

27 July | 2025

Bangladesh Foreign Policy Watch

CGS Centre for Governance Studies



A Bi-Weekly Roundup of Key Events

Recalling the July Uprising, both leaders honoured student sacrifices. Professor Yunus emphasised youth empowerment, international trade, and regional cooperation. Zutt lauded Bangladesh's success in girls' education and expressed interest in boosting youth opportunities. Special envoy Lutfey Siddiqi noted a rise in FDI and improved port operations at Chattogram.

15 July

World Bank VP Praises Interim Government's Economic Reforms



World Bank Vice President for South Asia Johannes Zutt praised Bangladesh's Interim Government for its bold economic reforms during a meeting with Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus. Commending efforts to address financial sector challenges, Zutt pledged continued support, highlighting over \$3 billion in funding last year.

16 July

Delhi Seeks Dhaka's Help Restoring Satyajit Ray's Home

The Indian government expressed its willingness to work with Bangladesh to repair and restore Satyajit Ray's ancestral home in Mymensingh. India's Ministry of External Affairs noted its regret that the property, belonging to Ray's grandfather, Upendra Kishor Ray Chowdhury, is reportedly being demolished. The property is viewed by India as a landmark symbol of the Bangla cultural renaissance and heritage. India suggested converting the site into a museum celebrating literature and the shared cultural legacy of both nations. The building is owned by the Government of Bangladesh and is currently in disrepair.

17 July

UK Retains Duty-Free Access for Bangladesh

The United Kingdom has retained duty-free market access for Bangladeshi exports, including garments and electronics, under its Developing Countries Trading Scheme (DCTS). The DCTS simplifies rules of origin, allowing components from multiple countries, thus facilitating trade. Covering 64 nations, the scheme offers reduced or zero tariffs, aiming to strengthen supply chains, attract UK investment in emerging markets, and engage high-growth economies. Since its launch in June 2023, it has generated over £16 billion in tariff savings. UK officials highlighted the role of trade in poverty reduction and economic growth. Leading UK retailers such as Marks & Spencer and Primark reaffirmed their sourcing commitments from Bangladesh.

55 People Pushed into Bangladesh

The Indian Border Security Force (BSF) reportedly pushed 55 individuals into Bangladesh across four border points in Sylhet and Sunamganj districts during the early hours of the morning. These push-ins—comprising 12 men, 33 women, and 10 children—are part of a larger pattern of cross-border incidents that have escalated since 7 May, totalling 1,915 people forced into Bangladeshi territory. Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) intercepted and detained the individuals upon entry. Preliminary interrogation suggests that these persons had entered India illegally in search of employment. Most detainees hailed from various districts across Bangladesh and were subsequently handed over to local police stations for legal action.

Two More Bangladeshis Arrested in Malaysia

Two additional Bangladeshi nationals have been arrested in Malaysia in connection with militant activities, bringing the total number of detained Bangladeshis to 36 under an ongoing security crackdown targeting radical groups. Bangladesh's Foreign Affairs Adviser, Touhid Hossain, confirmed active cooperation with Malaysian authorities and reiterated Bangladesh's firm position against terrorism. If found guilty, the accused may face two to seven years' imprisonment under Malaysian law.

The Bangladesh High Commission in Kuala Lumpur is working to verify the identities and charges of the detainees. Formal charges have been filed against five individuals. Bilateral discussions at the ASEAN Regional Forum reaffirmed continued counterterrorism cooperation.

World Bank Reaffirms \$3 Billion Bangladesh Support

World Bank Vice President for South Asia, Johannes Zutt, concluded his first official visit to Bangladesh, reaffirming over \$3 billion in concessional financing during the 2023–24 fiscal year. His meetings with interim government officials and stakeholders highlighted the Bank's commitment to strengthening governance, institutional transparency, and macroeconomic resilience amid challenges such as inflation and climate vulnerability. The partnership—spanning more than 50 years and totalling \$46 billion in cumulative support—continues to focus on key sectors such as education, healthcare, energy, and infrastructure. Looking ahead, the World Bank aims to help Bangladesh transition to a greener, more inclusive economy while mobilising private investment and supporting Vision 2041.

Sakhawat Urges Singapore Hiring Boost

Bangladesh's Shipping Adviser, M. Sakhawat Hussain, urged Singapore to recruit more skilled Bangladeshi professionals, particularly mariners, to support Singapore's maritime sector and boost Bangladesh's foreign currency earnings. In a bilateral meeting with Singapore's Minister Grace Fu, he emphasised Bangladesh's marine academy output and the global demand for its products, including garments and jute. Singapore expressed interest in a potential free trade agreement and affirmed support for human resource development. Investment opportunities in RMG, pharmaceuticals, ceramics, leather, and the Matarbari dockyard were discussed. Bangladesh also requested streamlined visa processes for sailors and offered cooperation in training port management personnel.

18 July

Bangladesh, UN Sign Human Rights Mission MoU

The Government of Bangladesh has signed a three-year MoU with the UN Human Rights Office (OHCHR) to field a mission supporting human rights promotion and protection.

The mission will provide training, legal assistance, and institutional support to help Bangladesh meet its national and international obligations. Emphasising reform and accountability after the July–August 2024 violations, the government stressed that the mission will respect Bangladesh’s legal, cultural, and religious framework. The UN has committed to transparency and cooperation with local stakeholders. Bangladesh retains the right to withdraw if the agreement no longer aligns with national interests.

19 July

Trade with India to Continue: Adviser

Commerce Adviser, Sk Bashir Uddin, affirmed that Bangladesh–India trade will persist in the public interest, prioritising mutual benefits for consumers and businesses. While acknowledging reported Indian restrictions at Akhaura and Dawki land ports, he noted the absence of formal notification. He downplayed India’s transshipment ban, citing Bangladesh’s domestic adaptation. Uddin emphasised that bilateral trade, particularly garment exports, relies on competitiveness, and noted that Indian firms may also be affected by increased logistical costs. He urged a focus on trade liberalisation rather than politics, and stressed the need to address the long-term trade deficit through diversification, enhanced competitiveness, and dialogue if formal trade issues arise.

20 July

RMG Exports to US Surge 22%

Bangladesh’s Ready-Made Garment (RMG) exports to the US rose by 21.61% to \$3.53 billion during January–May 2025, with export volume increasing by 21.04% to 1.15 billion square metres. Bangladesh remains the US’s third-largest apparel supplier with a 9.80% market share. US imports rose by 7.08% to \$31.70 billion. Exports to the EU grew by 17.8% to \$8.97 billion, and to other markets, including the UK and Canada, totalled \$4.35 billion. Despite strong growth, the US will impose an additional 35% tariff on Bangladeshi RMG from 1 August. A second round of tariff negotiations ended unresolved on 11 July; a third round is pending.

India’s Barrage Release Floods Teesta

Nearly 3,000 homes and 10,000 hectares of farmland in Bangladesh’s Teesta River chars were flooded after India opened 32 floodgates at the Gajoldoba Barrage without notice, following intense rainfall. The Teesta River rose by half a metre, nearing the danger level, prompting flash flood alerts in Lalmonirhat, Nilphamari, Rangpur, and Kurigram. Bangladesh opened all 44 gates of its Teesta Barrage in response. Affected areas include Goddimari, Mahishkhocha, Gobardhan, and Harinchwra. Heavy rainfall in Rangpur, Sylhet, and India’s Alipurduar exacerbated the situation. The abrupt flood followed dry conditions the previous day, triggering emergency evacuations in submerged agricultural zones.

Bangladesh, US Expand Defence Partnership

Bangladesh and the United States have agreed to deepen military cooperation through a series of joint exercises and capability-building initiatives. Exercise Tiger Lightning will focus on counterterrorism, peacekeeping, jungle warfare, medical evacuation, and counter-IED operations. Tiger Shark 2025 will enhance special forces’ maritime and marksmanship skills. Exercise Pacific Angel, emphasising humanitarian and disaster response operations, will include C-130 mobility, search and rescue, and aeromedical support. The RQ-21 Blackjack programme will strengthen Bangladesh’s unmanned aerial capabilities, maritime domain awareness, border security, and peacekeeping missions. These efforts underscore a shared commitment to regional security and defence modernisation.

21 July

Bangladesh to Annually Import US Wheat

Bangladesh has signed a five-year MoU with the United States to import 700,000 tonnes of high-quality wheat annually at competitive prices, aiming to bolster food security, nutrition, and supply stability. The deal, signed ahead of the third round of Bangladesh–US tariff talks, follows inconclusive negotiations in early July due to US demands for increased security cooperation.

Concurrently, the US imposed a 35% tariff on Bangladeshi exports, effective from 1 August. The US reaffirmed military collaboration with Bangladesh through programmes including Tiger Lightning, Tiger Shark, Pacific Angel, and the RQ-21 Blackjack initiative, enhancing counterterrorism, disaster response, and maritime surveillance capabilities.

22 July

China Pledges Stronger Bangladesh Cooperation

Chinese Ambassador Yao Wen reaffirmed China's readiness to enhance cooperation with Bangladesh across all sectors, including military collaboration, to support its development. Speaking at the National Defence College, Yao emphasised China's commitment to a multipolar world, inclusive globalisation, and non-hegemonic security principles. He promoted China's Global Development, Security, and Civilisation Initiatives as frameworks for global progress. Addressing over 100 Bangladeshi and foreign military officers, Yao underscored the significance of 2025, marking 80 years since China's WWII victory. Discussions followed on the Belt and Road Initiative, the Indo-Pacific Strategy, BRICS, and the Rohingya crisis, reflecting China's intent to deepen strategic bilateral ties.

23 July

Bangladesh Seeks USTR Tariff Talks

Bangladesh has submitted its position paper to the USTR, proposing 26 July or later for the final round of tariff negotiations, which must conclude before 1 August to avoid the imposition of reciprocal US tariffs. The proposal includes tariff reductions on US goods, increased imports—such as 0.7 million tonnes of wheat and 14 Boeing aircraft—and non-trade commitments. With over \$8.2 billion in apparel exports to the US in 2024, Bangladesh seeks duty reductions, ideally lower than Vietnam's 20%, to remain competitive amid a proposed 35% US tariff. Concerns persist among 1,322 BGMEA-affiliated factories, as tariff costs may shift to suppliers.

India Sends Burn Specialists to Bangladesh

A Bangladesh Air Force training jet crashed into a school in Dhaka's Uttara area, resulting in 32 fatalities and 165 injuries, including many children.

India dispatched a specialised medical team of burn experts to assist with treatment and may recommend further care in India. Additional Indian teams may follow based on assessments. Bangladesh's foreign ministry is prioritising medical expertise and equipment over financial aid. Singapore has also sent a medical team, while China and Japan have expressed readiness to support burn treatment. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi conveyed condolences and pledged full support for Bangladesh's recovery efforts following the tragic incident.

Nepal, Bangladesh Strengthen Climate Cooperation

Nepali Ambassador Ghanashyam Bhandari met with Bangladesh's Adviser for Chittagong Hill Tracts Affairs, Supradip Chakma. Both sides reaffirmed their commitment to advancing joint efforts on mountain-related issues and climate change. Emphasis was placed on cooperation in disaster preparedness and institutional linkages. They discussed the importance of mutual exchange of data and resources. Conversations also touched on trade, connectivity, energy, and people-to-people ties. Bangladesh's Chittagong Hill Tracts were a particular area of interest given their environmental vulnerability and potential for regional collaboration.

Dhaka, Islamabad Sign MoU on Visa Agreement

Bangladesh and Pakistan are close to finalising a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to grant visa-on-arrival facilities for diplomatic and official passport holders. This was discussed during a meeting in Dhaka between Pakistan's Interior Minister Mohsin Raza Naqvi and Bangladesh's Home Affairs Adviser Lt Gen (Retd) Md Jahangir Alam Chowdhury. The dialogue also covered collaboration in counterterrorism, counter-narcotics, cybercrime, and proposed joint police training. Naqvi emphasised Pakistan's anti-terrorism expertise and clarified that Rohingyas in Pakistan receive coded passports, not citizenship. Bangladesh urged Pakistan's support for Rohingya repatriation. The meeting aligned with the ongoing construction of Bangladesh's new embassy in Pakistan.

Italy Visa Seekers Stage Protest

Over 100 Italy visa applicants staged a sit-in protest outside the Italian Embassy in Dhaka,

Demanding resolution of prolonged visa delays despite holding valid 2023–24 work permits. Protesters outlined four key demands: expedited processing of work visa applications, fast-tracking of scanned passport submissions, return of approximately 3,000 withheld passports, and clarification on family visa complications. Many applicants, including family visa seekers, reported severe financial and mental stress due to inaction. Despite appeals to VFS Global, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Chief Adviser's Office, the embassy has made no significant response to their concerns.

24 July

India Expels 1,500 Muslims to Bangladesh

Human Rights Watch (HRW) reported that over 1,500 ethnic Bengali Muslims were expelled from India to Bangladesh between 7 May and 15 June, many allegedly Indian citizens from border states. Approximately 100 Rohingya refugees were also among those expelled. HRW criticised India's actions for lacking legal procedures and violating international human rights standards. The expulsions, aligned with the BJP-led government's crackdown on undocumented migration, have raised sovereignty, security, and regional stability concerns. The Border Guard Bangladesh confirmed the expulsions. HRW called on Dhaka to escalate the issue through diplomatic channels and international forums to address these violations and uphold rights protections.

19 Irregular Migrants Returned from Tunisia

Nineteen Bangladeshi migrants were repatriated from Tunisia and arrived in Dhaka via Emirates flight EK-582. Their return was coordinated by the Bangladesh Embassy in Libya, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment, and IOM. Most migrants had attempted to reach Europe via irregular sea routes, often falling victim to human trafficking, abduction, and abuse. Upon arrival, they received Tk6,000 in cash, food, medical care, and temporary accommodation from IOM. Authorities urged returnees to raise awareness about the dangers of illegal migration. Efforts continue to repatriate Bangladeshis detained in Tunisia.

China, FAO to Boost Bangladesh Food Security

China and the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) held a strategic discussion in Dhaka aimed at reinforcing Bangladesh's food security through trilateral cooperation. The meeting, involving Chinese Ambassador Yao Wen and FAO's Ye Anping, focused on deepening collaboration between China and FAO to support Bangladesh's agricultural development. Key areas identified include promoting sustainable agriculture, enabling technology transfer, and building capacity tailored to local needs. FAO Bangladesh Country Representative Dr Shi Jiaqun also attended, underscoring the institutional commitment to long-term food resilience in the country.

Australia Seeks Stronger Bangladesh Trade Ties

Australia is expanding trade and investment ties with Bangladesh, focusing on sectors such as food processing, agriculture, recycling, and the circular economy. A delegation led by Trade and Investment Commissioner Ben Carson visited Chattogram to explore these opportunities, meeting key industry players like BSRM (recognised for its green manufacturing practices), the PHP Family (active in recycling), and Banga Flavour & Fragrance, which collaborates with Australian firm TPM on food innovation using Australian inputs. The team also engaged with distributors of Australian agricultural products. The visit ended with a tribute at the Chittagong Commonwealth War Cemetery, honouring historical ties between the two nations.

25 July

123 Bangladeshis Barred from Malaysia

Malaysian immigration authorities denied entry to 198 foreign nationals—including 123 Bangladeshis—at Kuala Lumpur International Airport (KLIA) for non-compliance with immigration rules, such as insufficient funds, absence of accommodation bookings, and unclear travel purposes. The deportees will be returned under the 'Not to Land' (NTL) protocol, with airlines bearing repatriation costs. Most rejections occurred at KLIA Terminal 1. Authorities suspect syndicate involvement after discovering enforcement officials' photos on detainees' phones, possibly used to bypass border checks.

Malaysian officials reaffirmed their commitment to stringent border controls to prevent the misuse of the country as a transit point for unauthorised entry.

Bangladesh-US 'Tiger Lightning' Exercise Starts

The joint military exercise “Tiger Lightning-2025” commenced on at the Para Commando Brigade in Jalalabad Cantonment, Sylhet, co-led by the Bangladesh Army and the U.S. Army Pacific Command (USARPAC). Conducted under the supervision of the Para Commando Brigade and Nevada National Guard, the exercise will run until 30 July, involving 66 U.S. and 100 Bangladeshi personnel. It aims to enhance operational readiness, counter-terrorism capabilities, disaster response, and humanitarian assistance coordination. Major General Ascot A. Winter attended as chief guest. The exercise is expected to strengthen bilateral military cooperation and improve the professional capacity of both forces.

26 July

BSF Kills 34 Bangladesh Nationals in 11 Months of Interim Government

In the first 11 months of Bangladesh’s interim government, 34 citizens were killed by India’s Border Security Force (BSF)—surpassing annual totals for 2024 (30) and 2023 (31). On 25 July, BSF shot three Bangladeshis crossing the Feni border; two died—one in Bangladesh and the other in India. Despite repeated diplomatic appeals, including February’s bilateral border talks, India has taken no meaningful action. Analysts attribute India’s disregard to Bangladesh’s weak diplomatic leverage. Monthly border violence persists, alongside drone incursions, forced repatriations, and gunfire. These killings continue regardless of Indo-Bangla relations, amid heightened tensions since Sheikh Hasina’s ouster in 2024.

27 July

Saudi Envoy Calls on Chief Adviser Eyes Stronger Bilateral Ties

Newly appointed Saudi Ambassador Dr Abdullah Zafer bin Abiyah paid a courtesy call on Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus at the State Guest House Jamuna. The Chief Adviser welcomed the envoy and proposed deeper Saudi investment in energy, health, and pharmaceuticals.



The ambassador reaffirmed his country’s commitment, highlighting projects like the Patenga Terminal. He also delivered an invitation from the Saudi Crown Prince to attend the Future Investment Initiative Forum in Riyadh. Professor Yunus expressed gratitude for Saudi support and gifted the ambassador a graffiti collection from the July 2024 movement.

28 July

Terrorism Will Be Eliminated from Bangladesh: Chief Adviser

Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus reaffirmed his government’s zero-tolerance stance on terrorism during a meeting with U.S. Chargé d’Affaires Tracey Ann Jacobson. He pledged that no terrorist group would be allowed to operate in Bangladesh. They also discussed tariff talks, democratic transition, and national reforms. Yunus praised the National Consensus-Building Commission, calling its work under Professor Ali Riaz “excellent.”

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