

INTERNATIONAL

US airman
rescue may
mask bid to
steal uranium
Iran ministry says

AFP, Tehran

Iran's foreign ministry said yesterday that a US operation to rescue a downed airman may have been a cover to "steal enriched uranium" from the Islamic republic.

On Sunday, President Donald Trump said the US recovered a second crew member of an F-15E that went down over Iran on Friday in what he called a "daring" search and rescue operation.

Iran's military has called it "a deception and escape mission", insisting it was "completely foiled".

Yesterday, Iran's foreign ministry spokesman Esmail Baqaei said there were "many questions and uncertainties" about the operation.



Smoke rises from the site of an Israeli strike in Beirut's southern suburbs, near Camille Chamoun Sports City stadium, Lebanon yesterday. Inset, a relative mourns as she kisses the grave of a person killed in an Israeli strike in Tyre, Lebanon.



PHOTO: AFP, REUTERS

Use of Hormuz must
be guaranteed

UAE says, referring to any US-Iran war settlement; Iran Guards prepare plan for new order in the Strait

AGENCIES

UAE official Anwar Gargash said any settlement of the US-Iran war must guarantee access through the Strait of Hormuz, warning that a deal that fails to rein in Iran's nuclear programme and its missiles and drones would pave the way for "a more dangerous, more volatile Middle East."

Gargash, the diplomatic adviser to the UAE president, told a weekend briefing that the Strait of Hormuz - the world's most critical oil artery - cannot be weaponised, stressing that its security is not a regional bargaining chip but a global economic imperative.

"The Strait of Hormuz cannot be held



hostage by any country," said Gargash, adding that freedom of navigation through the waterway "has to be part and parcel of the settlement of any conflict with clear agreement on that."

Meanwhile, Iran's Revolutionary Guards said they are completing preparations to enforce new operating conditions in the Strait of Hormuz, reports Reuters.

Gargash said the UAE wants the war to end, but warned against a ceasefire that leaves the root causes of instability unresolved. "We don't want to see more and more escalation," he said. "But we don't want a ceasefire that fails to

address some of the main issues that will create a much more dangerous environment in the region...notably (Iran's) nuclear programme, the missiles and drones that are still raining down on us and on other countries."

US President Donald Trump threatened to rain "hell" on Tehran if it did not make a deal and reopen the Strait of Hormuz by his today's deadline, reports AFP. Gargash said the United Arab Emirates was ready to join any US-led international effort to secure shipping through the strait.

About a fifth of global oil and liquefied gas supplies normally pass through it each day, but Iran's actions have severely curtailed traffic, triggering a global energy crisis.

The UAE has come under heavier Iranian strikes than any other Gulf state, according to regional officials. Gargash said that for decades, the most unlikely worst case scenario for the UAE had been a full Iranian attack - a scenario that is now unfolding. Despite that, he said, the country was coping well, demonstrating resilience and resourcefulness under pressure.

US rescues downed
F-15 crew from Iran
in \$500m mission

NDTV ONLINE

The US military has successfully evacuated a pilot and an airman from Iranian territory after an American F-15E Strike Eagle jet was shot down inside the Islamic Republic.

The high-risk, multi-day US rescue mission, executed in the south of Iran's Isfahan province, is drawing attention not just for its precision but for its staggering cost, reaching close to \$500 million.

US officials called the recovery effort one of the "most challenging" combat search-and-rescue missions due to the terrain, a hostile Iranian pursuit and post-recovery complications.

Khalilur starts

FROM PAGE 2

reporters after a meeting between Prime Minister Tarique Rahman and Indian High Commissioner to Bangladesh Pranay Verma.

He said the focus would be on strengthening people-to-people ties, moving beyond one-person-driven engagement, and expressed hope that candid dialogue could help address several longstanding challenges.

During the meeting, Pranay Verma reaffirmed India's intent to work with the government and people of Bangladesh in a "positive, constructive and forward-looking manner" based on mutual interest and benefit.

He said India-Bangladesh cooperation should turn geographical proximity into new opportunities by strengthening economic and connectivity linkages and enhancing cultural and people-to-people exchanges.

The visit comes after ties hit a historic low following Bangladesh's political changeover after the July 2024 uprising, when both countries imposed varying degrees of trade and visa restrictions.

Dhaka has also been angered by deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina's stay in India and has repeatedly requested her extradition.

Since assuming power, the BNP has indicated that relations with India would not remain tied to the Hasina issue. In late February, Bangladesh missions in India resumed

all categories of visas for Indian nationals, while Dhaka now awaits reciprocity from New Delhi.

India has also signalled a willingness to improve ties. These include messages from the Indian prime minister congratulating Tarique Rahman and inviting him to visit New Delhi.

Indian Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla and Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri attended the oath-taking ceremony of the new cabinet. Recently, Bangladesh High Commissioner Riaz Hamidullah met S Jaishankar, Piyush Goyal, and Chief of Army Staff General Upendra Dwivedi.

Diplomatic sources said discussions during the visit would focus on resuming all categories of Indian visas, easing trade routes, energy cooperation, water-sharing of transboundary rivers such as the Ganges and Teesta, and maintaining peace along the border.

"In the first ministerial meetings, Dhaka will definitely raise priority issues, including the Ganges water treaty and the Teesta management project," a diplomatic source said.

The Ganges water treaty expires in December this year and will be a key test of bilateral relations, he added.

Another diplomatic source said Dhaka would seek to rebuild ties in line with people's aspirations - making them people-centric rather than party-centric.

"The area where the American pilot was claimed to be present in Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad Province is a long way from the area where they attempted to land or wanted to land their forces in central Iran," Baqaei said.

"The possibility that this was a deception operation to steal enriched uranium should not be ignored at all."

He added that the operation was "a disaster" for the United States.

Iran's military said several US aircraft had to "make emergency landings" in southern Isfahan province after being hit during the mission, with the US "forced to heavily bombard the downed aircraft" as a result.

Meanwhile, Iranian authorities said on Sunday morning that yet another US aircraft - a Lockheed C-130 Hercules - had been downed.

The US has not responded to those claims.

Ceasefire must address Iran's missiles, drones, nuclear risks
Iran strikes backfire, drive Gulf states closer to Washington

Measles outbreak

FROM PAGE 12

achievements were lauded worldwide and had significantly reduced deaths among children under five.

"From that situation, we are now witnessing a measles outbreak in the country, with hundreds of children fighting for their lives at hospitals," he told The Daily Star yesterday.

He added that the sudden scrapping of the sectoral programme, under which funds for vaccination were provided, by the interim government triggered a measles vaccine crisis, leading to the deaths of many children.

"When we are supposed to celebrate something positive on World Health Day, we have to fight an outbreak, which is very unfortunate.

"We are supposed to eliminate measles-rubella by 2026, but we are struggling with the growing number of measles patients at hospitals."

According to the latest Expanded Programme on Immunisation (EPI) Coverage Evaluation Survey in 2023, the country recorded a commendable 95.2 percent crude coverage, which means both valid and invalid vaccinations.

It recorded an impressive 81.6 percent full valid coverage (children receiving all doses of all vaccines up to nine months of age) among children under one year of age.

But data from the EPI shows crude vaccination coverage under its regular campaign declined over the past two years.

Particularly, measles-rubella vaccination rate saw a deep decline in the last two years. Children aged nine months were administered MR-1 vaccine, while children

over 15 months were given MR-2 vaccine under the regular immunisation programme.

EPI data shows MR-1 and MR-2 coverage declined since 2023.

Special campaigns are held every four years to cover those missed in routine vaccination, with the last campaign held in December 2020 and January 2025.

But the special campaign planned for late 2024 could not be conducted due to the situation surrounding the political changeover.

The interim government did not carry out any such drive. Health assistants, who give the children the shots, went on strike three times in 2025, disrupting the regular vaccination programme, said health officials.

The EPI authority also had to ration vaccines in some areas since January due to a shortage caused by a fund crisis, an official told this correspondent on condition of anonymity.

Mushtaq Husain, another public health expert, said the government has undertaken an emergency vaccination drive to control the spike in measles cases and deaths.

However, instead of relying on emergency measures, the system needs reform to ensure sustainable progress in the health sector.

He added that the Health Sector Reform Commission in 2025 has made several recommendations, including the formation of a permanent health commission and a separate directorate for public health, but the current government is yet to start implementation of the suggestions. "Unless we reform the system, we will have to resort to emergency measures whenever the situation deteriorates," he opined.

Early rain brings misfortune

FROM PAGE 12

It stays like this for a few more days, the crop will be completely damaged," he said.

Md Jamal Uddin, additional director for monitoring and implementation at the DAE Field Service Wing, said preliminary information from seven haor districts shows limited impact so far, with some areas not yet fully submerged.

He added that data collection is ongoing and a final damage assessment will be prepared soon.

According to the Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE) in Sylhet division, at least 3,640 hectares of cropland had been inundated as of Monday - 3,189 hectares in Sunamganj, 281 hectares in Habiganj, and 170 hectares in Moulvibazar.

However, experts estimate that at least 15,000 hectares of agricultural land across the division have been affected. Excessive rainfall in upstream Meghalaya and Assam, along with Bangladesh's northeast, typically triggers flash floods in haor areas, as seen in 2017 and 2022.

This year, however, there have been no significant early hill runoff. Instead, sustained late-spring rainfall since mid-March has caused waterlogging in low-lying areas. Crop protection dykes are also trapping stagnant water, prolonging the inundation.

Mohammad Omar Faruk, deputy director of the DAE in Sunamganj, said all upazilas except Chhatak are affected. "The initial expectation was that water would

recede once the rain stopped. But canals and water bodies that are usually dry in Chaitra are already full, hampering drainage," he said.

He added that four consecutive dry spring seasons had encouraged cultivation on previously unused haor lowlands, including water bodies where paddy farming is officially prohibited. "These lands have now been among the first to go under."

A Bangladesh Rice Research Institute expert said crop losses depend mainly on the duration of water stagnation and crop maturity, warning that fields submerged for more than 7-10 days face a high risk of rot.

The crisis has also triggered inter-village tensions in Sunamganj, mainly over embankments which hinder water flow from the haors.

On Friday, Paribesh O Haor Unnayan Sangstha organised a human chain in front of the Central Shaheed Minar in Sylhet city, demanding sustainable management of the haor ecosystem.

"Embankments are being built without scientific research or surveys, causing waterlogging and damaging the haor ecosystem," said Kasmir Reza, president of the organisation and general secretary of Bangladesh Poribesh Andolon (BAPA) in Sylhet.

He called for sluice gates, high-capacity pumps, and systematic excavation of haor canals and rivers based on scientific studies. Sunamganj Deputy Commissioner Dr Mohammad Ilias said the submerged area

currently accounts for less than two percent of total cultivated land.

Upazila-level committees have been formed to allow controlled embankment breaches, on the condition that farmers rebuild them later, he said.

"A 700-metre canal excavation is underway in waterlogged areas of Sadar upazila, while high-capacity pumps are being deployed in Pagnar haor in Jamalganj with support from the Bangladesh Agricultural Development Corporation (BADCO)," he added.

DAE data shows that 497,653 hectares of Boro paddy have been cultivated across Sylhet division this season - 276,848 hectares in haor areas and 220,805 hectares in non-haor areas.

The haor region contributes about 15 percent of Bangladesh's annual rice production.

Dr Md Mosharruf Hossain, additional director of the DAE in Sylhet division, said the submerged paddy has not yet been declared a total loss.

"If conditions improve, a significant portion can still be saved. Harvesting has already begun on a small scale - 182 hectares have been cut so far. Full-scale harvesting is expected from Pabela Baishakh," he said.

Agriculture Minister Mohammad Amin Ur Rashid on Sunday directed officials to increase vigilance over the Boro harvest in haor areas, monitor weather conditions, keep harvesters ready, and arrange agricultural labourers to speed up harvesting.

Promoting Energy-Related Low Carbon Urban Development in Bangladesh Project (LCUD)
Sustainable and Renewable Energy Development Authority (SREDA)
Level 9 & 10, Institution of Engineers, Bangladesh (IEB), Ramna, Dhaka

Expressions of Interest (EoI) for Services

GOVERNMENT OF THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF BANGLADESH

1. Ministry/Division	Power Division	
2. Agency	International Organization	
3. Name of Procuring Entity	Promoting Energy-Related Low Carbon Urban Development (LCUD) Bangladesh	
4. Title of Service	Individual Consultant- Procurement Associate -Time Based	
5. Procuring Entity District	Dhaka	
6. Expression of Interest for Selection of	Individual Consultant	Time - Based
7. EoI Ref. No.	27.02.0000.000.023.14.0008.26.18	
8. Date	07 April 2026	
KEY INFORMATION		
9. Procurement Sub-Method	Selection of Individual Consultants (SIC)	
FUNDING INFORMATION		
10. Budget and Source of funds	Development Budget	
11. Development Partner	United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), GEF	
PARTICULAR INFORMATION		
12. Project/Programme Code	224417700	
13. Project/Programme Name	Promoting Energy-Related Low Carbon Urban Development (LCUD) Bangladesh	
14. EoI Closing Date and time	28 April 2026, Time: 15:00 (BST)	
INFORMATION FOR APPLICANT		
16. Brief Description of the Assignment	Overall management and coordination of all activities for Promoting Energy-Related Low Carbon Urban Development (LCUD) Bangladesh	
17. Qualification and Experienced Required	Details is in the ToR, which is in SREDA website, (Notice Section & Project Box). SREDA website: www.sreda.gov.bd	
18. Other Details	Details is in the SREDA website, (Notice Section & respective Project Box). SREDA website: www.sreda.gov.bd	
19. Association with foreign firms is	Not Applicable	
PROCURING ENTITY DETAILS		
20. Name of the Official Inviting EoI	Engr. Md. Muzibur Rahman	
21. Designation of the Official Inviting EoI	Project Director, LCUD Bangladesh	
22. Address of the Official Inviting EoI	Level 9 & 10, IEB, Ramna, Dhaka	
23. Contact Details of the Official Inviting EoI	02-55110343, lcud2024@gmail.com	
24. Submission Procedure	Interested parties are requested to submit the EoI in person in the EoI Box at the SREDA office or Via email, if the EoI is submitted by email, the subject line must be clearly specified.	
The procuring entity reserves the right to accept or reject any all EoI(s).		

GD-731

Sd/-
Engr. Md. Muzibur Rahman
Project Director, LCUD