

DAILY BANGLADESH WATCH

19 May 2026

Takeaways

Politics

- ◆ **Nasiruddin Patwari of NCP on a border visit to protest border killings:** Nasiruddin Patwari, Chief Coordinator of the National Citizens Party (NCP), is going to Hatibandha to protest the killing of a Bangladeshi at the Lalmonirhat border. Tomorrow, he will visit with a delegation from the NCP. The delegation includes the party's organizer Miaz Mehrab Talukdar, M.M. Shoaib, Mustaq Ahmed Shishir, Russel Ahmed, along with central and local leaders. On Monday, NCP stated that the delegation will visit the grave of border martyr Md. Khadimul Islam, who was killed by Indian Border Security Force (BSF) gunfire, meet with injured individuals and family members of the deceased, and review the ongoing border situation during their visit to the Lalmonirhat Bangladesh–India border (*Amar Desh*, [18 May 2026](#)).
- ◆ **Patwari's stern warning to the Chief Election Commissioner:** Nasiruddin Patwari, the chief Coordinator of the National Citizens Party (NCP), has issued a stern warning to the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) A M M Nasir Uddin, raising allegations of election rigging. He stated that if another mass uprising occurs, the Election Commission will be restructured first for the purpose of reform. He also warned that the current Election Commission will be held accountable for allegations of election fraud. Nasiruddin Patwari claimed that there was widespread fraud in the 13th national parliamentary elections. The current commission has remained in place under the eyes of the Prime Minister. If the upcoming local government elections are not completely transparent and impartial, Patwari warned that they will launch a strong movement. and that this (election) commission would also be brought under accountability if there are irregularities. (*Kaler Kantha*, [18 May 2026](#)).
- ◆ **“EC had no design other than holding fair election”:** Chief Election Commissioner AMM Nasir Uddin on Monday said his commission did not work with any particular design to conduct the 13th parliamentary election held on February 12. “We didn't work with any design. Our design was only how to hold a free, fair and credible election,” he said. The CEC made the comments while addressing the inaugural ceremony of the newly elected Executive Committee of Reporters' Forum for Election and Democracy (RFED) at the Electoral Training Institute (ETI) in the city's Agargaon area. Nasir Uddin said they received full support and cooperation from the interim government during the February 12 general election. The Election Commission faced no interference from the then-interim government during the parliamentary election, he added. He said the former chief adviser of the interim government asked his administration not to interfere in the activities of the Election Commission at that time. About the upcoming local government elections, the CEC stressed the need for full cooperation from political parties for fair and peaceful elections. He asked the political parties, if necessary, to sit in discussions for the sake of holding the local government elections in a peaceful and fair manner. About the tentative timetable for the local body polls, Nasir Uddin said the timetable has not been finalised yet, and the EC is now working on amendments to rules and electoral codes (*Dhaka Tribune*, [18 May 2026](#)).

- ◆ **“No violence, but not fair”**: Jamaat-e-Islami Assistant Secretary General Hamidur Rahman Azad today said although the 13th National Parliamentary Election saw no violence, **it cannot be termed a “fair election”**. “The qualitative change this time is that we did not see violence at polling centres. I even said this at the Election Commission’s (EC) meeting the day after the election. **Everything looks fine outside, while inside it is chaotic,”** he added. He made the remarks while speaking at the inauguration programme of the newly elected committee of the Reporters Forum for Election and Democracy (RFED) and the farewell of the outgoing committee at the Election Training Institute in Dhaka’s Agargaon in the afternoon. Azad noted that in the February election, voters did cast ballots and first-time voters were able to exercise their franchise. “But if we do not point out the flaws, it will be hiding the truth. We gave our observations from the field. If a special intelligence agency monitored the election, they would have seen the same.” “There were some qualitative developments, but broadly we cannot call it a fair election,” he added. He alleged that despite press briefings, no corrective steps were taken. Calling for non-interference in upcoming local government polls, Azad said, “Even if there were deviations this time, the local government election should at least be festive, unlike the national election. That is our expectation” (*The Daily Star*, [18 May 2026](#)).
- ◆ **CEC worried as political parties begin naming local poll candidates**: Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) AMM Nasir Uddin has expressed concern over political parties unofficially announcing candidates ahead of the scheduled local government polls, reminding them that the elections are legally mandated to be non-partisan. Speaking at an event on Monday, the CEC urged political parties to reach a consensus to avoid a breakdown of order, noting that local body elections will not feature party symbols. “I see in the media that different parties are already announcing nominations. This is a matter of concern for me; it has added wrinkles to my forehead,” Nasir Uddin said. Highlighting the risks of partisan influence in a non-party election framework, he added: “If they became truly independent, without party ownership or backing, there wouldn’t be inter-party clashes. That is why I believe it would be wise for the political parties to sit down and resolve this themselves. Our support will be there” (*bdnews24.com*, [18 May 2026](#)).
- ◆ **Islami Andolan announces mayoral candidates for 2 Dhaka city corporations**: Islami Andolan Bangladesh has nominated Islami Jubo Andolan central president Atikur Rahman Mujahid for the Dhaka North City Corporation election, while the party’s central publicity and dawah secretary Sheikh Fazlul Karim Maruf has been nominated for the Dhaka South City Corporation election. The names of the candidates were announced this Monday afternoon by Syed Muhammad Rezaul Karim, ameer of Islami Andolan Bangladesh, at an exchange meeting with journalists. The meeting was held at the party’s central office in Paltan, Dhaka. **At the meeting, Syed Muhammad Rezaul Karim said that Islami Andolan Bangladesh would participate independently in local government elections across the country and would not join any alliance** (*Dhaka Tribune*, [18 May 2026](#)).
- ◆ **“Govt plans new law for RAB”**: Home Minister Salahuddin Ahmed has said the government is taking steps to form an elite force under a new law to ensure public safety. **He said the Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) is currently operating on an ad hoc basis, which is not appropriate, and that work is therefore underway to enact a separate law for the force.** He made the remarks yesterday, while speaking to journalists at the RAB headquarters on the occasion of the force’s 22nd founding anniversary. The home minister said the government is planning to introduce a new law that will fully uphold human rights. Under the proposed law, an elite force will be formed to ensure public security in line with new expectations. He said the new force could either be a reformed version of the current RAB structure or be established under a new name, adding that the government is still considering the matter. However, he said accountability and transparency would be ensured in any case. “The

authority will remain, and so will the responsibility. At the same time, transparency and accountability of the force will be guaranteed through the law,” he said (*Dhaka Tribune*, [18 May 2026](#)).

- ◆ **High Commissioner of Singapore meets opposition leader Shafiqur Rahman:** Singapore’s Non-Resident High Commissioner Derek Loh paid a courtesy call on opposition leader of the parliament Dr Shafiqur Rahman at his Bashundara office here. Singapore High Commission charge d’ affairs Michael Lee and Country Director for South Asia Mr Tae Dae Ern also attended with the High Commissioner, said a parliament secretariat release here. Opposition leader’s foreign affairs adviser Barrister Mir Ahmad Bin Quasem Arman, MP, also attended the meeting. The meeting was held in very cordial and friendly environment. During the meeting, they also have exchanged views on country’s present political and economic situation, industrial-commercial development, different important issues including post parliament polls democratic progress, referendum and necessary state reform through implementing the July charter. **During the call on, the Singaporean Non-Resident High Commissioner praised positive role of Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami in economic development and democratic progress of Bangladesh. At the same time, the High Commissioner also expressed hope for strengthening bilateral relations more between Bangladesh and Singapore in future, enhancing area of cooperation and creating new potential of development initiative of both the countries** (*BSS News*, [18 May 2026](#)).
- ◆ **Democratic International holds courtesy meeting with Jamaat leaders:** A courtesy meeting was held between leaders of Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami and a delegation from the U.S.-based international organization, ‘Democratic International.’ The meeting took place on Monday morning (May 18) at the central office of Jamaat-e-Islami. The delegation from ‘Democratic International’ included Dr. Abdul Alim, Chief Director of the Bangladesh office; Lipika Biswas, Senior Director; and Rabiul Islam, Senior Program Manager. **During the meeting, detailed discussions were held regarding the active role of political parties in Bangladesh’s democratic process, as well as the strengthening and sustainability of the country’s democratic and constitutional institutions. Additionally, emphasis was placed on ensuring citizens’ voting rights, organizing free and fair elections, and establishing good governance. During the discussions, the positive role played by Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami in consolidating democracy within the country was commended.** Optimism was expressed that Jamaat-e-Islami would continue to play a constructive role in the future to reinforce good governance and democratic progress within the nation. At this juncture, the leaders of Jamaat-e-Islami expressed hope that ‘Democratic International’ would further expand its cooperation in the future to make Bangladesh’s parliamentary democracy even stronger and more sustainable (*Kaler Kantha*, [18 May 2026](#)).

Economy

- ◆ **Bangladesh, UNDP launch initiative to accelerate low-carbon urban development:** The Sustainable and Renewable Energy Development Authority (SREDA) together with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) on Monday launched a new initiative to support Bangladesh’s transition toward a more sustainable, energy-efficient, and climate-resilient urban development. **The five-year initiative, titled ‘Promoting Energy-Related Low Carbon Urban Development (LCUD) in Bangladesh,’ is supported by a US\$ 3.7 million grant from the Global Environment Facility (GEF).** The project will promote renewable energy adoption, energy-efficient infrastructure, and low-carbon urban planning solutions to help reduce greenhouse gas emissions in

Bangladesh's rapidly growing cities, through development of investment grade projects, interaction between public and private stakeholder and awareness raising among city dwellers (*Dhaka Tribune*, [18 May 2026](#)).

- ◆ **World Bank approves \$350m loan for Bangladesh to purchase LNG:** The World Bank (WB) has approved an additional \$350 million loan for Bangladesh to finance the import of Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG). The Washington-based development lender approved the funding on May 15, and the decision was formally announced via a media release on Monday. Equivalent to approximately Tk 43 billion at the current exchange rate of Tk 122.75 per US dollar, the loan, as described in the media release, will sustain the country's industrial production and power generation, both of which rely heavily on imported gas. This is the second tranche of funding under the "Energy Sector Security Strengthening Project". **Under the package, the International Development Association (IDA) will provide short-term credit lines and payment guarantees, ensuring the security of LNG procurement through standby letters of credit (LC), according to the media release** (*bdnews24.com*, [18 May 2026](#)).

- ◆ **WB says that 1.4m more Bangladeshis pushed into poverty in 2025:** Around 1.4 million more people fell into poverty in Bangladesh in 2025, reaching the rate to 21.4 per cent, which was 20.5 per cent in 2024, said the World Bank. Moreover, the Middle East conflict is expected to blunt a projected recovery in 2026, leaving only 0.5 million people lifted out of poverty against a baseline of 1.7 million had the conflict not occurred. The Washington-based lender made the projection in its report titled 'Bangladesh Development Update: Special Focus – A Business Environment that Delivers Jobs', presented at a seminar jointly organised by the Policy Research Institute and the World Bank on Monday in the capital (*New Age*, [18 May 2026](#)).

- ◆ **NEC approves Tk 3 lakh crore ADP for FY27 with focus on reform, infrastructure:** The National Economic Council (NEC) on Monday approved the Annual Development Programme (ADP) worth Tk 3,00,000 crore for the 2026-27 fiscal year. Prime Minister Tarique Rahman chaired the meeting held at NEC conference room. Finance Minister Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury briefed reporters after the meeting. He said the proposed ADP includes Tk 1,90,000 crore from government funds and Tk 1,10,000 crore from foreign loans and grants. **The proposed ADP size marks a 50 per cent increase from the revised ADP of the current fiscal year, with domestic resource allocation rising by 48.44 per cent and external financing increasing by 52.77 per cent.** According to a press release of the Planning Ministry the Annual Development Plan (ADP) for the fiscal year 2026-27 reflects a new vision for development. Some 1277 new projects have been proposed from different dates and departments. In addition, 148 projects have been proposed to be included in the PPP cluster and the Bangladesh Change Trust Fund. The symbol reflects the importance of private investment and climate adaptation. The ADP for the fiscal year 2026-27 has emphasised on the special growth of projects and financial arrangements. There has been a large increase in the stimulus given to the project sector in the current fiscal year, which indicates an improvement in the capacity of development activities (*Prothom Alo*, [18 May 2026](#)).

- ◆ **"Teesta Master Plan to be implemented soon":** State Minister for Water Resources Forhad Hossain Azad today said the government would implement the Teesta Master Plan in the near future as necessary processes are progressing. "The Prime Minister pledged the project before the election. So, people should remain patient. The Teesta Master Plan will be implemented," he told reporters after inaugurating the regional phase of "Notun Kuri Sports-2026" at Shaheed Abu Sayeed Stadium here. The state minister said the Ministry of Water Resources is currently dealing with three

major issues - renewal of the Farakka Treaty, implementation of the Padma Barrage Project and the Teesta Master Plan. He said allocation for the Padma Barrage Project has already been approved by ECNEC, while technical review, examination and verification related to the big projects are continuing. Azad also said the Farakka Treaty will expire on December 11 and the government is holding discussions for its renewal (*BSS News*, [18 May 2026](#)).

- ◆ **Inclusion of marginalised people in budget process demanded:** Researchers, rights activists, journalists and civil society members on Monday called for ensuring the participation of marginalised communities in the formulation and implementation of the national budget. They made the call at a views-exchange meeting titled ‘fair allocation, participation, implementation and monitoring in the national budget for marginalised communities’, held in the capital Dhaka. The Association for Land Reform and Development organised the meeting before the forthcoming 2026–27 financial year national budget. According to the speakers, doubts remain about whether the full potential of the budget is being utilised for poverty alleviation, inequality reduction and socio-economic development across different population groups, regions, ethnic identities, gender identities and class structures (*New Age*, [19 May 2026](#)).

Foreign Policy

- ◆ **Bangladesh, US agree to reinforce defence ties:** Bangladesh and the United States have agreed in principle at the political level to reinforce defence cooperation, with both countries advancing negotiations on two long-discussed foundational agreements — the General Security of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA) and the Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement (ACSA). The negotiations, which have continued for nearly a decade, are now gaining renewed momentum as Dhaka seeks to diversify its defence partnerships while maintaining its long-standing policy of strategic balance among major powers. Officials familiar with the discussions say the agreements are largely technical and administrative in nature rather than military alliances, though they carry significant geopolitical implications as regional powers closely monitor developments. GSOMIA is a legally binding framework that enables the secure sharing and protection of classified military information between the United States and partner countries. It is widely considered a prerequisite for access to advanced American military technology, sophisticated defence platforms, and deeper operational cooperation. ACSA, meanwhile, facilitates logistical support and reciprocal services between armed forces during exercises, humanitarian missions, training, and peacekeeping operations. Under the arrangement, both countries would be able to provide services to each other’s military assets on a reciprocal basis. **Dhaka and Washington had previously reached agreement on draft texts of the defence deals, but the initiatives faced strong resistance from sections of Bangladesh’s security establishment.** According to the former official, some intelligence agencies believed Washington viewed Bangladesh as a strategically important outreach point in the Indo-Pacific region, and that signing the agreements could strengthen long-term US operational access. **However, when contacted, a senior official at the Bangladesh Embassy in Washington, told TIMES, “We have no knowledge of negotiations regarding the two instruments”** (*Times of Bangladesh*, [19 May 2026](#)).
- ◆ **Dhaka, Washington upbeat over growing Bangladesh-US ties:** Dhaka and Washington have expressed satisfaction over the growing trajectory of Bangladesh-US relations, reaffirming their commitment to expanding cooperation in areas of mutual interest. Bangladesh State Minister for Foreign Affairs Shama Obaed Islam and US Assistant Secretary of the Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs S Paul Kapur shared the view during a meeting at the US State Department yesterday, according to a statement issued by the Bangladesh Embassy in Washington. **During the meeting, the**

two sides discussed strengthening cooperation in trade, energy, defence, the Rohingya crisis, the Indo-Pacific region, and people-to-people contact. They also underscored the importance of regular high-level engagements to maintain momentum in the evolving bilateral relationship (*The Daily Star*, [19 May 2026](#)).

- ◆ **Bangladesh, New Zealand eye broader economic cooperation:** Bangladesh and New Zealand expressed interest in expanding bilateral cooperation in pharmaceuticals, tourism, higher education and food processing. The discussion was taken place during a meeting between Prime Minister's Foreign Affairs Adviser Humayun Kabir and New Zealand High Commissioner to Bangladesh David Pine at the Prime Minister's Office here. **During the meeting, the two sides held fruitful discussions on bilateral relations, trade expansion and new avenues of mutual cooperation between Bangladesh and New Zealand. Pine expressed New Zealand's keen interest in strengthening engagement with Bangladesh in pharmaceuticals, tourism, higher education and food processing sectors.** He also highly appreciated Bangladesh's proactive role in addressing the adverse impacts of global climate change and called on the country to play a stronger leadership role on the issue in the international arena (*BSS News*, [18 May 2026](#)).
- ◆ **Qatar to recruit Bangladeshi skilled workers in four categories:** Qatar has expressed strong interest in recruiting workers from Bangladesh in four skilled categories-electricians, plumbers, AC technicians and welding technicians from five designated technical training centers in the country. Visiting Qatari Labour Minister Dr. Ali bin Saeed bin Samikh Al Marri said this during a meeting with Bangladesh's Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment Minister Ariful Haque Chowdhury at the ministry conference room in Bangladesh Secretariat. **Responding to Bangladesh's request for additional visa centers in divisional cities, Dr. Al Marri assured that he would personally discuss the matter with Qatar's interior minister to help implement the proposal** (*BSS News*, [18 May 2026](#)).
- ◆ **Fakhrul urges Singapore to invest in Bangladesh's potential sectors:** Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives Minister Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir urged Singapore to invest in Bangladesh's promising sectors, saying the country has emerged as a highly potential destination for foreign investment. "There are vast opportunities for foreign investment in infrastructure, PPP, transport and technology sectors," he said when Singapore's Non-Resident High Commissioner Derek Loh paid a courtesy call on him at the secretariat here. The minister said Bangladesh is facing various challenges in development and modernisation, but the government led by Prime Minister Tarique Rahman is taking effective initiatives in different sectors to sustain economic progress. During the meeting, both sides stressed strengthening bilateral cooperation between Bangladesh and Singapore, particularly in investment, healthcare, technology transfer, waste management and rural development (*BSS News*, [18 May 2026](#)).
- ◆ **Bangladesh, Singapore pledge joint cooperation on police reform, cyber security:** Bangladesh and Singapore have reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening bilateral cooperation in police reform, cyber security, counterterrorism and investment expansion. The commitment came during a meeting between Home Minister Salahuddin Ahmed and Singapore's Non-Resident High Commissioner Derek Loh at the Secretariat today, said a press release of the ministry. **The meeting focused on law enforcement cooperation, professional training and capacity building of Bangladesh Police, cybercrime prevention, countering transnational extremism, real-time information sharing, trade and investment expansion, and mutual legal assistance in criminal matters.** Salahuddin described Bangladesh-Singapore relations as "close and multidimensional," saying the partnership is built on mutual trust, friendship and shared interests at both regional and

international levels. High Commissioner Derek Loh said Singapore is ready to provide technological and training support to enhance the professional capabilities of Bangladesh's law enforcement agencies. He proposed sending a delegation of senior Bangladeshi police officers to Singapore for specialised training and experience-sharing programmes (*BSS News*, [18 May 2026](#)).

- ◆ **UAE envoy meets PM's defence adviser:** The United Arab Emirates' ambassador to Bangladesh Abdulla Ali Alhmoudi paid a courtesy call on prime minister's defence adviser retired brigadier general AKM Shamsul Islam at his office at the Armed Forces Division in Dhaka Cantonment on Monday. During the meeting, both sides exchanged views on Bangladesh-UAE bilateral relations, particularly on expanding defence cooperation, experience-sharing and future collaboration opportunities, said an Inter-Services Public Relations Directorate press release. They also focused on enhancing defence and security cooperation through expanded training, capacity building, professional skill development and greater mutual engagement. They also noted that there remained significant scope to further broaden defence cooperation between Bangladesh and the UAE on the basis of their existing friendly relations (*New Age*, [19 May 2026](#)).
- ◆ **New Zealand assures BD of extending DFQF facility after LDC graduation:** New Zealand has assured Bangladesh of extending duty-free and quota-free (DFQF) facility and preferential market access even after its graduation from LDC. The country has also expressed its strong interests in further expanding bilateral trade and investment between the two nations. Non-resident high Commissioner of New Zealand to Bangladesh David Pine made the assurance and willingness while meeting with the Commerce Minister Khandakar Abdul Muktedir at the latter's secretariat office on Sunday. During the meeting, both the sides discussed the effective utilisation of existing regional frameworks and signing of the proposed comprehensive bilateral Free Trade Agreement (FTA), aiming to further strengthen the mutual cooperation (*Financial Express Bangladesh*, [18 May 2026](#)).

Security

- ◆ **Defence Adviser for boosting maritime security by strengthening domestic capability:** Prime Minister's Defence Adviser Brig Gen (retd) Dr AKM Shamsul Islam said domestic capability would be the country's main strength in strengthening maritime security. He came up with the remarks while visiting the Bangladesh Navy-operated Narayanganj Dockyard with a view to further strengthening the country's defence capability, naval strength and maritime security, according to a release of the Inter Services Public relations (ISPR) Directorate this afternoon. The defence adviser, during his visit, was apprised of the details about the overall activities of the dockyard, including its shipbuilding and repair capabilities, modern technical facilities, infrastructural development, production activities, maintenance systems and ongoing development works under the auspices of the Bangladesh Navy. Subsequently, he toured different important installations, workshops, production zones, repair facilities and ongoing development projects at the dockyard. Highlighting the importance of developing the domestic naval industry, he said expansion of local shipbuilding, repair and maintenance capabilities is essential for protecting national security, naval strength and maritime interests (*BSS News*, [18 May 2026](#)).
- ◆ **PM to lead new high-level committee on national security, social stability:** A National Coordination Committee has been formed, headed by Prime Minister Tarique Rahman, to ensure the country's security and social stability. Under its terms of reference, the committee has been tasked with carrying out a comprehensive assessment of the country's overall security situation. In the 13-member committee, the home minister has been appointed as the vice-chairman, while the

prime minister's defence adviser has been appointed the chief coordinator. The other members include high-ranking government officials. Generally, after forming a new government, various cabinet committees are constituted for different sectors. However, insiders said no committee under this specific name, headed by the prime minister, existed under any other recent government. According to its terms of reference, the committee will define critical issues, fields, and scopes related to national security and social stability, as well as formulate integrated action plans. The committee is also responsible for setting national security priorities, supervising coordination among agencies, and outlining the operational boundaries for law enforcement and security agencies. Furthermore, the committee will recommend amendments to existing laws and regulations, propose drafting of new laws, if necessary, and establish a system for the regular monitoring of online platforms. The National Security Intelligence (NSI) will provide the required manpower and infrastructural support to act as the secretariat for this committee (*The Daily Star*, [18 May 2026](#)).

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