

DAILY BANGLADESH WATCH

18 September 2026

Takeaways

Politics

- ◆ **Cantonment police chief withdrawn after 'controversial' audio emerges on social media:** Dhaka's Cantonment Police chief Rakibul Hasan has been withdrawn from his post amid controversy following the circulation of a "controversial" audio clip on social media. An order signed by Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) Commissioner Mosleh Uddin Ahmed on Thursday removed him from the position and attached him to DMP Headquarters. The order cited "administrative reasons" for his withdrawal. **In a clip that recently circulated on social media, a person identifying himself as the police chief is heard criticising the government, administration, army and police. Circulated under Rakibul's name, the audio has the person saying: "Police on the streets are very weak. If Sheikh Hasina returns in December, they won't be able to do anything." The person also claims in the audio, "Senior police officials are leaning towards BNP, but police at the field level are not." The person is also heard discussing allegations of bribery in police postings.** It could not be confirmed whether the audio circulated under Rakibul's name is indeed his. However, a senior DMP official told bdnews24.com that the matter is being investigated (*bdnews24.com*, [17 September 2026](#)).
- ◆ **Patwari says Govt moving towards deals with Israel, India on surveillance:** NCP Chief Coordinator Nasiruddin Patwari on Thursday alleged that the current government is moving towards agreements with India and Israel related to surveillance and access to citizens' digital communications. "We have heard that, behind the scenes, the current government is also moving towards such agreements with Israel and India. But they will not admit it publicly," he said. Patwari made the remarks at a discussion titled "SRB, enforced disappearance and cyber law: Human rights violations", organised by the NCP at its central office in the afternoon. **Referring to the Digital Security Act enacted by the previous government, he said the law had been used to justify checking the Facebook and WhatsApp messages of political figures and other people. He alleged that the previous government had entered into agreements with foreign powers, including India and Israel, to obtain such security and surveillance capabilities.** "If the government goes to a foreign state and says it needs to see what the people of Bangladesh are doing on Messenger and WhatsApp, and asks companies operating here for call records, that raises questions about citizens' security," he said (*Daily Times of Bangladesh*, [17 September 2026](#)).
- ◆ **Union parishad election date not finalised despite meeting:** The Election Commission (EC) had made a preliminary plan to hold union parishad (UP) elections in seven phases starting 12 November. However, the commission could not finalise the voting dates even after meeting with the relevant ministries and government agencies. The EC said more work was needed to coordinate the election schedule with examinations, Ramadan and preparations for the polls before specific dates could be announced. The meeting was held at the Nirbachan Bhaban in the capital on Thursday. **After the meeting, Election Commissioner Brigadier General (retd) Abul Fazl Md Sanaullah told reporters that all sides had agreed that the election should be completed before the Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC) examinations begin on 6 June next**

year. However, the date for the start of voting has not yet been finalised. Asked when the UP elections could begin, Sanaullah said, “First, I have to get a slot for holding the election.” He said there would be very little time available in November and December because of examinations. The Election Commission (EC) has validated 120 election symbols which will be applicable for next national election. The EC has finalized the list of the electoral symbols after amending the concerned sub-rule of the Election Conduct Rules 2008, said an EC gazette notification here on Tuesday. The symbol of ‘Boat’ has been kept on hold (*Prothom Alo*, [17 September 2026](#); *BSS News*, [17 September 2026](#)).

◆ **Picking local poll aspirants: BNP struggles, Jamaat already on the move:** As political parties gear up for the upcoming local government elections, the ruling BNP is struggling to contain multiple aspirants, while Jamaat-e-Islami says it has already selected candidates in most areas and many of them are already active in the field. **A BNP Standing Committee member, seeking anonymity, said the party does not want to formally choose candidates before the election schedule because early decisions could intensify rivalry and trigger clashes. Jamaat leaders say the final confirmation of candidates will come after the polls schedule is announced.** BNP leaders said that without party symbols, a BNP leader denied backing can still contest independently in the coming election, leaving the party dependent on organisational discipline to persuade rivals to withdraw. Jamaat leaders said as the party has a strong chain of command, it has been able to bring local leaders and activists to back single candidates in most areas without major internal disputes. **For the BNP, experience of the national election, when the BNP expelled around 72 rebel candidates, has prompted party Chairman Tarique Rahman to urge party leaders and lawmakers to minimise internal divisions and rally behind one candidate in each area during meetings with local leaders.** BNP’s candidate selection is complicated by its organisational condition, with 72 of 82 district and metropolitan committees past their terms, making it difficult to prepare and vet candidate panels through the ward, union, upazila, and district structures. **On the other hand, Jamaat says it faces no similar organisational hurdles, as prospective candidates go through a clear process from grassroots units to district and zonal levels before the final review by the central leadership** (*The Daily Star*, [17 September 2026](#)).

◆ **Ziaul ordered killing of BDR man, body dumped, witness tells ICT:** Former RAB intelligence chief Lieutenant Colonel Ziaul Ahsan personally planned and directed a series of so-called ‘Golf operations’, including alleged staged encounters and killings, a former RAB officer testified before International Crimes Tribunal-1 on Thursday. **Retired Major Sabbir Ahmed Osmani, who served as deputy commander of RAB-8 in Barishal from October 2009 before taking voluntary retirement in 2014, gave his testimony as the 13th prosecution witness in the crimes against humanity case against Ziaul. Sabbir said he had witnessed around 15 to 20 such operations in the Barishal region. He identified Ziaul, who was present in the dock, as ‘Zia sir’. Ziaul is facing at least 23 cases, mostly involving allegations of crimes against humanity.** The witness said the operations followed a particular pattern and that, except for Ziaul, no one knew the identities of the detainees. **Four people, including a witness to the BDR killings, were allegedly blindfolded, shot and dumped into the Baleshwar River in 2010, Major (retd) Md Sabbir Rahman Osmani told the International Crimes Tribunal on Thursday.** He gave the testimony on Thursday before International Crimes Tribunal-1 in a case concerning allegations of enforced disappearance (*Dhaka Tribune*, [17 September 2026](#); *New Age*, [18 September 2026](#)).

- ◆ **ACC seeks financial details of Asif Mahmud, wife:** The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) has sought information from the Bangladesh Financial Intelligence Unit (BFIU) on the domestic and overseas assets, bank accounts and financial transactions of former adviser and NCP leader Asif Mahmud Shojib Bhuiyan and his wife. An ACC letter, signed by Deputy Director and Inquiry Officer Md Zahid Kalam, was sent to the BFIU director on Thursday. **The letter said the ACC is investigating allegations against Asif Mahmud involving the acquisition of illegal assets, formation of shell companies, obtaining foreign citizenship and money laundering.** As part of the inquiry, the ACC sought details of all types of accounts held with banks and non-bank financial institutions in the names of Asif Mahmud, his wife Ayesha Akter Panna, and individuals, organisations and companies linked to them. **The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) is preparing to seek a travel ban against Asif Mahmud Shojib Bhuiyan, a former adviser to the interim government and spokesperson for the National Citizen Party (NCP)** (*Dhaka Tribune*, [17 September 2026](#); *Daily Sun*, [17 September 2026](#)).
- ◆ **Putul set to join AL Presidium:** Saima Wazed Putul, daughter of deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina, is set to join the Awami League Presidium, the party's highest policymaking body, as part of an organisational restructuring process more than two years after the party's ouster from power. **Senior party leaders said Hasina is moving to reorganise the Awami League amid discussions over her possible return to Bangladesh and the party's future leadership.** Putul is at the centre of the process, with leaders saying steps have begun to nominate her to the Presidium. The nomination could be finalised this month, they said. A meeting of the party's central executive committee has been called for Friday as part of the restructuring process. **The meeting was initially planned as an in-person gathering in New Delhi, but party leaders decided on Thursday evening to hold it virtually instead.** Putul is not the only name under consideration. The party is also discussing the inclusion of one leader from Chattogram division and another from Barishal division in the Presidium (*Daily Times of Bangladesh*, [18 September 2026](#)).
- ◆ **Lower judiciary shakeup sees 99 judges transferred:** The government has carried out a major reshuffle in the judicial administration, transferring 99 judges simultaneously across Bangladesh. Among those reassigned are 44 district and sessions judges. Several officials previously posted at the law ministry have also been returned to judicial duties. **The ministry issued six separate notifications ordering the transfers on Thursday night. Alongside 44 district judges, the affected judicial officers comprise 26 additional district judges and 25 joint district judges** (*bdnews24.com*, [18 September 2026](#)).

Economy

- ◆ **Tourism master plan underway covering 1,498 attractions nationwide:** Civil Aviation and Tourism Minister M Rashiduzzaman Millat today said work is underway on the Tourism Master Plan covering 1,498 attractions of different categories across the country. "We are working on a Tourism Master Plan encompassing 1,498 tourist attractions," he said while inaugurating the 13th Asian Tourism Fair 2026 in the capital. Millat said the government aims to transform the country's scattered tourism opportunities into a well-planned, sustainable and internationally competitive industry. **The minister said the government is also planning to**

develop Cox's Bazar into a regional tourism hub, adding that attracting international tourists is one of the main objectives of the newly constructed Cox's Bazar International Airport. He said the government's new tourism policy would place strong emphasis on private investment and public-private partnerships. Under the leadership of Prime Minister Tarique Rahman, Millat said, the government has placed tourism within its broader agenda for economic diversification, employment generation and balanced regional development. The government wants to raise tourism's contribution to the country's gross domestic product (GDP) from the existing 2-3 percent to 8-9 percent, he added (*BSS News*, [17 September 2026](#)).

- ◆ **Bangladesh slightly increases universal pension scheme returns:** The National Pension Authority has raised the age limit for nominees to receive pension benefits following the death of a subscriber under the universal pension scheme, extending it from 75 to 80 years. That means the primary pensioner will receive benefits for life, while their nominee or spouse will be entitled to draw the pension until reaching 80 years of age. The government has also marginally increased the return rate for subscribers on investments made during the 2025-26 financial year, adjusting it from 11.68 percent to 11.72 percent. The profit rate was approved on Thursday during the fourth meeting of the National Pension Authority's board of directors, chaired by Finance and Planning Minister Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury, the finance ministry said in a press note. According to the statement, the board reviewed the investment returns generated in the 2025-26 fiscal year before approving the new distribution rate (*bdnews24.com*, [17 September 2026](#)).
- ◆ **Bangladesh seeks IAEA support to connect RNPP to national grid:** Bangladesh has sought support from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to expedite the process of bringing electricity from the Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant into the national grid. The issue was discussed at a meeting between IAEA Director General Rafael Mariano Grossi and a Bangladesh delegation led by Science and Technology Minister Faqir Mahbub Anam at the IAEA headquarters in Vienna on Thursday. The meeting also discussed the peaceful use of nuclear technology, nuclear safety and international cooperation. Anam expressed gratitude to Grossi for his role in promoting the peaceful uses of nuclear technology and strengthening international cooperation. **The meeting focused on enhancing cooperation between Bangladesh and the IAEA and strengthening the country's capacity in the peaceful applications of nuclear science and technology through human resource development** (*Dhaka Tribune*, [17 September 2026](#)).
- ◆ **Korea to provide \$39.286 million grant to Bangladesh:** The government of Bangladesh and the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA), the Ministry of the Interior and Safety (MOIS), and the Rural Development Administration (RDA) of the Republic of Korea signed the Record of Discussion (RoD) & Terms of Reference (ToR) for a \$39.286 million grant for the project "Saemaul Plus End Poverty Program (SPEPP) in Bangladesh." The Project will be implemented by the Bangladesh Academy for Rural Development (BARD) as the lead implementing agency under the Rural Development and Co-operatives Division (RD CD) of the Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Co-operatives (MoLGRDC). **The Government of the Republic of Korea will provide amounting US\$ 39.286 million as a grant to implement the Project, indicatively allocated among KOICA (US\$ 30.0 million), MOIS (US\$ 5.686 million) and RDA Korea (US\$ 3.6 million), reports BSS.** The project aims to strengthen government and community capacity for sustainable rural community development,

enhance agricultural productivity and climate resilience, and increase rural household income by strengthening agricultural value chains and community-based business activities, said an ERD press release. The project sites are located in the 114 selected villages in Cumilla and Feni districts of Chattogram Division and Bogura district of Rajshahi Division. Implementation period of the Project will be from 2026 to 2034 (*Financial Express Bangladesh*, [17 September 2026](#)).

Foreign Policy

- ◆ **Mahdi Amin urges Indian envoy to prevent fugitives from creating instability:** Prime Minister's Adviser and spokesperson of Prime Minister's Office Mahdi Amin has urged the Indian High Commissioner to Bangladesh to ensure that fugitive allies of fascism and convicted criminals staying in India cannot make any attempt to create instability. He made the call when Indian High Commissioner to Bangladesh Dinesh Trivedi paid a courtesy call on him at the Prime Minister's Office here this morning. Deputy High Commissioner Pawan Badhe was present at the meeting. **The meeting discussed ways to further improve bilateral relations and enhance people-to-people contacts between the two countries. The meeting emphasised the need to further strengthen the democratic environment and values of the two countries. Both sides agreed to elevate bilateral relations to a sustainable and dignified level based on mutual respect, equality, fairness and justice.** They also held constructive discussions on resolving existing issues and challenges through mutual dialogue and cooperation. **During discussions on the multidimensional framework of bilateral relations, emphasis was placed on strengthening cooperation in education, health, sports, culture and tourism.** The meeting also discussed expanding business, trade and investment. Highlighting the immense potential of information technology and innovation, both sides agreed to enhance mutual cooperation in various promising areas, including science and technology (*Prothom Alo*, [17 September 2026](#)).
- ◆ **Bangladesh, France seek stronger cooperation in key sectors:** Bangladesh and France expressed their commitment to further strengthening bilateral cooperation, particularly in trade, investment, defence, aviation, education, renewable energy, technology and human capital development. The commitment was expressed when French Ambassador to Bangladesh Jean-Marc Sere-Charlet paid a courtesy call on State Minister for Foreign Affairs Humaiun Kobir at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. During the meeting, the French envoy congratulated Kobir on his assumption of office and exchanged views on ways to further deepen the longstanding friendship and partnership between the two countries. **The state minister appreciated France's continued engagement with Bangladesh, including its support for the country's socio-economic development, democratic transition and institutional strengthening. Kobir encouraged greater French investment in Bangladesh, highlighting opportunities in promising sectors such as infrastructure, renewable energy, space, technology and pharmaceuticals. He also underscored the importance of creating greater opportunities for legal and regular labour mobility between Bangladesh and France.** In this regard, the state minister reaffirmed Bangladesh's zero-tolerance policy towards irregular migration and human trafficking and expressed Dhaka's readiness to work closely with Paris in addressing these challenges. Ambassador Sere-Charlet reaffirmed France's readiness to enhance cooperation across all areas of mutual interest (*BSS News*, [17 September 2026](#)).

- ◆ **Three Chinese navy ships arrive on goodwill visit in Ctg:** Three Chinese Navy ships—Tang Shan, Da Qing, and Tai Hu— arrived in Bangladesh on Thursday for a five-day goodwill visit. Upon their arrival, the Chief Staff Officer to the Navy Commander, Chattogram Naval Area, welcomed the ships' officers and sailors. A well-attired Navy band performed in accordance with traditional customs. **High-ranking officials from the Chinese Embassy in Bangladesh, Chinese nationals, and senior local officials from the Bangladesh Navy were also present to welcome the vessels. Earlier, the Bangladesh Navy ship “BNS Umar Farooq” had greeted the visiting ships upon their entry into Bangladeshi waters.** According to the ISPR, a delegation comprising the commanding officers of the visiting ships and the Chinese Military Attaché to Bangladesh is scheduled to pay courtesy calls on the Commander, Chattogram Naval Area; the Commander, BN Fleet; and the Chairman of the Chattogram Port Authority. Bangladesh Navy personnel will visit the Chinese ships. Additionally, this visit offers naval personnel from both nations the opportunity to directly observe each other's operations and professional standards, as well as to exchange views. The goodwill visit is expected to further strengthen mutual cooperation, professional ties and friendly relations between the two navies. The Chinese Navy ships are scheduled to depart from Bangladeshi waters on 21 September (*Daily Sun*, [18 September 2026](#)).
- ◆ **Modi thanks Tarique for birthday wish:** Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi has expressed his “deep appreciation” for the birthday wish expressed by his Bangladeshi counterpart, Tarique Rahman, on Thursday. On Thursday, the Indian premier turned 76, and on the occasion, Tarique Rahman wished him “good health and high spirit.” **Taking to X, formerly twitter, the BNP chairman wrote: “Warmest birthday wishes to Prime Minister @narendramodi. Wishing you many happy returns of the day. May your dedicated service to the people of India always be accompanied by good health and high spirit.”** The post was published at 10:50pm on Thursday. About half-an-hour later, Modi thanked Tarique for the “warm birthday wish.” **On X, Modi posted his reply, saying: “Thank you, Prime Minister Tarique Rahman, for your warm wishes. I deeply appreciate your kind words”** (*Daily Sun*, [18 September 2026](#)).
- ◆ **PM Tarique to outline democratic transition pledges at UNGA:** Prime minister Tarique Rahman is scheduled to leave Dhaka for the United States on September 21 to attend the 81st session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York, where he is expected to outline Bangladesh’s commitments to democracy following the transition after the 2024 student-led mass uprising. The prime minister is scheduled to address the UNGA on September 24. **A foreign ministry official, preferring anonymity, said the prime minister is likely to highlight the government’s commitments following the July uprising, particularly its efforts to ensure civil and political rights. ‘The prime minister is likely to highlight his government’s commitments and efforts to ensure the civil and political rights of the people in accordance with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which Bangladesh signed in 2000.** A pro-people budget will also be highlighted,’ the official said. The prime minister is also expected to outline systematic reforms and initiatives undertaken by his government since taking office, including bills passed by parliament over the past six months. ‘Moreover, the prime minister will highlight his government’s mission, vision and political will at the upcoming UNGA,’ the official added. The US visit has, however, been shortened with the prime minister dropping his plan to visit San Francisco, a US city. At least 16 bilateral meetings and courtesy

calls are scheduled during his stay in New York. Some slots have also been kept open for possible last-minute meetings with world leaders, according to officials (*New Age*, [18 September 2026](#)).

Security

- ◆ **Laos suspends new work permits and labour visas for Bangladeshis:** Laos, a Southeast Asian country, has suspended the issuance of new work permits, plans to recruit workers and approval of labour projects for Bangladeshi nationals. The suspension, which took effect on 1 September, will remain in force until the end of 2026. The country's Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare announced the measure. The English-language news website The Laotian Times reported this on 14 September. According to the report, the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare issued the relevant directive on 9 September. **The ministry said the measure had been taken to curb illegal entry, human trafficking, unauthorised labour suppliers and employers who evade responsibility after bringing in workers from abroad. However, the directive does not specify why such a measure has been taken specifically against Bangladeshis.** Asked about the matter, Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment Minister Ariful Haque Choudhury told Prothom Alo that the government had received no official information about it. He said the matter would be examined and further action decided accordingly (*Prothom Alo*, [17 September 2026](#)).
- ◆ **Lawyer sent to jail in anti-terrorism case:** A Dhaka court on Thursday sent Advocate Abul Bashar, a former executive committee member of the Dhaka Bar Association, to jail in a case filed under the Anti-Terrorism Act with Pallabi Police Station in the capital. Dhaka Metropolitan Magistrate Mahbub Alam passed the order following a hearing, said Sub-Inspector Saiful Islam of the Prosecution Department. On Wednesday night, locals detained Abul Bashar in the Pallabi area and handed him over to police. He was later shown arrested in the Anti-Terrorism Act case and produced before the court. **According to the case statement, leaders and activists of the Awami League, whose activities have been banned, and its affiliated organisations brought out a procession in the metro rail area of Pallabi on 31 July.** Police intervened and detained several people, alleging that they carried out anti-government propaganda and conspired against the government, while others fled. Sub-Inspector Sohan Molla of Pallabi Police Station filed the case under the Anti-Terrorism Act on the same day (*Daily Sun*, [18 September 2026](#)).

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