

## US SC lets Trump revoke 'parole' status for migrants

REUTERS

The US Supreme Court yesterday let President Donald Trump's administration revoke the temporary legal status of hundreds of thousands of Venezuelan, Cuban, Haitian and Nicaraguan migrants living in the United States, bolstering the Republican president's drive to step up deportations.

The court put on hold Boston-based US District Judge Indira Talwani order halting the administration's move to end the immigration "parole" granted to 532,000 of these migrants by Trump's predecessor Joe Biden, potentially exposing many of them to rapid removal, while the case plays out in lower courts.

As with many of the court's orders issued in an emergency fashion, the decision was unsigned and gave no reasoning. Two of the court's three liberal justices, Ketanji Brown Jackson and Sonia Sotomayor,



**A resident stands near buildings damaged by Russian military strikes during Russia's ongoing attack on Ukraine, in the frontline town of Myrnohrad, Donetsk region, yesterday. Turkey has proposed to host a meeting between the American, Russian and Ukrainian presidents in an effort to advance toward an end of the three years of war in Ukraine.**

PHOTO: REUTERS

## Pak, India close to completing border troop reduction

Says senior Pakistani general, warns the crisis increased the risk of escalation in future

REUTERS, Singapore

Pakistan and India are close to reducing the troop build up along their border to levels before conflict erupted between the nuclear armed neighbours this month, a top Pakistani military official told Reuters yesterday, although he warned the crisis had increased the risk of escalation in the future.

Both sides used fighter jets, missiles, drones and artillery in four days of clashes, their worst fighting in decades, before a ceasefire was announced.

General Sahir Shamshad Mirza, Pakistan's chairman of the joint chiefs of staff, said in an interview that the two militaries had started the process of drawing down troop levels.

"We have almost come back to the pre-22nd April situation... we are approaching that, or we must have approached that by now," said Mirza, the most senior Pakistani military official to speak publicly since the conflict.

India's ministry of defence and the office of the Indian chief of defence staff did not immediately respond to Reuters'



requests for comment on the remarks by Mirza.

Mirza, who is in Singapore to attend the Shangri-La Dialogue forum, said while there was no move towards nuclear weapons during this conflict, it was a dangerous situation.

"Nothing happened this time," he said. "But you can't rule out any strategic miscalculation at any time, because when the crisis is on, the responses are different."

He also said the risk of escalation in the future had increased since the fighting this time was not limited to the disputed territory of Kashmir, the scenic region

in the Himalayas that both nations rule in part but claim in full. The two sides attacked military installations in their mainlands but neither has acknowledged any serious damage.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi warned Pakistan this month that New Delhi would target "terrorist hideouts" across the border again if there were new attacks on India.

The two countries have fought three major wars, two of them over Kashmir, and numerous armed skirmishes since both were born out of British colonial India in 1947.

India blames Pakistan for an insurgency in its part of Kashmir that began in 1989 and has killed tens of thousands. Pakistan says it provides only moral, political and diplomatic support to Kashmiris seeking self-determination.

"This (conflict) lowers the threshold between two countries who are contiguous nuclear powers...in the future, it will not be restricted to the disputed territory. It would come down to (the) whole of India and (the) whole of Pakistan," Mirza said. "This is a very dangerous trend."

## Israel intercepts missile fired from Yemen

AFP, Jerusalem

The Israeli army said it had intercepted a missile launched from Yemen on Thursday evening after air raid sirens sounded in the centre of the country and explosions were heard over Jerusalem.

"Following the sirens that sounded a short while ago in several areas in Israel, a missile launched from Yemen was intercepted," said an army statement.

Yemen's Houthi rebels claimed they fired a "hypersonic ballistic missile" at Ben Gurion airport near Tel Aviv.

"The operation successfully achieved its goal... forcing millions of occupying Zionists (Israelis) to flee to shelters and halting air traffic at the airport," they said in a statement.

The attempted attack comes two days after Israel said it intercepted a missile and another projectile fired from Yemen, which Iran-backed Houthi rebels said they had fired.

The Houthis have repeatedly launched missiles and drones at Israel since the Gaza war broke out in October 2023 following the Hamas attack on Israel.

The Yemeni rebels, who say they are acting in solidarity with Palestinians, paused their attacks during a two-month Gaza ceasefire that ended in March, but began again after Israel resumed its military campaign in the territory.

## IS claims first attack on new Syria forces

AFP, Beirut

The Islamic State (IS) group on Thursday evening claimed its first attack on Syria's new government forces since the fall of longtime Syrian president Bashar al-Assad, two war monitors said.

In a statement picked up by SITE Intelligence Group, IS said it had planted an "explosive device" on a Syrian forces' vehicle in the southern province of Sweida.

SITE and the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR) said it was the first IS-claimed attack on Syria's new government. SOHR said that one person was killed and three members of the Syrian army's 70th division were injured when a patrol was hit by a remote control landmine on Wednesday.

The man killed was accompanying the Syrian government forces in the desert area, according to SOHR.

Once in control of large swathes of Syria and Iraq, IS was territorially defeated in Syria in 2019 largely due to the efforts of Kurdish-led forces supported by an international coalition. It has maintained a presence mainly in the country's vast desert.

Reported attacks by the group in areas controlled by the Islamist-led government, which took power after Assad's ouster in December, have been scarce.

However, they have continuously carried out attacks on Kurdish-led forces in the northeast.

## Revenue gets priority over public health

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nicotine products more appealing, and protect public health, it reads.

Bangladesh is supposed to reduce tobacco use by 40 percent by 2030 as per the WHO's extended target and by 30 percent by 2025 as per the WHO Implementation Roadmap for Global Action Plan for Prevention and Control of Non-Communicable Disease 2013-2030.

But, between 2009 and 2022, Bangladesh saw a 13 percent relative decline in tobacco use, meaning the country made only 30 percent progress towards the 2030 target and 40 percent towards the 2025 target, according to an analysis of six relevant surveys by the Bangladesh Medical University (BMU) published last month.

Recent data about tobacco consumption is not available. But according to a Global Adult Tobacco Survey (GATS) 2017, 3.78 crore people aged 15 and above used tobacco, accounting for 35.7 percent of the population in that age group at the time.

According to research conducted by the Bangladesh Cancer Society and published in 2019, the economic losses due to tobacco consumption – covering treatment costs and productivity losses – amounted to Tk 30,560 crore in the 2017-18 fiscal year.

In contrast, the government earned Tk 22,810 crore in revenue from tobacco during the same period. The Smoking and Tobacco Products Usage (Control) Act was enacted in 2005 to curb tobacco use in Bangladesh, with a ban on smoking in public places as one of its key features.

The law was strengthened in 2013 through amendments but anti-tobacco campaigners have been calling for further amendments to make the law more stringent and to close loopholes that tobacco companies exploit to promote tobacco use.

An amendment proposal for the

Smoking and Tobacco Products Usage (Control) Act was placed before the cabinet in October 2023 but was sent back for further review.

Another proposal was submitted to the advisory council in November last year, but it was not approved.

Instead, a committee led by Finance Adviser Salehuddin Ahmed was formed to review it further.

According to estimates, around 35 percent of the country's population uses tobacco products, said Shafiqul Alam, the chief adviser's press secretary, while announcing the decision on November 7 last year.

"On one hand, tobacco use has many adverse health effects. On the other, the cigarette industry contributes significantly to revenue. So, a decision has been taken to revisit the law, considering all these perspectives," he said.

Nearly seven months later, no visible move to has been taken to amend the act.

The committee has yet to submit its report, said health ministry sources.

Sohel Reza Choudhury, head of epidemiology and research at the National Heart Foundation Hospital and Research Institute, said they have been demanding stricter tobacco laws for years to reduce tobacco use.

However, when the government moves to amend the law, tobacco companies argue that stricter regulations would reduce their income and government revenue.

"This is a delaying tactic, and they have been successful in postponing the amendments."

The impact of a stricter law would not immediately affect tax revenue as regular users may not quit despite price increases, but it would reduce the number of new users.

Tobacco use is a common risk factor for four major non-communicable diseases: cardiovascular disease, respiratory disease, cancer and diabetes, Choudhury said.

Referring to research, he said that among people under 40 with

heart disease, 40 percent of cases are caused by tobacco use.

Over 250,000 people die from various NCDs annually, with 50 percent of these being premature deaths. "So, tobacco control is essential to prevent these premature deaths," he told The Daily Star yesterday.

### AMENDMENT PROPOSALS

The proposed amendment includes a prohibition on the sale of loose or unpackaged tobacco products and bans the sale of these products through hawking.

It also proposes banning the sale of tobacco and tobacco products without registration, without standard packaging and within 100 metres of educational institutions, hospitals, clinics, sports venues and children's parks.

The amended proposal calls for a ban on tobacco advertising through any internet platform, website, email or social media. It requires all tobacco products and their packaging to be kept out of sight at points of sale.

Activities by tobacco companies under the guise of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programmes are prohibited.

The amendment recommends printing pictorial health warnings covering 90 percent of the surface area on all packaging, wrappers, cartons, bags, and containers – up from the current 50 percent.

Violations could lead to penalties including cancellation of production and sales licences.

The amendment would also prohibit any dedicated smoking areas, expand the definition of public places and include new products under the definition of tobacco products.

Increased penalties for all offences under the law have also been proposed.

Sheikh Momena Moni, programme director, and Md Akhteruzzaman, director general of the National Tobacco Control Cell, could not be reached for comment.

## Dozens of parties

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to achieve this goal and said it was "unfortunate" that the blame was being shifted onto political parties instead.

At a presidium meeting, Gono Forum called for an immediate and concrete election roadmap.

The meeting observed that over the past nine months, the government has failed to take effective steps to restore law and order or bring stability to the public administration. It added that no visible reforms or actions have been undertaken to ensure a fair and acceptable election.

As a result, public confidence in the government is declining, and uncertainty is growing among political parties and the general population, the statement said.

In a joint statement, the Left Democratic Alliance echoed similar concerns, calling the chief adviser's comments "a blatant falsehood" and "intentionally misleading".

Such a false statement by the chief executive of the state is not only harmful to the country but also damaging to his own image and constitutes a violation of his constitutional oath, the alliance said.

The alliance leaders asserted that more than 50 registered and unregistered political parties, including their own, have called for parliamentary elections by December.

The statement further said, "Under the same agenda, a newly formed political party supported by the government – along with some radical communal groups and parties involved in war crimes and crimes against humanity during 1971 – is engaging in various destructive activities to destabilise the country and sabotage the election."

These actions are plunging the nation into a dire situation, the alliance warned.

The 12-Party Alliance, in a separate statement, said all democratic and patriotic political parties – not just one – have been demanding a December election for the past nine months.

They accused Prof Yunus of trying to extend his stay in power through "political trickery" and of aligning with fundamentalist, unpopular, and anti-liberation groups.

They warned that his actions could derail the electoral process and deepen the ongoing political crisis.

## Bulbul replaces Faruque as BCB president

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after Faruque at the post.

"For the first time, I got a call from the NSC at the end of April. It was like, 'We will give you an opportunity, will you accept it?' After receiving that call, I didn't look back," Bulbul told reporters in a press conference in Mirpur after he was elected as the BCB boss during an emergency board of directors' meeting yesterday.

"I had a target to honour that call. Today, our honourable board of directors elected me as the president... We will try to take cricket in Bangladesh forward," he added.

Bulbul, who was not a running BCB councillor, was nominated a councillor by the NSC in place of Sheikh Hamim Hasan earlier on Thursday night, and ahead of yesterday's board meeting. Bulbul was nominated as a BCB director by the NSC in place of Faruque.

Later in the board meeting, he was elected as the president by the other nine board directors. Also, board directors Nazmul Abedeen Fahim and Fahim Sinha were elected as senior vice-president and vice-president, respectively.

"We received two letters from the

NSC yesterday [Thursday]. One was regarding the change of one of their councillors, naming Aminul Islam Bulbul as the new nominee. The other letter was the withdrawal of their previously nominated director, Faruque Ahmed," BCB's media and communication committee chairman Iftakhar Rahman Mithu said.

Meanwhile, Bulbul said that he came to the BCB to play a quick T20 innings as he is aware of the forthcoming election, and that he took up the job as a short-term assignment.

"As the time is limited, I'm here to play a quick T20 innings. I want to play a good T20 innings, which you all will remember.

"I don't want to comment on the past. I can say I'm not here for a long time. There is no exact timeframe, but I have a different agenda. As I work in cricket development, I want to continue it. I have taken this role as a short-term assignment," he said, adding that he would like to use his 19 years of knowledge of working at the International Cricket Council (ICC) and Asian Cricket Council (ACC) in Bangladesh cricket.

## UN warns all of Gaza at risk

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and others already at odds with the country over its Gaza offensive.

London called the move a "deliberate obstacle" to Palestinian statehood, while UN chief Antonio Guterres' spokesman said it pushed efforts towards a two-state solution "in the wrong direction", reports AFP.

Israeli settlements in the West Bank are regularly condemned by the United Nations as illegal under international law and are seen as a major obstacle to lasting peace. In a separate development, an Israeli

far-right minister said yesterday it was time to use "full force" in Gaza, after Hamas said the new US-backed truce proposal failed to meet its demands.

French President Emmanuel Macron said that European countries should "harden the collective position" against Israel if it does not respond appropriately to the humanitarian situation in Gaza.

With international pressure mounting on Israel over the deepening hunger crisis, Macron said action was needed "in the next few hours and days".