

CLAWS Newsletter



Bangladesh Briefing | Volume III

by Anjali Manhas

Politics

1. On March 3, 2025, the interim government announced the renaming of "Bangabandhu Satellite-1," the country's first satellite that was launched on May 11, 2018, to "Bangladesh Satellite-1". This change, effective from February 23, was approved by Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus. It indicates an attempt by the government to reflect a more nationalistic sentiment concerning technological achievements within the country. The decision is aimed at bolstering the national identity and pride associated with key satellites that have essential roles in both communication and connecting rural areas to technology. (The Business Standard)
2. Six months after toppling Sheikh Hasina's regime, Bangladesh's student leaders have launched the National Citizens' Party (NCP), aiming to establish a "second republic" with constitutional reforms. Muhammad Yunus leads the interim government, with elections expected in December. While the BNP is the frontrunner, NCP's youth-driven momentum could shift the political landscape. Concerns remain over their inexperience, internal rifts, and alleged Islamist ties. The interim government faces scrutiny over its neutrality, with calls for a caretaker administration if biases emerge. (The Guardian)
3. The BNP has launched two special support cells—'Legal Assistance Cell' and 'Health Support Cell'—to aid oppressed women and children, staffed by party-affiliated lawyers and doctors. Announced by Senior Joint Secretary General Ruhul Kabir Rizvi, these cells will monitor violence, rape, and murder cases nationwide and operate across 84 districts. Barrister Kaiser Kamal and Rafiqul Islam will coordinate the efforts. Citing the rape and murder of a child, Achiya, Rizvi condemned the weak law enforcement and demanded strict punishment for perpetrators to restore justice and the rule of law. (The Financial Express)
4. On March 7, 2025, Hizb-ut-Tahrir orchestrated a large rally in Dhaka, titled "March for Khilafat," that drew participation from thousands of its members and supporters. Organized near the Baitul Mukarram Mosque, the procession aimed to advocate for the establishment of an Islamic caliphate in Bangladesh, as well as a complete overhaul of the nation's secular governance. Attendees chanted slogans calling for Khilafat, demonstrating a clear demand for a radical restructuring of the political framework in line with their ideology. (India Today World Desk, 2025)
5. French Ambassador to Bangladesh, Marie Masdupuy, reaffirmed France's commitment to democratic values, human rights, and political dialogue in Bangladesh ahead of the

upcoming elections. In meetings with leaders from BNP, AB Party, and Ganosamhati Andolon, she discussed key issues and necessary reforms. The French Embassy in Dhaka emphasized France's dedication to strengthening ties with Bangladesh and promoting peace, stability, and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific region. (Dhaka Tribune)

6. A research paper titled "*National Image of China in Bangladesh*" highlights China's extensive military cooperation with Bangladesh, including technology transfers and defence agreements. Bangladesh has utilized Chinese support to develop its domestic defence industry, producing weapons and patrol vessels. The study notes strong defence ties, including a 2002 military cooperation agreement and a 2014 deal for PLA assistance. Bangladesh is the second-largest buyer of Chinese arms, acquiring 72% of its military equipment from China between 2019-2023. The report emphasizes that China supplies advanced military technology at lower costs without political conditions, reinforcing Bangladesh's *Force Goal 2030* modernization plan. (Dhaka Tribune)

Foreign Affairs

7. Bangladesh and Japan reviewed progress on PPP projects, including Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport's Terminal 3, as well as cooperation in railway and road transport. Chief Adviser's Principal Secretary M Siraz Uddin Miah met Japanese Vice Minister Hirofumi Amakawa in Tokyo, assuring full support for Terminal 3 operations. Discussions also covered the Kamalapur Multimodal Transport Hub, MRT Line 6, and Dhaka Outer Ring Road projects. Bangladesh sought Japan's investment in its tourism sector. Assistant Vice Minister Yosuke Tsutsumi and senior officials attended the meeting. (Dhaka Tribune)
8. Bangladesh's Chief Adviser's press wing has condemned "unfounded" media narratives from certain Indian outlets, including The Economic Times and India Today, for spreading baseless claims of instability within the Bangladesh Army. Calling such reports irresponsible and divisive, the press wing urged media organizations to adhere to ethical journalism, verify facts, and retract misinformation. It warned that such propaganda risks damaging bilateral relations and undermines regional cooperation. (Dhaka Tribune)
9. The Bangladesh government is preparing for Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus's visit to China, with an inter-ministerial meeting held to finalize key agenda points for his talks with President Xi Jinping. Discussions covered trade, health, foreign loans, agriculture, connectivity, and energy cooperation. (Dhaka Tribune)

10. Russia has sought Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus's cooperation to ensure the continuity of Gazprom International's gas exploration in Bangladesh. Russian Ambassador Alexander G Khozin made the request during a meeting at the State Guest House Jamuna. Gazprom, active in Bangladesh since 2012, is working on five new wells in Bhola. The chief adviser welcomed further cooperation. (Dhaka Tribune)
11. Nepal has invited Bangladesh to attend Sagarmatha Sambaad, a global multi-stakeholder dialogue forum in Kathmandu from May 16-18. Nepalese Ambassador Ghanashyam Bhandari handed the invitation to Bangladesh's Foreign Affairs Adviser Md Touhid Hossain. Both sides reviewed recent economic cooperation and discussed key areas like trade, energy, connectivity, tourism, climate change, and regional collaboration through SAARC, BIMSTEC, and BBIN. (Dhaka Tribune)
12. Foreign Adviser Md Touhid Hossain and Pakistani Deputy PM and FM Mohammad Ishaq Dar met in Jeddah on Sunday, reaffirming strong bilateral ties. Held on the sidelines of the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers meeting, the discussion focused on enhancing cooperation in trade, cultural exchanges, and people-to-people contacts. Both leaders expressed satisfaction with growing relations and emphasized historical, religious, and cultural bonds. (Dhaka Tribune)
13. One of the most notable visits was from UN Secretary-General António Guterres, who arrived in Bangladesh on March 13 for a four-day visit. This visit was characterized as a "Ramadan Solidarity" initiative, where Guterres aimed to express solidarity with the Rohingya refugees and the Bangladeshi people hosting them (PTI, 2025). The visit included discussions with Bangladesh's Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus regarding the ongoing humanitarian crisis faced by over 1 million Rohingya refugees in Cox's Bazar amidst fears of significant cuts in food aid due to dwindling international support (PTI, 2025). Guterres emphasized the need for international cooperation and urged global attention to the plight of the Rohingya, describing the aid cuts as "a crime".
14. Bangladesh and the UK will hold strategic talks on March 15 to strengthen political and socio-economic ties as the UK exits the EU and Bangladesh attains developing nation status in 2024. Discussions will cover political relations, trade, illegal Bangladeshi immigrants, and innovation. A Sheikh Hasina-Theresa May meeting is planned for April during the Commonwealth summit, with Dhaka eyeing a bigger role post-Brexit. Bangladesh seeks continued duty-free access to the UK market and aims to sign a repatriation deal for illegal immigrants. The UK's support in resolving the Rohingya crisis will also be a key topic. (Dhaka Tribune)

Border Security

15. Two Bangladeshi nationals, Shyamal Biswas (66) and Ratan Sarker (58), were repatriated after a flag meeting between Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) and India's Border Security Force (BSF) at the Maheshpur border on Tuesday night. The meeting, held near pillar 60/29, was led by Subedar Asaduzzaman Biswas (BGB) and AC Yadav Nagesh Gautam (BSF). The individuals were caught attempting to enter Bangladesh illegally and were handed over following discussions. (Dhaka Tribune)
16. The government informed Rajya Sabha that the BSF apprehended 2,601 Bangladeshi nationals attempting to enter India illegally from January 2024 to January 2025. Minister of State for Home Affairs, Nityanand Rai, highlighted strengthened Indo-Bangladesh border security through advanced surveillance, increased manpower, and technology integration. Security measures include continuous patrolling, checkpoints, intelligence reinforcement, and upgraded border fencing. Cooperation with Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) is facilitated through the 1975 Joint Guidelines and the 2011 Coordinated Border Management Plan. Additional efforts include anti-human trafficking units, community engagement, and securing riverine areas with floating Border Out Posts (BOPs). (The New Indian Express)
17. Infrastructure improvements have also been key components in the fight against illegal cross-border activities. The Indian authorities have focused on constructing border fencing and establishing Border Out Posts, particularly in vulnerable stretches of the border. (The Statesman, 2025)

Rohingya Crisis

18. UN Secretary-General António Guterres has warned of a humanitarian disaster in Cox's Bazar due to funding cuts by major donors, including the US and European nations. Speaking during his visit, he highlighted the severe impact on Rohingya refugees, with food rations at risk of being reduced. Guterres called on the global community to support Bangladesh's efforts and emphasized that a solution must be found in Myanmar. He also pointed out the worsening conditions due to climate change and stressed the need for education and skills training for refugees. His visit concluded with an Iftar meal, reinforcing solidarity during Ramadan. (UN News – Global Perspective and Human Stories)

19. Human rights groups criticized the government for the lack of legal rights afforded to refugees, arguing that the inability of these individuals to seek employment perpetuated their dependence on humanitarian aid. (UNICEF)
20. International NGOs (INGOs) have urged the global community to take immediate action to address the worsening Rohingya crisis as UN Secretary-General António Guterres visits Bangladesh. Severe funding shortages, set to reduce food rations and essential services in April, threaten humanitarian aid efforts. (Dhaka Tribune)
21. Throughout March, calls for both the Bangladeshi government and the international community to facilitate conditions conducive for safe and dignified return to Myanmar continued to mount, with various parties acknowledging that repatriation remains the ultimate solution. (Mujib Mashal - Reporting from Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, 2025)
22. The Trump administration considered phasing out aid to Lebanon and Rohingya refugees, citing a lack of US benefit, as revealed in a February 16 email by Peter Marocco, acting USAID deputy administrator. Marocco urged a reduction in dependency, questioning continued aid without reciprocal goodwill. The State Department declined to comment. The US has provided \$2.4 billion in aid to Rohingya refugees since 2017 and \$5.5 billion to Lebanon since 2001. While a waiver protected emergency food aid, USAID has undergone massive cuts, with 80% of programs cancelled. The UN warns of food ration reductions for Rohingyas due to funding shortages. (The Financial Express)

About the Author

Anjali Manhas is a Research Assistant at the Centre for Land Warfare Studies (CLAWS), where she specializes in Defence and Strategic Studies with a focus on South Asian geopolitics. She completed her Master's in Defence and Strategic Studies from Rashtriya Raksha University, where she developed a strong foundation in security, international relations, and strategic analysis. Anjali's current research centers on Bangladesh, examining its security dynamics, regional relationships, and strategic posture in South Asia. Her work aims to contribute to policy development and strategic insights for enhancing regional stability and security. With a keen interest in defence and strategic affairs, Anjali is committed to advancing knowledge and fostering a deeper understanding of South Asian security issues.



All Rights Reserved 2023 Centre for Land Warfare Studies (CLAWS)

No part of this publication may be reproduced, copied, archived, retained or transmitted through print, speech or electronic media without prior written approval from C L A W S. The views expressed and suggestions made in the article are solely of the author in his personal capacity and do not have any official endorsement. Attributability of the contents lies purely with author.