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Israel hits 40 targets in Gaza

24 Palestinians killed; ceasefire efforts stall

REUTERS, Jerusalem

Israeli airstrikes hit around 40 targets across the Gaza Strip over the past day, the military said yesterday, hours after Hamas rejected an Israeli ceasefire offer that it said fell short of its demand to agree a full end to the war.

Gaza's civil defence agency said 24 people, including 10 from the same family, had been killed in two strikes.

Civil defence spokesman Mahmud Bassal said on Telegram that "our crews recovered the bodies of 10 martyrs and a large number of wounded from the house of the Baraka family and the neighbouring houses targeted by the Israeli occupation forces in the Bani Suhaila area east of Khan Yunis," in the southern Gaza Strip.

Bassal later announced that a separate strike hit two houses in northern Gaza's Tal al-Zaatar, where crews had "recovered the bodies of five people".

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A Palestinian man inspects the damage at the site of an Israeli strike on a house, in the northern Gaza Strip, yesterday. PHOTO: REUTERS

Act fast before 'brief' 90-day tariff pause ends

US delegation tells govt

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Calling the US's 90 day tariff pause a brief window of opportunity, a visiting American delegation yesterday urged Dhaka to take concrete steps to address Washington's trade concerns within this period.

US President surprised the global community with his announcement of sweeping trade tariffs on most countries. However, just hours before they were set to take effect on April 9, he withdrew them for all except China.

During a meeting with Foreign Secretary Jashim Uddin at the foreign ministry, US officials also emphasised the importance of implementing necessary measures before the pause expires on July 9, according to a statement issued by the ministry.

The US team included Nicole Chulick, deputy assistant secretary of state for the Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs, Andrew Herrup, deputy assistant secretary of state at the Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs, and other officials.

The meeting discussed key areas of bilateral relations, including trade, investment, development cooperation, people-to-people ties, and the Rohingya crisis, added the release.

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India reacts to Shafiqul's comments on Murshidabad violence

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

India has reacted sharply to the remarks of Chief Adviser's Press Secretary Shafiqul Alam who urged New Delhi to take steps to protect the Muslim population of Murshidabad in West Bengal.

A statement from India's external affairs ministry termed his comments a "barely disguised and disingenuous attempt to draw a parallel with India's concerns over the ongoing persecution of minorities in Bangladesh".

"We reject the remarks made by the Bangladesh side with regard to the incidents in West Bengal," the ministry's spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said in the statement issued yesterday in response to media queries on Shafiqul's comments.

"Instead of making unwarranted comments and indulging in virtue signalling, Bangladesh would do better to focus on protecting the rights of its own minorities," Jaiswal said.

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Bangladesh tops sea arrivals to Italy

UNHCR data shows 2,589 reached Italian shores in first two months of 2025

MD ABBAS

The number of Bangladeshis crossing the Mediterranean Sea to reach Italy doubled in the first two months this year compared to the same period last year.

According to the latest data from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), 2,589 Bangladeshis landed in Italian shores in January and February this year while 1,206 went to the European country in the two months last year.

The sharp rise has alarmed migration experts, who warn that the trend reflects both deep-rooted socio-economic challenges at home and the lure of dream jobs there.

"All of them embarked from Libya," said the UNHCR's February edition of the Italy Sea Arrivals Dashboard, which was published on Thursday.

Libya has long served as a gateway for human smuggling networks operating in North Africa.

February alone saw 1,383 Bangladeshis arrive in Italy, up from 1,206 in January. In contrast, only 585 Bangladeshis arrived in January last year and 621 in February that year.

With this surge, Bangladesh became the top nationality arriving in Italy by sea between January and February this year.

Regarding this trend, Asif Munier, a Dhaka-based labour migration specialist, told The Daily Star, "This is not just a migration issue. It's a reflection of growing despair."

"Many young Bangladeshis are unemployed or underemployed. Those who cannot migrate through legal channels -- mostly young people -- take risky routes in hopes of a better future. But most of them

fall into the trap of brokers who sell them dreams of Europe."

The journey to Europe typically begins with travel to Libya -- often through legal or semi-legal means -- and ends in a hazardous sea crossing arranged by transnational trafficking networks.

These trips can cost from Tk 5 to 8 lakh, with the migrants funding the journey through loans, land



An overcrowded migrant boat.

PHOTO: AFP

sales, or support from relatives abroad.

"They risk their lives believing that once they land in Italy, the government there won't deport them and will grant them temporary stay permits, as Italy is considered a migration-friendly country," Asif added.

Bangladeshi migrants have long been vulnerable to trafficking, especially in North African transit hubs like Tripoli, Zuwara, and Sabha.

Talking to this correspondent, Shakirul Islam, chairman of Oviabashi Karmi Unnayan Programme, an organisation working for the welfare of migrant

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Solving expats' issues must begin at home

Says foreign adviser

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Foreign Affairs Adviser Md Touhid Hossain yesterday said that efforts to address the challenges faced by Bangladeshi expatriate workers must begin at home, as around 80 percent of the issues originate before they even leave the country.

Although only 20 percent of issues arise in destination countries, he said the responsibility to resolve all of them falls on Bangladesh missions.

He made these remarks while speaking at a programme marking "Foreign Service Day-2025," held at the Foreign Service Academy. The event was broadcast live on the foreign ministry's official Facebook page.

The adviser said Bangladesh's missions, despite limited manpower and resources, serve around one crore expatriates worldwide.

Citing Saudi Arabia as an example, he noted that about 32 lakh Bangladeshis reside there. "Even if all of them follow local laws, many still face various issues," he said.

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Trump signals possible easing of US-China tariff war

Leaves TikTok deal hanging

REUTERS, Washington

US President Donald Trump on Thursday signaled a potential end to the tit-for-tat tariff hikes between the US and China that shocked markets, and that a deal over the fate of social media platform TikTok may have to wait.

"I don't want them to go higher because at a certain point you make it where people don't buy," Trump told reporters about tariffs at the White House.

"So, I may not want to go higher or I may not want to even go up to that level. I may want to go to less because you know you want people to buy and, at a certain point, people aren't gonna buy."

Trump's comments further pointed to a diminished appetite for sharply higher across-the-board tariffs on dozens of countries after markets reacted violently to their introduction on April 2.

The Republican president slapped 10 percent tariffs on most goods entering the country but delayed the implementation of higher levies, pending negotiations.

Still, he hiked rates on Chinese imports, now totaling 145 percent, after Beijing retaliated with its own counter-measures. Last week, China said "will not respond" to a "numbers game with tariffs," its own signal that across-the-board rates would not rise further.

Trump said China had been in touch since the



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Polytechnic students continue protests

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Students of polytechnic institutes demonstrated in various parts of the country yesterday to press home their six-point demand.

Draped in white shrouds, the demonstrators carried banners and placards while chanting slogans, calling for urgent government intervention.

The students warned that if their demands are not met promptly, they will intensify their movement in the coming days.

In Dhaka, several hundred students under the banner of "Technical Student Movement" began their protest from Dhaka Polytechnic Institute around 2:15pm. The procession marched through different roads and concluded with a rally in front of the institute.

At the rally, Mashfiq Islam, a central representative of the platform, said, "It is a matter of our existence. We will remain united to meet our demands through a tougher movement."

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Students of polytechnic institute continued their protests in various parts of the country yesterday to press home their six-point demand. In Dhaka, they brought out a procession in the Tejgaon area in the afternoon.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

US strike on Yemen fuel port kills 74

Say Houthi media

AGENCIES

US strikes on a fuel port in Yemen killed at least 74 people yesterday, Houthi-run media said, one of the deadliest days since the United States began its attacks on the Iran-backed militants.

The United States has vowed not to halt the large-scale strikes begun last month in its biggest military operation in the Middle East since President Donald Trump took office in January, unless the Houthis cease attacks on Red Sea shipping.

Al Masirah TV said 102 people were also wounded in yesterday's strikes on the western fuel port of Ras Isa, which the US military said aimed to cut off a source of fuel for the Houthi militant group.

Responding to a Reuters query for comment on the Houthis' casualty figure and its own estimate, the US Central Command said it had none beyond the initial announcement of the attacks.

"The objective of these strikes was to degrade the economic source of power of the Houthis, who continue to exploit

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