

CLAWS Newsletter



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by Anjali Manhas

Political Developments

1. **Bengali New Year Parade Controversy and Political Symbolism** : On April 14, 2025, Bangladesh celebrated Pahela Baishakh for the first time since the 2024 student-led uprising that ousted former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. The traditional New Year parade, previously called Mangal Shobhajatra, was renamed Borshoboron Ananda Shobhajatra—its original 1989 title—symbolizing a break from the Awami League’s legacy. The event blended vibrant cultural motifs with political symbolism, including depictions of Hasina as the “Face of Fascism” and references to the deadly 36-day protest that claimed around 1,400 lives. While some hailed the changes as a celebration of newfound freedom, others warned against politicizing cultural traditions. Notably, the participation of 28 ethnic minority groups signaled a move toward broader national inclusivity, reflecting ongoing ideological tensions between Bengali and Bangladeshi nationalism. (*Aljazeera*)
2. **The Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) expressed dissatisfaction with the interim government's election roadmap**, which plans to hold polls between December 2025 and June 2026. BNP urged for a December cut-off time for the election. (*The Business Standard*)
3. **Key Highlights from Police Week-2025 Inaugural Events**: During the inauguration of Police Week-2025 at Rajarbagh, police officials called for the formation of an independent commission to ensure impartial functioning of the force, free from political influence. Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus assured that the demands, including a compensatory allowance for constables, would be considered. The Inspector General of Police highlighted recent reforms and trust-building efforts. A workshop addressed election preparedness, assigning officers tasks to counter misinformation, ensure neutrality, and maintain law and order. Officials also proposed recruiting unmarried ASPs for better training discipline and improving support systems for lower-ranking personnel, including housing, nutrition, and healthcare. (*The Daily Star*)
4. **Army Chief Vows Political Neutrality and Regional Stability**: In an interview, Bangladesh Army Chief General Waker-Uz-Zaman asserted the military's firm commitment to staying out of politics, acknowledging past mistakes and pledging non-interference during his tenure. He emphasized that only politicians can replace politicians and disassociated the army from the DGFI’s previous political involvement. The general expressed support for the interim government led by Prof Muhammad Yunus, even at the

cost of military inconvenience. He also highlighted the importance of maintaining balanced, mutually respectful relations with India, stressing fairness and national interest, especially regarding border stability and water sharing. *(The Daily Star)*

5. **New Political Party 'Bangladesh Natundhara Janatar Party' Launched in Dhaka**

A new political party named Bangladesh Natundhara Janatar Party was officially launched on April 26, 2025, in Dhaka. The party, led by convenor Muhammad Abdul Ahad Noor and patron ATM Momtazul Karim, announced a 37-member central convening committee at the launch event held at the Shishu Kalyan Parishad building. The party plans to form national and grassroots-level committees across Bangladesh. Leaders from several other political parties attended the event, signaling broader political engagement. *(Dhaka Tribune)*

International Relations

1. **Bangladesh-Pakistan Diplomatic Talks Resume** : On April 17, 2025, foreign ministry officials from Bangladesh's interim government and Pakistan resumed bilateral talks in Dhaka after a 15-year hiatus, marking a significant step toward mending strained ties between the two South Asian Muslim-majority countries. This was the first such consultation since 2010, reflecting a thaw in relations following significant political changes in Bangladesh. *(The Associate Press)*
2. **Bangladesh, Azerbaijan to Boost Connectivity and Strengthen Bilateral Ties**
Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus met Azerbaijan's Deputy Foreign Minister Elnur Mammadov in Dhaka and agreed to enhance bilateral ties by improving connectivity, including launching a direct flight between Dhaka and Baku and opening an Azerbaijani embassy in Dhaka. Discussions focused on expanding cooperation in trade, education, energy, technology, and culture. Professor Yunus emphasized student exchange and investment opportunities in Bangladesh, while appreciating Azerbaijan's ASAN and DOST service models. He also received an invitation to attend the upcoming ECO Summit in Azerbaijan in July 2025. *(X post by @ChiefAdviserGoB)*
3. **Uruguay, Bangladesh Discuss Trade and Youth Investment in Rome**
Uruguay's Foreign Minister Mario Lubetkin met Bangladesh Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus in Rome following Pope Francis' funeral. They discussed enhancing trade between Bangladesh and Latin America, particularly with Mercosur nations, and

explored collaboration on youth investment and social business. Both reaffirmed their commitment to a "Three Zero" world and agreed on the need for continued high-level dialogue. *(X post by @ChiefAdviserGoB)*

4. Bangladesh's Chief Adviser Meets Senior Vatican Leaders in Rome

Following the Funeral Mass of Pope Francis, Bangladesh's Chief Adviser, Professor Muhammad Yunus, held separate meetings in Rome with Cardinal Silvano Maria Tomasi and Cardinal Jacob Koovakad. The discussions covered regional peace, interfaith dialogue, and economic growth. Cardinal Tomasi emphasized peace-building in Southeast Asia and praised Vietnam's development, which Professor Yunus cited as a model for Bangladesh. Cardinal Koovakad announced an interfaith dialogue event to be hosted in Bangladesh in September, with both leaders affirming the importance of religious harmony. *(X post by @ChiefAdviserGoB)*

5. Bangladesh Chief Adviser Meets Qatari PM to Deepen Bilateral Ties and Seek Support for National Rebuilding :

Bangladesh Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus met with Qatari Prime Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani in Doha on April 24, 2025. The leaders discussed strengthening bilateral cooperation, with Qatar assuring full diplomatic and financial support for Bangladesh's rebuilding efforts. They addressed the Rohingya crisis, with both calling for enhanced international support. Discussions also included the Gaza situation, youth development, and support for female athletes in Bangladesh. The Qatari PM welcomed a technical delegation from Bangladesh and accepted an invitation to visit the country. *(X post by @ChiefAdviserGoB)*

6. Strengthening Bangladesh-China Economic and Strategic Ties :

A 100-member Chinese business delegation, led by China's commerce minister, is set to visit Bangladesh soon, highlighting growing bilateral economic relations. During a recent meeting between Bangladesh's Foreign Secretary Md Jashim Uddin and Peng Xiubin from the Communist Party of China, both sides discussed trade, investment, education, healthcare, and the Rohingya issue. Bangladesh welcomed medical support from Kunming and requested more university scholarships, while reiterating its support for the One-China policy. China emphasized continued infrastructure support, cultural cooperation, and expanded engagement with political parties and think tanks under its neighborhood diplomacy strategy. *(Dhaka Tribune)*

7. Recalibrating Bangladesh-India Relations Amid Political Transition and Strategic Uncertainty :

India's abrupt withdrawal of the transshipment facility for Bangladeshi exports has strained bilateral ties, especially in the wake of Bangladesh's recent political

upheaval that unseated the Awami League. This move, coupled with rising diplomatic tensions, misinformation, and unresolved issues like border violence and water-sharing, poses challenges to regional stability. However, the June 4 Yunus-Modi meeting at the BIMSTEC Summit marks a pivotal step towards rebuilding trust and cooperation. Given their deep historical ties and mutual strategic interests, both nations must leverage this moment to redefine their relationship through equitable engagement, institutional reinvigoration, and proactive diplomacy to ensure regional peace and resilience. (*The Daily Star*)

Border Security

1. BSF Foils Major Smuggling Attempt Along South Bengal Frontier

Jawans of the Border Security Force (BSF) thwarted multiple smuggling attempts along the India-Bangladesh border in South Bengal, arresting four Bangladeshi nationals and seizing contraband worth ₹11 lakh. Key recoveries included 2,817 bottles of Phensedyl, 21 kg of ganja, and 43 fish pin balls. A major operation near the Ghoadanga outpost in North 24 Parganas led to the arrest of four suspects and the seizure of narcotics, with one detainee identified as a repeat offender. (*News Arena India*)

Rohingya Refugee

1. Bangladesh Considers UN Aid Corridor to Rakhine State

Bangladesh's interim government has expressed willingness to support a UN-led humanitarian aid corridor through its territory to Myanmar's Rakhine state, aiming to assist civilians affected by conflict and natural disasters. The proposal, initiated by UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, is under consultation and has sparked domestic political concerns over national sovereignty and security. Key political parties, including the BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami, have demanded broader consultations. The UN has stated that any aid passage requires approval from both Bangladesh and Myanmar. (*Reuters*)

2. Funding Cuts Threaten Survival and Stability in Rohingya Refugee Camps

Severe funding cuts from the U.S. and some European nations are worsening the humanitarian crisis in Bangladesh's Rohingya refugee camps, particularly in Cox's Bazar. Over 300,000 refugees are facing healthcare disruptions, with critical services like physiotherapy and primary care under threat. Food aid is also being slashed, with rations potentially dropping to just \$6 a month, increasing hunger, malnutrition, and the risk of

crime, trafficking, and radicalisation. Community leaders warn the deteriorating situation could escalate into a broader regional and global issue if left unaddressed. (*Reuters*)

3. **Prof Yunus Urges Qatar's Active Role in Rohingya Repatriation and Regional Cooperation** : During his visit to Qatar for Earth Summit 2025, Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus called on Qatar to leverage its diplomatic influence and financial strength to pressure Myanmar for the **swift repatriation of 1.3 million Rohingyas** from Bangladesh. He emphasized that the **prolonged refugee crisis poses serious regional security threats** and that sustainable repatriation is the only viable solution. Prof Yunus urged Qatar to contribute to the OIC fund for the ongoing ICJ genocide case against Myanmar and support high-level participation in the **UN-led Rohingya Conference** planned in New York in September 2025. In meetings with top Qatari officials, he also pitched deeper **economic cooperation**, including an exclusive economic zone for Qatari manufacturers, and welcomed upcoming **SpaceX satellite services** in Bangladesh. SpaceX VP Lauren Dreyer confirmed a technical launch could happen as early as May. (*The Daily Star*)



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.



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