

# DAILY BANGLADESH WATCH

12 May 2026

## Takeaways

### Politics

- ◆ **LDP Chairman Alleges “Vote Engineering” and Minority Persecution in West Bengal:** Dr. Colonel Oli Ahmad, Chairman of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and a former minister, has remarked that Suwendu Adhikari of West Bengal, India, was installed in power through "vote engineering" carried out on the advice of Sheikh Hasina. He made these comments yesterday, Sunday (May 10), while delivering his speech as the chief guest at a seminar organized by the 11-party alliance at Chittagong Engineers' Institution Auditorium. **Since that victory, persecution has been unleashed against the minorities, particularly Muslim population in the region.** "I have seen reports in newspapers depicting Muslims being tied to vehicles and dragged along the ground while being subjected to torture," he added.
- ◆ **Islamic Unity Front alleges Minority Persecution in West Bengal and Calls for Formal Diplomatic Action :** The Islamic Unity Front held a protest march and rally in the capital Dhaka against attacks, persecution on Muslims, assaults on madrasas and mosques, border killings, and destruction of homes in West Bengal, India. On Monday afternoon, Maulana Abdul Qadir, the chairman of the front, presided over the pre-march rally at the North Gate of Baitul Mukarram. At the rally, Mufti Sakhawat Hossain, the general secretary of the Islamic Unity Front, said that on August 5, when the fascist Hasina fled Bangladesh and sought refuge in India, the country's religious scholars (Ulema), devotees and Tawhidi community had protected Hindu temples and the lives and businesses of Hindus. But today the Modi government has completely failed. They have seized power by inciting extremist Hindus, but they have failed to ensure the safety of the people's lives and property. **He said that they will appeal to Bangladesh's Prime Minister Tarique Rahman to immediately summon the Indian High Commissioner, protest against the oppression and persecution, and declare solidarity with Bangladesh's Ulema and the Tawhidi community. Otherwise, Bangladesh's Tawhidi community will soon announce a long march to stop India's aggression at any cost.**
- ◆ **Bangladesh Religious Affairs Minister Vows Protection for Minorities and Urges Inclusive Governance in India:** Religious Affairs Minister Kazi Shah Mofazzal Houssain Kaikobad has said he would take a firm stance against any form of oppression of minorities. He stated that he would resign from his ministerial post if necessary, but would not tolerate oppression, injustice, or persecution against minorities or followers of other religions in the country. The minister made these remarks at a dialogue organised by the Bangladesh Secretariat Reporters Forum (BSRF), an association of journalists covering the Secretariat beat. The event was held at the media centre of the Secretariat today, Monday. **Responding to a question, Kazi Shah Mofazzal Houssain said India is a vast country and that he respects it because it upholds democracy. He, however, added that he would respect India even more if it embraced minorities, ensured their security, and treated them as an integral part of its population with equal rights and protections.** The religious affairs minister said, "But let me say one thing... what is happening in India is not the main issue. Just because something happens in India does not mean it will be allowed to happen in Bangladesh. If necessary,

I will resign from the ministry, but I will not tolerate oppression, injustice, or persecution against minorities or followers of any other religion here.”

- ◆ **BNP Urges International Crimes Tribunal to Expedite Investigation into Awami League-Era Human Rights Abuses:** The Bangladesh Nationalist Party on Monday urged the International Crimes Tribunal prosecution to progress in investigating its complaint over alleged enforced disappearances, torture and crossfire killings of its leaders and activists during the Awami League regime. BNP central executive committee member and case and information preservation coordinator Salahuddin Khan reminded ICT chief prosecutor Aminul Islam about the party’s complaint. Salahuddin Khan reminded the ICT that on January 8, 2025, his party submitted a 243-page document detailing their complaint along with presenting supporting documents and evidence to then ICT chief prosecutor Muhammad Tajul Islam, who assured them of justice. The party alleged that no visible progress was made in the matter despite repeated written reminders seeking effective steps. **The BNP complaint claimed that 2,276 people, of them 1,776 BNP leaders and activists, were killed in alleged crossfire incidents during the AL regime.** According to the complaint, leaders and activists of the BNP and its associate bodies were subjected to planned repression between 2008 and August 5, 2024, the period when Awami League was in power.
- ◆ **Bangladesh Information Minister Announces Independent Media Commission and Strategies to Combat AI Misuse:** Information and Broadcasting Minister Zahir Uddin Swapon yesterday (11 May) said the government will establish an effective and independent media commission to ensure press freedom. **He said the commission will be formed through consensus based on opinions from all stakeholders so that it is not seen as an imposed structure.** The minister made the remarks while speaking as the chief guest at the inauguration of Asia Post at Bengal Shilpalay. Protecting people from false information is now one of the major challenges of the time, he said. He also warned that the misuse of artificial intelligence (AI) is creating new challenges and said the government has taken initiatives to develop new strategies to address the issue. Swapon sought cooperation from media professionals in tackling these emerging challenges and reaffirmed the government's commitment to protecting the freedom, dignity and professional integrity of the media.
- ◆ **The government has announced plans to establish a dedicated Cyber Police Unit to contain the rising trend of digital crimes following a proposal submitted by Bangladesh Police.** Highlighting the evolving nature of crime in the digital age, Home Minister Salahuddin Ahmed today announced the formation of a specialised Cyber Police Unit to combat cybercrime, online rumours and misinformation spread through social media platforms. Bangladesh Police formally placed the proposal before Prime Minister Tarique Rahman during the inaugural ceremony of Police Week on Sunday (10 May).
- ◆ **Home Minister Salahuddin Ahmed on Monday reaffirmed the government’s “zero tolerance” policy against corruption within the police force,** saying that there would be no compromise in maintaining discipline and chain of command in the law enforcement agency. “There is no place for corruption in the police force. We will strictly adhere to the government’s anti-corruption stance,” he said. He made the comments while speaking as a special guest at a directive speech program for senior police officers during Police Week 2026 at Shapla Hall of the prime minister’s office in Tejgaon on Monday morning. Prime Minister Tarique Rahman attended the program as the chief guest. Highlighting the evolving nature of crime in the digital age, the home minister announced the formation of a specialized cyber police unit to combat cybercrime, online rumors, and misinformation spread through social media platforms. He also said the government has decided to

establish two modern police training academies at Jungle Salimpur in Chittagong to enhance professionalism within the force.

- ◆ **Police personnel have raised several demands, including the introduction of a separate pay scale similar to those enjoyed by the army, navy, air force, and judiciary.** These demands were presented to Prime Minister Tarique Rahman during the Police Week 2026 welfare parade held on Sunday, at the Rajarbagh Police Lines auditorium in the capital. Several senior police officials who attended the closed-door welfare parade confirmed to Prothom Alo that the demands had been raised. According to relevant sources, a senior police officer drew the prime minister's attention to the fact that the army, navy, air force, and judiciary already have separate pay scales. He then demanded a separate pay structure for the police as well. Police sources also said that a previous government order for constructing new buildings for the police remains stalled. They demanded fresh allocations to resume those projects. At the same time, they sought an increase in investigation allowances, saying that currently investigating officers receive Tk 5,000 per case, which is insufficient to complete investigations. In addition, demands were raised for interest-free motorcycle loans for sub-inspectors (SIs).
- ◆ **Challenges and Public Trust: The BNP Government's First Two Months in Power:** Within just over two and half months, the BNP government had to face several uncomfortable questions at once—implementation of reform promises, controversies over some key appointments, control of law and order, the energy situation, and mounting economic pressure. **For a government that came to power with an absolute majority after the July mass uprising, maintaining public trust has thus become a major early test.** Many political observers believe that although the prime minister's personal sincerity and modest lifestyle are noticeable, these have not yet been reflected across the government, administration, and field levels. Rather, hesitation over reforms, controversies surrounding some appointments, and weak communication in addressing public crises are raising questions in people's minds.

## Economy

- ◆ **The government has decided to assess whether 31 renewable energy projects, cancelled by the interim government while under implementation, can be allowed to continue in a bid to increase electricity generation. On 6 May, the Ministry of Power, Energy and Mineral Resources issued an office order forming a committee to examine whether activities under the cancelled letters of intent (LoIs) could legally proceed.** The committee is headed by Bangladesh Power Development Board (BPDB) Chairman Rezaul Karim, while Power Division Joint Secretary Md Mahafuzar Rahman serves as a member. The ministry has asked the committee to review the ongoing projects in line with existing laws and submit a report within seven working days. According to ministry sources and stakeholders, the 31 companies began operations and made significant progress after receiving LOIs during 2022-2023 under the Quick Enhancement of Electricity and Energy Supply (Special Provision) Act, 2010. However, in 2024, the interim government cancelled the LOIs of these 31 companies, allegedly misinterpreting a High Court verdict in the process.
- ◆ **Finance and planning minister Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury on Monday said that plans were under way to import around 4,000 megawatts of new power through the regional grid in India.** He also said that people creating obstacles to ease of doing business should be rendered inactive to ensure the deregulation on way to fostering the country's progress on economy, health,

and education. He was speaking at a pre-budget discussion organised by the vernacular business daily Bonik Barta in the city. Along with the planned import, some 2,000MW power from the country's first nuclear power plant in Ishwardi is in the calculation for an uninterrupted supply, added the minister. **Power-starved Bangladesh has already imported a small amount of power from Nepal and a significant amount from India, including the controversial Adani Power Limited, through the regional grid. Noting that the new government is preparing separate policies on power, natural gas, and coal, the minister said that the government would focus on uninterrupted power and energy supply and ensure high-speed internet to spur the economic activities using digital devices.** He regretted that the government had inherited an economy characterised by a downturn and plagued with over-power generation capacity, high unemployment, low private investment and mismanagement in the banking sector.

- ◆ **Bangladesh Power Development Board (PDB) has adopted a new tactic in its proposal to increase electricity prices.** Alongside raising prices, the agency wants to increase revenue by changing the billing slabs for residential consumers. If the proposal is implemented, a large section of consumers may lose the benefit of using electricity at lower rates. Besides, the PDB also wants electricity prices to be adjusted twice a year. According to the PDB proposal, this may create additional billing pressure on 35 per cent of electricity consumers. Of them, 23 per cent belong to the lower middle class and use less than 200 units of electricity per month. Such consumers generally use electricity at home to regularly run multiple lights, fans, refrigerators and televisions. PDB officials say the government does not want to increase electricity prices for poor people. Therefore, instead of raising prices for the first two categories, a proposal has been made to change the slab starting from the second tier. As a result, those who use more electricity will no longer receive the lower-rate benefit of the first slab. However, people concerned from the power sector said the PDB should first reduce its own unreasonable expenses. Instead, it is trying to collect extra money from consumers. Slab-based benefits in bills exist specifically for lower electricity users. Similarly, tax rates in income tax are determined according to slabs. Even second-tier taxpayers receive the benefits of the first slab.
- ◆ **Finance Minister Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury has said the conditions being added by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) under the loan agreement are not “suitable” for the economy of Bangladesh.** He made the comments at a discussion titled “Roadmap to Building Bangladesh’s Economic Future in the Face of Global Uncertainty” organised by the Daily Bonik Barta in Dhaka on Monday. **The finance minister said the government could not accept all IMF conditions out of “responsibility” to the people.** Khosru said, “Most of the development partners agree with the BNP’s election manifesto. They are my development partners. If they do not agree with me, I will not be able to move forward. “There are disagreements in many places with the IMF, because the conditions that they are giving are not suitable for my economy.” Explaining the government’s continued stance against the IMF’s conditions, he said: “We are an elected government with a responsibility to the people. We cannot do everything according to their words. “That is why we have differences with some multilateral organisations, and these differences will continue. “I will correct my course as much as it is consistent with my manifesto. It is not possible to do anything beyond this.” Amid concerns about the release of the remaining amount of the loan agreement with the IMF, the minister claimed on Apr 18 that the IMF has a “positive” attitude to continue the loan programme.
- ◆ **The BNP government has finally taken the initiative to build the Padma Barrage.** Nearly 25 years ago, the then Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) government had initiated efforts to construct the barrage. The Padma Barrage (First Phase) construction project may be placed for approval at the

meeting of the Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (ECNEC) next Wednesday. **The estimated cost of the project has been set at Tk 334.74 billion. According to the project proposal documents, a 2.1-kilometre main dam will be constructed on the Padma River in Pangsha upazila of Rajbari. The initiative has been taken to address water shortages on nearly 37 per cent of the country's land dependent on the Padma River.** By increasing water flow, five rivers in the country's south western region will be revitalised, helping reduce salinity coming from the Sundarbans region. This is expected to help maintain biodiversity balance and increase agricultural and fish production. **A total of 16 projects, including the Padma Barrage construction project, are scheduled to be presented at Wednesday's ECNEC meeting.** It is learned that the initiative has been taken as part of fulfilling an electoral pledge. **According to sources at the Planning Ministry, the project has mainly been prepared to provide some relief from the water crisis during the dry season caused by the Farakka Barrage.** After decades of study and examination, the Padma Barrage project is now awaiting approval. The final proposal for the project has been prepared under the Agriculture, Water Resources and Rural Institutions Division of the Planning Commission.

- ◆ **Road Transport and Bridges Minister Sheikh Rabiul Alam on Monday said the government is planning to construct a second Padma Bridge, with three proposals currently under consideration.** Speaking to journalists after a preparatory meeting at the Secretariat on measures to ensure safe travel during the upcoming Eid-ul-Azha holiday, the minister said the first proposal is to build the bridge at the Daulatdia–Paturia point. **“The feasibility study has already been completed. We are now considering the financing aspect and holding discussions on it. Other preliminary preparations are also underway,” he said.** The minister made the remarks in response to a question on whether the construction of a second Padma Bridge would significantly help reduce road accidents.
- ◆ **Prime Minister Tarique Rahman on Monday pointed to alleged inflated spending and corruption in several mega projects, including Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant, Karnaphuli Tunnel, and Padma Bridge, based on audit findings that exposed widespread misuse of public funds.** Speaking at a meeting with senior police officials at the Prime Minister's Office at Tejgaon, he cited findings from some audit reports presented to him by the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG). The Prime Minister said the current government inherited a “fragile” state structure and economy after assuming office. **“When the current government took responsibility, we found almost every sector in a very vulnerable condition. We received the country in a situation similar to that of a war-ravaged nation,” he said.** Tarique Rahman said he was not presenting the issues politically but was sharing realities revealed in official audit findings.
- ◆ **Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) Affairs Minister Dipen Dewan has said the government is taking special initiatives to attract foreign tourists to the hilly region.** "The hilly region has immense tourism potential. The government is taking special plans to attract not only domestic tourists but also foreign visitors," he said. Dipen said necessary measures are being taken to ensure the safety of foreign tourists and remove all obstacles to their free movement. He made the remarks while speaking as the chief guest at a views-exchange meeting on the development of the tourism sector in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, organised by the Resort Owners Association Rangamati at Bargee Lake Valley Resort in Rangamati on Sunday night. Dipen Dewan said increased visits by foreign tourists to the CHT would create employment opportunities at the local level and financially benefit local people. Mentioning that there are some administrative obstacles to the movement of foreign tourists, he said discussions are underway at the highest levels of the government to resolve the issues.

## Foreign Policy

- ◆ **West Bengal Border Fencing and Bilateral Relations: Bangladesh Signals Resilience and Hope for Cooperation:** West Bengal Chief Minister Suwendu Adhikari, a BJP leader, has reportedly decided to erect fencing along the Bangladesh border. He has announced the transfer of land to the Border Security Force (BSF) within 45 days for this purpose. **In an initial reaction, the Prime Minister's Foreign Affairs Adviser In an initial reaction, the Prime Minister's Foreign Affairs Adviser Humayun Kobir said, "Barbed wire is no longer something that can intimidate a country like Bangladesh.** The Bangladesh government is no longer afraid of barbed wire." He made the remarks on Monday while speaking to journalists at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Humayun Kobir said, "Barbed wire is no longer something that can intimidate a country like Bangladesh. If you want to engage with people, the people of Bangladesh are not afraid of barbed wire. The government of Bangladesh is also not afraid of barbed wire. Wherever we need to speak, we will speak." **He added, "People are being killed along the border. We have seen such incidents during Hasina's regime. That kind of situation will never happen again, Insha'Allah. And if anyone tries to create such conditions at the border, Bangladesh is not a subservient country that will simply sit and watch. Bangladesh has plans on what to do."** The adviser to the Prime Minister said, "We hope it does not go in that direction. Neighbouring countries should maintain regional stability. We want dialogue with our neighbours. **Challenges will remain. Sheikh Hasina, whom he referred to as a 'terrorist', killed 1,500 people and fled there. She is now in a sovereign state in India. We have been assured by the Indian government that no space will be given to her to destabilize Bangladesh from there."** Humayun Kobir said, **"We want to take bilateral relations forward. The leadership on both sides must have a forward-looking mindset. There are certainly many challenges. As long as dialogue remains open, there is scope for resolving issues. Some issues can be resolved quickly, while others will take time."** He added, "Many campaign statements are made for electoral gain. But the role of a government in power is entirely different. We should allow some time. Campaign rhetoric and government statements are not the same. Our relations will primarily be with the central government. We can also see internal politics here." **In response to a question on the Teesta issue, the Prime Minister's adviser said, "In West Bengal, the BJP is now in power. Earlier, when the Trinamool Congress was in power at the state level alongside the central government, their opinion had to be taken into account, which created challenges for us. Now there is no Trinamool Congress in power. The same party is in power at both the centre and the state. We expect this to make things more positive and less challenging. Time will tell."**
- ◆ **When asked about the foreign minister-level meeting between Bangladesh and China, Humayun Kobir said Bangladesh's relationship with China is historic, adding that it was initiated by former president Ziaur Rahman.** He said this was the first visit to Beijing by the new government. "China is an important bilateral partner of Bangladesh. We will further strengthen this relationship. A new opportunity has emerged to take ties to a new height. China is also interested in working with Bangladesh under the leadership of Prime Minister Tarique Rahman," he said. **When asked what kind of assistance Bangladesh had sought during the meeting, he said, "We discussed all aspects of the relationship. There were positive discussions on the Teesta issue as well, though not in detail. China's Exim Bank will finance the project."** When asked when work on the Teesta project would begin, the adviser said the survey report and its recommendations now needed to be reviewed, while further discussions were still pending. He said more time would be needed for detailed talks. Responding to a question about the prime minister's possible visit to China and the

prospect of signing a Teesta agreement during the trip, Humayun Kabir said the visit had not yet been finalised.

- ◆ **Education and Primary and Mass Education Minister Dr ANM Ehsanul Hoque Milon said the ‘Pakistan-Bangladesh Knowledge Corridor’ programme will open a new horizon of cooperation in the fields of education and research between the two countries.** “Through this initiative, we hope that the student-teacher exchange programme in the field of higher education will take our bilateral relations to a new height,” he said. The education minister made the remarks while speaking as the chief guest at the launching ceremony of the second phase of the ‘Pakistan-Bangladesh Knowledge Corridor’ programme and the inauguration of Education Expo-2026’ at a city hotel. He said 74 Bangladeshi students are already pursuing higher education in Pakistan under the first phase of this programme. “There will be great opportunities for talented students in the second phase as well,” he added. Noting that the standard of Pakistani universities is very good, Milon said Bangladeshi students are getting the opportunity to study there without any cost, which is very commendable. Especially, he said, the monthly scholarship being given to students for accommodation and living expenses will help them focus fully on their studies. The minister said there are many similarities in religion, culture and food habits of Pakistan and Bangladesh. Mentioning that currently, there are 116 private and 57 public universities in Bangladesh, he hoped that in the future, students from Pakistan will come to Bangladesh for higher education too. Milon stressed increasing joint collaboration and teacher-exchange programmes between the universities of the two countries.
- ◆ **State Minister for Foreign Affairs Shama Obaed Islam on Monday reiterated the government’s “zero tolerance” stance against illegal migration, warning of strict legal action against trafficking syndicates involved in irregular migration.** She made the comments while chairing a meeting on migration and mobility at State Guest House Padma, organized by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the wake of recent deaths of Bangladeshi migrants in the Mediterranean Sea on the Bangladesh-Libya-Italy route. The foreign secretary, senior government officials, the ambassadors of Italy and charge de affairs of Libya to Bangladesh, and the chief of mission of the International Organization for Migration in Dhaka attended the meeting. During the discussion, the Italian ambassador to Bangladesh, Antonio Alessandro, stated that the European Union is set to introduce new asylum and migration regulations in June this year, making legal status for illegal migrants more difficult. The meeting stressed expanding safe, orderly, and regular migration pathways through skill development, language proficiency, and stronger alignment between training and overseas employment opportunities.

## Security

- ◆ **The Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) has been on highest alert along the border with India since the state assembly elections in West Bengal, says Home Minister Salahuddin Ahmed.** He made the announcement on Monday while talking to reporters after a meeting chaired by the prime minister. The decision comes as the new state government of West Bengal said it will transfer land to the Border Security Force (BSF) to erect fences along the Bangladesh border. On May 4, the BGB ordered its members to be vigilant to prevent infiltration during the vote counting in four Indian states, including West Bengal. Noting that Bangladesh maintains diplomatic relations with the central government of India based on “sovereign equality”, Salahuddin said the political situation of any particular state does not affect Bangladesh's foreign policy or bilateral relations. The BGB remains constantly vigilant to prevent infiltration and maintain law and order at the border, he said. On rumours and misinformation on social media about the alleged post-election persecution of

minorities in West Bengal, he said propaganda is often carried out using old and misleading videos. "So far, the home or foreign ministry received no information attesting to such a situation or its negative impact on Bangladesh," the minister said, urging Bangladeshis not to be misled by such propaganda.

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