting with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi may take place. In May, he will participate in the Nikkei 30th Future of Asia event in Tokyo and visit the Osaka Expo 2025, focusing on multilateralism, regional collaboration, and sustainable development.

### **BSF Returns Body of Bangladeshi Killed**

The Indian Border Security Force (BSF) returned the body of Shahed Ahmed, a Bangladeshi youth from Kanaighat upazila, after he was allegedly attacked by Khasia people in India. Shahed had reportedly crossed the border illegally. His bullet-riddled body was handed over to the Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) following a flag meeting near the Barachhara border. Kanaighat police confirmed the victim's identity, and legal procedures are underway to return the body to his family. The incident highlights ongoing concerns over border security and the safety of Bangladeshis crossing into India.

### **10 March**

### **Bangladesh Army Refutes UN Warning**

The Bangladesh Army has denied receiving any direct communication or warnings from the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCHR) regarding its role in political changes affecting its UN peacekeeping missions. The statement follows remarks by UN human rights chief Volker Türk, who claimed in a BBC interview that the UN had cautioned the army against involvement in regime changes during the 2024 protests. The army emphasized its neutrality, adherence to the rule of law, and historical impartiality during political transitions. It reaffirmed its commitment to global peacekeeping, the national economy, and constructive international dialogue.

### **11 March**

### **Chinese Company Wins Mongla Port Upgrade Contract**

The China Civil Engineering Construction Corporation has secured a contract worth Tk 4,046.48 crore to upgrade the

Mongla Port container terminal, with completion expected by 2028. The Chinese government will finance Tk 3,592.90 crore, while Bangladesh will contribute Tk 475.33 crore. The project includes a new terminal, delivery yard, car sheds, and road improvements to address infrastructure challenges that have led to underutilization of berthing facilities. Additionally, a Tk 6,015 crore India-funded project for Mongla Port has been ongoing since 2020. The government also approved LNG procurement from a U.S. supplier and electric pole purchases for power distribution.

## Bangladesh's RMG Exports to US Rise by 46%



Bangladesh's readymade garment (RMG) exports to the US surged by 46% in January 2025, reaching \$799.65 million, up from \$547.95 million in January 2024. This growth outpaced competitors Indonesia (41.7%), India (33.64%), and Vietnam (19.9%), increasing Bangladesh's market share in US apparel imports to 9.44%. In volume, exports grew by 49.21% in square meters shipped. China and Vietnam remained the top suppliers with market shares of 20.77% and 18.92%, respectively. Experts attribute Bangladesh's growth to sourcing diversification, improved factory compliance, and sustainability initiatives while recommending product diversification and policy support to sustain momentum.

## 12 March

## Moody's Downgrades Bangladesh Banking Outlook to Negative

Moody's has downgraded Bangladesh's banking sector outlook from "stable" to "negative", structural weaknesses. GDP growth is projected at 4.5% for FY25, while inflation is expected to remain at 9.8%, impacting businesses and consumers. Non-performing loans (NPLs) have surged from

9% to 17% in the last nine months of 2024, with further increases anticipated due to social unrest and weak banking regulations. Bank profitability is expected to decline as institutions allocate higher provisions for loan losses. State-owned banks remain undercapitalized, and regulatory and governance issues continue to challenge the sector.

## Dhaka Considers Supporting UN-Led Aid in Rakhine

Bangladesh is considering supporting a UN-led humanitarian assistance program in Myanmar's Rakhine State to address a potential famine and promote regional stability. In a meeting between Foreign Affairs Adviser Md Touhid Hossain and ASEAN Special Envoy Tan Sri Othman Hashim, discussions focused on early Rohingya repatriation with rights and security guarantees. Hossain proposed a comprehensive Rohingya Repatriation Roadmap, involving Myanmar, ASEAN, the UN, and donor countries, urging ASEAN nations to play a more coordinated role. The envoy reaffirmed ASEAN's commitment to resolving the crisis and highlighted ongoing humanitarian efforts in Myanmar.

## Gambian Foreign Minister Discusses ICJ Case with Chief Adviser

Gambian Foreign Minister Mamadou Tangara met Chief Adviser Prof. Muhammad Yunus at the State Guest House Jamuna to discuss The Gambia's genocide case against Myanmar at the ICJ. Tangara reaffirmed his country's commitment to justice for the Rohingya Muslims, assuring that President Adama Barrow remains dedicated to the case. Prof. Yunus thanked Gambia for its efforts and sought international support. Discussions also covered humanitarian aid in Rakhine, trade cooperation, UN peacekeeping, and microcredit initiatives. Tangara praised Yunus' leadership, expressing confidence in his ability to mobilize global backing for the Rohingya cause.

14 March

## UN Chief Visits Cox's Bazar, Engages with Rohingya Community



UN Secretary-General António Guterres visited Ukhiya, Cox's Bazar, where he interacted with Rohingya children at a learning centre and engaged with Rohingya women at Camp 18. He also toured the Rohingya Cultural Centre, emphasizing the community's resilience and cultural heritage. During his visit, Guterres listened to Rohingya women's experiences and concerns, reaffirming the UN's commitment to their rights and well-being. Later, he addressed the media at Camp 18, sharing insights from his visit and calling for sustained global support for the Rohingya crisis. Chief Adviser Dr. Muhammad Yunus joined the UN Secretary-General during the visit, underscoring Bangladesh's commitment to international cooperation and humanitarian efforts.

## 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

 Centre for  
Governance Studies