

## Austria rejects US military overflights

AFP, Vienna

Austria has rejected US requests for military overflights of its territory since the start of the conflict in the Middle East in line with its policy of neutrality, a defence ministry spokesman told AFP yesterday.

"There have indeed been requests and they were refused from the outset," Colonel Michael Bauer said, adding that every time a similar request "involves a country at war, it is refused".

Austria has been a neutral country since 1955. It is surrounded to the north, south, and east by Nato members, with neutral Switzerland to the west.

US President Donald Trump has criticised France and Spain, which refused to allow their airspace to be used for the war against Iran.

In mid-March, Switzerland, also invoking its neutrality, said it had refused the use of its airspace.



Members of Iraq's Hashed al-Shaabi forces carry the coffins of a commander and comrades killed in a strike in Tal Afar, during a funeral in Baghdad yesterday, amid US-Israeli strikes on Iran. PHOTO: AFP

## Russia blocks drone strike on Turkey pipeline

Accuses Ukraine of multiple attacks on the gas line in March

AFP, Moscow

Russian forces repelled a drone attack early yesterday on part of the TurkStream gas pipeline that connects southern Russia and Turkey, the pipeline's operator Gazprom said in a statement.

Several European countries, including Hungary, Slovakia and Serbia, receive gas supplies via the pipeline. Russia has accused Ukraine of attacking it multiple times, most recently in March.



"The Russkaya compressor station, which ensures the reliable export of gas via the TurkStream pipeline, came under attack from three aircraft-type unmanned aerial vehicles," Gazprom said.

"The attack was repelled and no damage was caused to the Gazprom facility."

Ukraine made no immediate public comment. The Russkaya compressor station is the starting point of TurkStream.

Ukraine has struck Russian energy infrastructure throughout the nearly four-year war, in a bid to sap Moscow's ability to finance its offensive.

## Trump's threats a potential war crime

TARGETING WATER PLANTS IN IRAN

Gulf allies express grave concern

CNN ONLINE

After President Donald Trump floated on Monday the possibility of expanding the Iran war by potentially striking water treatment plants in Iran, some Gulf countries reiterated grave concerns to the Trump administration about any strikes on civilian infrastructure and the risk of an intensifying tit-for-tat escalation, according to four regional sources.

Civilian infrastructure sites like water plants are clearly banned as targets by international law, but throughout the war following US and Israeli strikes, Iran has retaliated against US allies in the Gulf region, many of whom rely heavily on desalination to provide water for citizens due to few fresh water sources.

If Iran responded to a US strike on a water plant by hitting a similar facility in a nearby country, it could trigger devastating consequences.

"It will be a huge catastrophe if they strike, we rely on desalination for almost all drinking water," said one regional official, explaining that the concerns about pursuing these strikes have been clearly articulated to Trump administration officials in the past and were reiterated after Trump's Truth Social post on Monday.

While several countries have privately reached out to the Trump administration to warn against such attacks, they've so far avoided publicly rebuking the US president.

Targeting critical civilian infrastructure, which includes water plants and potentially power plants that have also been the subject of Trump threats, could be



**Iran relies little on desalination, but nearby states including Qatar, Bahrain get over half their drinking water from it.**

considered a war crime. The Geneva Conventions and its protocols define objects indispensable to the survival of a civilian population as illegal military targets, and clearly cites "drinking water installations and supplies and irrigation work" as falling into that category.

"Desalination plants are purely civilian infrastructure. There is no legal argument whatsoever for attacking them," said Kenneth Roth, a former executive director of Human Rights Watch, adding that those advising Trump have "a responsibility not to implement any illegal order."

Iran gets only a small fraction of its water from desalination plants.

But nearby countries including Qatar and Bahrain produce more than half of their drinking water using the technology, which converts seawater into potable water by removing the salt.

The private chorus of voices encouraging the US to steer clear of committing potential war crimes that could escalate the conflict does not include every player in the region.

Some nations don't have the bandwidth to fight against potential strikes from Iran because they are entirely consumed by defending against the current Iranian attacks, said a senior Gulf diplomat.

In early March, Iran accused the US of attacking a freshwater desalination plant on Qeshm Island, and Iranian officials warned of retaliation.

A US defense official told CNN that it was not a US strike. But the state of the desalination plant and what caused the alleged disruption remains unclear.

## Nepal to issue formal apology to Dalits within 15 days

TNN, Kathmandu

Nepal's new govt said it would issue a "formal state apology" to Dalits and other historically excluded communities within 15 days under Prime Minister Balendra Shah's 100-point reform agenda, in what activists described as a historic acknowledgment of generations of caste-based discrimination and denial of opportunity.

The proposed apology is to be accompanied by measures on social justice, inclusive restoration and historical reconciliation.

The agenda said: "We will formally acknowledge the injustice, discrimination and deprivation of opportunities inflicted on Dalits and historically marginalised communities by the state, society and policy structures, and prepare the basis for social justice, inclusive restoration and historical reconciliation."

It added that a programme would be announced too. The promise has drawn attention in a country where Dalits make up about 13-14 percent of the population but continue to face entrenched exclusion despite constitutional guarantees and laws against caste-based discrimination.

Activists said nearly 42 percent of Dalits lived below the poverty line, literacy remained below the national average, and representation in key institutions stayed disproportionately low.

## BORDER CONFLICT

# Burden lies with Afghanistan to end hostilities

Pakistan says after initial talks with Kabul

AFP, Islamabad

Pakistan said yesterday that the burden of ending its conflict with Afghanistan lay with Kabul, as the two sides held preliminary talks to try to end hostilities.

The neighbours and one-time allies have been locked in an escalating conflict over claims from Islamabad that Kabul is harbouring extremists responsible for cross-border attacks.

Negotiations started in Urumqi, in northwest China, on Wednesday, after Pakistan's Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar travelled to Beijing for talks with his Chinese counterpart, Wang Yi.

Pakistan foreign ministry spokesman Tahir Hussain Andrabi told reporters in the capital that the government hoped for a "durable solution".

"Our participation (in talks) is a reiteration of our core concerns," he said.

"The burden of real process, however, lies with Afghanistan, which must demonstrate visible and verifiable actions against terrorist groups using (its) soil against Pakistan."

He described the negotiations as "working level talks" and said they were ongoing. "Our delegation has not returned yet," he added.

## Major quake in Indonesia kills one, sparks panic

AFP, Manado

A major 7.4-magnitude quake struck off the coast of eastern Indonesia yesterday, killing one person, damaging buildings and sending people running into the streets in panic.

The early-morning tremor in the Molucca Sea between the Sulawesi and Maluku island groups triggered waves up to 75 centimetres (2.5 feet) high in places and prompted a tsunami warning that was subsequently lifted.

"I didn't know what to do. I was just trying to save my family," street food vendor Siti Rohayati, 58, told AFP of the moment the quake hit during the breakfast rush in Manado in North Sulawesi province.



"All that mattered was getting my children away safely. I pushed all three of them and told them: 'Run!'"

One person was killed when a building collapsed in Manado, and another was injured, search and rescue official George Leo Mercy Randang told AFP.

The victim was "buried under the rubble", he said, adding that authorities were following up on reports of more people injured.

The US Geological Survey (USGS) said the tremor hit at a shallow depth of 35 kilometres.

The Hawaii-based Pacific Tsunami Warning Center (PTWC) initially said hazardous tsunami waves were possible within 1,000 kilometres (621 miles) of the epicentre along the coasts of Indonesia, the Philippines and Malaysia.

Elevated waves were observed in nine locations in North Maluku, North Sulawesi and Gorontalo provinces, with the highest hitting 75 centimetres in North Minahasa, according to Indonesia's BMKG geological agency.

The PTWC lifted its warning just over two hours after the tremor, saying the tsunami threat "has now passed".

Budi Nurgianto, a 42-year-old resident of Ternate in North Maluku province, said he was inside his house when the tremor struck, sending people outside in terror.

"The quake was felt strongly. I heard it first from the walls of the house that shook," he said.

**BANGLADESH GAS FIELDS COMPANY LIMITED**  
(A Company of Petrobangla)  
Birashar, Brahmanbaria.

Reference no. 28.10.1213.000.806.00.0351(1).26 Date: 31-03-2026

### e-Tender Notice

e-Tenders are invited in e-GP System Portal (<https://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) by Civil Engineering Department, Bangladesh Gas Fields Company Limited, Birashar, Brahmanbaria for the procurement of following works:

SL No	Package No.	Description of works	Tender ID No.	Tender Last Selling /downloading date & Time	Tender Closing date & time	Tender Opening date & time
1	Civil/egp/57/2025-2026	Renovation works of 03 nos, room of Gomoti rest house at Bakhrabad Gas Field under the project titled 3-D seismic survey of Habiganj, Bakhrabad and Meghna field.	1250386 (OTM)	12-04-2026 up to 16.00 Hrs.	13-04-2026 at 14.00 Hrs.	13-04-2026 at 14.00 Hrs.

- This is an online tender, where only e-Tenders will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted;
- The fees for downloading the e-Tender documents from the National e-GP system portal have to be deposited online through any members of registered bank's branches up to 16.00 Hrs. on 12-04-2026;
- To submit e-Tender, please register on e-GP system portal (<https://www.eprocure.gov.bd>);
- Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System portal and from e-GP help desk ([helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd](mailto:helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd));
- The procuring entity reserves the right to reject all the tenders without assigning any reason whatsoever.

28.10.1213.000.876.09.0060.26 (3D-Civil)  
(4x4.5")

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Memo No. 35.01.8400.466.13.191/6-861 Date: 02-04-2026

### Tender Notice (OTM)

This is to notify for all concerns that e-Tenders is invited and will publish on 02 April 2026 in the National e-GP Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for procurement of works for the following Tender. Interested persons/firms can see details by visiting the web site [www.eprocure.gov.bd](http://www.eprocure.gov.bd).

SL.	Tender ID	Tender Reference No.	Name of Work	Date & Time
01	1245204	e-GP/PMP Road/RRD-01/2025-2026	Surfacing Work by Carpeting and Seal Coat at Ch. 00+000 (Bangalhala) to Ch. 09+000 (Islampur) km of Bangalhala-Rajasthali-Farua-Bilaichhari-Barkal Road (Z-1814) under Rangamati Road Division during the year 2025-2026.	Last Selling 30.04.2026, 11:00 Closing 30.04.2026, 12:30

Sabuj Chakma  
ID No. 602314  
Executive Engineer (CC), RHD  
Road division, Rangamati.