

US-Iran ceasefire on 'life support'

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The developments unnerved global energy markets already thrown into chaos by the war and the overlapping blockades imposed by Iran and the US in the Strait of Hormuz — a vital conduit for oil and gas shipments.

"The energy supply shock that began in the first quarter is the largest the world has ever experienced," the CEO and president of Saudi oil giant Aramco, Amin Nasser, told investors.

"If the Strait of Hormuz opens today, it will still take months for the market to rebalance, and if its opening is delayed by a few more weeks, then normalisation will last into 2027."

Aside from energy, the world also faces a shortage of fertiliser — much of which comes from Gulf ports — and hence food for tens of millions of people.

Jorge Moreira da Silva, executive director of the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), told AFP there were just a few weeks left to avert a potentially "massive humanitarian crisis".

"We may witness a crisis that will force 45 million more people into



This photograph taken from the southern Lebanese area of Nabatieh, shows smoke rising from the site of an Israeli airstrike that targeted the village of Kfar Tibnit yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

hunger and starvation."

Trump did not say what had offended him in Iran's response, but Tehran's foreign ministry said it had called for an end to the US naval blockade of its

ports and to the war "across the region" — implying a halt to Israel's strikes targeting Hezbollah in Lebanon.

Crucially, ministry spokesman Esmail Baghaei told reporters, Iran

demanding the "release of assets belonging to the Iranian people, which have for years been unjustly trapped in foreign banks".

This would not be just a return to the status quo before the US and Israel launched the war on February 28, but a victory in the Islamic republic's long-standing campaign against its economic isolation.

"We did not demand any concessions. The only thing we demanded was Iran's legitimate rights," Baghaei said.

An end to international sanctions would diminish Washington's leverage over Tehran as it tries to secure a lasting end to Iran's nuclear enrichment.

The US, Israel and their allies have long accused Iran of seeking atomic weapons, an accusation Tehran has repeatedly denied.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has insisted the conflict would not end until Iran's nuclear facilities were destroyed.

The Wall Street Journal, citing people familiar with the matter, said Iran's counterproposal had included the possibility of diluting some of its highly enriched uranium, with the

rest transferred to a third country.

The lack of a path to resolution has focused concern on the Strait of Hormuz, where Iran is restricting maritime traffic and establishing a payment mechanism to charge tolls for ships crossing.

US officials have stressed it would be "unacceptable" for Tehran to control the international waterway.

Trump told Fox News that he was considering reviving a short-lived US operation to guide oil tankers and other commercial ships through the Strait of Hormuz, but that he had not yet made a final decision.

Saudi sources previously told AFP that Saudi Arabia had prohibited the US from using its airspace and bases for the operation the first time around, fearing "it would just escalate the situation and would not work".

Trump is expected to arrive in Beijing on Wednesday, where Iran is set to be among the topics discussed with Chinese President Xi Jinping as pressure mounts to end the conflict and the energy crisis it has triggered.

Trump has been leaning on China to use its influence to push Tehran toward a deal with Washington.

Baghaei suggested China could instead use the visit to push back against US objectives in the Gulf. "Our Chinese friends know very well how to use these opportunities to warn about the consequences of the US's illegal and bullying actions on regional peace and security," he said.

Meanwhile, the UK and France will today host a multinational meeting of defence ministers on military plans to restore trade flows through Hormuz, the British government said.

The announcement came hours after Iran warned London and Paris against sending warships to the region.

"The Defence Secretary John Healey will co-chair a meeting of over 40 nations, alongside his French counterpart, Minister Catherine Vautrin, for the multinational mission's first Defence Minister's meeting," a British defence ministry statement said Sunday.

The virtual meeting follows a two-day gathering in London in April of military planners who thrashed out the practicalities of a multinational mission led by the UK and France to protect navigation in the key waterway following a sustainable ceasefire.

SC regrets

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high standards of scrutiny and fairness mandated in criminal proceedings of such grave nature."

On May 27, 2025, the Appellate Division scrapped its earlier judgement that had upheld the conviction and death sentence handed down by the International Crimes Tribunal against Azharul in 2014.

The apex court also acquitted him of all charges and directed jail authorities to release him immediately unless he was wanted in any other case.

The bench delivered the verdict following an appeal filed by the Jamaat leader, challenging the conviction and death penalty awarded by the ICT.

Azharul's lawyer Mohammad Shishir Manir said his client, who had been in jail since August 8, 2012, was released on May 28, 2025, following the SC verdict.

ATM Azharul, currently nayebe-ameer of Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami, was elected a lawmaker from Rangpur 2 in the February 12 national election.

Barrister Mohammed Belayet Hossain, another lawyer for Azharul, earlier told this correspondent that this was the first time the Appellate Division had rescinded its own judgement upholding a conviction and death sentence handed down by the ICT in a crimes against humanity case.

Jamaat leaders Motiur Rahman Nizami, Abdul Quader Mollah, Muhammad Kamaruzzaman, Ali Ahsan Mohammad Mojaheed and Mir Quasem Ali, along with BNP leader Salauddin Quader Chowdhury, were executed following Supreme Court verdicts in cases related to crimes against humanity committed in 1971.

Rise above

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with the government, your personal beliefs should not be reflected in your official duties," Shibly quoted the prime minister as saying.

Tarique also said that differences of opinion should be expressed only through the ballot box. "Before that, we must all love this country and remain united in the interest of the nation."

"Many of you have spoken about your hopes for the future of your wives and children. If we can all work together to ensure a safe Bangladesh, then everyone's future will be secured. If Bangladesh becomes safe, we will all live well."

After the programme marking Police Week 2026, the PM walked with police officials and exchanged greetings with them.

He also took part in a photo session with police officials in front of the Tiger Gate of the PMO.

Earlier in the day, Tarique addressed police officials at an event marking Police Week 2026 at the PMO's Shapla Hall.

During his speech, he gave various directives regarding law and order and asked police to treat criminals as criminals, regardless of their political identity.

He also stressed that there would be no compromise with corruption, terrorism and misrule, and urged police officers to work in a people-oriented manner.

Tarique reiterated the government's commitment to implementing all pledges made in its election manifesto and the July charter.

Speaking about police welfare, the premier said the government would remain committed to ensuring the wellbeing of police personnel.

"Honesty, merit, and efficiency will be the key principles in recruitment, transfer, and posting within the administration."

Tarique acknowledged that police duties are not confined to fixed working hours, noting that police personnel work day and night, including even holidays.

"The government cannot remain indifferent to ensuring the physical and mental well-being of police personnel. Therefore, every logical and necessary demand of yours will be implemented gradually."

Cops seek more 999 staff

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"We need more people to receive the emergency calls. Initially, we sought to raise the number to 200 as quickly as possible, with a long term plan to expand it to 500," the official said.

An SP who attended the meeting said discussions were also held on the limitations of existing forensic facilities.

"At present, the country's four forensic laboratories in divisional cities do not have adequate facilities for all types of forensic examinations. As a result, investigations into many cases are delayed. We demanded modernisation of the forensic labs," he told The Daily Star.

The officials also called for increasing manpower in the Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) police unit and transport facilities for the police department.

A deputy commissioner of the DMP said demands were also made to increase manpower at the Armed Police Battalion (APBn) to form more battalions.

"Additional APBn battalions are needed in the Dhaka area to

ensure national security. Otherwise, maintaining law and order will become difficult," the officer said.

According to sources at the conference, the home minister responded positively to the demands. He assured officials that the number of 999 call takers would soon be increased to 200.

He also said the remaining demands would be implemented gradually, considering the government's financial capacity, resources, and priorities.

Cabinet Secretary Nasimul Ghani and Senior Secretary at the home ministry Monjur Morshed Chowdhury addressed the conference as special guests.

Additional IGP of the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) Mosleh Uddin Ahmed delivered the welcome speech, while Inspector General of Police Md Ali Hossain Fakir gave the vote of thanks.

Senior police officials, including additional IGPs, DIGs, additional DIGs, and superintendents of police, attended the event.

Pro-AL lawyers 'shut out' of at least 13 bar elections

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Earlier on April 26, the SCBA held an extraordinary general meeting and decided not to allow pro-AL lawyers to contest the election, citing a ban imposed on the activities of the party and its associated and affiliated organisations on May 11 last year.

Every bar association has its own charter under which it functions and holds polls annually. It informs the Bar Council about its decisions regarding the annual election and also the outcome of the polls.

Moksadul Islam, a senior lawyer at the SC, said the charters of bar associations do not allow partisan politics. Lawyers contest bar polls in individual capacity as they cannot run in elections under any political panels or platforms.

Political dominance in professional bodies like bar associations also goes against the spirit of the country's constitution, he noted.

Several legal experts and rights activists said the exclusion of pro-AL lawyers from bar association elections undermines democratic norms and runs counter to the constitutional provisions that guarantee freedom of association.

Some referred to article 38 of the constitution, which states that every citizen has the right to form associations or unions, subject only to reasonable restrictions imposed by law in the interests of morality or public order.

Manzill Murshid, a lawyer at the

SC, said that not only lawyers aligned with the Awami League, but also those linked to the 14-party alliance and some independent candidates saw their nomination papers cancelled.

"The issue is no longer confined to one political party; it raises broader concerns about the democratic environment within professional bodies," said Manzill, also a human rights activist.

He emphasised that bar association elections are fundamentally professional in nature, involving practising lawyers as both voters and candidates.

Previous governments faced allegations of exerting pressure and influence in these elections, but candidates aligned with various political parties were at least allowed to contest, he added.

Another SC lawyer, Sara Hossain, said, "The right to contest elections to professional bodies is directly related to the enjoyment of the rights to freedom of association and expression. We have seen how this right has historically been restricted in previous years under different governments through gross politicisation, where lawyers did not stand for election based on their professional reputation or integrity, but simply through political panels."

She said that during the final years of the AL government, there was direct interference in bar association elections to ensure that AL-backed candidates won. Pro-BNP

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the interim government's move to bifurcate the National Board of Revenue, calling the process "half-baked" and incomplete.

"Incomplete reform creates more problems than having no reform at all," he said, adding that a parliamentary committee is now reviewing the issue to make the reform more effective.

On corruption in public spending, the finance minister said the government is reviewing nearly 1,300 ongoing projects, many of which were allegedly undertaken for "personal interests".

He added that future projects would be approved based on return on investment, job creation, and environmental protection.

Khosru also said corruption

and red tape continue to obstruct business activities and service delivery.

"For energy security, we want to ensure at least three months of reserves so that there is no disruption in oil, gas, and power supply."

Moderated by Bonik Barta Editor Dewan Hanif Mahmud, the event was attended by business leaders, industrialists, politicians, and economists.

Debapriya Bhattacharya, distinguished fellow of the Centre for Policy Dialogue, said implementation often does not match policymakers' intentions.

"In implementation, 20 to 25 percent of planned expenditure cannot be spent, revenue cannot be collected, and reform processes get stuck midway."

Business leaders at the event urged the government to avoid raising taxes and simplify business regulations.

Ahsan Khan Chowdhury, chairman of PRAN-RFL Group, warned that higher taxes would push products beyond consumers' reach.

Mostafa Kamal, managing director of Meghna Group of Industries, said businesses were still struggling with a difficult regulatory environment despite the change in government.

Among others, Sharif Zahir, chairman of UCB Bank, Anwar-Ul Alam Chowdhury, president of Bangladesh Chamber of Industries, Md Ahteshamul Haque Khan, managing director of Dutch-Bangla Bank, also spoke on the occasion.

candidates and voters in the SCBA were threatened, assaulted and even arrested.

"It's crucial that we don't repeat these experiences and instead move towards inclusive polls. At the same time, I see that some lawyers contesting now played dubious roles in furthering violations during the past regime, and I think we should be clear about their roles," she pointed out.

"Rather than barring people from contesting, we should hear about each person's record and role — not only during the July [uprising], but also in defending rights at different times — and then voters can decide."

Noting that lawyers should prioritise professional values over political identities, SC lawyer Mohammad Shishir Manir said, "We all have to strive for professional excellence. A free and fair environment is required for a participatory election."

When contacted, Law Minister Md Asaduzzaman said bar elections are an internal matter of the legal community.

"The government has no involvement in this issue," he told this newspaper on May 4 without elaborating further.

DISTRICT BAR POLLS

Pro-AL lawyers were unable to participate in bar elections in Dhaka, Chattogram, Rajshahi, Shariatpur, Munshiganj, Mymensingh, Barishal, Manikganj, Cumilla, Jamalpur,

Khulna, Pabna and Gazipur, according to information collected by our correspondents.

In Dhaka bar association polls held on April 29-30, only 7,069 out of 20,785 lawyers (around 34 percent) cast their votes for the 23-member executive committee for 2026-27. Pro-BNP lawyers won all posts.

Pro-AL lawyers boycotted the election, as they were not allowed to collect nomination papers.

Obydul Islam, a pro-AL lawyer, said at least 16 lawyers aligned with the AL wanted to contest the election but none of them was allowed to collect nomination papers.

Another lawyer, Mohammad Liton Miah, who sought to run as an independent candidate for the post of assistant general secretary, also claimed he was denied a nomination form despite fulfilling all requirements.

BNP backed candidates won 13 of 15 posts in Manikganj Bar Association election on February 26; 20 of 21 posts in Rajshahi Bar Association polls on March 13; and all 14 posts in Khulna Bar Association on March 29 following the exclusion of pro-AL candidates.

Similar situations were reported in several other districts. In Shariatpur, BNP-backed candidates were elected unopposed in 15 posts after AL-backed lawyers were not allowed to submit nomination papers.

The Munshiganj Bar Association polls also saw BNP-backed lawyers

elected unopposed in 11 posts following the cancellation of candidacies of pro-AL lawyers.

Pro-AL lawyers were either not allowed to collect nomination papers or saw their candidacies cancelled in Barishal, Jamalpur, Mymensingh, and Gazipur.

In Chattogram, AL-aligned lawyers alleged that pro-BNP lawyers obstructed and assaulted them when they tried to collect and submit nomination papers for 21 posts under the banner of "Sadharan Ainjibi Parishad" for the bar association polls slated for May 21.

Lawyers aligned with the AL in Cumilla said they were able to submit nominations only after intervention by a local lawmaker. They, however, alleged that they faced threats that restricted their campaigning.

WHERE PRO-AL LAWYERS WON

Pro-AL lawyers secured victories in several bar association elections in which they were able to participate as independent candidates.

In Noakhali, lawyers aligned with AL won nine of 15 posts, including that of general secretary; 14 out of 24 posts in Sylhet; seven of 17 posts in Cox's Bazar; 13 of 15 posts in Madaripur; five of 15 posts in Faridpur; and seven of 13 posts in Pirojpur.

Pro-AL lawyers were also successful in Brahmanbaria Bar Association election, securing seven of 13 posts, including those of president and general secretary.

Facebook 'news' pages out to objectify women for profit

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and accountability are often compromised, making online spaces increasingly hostile," she said.

VISUALS OVERRIDE STORY
An analysis of the 100 reels shows that even when captions appear neutral or informational, the visuals often tell a different story.

Across many posts, zoom-ins, slow motion, and selective framing are used not to document events but to redirect attention to women's bodies, stripping away the original context.

For example, a page named Ovjatra posted a reel of Meghna Alam with the caption, "Meghna Alam joins VP Nur's party."

While the caption suggested a political development, the footage itself focused largely on close, body-centred shots rather than the event it claimed to report. The page has uploaded several similar videos featuring other women, following the same visual pattern.

Academics have also been targeted. A Facebook page initially called News Bangla BD, and later renamed Binodon Bangla, posted at least 15 reels of Shehreen Amin Bhuiyan during Pahela Baishakh celebrations.

The videos contained unnecessary close-ups and body-focused framing.

Speaking to The Daily Star, she described the experience as deeply unsettling.

"They record videos without any consent, either from very close or by zooming in from a distance. They film from behind or from the side, thinking it will bring views and followers. It feels extremely uncomfortable," she said.

In some cases, captions went beyond neutral descriptions, using suggestive lines that further objectified women captured in unguarded moments. Phrases such as "it is hard to fool the legend's eyes" and "what did the beautiful actress do in front of everyone?" were used to frame the footage.

Audience responses frequently amplified the harm. A review of comment sections across multiple reels shows that many responses are unfit for publication, with users posting sexually explicit remarks targeting women's bodies and character rather than engaging with any reported context.

This pattern appeared consistently across most of the pages reviewed.

"A DIGITAL DISORDER"

The Daily Star sent messages to six Facebook pages that present themselves as media outlets but received no response. The newspaper also called the administrators of three other pages. While two responded to queries, one did not answer phone calls despite repeated attempts.

One page called News Bangla BD listed a physical office address at "Hassan Plaza, 53 Karwan Bazar, Dhaka". A visit to the location, however, found no organisation operating under that name.

When asked about the rationale behind repeatedly posting such reels, an administrator of Daily Biplobi Kantho, Tamim Nisad, acknowledged that the content was driven by audience growth rather than editorial judgment.

"The page is new, so we are posting more reels to increase our followers," he told The Daily Star. "She [Keya Payel] is a popular actress, which is why more content featuring her has been shared."

He said the page was not yet a registered media outlet but claimed that documents for registration were being prepared.

Media experts warn that these practices reflect a broader and more troubling shift.

Abdullah Al Mamun said, "This is a highly negative development, and it has increased sharply in recent months. What we are seeing is a systematic use of digital platforms to target individuals under the guise of media activity."

According to Mamun, the phenomenon goes beyond isolated instances of unethical content. He said some actors appear to be using such material strategically to dominate digital spaces, suppress critical voices, and consolidate influence.

"Addressing this growing digital disorder requires proactive intervention," he said, calling for more effective oversight and accountability mechanisms to curb abuse on digital platforms.

'SAFE HARBOUR'

The pattern of content observed across these pages raises questions about the enforcement of Meta's Community Standards on adult sexual exploitation.

The policy explicitly prohibits the sharing of "secretly taken non-

commercial imagery" that focuses on "commonly sexualised body parts", particularly when circulated to sexualise or draw attention to an individual.

Meta also outlines enforcement tools such as visibility limits, account restrictions, and monetisation controls. Yet the continued presence and circulation of such content point to weak enforcement of these rules, allowing prohibited material to remain widely accessible on the platform.

Md Sayeed Al Zaman, a researcher at the News and Media Research Centre at University of Canberra in Canberra, said these shortcomings are especially evident in non-Western contexts.

"Enforcement of these policies in countries like Bangladesh appears inadequate, partly due to contextual ambiguity and limitations in local-language moderation."

He added that delayed and inconsistent responses to reported violations create "a safe harbour" for such actors.

"This allows harmful content to circulate widely, while accountability remains limited."