

DAILY BANGLADESH WATCH

22 May 2026

Takeaways

Politics

- ◆ **HC scraps petition to investigate Yunus government's 18-month activities:** The High Court has summarily dismissed a writ petition seeking an investigation into the 18-month tenure of the interim government led by Muhammad Yunus and the trade agreement signed with the United States. On Thursday, a High Court bench comprising Justice Ahmed Sohel and Justice Fatema Anwar passed the order. Senior Supreme Court lawyer Mohsin Rashid filed the petition on Sunday. **Speaking to the media afterward, Attorney General Kazal outlined the state's arguments, saying: "The point I made on behalf of the state is that, under our laws, there are defined criteria regarding who qualifies as an aggrieved person entitled to file such a case, and he does not fall within that periphery of law."** "I also argued that his objective was not to seek any legal remedy. It may appear that he filed the writ petition for some political purpose or ulterior motive" (*bdnews24.com*, [21 May 2026](#)).
- ◆ **Ensuring violence-free local govt polls is challenging, says CEC Nasir:** Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) AMM Nasir Uddin spoke of a history of conflict and violence in Bangladesh's local government elections, but says he does not want to see any bloodshed in the upcoming polls. Nasir said 236 people died during the local government elections in 2016 and 103 in the union council elections in 2021, he said, citing several non-governmental organisations and media outlets at an event in Dhaka on Thursday. **"We want to hold local government elections free of bloodshed. We want them to be held beautifully."** Preparations are underway for the elections for various positions in the local government's 4,581 union councils, 61 district councils, 495 Upazila councils, 330 municipalities, and 13 city corporations. The plan is for elections to begin this year and to be held in stages. Nasir also called for the cooperation of political parties to organise free and fair elections. The EC will hold discussions with stakeholders ahead of the local elections, Nasir said: "We want everyone's cooperation to try and unite the nation. An awareness campaign will be conducted ahead of the vote. We will talk to stakeholders" (*bdnews24.com*, [21 May 2026](#)).
- ◆ **Appeal filed against High Court verdict on SC Secretariat:** The state has filed an appeal against a High Court (HC) verdict regarding the establishment of a separate secretariat for the Supreme Court (SC). Confirming the matter to newsmen, Attorney General Md Ruhul Quddus Kazal said the matter is scheduled to be heard by the Appellate Division chamber judge court later in the day. On 19 May, a gazette notification issued by the law ministry reassigned 15 judicial service officials and judges working under the now-defunct Supreme Court Secretariat back to the ministry (*Dhaka Tribune*, [21 May 2026](#)).
- ◆ **"Govt wants Sheikh Hasina back through legal procedure":** Home Minister Salahuddin Ahmed has said the government wants to bring back former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to Bangladesh through legal procedures and existing extradition mechanisms. **"We want Sheikh Hasina back through legal procedure. Through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and under the existing extradition treaty, a formal request has been made for her return so that she can face**

the cases filed in Bangladesh,” he said. Speaking at a press briefing on the country’s law and order situation at the home ministry’s conference room in Bangladesh Secretariat Thursday, the minister said a formal request had already been sent through diplomatic channels for her return so that she can face legal proceedings in Bangladesh (*Dhaka Tribune*, [21 May 2026](#)).

- ◆ **Swapon seeks UK, Swiss cooperation in ensuring media freedom:** Information and Broadcasting Minister Zahir Uddin Swapon has said the present government is committed to ensuring the freedom of media. “The government is determined to ensure media freedom. To this end, work has already begun to form a Media Commission,, he made the remarks when British High Commissioner in Bangladesh Sarah Cooke paid a courtesy call on him at his office in the Secretariat on Thursday. **The minister expressed interest in utilizing the experience of the UK media regulatory authority Office of Communications (Ofcom), saying “Ofcom’s experience can be utilized in formulating media sector policies in Bangladesh.”** The British High Commissioner assured the minister of giving all necessary cooperation in this regard and informed him about the overall activities of Ofcom (*Dhaka Tribune*, [21 May 2026](#)).
- ◆ **Amnesty urges Bangladesh to drop ICT charges against two journalists:** Amnesty International has called on Bangladeshi authorities to immediately withdraw charges brought by the International Crimes Tribunal (ICT) against detained Ekattor Television journalists Farzana Rupa and Mozammel Haque. In a statement issued on 21 May, Amnesty International criticised the charges, which reportedly relate to a "misleading" report aired by the television channel on the deadly crackdown at Shapla Square in May 2013. South Asia Regional Director of Amnesty International, Smriti Singh further criticised the ICT, saying, "Moreover, the Tribunal has been blighted by serious fair trial and due process concerns, as well as for meting out the death penalty, which Amnesty International opposes in all cases." According to Amnesty, Farzana Rupa has been detained since August 2024 and faces nine murder charges. Mozammel Haque has been in detention since September 2024 and faces five cases, including four murder charges and one extortion charge (*TBS*, [22 May 2026](#)).
- ◆ **Committee to review NBR division ordinance meets on 23 May:** A committee formed to further examine the Revenue Policy and Revenue Management Ordinance 2025 and prepare it for presentation in parliament as a new bill will hold its first meeting on 23 May, according to sources at the public administration ministry. The ordinance, passed by the interim government, was presented during the first session of the 13th National Parliament to be converted into law. A special parliamentary committee formed to review 133 ordinances issued during the interim government recommended that the revenue-related ordinances should not immediately be tabled as bills. Instead, the committee advised that they should first be reviewed further and strengthened before being reintroduced in parliament (*TBS*, [22 May 2026](#)).
- ◆ **Constitution Amendment Committee-Jamaat hesitates amid reform vs. amendment debate:** Bangladesh’s main opposition party, Jamaat-e-Islami, has not yet decided whether it will nominate representatives to the government’s proposed special committee on constitutional amendments. **However, several party leaders believe that joining an “amendment committee” instead of a broader constitutional reform process could legitimise the government’s approach, allowing it to proceed on its own terms. As a result, there is growing sentiment within Jamaat against joining the committee.** According to several sources, the opposition has consistently been demanding constitution reform rather than mere amendments. They argue that the first step should have been implementing the July Charter and forming a Constitution Reform Council, as promised in BNP’s 31-point programme. Instead, the government has proposed an amendment-

focused committee. At the latest meeting of the 11-party alliance liaison committee on 30 April, the issue was also discussed. Sources present at the meeting said that the alliance leaders expressed negative views about the proposed amendment committee. They believe that recent government initiatives have not created an atmosphere of trust for the opposition. Therefore, they want to observe the government's next steps before making a final decision (*Prothom Alo*, [21 May 2026](#)).

- ◆ **Bangladesh joins International Big Cat Alliance:** The cabinet has approved a proposal to join the International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA). Formed in 2023, the primary objective of this global alliance is to play a role in conserving large cat species, including tigers, lions, leopards, snow leopards, pumas, jaguars, and cheetahs. Currently, 24 UN member states are part of this alliance. The proposal was approved yesterday during the eighth cabinet meeting chaired by Prime Minister Tarique Rahman. The principal objectives of the IBCA framework agreement include protecting big cat habitats, preventing illegal hunting and wildlife trade, and promoting technological cooperation and exchange of expertise among member countries. **The cabinet also approved the draft “GCM National Action Plan” for 2026-2030 to implement the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) aimed at ensuring safe, orderly and regular migration.** According to the proposal placed by the Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment, the GCM was adopted at the UN in 2018 and 164 states, including Bangladesh, have joined it. Bangladesh has been playing a leading role in various global cooperation platforms on international migration and was also among the proponents of the GCM concept. In recognition of this role, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) listed Bangladesh as a “GCM Champion” country in 2020 (*The Daily Star*, [22 May 2026](#)).

Economy

- ◆ **CAB opposes proposed power tariff hike, warns of inflation spike:** Consumers Association of Bangladesh (CAB) on Thursday strongly protested a proposed electricity tariff hike, warning that any increase would deepen financial pressure on middle- and low-income households and further fuel inflation. The consumer rights body raised the concern at a public hearing organised by the Bangladesh Energy Regulatory Commission (BERC). **CAB said ordinary consumers are already under severe economic pressure due to high inflation, rising prices of essential commodities, and increased fuel and living costs.** It said inefficiencies in the power sector—including system losses, delayed projects, excessive expenditures, and capacity payments—should not be passed on to consumers. Instead, it called for improved governance, accountability, and operational efficiency within the energy sector to reduce overall costs. **CAB also warned that higher electricity tariffs would raise production and supply costs across industries, agriculture, transport, and small businesses, ultimately pushing up prices of essential goods and services.** During the hearing, CAB presented a five-point set of recommendations to BERC (*Dhaka Tribune*, [21 May 2026](#)).
- ◆ **Govt undertakes all-out reform programme to establish a welfare-oriented state, humane economy:** Finance Minister Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury said the government has undertaken an all-out reform programme to establish a welfare-oriented state and a humane economy for the country's common people by moving away from an oligarchic and patronage-based economic system. “The democratization of the economy is not merely a slogan; it is the core philosophy of the present government,” he said while addressing a roundtable discussion titled “Budget in Times of Crisis and Public Expectations” organised by the Bengali daily Prothom Alo held at a hotel in the capital. **The finance minister said the government is placing special emphasis on bringing marginalised communities, including blacksmiths, potters and**

handloom workers who remained outside the budgetary framework for decades, into the mainstream economy. He said special projects and funds would be allocated in the upcoming budget to promote and monetize the creative economy, including theatre, culture, music, painting and artificial jewellery industries, said a Finance Ministry press release (*BSS News*, [21 May 2026](#)).

- ◆ **Govt to remove all barriers to mango export:** Fisheries, Livestock and Agriculture Minister Mohammed Aminur Rashid said the government will try to remove all the barriers particularly the higher freight charge to export mangoes. “The present government in line with its electoral manifesto will try to expand all the facilities including to reduce exorbitant freight charge in export agro products and mangoes in line with the government’s commitment to make the country’s exports easier and smooth,” he said. The minister came up with the assurance while he was inaugurating mango export, organized by Exportable Mango Production Project (EMAPP), under the Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) at Bangladesh Agricultural Research Council (BARC) here. According to the demand of the global market, he urged the scientists to improve the colour and shelf life of the mango through unchanging the gene of the original varieties. The government support in setting up modern processing and treatment plants is crucial to improve both the quality and quantity of exports, he added (*BSS News*, [21 May 2026](#)).
- ◆ **Govt working to build modern, safe communication network with JICA support:** Road Transport and Bridges, Railways and Shipping Minister Shaikh Rabiul Alam today said the government is working to develop a modern, safe and internationally standard communication network in the country, stressing that Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA)'s continued support is playing a vital role in achieving the goal. During the meeting, the two sides discussed ongoing development activities in the country's road, bridge, railways and shipping sectors, construction of sustainable infrastructure, use of modern technology and prospects for future cooperation. The minister said the present government is committed to modernising the country's transport and communication sectors to ensure safe, efficient and world-class connectivity. He highly appreciated JICA's long-standing cooperation and support as a development partner of Bangladesh. The JICA delegation expressed its interest in continuing partnership in Bangladesh's infrastructure development initiatives and assured enhanced cooperation in future development projects. Rabiul made the remarks when a JICA delegation paid a courtesy call on him at his office at the Bangladesh Secretariat in the capital (*BSS News*, [21 May 2026](#)).
- ◆ **UAE’s dnata eyes HSIA third-terminal ground handling:** United Arab Emirates Ambassador to Bangladesh Abdulla Ali Abdulla Alhmoudi expressed UAE based company dnata’s interest in providing ground handling services at the Third Terminal of Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport (HSIA). The ambassador conveyed the interest during a courtesy call on Civil Aviation and Tourism Minister Afroza Khanam and State Minister M Rashiduzzaman Millat at the Bangladesh Secretariat. Responding to the proposal, State Minister Millat briefed the ambassador on the progress of preparatory activities for the inauguration of the Third Terminal. He said the government would take necessary decisions and communicate further developments after the Operational Readiness and Airport Transfer (ORAT) activities become fully operational. During the meeting, the two sides also emphasized strengthening the existing bilateral relations between Bangladesh and the United Arab Emirates, alongside enhancing cooperation in the civil aviation and tourism sectors. They also discussed expanding investment opportunities and boosting mutual collaboration (*BSS News*, [21 May 2026](#)).
- ◆ **WB study reports Bangladesh SOEs cost treasury Tk 882b as losses mount:** Bangladesh's state-owned enterprises (SOEs) drained nearly Taka 882 billion from the national exchequer in a single

year, emerging as one of the country's biggest fiscal risks, according to a World Bank study. **The study report highlighted that the deteriorating financial condition of public enterprises has become "unsustainable" at a time when Bangladesh is already facing falling revenue collection, slower economic growth and mounting pressure on public finances, BSS reports citing a press release.** It said the growing losses of SOEs are consuming resources that could otherwise be invested in healthcare, education and social protection. According to the study, non-financial SOEs incurred a combined adjusted loss of Tk 441 billion in FY2024, while total net fiscal transfers from the government, including subsidies and development funding, climbed to around Tk 882 billion, equivalent to 1.7 percent of GDP. The Bangladesh Power Development Board alone recorded losses exceeding Tk 444 billion in FY2024 due to high power generation costs, costly capacity payments to private power producers and electricity tariffs kept below production costs. The report said politically influenced investment decisions, controversial contracts with independent power producers and weak corporate governance have severely undermined the sector's financial sustainability. Other major loss-making entities include the Bangladesh Oil, Gas and Mineral Corporation, Bangladesh Rural Electrification Board, Trading Corporation of Bangladesh and several manufacturing corporations in the fertilizer, sugar and jute sectors. **The report observed that many manufacturing SOEs continue to incur persistent losses despite operating in competitive markets where private firms remain profitable. The report also highlighted deep corporate governance weaknesses within Bangladesh's SOE structure. It identified fragmented laws, bureaucratic control, weak oversight and lack of financial transparency as key reasons behind poor performance** (*Financial Express Bangladesh*, [21 May 2026](#)).

Foreign Policy

FM's Beijing visit boosts Belt-Road cooperation ties, Chinese envoy: Chinese Ambassador to Bangladesh Yao Wen said Foreign Minister Khalilur Rahman's recent visit to China injected fresh momentum into bilateral Belt and Road cooperation and expanded collaboration in multiple sectors between Dhaka and Beijing. "The visit injected fresh momentum into our Belt and Road cooperation," he said, referring to Rahman's China tour held around two weeks ago. The ambassador said Bangladesh and China reaffirmed commitments to strengthening cooperation in trade, investment, infrastructure, digital economy, green development, health care and people-to-people exchanges. **He said relations between Bangladesh and China have deepened further following the formation of the new BNP government after the February general election, with cooperation continuing across various strategic sectors.** The ambassador also noted that a high-level BNP delegation led by Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir recently visited China, strengthening institutional exchanges between the Communist Party of China and the BNP through mutual learning on governance and development. **Highlighting growing Chinese investment in Bangladesh, Yao Wen said at least four Chinese companies signed investment agreements worth nearly US\$100 million within just over three months of the new government taking office.** He said that Beijing is advancing several priority projects, including the Expansion and Modernisation of Mongla Port Facilities Project, the China-Bangladesh Friendship Hospital project and the China-Bangladesh Friendship Residential Hall at the University of Dhaka. The envoy expressed optimism that the China-Bangladesh Comprehensive Strategic Cooperative Partnership would continue to move forward and deliver greater benefits to the peoples of both countries. Referring to bilateral human resources cooperation, Yao Wen said China will organise 23 bilateral and 30 multilateral training programmes this year for nearly 600 Bangladeshi participants. The programmes will cover

telecommunications, information technology, renewable energy, cross-border e-commerce, transportation, agriculture, tourism and education, he added (*BSS News*, [21 May 2026](#)).

Bangladesh, South Africa vow stronger bilateral cooperation: Bangladesh and South Africa today agreed to strengthen political, economic and multilateral cooperation as the two countries held the sixth round of Foreign Office Consultations (FOC) in Pretoria after a six-year hiatus. The meeting reviewed the entire spectrum of bilateral relations and explored future areas of cooperation of mutual interest, according to a joint communique, issued following the consultations. **The two sides underscored the longstanding relations between Bangladesh and South Africa forged through solidarity, friendship and cooperation, while marking the 32nd anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic ties between the two countries.** They expressed regret over the six-year gap in diplomatic consultations caused mainly by the COVID-19 pandemic and agreed to intensify high-level exchanges and institutional engagements to further deepen bilateral ties. **During the meeting, Bangladesh requested South Africa to establish a resident diplomatic mission in Dhaka, while the South African side assured that the matter would be considered in the near future.** The two countries welcomed the significant growth in bilateral trade and economic relations, noting that stronger commercial ties could contribute to employment generation and economic growth in both countries. Bangladesh also invited a South African trade delegation to visit Bangladesh to explore new investment and business opportunities. The consultations highlighted cooperation in sports, particularly cricket, alongside people-to-people exchanges, arts and culture. Bangladesh appreciated South Africa's scholarship offer for young Bangladeshi cricketers and sought expanded scholarship opportunities for Bangladeshi students at undergraduate and postgraduate levels (*BSS News*, [21 May 2026](#)).

Security

- ◆ **BGB on maximum alert after West Bengal chief minister threatens to deport 'illegal Bangladeshis':** Home Minister Salahuddin Ahmed has said the Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) is on maximum alert to prevent any illegal push-ins. Speaking at a press briefing at the Secretariat on Thursday, he also described the implementation of the controversial Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) by the newly formed government in India's West Bengal as an "internal matter" of that country. The West Bengal government is also advancing a plan to swiftly secure its border that is still not "secured" with fences, announcing that the BSF will receive necessary land in 45 days, according to a state-owned Indian media outlet. Out of the 4,096km border between the two nations, India has already fenced 3,240km. West Bengal shares more than 2,200km of its border with Bangladesh. In April, India unveiled a border security plan that grabbed widespread international media attention. The plan involves using snakes and crocodiles to guard riverine gaps where traditional fencing is difficult or physically impossible to install (*bdnews24.com*, [21 May 2026](#)).

- ◆ **West Bengal hands over 75 acres to BSF for border fencing:** India's West Bengal government on Wednesday handed over an initial 75 acres of land to BSF to cover fencing of 27 km of the international border between India and Bangladesh, reported *The Times of India* on Thursday. West Bengal CM Suwendu Adhikari, who earlier promised to start the land handover process after the BJP government assumed office, said that completion of the critical, long-pending fencing along the India-Bangladesh border would be crucial to national security, added the report available online. Of the land, 43 acres were directly purchased, while 32 acres were vested land.

The CM said that he had asked the district magistrates of border districts to maintain regular coordination with BSF and other central agencies (*New Age*, [22 May 2026](#)).

- ◆ **Cabinet approves defence deal with Japan:** The cabinet on Thursday approved a proposal to ratify the agreement titled **Transfer of Defence Equipment and Technology, signed between Japan and Bangladesh**. The approval came at the weekly meeting of the cabinet chaired by prime minister Tarique Rahman at the Cabinet Division in the Bangladesh Secretariat. The defence pact had been signed on Feb 3, 2026, during the final days of the interim government led by Muhammad Yunus (*New Age*, [22 May 2026](#)).

*[Disclaimer: We do not subscribe to the views or interpretations expressed by various Bangladeshi commentators we make available for perusal by our experts/analysts/policymakers every day. We put it all together in Daily Bangladesh Watch (DBW) with a view to acquainting our readers with the existing thought process in Bangladesh having its bearing on India, with the hope that such effort will help us in devising appropriate policies to deal with Bangladesh in a more effective manner. DBW is curated by **Dr. Ankita Sanyal**]*