

# DAILY BANGLADESH WATCH

18 May 2026

## Takeaways

### Politics

◆ **Shah Ali Shrine in Mirpur attacked, Jamaat denies allegation of involvement:** A group of people attacked the Shah Ali shrine in Mirpur, Dhaka, in the wee hours of Friday, using sticks and forcing devotees of the saint to flee. Videos and photos of the incident have already gone viral on social media, drawing widespread criticism. Visitors and locals have accused leaders and activists of Jamaat-e-Islami of carrying out the attack. Police have also said they have received similar allegations. However, Jamaat has denied any involvement. The attack has raised fears among devotees of Shah Ali, amid concerns over a continuing pattern of shrine attacks across the country since the July 2024 mass uprising. According to a report by Sufi research organisation Maqam: Centre for Sufi Heritage, some 97 shrine attacks were reported across the country between August 2024 and December 2025, with the highest number occurring in Dhaka and Chattogram divisions (*Prothom Alo*, [15 May 2026](#)).

◆ **“Attack on Shah Ali shrine part of pattern seen under Yunus government”:** The Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) has condemned the attack on the Shah Ali Baghdadi shrine in Dhaka’s Mirpur, describing it as a continuation of the violence that began during the previous interim government. In a statement on Saturday, the graft watchdog also demanded that the perpetrators be punished. TIB Executive Director Iftekharuzzaman said: “There is no room to consider this an isolated incident. Rather, it is part of a far-reaching plan to develop communal forces by spreading hatred and violence in a well-planned manner and destroying the liberal folk traditions and culturally diverse practices of present-day Bengalis. This is a warning sign for all citizens who uphold free thought and tolerance.” Several devotees who were present at the shrine claimed that the attackers were affiliated with Jamaat-e-Islami and its student wing Islami Chhatra Shibir. Police gave different versions of what had happened, with accounts varying between an anti-drug drive and an unauthorised operation carried out by local groups. Followers of the shrine fear that Thursday night’s attack may be part of the ongoing wave of attacks and vandalism targeting shrines and Sufi sites across the country since Aug 5, 2024. According to them, members of Jatiotabadi Jubo Dal, the youth wing of the ruling BNP, had also attacked the shrine a week ago in the name of an anti-drug drive. The TIB said, “It is not enough for Jamaat activists to simply deny the allegations of involvement. “We urge them and other religion-based political parties to clarify their position on the issue, in addition to the core spirit of Bangladesh’s independence and the July Movement, as well as the country’s glorious culture of coexistence among traditional cultural, spiritual and social diversity” (*bdnews24.com*, [16 May 2026](#)).

◆ **“The allegation against Jamaat regarding the Shah Ali Mazaar issue is baseless”:** Bangladesh Islami Front has held a protest march and rally against the attack on the precincts of Hazrat Shah Ali (RA)’s shrine. Leaders of the organization have demanded the immediate arrest of those involved in the incident and exemplary punishment. Secretary General of Bangladesh Islami Front, Principal S.U.M. Abdus Samad, said that it can never be accepted that the reign of mob terror, which has continued since the time of the interim government, will repeat under an elected government. Those who carried out attacks on various shrines under the name 'Tauhidi Janata' during the Yunus government have

attacked the precincts of Hazrat Shah Ali Baghdadi (RA)'s shrine. He claimed that sometimes Hefazat and sometimes Jamaat supporters are involved in these attacks using the name 'Tauhidi Janata'. All attackers must be arrested swiftly. Abdus Samad also alleged that a local Member of Parliament has a direct role in the attack on Hazrat Shah Ali (RA)'s shrine. He said, "The police administration says they did not conduct any operation, while the local MP says the administration carried out an operation" (*Kaler Kantha*, [16 May 2026](#)).

◆ **National minorities call for rights, cultural protection:** A daylong cultural event titled 'Unity in diversity and cultural harmony fair 2026' was held in Sirajganj on Saturday, highlighting the importance of preserving the languages and cultural heritage of the country's national minority communities. Organised by the Bangladesh Indigenous and Ethnic Minority Federation, the programme took place on the Muktir Soplan premises in Sirajganj district town. **At the programme, representatives of ethnic communities also placed a 12-point demand charter that included official recognition of non-gazetted ethnic groups, 5 per cent quota in government jobs, reserved seats in parliament, organising annual cultural fair, and the establishment of an ethnic minority welfare trust.** Speaking as chief guest at the inaugural session, power, energy and mineral resources minister Iqbal Hasan Mahmud Tuku, referring to former president Ziaur Rahman, said, 'Ziaur Rahman stated that all people living within Bangladesh are Bangladeshis. Bangladeshi nationalism is like a garden where people of different languages, cultures and traditions live together.' The minister also urged national minority communities to preserve their mother languages and cultural identity while prioritising education. The programme was chaired by Bangladesh Indigenous and Ethnic Minority Federation president Sapon Chandra Sing Sardar (*New Age*, [17 May 2026](#)).

◆ **19 held over procession after ex-AL MP's janaza:** The police arrested 19 leaders and activists of the Bangladesh Awami League and its associate organisations after they allegedly brought out an anti-government procession following the namaz-e-janaza of former AL lawmaker Mosharraf Hossain in Chattogram on Thursday. A case has been filed in this connection under the Anti-Terrorism Act 2009, the Chattogram Metropolitan Police said in a press release issued on Friday afternoon. Leaders and activists of the AL and its affiliates, carrying sticks and brick chips, staged a sudden procession on the city's main roads, chanting anti-government slogans after Mosharraf's janaza on the Jamiatul Falah Mosque ground, according to the police. During the primary interrogation, the arrested people admitted their involvement in different associate bodies of the AL, including the banned Bangladesh Chhatra League, the police said. The police also said that the arrested people were involved in anti-state conspiracy, sabotage, criminal activities, and providing support and funds for such activities (*New Age*, [16 May 2026](#)).

◆ **Police recommend dropping 'fake' July killing charges against Hasina, 83 others:** Police have recommended the acquittal of Sheikh Hasina and 83 others in a case involving the alleged murder of a woman during the July Uprising after investigations revealed the entire incident was "fabricated". The investigating officer, Sub-Inspector Shahadat Hossain of Mohammadpur Police Station, submitted the final report to the court on Apr 27. **In the report, the officer noted that the complainant Mohammad Sumon admitted to filing the case following "financial inducements and pressure from certain individuals". Police urged the court to proceed against Sumon over allegations of a false complaint rather than the suspects.** The case was lodged on Feb 14, 2025, claiming Sumon's wife, identified only as Fatema, was shot dead on Aug 4, 2024 during the protests in Mohammadpur. Those named in the case included former home minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal, Obaidul Quader, Nasrul Hamid Bipu, and several top former police officials. While seven individuals were arrested during the initial phase of the investigation -- including Kamrul Islam and Abdul Mukit Majumder -- police now seek the discharge of all 84 people linked to the case (*bdnews24.com*, [15 May 2026](#)).

◆ **Lawyer seeks inquiry into alleged failures during Yunus-led 18-month interim rule:** A petition has been filed with the High Court seeking an investigation into the 18-month tenure of the interim government led by Muhammad Yunus. The petition was filed by senior lawyer Mohsin Rashid, while advocate MK Rahman argued on behalf of the petitioner. Attorney General Ruhul Quddus Kazal represented the state. Later, MK Rahman alleged that the interim administration had created “anarchy” across all sectors, including the economy and healthcare, during its 18 months in office. “We sought an investigation into the interim government’s activities,” he said. “A commission under the Commission of Inquiry Act is necessary so that no elected government can be overthrown in the future.” **The High Court has set Thursday for passing an order on a writ petition seeking an investigation into the activities of the interim government led by former chief adviser Dr Muhammad Yunus during its 18-month tenure.** (*bdnews24.com*, [17 May 2026](#))

◆ **Writ filed seeking travel ban on Dr Yunus, all advisers:** A writ petition has been filed with the High Court seeking an investigation into the role of the former chief adviser Dr Muhammad Yunus and other advisers over the handling of measles vaccination. The petition also seeks a directive to impose a travel ban on 24 individuals, including Dr Yunus and both current and former advisers. Supreme Court lawyer Barrister M Ashraful Islam filed the petition on Sunday, alleging that the concerned authorities were involved in shifting the country’s measles vaccination programme from the state-run system to the private sector. The cabinet secretary along with the secretaries of the ministries of Health, Home Affairs, and Public Administration, and the Director General of the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), among others, have been named as respondents (*Dhaka Tribune*, [17 May 2026](#)).

◆ **Editors’ Council submits list of 282 journalists to PM, flags murder cases against 94:** The Editors’ Council has handed over a list of 282 journalists to Prime Minister Tarique Rahman, highlighting that 94 of them have been accused in murder cases. Briefing reporters at the Secretariat today, immediately after the meeting with the prime minister at the Cabinet Division, several members of the Editors’ Council shared details of the discussion. The list of journalists, however, was not shared. **The information minister told reporters that the prime minister echoed the editors’ concerns and has already instructed him to take necessary action.** At the same time, the Editors’ Council unanimously thanked the prime minister, noting that there has been no state-level intervention in media operations since the formation of the BNP-led government, the minister added (*The Daily Star*, [17 May 2026](#)).

◆ **Draft laws clip powers granted in ordinances:** Weeks after promising stronger legal frameworks to combat state-sponsored human rights violations, the government yesterday presented new draft laws on enforced disappearances and the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) that critics say strip away independent oversight and institutional strength. The drafts were unveiled at a stakeholder discussion organised by the law ministry at the CIRDAP auditorium in Dhaka, chaired by Law Minister Md Asaduzzaman. Stakeholders described the drafts as “watered-down versions” of relevant ordinances, which were passed by the interim administration but allowed to lapse by the elected government (*The Daily Star*, [18 May 2026](#)).

◆ **BNP, Jamaat face off over July charter implementation:** The exchange of allegations and counter-allegations between the government and the opposition over implementing the July National Charter and the referendum outcome has finally moved into the political field. After the Jamaat-e-Islami and the National Citizen Party entered the field, blaming the ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party as opposed to the July Charter and reforms, the BNP has now stepped in, calling the opposition’s allegations propaganda. The BNP has, meanwhile, launched a month-long grassroots programme across

the country to explain its position on the July National Charter and referendum amid growing pressure from opposition political parties to implement the charter. Since the formation of the government, the BNP's political activities at the grassroots level had remained absent. On the other hand, opposition parties, including the Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami and its allies, have kept staging programmes to demand the implementation of the July charter, alleging that the government had undermined the referendum outcome and was unwilling to implement the charter. Amid continued allegations from opposition parties that the BNP was ignoring the July charter, the party has recently instructed its district, metropolitan, and upazila units to launch month-long programmes to inform people about its stance on the July charter and referendum (*New Age*, [18 May 2026](#))

## Economy

◆ **“People want Teesta Master Plan implemented, not promises”**: Opposition Leader in the parliament and Jamaat-e-Islami Ameer Shafiqur Rahman said that people are tired of hearing promises about the Teesta Master Plan and now want to see it implemented. “It is not enough to chant slogans like ‘Jago Bahe, Teesta Bachao’ only before elections. The people living along the Teesta are now awakened. They want their rights and legitimate demands fulfilled. The state must show sincerity towards their demands,” he said. Shafiqur Rahman made the remarks while addressing a civic gathering, as the chief guest, at the Rangpur Shilpakala Auditorium. The event was organised by Jamaat leaders and activists from the Rangpur-Dinajpur region on Friday evening. Shafiqur said, “The Rangpur region has long been neglected. The people here are victims of development disparity. The issues of agriculture, rivers, environment, and livelihoods in this region must receive greater national attention. For the overall development of the country, northern Bangladesh must be given priority.” **He said implementation of the Teesta Master Plan would bring positive changes to the lives and livelihoods of nearly 25 million people in northern Bangladesh.** Criticising the government's development priorities, he said, “The government has approved the implementation of the Padma Barrage Project. The Padma Barrage is undoubtedly important, but the Teesta Master Plan should also receive equal importance. The life-and-death concerns of the people of northern Bangladesh should not be ignored.” Calling on the people living along the Teesta to prepare for a movement, he said, “The Teesta Master Plan will not be implemented automatically. People must become organised and build a movement. Only when your voices reach parliament will the path to implementing the project become easier.” **Rejecting allegations that Jamaat had prior knowledge of the United States-Bangladesh reciprocal trade agreement signed during the interim government's tenure, Shafiqur said, “No one from the interim government discussed this trade agreement with us in any form.” Referring to the political situation in India's West Bengal and border killings, he said, “We condemn incidents of human rights violations taking place in West Bengal. Not only in West Bengal, but anywhere in the world where people are persecuted or attacked because of their religious identity, we protest against it.”** (*The Daily Star*, [15 May 2026](#)).

◆ **“BNP govt will resolve Farakka issue with support of domestic, international stakeholders”**: BNP Chairperson's Adviser and Information and Broadcasting Minister Zahir Uddin Swapon on Saturday expressed optimism that the ruling BNP government would be able to resolve the long-standing Farakka issue with support from both domestic and international stakeholders. “As the Sheaf of Paddy symbol received the people's spontaneous mandate in the national election and gained support from all domestic and foreign forces, in the same continuity the Sheaf of Paddy will, InshaAllah, resolve the Farakka problem,” he said. He made the remarks while speaking as the chief discussant at a discussion organised by Bhashani Janashakti Party marking Maulana Bhashani's historic Farakka Long March Day at the Central Shaheed Minar on Saturday afternoon. Paying tribute to Maulana Abdul Hamid Khan

Bhashani, Swapon said the veteran leader's Farakka march reflected not only political resistance but also his far-sighted patriotism and deep commitment to the welfare of the people. **He said Bangladesh must continue to demand its fair share of water from India regardless of whether projects like the Padma Barrage or Teesta water management plans are implemented domestically.** "There is no question of giving up our rightful share of water from India," he said. **Referring to the Teesta agreement issue, Saiful said the Indian central government had long used West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee as an excuse for delaying the treaty.** "Now there is no scope for playing the Mamata card again. The agreement must be between the governments of Bangladesh and India," he said. He urged the Bangladesh government to prioritize the issue and pursue a sustainable long-term water management strategy (*Dhaka Tribune*, [16 May 2026](#)).

◆ **"Govt. needs 2-years for economic recovery":** Finance and Planning Minister Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury has said past governments had left the country's economy in a fragile state and current government needs two-years time to settle the economy again on right track. The present government had to face gigantic global crisis triggered by from Middle East war immediate after assuming office, he said referring to the ongoing challenges. "The government had to spend Taka 40,000 crore from budget for fuel purchase and another Taka 50,000 crore for foreign debt payment in the power sector," he said. "With all together, the country's economy is not in a good shape. Even though government has decided to provide highest allocation in health sector in upcoming budget to ensure healthcare services for downtrodden people free of cost" Amir Khosru said. The Finance Minister said this while speaking as chief guest at the foundation laying ceremony of 17th storey academic building of Chattogram Maa O Shishu Medical College Hospital (*BSS News*, [16 May 2026](#)).

◆ **PM inaugurates Khordda Canal re-excavation in Chandpur:** Prime Minister Tarique Rahman inaugurated the Khordda Canal re-excavation work in Waruk Bazar area of Tamta Dakshin Union in Shahrasti Upazila in the district. President Ziaur Rahman excavated this Khordda Canal in 1978. After 48 years, the canal is now being re-excavated by his son Tarique Rahman. After launching the Khordda Canal re-excavation work, the Prime Minister ascended a stage built next to the canal while thousands of leaders, activists and supporters on both sides of the canal welcomed the premier with loud slogans and applause. **Tarique Rahman is also scheduled to inaugurate the re-excavation work of another canal named 'Bishwa Canal' adjacent to Ghosher Hat in Kumardugi village of Shah Mahmudpur Union of Chandpur Sadar Upazila.** The Bishwa Canal runs from the Dakatia River to the southern border of Matlab via Ghosher Hat. (*BSS News*, [16 May 2026](#)).

◆ **Speakers demand UN-backed river commission to resolve Ganges water crisis:** Speakers have demanded the formation of a regional river commission comprising China, Nepal, Bhutan, India, and Bangladesh under the supervision of the United Nations and the World Bank to ensure fair share of Ganges water. They made the demand at a mass gathering organized by the 'Farakka Long March Day Celebration Committee' on the bank of the Padma River at Barokuthi in Rajshahi city on Saturday afternoon marking historic 'Farakka Long March Day'. The regional commission would be able to ensure equitable distribution of water in the river basins of the region, environmental conservation, economic development of the people of the river basins especially the poor, improving living standard of people and protecting the rights of neglected women and children, they observed. Advocate Enamul Haque, President of the Rajshahi chapter of the 'Save the River and Environment Movement' presided over the function. The speakers urged the government to take necessary steps to save the Sundarbans, the world's largest mangrove forest and the UNESCO World Heritage, from the reduced river flow and excessive salinity. **They said that the damage caused to Bangladesh due to the diversion of water through India's Farakka Barrage in the Ganges River, the dam on the Teesta River, and dams on other rivers must be**

assessed. In this connection, they said that remedies and compensation must be demanded from the Indian government for causing harm to Bangladesh by unilaterally withdrawing water from the river Farakka. However, this problem cannot be resolved bilaterally either. In the interest of a fair share of international rivers, a regional forum must be formed comprising India, Bangladesh, China, Nepal, and Bhutan on river issues, they observed. Besides, the speakers said that if reservoirs are built in Nepal to store Himalayan water, the water flow at Farakka during the dry season could be increased from 130,000 cusecs to 190,000 cusecs. Everyone would be benefitted from that. With the help of reservoirs, Nepal would be able to generate about 10,500 megawatts of electricity annually, which Nepal could also export to Bangladesh, they added. (*BSS News*, [17 May 2026](#)).

◆ **“People deprived of fair share of waters of transboundary rivers due to fallen AL govt”**: BNP Secretary General and Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives Minister Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir on Friday said the people of Bangladesh had been deprived of their fair share of waters of the transboundary rivers because of the deposed Awami League government. In a message marking the “Historic Farakka Day” on May 16, Fakhrul said the day remains a significant milestone in Bangladesh’s national movement. “Forty-nine years ago, under the leadership of the undisputed oppressed people’s leader Maulana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhashani, hundreds of thousands of people from across the country joined the historic long march towards Farakka demanding Bangladesh’s rightful share of the Ganges water in accordance with international law,” he said. **Fakhrul said India constructed a dam at the Farakkah point on the Ganges and began unilaterally withdrawing water from the shared river. “As a result, the northwestern region of Bangladesh has nearly turned into a desert. Severe ecological imbalances, including water scarcity, have emerged in the region,” he said. He alleged that the then Awami League government ignored public opinion and allowed India to experimentally operate the Farakka Barrage for a few days without considering biodiversity, environmental standards and the risks of natural and humanitarian disasters. “But the barrage has continued operating ever since and has now turned into a deadly trap,” Fakhrul said. “Due to the then Awami League government, the people of this country have been deprived of their fair share of water,” he added. (*Dhaka Tribune*, [15 May 2026](#)).**

◆ **“The government will not make any agreement that destroys the country's interest”**: BNP Secretary General and Minister of Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives (LGED) Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir has commented that the government will not make any agreement that undermines the national interest of the country. He said this in his keynote speech as the chief guest at a discussion meeting organized by BNP at the Engineers Institution auditorium in the capital on Saturday afternoon on the occasion of Farakka Long March Day. He said that whether Bangladesh will maintain good relations with India will depend on the execution of the Farakka agreement. “The government will prioritize the interests of Bangladesh, God willing.” **The BNP Secretary General said that after the current year's agreement ends, India must take the initiative in renewing the Farakka agreement. However, the Farakka barrage agreement will be renewed while protecting Bangladesh's interests.** Referring to the construction of the Padma barrage as a historic decision, Mirza Fakhrul said that discussions and agreements on resolving the Farakka issue must be conducted with due consideration of the aspirations of the people of Bangladesh and the national interest. At the same event, BNP standing committee member Gayeshwar Chandra Roy expressed deep concern about the country's water and environmental crises as well as its communal situation. He said, 'Alongside water and environmental problems, the communal problem is also taking a huge shape. The rise of extremist communalism needs to be controlled.' **Gayeshwar Chandra Roy also accused the Chief Minister of West Bengal, India, of inciting communalism. He said that he would not quarrel with neighbours, but he would not remain trapped in the chains of slavery either. (*Amar Desh*, [16 May 2026](#)).**

◆ **Jamaat praises government on announcement of the Padma Barrage construction:** Leader of the opposition and Amir of Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami, Dr. Shafiqur Rahman, has praised the government for announcing the construction of the Padma Barrage. He said, 'The Padma has become a desert in the dry season and a cause of suffering in the rainy season. We congratulate the government for announcing the construction of the Padma Barrage. But this should not just be for show. At the same time, the Teesta Master Plan must also be implemented.' On Saturday (May 16) afternoon, he made these remarks at a rally organized by an 11-party alliance in the historic madrasa grounds of Rajshahi, demanding the implementation of the referendum verdict, relief from public suffering, and fair allocation of the Padma's water. Jamaat Amir said, 'The first government of the Awami League had given the opportunity to run water through Farakka for only 15 days, but even after 55 years, those 15 days have not been completed. Meanwhile, a BNP leader, who is currently a minister, had organized a huge event on the banks of the Teesta before the elections to create an election atmosphere. We want to clearly state that, without looking at anyone's bloodshot eyes, the Teesta grand plan must be implemented. Water must be brought to the Padma; this is our rightful due.' He said, 'Across Bangladesh, 154 uniform rivers have almost died. If the rivers do not flow properly, then where will the water for the canals come from? First, pay attention to the rivers, and at the same time, also pay attention to the canals. We want the rivers to regain their navigability, and for the canal-digging initiative to see real implementation.' Referring to a neighbouring country as a neighbour, Shafiqur Rahman said, 'We respect our neighbours. We do not want division and unrest there based on religion. But we are seeing that people are being harassed there just because of being Muslim. Red eyes are being shown toward Bangladesh. Friends, this is Titumir's Bangladesh, Haji Shariatullah's Bangladesh, Shah Makhdum's Bangladesh. Do not glare at this Bangladesh. We want to live in peace, and you should live in peace too. If you play cat-and-mouse with our peace, no one's peace will remain.' He further said, 'This country belongs to Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, and Christians. Whoever is born here will enjoy the rights of citizenship on the basis of equal dignity. This is the tradition of Bangladesh. Let no one put a black hand on our heritage. If they do, then 4 billion hands of 200 million people will stop it, Insha'Allah.' (*Kaler Kantha*, [16 May 2026](#)).

◆ **Experts raise concerns over effectiveness and risks of Tk 500bn Padma Barrage project:** After more than six decades of studies, revisions and debate, the proposed Padma Barrage has been approved by the Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (ECNEC), pushing forward one of Bangladesh's most ambitious river projects. The decision has immediately reignited a national conversation over its effectiveness, environmental risks and dependence on upstream water flows from India. Some experts say the success of the project largely depends on India's role, as the Padma is an international river. They argue that the matter should be addressed before the expiry of the Ganges water-sharing treaty. The government says the project will help preserve water in the Padma during the dry season, revive five river systems dependent on the river, reduce salinity in the south-western region, restore the Sundarbans ecosystem by ensuring freshwater supply, ease waterlogging in areas including Bhabodah in Jashore, expand irrigation facilities and improve drainage systems in Padma-dependent areas. Environmental activists and several experts, including Bangladesh Poribesh Andolon (BAPA), have expressed concern over the project. The organisation says the project proposal does not mention or discuss possible negative impacts. "Yet the project will have significant adverse effects both upstream and downstream," BAPA said. Environmental expert and Bangladesh Environmental Network (BEN) global coordinator Md Khalequzzaman argues that the project's effectiveness will be limited without cooperation from India. In an open letter to the government, he urged prioritising a revised water-sharing approach instead of building the barrage. Khalequzzaman also urged ratification of the UN watercourses convention, arguing it would strengthen Bangladesh's negotiating position. He cautioned that relying solely on a barrage could reduce diplomatic leverage if upstream flow is restricted, drawing lessons from

the Teesta irrigation experience. He also warned that the project could worsen salinity in the southern region and disrupt sediment flow, potentially altering the natural dynamics of the Bengal delta. Water resources expert Prof AKM Saiful Islam of Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET) also raised concerns about long-term feasibility, stressing that the project's success depends heavily on future water availability under the Ganges treaty framework. He said if dry-season flows are not secured after the treaty expires, the project could face major operational uncertainty. Comparing it with the Teesta basin, he noted how lack of a comprehensive agreement has already complicated water management. However, water resources specialist and Bangladesh Center for Environmental and Geographic Information Services (CEGIS) Executive Director Malik Fida A Khan sees the project as essential for the south-western region. Despite supporting its necessity, he flagged several challenges, including the need to modernise outdated designs, lack of domestic contractors with experience in mega river structures, and funding constraints for a project estimated at over Tk 345 billion. Gonotantrik Odhikar Committee (Democratic Rights Committee) member Prof Anu Muhammad has raised serious concerns over the technical and environmental implications of the proposed Padma Barrage, warning that it may worsen river flow problems instead of resolving them (*bdnews24.com*, [17 May 2026](#)).

◆ **Four domestic and foreign companies are competing to take over two more terminals of Chittagong Port:** There was already discussion about the largest terminal at Chittagong Port, the New Mooring Container Terminal (NCT). Now, fierce competition among domestic and foreign companies has also begun for two other important terminals of the port—the General Cargo Berth (GCB) and Chittagong Container Terminal (CCT). DP World from the United Arab Emirates, Red Sea Gateway Terminal (RSGT) from Saudi Arabia, the domestic industrial group MGH Group, and alliances of the current berth operators—all are now showing interest in taking control of these active and revenue-generating terminals of Chittagong Port. According to people associated with the port, instead of long-term investments in new projects, operators are now targeting existing terminals to ensure quick returns. Chittagong Port mainly has four principal container and cargo terminals. These are—General Cargo Berth (GCB), Chittagong Container Terminal (CCT), NCT, and Patenga Container Terminal (PCT). Currently, all terminals except PICT are being operated by domestic operators. Patenga Container Terminal is operated by Saudi Arabia's 'Red Sea Gateway Terminal' (RSGT). In addition to these foreign companies, large domestic firms have also entered the competition. The Bangladeshi industrial group 'MGH Group' (which had previously submitted a proposal to operate the CCT) has recently submitted a new proposal to operate both the CCT and the NCCT terminals. A senior official of the Chittagong Port Authority (CPA) confirmed that several proposals have been received from various domestic and foreign companies for terminal operation and investment. Officials and port users say that foreign companies have been showing interest over the past few years in new (greenfield) expansion projects like 'Bay Terminal.' However, these new projects require huge investments and long periods of construction. In contrast, revenue or income can be obtained immediately from the currently operational terminals. And for this reason, both domestic and foreign operators are now focusing more on the existing operational terminals. During the Awami League government, discussions had begun with DP World to operate the NCT. This process continued even during the interim government and had approached the finalization of the contract. However, before the parliamentary elections in February, the process was suspended due to a strike by port workers. The current government is still discussing DP World's proposal for the NCT. Officials from the Ministry of Shipping have stated that the CST terminal has also been placed on the discussion table under the 'Bangladesh-Dubai joint platform.' In the upcoming meetings, it may be considered as a separate project. (*The Daily Star*, [18 May 2026](#)).

◆ **Nahid calls for parliamentary debate, transparency on recent US deals:** National Citizen Party (NCP) Convener and Opposition Chief Whip Nahid Islam warned that the people of Bangladesh

would not accept any government that tries to run the country by depending on a foreign power. “One party used to look towards India. Now, if the new government wants to run the country by depending on another superpower, the people of Bangladesh will not accept it,” he said while speaking as chief guest at a discussion marking the first founding anniversary of the NCP affiliated organisation, Jatiya Jubo Shakti, at BMA Bhaban on Topkhana Road in Dhaka. Nahid also raised questions over recent agreements with the US, including an energy agreement and a commercial deal. “Any agreement of national importance must be discussed in the parliament and made public so that people know whether Bangladesh’s interests have been protected.” He also urged the government to stop blaming the previous interim administration for the measles and energy crises (*The Daily Star*, [16 May 2026](#)).

◆ **Left parties to wage tougher movement over US trade deal:** Leaders of the Anti-Fascist and Anti-War Alliance on Sunday, at a protest rally in Dhaka, called on the Bangladesh Nationalist Party-led government to scrap the ‘unequal’ trade deal signed with the United States government during the rule of interim government. The Anti-fascist and Anti-war Alliance, a combine of 13 political parties, organised the rally in front of the National Press Club chaired by its coordinator and general secretary of the Socialist Party of Bangladesh, Bazlur Rashid Firoz. Bazlur Rashid said that the interim government had signed an ‘unequal’ trade deal with the United States government, by which America would benefit more and Bangladesh would be deprived. He called on the BNP government to take immediate steps to scrap the deal after discussing it in the parliament. He warned that if the government did not scrap the deal, the left political wings would wage tougher movements (*New Age*, [18 May 2026](#)).

## Foreign Policy

◆ **Brazil backs Bangladesh's UNGA bid, BRICS aspirations:** Brazil on Friday formally backed Bangladesh's bid for the presidency of the 81st session of the United Nations General Assembly and assured support for Dhaka's aspiration to join BRICS, marking a major strategic breakthrough in bilateral ties. The development came during a high-level meeting between Prime Minister's Foreign Affairs Adviser Humayun Kabir and Celso Amorim, chief adviser to the Brazilian President at Palácio do Planalto in Brasília, according to a message received here. During the meeting, both sides pledged to elevate Bangladesh-Brazil relations into a multidimensional strategic partnership anchored in stronger political engagement, economic cooperation, multilateral coordination and Global South solidarity. At the outset, Amorim conveyed President Lula's greetings and congratulations to the leadership and people of Bangladesh, describing Bangladesh as an emerging and influential voice of the Global South with an increasingly important international role (*Prothom Alo*, [16 May 2026](#)).

◆ **Bangladesh, Brazil eye strategic partnership, deeper cooperation:** Bangladesh and Brazil have expressed strong interest in elevating bilateral relations to a strategic partnership as the two Global South nations seek to deepen cooperation in trade, investment, technology and institutional engagement. Prime Minister’s Foreign Affairs Adviser Humayun Kobir held talks with Brazilian President’s foreign affairs chief adviser Celso Amorim at Palácio do Planalto on Friday, according to an official release received here on Saturday. During the meeting, both sides underscored the need to transform the existing friendly relations into a strategic partnership, reflecting the growing convergence between Bangladesh and Brazil as emerging voices of the Global South. The two leaders noted that bilateral trade between Bangladesh and Brazil has already reached nearly US\$4 billion, but said the current volume remains far below the actual potential of the two economies. Kobir said the economies of the two countries are complementary and can emerge as stronger economic partners through direct shipping links, enhanced investment flows and stronger business-to-business connectivity. He stressed the need to reduce

dependence on intermediaries in bilateral trade, noting that Bangladesh currently imports cotton, soybeans, sugar, agricultural commodities and industrial raw materials from Brazil, while substantial opportunities remain for Bangladeshi exports of ready-made garments, pharmaceuticals, jute goods and ceramic products (*Dhaka Tribune*, [16 May 2026](#)).

◆ **Algeria keen on investing in Bhola:** Algerian ambassador to Bangladesh Abdelouahab Saidani has expressed strong interest in expanding investment cooperation in Bhola, particularly in gas-based industries, fisheries, livestock, and agro-processing sectors. The envoy concluded a three-day official visit to Bhola on Thursday. During the visit, he held discussions with local business leaders and district administration officials to explore potential areas of economic cooperation and joint ventures. Speaking at an exchange of views meeting organised by the Bhola Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Saidani highlighted the longstanding friendship between Algeria and Bangladesh, which dates back to the 1971 Liberation War. He noted that Bangladesh offers significant opportunities in agriculture, fertilizer production, and the energy sector. He further stated that Algeria is keen to invest in Bangladesh across multiple sectors, including trade and commerce, and specifically identified Bhola's gas-based industries, glass and ceramics manufacturing, fisheries, and livestock as promising areas for cooperation. The ambassador also mentioned that visa processing for Bangladeshi citizens traveling to Algeria can be completed in as little as 10 minutes, reflecting efforts to facilitate smoother people-to-people and business exchanges (*New Age*, [16 May 2026](#)).

◆ **Bangladesh, Angola open energy cooperation talks:** Bangladesh and Angola have held their first high-level bilateral dialogue on energy cooperation, opening a new chapter in efforts to forge a long-term partnership in energy supply, investment and technical collaboration. The virtual meeting, held at Bangladesh's initiative on Friday, brought together senior government officials and state energy entities from both countries for discussions on crude oil and gas cooperation, supply arrangements and investment opportunities. The Bangladesh delegation was led by the secretary of the Energy and Mineral Resources Division and included senior officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Power, Energy and Mineral Resources, Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation and Petrobangla. Bangladesh High Commissioner to Nigeria Miah Md Mainul Kabir, who is concurrently accredited to Angola, also attended the meeting and highlighted the mission's continued efforts to strengthen Bangladesh-Angola relations, according to a message received on Saturday. Bangladesh expressed strong interest in establishing a government-to-government energy cooperation framework with Angola and invited an Angolan technical delegation to visit Dhaka at the earliest opportunity to begin formal negotiations. The Bangladesh delegation also conveyed its readiness to send a reciprocal technical mission to Luanda to advance the discussions and urged early finalisation of a proposed Memorandum of Understanding to provide an institutional framework for bilateral cooperation (*Dhaka Tribune*, [16 May 2026](#)).

◆ **Beijing wants to take the prime minister to China in June:** Since the BNP government took office in Bangladesh, Dhaka-Beijing political communication has become more intimate. **With the aim of taking existing relations between the two countries to "new heights", Beijing is interested in having Prime Minister Tarique Rahman visit China in the last week of June.** According to the proposal from China, the visit could be more than two days. Several responsible government officials, on the condition of anonymity, have informed Prothom Alo about Prime Minister Tarique Rahman's "planned" visit to China. Sources indicate that the schedule for the visit has not yet been finalised. However, according to initial discussions, Prime Minister Tarique Rahman may meet with China's President Xi Jinping and Prime Minister Li Keqiang the day after his arrival in Beijing. Diplomatic sources in Dhaka and Beijing have informed this reporter that a meeting was held on 6 May in Beijing between Bangladesh's Foreign Minister Khalilur Rahman and China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi. In that meeting, emphasis was placed

on intensifying political communication to advance existing relations between the two countries. Prime Minister Tarique Rahman's potential visit to China was particularly highlighted in the discussions between the two foreign ministers. **According to diplomatic analysts, since the new government took office in Bangladesh following the elections in February, political and government-level communication with China has been increasing.** Multiple sources have indicated that while not everything is finalised yet, sources indicate that Bangladesh might bring up topics like increasing trade and investment, particularly relocating Chinese industries, operationalising economic zones, the Teesta Master Plan, modernising the Mongla Port, and initiating direct flights between Guangzhou-Chattogram and Shanghai-Chattogram. **Officials in Dhaka report that over the past three months, China and Pakistan have been unofficially discussing these two regional cooperation initiatives.** The matter has arisen in internal discussions within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs since the new government was instituted under Prime Minister Tarique Rahman. Particularly when Bangladesh is taking initiatives to activate SAARC, there is support for taking time before joining any new regional alliance. The proposed Beijing visit by the Prime Minister could provide important insights not only for bilateral relations but also for indicating the path forward for Bangladesh's regional diplomatic stance. (*Prothom Alo*, [18 May 2026](#)).

◆ **500 Bangladeshi students to get free higher education opportunities in Pakistan:** Around 500 Bangladeshi students will get the opportunity to pursue higher education free of cost at different universities in Pakistan under the Bangladesh-Pakistan Knowledge Corridor initiative. The announcement came at the Bangladesh-Pakistan Education Expo, held for the second time on Sunday at Shahjalal University of Science and Technology (SUST). Pakistan High Commissioner to Bangladesh Imran Haider and SUST Vice-Chancellor Professor Dr AM Sarwaruddin Chowdhury inaugurated the expo at the university's new Social Science Building. Representatives from 22 leading Pakistani universities joined the programme alongside SUST teachers and officials. During the event, SUST signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with a Pakistani university and a Memorandum of Interest (MoI) with another university. Speaking on the occasion, High Commissioner Imran Haider said the initiative had received positive responses from students and academics and would help strengthen educational and cultural ties between Bangladesh and Pakistan. He said the programme would create a platform for knowledge and cultural exchange between the two countries. (*Dhaka Tribune*, [17 May 2026](#)).

◆ **Dubai to recruit 6,000 drivers from Bangladesh:** Dubai Taxi Company will recruit 6,000 skilled drivers from Bangladesh this year. As part of the process, interviews for driver recruitment will begin on Monday at the Bangladesh-Korea Technical Training Centre in Dhaka. The information was disclosed on Sunday during a courtesy meeting between expatriates' welfare and overseas employment minister Ariful Haque Chowdhury and a delegation of Dubai Taxi Company at the ministry in the capital. During the meeting, the minister thanked the delegation for recruiting skilled drivers from Bangladesh and expressed hope that the initiative would continue in the future. He said the ministry would provide all kinds of support throughout the process. Ariful also urged the company to ensure salaries and allowances for workers during their training period after arriving in Dubai. At the same time, he requested them to recruit other professionals from Bangladesh, including doctors and nurses. Representatives of the company said that around 15,000 employees from 27 countries are currently working for them as taxi and limousine drivers. Of them, nearly 8,000 are Bangladeshi nationals. They added that Bangladeshi workers are given priority in recruitment due to their skills and hard work. They further said that through the interviews beginning on Monday, around 1,500 new drivers will initially be screened and selected. The company is interested in recruiting 6,000 Bangladeshi drivers this year (*New Age*, [18 May 2026](#)).

◆ **Qatar Labour Minister Ali bin Saeed arrives in Dhaka on 2-day visit:** Qatar's Labour Minister Ali bin Saeed bin Samikh Al Marri has begun a two-day official visit to Dhaka focused on manpower

**export and bilateral cooperation.** He was received on arrival on Sunday afternoon by Expatriates' Welfare Minister Ariful Haque Choudhury and Prime Minister's Foreign Affairs Advisor Humaiun Kobir at Shahjalal International Airport. A statement from the Qatar embassy said the visit reflects the close fraternal ties between the two countries. It said a joint committee meeting will be held during the visit, where labour, manpower issues and broader bilateral cooperation, including matters related to the Bangladeshi community in Qatar, will be discussed. "We hope this visit will be highly successful and fruitful and further strengthen the friendship and partnership between Qatar and Bangladesh in the days ahead," the statement added (*bdnews24.com*, [17 May 2026](#)).

◆ **Qatar Labour Minister Ali bin Saeed meets PM Tarique Rahman:** Qatar's Labour Minister Ali bin Saeed bin Samikh Al Marri has met with Prime Minister Tarique Rahman. The meeting took place on Sunday at the State Guest House Jamuna, according to Prime Minister's Additional Press Secretary Atiqur Rahman Rumon. "Matters of mutual interest to the two countries were discussed at the meeting," he said. Earlier in the afternoon, the Qatari minister arrived in Dhaka for a two-day state visit focused on manpower export and bilateral cooperation. He is scheduled to hold meetings with senior officials of the Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs during the visit (*bdnews24.com*, [18 May 2026](#)).

## Security

◆ **BGB detains Indian couple at Moulvibazar border:** An Indian couple was detained by the Border Guard Bangladesh while allegedly attempting to enter Bangladesh illegally through the Borlekha border in Moulvibazar. The detainees were identified as Kamrul Ahmed, 32, and his wife Husna Begum Laskar, 24. They were detained from the Gandhai area under Dakshin Shahbazpur union at around 6am on Friday. Members of the BGB recovered Indian identity documents and mobile phones from their possession. According to the 52 BGB Battalion, Kamrul Ahmed travelled to India in 2014 through the Benapole border in Jessore with the help of traffickers. He later obtained Indian citizenship in 2015. He subsequently married Husna Begum Laskar, daughter of Taj Uddin Laskar of Lala village in Hailakandi district of India. During preliminary questioning by the BGB, the couple reportedly admitted to crossing the border illegally into Bangladesh. **The BGB said legal action against them is under way. Officer-in-Charge of Barlekha police station, Moniruzzaman Khan, said on Friday afternoon that the BGB had handed the two detainees over to the police on charges of illegal entry.** "We are verifying the matter, and the BGB has filed a complaint. Further legal action is being taken," he said. (*Dhaka Tribune*, [15 May 2026](#)).

◆ **High commission denies reports of Pakistan's PM visit to Bangladesh for 'defence pact':** The Pakistan High Commission in Dhaka has rubbished reports that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Army chief Field Marshal Asim Munir will visit Bangladesh. Pakistani news website Islamabadpost had reported on Friday that the two would undertake a three day trip to Dhaka after Prime Minister Tarique Rahman returns from a trip to China. "We have no knowledge of any such plans," a spokesperson for Pakistan's Dhaka mission told *bdnews24.com* Friday night. The Bangladesh government has not officially announced any trip by the premier to China. The Islamabadpost article had based its report on rumours allegedly circulating in diplomatic and media circles, calling the proposed high-level visit a potential "major breakthrough in bilateral relations between Islamabad and Dhaka". It cited "sources familiar with the matter" as claiming that several agreements on trade, connectivity, investment, cultural exchange, security cooperation, and a major defence pact would be signed during the trip. (*bdnews24.com*, [15 May 2026](#)).

◆ **Arakan Army continues to pick up fishermen from Bangladesh:** Myanmar's armed rebel group, the Arakan Army, continues to detain Bangladeshi and Rohingya fishermen from the Naf River and the Bay of Bengal, keeping them in custody in conflict-hit Myanmar. **The armed group detained the fishermen when they unknowingly entered Myanmar territory while fishing in the river or the Bay. At least 165 fishermen, including 81 Bangladeshis and 84 Rohingyas from camps for forcibly displaced Myanmar nationals at Ukhiya and Teknaf upazilas of Cox's Bazar, who were detained between December 8, 2024, and May 12, 2026, are still in the custody of the Arakan Army, according to Border Guard Bangladesh data.** During the same period, the BGB brought back 234 fishermen, of them 143 were Bangladeshis and the rest 91 Rohingyas. Bangladesh foreign ministry's Myanmar Wing director general Md Toufiq-ur-Rahman said that there was no scope for maintaining diplomatic relations with the Arakan Army and that Bangladesh could not formally communicate with the group to seek the release of detained fishermen. 'The Arakan Army's detention centres are not even proper jails. We have some informal engagement. We are now in a dilemma as we have to allow fishing for livelihoods while also ensuring that fishermen do not get caught by the rebel group,' he added. He also said that it was not clear whether all the fishermen had actually crossed the border or whether some had been abducted from Bangladesh territory. The fishermen urged the government to demarcate the maritime border with floating buoys so that they could avoid accidentally crossing into Myanmar waters (*New Age*, [16 May 2026](#)).

◆ **Sacked army man arrested over alleged links to banned Islamist outfit:** The Dhaka Metropolitan Police's Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime unit arrested a dismissed Bangladesh Army member from the Islamnagar area of No 5 Shahjadpur union under the Barlekha police station area in Moulvibazar district early Friday over his alleged links to the banned Islamist outfit Neo-Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh. A team of CTTC's Counter Terrorism Investigation Division in a raid arrested him at about 1:50am on Friday, said a Dhaka Metropolitan Police press release. The sacked army personnel, Rahed Hossain Mahed, a resident of Sylhet, is a suspect in a case filed with the Sher-e-Bangla Nagar police station in the Dhaka city in February, the release said quoting CTTC officials. Referring to the preliminary investigation, the CTTC said that Rahed was an active member of the banned outfit Neo-JMB, while the DMP later said in another statement that he had been inspired by banned Dawlatul Islam Neo-JMB. CTTC Counter Terrorism Investigation Division additional deputy commissioner Main Uddin Chowdhury said that they produced Rahed before a Dhaka metropolitan magistrate court on Friday afternoon, and the court granted a three-day remand for him in CTTC custody. Quoting Barlekha police station officer-in-charge Moniruzzaman Khan, *New Age's* staff correspondent in Sylhet reported that the police were on alert after the Police Headquarters issued a warning on April 23 about suspected attacks on important installations in the country. Moniruzzaman said that based on secret information, they knew that Rahed had been in hiding since the red alert was issued and he was trying to flee to India by crossing the Bangladesh-India border along the Barlekha upazila. (*New Age*, [16 May 2026](#)).

◆ **Govt directs stricter border monitoring to curb illegal cattle entry:** State Minister for Fisheries and Livestock Sultan Salauddin Tuku said law enforcement agencies, including Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) and local administrations, have been directed to strengthen surveillance and take effective measures to prevent the illegal entry of cattle through border areas from neighbouring countries. He made the remarks while speaking as the chief guest at a seminar titled "Sustainable Livestock Development: Modern Farm Management, Market Linkage and Value Chain" held at Momo Inn Convention Centre in Bogura this afternoon, organised by the Livestock and Dairy Development Project. The state minister said the government is committed to protecting the interests of local farmers and ensuring sustainable development of the livestock sector. He added that Bangladesh has already achieved self-sufficiency in meeting the demand for sacrificial animals during Eid-ul-Azha due to increased domestic production. (*BSS News*, [17 May 2026](#)).

◆ **India speeds up border fencing:** The West Bengal of India has sped up barbed-wire fencing along the North 24 Parganas border with Bangladesh, reported The Times of India on Sunday. The move comes after West Bengal CM Suwendu Adhikari announced the expedited handover of land to the Border Security Force, added the report available online. According to the report, around 51 km of the nearly 150 km stretch from Bongaon to Hingalganj-Samsernagar remains unfenced, administrative sources say. Discussions among the police, BSF and locals are under way on the handover of fertile agricultural land to the administration. The BSF officials said the 96 km long Swarupnagar to Samsernanj stretch, including 46 km along the Icchamati River, is highly sensitive and remains under strict surveillance. Basirhat SP Alaknanda Vhowal recently inspected the area along with BSF officials, read the report. Farmers along the Basirhat sector have raised concerns about the land acquisition because parts of their farmland lie beyond the existing fence near Bangladesh's Satkhira district. For now, these farmers submit identity documents to border guards to cross the border to work on their fields, added the report. In Bongaon, around 24 acres of land would be required for fencing. Authorities have received farmers' consent for 20 acres. Discussions are ongoing with other farmers, authorities said. (*New Age*, [18 May 2026](#)).

◆ **Army detains 3 UPDF members with arms, ammo:** The Bangladesh Army detained three members of the United People's Democratic Front-main, including its alleged toll collector Ronel Chakma, from the Budongchhara area under Guimara Region in the Chittagong Hill Tracts. Arms, ammunition and extortion-related materials were recovered during an operation conducted Saturday noon, according to a press release issued by the Inter Services Public Relations directorate early Sunday. The ISPR said an army team took position in the area at around 12:00pm based on specific intelligence inputs. Later, several armed men riding two motorcycles attempted to cross the spot. But when army personnel signalled them to stop, the suspects allegedly opened fire on the troops, prompting the soldiers to retaliate in self-defence. The army team later recovered one AK-22 rifle with a magazine, six rounds of live ammunition, one fired cartridge case and other related equipment. Such operations would continue in the CHT region to maintain peace, harmony and stability and to curb terrorism and extortion activities, the ISPR said (*New Age*, [18 May 2026](#)).

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