

# CLAWS Newsletter



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by Anjali Manhas

## Politics

1. Thousands of activists and leaders of the Bangladesh Jatiyatabadi Sramik Dal, the labour wing of BNP, gathered at Nayapaltan in Dhaka to participate in a May Day rally. The rally featured speeches highlighting labour rights and demands, with BNP Acting Chairman Tarique Rahman expected to deliver a key speech on the labour situation and national politics. Despite rain, the rally saw sustained participation and chants for workers' rights and trade unions. (*The Business Standard*)
2. A three-day series of political rallies began in Dhaka as different political parties sought to gather support ahead of upcoming elections. The interim government led by Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus has been preparing for reforms and potential elections scheduled by end of 2025 or mid-2026. The BNP organized a large May Day rally, aiming to showcase demands for free and fair elections. Islamist parties like Jamaat-e-Islami also staged rallies. (*Arab News*) (*France24*)
3. On May 2, the National Citizens' Party (NCP), led by youth leaders, staged a demonstration at the south gate of Baitul Mukarram National Mosque to demand justice and raise national issues. The following day, May 3, Hefazat-e-Islam Bangladesh organized a grand assembly at Suhrawardy Udyan to protest the Women's Reform Commission's proposals and other concerns. Organizers have been preparing for the event for over a month. Meanwhile, a gazette from the Ministry of Public Administration announces a three-day government holiday starting May 1, in observance of May Day and the weekend. (*The Daily Star*)
4. Khaleda Zia, former Prime Minister and BNP leader, returned to Bangladesh from medical treatment in London. Her arrival increased pressure on the interim government to announce a definitive date for national elections. BNP officials expressed optimism that her presence would aid in the democratic transition. (*Al Jazeera*)
5. News broke out about former Bangladesh President Mohammad Abdul Hamid fleeing to Thailand for medical treatment, an event illustrating ongoing political and societal instability. (*Economic Times*)
6. Bangladesh's interim government, headed by Muhammad Yunus, officially banned all activities of the former ruling Awami League party led by ousted Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina under the Anti-Terrorism Act. This ban includes suspending all party operations domestically and online until the completion of an ongoing trial at the International Crimes Tribunal (ICT) regarding the deaths of hundreds of protesters during the 2024 uprising. Legal amendments were made to allow prosecution of parties as entities. The ban followed

widespread protests led by the student-formed National Citizens Party and supported by Islamist groups demanding the Awami League be declared a terrorist organization.

The Awami League vehemently rejected the ban, calling it illegitimate and undemocratic, vowing to continue political operations despite restrictions.

- The BNP expressed cautious support for the ban, seeing it as a necessary step for accountability, although it had earlier opposed banning political parties.
- Human rights groups and international observers raised concerns about the impact on democracy and fair political competition.

*(The Guardian), (Reuters), (ABC News), (New York Times)*

7. The Election Commission officially suspended the registration of the Awami League, effectively barring it from participating in future elections. The ban alarmed regional neighbors; India expressed concern about the impact on democratic processes in Bangladesh.

- Continued political tensions were reported, including restrictions on Awami League's online platforms and intensified government scrutiny.
- Analysts highlighted the precarious situation Bangladesh faces due to political polarization and delayed elections expected no earlier than mid-2026.
- Meanwhile, the interim government faced calls to prioritize democratic reforms and reconcile political divides.

*(Al Mayadeen), (AFP via Nampa), (The Hindu), (DAWN), (Mizzima News), (South China Morning Post), (EU Reporter analysis), (Mirage News), (Ainvest News)*

8. Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus arrived in Chattogram on May 14, 2025, for a day-long visit—his first since assuming office. He landed at Shah Amanat International Airport at 9:22 AM and was received by local government officials. During his 12-hour stay, Yunus is scheduled to attend several engagements, including serving as the chief guest at the fifth convocation of Chittagong University, where he will deliver the convocation address. He is accompanied by key advisers covering sectors such as energy, education, health, and SDGs. *(The Daily Star)*

9. Supporters of BNP's Ishraque Hossain staged a sit-in protest at Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC) headquarters on May 14, demanding his immediate oath-taking as mayor. Despite a March 27 tribunal verdict declaring Ishraque the rightful winner of the 2020 DSCC election and a gazette notification issued by the Election Commission (EC) on

April 27, he has not yet been sworn in. Protesters accused the government of stalling the process and warned of intensified demonstrations. The Local Government Division, responsible for arranging the oath ceremony, has yet to act. Ishraque's rival, Sheikh Fazle Noor Taposh, assumed office in May 2020. *(Dhaka Tribune)*

### Foreign Affairs

1. The International Monetary Fund is set to release \$1.3 billion to Bangladesh in June following the fourth review of its \$4.7 billion loan programme and a breakthrough in talks on exchange rate reforms, the finance ministry said. *(Reuters)*
2. Bangladesh has called on India to immediately stop the recent push-in of people across the border, warning that such actions pose risks to security and undermine mutual understanding. *(The Daily Star)*
3. Japan today affirmed its support to the interim government of Bangladesh and its reform initiatives, and assured continuing cooperation for the country's socio-economic development during the 6th round of Bangladesh-Japan Foreign Office Consultations held in Tokyo. *(BSS News)*
4. On May 15, the 6th Japan-Bangladesh Foreign Secretary Level Consultation was held in Tokyo with commitments to strengthen bilateral relations in security, economy, cooperation, and cultural exchanges under the Japan-Bangladesh Strategic Partnership. *(Ministry of Foreign Affairs Japan)*
5. Bangladesh's Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus praised both Indian PM Modi and Pakistani PM Shehbaz Sharif for agreeing to an immediate ceasefire and urged for diplomacy over conflict, reflecting a balanced foreign policy approach amid India-Pakistan tensions. *(The Diplomat)*
6. India's government claimed airlifting 300 undocumented Bangladeshi migrants from Gujarat to Tripura and pushing them back into Bangladesh via the land border on May 4, asserting they were undocumented Bangladeshi nationals. Bangladesh's Ministry of Foreign Affairs sent a letter on May 8 urging India to follow established mechanisms and stop push-ins of people across the border without due process, warning these acts undermine mutual understanding and border peace. *(The Business Standard)*
7. Bangladesh sought Japan's increased Official Development Assistance (ODA) concessional loans, extension of loan repayment terms, and budgetary support in 6th Foreign Office Consultations in Tokyo. Both countries discussed cooperation on trade,

investment, climate change, and the Rohingya crisis, reaffirming a strategic partnership. *(The Business Standard)*

8. Bangladesh and Japan outlined future cooperation areas including infrastructure, economic, security, and cultural exchanges ahead of Chief Adviser Prof Yunus's upcoming visit to Japan in May 2025, strengthening the bilateral strategic partnership. *(The Daily Star)*
9. Bangladesh will receive \$1.3 billion from the IMF in June 2025 after reaching a staff-level agreement on reforms including exchange rate flexibility, tax reforms, banking governance improvement, and climate investments amid macroeconomic pressures. *(Reuters)*
10. At the "China-Bangladesh Readers Forum on Xi Jinping: The Governance of China," held in Dhaka, Chinese Ambassador Yao Wen emphasized that China's unique path to modernization could serve as a model for Bangladesh and other Global South nations. Highlighting China's achievements in economic growth and social stability without adopting Western models, he described President Xi Jinping's governance philosophy as a valuable reference for developing countries. The event marked the launch of the Bengali edition of Xi's book, which has gained global reach and influence. Prominent Bangladeshi officials and scholars praised the growing bilateral ties and shared aspirations for development, peace, and people-to-people exchange. *(Dhaka Tribune)*
11. The US State Department reaffirmed its commitment to working with Bangladesh's interim government, despite concerns over political restrictions and alleged support for radical ideologies. It emphasized support for democratic processes and freedoms of expression and assembly. *(The Daily Star)*
12. Malaysia has agreed to recruit a large number of Bangladeshi workers in the coming months, prioritizing their rights, easing visa restrictions, and expanding job opportunities. Asif Nazrul, adviser to the Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare, confirmed that Bangladeshis are set to receive the largest share of 100,000–150,000 upcoming foreign worker recruitments. Following meetings with key Malaysian ministers, Malaysia also committed to processing entry for 17,000 previously delayed Bangladeshi workers, starting with a batch of 7,926. Efforts are underway to secure multiple-entry visas and address regularization of undocumented workers, with an emphasis on sending more skilled manpower. *(The Daily Star)*

### Border tensions

1. Rohingya Push-Back from India: Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) detained five Rohingyas pushed in from India's Assam state. The family claimed they were forcibly blindfolded and dropped at the border by Indian forces. UNHCR cards issued in India confirmed their refugee status. A protest has been lodged with India. (*The Daily Star*)
2. Brahmanbaria Clash: One person was killed and at least 15 injured in violent clashes between two rival groups in Brahmanbaria over local dominance and alleged drug activity. Police have detained several suspects and are continuing their investigation. (*The Daily Star*)
3. The Indian Border Security Force (BSF) pushed 44 Bangladeshi nationals—including 13 men, 18 women, and 13 children—back into Bangladesh through the Uttar Shahbazpur border area in Moulvibazar early on 14 May 2025. These individuals had reportedly entered India illegally in search of employment and were arrested by Indian authorities before being repatriated. The Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) intercepted and verified them as Bangladeshi citizens. This is the third such incident in recent weeks, with similar pushbacks occurring on May 6 and 7. The BGB has since increased security along the Barlekha border to prevent further occurrences. The repatriated individuals claimed more Bangladeshis remain in Indian custody, awaiting similar deportation. (*Daily Observer*)

## 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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