

DAILY BANGLADESH WATCH

01 September 2026

Takeaways

Politics

- ◆ **Mecca Pact: Speakers against haste, urge consensus and preparation before joining:** Bangladesh's accession to the Mecca Defence Pact could create new opportunities for the country, but security experts have cautioned against rushing into a decision. **They said any decision on potential membership should be based on political consensus and effective diplomatic preparation.** The views emerged at a discussion titled "Joining the Mecca Pact: Scrutinising Bangladesh's Options", held on Monday morning at the BDBL Building in Karwan Bazar, Dhaka. Organised by Voice for Reform, the event was attended by security experts, political analysts, diplomats, university academics and representatives of civil society. Major General (ret'd) Fazle Elahi Akbar, chairman of the Foundation for Strategic and Development Studies (FSDS), said joining the Mecca Defence Pact could create opportunities to enhance Bangladesh's defence capabilities. In particular, the country could strengthen its defence equipment supply chains, develop its military-industrial capacity and improve interoperability with participating countries. Bangladesh could also benefit from joint training and intelligence-sharing, he argued. **The security expert also highlighted several potential risks associated with joining the pact. He said India might have to take Bangladesh into greater consideration in its military planning if Bangladesh became a member. At the same time, it was uncertain whether the United States' current position would remain unchanged in the future.** According to Major General (ret'd) Fazle Elahi Akbar, there was no need for Bangladesh to rush into joining the Mecca Defence Pact. He, however, pointed out that **despite maintaining diplomatic relations and engagement with various countries for 55 years, Bangladesh still had no sufficiently reliable ally that would firmly stand by it at the UN Security Council on matters concerning the country's security. In such circumstances, he said, becoming part of a collective security framework could be a strategic consideration for Bangladesh.** Professor Sazzad Siddiqui, chairman of the Department of Peace and Conflict Studies at Dhaka University, noted that **Turkey is a member of NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization), while the United States maintains important relations with Saudi Arabia and Pakistan. Against this backdrop, he said, the US position and President Trump's congratulatory message should be carefully analysed in the context of the Mecca Defence Pact.** John F Danilowicz, former deputy chief of mission at the US Embassy in Dhaka, described the Mecca Defence Pact as an important test for Bangladesh. **The decision, he said, would demonstrate how the BNP government's "Bangladesh First" policy would be translated into practice** (*Prothom Alo*, [31 August 2026](#)).
- ◆ **Asif Mahmud says NCP views Makkah Pact positively:** National Citizens Party (NCP) spokesperson Asif Mahmud Shojib Bhuyain has said the party views the Makkah Pact positively, while its subcommittee is closely monitoring the issue. He made the remarks at a press conference at the airport on Monday morning after returning home from performing Umrah. The Makkah Pact, also known as the Makkah Joint Defence Agreement, is a trilateral defence agreement between Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and Turkey. Asif Mahmud also alleged that a syndicate linked to the ruling BNP had become active again, saying airfares to Saudi Arabia had fallen during the interim government but increased after the BNP came to power. He also referred to the ongoing gas and electricity crises, alleging that prices and extortion had increased across

sectors since the election. “The people are in a state of despair,” he said, urging the government to take swift measures to address the situation (*Dhaka Tribune*, [31 August 2026](#)).

- ◆ **MSF: Killings, political violence, minority attacks rise in August:** Killings, political violence and attacks on minority communities increased in August compared to the previous month, while incidents of violence against women and children also rose, according to the Manabadhikar Shongskriti Foundation (MSF). The number of people killed in incidents involving women and children jumped nearly 75%, while injuries in political violence surged 181%, the rights organization said in its monthly review of the country’s human rights situation released yesterday. According to the report, 91 women and children were killed in August, compared to 52 in July. **Violence against women and children also increased from 306 incidents in July to 327 in August, marking a 6.8% rise.** MSF expressed particular concern over the sharp rise in political violence in August. **The number of people injured in political violence increased from 95 in July to 267 in August, an increase of 181%.** Deaths, however, declined from seven to five. **The incidents involved activists and supporters of the BNP, National Citizens Party (NCP), Jamaat-e-Islami and Awami League, as well as internal and inter-party conflicts, according to the report.** Violence against minority communities also increased sharply in August. MSF documented 26 incidents involving minorities during the month, compared to eight in July. The incidents included vandalism of religious idols in Faridpur and Chittagong, attacks on members of minority communities, deaths and threats (*Dhaka Tribune*, [01 September 2026](#)).
- ◆ **Distrust in govt: Jamaat bloc may boycott local polls:** Opposition parties in Bangladesh are losing confidence in the government over what they describe as a failure to implement promised reforms, irregularities, corruption and growing politicisation of state institutions. They also question whether future elections can be held fairly if “partisan individuals” remain at Election Commission (EC). The 11-party alliance led by Jamaat-e-Islami has warned that it may boycott upcoming local government elections unless partisan appointments are withdrawn. Alliance leaders are also considering tougher programmes, including laying siege to EC if necessary, to press for the removal of Md Shamsul Alam. The issue has widened the rift between the ruling BNP and its former ally Jamaat. The Jamaat alliance says it will not compromise on reforms, electoral credibility and institutional neutrality. National Citizen Party (NCP), a key alliance partner, also plans to continue opposing government decisions both in parliament and on the streets. Alongside alliance programmes, the youth-led party is preparing to remain active with its own political initiatives. At the same time, Jamaat and its partners have no immediate plan to leave the alliance. Instead, they want to maintain unity and intensify pressure on the government over reform and governance issues. **Although differences between BNP and the Jamaat alliance over reforms emerged after the government was formed, the rift became more visible after BNP leaders were appointed on contractual terms to senior positions in 12 important institutions, boards, EC and corporations on 23 July** (*Daily Times of Bangladesh*, [01 September 2026](#)).
- ◆ **Local polls: BNP pushes single candidates as MPs build camps:** The ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) is pushing for single candidates in the upcoming local government elections, but growing competition among grassroots leaders and efforts by lawmakers to promote their own political camps are complicating the process. In almost every Union Parishad, multiple BNP leaders are expressing interest in contesting the chairperson’s post. In some unions, three or four potential candidates are already preparing to enter the race. In the Motobi Union of Feni Sadar Upazila, at least nine BNP leaders and supporters are currently interested in or actively preparing to contest the chairperson’s post. Similar activities involving

multiple potential candidates have been reported in many other unions across the country, raising concerns within the party that bringing unsuccessful contenders behind a single BNP-backed candidate could prove difficult once the election schedule is announced. **The BNP central leadership fears that multiple candidates could split the party vote and revive the internal conflicts seen during the national election, when rebel BNP candidates contested in 72 constituencies. The effects of those rivalries are still visible in several areas.** Party leaders fear that similar divisions in the local elections could undermine organisational unity and give Jamaat-e-Islami and other contenders an opportunity to gain ground. Against this backdrop, BNP Chairman and Prime Minister Tarique Rahman has repeatedly instructed party leaders, activists and lawmakers to remain united (*Dhaka Tribune*, [01 September 2026](#)).

- ◆ **BNP in power, yet organisation under strain:** More than six months after sweeping to power with a commanding majority following 17 years on the sidelines, the BNP is still struggling to get its house in order. As the party marks its 48th founding anniversary today, organisational activities remain sluggish, grassroots discipline has frayed, and senior leaders are increasingly absorbed in state responsibilities rather than party affairs, leaving the organisation adrift at a critical moment. **More than two years after the uprising, the BNP has yet to hold its national council or complete councils of several bodies, while most grassroots committees are already operating beyond their terms. Political analysts say the party's top priority should have been strengthening its organisation, especially as it grapples with an ailing economy, fragile energy and law-and-order sectors, and a politically tense environment. With most BNP policymakers now absorbed in government, many grassroots leaders and activists are instead focused on establishing local dominance amid allegations of extortion and internal clashes, according to sources.** The loss of its matriarch Khaleda Zia seven weeks before the February election has further weakened efforts to unite and reorganise, they added. The BNP faces growing grassroots challenges, with some leaders and activists accused of criminal activities and engaging in internal feuds, damaging the government's image (*The Daily Star*, [01 September 2026](#)).
- ◆ **Tarique's double bind: Govern well or repeat Hasina's mistake:** Every Bangladeshi leader makes concessions with India on rivers, trade, security, and the border. That is not weakness; geography leaves them no other option. What is weakness is relying on Delhi's goodwill to survive politically, as Hasina did. Sheikh Hasina was not ousted as a result of India's loss of support; India backed her to the very end and continues to shelter and protect her. She was toppled because fifteen years of a captured judiciary, a security state that killed and disappeared people with impunity, and an economy that stopped delivering for the young finally exhausted the country's patience. **Her closeness to Delhi only proved disastrous after domestic legitimacy had already collapsed. It didn't trigger the collapse; it simply meant that when she needed somewhere to run, she had somewhere to run to.** That is the irony Tarique should sit with: the same relationship that insured Hasina against accountability for over a decade became, in the end, her only remaining asset — a border to flee across rather than a government to save. **Dependency on a foreign patron does not prevent domestic failure. It just affects what happens after.** Rushing to New Delhi while Sheikh Hasina is still allowed to give political press conferences on Indian soil and Dhaka's extradition request for an ousted leader convicted and sentenced to death in absentia has been "under consideration" for 18 months would hand Jamaat and other critics a ready-made grievance that Tarique also needs India more than he lets on. **He cannot allow the Hasina question to dominate the relationship, but he also cannot let it go unanswered. The test is sequencing — extracting something real on transboundary rivers, border killings, trade access, or deportation practices before staging a summit as a victory lap. Nor can he fall into the opposite trap: performing nationalism for a domestic audience by unnecessarily**

antagonising Delhi or treating a tilt toward Beijing as a costless alternative. China will gladly play flatterer if Tarique allows it, but a foreign policy based on hedging for its own sake — rather than on what Bangladesh's economy and security truly require — leaves Dhaka with fewer viable options. India, for its part, also has an interest in a stable, functioning Bangladesh; that provides Tarique leverage, as long as he uses it to bargain rather than to posture. **The distinction he needs to maintain in each of these negotiations is between compromise and dependency.** Bangladesh's prime minister cannot choose between managing external actors and managing Bangladesh. They are not sequential problems; rather, they are the same problem viewed from two directions. He has what his predecessor eventually lost: public patience, a plural opposition, and the chance to demonstrate that a democratic mandate is a sturdier foundation for a relationship with India than repression ever was. **Whether that opportunity is seized or squandered will be determined less by what happens on a tarmac in the Indian capital than by the price of essentials, the reliability of the electricity grid, the revival of investment, job creation, the restoration of confidence in democratic institutions and whether the courts are seen to serve the law rather than the party in power.** At the same time, the government must navigate complex diplomatic relations with regional and global players. Get those right, and India becomes easier to deal with. So do the other players. Get them wrong, and no amount of diplomacy will matter (*Daily Times of Bangladesh*, [01 September 2026](#)).

Economy

- ◆ **Govt seeks foreign funds worth \$4.5 billion:** The government has begun searching for nearly US\$4.5 billion in foreign financing to build the proposed Dhaka-Chattogram Expressway, one of Bangladesh's largest planned transport infrastructure projects. **With the total project cost estimated at Tk 710 billion, the government is exploring concessional loans, co-financing and alternative models, including public-private partnerships, to develop the strategic economic corridor linking Dhaka with Chattogram Port, officials said on Saturday.** The Planning Commission (PC) recently requested the Economic Relations Division (ERD) to explore sources of foreign financing for the project, they said. **The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has already expressed interest in financing the construction of the Dhaka-Chattogram Expressway, said an official of the Ministry of Road Transport and Bridges (MoRT&B). The ERD is also attempting to prepare a hybrid co-financing proposal.** The framework could potentially bring in the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) alongside traditional lenders to break the financing deadlock, he added (*Financial Express Bangladesh*, [30 August 2026](#)).
- ◆ **Fuel oil prices to remain unchanged in Sept:** he prices of fuel oil have been kept unchanged for the month of September. **At the existing rates, diesel will remain at Tk 115 per litre, kerosene at Tk 135, petrol at Tk 140, and octane at Tk 145, said a statement of the Energy and Mineral Resources Division. The prices will take effect from September 1** (*BSS News*, [31 August 2026](#)).
- ◆ **Bangladesh pushes oil-fired power despite sixfold fuel cost to free more gas for industry:** Bangladesh is preparing to burn much more furnace oil for electricity, at roughly six times the fuel cost of gas-fired power, in an attempt to free up scarce gas for factories. **The Power Development Board (PDB) has set a target of generating around 4,000MW from oil-fired plants by reducing the amount of gas used in power generation. There is one immediate problem, though. Many private furnace oil plants do not have enough fuel to run anywhere near full capacity.** Bangladesh has 54 public and private HFO-fired power plants with a total installed capacity of 5,630MW. But bringing a much larger share of that capacity online will require more fuel and, for private plants, money to buy it. **There is a cost surge as oil-fired power costs Tk 20.69 per**

unit in fuel alone, compared with just Tk 3.45 for gas. Debt drains fuel supply as producers cannot import furnace oil as unpaid government bills stall plant operation (*bdnews24.com*, [31 August 2026](#)).

- ◆ **Bangladesh Railway receives 57 rakes from India in August:** Bangladesh Railway (BR) received a total of 57 rakes of interchange traffic from Indian Railways (IR) in August, the highest monthly rake reception since January 2025. The rakes were received through three interchange points between the two countries, according to railway officials. Railway authorities expressed satisfaction over the increased reception of rakes and hoped the momentum would continue in the coming months. They also thanked officials and personnel involved in coordinating the interchange traffic between the two railway systems (*Daily Sun*, [01 September 2026](#)).
- ◆ **Gas supply to normalise by second week of September, hopes Rizvi:** BNP acting secretary general Ruhul Kabir Rizvi today expressed hope that normal gas supply across the country would be restored by the first or second week of September. “Normal gas supply will be ensured by the first or second week of September. We can also see some signs that electricity supply will be available,” he told reporters after paying tribute at the graves of BNP founder Ziaur Rahman and party Chairperson Khaleda Zia at Zia Udyan, marking the party’s 48th founding anniversary. Referring to the ongoing power and energy crisis, Rizvi said it was not created by the BNP or the government but resulted from the global situation, including the US-Iran conflict and disruptions to fuel-carrying vessels through the Strait of Hormuz. He said the government was taking steps to address the crisis and had allocated an additional Tk 40,000 crore for the power and energy sectors. A technical fault at the LNG terminal in Maheshkhali had also been repaired and regasification resumed, he added (*The Daily Star*, [01 September 2026](#)).
- ◆ **ADB approves \$175m loan to boost power networks, jobs and services in Chattogram Hill Tracts:** The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has approved a \$175 million concessional loan to expand access to reliable and affordable electricity in Bangladesh’s Chattogram Hill Tracts, helping boost livelihoods, improve essential services, and support inclusive development in one of the country’s most remote regions. The Sustainable Energy Development and Community Empowerment in the Chattogram Hill Tracts Project will extend and modernise power distribution networks across 26 remote upazilas in the hill districts of Khagrachari, Rangamati and Bandarban, benefiting at least 88,000 additional households, including 35,000 from small ethnic communities. In addition to the ADB financing, the project will receive a \$2.72 million grant from the Japan Fund for Prosperous and Resilient Asia and the Pacific, financed by the Government of Japan through ADB. The Government of Bangladesh will contribute \$36.54 million, while the BPDB, serving as the executing and implementing agency, will provide \$45.65 million (*Financial Express Bangladesh*, [01 September 2026](#)).

Foreign Policy

- ◆ **Makkah Pact: FM says no reason for anyone to be upset or worried:** Foreign Minister Dr Khalilur Rahman on Sunday reiterated that the "Makkah Pact" is an internal matter of the world Muslim family and that there is no reason for anyone to be upset or worried about this. “This is not a matter of threatening. This is not a matter of attacking anyone. This is a matter of self-defense of our world Muslim family. So I do not see any reason for anyone to be upset or worried about this,” he said. Dr Khalilur left Dhaka on Sunday night for New York to take up his responsibilities as president of the 81st Session of the United Nations General Assembly, a

tenure that will coincide with a crucial period for the world body, including the selection of a new UN secretary-general. **The foreign minister said Bangladesh will maintain good relations with all countries while firmly protecting its national interests, reiterating that the government's foreign policy is guided by the principle of "Bangladesh First."** "Bangladesh First" means that Bangladesh is not alone. It means that we will maintain our relations by ensuring our mutual interests," he said (*Dhaka Tribune*, [31 August 2026](#)).

- ◆ **Mahdi Amin terms China visit as successful, productive:** Prime Minister's Education and Primary and Mass Education Adviser Dr Mahdi Amin has described the recent three-day visit to China as highly fruitful and successful, marked by the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on technical education, the inauguration of an international service centre and the launch of three new institutional platforms. He made the remarks today in response to questions from journalists at a press conference on his post-China visit, held at the meeting room of the Technical and Madrasa Education Division of the Ministry of Education. Dr Mahdi Amin said China has a reputation worldwide for providing quality technical education in a highly effective and cost-efficient manner. He said that during the short visit led by Education and Primary and Mass Education Minister Dr A N M Ehsanul Hoque Milon, fruitful discussions were held with representatives of over 50 leading technical and vocational universities, institutes and industries in China. **"The key achievement of the visit is that a specific institutional foundation has been laid to enhance the skills of teachers and students in Bangladesh's technical education sector,"** he said. He said that during the visit, a significant MoU titled 'China-Bangladesh Vocational Education, Training and Research Center' was signed, while the 'China-Bangladesh Industry and Education Integration International Service Center' was formally launched. Besides, three more platforms were launched to strengthen joint cooperation. These are the 'China-Bangladesh Vocational Teacher Training Center', the 'Bangladesh Vocational Education Research Center' and the 'Bangladesh 'Chinese Language+ Skill Development' Cooperation Center' (*BSS News*, [31 August 2026](#)).
- ◆ **Education minister says Bangladesh-Japan ties to expand further:** Education Minister Dr ANM Ehsanul Hoque Milon today said the friendly relations between Bangladesh and Japan would be expanded further in the future as a special delegation of the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) met him. **"Bangladesh has a longstanding friendly relationship with Japan. The areas of relations and cooperation between the two countries will expand further in the future,"** he said. The JICA delegation met the Education Minister at his ministry office in the Bangladesh Secretariat here, said an official handout. Mochizuki Hiroshi, Director of the Human Development Department at JICA headquarters, led the delegation. During the meeting, Ehsanul Hoque Milon said work is underway on a new curriculum to reduce the gap between educational institutions and industries. **Emphasizing the importance of learning a third language for developing students' skills,** he said it is being incorporated into the curriculum. The government has plans to include multiple languages in the curriculum, the minister said, adding that Japanese is also important as a third language. He expressed hope that JICA would play an important role in these areas (*BSS News*, [31 August 2026](#)).
- ◆ **Detained in India, court bars Hadi murder accused from leaving Bangladesh:** Despite being detained in India, Faisal Karim Masud, the prime accused in the murder of Inqilab Mancha spokesperson Sharif Osman Hadi has been barred by a Dhaka court from leaving Bangladesh. Dhaka Metropolitan Senior Special Judge Md Shahjahan Kabir also passed similar order for Faisal's wife Shaheda Parveen Samia on Monday following an application by the Anti-Corruption Commission. The ACC, however, was unaware that Faisal and his wife were in

Indian custody when it sought the travel ban, according to court sources (*New Age*, [31 August 2026](#)).

- ◆ **Civil aviation minister: Bangladesh buying 14 Boeing aircraft, plans to lease more:** Civil Aviation and Tourism Minister M Rashiduzzaman Millat on Monday said Bangladesh is buying 14 Boeing aircraft from the United States and it has also plans to lease some additional aircraft. “The US had requested that Bangladesh use Boeing aircraft, and the government is acting accordingly,” he told reporters, responding to a question over the government’s reported plan to purchase Boeing aircraft from the United States. The minister attended a law-and-order and development coordination meeting as the chief guest at the conference room of the Mymensingh deputy commissioner in the afternoon. Millat said Bangladesh will procure new aircraft from Airbus, jointly manufactured by France, Britain and Germany, as part of efforts to modernise and strengthen the aviation sector. U.S. Special Envoy for South and Central Asia and its Ambassador to India Sergio Gor has said Bangladesh has committed billions of dollars to buy additional Boeing aircraft from the United States under a new deal between Dhaka and Washington (*Dhaka Tribune*, [31 August 2026](#)).

Security

- ◆ **President stresses stronger BGB role in preventing border killings, smuggling:** President Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir on Monday stressed the need for stronger role by Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) to prevent smuggling, drug trafficking, push-ins and border killings. He made the call when BGB Director General Major General Mohammad Ashrafuzzaman Siddiqui paid a courtesy call on the president at Bangabhaban. **During the meeting, the BGB DG congratulated President Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir on assuming office. He briefed him on the force’s overall activities and initiatives to enhance surveillance along the borders through the deployment of advanced drones and modern technologies. President Fakhrul appreciated the BGB’s initiative to introduce advanced technologies to strengthen border security and assured the force of all-out cooperation in this regard.** The president’s secretaries and senior officials were present during the meeting (*Dhaka Tribune*, [31 August 2026](#)).
- ◆ **62 War Course officers visit defence ministry:** A total of 62 military officers attending the Armed Forces War Course of the National Defence College visited the Ministry of Defence at Sher-e-Bangla Nagar in the capital on Monday. **The visit was part of the officers’ professional training programme aimed at familiarising them with the functions and activities of the Ministry of Defence. Defence secretary Md Ashraf Uddin presided over a view-exchange meeting held at the ministry’s conference room on the occasion, said a press release of ISPR.** Senior officials of the ministry, head of the AFWC delegation Brigadier General Mohammad Nazmul Haque along with NDC faculty members and staff officers, were present at the meeting. A power-point presentation was made before the visiting officers, outlining the activities and functions of the Ministry of Defence. The presentation was followed by an interactive question-and-answer session, during which the officers and ministry officials exchanged views on various issues related to defence administration and national defence affairs (*Daily Sun*, [31 August 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, Research Fellow, CPS**]*