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US seizes Russia-flagged tanker China slam US 'bullying'

REUTERS, Washington

The US seized an empty Russian-flagged, Venezuela-linked oil tanker in the Atlantic Ocean yesterday as part of President Donald Trump's aggressive push to dictate oil flows in the Americas and force Venezuela's socialist government to become an ally.

After capturing Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro in an attack on Caracas on Saturday, the US is continuing to blockade vessels under sanctions off the South American country, a member of the OPEC oil group. The US Coast Guard and US military special forces apprehended the Mariner tanker, which had refused to be boarded last month and had switched to Russia's flag, officials said.

The US operation was supported by Britain's Royal Air Force and one of its military vessels, which British Defence Secretary John Healey said was part of "global efforts to crack down on sanctions busting."

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This undated handout photo released yesterday by the US European Command's X account shows the M/V Bella 1 oil tanker in the northern Atlantic Ocean. The US military yesterday seized the Russian-flagged oil tanker in the North Atlantic for sanctions violations, bringing an end to a multi-week pursuit by American forces.

PHOTO: AFP

Bangladesh added to US visa bond list

Travellers now have to deposit up to \$15,000

UNB, Dhaka

The United States has expanded a visa bond policy to include Bangladesh and 24 other countries, requiring citizens of these nations to post refundable bonds of up to \$15,000 as part of their application for a US visitor visa, according to the US State Department website.

"Any citizen or national travelling on a passport issued by one of these countries, who is found otherwise eligible for a B1/B2 visa, must post a bond for \$5,000, \$10,000, or \$15,000," the State Department website said, adding the amount would be determined at the time of the visa interview.

Payment must be made through the US Treasury's online platform, Pay.gov.

The list of affected countries now totals 38, mainly from South Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean.

In addition to Bangladesh, the expanded roster includes nations such as Algeria, Cuba, Nepal, Nigeria and Venezuela. The new requirements are set to take effect January 21, 2026.

US officials say the bond requirement is intended to discourage visitors from overstaying their visas.

However, the policy has drawn criticism for potentially making travel to the US unaffordable for many applicants from developing countries. Although paying a bond does not guarantee a visa, applicants who are denied or who comply with visa terms can receive refunds.



Taher's income doubles, assets dip

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The annual income of Syed Abdullah Mohammad Shishir Manir, a Supreme Court lawyer, has declared a total asset of Tk 1.12 crore, over three times less than that of his wife, according to his affidavit.

In contrast, the wealth of his wife, Sumaiya Rashid Raian, a private service holder, is estimated at Tk 2.74 crore during the same period.

Taher, 67, contesting from Cumilla-11, was elected from the same

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Shishir Manir declares Tk 1.12cr asset

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Jamaat-e-Islami candidate Mohammad Shishir Manir, also a Supreme Court lawyer, has declared a total asset of Tk 1.12 crore, over three times less than that of his wife, according to his affidavit.

The asset of his wife, Sumaiya Rashid Raian, a private service holder, is estimated at Tk 2.74 crore during the same period.

Taher, 67, contesting from Cumilla-11, was elected from the same

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Sarwar earns monthly Tk 28,000 from writing

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Md Golam Sarwar, the NCP candidate for Narsingdi-2, doesn't own agricultural or non-agricultural land, an apartment, furniture, or electronic items, according to his affidavit submitted to the Election Commission.

Sarwar has no bank account. His sole asset is Tk 3 lakh in cash, the document shows.

The 32-year-old, who mentioned HSC as his highest educational qualification, listed his current profession as "writer" and his previous

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Mitu has movable assets worth Tk 74 lakh

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Mahmuda Alam Mitu, the Jhalakathi-1 candidate from the NCP, holds movable assets worth over Tk 74 lakh, but doesn't own any land, house, or apartment, shows her affidavit submitted to the Election Commission.

The 36-year-old, a physician, declared assets of 20 bhoris of gold valued at Tk 45 lakh, Tk 28.40 lakh in cash, and Tk 51,000 in a bank account.

Like Mitu, her physician husband, Md Mahbubur Rahman,

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Jamaat tells EC one party getting special treatment

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Jamaat-e-Islami has demanded the removal of partisan deputy commissioners and superintendents of police from their posts, equal treatment to all parties and action against violations of electoral code of conduct ahead of the February 12 national election and referendum.

The party alleged that the level playing field for political parties has not ensured yet, a particular party is being given extensive campaign facilities and protection, and Jamaat's candidates faced discrimination in several cases during the scrutiny of nomination papers by returning officers.

It added that if the next election is "arranged", the country will face an existential crisis and fall into a dangerous situation.

Jamaat Nayeb-e-Ameer Syed Abdullah Mohammad Taher made the remarks while briefing reporters following its five-member delegation met Chief Election Commissioner AMM Nasir Uddin at the capital's Nirbahan Bhaban yesterday.

He said, "We have seen major discrimination in the process of scrutinising nominations. We have also seen inconsistencies in administrative decisions. For example, in cases involving dual citizenship, nominations have been accepted in some places, while in similar cases they have been rejected elsewhere."

Citing examples of dual citizenship, he said BNP

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WARMTH OF LOVE ... A family of rhesus monkeys at the Chattogram Zoo huddle together to keep warm yesterday as a cold wave sweeps over the country. Like humans, animals too seek warmth in togetherness.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

Passenger dies as Biman flight 'skips emergency landing'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A passenger died after falling ill aboard a Biman Bangladesh Airlines flight bound for London on New Year's Eve, with co-passengers alleging that negligence by the pilot contributed to the death.

Several passengers said the 60-year-old passenger's life could have been saved had the pilot in-command, Captain Aliya Mannan, diverted the aircraft to a nearby airport for emergency medical treatment instead of returning to Dhaka.

The incident occurred on Biman flight BG 201, operating on the Dhaka-Sylhet-London route, on December 31.

According to Biman sources, the aircraft departed Sylhet and, while flying over Pakistan near Lahore, a passenger fell ill, prompting the cabin crew to seek medical assistance onboard. A doctor who responded attended to the passenger but was unable to diagnose the condition.

The pilot then decided to return

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Labour migration up 12% despite challenges
Says RMMRU report

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Labour migration from Bangladesh increased nearly 12 percent last year despite growing global restrictions, rising migration costs, and safety concerns for migrant workers.

More than 11.3 lakh Bangladeshis migrated abroad for work in 2025, with 67 percent of them heading to Saudi Arabia, according to data from the Bureau of Manpower Employment and Training.

Although Bangladeshi workers migrated to 141 countries, about 90 percent went to just five countries -- Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Singapore, Kuwait, and the Maldives -- according to the "Trends, Achievements and Challenges of Labour Migration from Bangladesh 2015" report by the Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit (RMMRU).

Bangladesh remains one of the world's top remittance-receiving countries, with migrant workers sending home a record \$32.82 billion in 2025, the highest in 25 years, said the report, which was unveiled yesterday at an event held at the National Press Club.

Female labour migration continued to decline, raising serious concerns.

Only 62,317 women migrated for work in 2025, accounting for just 5.5 percent of total migrants.

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STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Pakistan eyes selling fighter jets to Bangladesh

REUTERS, Islamabad

The air force chiefs of Pakistan and Bangladesh held talks on a potential pact covering the sale of JF-17 Thunder fighter jets to Dhaka, Pakistan's military said, as Islamabad widens its arms supply ambitions and beefs up ties with Bangladesh.

The talks in Islamabad come as Pakistan looks to capitalise on the success of its air force in the conflict with arch-foe India in May last year, the worst fighting in nearly three decades between the nuclear-armed neighbours.

Pakistan's Air Chief Marshal Zahoor Ahmed Baber Sidhu and Bangladesh counterpart Hasan Mahmood Khan had detailed talks on procurement of the JF-17 Thunder, a multi-role combat aircraft jointly developed with China, the military's press wing said.

Pakistan has also assured Bangladesh of the "fast-tracked delivery of Super Mushshak trainer aircraft, along with a complete training and long term support ecosystem," it added in Tuesday's statement.

The talks signal improving ties as the South Asian nations have grown closer since massive protests in August 2024 drove then Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to flee to India, shattering Dhaka's relationship with New Delhi.

"The visit underscored the strong historical ties between Pakistan and Bangladesh and reflected a shared resolve to deepen defence cooperation and build a long-term strategic partnership," the military said.

In the wake of Hasina's ouster, Islamabad and Dhaka have resumed direct trade for the first time since the 1971 war that brought independence for Bangladesh, while their military officials have held several meetings.

The JF-17s have become the cornerstone of the Pakistani military's weapons development programme, figuring in a deal with Azerbaijan and a \$4 billion weapons pact with the Libyan National Army.

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STAFF CORRESPONDENT