

Bangladeshi envoy meets Indian army chief

Defence ties discussed ahead of Khalilur's visit

AGENCIES

Bangladesh High Commissioner to India M Riaz Hamidullah yesterday met Indian Chief of Army Staff General Upendra Dwivedi in New Delhi to discuss bilateral issues ahead of Foreign Minister Khalilur Rahman's visit.

According to a post on X by the Indian Army's Additional Directorate General of Public Information, the two officials held talks at South Block and "deliberated on enhancing bilateral defence cooperation, including joint training initiatives."

They also explored opportunities for deeper collaboration aimed at promoting regional peace and security, it added.

Khalilur is scheduled to visit India on a two-day trip starting April 7. He is expected to hold bilateral talks with his Indian counterpart S Jaishankar.

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PHOTO: AFP

First responders search for survivors after an overnight Israeli airstrike on a house in Zibdine, southern Lebanon, yesterday.

Nepal holds its first post-polls parliament session

AFP, Kathmandu

Nepal's newly elected lawmakers yesterday met for the first parliamentary session since deadly anti-corruption protests toppled the government in September 2025 and left the old parliament building in flames.

Lawmakers, elected in March, met within the new parliament building, with many of the politicians taking their seats for the first time.

That includes the Himalayan nation's new leader, rapper-turned politician Prime Minister Balendra Shah, who led the Rastriya Swatantra Party (RSP) to sweep the polls, winning 182 of the 275 seats, just short of a two-thirds majority.

Shah, 35, was dressed all in black, including his trademark dark sunglasses that he kept on inside the hall.

The prime minister has remained silent publicly since his RSP party won the election, beyond taking the oath as leader and the release of a rap song, where he said that the "strength of unity" was his "national power".

Rabi Lamichhane, president of the RSP, spoke to lawmakers yesterday.

"The votes we have received are not just of support, but for change... and I can proudly say we have begun that change," he said.

"Our work, and the government's work, will speak," he said.

Oil prices surge as hope fades

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Iran is trying to hold the global economy hostage in the Strait of Hormuz. They must not prevail. To that effect, partners today called for the immediate and unconditional reopening of the Strait and respect for the fundamental principles of freedom of navigation and the law of the sea."

Britain's Foreign Minister Yvette Cooper said in a statement after talks.

Earlier, French President Emmanuel Macron said that the opening could be "only done in consultation with Iran", adding that a military operation to liberate Hormuz is "unrealistic".

Meanwhile, the secretary general of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) called for the UN Security Council to authorise the use of force to protect the Strait of Hormuz from Iranian attacks.

China said that US and Israeli strikes on Iran were the "root cause" of the blockage. It also called for an immediate ceasefire in the Middle East.

Iran's armed forces responded to Trump with a warning for the United States and Israel of "more crushing, broader and more destructive" attacks in store.

The war will continue until the "permanent regret and surrender" of Iran's enemies, said Ebrahim Zolfagari, spokesperson for the Iranian military's Khatam al-Anbiya central headquarters, in a statement carried by Iranian media.

Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister Kazem Gharibabadi yesterday told Russia's Sputnik state media that Oman was helping to prepare a draft for a peacetime protocol to supervise

maritime traffic through Hormuz. The protocol would apply after the end of the ongoing war, the IRNA news agency said.

Amid the escalation, UN chief Antonio Guterres yesterday warned that the conflict risked spiralling into a wider war, as he called for an immediate halt to US-Israeli strikes on Iran and Iranian attacks on its neighbors.

Thousands of people have been killed across the Middle East since February 28, when the US and Israel began air strikes on Iran. The Iranian Health Ministry yesterday updated the death toll to 2,076, with 26,500 wounded. More than 1,300 have been killed in Lebanon.

At least 28 people have died in Israel, and 13 US troops have been killed in Iranian retaliation.

Iran yesterday said several people were likely injured when a bridge linking Tehran and the western city of Karaj was hit by air strikes. Some of its largest steel producers and Tehran's Pasteur Institute of Iran medical research centre had sustained serious damage in the conflict, it said.

Late yesterday, Trump posted footage on social media of smoke rising from the BI bridge in Karaj, around 20 miles (35 kilometers) southwest of Tehran — and warned that there would be further destruction unless Iran comes to the table to end the five-week war.

"The biggest bridge in Iran comes tumbling down, never to be used again — Much more to follow! IT IS TIME FOR IRAN TO MAKE A DEAL BEFORE IT IS TOO LATE, AND THERE IS NOTHING LEFT OF WHAT STILL COULD BECOME A GREAT COUNTRY!" Trump said.

The country's Revolutionary Guards

said they had targeted US-linked steel and aluminium facilities in Gulf states and would step up such attacks if Iranian industries were hit again.

Israel reported new incoming salvos yesterday. Several blasts sounded in Jerusalem, AFP journalists said, after the military issued an alert over incoming Iranian missiles.

Saudi Arabia said it had intercepted four drones, and Abu Dhabi said it had intercepted a missile, with minor damage near an economic zone.

The US embassy in Baghdad urged its citizens to leave Iraq, warning of attacks in the capital by Iran-allied militia in the next 24 to 48 hours.

Fuel shortages have already caused economic strains across Asia, and they are expected to bite in Europe soon. Italy's foreign minister said migration flows would increase if the conflict were to drag on.

Benchmark Brent crude prices LCOC jumped by about 8 percent to around \$109 per barrel, and stocks took a hit, with little reassurance from Trump's address about how the strait would reopen.

Experts fear a prolonged conflict may drive crude prices to as high as \$150. Most analysts estimate crude might hit \$130-\$140.

The conflict has also reduced fertiliser shipments through the passage by 92 percent, from over a million tonnes in February to just 82,000 in March.

Trump, in his Wednesday's speech, said talks could be possible with Iran's new leadership, which he described as "less radical and much more reasonable" than their predecessors.

Key reform ordinances left to expire

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suitable candidates would be selected and the chief justice would advise the president on appointments.

It stipulated that a "Supreme Judicial Appointment Council", led by the chief justice, would recommend qualified individuals for appointment to the Appellate and High Court divisions of the SC.

Separately, the interim government also issued the Supreme Court Secretariat Ordinance to establish an independent secretariat for overseeing, controlling, and maintaining discipline in the subordinate courts, thereby ensuring judicial independence.

Under this ordinance, the secretariat would handle all administrative and clerical responsibilities related to subordinate courts and administrative

enforced disappearances, the ordinance sets the death penalty as the maximum punishment for this crime, according to the law.

Among these, the referendum ordinance was issued with the aim of holding a referendum to implement the July National Charter.

Jamaat issued notes of dissent for both ordinances.

In 2025, the Anti-Corruption Commission (Amendment) Ordinance was issued to expand the ACC's investigative powers; allow direct filing of cases; cover serious financial crimes, including those committed abroad; and increase the number of commission members.

The interim government also issued the Revenue Policy and Revenue

and Tobacco Products Use (Control) (Amendment) Ordinance; Prevention and Suppression of Human Trafficking and Migrant Smuggling Ordinance, 2026; Land Use Control and Agricultural Land Protection Ordinance; Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulation (Amendment) Ordinance; Private Educational Institutions Teachers and Employees Retirement Benefits (Amendment) Ordinance; and Private Educational Institutions Teachers and Employees Welfare Trust (Amendment) Ordinance.

Among these, the Anti-Terrorism (Amendment) Ordinance introduced provisions allowing the prohibition of activities by any specified entity, including rallies, meetings, and publications. Following its promulgation, the political activities of the Awami League were banned.

The special committee's report, however, does not specify what further changes will be made.

The interim government also issued the Police Commission Ordinance to establish a commission through a selection committee.

The commission would recommend the appointment of the inspector general of police and address citizens' complaints as well as internal grievances within the police force.

This ordinance too has been recommended for passage in its amended form. However, the opposition Jamaat issued notes of dissent on this as well.

TO BE PASSED UNCHANGED

Ninety-eight ordinances were recommended to be passed unchanged, including several relating to local government institutions with provisions for appointing administrators in special circumstances and in public interest.

Jamaat also expressed its objections in this regard.

Other ordinances include the Grameen Bank (Amendment) Ordinance; International Crimes (Tribunals) (Second Amendment) Ordinance; Delimitation of Constituencies (Amendment) Ordinance; Representation of the People (Amendment) Ordinance, 2025; Cyber Security Ordinance; Government Service (Amendment) Ordinance; the ordinance on welfare and rehabilitation of families of July uprising martyrs and fighters; the July Uprising Memorial Museum Ordinance; the July Uprising (Protection and Liability Determination) Ordinance; as well as several other ordinances relating to the renaming of various organisations.

The July Uprising (Protection and Indemnity) Ordinance provides indemnity to July fighters in cases where killings occurred as part of the political resistance against the fascist regime.

Jamaat issued notes of dissent regarding ordinances on the Value Added Tax and Supplementary Duty (Second Amendment) Ordinance, 2025; the Customs (Amendment) Ordinance, 2025; the Income Tax (Amendment) Ordinance, 2025; the Civil Aviation (Amendment) Ordinance, 2026; and the Bangladesh Travel Agency (Registration and Control) (Amendment) Ordinance, 2026.

CONCERNS
Political analysts and former parliamentary officials warned that repealing ordinances related to apex court reforms may derail efforts to grant the judiciary administrative and financial autonomy. Without these measures, the executive branch would continue to control judicial appointments, transfers, and promotions — undermining the separation of powers.

They also cautioned that shelving 16 ordinances could stall key reform initiatives introduced by the interim government.

Meanwhile, ongoing political debate over the formation of the Constitutional Reform Council, coupled with opposition dissent on nearly all ordinances set to expire, is likely to deepen political divisions.

As a result, the reform issue could further intensify tensions in the political arena in the days ahead.

Consumers in for worsening LPG woes

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kg and the cylinder prices across different sizes — from 5.5kg to 45kg, will range between Tk 792 and Tk 6,482.

The auto gas price — LPG used in vehicles — has been set at Tk 79.77 per litre, which was Tk 61.83 per litre last month.

Though the 12kg cylinder's regulated price stood at Tk 1,341 in March, consumers had to pay between Tk 1,600 and Tk 1,800 across the market for much of the month.

Towards late March, the price started rising again, and even before the regulator's latest decision, traders were reportedly selling cylinders at between Tk 1,900 and Tk 2,100 in some cases.

During a stakeholder meeting with the regulator prior to the price announcement, traders submitted a note of dissent, saying the pricing structure was "unrealistic" as they expected more hike in local prices, according to the officials.

Traders argued they had been paying higher freight charges since early March compared to the cost components considered in the April price calculation.

Asked about the issue, BERC Chairman Jalal Ahmed said the LPG market experienced supply chain disruptions throughout March, which affected overall market dynamics.

The regulator determines LPG prices based on several key indicators, including the Saudi contract price (CP),

exchange rate movements and other related cost components.

The Saudi CP is a publicly available benchmark that importers can access, meaning companies are generally aware of international price movements beforehand, which is how they increased the prices, he added.

Following the BERC set prices is mandatory, Jalal said, adding that they will request the government to use district administrations to intensify oversight of the LPG supply chain.

Bangladesh's monthly LPG consumption generally ranges between 120,000 and 150,000 tonnes, and the country relies heavily on imports.

Data from the National Board of Revenue shows that private importers have been able to import around 186,000 tonnes of LPG for the April supply.

The current import premium of \$120 determined by BERC does not reflect the actual market situation, said Tanzeem Chowdhury, chief executive officer of Omera Petroleum.

The import premium has surged to between \$300 and \$350 since the Iran war, which most LPG suppliers are now facing.

He also pointed out that the government itself had estimated an import premium of about \$165 when the Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation planned to import LPG.

Given this, he questioned the rationale behind the BERC's reference of the \$120 import premium, saying such a price could lead to unsustainable

losses for suppliers.

Tanveer Ahmed Mostafa, director of Meghna Group of Industries, said the company has always prioritised national energy security and the affordability of essential commodities.

Global LPG benchmarks and freight premiums, particularly due to ongoing geopolitical disruptions, have significantly increased procurement costs.

"We believe that through strategic procurement and a collaborative regulatory approach, we can serve the market responsibly while ensuring the sector's long-term sustainability," he added.

The LPG supply crunch began in November last year and continued until February, partly due to the absence of several major importers from the market and shifts among emerging suppliers, according to industry players.

"The government's pricing is unrealistic as the international prices have gone up much higher," said Mohammed Amirul Haque, president of the LPG Operators Association of Bangladesh.

Although most of the importers follow the fixed rate, the prices increase basically in the retail level.

"It's beyond our control," he said, while calling for the involvement of law enforcers and the Directorate of National Consumers' Right Protection.

The BERC chairman said they are considering monitoring a few companies on a trial basis to verify the importers' claims.

'Big step for humanity'

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right at it," said Wiseman, the mission commander. US President Donald Trump praised "our brave astronauts," calling the successful launch "quite something" at the top of his televised address on the war against Iran.

The astronauts are now in orbit around the Earth, where they will remain while performing various checks to ensure the reliability and safety of a spacecraft that has never carried humans before.

Scientist Sian Proctor ventured to Florida's Space Coast to witness the moment along with the approximately

400,000 people local authorities said had gathered to watch.

"Everybody should be excited and be following the next 10 days, because this is a big step for humanity," Proctor said.

Astronauts successfully completed "proximity operations" demonstrations, which tested how their Orion capsule can move relative to another spacecraft and included various maneuvers that mimic what would be needed to dock with a lunar lander.

"Great flying with you, Houston. Nice vehicle," said pilot Glover.

Early on teams identified a number

of kinks to work out, including "a controller issue with the toilet when they spun it up," said Amit Kshatriya, Nasa's associate administrator, during a post-launch briefing. "We're just getting started," he added.

Nasa head Jared Isaacman also noted a temporary communication problem with the spacecraft that had since been resolved. The astronauts were "safe, they're secure, and they're in great spirits," he said.

Isaacman also emphasized the historic nature of the launch: "Nasa is back in the business of sending people to the Moon."

tribunals. It would also manage matters such as the posting, promotion, transfer, discipline, and leave of judges engaged in judicial work.

Overall control of the secretariat would rest with the chief justice, while its secretary would serve as the administrative head.

Three Jamaat-e-Islami MPs issued notes of dissent on all three ordinances related to the apex courts.

TO BE EXPIRED

The special committee also recommended that 16 ordinances not be ratified in the current parliamentary session; they may be reintroduced in parliament as bills by the relevant ministries later.

These include amendments to the National Human Rights Commission and Anti-Corruption Commission laws, a proposed referendum law, legislation on preventing and addressing enforced disappearances, and the Right to Information law.

The enforced disappearance prevention and remedies ordinance is aimed at curbing, investigating, and punishing enforced disappearances.

Management Ordinance, restructuring the existing framework by separating revenue policy formulation from revenue collection.

It provides for the establishment of two separate divisions under the finance ministry: the Revenue Policy Division and the Revenue Management Division. The move sparked protests among officials.

The Microfinance Bank Ordinance establishing microfinance banks was also issued under the interim rule.

TO BE PASSED WITH AMENDMENTS
Fifteen ordinances are set to be passed with amendments.

These include Women and Child Repression (Amendment) Ordinance, 2025; Public Procurement (Amendment) Ordinance, 2025; Bank Resolution Ordinance, 2025; Anti-Terrorism (Amendment) Ordinance, 2025; Code of Criminal Procedure (Second Amendment) Ordinance, 2025; National Data Management Ordinance, 2025; Bangladesh Labour (Amendment) Ordinance, 2025; Human Organ Transplantation Ordinance, 2025; Police Commission Ordinance; Smoking