



There was no reason for Putin to be shooting missiles into civilian areas, cities and towns ... It makes me think that maybe he doesn't want to stop the war.
Donald Trump
US president



Vehicle sales plunged in 2024

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The dark economy of child beggars

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Manipuri community celebrates 'Lai-Haraoba'

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Liverpool set for PL title party

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Bangladesh races to expand air cargo capacity

Sylhet airport set to launch dedicated cargo operations today; Chattogram to follow suit

RASHIDUL HASAN and REFAYET ULLAH MIRDHA

Bangladesh is racing to expand its air cargo capacity after India's abrupt suspension of third-country transshipment earlier this month upended a logistics route for garment exporters.

The Indian decision, announced without warning on April 8, cut off a vital land-air corridor that allowed Bangladeshi goods to move overland to Kolkata and Delhi airports and onward to global markets. The disruption has forced Dhaka to fast-track efforts to diversify export channels and reduce dependence on India.

In a first move to address the shortfall, Sylhet's Osmani International Airport is set to launch dedicated cargo operations today and become the country's second airport to handle freighter flights after Dhaka's Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport (HSIA).

A chartered Airbus A330-800 freighter of Galistair Aviation is scheduled to depart Sylhet at around 7:05pm, carrying up to 60 tonnes of garments to Spain, said Shakil Meraj, director (in-charge) of the Cargo Department of Biman Bangladesh Airlines. The shipment is bound for



A photograph taken from St Peter's Basilica shows a section of the people who gathered for the funeral mass of Pope Francis at the Vatican yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

The world bids farewell to the 'Pope of the poor'

AGENCIES

Hundreds of thousands of mourners yesterday joined world leaders, including US President Donald Trump, to bid farewell to Pope Francis, a champion of the poor who strived to forge a more compassionate Catholic church.

The Vatican said 400,000 people packed St Peter's Square and lined the streets of Rome for the funeral of the first Latin American leader of the world's 1.4 billion Catholics.

After a solemn funeral, the Argentine pontiff's plain wooden coffin -- a testament to a life of humility -- was driven slowly to Rome's Santa Maria Maggiore church, where he was interred in a private ceremony.

Cardinals marked his coffin with red wax seals before it was lowered

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- ➔ Suspension of India's land-air route a wake-up call
- ➔ Long-term hopes pinned on Dhaka airport's 3rd terminal
- ➔ Exporters want infrastructure improvement, cost competitiveness
- ➔ Secretary says govt to cut operational expenses

Inditex, the Spanish clothing company that owns several major fashion brands, including Zara. Biman will provide cargo and ground-handling services for the inaugural flight.

Civil Aviation and Commerce Adviser Sk Bashir Uddin is expected to attend the inaugural ceremony as chief guest, alongside Bangladesh's Ambassador to Mexico MMushliqul Fazal Ansarey and Civil Aviation and Tourism Secretary Nasreen Jahan, who will be present as special guests.

"This is a significant milestone as Sylhet becomes operational for cargo flights," said Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh (CAAB) Chairman Air Vice Marshal Md Monjur Kabir Bhuiyan. He added that explosive detection systems, X-ray scanners, and additional security arrangements had been installed to meet international freight handling standards.

The initiative to open Sylhet is part of a broader strategy to decentralise and expand Bangladesh's cargo-handling capacity. Officials are also moving to activate Shah Amanat International Airport in Chattogram for dedicated cargo operations, which have remained dormant since 2022.

An emergency meeting was held at Chattogram airport on April 21 to address operational bottlenecks. Group Captain Sheikh Abdullah Alamgir, director of the airport, said preparations were underway to restart cargo services and that initial capacity would allow at least two large

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POLICE WEEK-2025

Cops to get directives over polls

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

Ahead of the upcoming Police Week-2025, the police top brass have finalised instructions for field-level officers to ensure stability and deliver a credible national election.

Senior officials will also listen to the challenges and demands of field officers during the week-long discussions to strengthen law and order ahead of the 13th parliamentary polls.

Following the interim government directives, police have decided to act impartially and resist pressure from any quarters during the election period.

These decisions were made during preparatory meetings for Police Week, set to begin on April 29, according to Police Headquarters (PHQ) sources.

Enamul Haque Sagor, assistant inspector general

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TALKS WITH CONSENSUS COMMISSION

Jamaat for two-term cap on PM's tenure

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Like the BNP, the Jamaat-e-Islami favours a five-year term for both the parliament and the president, opposing the National Consensus Commission's recommendation for a four-year term.

"We told them that it [four-year term] wouldn't be right. The tenures [of Jatiya Sangsad] should be five years," Nayeb-e-Ameer Syed Abdullah Muhammad Taher told reporters after Jamaat's daylong meeting with the National Consensus Commission yesterday.

The party, however, agreed with the commission's recommendation that a person will not be able to become the prime minister for more than two terms -- a proposal opposed by the BNP.

Jamaat also proposed that in the fundamental principles of the constitution, the commission's suggested term "pluralism" be replaced with "absolute trust and faith in Allah".

The party has agreed in principle to

We must tread cautiously and, if necessary, act firmly. We must work to correct the fundamental issues.

Jamaat Nayeb-e-Ameer Syed Abdullah Muhammad Taher

amend article 70 of the constitution, which bars MPs from voting against party decisions in parliament. Apart from constitutional amendments, budget approvals and votes of confidence, the MPs should be allowed to express their independent opinions in the Jatiya Sangsad on any other matters, said Taher, who led the 10-member Jamaat delegation in the discussion.

Jamaat also agreed in principle to the formation of a National Constitutional Council to oversee

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INDO-PAK TENSIONS

Rivals exchange gunfire for 2nd day

Pakistan calls for neutral probe into the Kashmir killings

REUTERS, Srinagar/Islamabad

Indian and Pakistani troops exchanged gunfire along the disputed Kashmir region for a second straight day yesterday as Islamabad called for a "neutral" investigation into the killings of tourists in Indian occupied Kashmir.

Pakistan said it is also willing to cooperate in unveiling the truth behind the incident and favoured peace.

New Delhi has blamed Islamabad for the killings. India has identified two of the three suspected militants as Pakistani, though Islamabad has denied any role in the attack on Tuesday that killed 25 Indian and one Nepali tourists.

"Pakistan is fully prepared to cooperate with any neutral investigators to ensure that the truth is uncovered and justice is served," said Pakistan's interior minister, Mohsin Naqvi.

"Pakistan remains committed to peace, stability and the following of international norms but will not compromise on its sovereignty," he told a press conference.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi has vowed to pursue the attackers to "the ends of the earth" and said that those who planned and carried it out "will be punished beyond their imagination". Calls have also grown from Indian politicians and others for military retaliation against Pakistan.

After the attack, India and Pakistan unleashed a raft of measures against each other, with Pakistan closing its

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Over 12,700 arrested in eight days

Special drives underway

MUNTAKIM SAAD and SHAHEEN MOLLAH

Police have arrested more than 12,700 people across the country over the past eight days.

Of them, over 7,900 were arrested in connection with regular cases and warrants, while around 4,700 were held in other cases, according to data provided by the Police Headquarters until yesterday.

Many of the arrestees are leaders and activists of the Awami League and its affiliated organisations. They were picked up following flash processions in different parts of the country, according to police and media reports.

Enamul Haque Sagor, assistant inspector general (media) at the Police Headquarters, told The Daily Star that the number of arrests has increased in recent days as multiple special drives are underway. Arrests are also being made in regular cases and based on warrants, he added.

Asked about the arrests following the AL processions, he said those trying to destabilise the country and violating laws were being brought to book.

This newspaper has obtained a list of

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Passengers crowd the Karwan Bazar metro station as operations resumed following a 1.5-hour suspension yesterday evening. Authorities said the halt was caused by a power supply disruption at the Bijoy Sarani substation.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Six killed as autorickshaw, pickup collide

A CORRESPONDENT, Rangamati

Six people in a CNG-run autorickshaw were killed after a pickup collided head on with the vehicle on the Rangamati-Chattogram highway in Rangamati's Kawkhali yesterday morning.

The victims are Md Abu Taher, 50, of Raozan upazila in Chattogram; Mahabubur Rahman, 50, of Hathahazari upazila; Joyanal Abedin, of Rangunia upazila; Nurun Nahar, 40, of Rangamati's Kawkhali upazila; Izadul, 25, of Chattogram's Sitakunda; and Amesi Marma, 30, of Kalampani union in Kawkhali, said police.

Kawkhali Police Station Officer-in-Charge Md Saiful Islam Sohag said the incident took place around 10:15am in Chairman Park area when the pickup collided head on with the three-wheeler leaving three people dead and three others injured.

Three others from the auto-rickshaw were taken to a local hospital, where doctors pronounced two of them dead. Amesi Marma was referred to Chattogram in a critical condition. She died at JK Memorial Hospital in Raozan, the OC said.

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