



The Fake News Media hates to report how well the US Military has done against Iran, which is totally defeated and wants a deal.
DONALD TRUMP

The Daily Star

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Shipping costs spiral as war prompts new surcharges

B1



Beyond the panic at the petrol pump

P5



The growing challenge of rare tumours

P10



A captain searching for his place

P11

'Send warships to secure Hormuz'

Trump urges world powers after Iran vows retaliation for attack on crucial oil hub; US bringing in more troops, ships, say reports

Iran vows to target US-affiliated energy facilities

Israel says Iran war entering 'decisive phase'

Reports say US may be preparing for a ground invasion

US embassy attacked in Baghdad; UAE oil facility hit

AGENCIES

US President Donald Trump yesterday urged other nations to help secure a vital shipping lane choked off by the war with Iran, which showed no signs of slowing as strikes hit the US embassy in Baghdad and a major Emirati energy facility.

The rapidly evolving conflict has threatened to worsen the global energy crisis, with Trump threatening to strike Iran's oil infrastructure and Tehran vowing

and safe," he wrote on Truth Social, saying China, France, Japan, South Korea, and the UK would "hopefully" be among them.

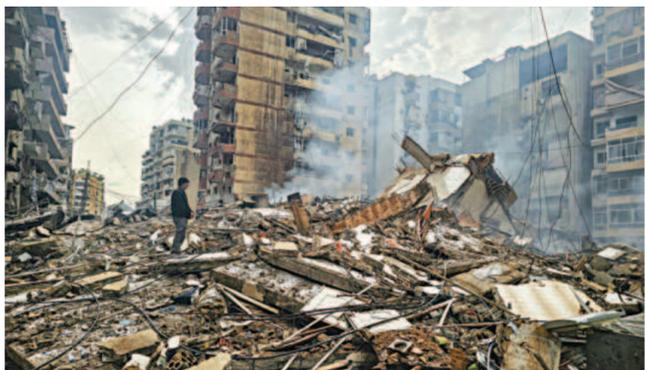
"In the meantime, the United States will be bombing the hell out of the shoreline, and continually shooting Iranian Boats and Ships out of the water," he wrote.

Trump, after claiming to have "totally obliterated" military targets on Iran's Kharg Island hub on Friday, threatened to strike the oil infrastructure there unless Tehran stopped attacking vessels in the



Smoke rises in the Fujairah oil industrial zone, caused by debris from an intercepted drone, in the UAE yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP



A man stands on the rubble of a destroyed building at the site of an overnight Israeli airstrike that targeted the Haret Hreik neighbourhood of Beirut's southern suburbs yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

retaliation against energy facilities in US-affiliated countries across the region.

Meanwhile, Israel yesterday said the war against Iran was entering its "decisive phase" as explosions rocked cities across Iran and Lebanon, where scores of people have died.

Having earlier vowed that the US Navy would "very soon" start escorting tankers through the Strait of Hormuz, a conduit for 20 percent of the world's fossil energy supplies, Trump appeared to call for reinforcements yesterday.

"Many countries... will be sending War Ships, in conjunction with the United States of America, to keep the Strait open

strait.

Kharg, the export terminal for 90 percent of Iran's oil shipments, lies about 300 miles northwest of the strait and is a crucial oil source for many countries, including China.

US strikes did not target Kharg's oil infrastructure, but "should Iran, or anyone else, do anything to interfere with the Free and Safe Passage of Ships through the Strait of Hormuz, I will immediately reconsider this decision," Trump said.

As the war entered its third week, Iran, however, struck a defiant note, playing down the extent of the damage on Kharg

SEE PAGE 2 COL 2

PM urges unity for a peaceful Bangladesh

Launches pilot programme for religious leaders' honorariums

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Tarique Rahman yesterday pledged to build a peaceful and secure Bangladesh through the united efforts of people of all religions and warned against any attempt to create division among them.

"Today, people of all religions are sitting together in one row here. This has long been a tradition of Bangladesh. No one should be allowed to create division among us. Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, and Christians -- we will all work together, In Sha Allah, to build a peaceful Bangladesh."

People of all religions in Bangladesh have always lived together in peace, the PM said at the inauguration of a government pilot programme to provide monthly honorariums to imams, muezzins, and other religious leaders.

"We want to build a safe state and a secure society for everyone -- something that people from all classes and professions desire," he told the event at Osmani Memorial Auditorium in the presence of leaders of all faiths.

PHOTO ON PAGE 3



SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

Govt may relax fuel purchase caps from today

Move aimed at easing Eid travel

ASIFUR RAHMAN

The government is set to ease restrictions on fuel lifting for vehicles from today, amid mounting pressure on refuelling stations ahead of the Eid travel rush, while authorities insist that adequate supplies will be maintained throughout the holiday period.

Officials said all fuel pumps on highways will remain open around the clock for seven days before Eid and five days after, to facilitate uninterrupted travel.

Road Transport and Bridges Minister Shaikh Rabiul Alam said the decision to relax the cap was taken to reduce pressure on filling stations as millions prepare to leave cities for their hometowns.

Yesterday, refuelling pumps in different areas of Dhaka were crowded with long queues since morning. The line of cars at Meghna Filling Station in the Paribag area stretched past Shabbagh Metro Station to the nearby intersection.

In the evening, the situation remained almost the same, while nearby Purbachal Traders ran out of stock. Similarly, the queue at Trust Filling Station near Bijoy Sarani extended past Jahangir Gate.

- Highway filling stations to remain open 24 hours during holiday period
- Fuel stocks sufficient for at least 15 days, officials say
- Govt assures uninterrupted supply for Eid travellers

Pump owners in the Khulna and Faridpur regions also suspended the lifting of fuel from the depots of the three distributors -- Padma, Meghna, and Jamuna -- worsening the situation in those areas. They alleged they were not receiving adequate supplies to meet the growing demand.

Sheikh Murad Hossain, senior vice-president of the Khulna Divisional Fuel Distribution Association, said pump owners have been receiving less than half of their required fuel for several days.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 6

TRADE PROBE USTR seeks hearing date from Dhaka

REFAJET ULLAH MIRDHA

The United States Trade Representative (USTR) has sought a date from Bangladesh for a hearing as part of the US's twin investigations into trade and forced labour.

Brendan Lynch, the assistant USTR for South and Central Asia, contacted the commerce ministry for the date, Commerce Secretary Mahbubur Rahman told The Daily Star.

A date would be given right after the Eid-ul-Fitr holidays as there are only three working days left, he said.

At the hearing, the USTR may seek information on production capacity in different industrial and manufacturing sector, wage payment, labour law update, export capacity, subsidy payment and labour issues.

The USTR may raise the issues of non-tariff barriers that American businesses are facing in Bangladesh.

Bangladesh has already started preparations for the hearing and gathering evidence to support the country's stance, he said.

For the USTR, it would be difficult to prove Bangladesh's excessive production

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1



PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Little Hadija and Tabassum were waiting eagerly with their family at Kamalapur Railway Station yesterday to board a train to Brahmanbaria, where they will celebrate Eid-ul-Fitr at their grandparents' home. Amid the bustle of the station, the two children's bright smiles captured the excitement of the journey and the simple joy of heading home to family for the festival.

IMF LOAN Bangladesh may get next tranche in June

\$1.3b instalment tied to govt commitment to advancing reforms

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

Bangladesh could receive a \$1.3 billion tranche from its loan programme with the International Monetary Fund by June if the new government moves ahead with reforms to make the dollar exchange rate more market based, strengthen revenue collection, reduce subsidies, and address weaknesses in the banking sector.

A three-member high-level IMF delegation, led by Krishna Srinivasan, director of the Asia and Pacific Department, is scheduled to arrive in Dhaka on March 23 for a two-day visit to resume talks on the \$5.5 billion loan programme, which stalled in November last year.

The team will meet Prime Minister Tarique Rahman, Finance and Planning Minister Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury, and Bangladesh Bank Governor Md Mostaqur Rahman to discuss the programme and the government's reform priorities.

Finance ministry officials said the IMF would seek clarity from the highest level of government on the new administration's commitment to the programme. Further discussions are expected on the sidelines of the IMF-World Bank Spring Meetings in April.

Following those talks, a regular IMF mission may visit Dhaka to proceed with the process for releasing the next \$1.3 billion tranche, the officials said.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 2