



BANGLADESH

CHIEF ADVISER TO GO TO CHINA 26 MAR, MEETING WITH PRESIDENT XI

Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus will visit China on 26 March, aiming to strengthen Bangladesh-China relations, according to Press Secretary Shafiqul Alam. On 27 March, he will address the Boao Forum for Asia (BFA), often referred to as the "Davos of the East," where top Asian leaders and global CEOs participate. During the forum, he is expected to meet with business leaders to discuss investment opportunities in Bangladesh. On 28 March, Prof Yunus will hold a bilateral meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping in Beijing, focusing on key bilateral issues. Bangladesh seeks to attract Chinese investment, particularly in manufacturing and solar energy, to transform the country into a manufacturing hub. Two Chinese companies, including solar PV giant Longi, will soon establish offices and plants in Bangladesh following earlier discussions. Prof Yunus will also deliver a lecture at Peking University, where he will receive an honorary doctorate. Additionally, he will visit Chinese Hi-Tech parks and hold discussions with Chinese hospital chains for potential joint ventures. The Chinese ambassador in Dhaka expressed optimism that the visit will lead to increased Chinese investment in Bangladesh.

Source: [Chief Adviser to go to China 26 Mar, hold meeting with President Xi 28 Mar: Press Secretary | Prothom Alo](#)

THIS WILL BE THE MOST IMPORTANT VISIT BY ANY BANGLADESH LEADER: CHINESE AMBASSADOR YAO WEN

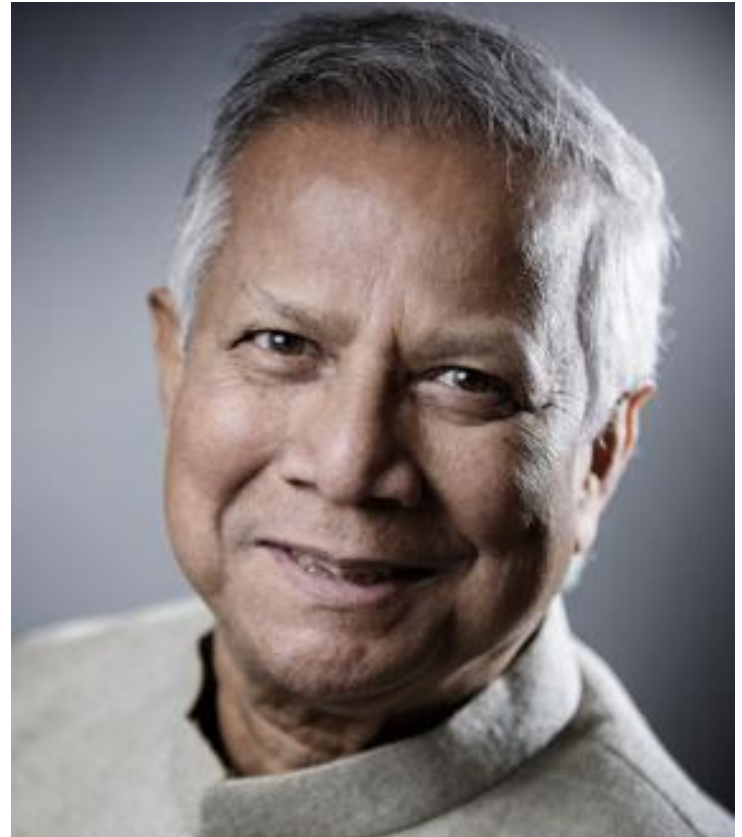
Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus will visit China on 26 March, a trip expected to elevate Bangladesh-China relations, according to Press Secretary Shafiqul Alam. On 27 March, he will address the Boao Forum for Asia (BFA), known as the "Davos of the East," where global leaders and CEOs will discuss Asia's evolving role. The Chinese Ambassador to Bangladesh, Yao Wen, met Prof Yunus to discuss the visit and emphasized its significance, calling it the most important visit by any Bangladeshi leader. On 28 March, Prof Yunus will meet Chinese President Xi Jinping in Beijing to discuss key bilateral matters. Bangladesh aims to attract Chinese investments, particularly in manufacturing and solar energy, with two Chinese firms, including solar giant Longi, set to open offices and factories in Bangladesh. During the trip, Prof Yunus will also visit Chinese Hi-Tech parks and deliver a lecture at Peking University, where he will receive an honorary doctorate. The Chief Adviser will further engage with Chinese hospital chains to explore joint healthcare ventures. The Chinese envoy expressed optimism that this visit would lead to increased Chinese investment in Bangladesh.

Source: [Chief Adviser to go to China 26 Mar, hold meeting with President Xi 28 Mar: Press Secretary | Prothom Alo](#)

WITH ELECTION LOOMING, CA YUNUS ORDERS POLICE TO STRENGTHEN SECURITY FOR ALL CITIZENS

Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus has directed the police to enhance security measures to ensure the safety of all citizens, including minorities, ahead of the upcoming election. Addressing 127 senior police officials at the Chief Adviser's Office on 17 March, he warned that defeated forces might attempt to provoke unrest and urged the police to remain vigilant. He emphasized the critical role of law enforcement in building a new Bangladesh and instructed officers to counter propaganda that could disrupt national progress. Yunus highlighted that police are the backbone of law enforcement and essential for implementing government initiatives. Home Affairs Adviser Jahangir Alam Chowdhury, Home Secretary Nasimul Gani, and Inspector General of Police Baharul Alam, among others, were present at the meeting. Senior police officials, including SPs from all districts, DIGs, and additional IGP, attended the discussion. Several advisers from different ministries, including Law, CHT Affairs, and Power, were also in attendance.

Source: [With election looming, CA Yunus orders police to strengthen security for all citizens | The Business Standard](#)



ANTÓNIO GUTERRES VISITS BANGLADESH

UN CONSIDERING HUMANITARIAN CHANNEL FROM BANGLADESH TO MYANMAR

United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres announced that the UN is considering establishing a humanitarian aid channel from Bangladesh to Myanmar. Speaking during his four-day visit to Bangladesh, he emphasized the need for increased aid inside Myanmar to support Rohingya repatriation efforts. Guterres acknowledged that such a channel would require authorization and cooperation from all parties involved. Addressing the role of the Arakan Army (AA), an ethnic rebel group in Myanmar, he stressed the need for dialogue despite past difficulties. He called for regional pressure to end conflicts and restore democracy in Myanmar. His remarks followed a plea from Fortify Rights urging Bangladesh to facilitate cross-border aid to civilians in Rakhine state. The AA has intensified its conflict with Myanmar's military, seizing territory and isolating the state capital, Sittwe. Meanwhile, the UN's World Food Programme has warned of severe funding shortages, which will leave one million people, including 100,000 displaced Rohingyas in Rakhine, without food aid. The UN previously warned of an imminent famine threat in the region.



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Source: [UN considering humanitarian channel from Bangladesh to Myanmar](#)

UN CHIEF AFFIRMS SOLIDARITY WITH BANGLADESH AMID POLITICAL TRANSITION

UN Secretary-General António Guterres has expressed solidarity with Bangladesh as it undergoes significant political and structural reforms. During his visit, he praised the country's progress and emphasized the international community's role in supporting Bangladesh's path toward democracy, justice, and prosperity. Guterres acknowledged Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus's leadership and the aspirations of the Bangladeshi people. Bangladesh has been in transition since the resignation of former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina last August following student-led protests, which saw over 300 deaths and 20,000 injuries due to a violent crackdown. Calling this a pivotal moment, Guterres assured that the UN remains a steadfast partner, committed to assisting in fostering peace, national dialogue, and stability. He reaffirmed the UN's readiness to support Bangladesh in achieving a sustainable and inclusive future.

Source: [UN chief affirms solidarity with Bangladesh amid political transition | UN News](#)

IN BANGLADESH, UN CHIEF VOWS TO PREVENT ROHINGYA SUFFERING AS AID CUTS LOOM



During his visit to the Rohingya refugee camps in southern Bangladesh, UN Secretary-General António Guterres vowed to prevent further hardship as drastic aid cuts threaten food supplies and essential relief efforts. He warned that funding reductions by major donors, including the US and European nations, could lead to severe consequences, describing Cox's Bazar as "ground zero" for the crisis. Guterres emphasized that further food ration cuts would be catastrophic, potentially leading to loss of lives. Calling his visit a mission of solidarity, he praised Bangladesh for hosting over one million Rohingya refugees despite resource constraints. He urged the international community not to turn its back on the crisis and called for urgent support. Stressing that a lasting solution must come from Myanmar, he reaffirmed the UN's commitment to ensuring the safe and voluntary repatriation of Rohingyas. He also highlighted the vulnerability of the camps to climate change, with extreme weather conditions increasing risks for refugees. Beyond immediate aid, Guterres underscored the need for education and skills training to provide Rohingya refugees with a sustainable future.

Source: [In Bangladesh, UN chief vows to prevent Rohingya suffering as aid cuts loom | UN News](#)



UN CHIEF GUTERRES BREAKS RAMADAN FAST WITH 100,000 ROHINGYA IN BANGLADESH

UN Secretary-General António Guterres and Bangladesh's interim leader Muhammad Yunus joined 100,000 Rohingya refugees for iftar at the Ukhia camp in Cox's Bazar, emphasizing the urgent need for humanitarian aid as food rations were slashed to \$6 per person. Guterres vowed to rally global support, urging solidarity to prevent further suffering, while Yunus pledged to work with the UN for the safe return of the

Rohingya to Myanmar before next Eid. However, the event turned tragic as a stampede left one dead and two injured, highlighting the desperation in the overcrowded camps. [Source: UN chief Guterres breaks Ramadan fast with 100,000 Rohingya in Bangladesh — BenarNews](#)



GUTERRES FOR GLOBAL SOLIDARITY TO END ROHINGYA CRISIS

UN Secretary-General António Guterres, during his visit to Rohingya camps in Cox's Bazar, called for global solidarity and urgent action to support the refugees and their Bangladeshi hosts. Emphasizing that Rohingya deserve dignity, safety, and a safe return to Myanmar, he urged all parties to ensure civilian protection and prevent further violence. Guterres warned of a looming humanitarian crisis due to drastic aid cuts, with funding for 2025 projected to drop to just 40% of 2024 levels. He praised Bangladeshis for their generosity despite climate challenges but stressed that humanitarian aid alone isn't enough—lasting solutions must come from Myanmar. [Source: Guterres for global solidarity to end Rohingya crisis | At a Glance](#)



'WE ARE SIMPLY GOING TO STARVE': UN CHIEF VISITS ROHINGYA REFUGEES AMID AID FUNDING SHORTFALL

UN Secretary-General António Guterres recently visited the Rohingya refugee camps in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, as the humanitarian crisis deepens due to drastic funding shortfalls. The United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) has warned that food rations for the over one million refugees may be slashed from \$12.50 to just \$6 per month starting in April, creating fears of widespread hunger. The cuts are largely attributed to a lack of donations, particularly following the shutdown of USAID operations and reduced global support for the refugee crisis. The situation is especially dire as the Rohingya, who fled violent persecution in Myanmar, have limited access to employment, education, and basic services in the camps. Many refugees, such as Mohammed Sabir and Abdur Salam, expressed the devastating consequences of these cuts, fearing that they would not be able to feed their families. Guterres emphasized the need for increased global solidarity, urging the international community to step up and provide

necessary support to avoid further suffering. His visit, during the holy month of Ramadan, was seen as a crucial effort to raise awareness and mobilize action for the Rohingya people, who continue to live in precarious conditions with little hope for a sustainable future unless the international community responds.

[Source: 'We are simply going to starve': UN chief visits Rohingya refugees amid aid funding shortfall | Reuters](#)

POLICE DEMAND INDEPENDENT COMMISSION

Top police officials in Bangladesh have urged Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus to establish an independent police commission to address ongoing issues within the force, such as outdated practices, inadequate housing, and lack of gender inclusivity. They stressed that without such reforms, the police could revert to negative roles, as seen under previous regimes. Despite recommendations from the Police Reform Commission, the demand for an independent commission remains unaddressed. Police leaders also raised concerns over resources and the law and order situation, with a call for urgent reforms to ensure a service-oriented force.

Source: [Meeting with chief adviser: Police demand independent commission](#)

MEDIA COMMISSION RECOMMENDS 'ONE MEDIA, ONE HOUSE'

The Media Reform Commission in Bangladesh has proposed significant changes, including a "one media, one house" policy, which aims to prevent individuals, families, or companies from owning multiple media outlets. This includes barring cross-ownership between different types of media (e.g., a TV station and a newspaper) to maintain sector viability. The commission also recommended bringing media companies under the capital market, requiring large outlets to go public, and enforcing strict hiring practices for journalists. Additionally, it proposed that journalists' starting salaries should match those of first-class government officers, and probation periods should not exceed one year.

Source: [Media Reform Commission Bangladesh | Media commission recommends 'one media, one house'](#)

GOVT COMMITTED TO ENSURING SMOOTH LDC GRADUATION: COMMERCE ADVISER

Commerce Adviser Sk. Bashir Uddin has reassured that the interim government is fully committed to ensuring Bangladesh's smooth graduation from the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) by November 2026. He emphasized that despite challenges, the transition would proceed as scheduled, urging businesses to accept the reality and avoid delays in necessary reforms. While acknowledging the economic strain caused by global disruptions, including the COVID-19 pandemic and the Russia-Ukraine war, he stated that postponing the graduation was not an option. Bangladesh has met all three UN criteria for graduation, and the European Union, along with other nations, has pledged to extend trade benefits until 2029 to help ease the transition.

Source: [Govt committed to ensuring smooth LDC graduation: Commerce Adviser](#)

NEXT NATIONAL BUDGET WILL BE BUSINESS-FRIENDLY: ADVISER SALEHUDDIN

Finance Adviser Salehuddin Ahmed assured that the upcoming national budget will be business-friendly, with a favorable tax policy aimed at boosting investment, GDP growth, and employment. In a pre-budget meeting with business leaders, he discussed proposals to lower tax rates, streamline online tax payments, and address customs procedures. Business representatives, including those from the Bangladesh Chamber of Industries (BCI), the BGMEA, and BKMEA, suggested reducing VAT in specific sectors, revising tax provisions, and standardizing customs codes. They also called for continued tax incentives for export-oriented industries and improvements in the banking and VAT systems.

Source: [Next national budget will be business-friendly: Adviser Salehuddin | The Business Standard](#)

VAT WAIVER ON SUPERSHOPS BOOSTS SALES 20%

The removal of a 5% VAT on packaged goods at supermarkets in Bangladesh has led to a 20% increase in customer footfall at major chains like Meena Bazar, Agora, and Shwapno. Supermarkets, which had struggled with higher prices compared to traditional bazaars, are now seeing a resurgence in business as they offer more competitive pricing. Despite the VAT relief, the industry still faces challenges, such as paying VAT on gross margins while informal retailers evade similar taxes. Industry leaders are calling for further tax relief and infrastructure support to facilitate growth in modern retail, which holds only 2.5% of the market share in Bangladesh, compared to higher figures in neighboring countries.

Source: [VAT waiver on supershops boosts sales 20% | The Business Standard](#)

GOVERNMENT SEEKS LOANS TO IMPORT LNG AMID DOLLAR CRISIS

Bangladesh's ongoing dollar crisis is affecting its LNG imports, prompting the government to seek a \$350 million loan from the World Bank to cover LNG purchase costs for the 2025-26 fiscal year. The country has been relying on LNG imports due to declining domestic gas production, but payment arrears to foreign suppliers, such as Chevron, have accumulated, leading to delivery delays. Despite the loan assistance, experts warn that this short-term solution exacerbates Bangladesh's financial strain. Over the past years, the country has borrowed to cover LNG costs, leading to rising debts and a weakening repayment capacity. Analysts urge the government to prioritize sustainable energy solutions and domestic gas exploration to avoid further financial challenges. *Source: [Government seeks loans to import LNG amid dollar crisis](#)*

CPD PROPOSES RAISING TAX-FREE INCOME LIMIT TO TK 400,000

The Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) has proposed raising the annual tax-free income limit for individual taxpayers to Tk 400,000 in the upcoming 2025-26 fiscal year, an increase of Tk 50,000 from the current ceiling of Tk 350,000. This proposal was presented at a press briefing in Dhanmondi, Dhaka. The current tax system follows progressive rates ranging from 5% to 25%, with no tax on income up to Tk 350,000. The new proposal aims to benefit lower-income taxpayers by increasing their tax-free income threshold. Additionally, the tax-free limit for female taxpayers, individuals over 65 years, third-gender taxpayers, and those with disabilities already has higher exemptions, with special provisions for gazetted freedom fighters. CPD's proposal is seen as a step to ease the tax burden on lower-income groups. *Source: [CPD proposes raising tax-free income limit to Tk 400,000](#)*

INDIAN LOC PROJECTS TO BE REASSESSED AS FUND DISBURSAL SLOWS DOWN

Disbursement of Indian loans under the Line of Credit (LoC) to Bangladesh has slowed significantly, with only USD 81 million released between July and January, and no new commitments made. This delay is mainly due to project halts following political changes and issues with Indian contractors. The Economic Relations Division (ERD) is reassessing ongoing projects, and a committee will be formed to address the delays. India has committed USD 7.36 billion in loans since 2010, but only USD 1.88 billion has been disbursed. The two countries agreed to review project conditions to speed up progress. *Source: [Indian LoC projects to be reassessed as fund disbursal slows down](#)*

INDIA



INDIA AND NEW ZEALAND TO INSTITUTIONALISE DEFENCE AND SECURITY COOPERATION: PM MODI

India and New Zealand have agreed to strengthen defense and security cooperation, focusing on joint exercises, training, and port visits, as well as developing a bilateral defense industry collaboration. Prime Ministers Modi and Luxon also discussed a roadmap for a Free Trade Agreement to boost trade and investment, particularly in sectors like dairy, food processing, and pharmaceuticals. Both leaders addressed concerns over pro-Khalistan activities in New Zealand, committing to cooperation against illegal elements. Luxon also announced an expansion of New Zealand's diplomatic presence in India and highlighted the significant contribution of the Indian

community in New Zealand.

Source: [India and New Zealand to institutionalise defence and security cooperation: PM Modi - The Hindu](#)



INDIA WAS AWARE OF ANTI-HASINA WAVE BUT COULD NOT INTERFERE, SAYS JAISHANKAR

EAM BRIEFS MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT ON INDIA'S FOREIGN POLICY WITH REGARD TO BANGLADESH, MYANMAR, SAYS 'SAARC IS NOT OFF THE TABLE'

India was aware of the anti-Hasina sentiment building in Bangladesh ahead of the violent overthrow of Sheikh Hasina's government in August 2024, but was unable to intervene due to limited leverage, as stated by External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar during a briefing to Members of Parliament. He mentioned India's awareness of the situation, referencing comments from the U.N. Human Rights Chief about potential consequences for Bangladesh's army. Jaishankar also addressed ongoing issues in Myanmar, including the civil war and its spillover effects on India's northeastern states, and discussed the future of SAARC, indicating it is "not off the table" despite its hiatus since 2014. Additionally, concerns about China's growing influence in the region were raised.

Source: [India was aware of anti-Hasina wave but could not interfere, says Jaishankar - The Hindu](#)

INDIA CAN ENGAGE WITH RUSSIA, UKRAINE, ISRAEL, IRAN PARALLELLY: JAISHANKAR

External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar highlighted that the principle of "Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas" applies equally to India's foreign policy, emphasizing the country's ability to engage with diverse global actors such as Russia, Ukraine, Israel,

and Iran simultaneously. During a media event, he stressed India's diplomatic flexibility, particularly in defense, technology, trade, and security, ensuring India keeps multiple avenues open. Jaishankar pointed out India's participation in over 40 groupings and its efforts to safeguard commercial interests, promote Indian talent globally, and expand connectivity. He underscored that trust and strong partnerships are essential to advancing trade and technology, driving India's development and international standing.

Source: [India can engage with Russia, Ukraine, Israel, Iran parallelly: Jaishankar says 'sabka saath' key to foreign policy | Latest News India - Hindustan Times](#)

INDIA'S \$23 BILLION PLI SCHEME TO RIVAL CHINA FACTORIES TO LAPSE AFTER IT DISAPPOINTS

India's \$23 billion Production-Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme, aimed at boosting domestic manufacturing and attracting firms away from China, is set to lapse after disappointing results. Despite participation from major companies like Foxconn and Reliance, many firms failed to meet production targets, and those that did found delays in receiving promised subsidies. As of October 2024, only 37% of the production target was achieved, with less than 8% of the allocated incentives distributed. While the government defended the program's success in pharmaceuticals and mobile-phone manufacturing, the manufacturing sector's share of the economy has declined. The government is considering alternative approaches, including reimbursing investments to accelerate cost recovery. Critics argue that the failure of this initiative could hinder future efforts to revive India's manufacturing sector. **Source:** [India's \\$23 billion PLI scheme to rival China factories to lapse after it disappoints - The Hindu](#)

US AIMS TO BOLSTER INDIA TIES AS GLOBAL ALLIANCES SHIFT



DURING A HIGH-PROFILE VISIT TO NEW DELHI, US INTELLIGENCE CHIEF TULSI GABBARD SAID INDIA AND THE US WILL DEEPEN STRATEGIC COOPERATION, EMPHASIZING THAT "AMERICA FIRST" DOES NOT MEAN "AMERICA ALONE."

During her visit to New Delhi, US Director of National Intelligence, Tulsi Gabbard, emphasized the growing strategic cooperation between the US and India. She highlighted that while President Trump's "America First" slogan doesn't mean "America alone," it signifies the importance of building mutual relationships to advance shared interests. Gabbard noted the "huge opportunities" for US-India ties, especially in the context of regional security and economic cooperation. Both nations are working together on combating terrorism, enhancing maritime and cyber security, and addressing the geopolitical challenges in the Indo-Pacific region, particularly concerning China's rising influence. While India is not a formal US ally, the two countries share interests, notably in containing China, and are committed to strengthening ties through frameworks like the Quad. Gabbard's visit underscores the priority the Trump administration places on the India-US relationship as they collaborate on defense, intelligence, and regional stability, despite the challenges posed by trade disputes and global dynamics.

Source: [US aims to bolster India ties as global alliances shift - DW - 03/19/2025](#)

PAKISTAN



PAKISTAN ARMY SAYS 300 HOSTAGES FREED FROM TRAIN

Pakistan's military has freed over 300 hostages from a train seized by militants in Balochistan. The Baloch Liberation Army (BLA) attacked the train, killing 21 civilians and 4 military personnel before the military's rescue operation. The militants, who demand greater autonomy for Balochistan, threatened to kill hostages unless political prisoners were

released. The army killed 33 militants during the operation and continues its search for any remaining threats. The BLA, designated as a terrorist organization, has previously carried out similar attacks, but this is the first train hijacking.

Source: [Pakistan army says 300 hostages freed from train](#)



PAKISTAN LINKS TRAIN HIJACKING TO 'AFGHAN HANDLERS' AND INDIAN MASTERMIND

INDIA AND AFGHANISTAN REJECT CHARGES, AS PAKISTAN REVEALS DETAILS OF OPERATION THAT FREED HUNDREDS OF PASSENGERS.

Pakistan has linked the recent hijacking of the Jaffar Express train in Balochistan to "terrorists" with alleged ties to handlers in Afghanistan, while also accusing India of being the mastermind behind the attack. According to Pakistan's military spokesperson, Lieutenant General Ahmed Sharif Chaudhry, the Baloch Liberation Army (BLA) was responsible for the attack, and they communicated with their "handlers" in Afghanistan using walkie-talkies. Chaudhry further claimed that the BLA targeted ethnic groups among the passengers, segregating them based on

ethnicity. The Pakistani military's Operation Green Bolan successfully rescued 354 passengers after a 36-hour standoff, during which 26 people, including civilians and military personnel, were killed. The military reported that 33 BLA militants were also killed during the operation. Chaudhry emphasized that intelligence monitoring and aerial reconnaissance were crucial in tracking the attackers, while elite forces from the Army's Special Services Group (SSG) led the rescue operation. Pakistan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs had previously stated that the terrorists were in contact with their handlers in Afghanistan and that the BLA was operating from Afghan soil. This prompted a sharp response from India and Afghanistan, both of whom rejected Pakistan's accusations. India called the claims baseless, urging Pakistan to address its own internal issues, while Afghanistan denied the allegations, claiming that no BLA members were present in Afghanistan and urging Pakistan to focus on its own security challenges. The BLA, a separatist group, has long been fighting for greater autonomy or independence for Balochistan and has previously attacked military and civilian targets.

Source: [Pakistan links train hijacking to 'Afghan handlers' and Indian mastermind | Conflict News | Al Jazeera](#)

ISLAMABAD, KABUL AGREE TO DEEPEN DIPLOMATIC TIES

Pakistan and Afghanistan have pledged to sustain diplomatic engagement to address key bilateral issues, including trade, security, and the status of Afghan refugees in Pakistan. This agreement was made during a meeting between Pakistan's Special Envoy Muhammad Sadiq and Afghanistan's Acting Foreign Minister Mawlawi Amir Khan Muttaqi in Kabul. Discussions covered the reopening of the Torkham border, which had been closed for 27 days due to construction disputes, with a temporary solution in place until April 15. Afghanistan emphasized that trade obstacles should not be linked to other issues, and Pakistan committed to addressing these concerns. Another key issue was the status of over 3.1 million Afghan refugees in Pakistan, with Pakistan setting a deadline for the return of undocumented individuals by March 31, while registered refugees have been granted permission to stay until June 2025. Both sides agreed to enhance high-level engagement and counterterrorism cooperation as part of their diplomatic efforts.

Source: [Islamabad, Kabul agree to deepen diplomatic ties - Pakistan - DAWN.COM](#)



Source: [Saudi crown prince, Pakistan PM discuss relations](#)

SAUDI CROWN PRINCE, PAKISTAN PM DISCUSS RELATIONS

Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman and Pakistan's Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif met in Jeddah to discuss bilateral relations, cooperation across various fields, and regional and international developments. The meeting, attended by senior Saudi and Pakistani officials, aimed to strengthen ties between the two countries. Following the meeting, Sharif arrived in Madinah on Thursday with his delegation and was warmly received at the Prince Muhammad bin Abdulaziz International Airport by the Governor of the Madinah Region, Prince Salman bin Sultan bin Abdulaziz, and other officials, including Saudi Ambassador to Pakistan, Nawaf bin Saeed Al-Maliki.

CLIMATE CHANGE TO BOOST NON-AGRI WATER USE: WORLD BANK

According to a World Bank report, climate change is expected to significantly increase non-agricultural water use in Pakistan, with demand projected to rise by 60% due to a 3°C temperature increase by 2047. This shift will require repurposing up to 10% of irrigation water to meet non-agricultural demands, which poses a challenge for food security. The World Bank's strategy focuses on supporting climate-resilient agriculture, water management reforms, and infrastructure improvements in flood-prone areas like Balochistan and Sindh. The plan includes promoting efficient water use, climate-smart farming, and financial inclusion for small farmers, alongside investments in agriculture value chains and climate finance efforts.

Source: [Climate change to boost non-agri water use: World Bank - Pakistan - DAWN.COM](#)

GOVT MEETS ANOTHER IMF CONDITION OF PHASING OUT EXPORT FINANCING

Pakistan approved the phasing out of the Rs330 billion subsidized export financing scheme from the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) as part of fulfilling the International Monetary Fund (IMF) conditions for the disbursement of a \$1.1 billion installment. The Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the Cabinet decided to transfer the SBP's Long-Term Financing Facility (LTFF) portfolio to the newly established Exim Bank, which will now handle the refinancing schemes. The cost to the government for meeting subsidy requirements is estimated at Rs91.5 billion. This move aligns with Pakistan's commitment under the IMF's Extended Fund Facility (EFF) to phase out SBP's involvement in these schemes by 2028. Additionally, the ECC approved supplementary grants totaling Rs3.4 billion for various government expenses, including media payments, parliamentary schemes, and a medical center in Islamabad.

Source: [Govt meets another IMF condition of phasing out export financing - Business - DAWN.COM](#)

PAKISTAN FACES FINANCE, CAPACITY GAP IN CLIMATE FIGHT: MINISTER AURANGZEB

Pakistan is prioritizing climate action through a series of strategic initiatives aimed at addressing the country's environmental challenges. Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb highlighted the growing recognition of climate change as an existential threat, focusing on the risks posed by melting glaciers and severe flooding. To support green projects, he launched the Parwaaz Green Action Bond, building on the success of the Wapda Green Bond. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif emphasized the government's commitment to climate action through policies like the National Adaptation Plan and National Clean Air Policy, while urging collective efforts to tackle climate vulnerabilities, especially as Pakistan contributes less than 1% to global greenhouse gas emissions but remains highly climate-vulnerable.

Source: [Pakistan faces finance, capacity gap in climate fight: minister Aurangzeb - Business - DAWN.COM](#)

USAID FUNDING FREEZE: MINISTRY TERMINATES JOBS OF 36 STAFF NURSES IN FEDERAL, PROVINCIAL HOSPITALS

In Nepal, the abrupt suspension of USAID funding has led to the termination of 36 staff nurses across 18 federal and provincial hospitals, severely impacting key health programs, including those promoting exclusive breastfeeding. This funding freeze is part of a broader decision by the US government to halt nearly all global assistance for three months, affecting various healthcare initiatives supported by USAID, including exclusive breastfeeding programs. Health experts warn that this disruption could undo years of progress in Nepal's health sector, where the exclusive breastfeeding rate has steadily declined. The country had previously committed to improving this rate to over 90% by 2030, but recent trends show a decrease from 70% in 2011 to 56% in 2022. This setback, along with the suspension of other critical health programs, raises concerns about Nepal's ability to meet its Sustainable Development Goals, particularly in reducing neonatal mortality and improving maternal and child health.

Source: [USAID funding freeze: Ministry terminates jobs of 36 staff nurses in federal, provincial hospitals](#)



OLI SEEKS DEALS WITH THAILAND, MODI MEET DURING BIMSTEC TRIP

Nepal's Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli is set to attend the sixth summit of the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (Bimstec) from April 2-4 in Thailand, where he will also undertake a bilateral visit. This visit aims to foster stronger ties between Nepal and Thailand, with agreements expected in areas such as tourism, culture, and agricultural collaboration, including technical advancements like soil testing and seed treatment. Discussions will also focus on clean energy, hydrogen, and

educational exchanges. Additionally, Nepal seeks to hold bilateral meetings with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and other leaders on the summit's sidelines. The summit will also address key issues such as regional connectivity, trade, and the Bimstec Free Trade Agreement (FTA).

Source: [Oli seeks deals with Thailand, Modi meet during Bimstec trip](#)

NEPAL'S PM WARNS AGAINST FORGETTING MONARCHY'S PAST 'AUTOCRATIC RULE'

Nepal's Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli warned against forgetting the autocratic rule that existed under the monarchy while emphasizing the importance of consolidating the achievements of the federal democratic republic. Speaking at an event in the capital, Oli referred to recent pro-monarchy protests and urged the public to focus on strengthening the republican system. He reminded the people of the long struggle and sacrifices made to abolish the monarchy and establish a republican system, asserting that there is no alternative to the current system. Oli also highlighted the need for collaboration between local, provincial, and federal governments to effectively serve the people, amidst growing calls from monarchy supporters for its restoration.

Source: [Nepal's PM warns against forgetting monarchy's past 'autocratic rule'](#) | External Affairs & Defence Security News - Business Standard

IMF COMPLETES FIFTH REVIEW OF NEPAL'S EXTENDED CREDIT FACILITY

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has completed its fifth review under Nepal's four-year Extended Credit Facility (ECF), approving the release of \$41.8 million, bringing the total disbursements to \$289.1 million. While acknowledging Nepal's progress in economic recovery and maintaining macroeconomic stability despite political challenges and flood-related disruptions, the IMF highlighted the need for continued fiscal discipline and structural reforms. Economic growth is expected to rise moderately to 4.2% in the 2024-25 fiscal year, driven by reconstruction efforts and increased hydropower generation. The IMF emphasized the importance of revenue mobilization, improved public investment management, and strengthening fiscal transparency to ensure sustainable growth. Recommendations also included strengthening the financial sector, addressing vulnerabilities, and enhancing the anti-money laundering framework following Nepal's recent greylisting by the FATF.

Source: [IMF completes fifth review of Nepal's extended credit facility](#)

BHUTAN



BHUTAN MOVES TO YELLOW LIST AS REASON GIVEN IS VISA OVERSTAY

Bhutan has moved from the dreaded "Red List" to the milder "Yellow List" of the United States government, meaning it no longer faces an absolute travel ban but still faces scrutiny due to high rates of visa overstays. The "Yellow List" consists of countries given time to address perceived deficiencies, with the potential risk of being moved to a more severe list if they fail to comply. Bhutan's primary issue is visa overstay, with citizens overstaying their tourist, student, and other visas. The rate of overstay for Bhutanese citizens is significantly higher than the global average, especially in the student and exchange visitor category. While Bhutan's inclusion on the "Yellow List" is a matter of concern, it is less severe than the "Red List." The news has been met with shock in Bhutan, where citizens are accustomed

to seeing the country on positive international lists, and it could strain Bhutan-US relations, which have previously been positive.

Source: [Bhutan moves to Yellow List as reason given is Visa Overstay – The Bhutanese](#)



EU STRENGTHENS PARTNERSHIP WITH BHUTAN WITH AN ADDITIONAL €17 MILLION SUPPORT

The European Union and Bhutan celebrated their 40th anniversary of partnership with the announcement of an additional €17 million support package aimed at enhancing Bhutan's good governance and digital transition for sustainable development. This funding adds to the €48 million allocated between 2021 and 2027, focusing on economic diversification, agri-food systems, and public finance management. The partnership also aligns with the EU's Global Gateway strategy, mobilising sustainable investments, particularly in green energy and climate action, with initiatives like a €150 million renewable energy loan for solar and mini-hydro projects in Bhutan, supporting the country's environmental goals and fostering deeper cooperation.

Source: [EU strengthens partnership with Bhutan with an additional €17 million support - European Commission](#)

SRI LANKA

INDIAN PM NARENDRA MODI TO VISIT SRI LANKA ON APRIL 5 TO FINALISE KEY AGREEMENTS, SAYS PRESIDENT DISSANAYAKE

Sri Lankan President Anura Kumara Disسانayake announced that Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi will visit Sri Lanka on April 5 to finalize agreements made during Disسانayake's visit to Delhi last year. A key highlight of the visit will be the launch of construction for the Sampur solar power plant in Trincomalee, a joint venture between Sri Lanka's Ceylon Electricity Board and India's National Thermal Power Corporation. This project replaces an earlier plan for a coal plant at the site. Modi's visit underscores India-Sri Lanka cooperation in energy, connectivity, and regional security, reinforcing Colombo's commitment to safeguarding India's strategic interests.

Source: [Meerut murder accused suffer 'severe' drug addiction; refusing food, demanding marijuana, morphine in jail | Latest News India - Hindustan Times](#)

LANKAN PRESIDENT VOWS TO END ISLAND'S IMAGE AS 'CORRUPT' COUNTRY

Sri Lanka's President Anura Kumara Disسانayake marked the country's independence anniversary by pledging to change its global image as a "corrupt" nation. The self-avowed Marxist leader emphasized his commitment to reducing lavish government spending, opting for a scaled-back military march instead of extravagant displays. Disسانayake assured the nation that his government, despite the challenges and the remnants of a flawed political system, is dedicated to transforming Sri Lanka's reputation. His government recently concluded a crucial debt restructuring, ending the country's status as a bankrupt nation after defaulting on its \$46 billion external debt in 2022.

Source: [Lankan president vows to end island's image as 'corrupt' country](#)

INDIA'S ADANI WITHDRAWS FROM TROUBLED \$442M SRI LANKA WIND POWER PROJECTS

The Adani Group has withdrawn from a \$442 million wind power project in Sri Lanka, citing financial unviability, after the Sri Lankan government sought to renegotiate the deal. The project, which involved the construction of two wind power plants and two transmission projects, was under review following accusations by US authorities that Adani and executives were involved in bribery schemes, charges the firm denies. The Sri Lankan government had been negotiating to lower the cost of power generated by the project. Despite the withdrawal, Adani expressed continued commitment to future collaborations in Sri Lanka.

Source: [India's Adani withdraws from troubled \\$442m Sri Lanka wind power projects | Business and Economy News | Al Jazeera](#)

IMF RELEASES US\$334MN TO SRI LANKA

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has completed the third review of Sri Lanka's 48-month Extended Fund Facility (EFF), approving a disbursement of SDR 254 million (about US\$334 million), bringing total support to SDR 1.02 billion (US\$1.34 billion). IMF Deputy Managing Director Kenji Okamura praised Sri Lanka's economic recovery, citing low inflation, improved revenue collection, and growing reserves. With economic growth averaging 4.3% since late 2023, Sri Lanka is expected to recover 40% of its losses from 2018–2023 by the end of 2024. However, Okamura stressed the need to maintain reform momentum to ensure stability and long-term growth.

Source: [IMF releases US\\$334mn to Sri Lanka - Breaking News | Daily Mirror](#)

SRI LANKA APPAREL SECTOR TO GAIN FROM NEW US TARIFFS

The U.S. tariff hikes on China, Mexico, and Canada are prompting buyers to rethink their supply chains, creating opportunities for Sri Lanka. MAS Holdings CEO Suren Fernando noted increased inquiries from U.S. buyers looking to shift orders, positioning Sri Lanka as a premium alternative despite lower production volumes than Bangladesh and Vietnam. By focusing on high-value products like lingerie, sportswear, and swimwear, leveraging faster lead times, and adopting technological advancements, Sri Lanka aims to strengthen its trade position. With a revenue target of \$5-8 billion in the next three years, the country could benefit from shifting global trade dynamics.

Source: [Sri Lanka apparel sector to gain from new US tariffs | Print Edition - The Sunday Times, Sri Lanka](#)

AFGHANISTAN

US STATE DEPT: WE ARE WORKING TO BRING AMERICANS HOME

The US State Department reaffirmed its commitment to securing the release of Americans detained abroad, with spokesperson Tammy Bruce highlighting ongoing efforts to bring Mahmood Shah Habibi and other US citizens home from Afghanistan. She expressed gratitude to Qatar and the UAE for their roles in facilitating negotiations, particularly in securing the release of George Galtzman. The statement follows a US delegation's visit to Kabul, during which discussions were held on US-Afghanistan engagement. In a goodwill gesture, the Islamic Emirate released Galtzman, signaling a potential opening for further dialogue.

Source: [US State Dept: We Are Working to Bring Americans Home | TOLONews](#)

PAKISTAN AGAIN URGES ISLAMIC EMIRATE TO ACT AGAINST EXTREMIST GROUPS

Pakistan has once again urged the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan to take decisive action against extremist groups allegedly operating on Afghan soil, including TTP, BLA, and ISKP. Islamabad insists that Afghanistan must fulfill its international commitments by dismantling terrorist infrastructure. However, Kabul has rejected these claims, arguing that Pakistan's security issues are longstanding and internal. Amid rising tensions, Russia has expressed willingness to mediate through the Moscow Format if both sides agree. The ongoing disputes have strained relations, occasionally leading to cross-border military confrontations.

Source: [Pakistan Again Urges Islamic Emirate to Act Against Extremist Groups | TOLONews](#)

ABOUT BEI

Bangladesh Enterprise Institute is a non-profit, non-political research center. Established in October 2000, the Institute has established for itself a reputation for excellence in its research and advocacy work focusing on the growth of private enterprise in Bangladesh. The Institute promotes issues of importance to the private sector and seeks to initiate essential measures and influence policy for the development of a market-oriented economy. Through the promotion of sustainable growth in domestic trade, commerce and industry, BEI hopes to address the enormous challenge for Bangladesh in securing a fair share of the global market.

BEI has a particular interest in the support and growth of Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs), which have the potential to be the engine of economic growth in Bangladesh. BEI also undertakes research and policy advocacy work focusing on the issues of foreign policy and security, particularly those of terrorism impacting Bangladesh and South Asia.

Being conscious of the enormous challenge to securing a fair share for Bangladesh in the global market as well as to address issues of trade and investment promotion, the Bangladesh Enterprise Institute (BEI) was established under the initiative of some leading business personalities of the country.

M Humayun Kabir, former Ambassador, has been working as the President and Chief Executive of the institute.

The institute is registered with the Registrar of Joint Stock Companies, Bangladesh, under the Societies Registration Act.

DISCLAIMER

In compiling this weekly news update, BEI has attempted to include the most relevant news accounts from the past week concerning South Asian Region. From time to time, news beyond South Asia has also been included if it finds relevance on any issues to the region. We recognize that some developments may have been overlooked, and that some sources may not be viewed by all as credible or balanced. Inclusion of a news story and its summary does not constitute any kind of endorsement or position taken by BEI, and the text and positions included in the above are solely extracted from various news articles published in the print media in various countries in South Asia and beyond. If you have any comments or feedback for us regarding this digest, please email at bei@bol-online.com. For more information about BEI and our work, please visit <https://www.bei-bd.org/>

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