



An Iranian man walks past symbolic belongings laid on the ground at Valias Square in Tehran yesterday, in tribute to the schoolgirls in Minab killed in an airstrike. The airstrike hit a primary school in the southern Iranian city on the first day of the war, killing at least 170 people, including students and teachers.

PHOTO: AFP

## Only 5 ships pass through Strait of Hormuz in 24 hrs

REUTERS, London

Only five ships, including one Iranian oil products tanker, have passed through the Strait of Hormuz in the past 24 hours, shipping data showed yesterday, after Iran seized two container ships this week and the US continues to blockade Iranian ports.

Shipping traffic passing through the crucial waterway at the entrance to the Gulf during an uneasy ceasefire between Washington and Tehran represents a fraction of the average 140 daily passages before the Iran war began on February 28.

"For most shipping companies, they will need a stable ceasefire and assurances from both sides of the conflict that the Strait of Hormuz is safe to transit," said Jakob Larsen, chief safety and security officer at shipping association BIMCO.

"In the meantime, shipping will be restricted to using routes close to Iran and Oman. Due to their confined nature, these routes cannot safely accommodate the normal volumes of shipping through the Strait of Hormuz," Larsen added.

Between April 22 and early April 23, seven vessels transited the strait, six of which were involved in Iran-related trade, analysis from Lloyd's List Intelligence showed.

The closure of the strait has disrupted a fifth of the world's oil and liquefied natural gas (LNG) supplies and triggered a global energy crisis.

Hundreds of ships and 20,000 seafarers remained stranded inside the Gulf with war risk insurers and oil companies watching for any sign that the risks may have eased so they can prepare to sail through.

## US THREAT TO OUST SPAIN Nato 'must remain united': Italy PM

AFP, Nicosia

Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni yesterday urged Nato allies to stick together, after a report that the United States was mulling action against Spain over its refusal to support operations against Iran.

"Nato must remain united. I believe it is a source of strength," Meloni told reporters as she attended an EU summit in Nicosia, Cyprus.

The Reuters news agency cited an anonymous US official saying the Pentagon had outlined potential measures to punish allies over their response to the Iran war, including suspending Spain from the alliance.

There is no provision in the Nato treaty allowing for the suspension or expulsion of one of the alliance's members.

US President Donald Trump has repeatedly railed against Nato allies for refusing to help out more with the Iran war, saying he viewed it as a betrayal.

Some of them — France, Spain and Italy — did not allow US military aircraft deployed for the war to overfly their territories or to use bases.

Britain initially also refused, but later allowed US flights from its bases for "defensive" missions in the conflict.

Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez, whose country was reportedly singled out for suspension, said Friday he was "not worried", stressing his country was a "reliable member" of Nato.

Meanwhile, as Trump deepens questions over whether Washington would help defend Nato allies, the EU is set to lay out a "blueprint" for how its own mutual assistance clause works if a country is attacked.



## War, drought, aid shortfall to fuel hunger in 2026

Global report says 266m face acute hunger across 47 countries

REUTERS, Rome

Conflict, drought and shrinking aid will keep global hunger at critical levels in 2026, with food insecurity expected to worsen in some of the world's most fragile countries, according to the 2026 Global Report on Food Crises.

The 10th edition of the hunger monitor, published by a coalition of development and humanitarian organisations, said that acute hunger had doubled over the past decade, with two famines declared last year for the first time in the report's history — in Gaza and Sudan.

In total, 266 million people in 47 countries and territories faced high levels of acute food insecurity in 2025, while 1.4 million people faced catastrophic conditions in parts of Haiti, Mali, Gaza, South Sudan, Sudan and Yemen.

In 2025 alone, 35.5 million children worldwide were acutely malnourished, including nearly 10 million suffering from severe acute malnutrition.

Looking at this year, the report said severity levels remained critical, with only Haiti expected to escape from the worst "catastrophic" band thanks to a slight improvement in security and increased humanitarian aid.

"We are no longer seeing just temporary shocks, but persistent shocks over time," said Alvaro Lario, head of the UN International Fund for Agricultural



Development, which helps draw up the annual report.

"The main message is that food insecurity is not an isolated issue anymore, but is putting pressure on global stability," he told Reuters.

The US-Israeli war on Iran has added to the alarm, Lario said, warning that prolonged disruption to energy and fertiliser trade could spill over into global food markets and worsen hunger in import-dependent countries already in crisis.

"Even if the conflict in the Middle East were to end right now, we know that a lot of the food price shocks and inflation will happen in the next six months," he said.

Even before the added stress of this latest war, West Africa and the Sahel looked likely to

remain under heavy pressure this year from conflict and persistent inflation, particularly in Nigeria, Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso.

In East Africa, failed rains across much of the Horn of Africa are expected to deepen suffering in Somalia and Kenya, where drought, insecurity, high food prices and reduced humanitarian aid are likely to drive worsening conditions.

The report also warned that humanitarian and development financing for food sectors in crisis fell sharply in 2025 and is projected to decline further.

Humanitarian food-sector funding is estimated to have dropped by some 39% last year from 2024 levels, while development assistance contracted by at least 15 percent.

## Americans blame Trump for gas price surge: poll

REUTERS, Washington

A clear majority of Americans blame President Donald Trump for surging gasoline prices, which is weighing on his Republican Party ahead of November's congressional midterm elections, according to a Reuters/Ipsos poll.

Some 77 percent of registered voters in the poll, which concluded early this week, said Trump bears at least a fair amount of responsibility for the recent rise in gas prices.

The view was widely shared across the political spectrum, with 55 percent of Republican voters, 82 percent of independents and 95 percent of Democrats pinning blame on the president for the higher costs.

Some 58 percent of voters, including one in five Republicans and two-thirds of independents, said they would be less likely to support candidates in the November 3 polls who support Trump's approach to the conflict with Iran.

Analysts say Trump's party faces an uphill battle to keep their US House of Representatives majority. Risks are also rising that they will lose control of the Senate.



## Putin's rating falls to lowest since 2022

REUTERS, Moscow

Russian President Vladimir Putin's approval rating has fallen for a seventh week in a row to 65.6 percent, its lowest level since the invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, according to state pollster VTsIOM.

Russia's paramount leader, who was appointed acting president by Boris Yeltsin just eight years after the fall of the Soviet Union, has ruled the country since 1999 either as president or prime minister.

A former KGB lieutenant colonel who watched the Soviet Union collapse while based in East Germany, Putin will overtake Josef Stalin and become Russia's longest-serving ruler since Empress Catherine the Great if he completes his current six-year term.

But his ratings, though still high by Western standards, have taken a hit in recent weeks. Putin's approval rating is down from 73.3% in March, while trust in him has slipped over the same period to 71% from above 77%, according to VTsIOM.

## Rising from the ashes, even stronger

FROM JACKET 1 Dhaka Metropolitan Police; and Kya Swee Nue Marma, officer-in-charge of Tejgaon Police Station.

The Daily Star also continued its tradition of honouring grassroots changemakers by recognising four exemplary individuals.

These included Rahima Khatun, a grassroots health worker in Chuadanga who spent 30 years improving maternal health and family planning as the community's trusted "Doctor Apa"; Ballal Hossain, a former day labourer from Jashore who transitioned into a successful agricultural entrepreneur; Shirin Akter, Bangladesh's fastest woman and a 16-time national champion who rose from barefoot competitions; and Nagina Najnin Banu, a pioneer from Thakurgaon who launched a mozzarella cheese revolution in her village, helping empower several other women.

Hundreds of guests, including ministers, business leaders,

politicians, academics, vice-chancellors, journalists, diplomats, development partners, civil society members, and patrons of the newspaper, attended the event.

Among the ministers and parliamentarians present were Home Minister Salahuddin Ahmed; Finance Minister Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury; opposition leader and Jamaat-e-Islami Ameer Shafiqur Rahman; Energy Minister Iqbal Hassan Mahmood Tuku; Fisheries, Livestock and Agriculture Minister Mohammad Amin Ur Rashid; Information Minister Zahir Uddin Swapon; State Minister for Sports Aminul Haque; BNP Standing Committee member Abdul Moyeen Khan; Dhaka-12 MP Saiful Alam Khan Milon; and National Citizens Party MP from Narayanganj-4 Abdullah Al Alamin.

The event was also graced by Prof Rehman Sobhan, founder and chairman of Centre for Policy Dialogue; Prof

Abdullah Abu Sayeed, founder of Bishwa Sahitya Kendra; political scientist Prof Rounaq Jahani; rights activist and academic Hameeda Hossain; Supreme Court lawyer Barrister Sara Hossain; and Dr Hossain Zillur Rahman, founder and executive chairman of Power and Participation Research Centre, among others.

Notable political personalities included Jamaat central leaders Ahsanul Mahboob Zubair, Maulana Abdul Halim, and Aatur Rahman; Supreme Court lawyer Shishir Manir; the Prime Minister's Deputy Press Secretary Shahadat Shadhina, his Office Director Mohammad Nasir Uddin Sarwar, and speech writer Mahfuzur Rahman; Chief Prosecutor of the International Crimes Tribunal Md Aminul Islam; National Citizens Party spokesperson Asif Mahmud Shojib Bhuiyan and its Chief Organiser (North) Sarjis Alam; and former interim government adviser Mahfuj Alam, who is currently leading a new political platform called

Alternatives. Other political personalities included Maulana Ahmad Abdul Qayyum, assistant secretary general of Islami Andolon Bangladesh; Maulana KM Shariatullah, chief coordinator of its Central Media Cell; Maimunul Islam Mithun, publicity secretary of Islami Chhatra Andolon; Advocate Monir Hossain of the Central Media Cell; and Ahmad Abdul Kader, secretary general of Khelafat Majlis.

Business leaders who attended the programme included Kamran T Rahman, president of the Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Dhaka; Naser Ezzat Bijoy, CEO of Standard Chartered Bangladesh; Syed Mahbubur Rahman, MD and CEO of Mutual Trust Bank; Rupali Haque Chowdhury, managing director of Berger Paints Bangladesh; Abdul Hai Sarker, chairman of Dhaka Bank; Syed Nasim Manzur, managing director of Apex Footwear; Mohammad Ali, managing director and CEO of Pubali Bank;

Showkat Aziz Russell, president of the Bangladesh Textile Mills Association; and Tapan Chowdhury, managing director of Square Group. The chiefs of law enforcement agencies at the event included DMP acting commissioner Md Sarwar; RAB Director General Ahsanul Habib Palash; CID Chief Mosleh Uddin; DB Chief Shafiqul Islam; and DC (Tejgaon Division) of DMP Ibne Mizan.

Tamim Iqbal, president of the Bangladesh Cricket Board; and Tabitha Awal, president of the Bangladesh Football Federation, also attended the programme, along with Shahnaz Rahman, chairperson of Transcom Group and its CEO Simeen Rahman.

Eminent personalities from the diplomatic circuit included Bangladesh Foreign Secretary Asad Alam Siam; EU Ambassador Michael Miller; Japanese Ambassador SAIDA Shinichi; UK High Commissioner Sarah Cooke; Canadian High

Commissioner Ajith Singh; Italian Ambassador Antonio Alessandro; German Ambassador Dr Rudiger Lotz; Swiss Ambassador Reto Renggli; Indian High Commissioner Pranay Verma; Swedish Ambassador Nicolas Weeks; Norwegian Ambassador Hakon Arald Gulbrandsen; Danish Ambassador Christian Brix Moller; Argentine Ambassador Marcelo Carlos Cesa; Turkish Ambassador Ramis Sen; Thai Ambassador Thitiporn Chirasawadi; Maldivian Ambassador Shiuneen Rasheed; Indonesian Ambassador Listyowati; Singapore High Commissioner's Chargé d'Affaires Mitchel Lee; and Counselor for Public Affairs at the US Embassy Monica Shie.

Besides, UN Resident Coordinator Carol Flores-Smerezniak; UNESCO Country Representative Dr Susa Vize; International Fund for Agricultural Development Country Director Dr Valentine Achancho; and UNDP Resident

Representative Sonali Dayaratne, along with UN Women representatives, also attended the programme. Top journalists present included Prothom Alo Editor and Publisher Matiur Rahman; Channel i Managing Director Faridur Reza Sagar and its Director and Head of News Shykh Seraj; Kaler Kantho Editor and Jatiya Press Club President Hasan Hafiz; Dhaka Tribune Editor Reaz Ahmad; Bdnnews24.com Editor-in-Chief and Publisher Toufique Imrose Khalidi; The Financial Express Editor Shamsul Huq Zahid; Editor and Publisher of Counterpoint Zafar Sobhan; Jatiya Press Club General Secretary Ayub Bhuiyan; and television talk show host and executive director of the Centre for Governance Studies (CGS) Zillur Rahman.

The second day of the event, to be held today, will feature similar programmes with guests from several different fields and organisations.

## Free Suu Kyi, more prisoners Asean chair urges Myanmar

REUTERS, Manila

The Philippines, chair of the regional bloc Asean, yesterday encouraged more prisoner releases in Myanmar, including ousted former leader Aung San Suu Kyi and said a recent amnesty was a positive step towards inclusive national dialogue.

"We reaffirm our commitment to assisting Myanmar, as an integral part of Asean, to achieve a peaceful and durable solution to the political crisis in the country," the Philippines said in a statement as chair of the 11-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

Aung San Suu Kyi has been in detention since her elected government was toppled in a 2021 coup and her welfare was discussed this week by Thai Foreign Minister Sihasak Phuangketkeow when he met Myanmar's new President Min Aung Hlaing.