

# DAILY BANGLADESH WATCH

20 May 2026

## Takeaways

### Politics

- ◆ **“Independent mass media commission to be formed soon”:** Information and Broadcasting Minister Zahir Uddin Swapon said that work is underway to form an effective, widely acceptable and independent mass media commission aimed at ensuring a free media environment in the country. Speaking as the chief guest at the inaugural ceremony of a new Bengali daily "Agamir Somoy" at a city hotel this evening, the minister said the proposed commission would be formed in consultation with all relevant stakeholders. **He said the government is working to establish a commission with quasi-judicial authority in the near future.** Once formed, it would help ensure media freedom while also protecting the rights and security of journalists, he added. The commission, he added, would ensure that neither media owners nor others could deprive journalists of professional rights or misuse journalistic privileges. (*BSS News*, [19 May 2026](#)).
- ◆ **“Media commission, policy to be formed by July-August:”** Information and Broadcasting Minister Zahir Uddin Swapon said a time-befitting media policy and a media commission will be formed by July-August next to ensure the interests of all parties - journalists, owners and newspaper employees. Besides, he said, the media commission will work to bring the issues of creating anarchy through unethical journalism under the legal framework. “We are working to create a specific and organised legal framework to resolve disputes between journalists and the owners. A policy and a commission acceptable to all will be formed by July-August so that the interests of all parties are guaranteed,” he said. The minister said the issues of false cases filed against journalists and unethical journalism were discussed in the meeting with the Editors' Council. Since there is no specific provision in the existing law to identify such activities as a crime, aggrieved people are often using different laws, he said. Swapon said it will be possible to remove this legal limitation after the formation of the proposed media commission (*BSS News*, [19 May 2026](#)).
- ◆ **PM inaugurates 'Land Service Fair-2026':** Prime Minister Tarique Rahman on Tuesday inaugurated the three-day "Land Service Fair-2026" aimed at making land-related services easier and more accessible for people across the country. The prime minister opened the fair by pressing a button at the Bhumi Bhaban at Tejgaon in Dhaka at 11:05am. He also unveiled the covers of three publications of the Ministry of Land. Following the inauguration, the fair began simultaneously in all districts and upazilas across the country. The fair will continue until May 21. This year's theme of the fair is: “People-friendly automated land management, secure land and a prosperous future.” **The main objective of the fair is to familiarise citizens with new digital land services and provide some services directly at the venue** (*Dhaka Tribune*, [19 May 2026](#)).
- ◆ **“Ansar-VDP to turn every village into development hub”:** Prime Minister Tarique Rahman has said that through Ansar-VDP, every village of the country will become a center of socio-economic development, expressing optimism that Bangladesh will advance further through the courage and dedication of the force's 6 million members in building a discrimination-free,

**justice-based and safe society.** The prime minister made the remarks in a statement sent to the media on Tuesday ahead of the 46th National Assembly-2026 of the Bangladesh Ansar and Village Defense Force, to be observed on Wednesday. He said the role of Ansar members remains “significant in any need of the country,” adding that the force played a “commendable role” in ensuring a free, fair and impartial 13th national parliamentary election held across the country in February. **The prime minister added that more than 52,000 attached Ansar members are working tirelessly to ensure security at industrial factories, hospitals, financial institutions and other critical national installations** (*Dhaka Tribune*, [19 May 2026](#)).

◆ **Jamaat draws up initial structure of shadow cabinet:** Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami, opposition party, has moved closer to forming a shadow cabinet designed to offer constructive criticism of government decisions and present alternative policy proposals, say several senior leaders of the party. The preliminary structure of a shadow cabinet, covering all ministries, has already been drawn up, they told *The Daily Star* recently. The party, however, has not yet made any announcement on the matter. Alongside the party’s top leaders, policy experts, lawyers, university teachers, businesspeople and former bureaucrats were involved in drafting the structure. Party leaders said they want to further assess the structure before rolling it out, as the concept is new in Bangladesh. Based on the outcome, an operational framework may be finalised ahead of the next parliamentary session beginning on June 7. If everything goes according to plan, the names of shadow cabinet members will be announced during the session. **According to the initial structure, each ministry-based team will consist of three to five members. Each team will be led by either a lawmaker, a senior party leader or an expert, Jamaat Assistant Secretary General Ahsanul Mahboob Zubair, who heads its central publicity department, said** (*The Daily Star*, [20 May 2026](#)).

◆ **“Govt forming another ‘figurehead’ NHRC”:** The Transparency International Bangladesh on Tuesday expressed concern over the draft National Human Rights Commission Act 2026, saying that several provisions risk turning the proposed commission into a government-dependent body and undermining its independence. In a statement sent to the media on Tuesday, the anti-graft watchdog’s executive director, Iftekharruzaman, said that the draft included provisions requiring the commission to obtain permission from, or rely on reports by, government authorities and law enforcement agencies while investigating allegations of human rights violations against them. The government on Sunday presented a new draft law for the NHRC at a stakeholder discussion organised by the law ministry at the CIRDP auditorium in the capital Dhaka, chaired by law minister Md Asaduzzaman (*New Age*, [20 May 2026](#)).

◆ **Meeting of Jamaat MP with Bangladesh Ambassador in South Korea:** Mohammad Kamal Hossain, Member of Parliament for Dhaka-5 and Assistant Secretary of Dhaka Metropolitan South Jamaat, had a courtesy visit and meeting with Bangladesh Ambassador to South Korea, Taufiqul Islam Shatil. This unscheduled meeting took place yesterday, Monday, at the Bangladesh Embassy in South Korea. **The meeting was organized on the occasion of the MP’s personal visit. In the friendly atmosphere of the meeting, important discussions were held on various issues concerning the interests of the country and the problems of overseas Bangladeshis. In particular, detailed discussions were held regarding sending the bodies of all expatriate workers (remittance-wielder), including students staying abroad, back to the country at government expense.** MP Mohammad Kamal Hossain promised to discuss the legal aspects of this process with the Minister of Expatriates’ Welfare and Overseas Employment after returning to the country. Additionally, the meeting also covered discussions on how business, trade, and investment from South Korea to Bangladesh can be increased. Among others, the meeting was also attended by the

embassy counselor Tarazul Islam, Commercial Counselor Md. Nazmul Haque, and M I Choton, member of the Bangladesh-South Korea Unity Council and businessman (*Amar Desh*, [19 May 2026](#)).

- ◆ **Exchange of views between the President of PAS Malaysia and the Secretary General of Jamaat:** Mia Golam Parwar exchanged views with Tan Abdul Hadi Awang, MP, President of Malaysia's largest political party, the Islamic party PAS-Malaysia. On Tuesday, during his visit to Malaysia, Mia Golam Parwar, Secretary General of Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami and former MP, held this exchange meeting. **During the discussion, various topics of mutual interest, contemporary challenges of the Muslim Ummah, and different ways to further strengthen the fraternal relationship between the people of Bangladesh and Malaysia were discussed.** Earlier, Mia Golam Parwar had a courtesy meeting with Nurul Izzah Anwar, vice president of Malaysia's ruling Justice Party and daughter of Malaysia's Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim (*Amar Desh*, [19 May 2026](#)).
- ◆ **“So was Sheikh Hasina true”, questions Masud Kamal:** “The United States wanted the island of Saint Martin and its surrounding areas for use by their military forces”, Sheikh Hasina said, “if I don’t allow them to use these, then I might have to step aside. Now we are seeing that Sheikh Hasina had to step aside.” However, is this really what happened to Sheikh Hasina? Such a question has been raised by journalist and political analyst Masud Kamal. He said, 'When everyone is talking about the trade agreement with the United States—experts, scholars, economists, journalists, those who are discussing and criticizing it—we see that neither the government nor the opposition is making any statements. Everyone is completely silent; it seems as if they are somehow afraid or have accepted the matter. Since they are not protesting against what people are saying or what we are criticizing, it feels as if they think there is nothing to protest about.' **Masud Kamal said, 'When there is so much discussion about trade, at the same time we are hearing about two more agreements. To avoid redundancy, both are defence-related agreements with the United States. One is a General Security of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA), and the other is an Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement (ACSA). We have learned that these two agreements are at the very final stage of signing.'** For the past few days, some people have been discussing this on social media. I also couldn't say anything as I didn't have any concrete information. **But today I saw that an international media outlet called 'Maritime Insight' also reported on this agreement. The headline of their news was - 'U.S Plans To Deploy Warships In Bangladesh, Closer To India & China'. This news gives an indication of what the reaction might be if this agreement happens, what kind of trouble we could get into, suggesting that China and India may not take it easily. 'Now the question is, what is in the agreement? Amidst many things, it states here that US military ships or warplanes will be able to use Bangladesh's ports and airbases for fuel collection, maintenance, and logistical support. That means, our seaports, our airports can be used by the United States as per their needs. What will they do by using these? But this is a basic point. How will India and China react to this? Will they be happy?' Masud Kamal further said, 'Let's suppose hypothetically, if we had allowed India to use these ports—forget about the current situation, let's assume during Sheikh Hasina's tenure. If Bangladesh had allowed India to use these bases back then, tell me, what would have happened across the country? There would have been an uproar. People would have said we are selling the country, entering into a slavery agreement, becoming the taxpayers of another country. They would have said that. Who would have said it—you know those faces too. What are those people doing now? Has anyone protested? Has anyone raised a word? We have seen their shouting and uproar over the slavery that did not happen. But the slavery that is happening now, with all the agreements properly made and write-ups in international media—our media is silent on these, and those**

patriotic people, whose blood boils at the mention of slavery, are now silently wandering around with ice-cold blood, smiling.' **He mentions, 'Not only this, but other military facilities will also have to be made available for use by the United States. Do you remember, during the caretaker government, American soldiers came to Cox's Bazar for exercises. At that time, many of us protested, asking why this had to be done. The government at that time explained in various ways that it was routine work.** You should also remember, during the rule of the past authoritarian ruler, whom we call Sheikh Hasina, she said that the United States wanted to use our military forces, including the island of Saint Martin and the surrounding areas, for their naval use. They said that if these were allowed to be used, there would be no problem for Sheikh Hasina, and that they would keep Sheikh Hasina in power.' Sheikh Hasina said all these things, we did not believe it. We said that Sheikh Hasina was trying to scare us. **Sheikh Hasina said that if I do not allow the use of these, then I might have to step aside. Now what are we seeing, Sheikh Hasina has had to step aside. Sheikh Hasina has even left the country.** There is another reason behind this as well. I will certainly say that Sheikh Hasina's misgovernance, the denial of democracy, the denial of people's voting rights, giving approval to unrestricted looting—there are many such things, there is no end to the crimes. **But still, when this point aligns, many will say that the United States had a role in removing Sheikh Hasina. He said, 'Do you remember, a few days ago—the main person of the July movement, the one who was known as their guru, Mr. Farhad Mazhar, also said that now he has realized that this movement, or the fall of Sheikh Hasina, or the change of power—whatever we say—has a significant role played by the United States. We are gradually realizing where the interests of the United States lie.** First, it was the trade agreement, and now it is the defence agreement. So that is the same thing: we drove Sheikh Hasina out of the country, we said Sheikh Hasina was intimidating people with black magic, but now it is seen that those things are actually being implemented.' (*Kaler Kantha*, [19 May 2026](#)).

◆ **“Hasina says return depends on restoration of democracy, political rights in Bangladesh”:** Former prime minister Sheikh Hasina has said she will return to the country “very soon”, linking her comeback to what she described as the restoration of a democratic environment and political rights, according to an email interview published by the *Hindustan Times*. In the interview, Hasina warned that Bangladesh could drift back towards what she called the “dark days” of 2001 to 2006, when the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) was in power, saying rising militant and extremist forces posed a renewed risk to stability. Hasina, who has been living in India since her Awami League government collapsed following student-led protests in 2024, also stressed that her absence from the country did not amount to political silence, said the Indian English-language daily. She added that her return was not tied to any fixed timeline, but to broader political conditions. Hasina also argued that restrictions on the party reflected fear among political opponents rather than legal permanence, claiming the party retained mass support despite “attacks, cases, imprisonment and persecution”. Addressing internal discussions within the party about leadership restructuring, she reportedly said organisational change was normal but rejected the idea of replacing ideological foundations. Hasina concluded that her return, and the party’s future, were only “a matter of time” (*bdnews24.com*, [19 May 2026](#)).

◆ **Govt claims successes, oppositions list failures:** The government on Tuesday presented its achievements during the first three months in office while opposition parties, in and outside the parliament, challenged the claims. The government claimed success in managing the energy crisis, maintaining public security and controlling inflation, but the opposition accused the administration of failing in the law and order, inflation control, and public service delivery. Information minister Zahir Uddin Swapon at a press conference at the Bangladesh Secretariat presented a comprehensive

progress report for the government. **Govt claims 1)** Tackling energy crisis, ensuring fuel supply, 2) Nationwide measles vaccination, 3) Securing 9.5cr vaccine doses through UNICEF, 4) Monthly cash assistance thru expanded Family Card, 5) Renewable energy expansion plan. **Oppositions allege 1)** Law and order deterioration, 2) Rising inflation, commodity prices, 3) Transport-related deaths during Eid-ul-Fit, 4) Negligence in handling measles outbreak, 5) Moving away from July National Charter, referendum mandate (*New Age*, [20 May 2026](#)).

◆ **Govt plans to begin local government elections from September–October:** The government plans to start a phased rollout of local government elections across Bangladesh after the monsoon season, beginning in September or October this year. LGRD State Minister Mir Shahe Alam made the announcement while speaking to journalists in Bogura today. He said elections to five tiers of local government bodies will be completed within the next year. According to him, the sequence of polls will depend on budget availability, with union parishad elections expected to be held first, followed by other local bodies requiring larger allocations. The state minister also said elections to 13 city corporations, including the newly formed Bogura City Corporation, will be completed within the same timeframe (*The Daily Star*, [19 May 2026](#)).

◆ **EC names 23 parties for missing election expense accounts submission deadline:** The Election Commission (EC) has published the names of 23 registered political parties that failed to submit their expenditure accounts for the 13th national parliamentary election within the stipulated deadline. According to the EC, the parties that failed to submit the accounts are: Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), National Citizen Party (NCP), Islami Oikya Jote, Bangladesh Islami Front, Biplabi Workers Party of Bangladesh, Jatiya Gonotantrik Party (Jagpa), Bangladesh Muslim League (BML), Ganotantri Party, Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD), National Democratic Movement (NDM), Bangladesh Jatiya Party (BJP), Gonoforum, Amar Bangladesh Party (AB Party), Gono Odhikar Parishad (GOP), Nagorik Oikya, Ganosamhati Andolan, Gono Front, Bangladesh Minority Janata Party (BMJP), Bangladesh Kalyan Party, Bangladesh Republican Party (BRP), Amjanatar Dal, Bangladesh Samadhikar Party (BEP), Bangladesh Nezame Islam Party. He also said the EC Secretary Akhtar Ahmed would extend the submission deadline following requests from political parties (*The Daily Star*, [20 May 2026](#)).

◆ **Attack on Shah Ali Shrine: Religious dispute or struggle over wealth?** A wave of nationwide criticism has erupted over an attack on the Shah Ali Baghdadi (RA) shrine in Mirpur, Dhaka. One side says the violence escalated during a law enforcement drive against long-standing drug trafficking in the shrine area. Another side claims the so-called “anti-drug operation” was a tactic to assert influence and seize control of businesses and economic assets surrounding the shrine. **Analysts say the incident also reflects efforts to establish political and ideological dominance. Locals, however, believe the episode goes beyond extremism, drugs, or crime. They point to control of the shrine committee, extortion and financial interests, ideological and religious divisions, and the expansion of political influence. Influence over the shrine, control of followers, and financial transactions are also cited as key factors.** The shrine’s assets—worth thousands of crores of taka—have further intensified tensions. Following political changes, control over its influence network has repeatedly shifted hands (*Dhaka Tribune*, [20 May 2026](#)).

## Economy

- ◆ **“Bogha Bridge construction to begin next year”:** Road Transport and Bridges, Railways and Shipping Minister Shaikh Rabiul Alam said the construction work on the proposed Bogha Bridge over the Lohalia River is expected to begin early next year. He made the announcement after visiting the feasibility study site for the bridge construction at the premises of Chargarabdi Islamia Dakhil Madrasa in Dumki upazila of the district. **The minister said the government has undertaken the project to connect the rural economy with the country's main economic infrastructure and improve communication networks.** He said modernization of the transport system would enable farmers and local producers to send agricultural goods, handicrafts and other local products directly to major urban markets without relying on middlemen (BSS News, [19 May 2026](#)).
- ◆ **“Govt aims to transform jute sector into \$7 billion industry”:** Commerce, Industries and Textiles and Jute Minister Khandakar Abdul Muktaadir today said that the government has set an ambitious target to transform Bangladesh's traditional jute sector into a US\$5 billion to \$7 billion export-oriented industry. **Through modernization, research, diversified products, and stronger private sector participation this target can be reached Muktaadir hopes.** "The country's golden fiber sector has the potential to regain a prominent position in the global market through planned reforms and technological advancement," Muktaadir said. Muktaadir said that Bangladesh currently earns around \$1 billion annually from jute and jute goods exports, but the sector could grow several-fold with meticulous planning, modern technology, intensive research, quality seed production and expansion of diversified jute products (BSS News, [19 May 2026](#)).
- ◆ **Haor rice losses surpass 200,000 tons, prices rising:** The total rice loss has been estimated at nearly 214,000 metric tons — around 1 per cent of total boro season production following rain and flash floods from upstream hills in the haor wetlands. However, its impact is already beginning to show in the market. Rice prices are rising again. Visits to wholesale shops at Babubazar in Old Dhaka, **Mohammadpur Krishi Market, and Karwan Bazar in the capital revealed that rice prices have increased by Tk 2 to Tk 5 per kilogram over the past three to four days. The impact has not yet reached the retail market.** Traders say the boro season is the country's principal rice production season. Normally, rice prices fall at the beginning of this season. This year too, prices had been declining, but the trend did not last. Prices are now climbing again (Prothom Alo, [20 May 2026](#)).
- ◆ **Rural electricity may face pressure as PDB pushes REB to raise revenue:** The Bangladesh Rural Electrification Board (REB) supplies electricity to rural people through 80 cooperatives across the country. For five decades, it has been delivering relatively low-cost electricity to villages. Loss-making cooperatives under REB are kept afloat through the income of a few profitable ones. **However, to reduce its own financial deficit, the Bangladesh Power Development Board (PDB) is now exerting pressure on REB.** In a new proposal submitted to the Bangladesh Energy Regulatory Commission (BERC), PDB has said it wants to increase the bulk power tariff rates for REB's profitable cooperatives. However, REB officials said that in the last fiscal year only 13 cooperatives actually made profits. Another four did not incur losses. The remaining 63 cooperatives are sustained through subsidies from the profitable ones. If PDB's proposal is implemented, the existing rural electricity supply structure could collapse. They say it would be a self-destructive decision by the government. BERC Chairman Jalal Ahmed told Prothom Alo that the stakeholders will be included in the review of PDB's proposal during the public hearings to be

held on 20 and 21 May. The commission will then make a final decision considering consumer interests (*Prothom Alo*, [19 May 2026](#)).

- ◆ **“New trade agreement is beneficial for both the US and Bangladesh”:** The United States and Bangladesh recently concluded an Agreement on Reciprocal Trade, which we call the “ART,” that if fully embraced and executed, can propel not just trade between our two countries, but Bangladesh’s economic development to new levels. We cannot have lasting economic prosperity if those countries that export to the United States then import primarily from other countries – creating massive and chronic trade deficits that impoverish the very market you rely on. Let me share the concrete steps Bangladesh has committed to besides improving the treatment of US exports in general: Bangladesh has committed to purchasing \$3.5 billion in US agricultural products—wheat, soy, cotton, and corn. These are high quality US commodities, which the Government of Bangladesh and private buyers have assured us are of outstanding quality which makes them high value purchases. **The press and pundits like to focus on the price, but experts focus on things like quality and protein content. You get what you pay for.** The agreement also commits Bangladesh to \$15 billion in energy products over the next 15 years, something that would be met by simply continuing the current rate of LPG from the US. Given the role of the US as one of that largest and most reliable suppliers of energy in the world, this seems like a commitment that will likely be surpassed by market forces alone, while improving availability of energy across Bangladesh. And beyond the direct commercial benefits – lower tariffs for Bangladeshi exports to the United States and better access to the Bangladeshi market for US exports – **Besides these direct purchase agreements, the Bangladeshi government has also made commitments in the ART to improve the business climate – commitments that should be applauded by every Bangladeshi businessman, politician, and consumer. This is about Bangladesh unlocking its potential** (*Prothom Alo*, [20 May 2026](#)).

## Foreign Policy

- ◆ **Singapore pushes \$1bn investment plan for Chittagong Bay Terminal project:** Singapore has reiterated its interest in managing the proposed Bay Terminal at Chittagong Port and plans to invest up to \$1 billion in its infrastructure development. The non-resident High Commissioner of Singapore to Bangladesh Derek Loh conveyed the interest during a courtesy call on Commerce Minister Khandakar Abdul Muktedir at the Secretariat on Tuesday, according to the ministry. Describing the Bay Terminal project as a "vital and exemplary initiative", Loh said Singapore is keen to expand its business and investment footprint in Bangladesh. **“This investment of approximately \$800 million to \$1 billion will play a crucial role in developing Bangladesh’s trade infrastructure and will help attract more foreign direct investment (FDI) in the future,” a statement from the ministry quoted Loh.** He added that once operational, the terminal will enhance port capacity, minimise demurrage costs, and ensure significant savings for Bangladeshi exporters, opening new doors for the trade and industrial sectors. The interim government approved the Bay Terminal infrastructure development project -- valued at Tk 135.25 billion -- in April 2025 (*bdnews24.com*, [19 May 2026](#)).
- ◆ **Air chief joins PACS 26 in US:** Chief of air staff of the Bangladesh Air Force Air-Chief-Marshal Hasan Mahmood Khan has recently joined the Pacific Air Chiefs Symposium 2026 in Honolulu, Hawaii. He attended the PACS 26 during his visit to the United States from May 11 to 15, said an Inter Services Public Relations press release on Tuesday. The air chief visited the United States at the invitation of commander of Pacific Air Forces General Kevin B Schneider. The symposium

focused on networking and exchange of information among the air forces of the Indo-Pacific region, the ISPR said. The visit is expected to further strengthen the existing friendly relations between Bangladesh and the United States and expand mutual cooperation in professional sectors, added the press release (*New Age*, [20 May 2026](#)).

## Security

- ◆ **Exchange of fire between BSF and BGB at Sylhet border:** Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) has responded after India's Border Security Force (BSF) opened fire near the Sylhet border. The incident occurred on Monday afternoon in the Sonarhat border area of Gowainghat Upazila on Monday afternoon, said Lt Col Md Nazmul Haque, commander of Sylhet BGB Battalion-48. No one was injured in the incident, and the border situation is currently "calm and stable", Nazmul said. **BGB said it returned fire after the BSF opened fire in the area. The force said the situation was quickly brought under control through its "firm and professional" response.** Patrols and surveillance along the border were also strengthened immediately after the incident, according to BGB. Lt Col Nazmul said, "We are on the highest alert regarding any provocative and unwanted incident at the border. The BGB is performing its duties with utmost professionalism and determination to protect the country's sovereignty and border security." The BGB has warned local public representatives and the people living near the border to refrain from "illegal border crossings and unauthorised activities in the border area" (*bdnews24.com*, [19 May 2026](#)).
- ◆ **Body of Indian High Commission officer recovered from Chattogram office:** An official of the Indian High Commission in Chattogram has been found dead inside the mission premises. The deceased has been identified only as Narendra, 38, who was serving as an assistant protocol officer, police said. The victim hailed from Chandigarh, India. His body was found on Tuesday inside the office premises on Zakir Hossain Road in the port city's Khulshi area. **Police suspect he died of a cardiac arrest.** Chattogram Metropolitan Police Assistant Commissioner for Public Relations Aminur Rashid told *bdnews24.com* that the body was recovered from in front of the bathroom door of a data entry room on the second floor of the old visa centre building. "We primarily suspect that the official died while going to the bathroom at some point during the night," he said. As the deceased was a foreign national, police completed the necessary formalities before sending the body to the Chattogram Medical College Hospital morgue for a postmortem, the officer added (*bdnews24.com*, [19 May 2026](#)).
- ◆ **Defence ministry warns against fake legal notices issued by fraudsters:** The defence ministry warned people against a fraud ring that is issuing fake legal notices using the ministry's name to harass people and extort money on Tuesday. In a statement, the ministry said the fraudsters are sending false and fabricated legal notices to people in different districts of the country, accusing them of involvement in criminal activities and threatening them with imprisonment, fines, and other punishments, said the release of the Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) Directorate this evening. **It said the ministry clarified that there is no department, branch, or cell named "Law Control Department" or "Crime Unit Cell" under the Ministry of Defense, and the ministry does not conduct such activities at all. "Necessary legal steps have already been taken in this connection,"** the ISPR mentioned (*Dhaka Tribune*, [19 May 2026](#)).

- ◆ **RAB to stay despite widespread calls for disbandment:** Despite repeated recommendations from the United Nations and various rights groups, political parties and organisations to disband the Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) over allegations of enforced disappearances, extrajudicial killings and other human rights violations, the government is now considering retaining the force. However, it remains unclear how the activities of the elite unit — which has been largely keeping a low profile since the July mass uprising — will proceed in the future. Speaking to newsmen on Monday after a programme marking RAB's 22nd founding anniversary, Home Minister Salahuddin Ahmed said the government was working to build a modern and professional elite force that would fully uphold human rights and meet public expectations. However, he did not elaborate on what reforms, if any, would be introduced to the force's structure (*Prothom Alo*, [19 May 2026](#)).
- ◆ **RAB likely to be recast, may even get a new name: PM's info adviser:** Prime Minister Tarique Rahman's adviser on information and broadcasting affairs, Zahed Ur Rahman, has said that in one sense RAB (Rapid Action Battalion) will no longer exist in its current form and that the force may even be renamed. He made the remarks today, Tuesday, while responding to questions from journalists at the Secretariat during a regular press briefing organised by the Ministry of Information to highlight the government's activities. At the briefing, Information and Broadcasting Minister Zahir Uddin Swapon outlined the government's activities over the past three months. Various organisations, political parties and rights groups, including the United Nations, have recommended disbanding the RAB over allegations of enforced disappearances, extrajudicial killings and other human rights violations (*Prothom Alo*, [19 May 2026](#)).
- ◆ **170 Bangladeshis return home from Libya:** Another 170 Bangladeshi nationals were repatriated from Benghazi, Libya. They arrived in Bangladesh at 5am on a Buraq Air flight on Tuesday. The repatriation was carried out with the support of the Libyan government and the International Organization for Migration through coordinated efforts by the Bangladesh Embassy in Libya, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment. Most of the returnees reportedly entered Libya illegally after being lured by human traffickers with promises of travelling to Europe by sea. Many of them allegedly faced abduction and torture during their stay in Libya. The Foreign Ministry, the Bangladeshi Embassy in Libya, the Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment, and the International Organization for Migration are continuing joint efforts to ensure the safe return of Bangladeshi nationals detained at various detention centers in Libya (*Dhaka Tribune*, [19 May 2026](#)).
- ◆ **Coast Guard seizes fuel, edible oil in Chattogram:** The Bangladesh Coast Guard seized a huge quantity of fuel oil and edible oil in two separate drives in Chattogram's Patenga and EPZ areas on Monday night and Tuesday. The Coast Guard disclosed the information in a press release signed by its media officer Lieutenant Commander Sabbir Alam Suzan on Tuesday. **During the drive, the team seized 7,000 litres of jet fuel, 6,000 litres of diesel, 1,500 litres of octane and a truck used for carrying the fuel from a secret stockpile, the release said. The seized fuel oil was worth about Tk 23.35 lakh** (*New Age*, [20 May 2026](#)).
- ◆ **HRW reports that Returning to Rakhine State still unsafe for Rohingyas:** Human Rights Watch (HRW) has said the massacre in Hoyyar Siri underscores that returning to Rakhine State is still unsafe for Rohingyas, even in areas now controlled by the Arakan army. Over the past decade, the Myanmar military has committed ethnic cleansing, genocidal acts, and other atrocities in Rakhine

State that have forced over a million Rohingya to flee. **Bangladesh is now hosting over 1.3 million Rohingyas in Cox's Bazar and Bhasan Char Island** (*Dhaka Tribune*, [19 May 2026](#)).

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