

# CLAWS Newsletter



Bangladesh Briefing | Volume II | Issue No III

by Anjali Manhas

## **Bangladesh Briefing – 22**

### **Political Developments**

#### **Election Visa and Security Update ([Dhaka Tribune](#))**

Foreign Adviser Md Touhid Hossain has announced that Bangladesh will issue visas to Indian journalists to cover the upcoming national election, while ordinary visa services will remain suspended for another 8–10 days. The government welcomes international observers and media to ensure transparency, with the Election Commission handling observer matters independently. Authorities report no major security disruptions so far, describing the overall situation as stable, and stated that any potential unrest could stem from groups not participating in the election.

#### **Peaceful Protests Across US Over Minority Persecution in Bangladesh ([NDTV World](#))**

Peaceful demonstrations were held in more than 22 cities across the United States to raise awareness about alleged violence against Hindu and other minority communities in Bangladesh. One of the largest rallies took place in Artesia, where hundreds gathered for a march calling for justice, protection, and international attention. Organisers described the events as non-political and focused on human rights, with participants chanting “Om Shanti” and holding placards advocating peace. Speakers cited reports of attacks on Hindu, Buddhist, and Christian minorities and urged global institutions and governments to increase scrutiny and safeguard religious freedom. The protests come ahead of Bangladesh’s national elections, with the government led by Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus facing criticism over minority protection and the ban on Sheikh Hasina’s Awami League. The Bangladeshi government has previously stated it is committed to protecting all citizens and prosecuting those responsible for sectarian violence.

#### **Bangladesh Election 2026: Minority Security Concerns ([Aljazeera](#))**

Ahead of Bangladesh’s February 12, 2026 national election, religious minorities said they felt increasingly insecure following a series of attacks reported since the August 2024 ouster of Sheikh Hasina. Minority groups claimed hundreds of communal incidents over the past year, though the government maintained that most cases were ordinary crimes rather than religiously motivated violence. The interim administration led by Muhammad Yunus said steps had been

taken to ensure a safe and inclusive vote, but anxiety persisted in several communities given Bangladesh's history of election-related unrest.

### **Indefinite Strike Disrupts Operations at Chattogram Port ([The Daily Star](#))**

Operations at Chittagong Port Authority in Chattogram were disrupted after workers enforced an indefinite strike from 8:00am on February 8, 2026, halting cargo handling at several vessels and affecting activities at the outer anchorage. The Chattogram Bandar Rokkha Sangram Parishad had demanded cancellation of the proposed lease of the New Mooring Container Terminal to DP World, removal of the port chairman, and a probe into alleged corruption. While operations at some terminals continued under naval management, heavy security had been deployed across port areas, two employees were detained, and authorities held an emergency meeting amid escalating tensions between workers and port officials.

### **BNP Claims Victory in Bangladesh's First Post-Uprising Election ([The Associated Press](#))**

The Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) claimed victory in Bangladesh's first national election since the 2024 uprising, saying it secured enough parliamentary seats to form a government, though the final results were yet to be formally announced by the Election Commission. Led by Tarique Rahman, who recently returned from years in exile, the party reportedly crossed the 151-seat majority threshold in the 350-member Parliament. Voter turnout stood at 59.44 percent, and a majority also backed proposed constitutional reforms, including term limits for the prime minister. The Jamaat-e-Islami-led alliance secured significant seats and raised concerns over delayed results, with its chief Shafiqur Rahman poised to become opposition leader. The vote was widely viewed as a key test of the country's democratic transition following the removal of Sheikh Hasina in 2024.

### **Sheikh Hasina Rejects Bangladesh Election Results as 'Deception and Farce' ([TOI](#))**

Ousted former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina rejected the February 12 general election results, describing the polls as a "pre-planned election of deception and farce" and a "disgraceful chapter" in Bangladesh's democratic history. In a statement from exile in New Delhi, she alleged large-scale irregularities in turnout figures released by the Election Commission and questioned the legitimacy of the process, citing inconsistencies in early voting data. The vote resulted in a sweeping victory for the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), now led by Tarique Rahman following the death of Khaleda Zia. BNP leaders have since renewed calls for Hasina's extradition from India to face trial in Bangladesh.

## **Bangladesh Referendum Passes Amid BNP's Landslide Victory, Raising Questions on Reform Implementation ([The Daily Star](#))**

In Bangladesh's February 12, 2026, elections, voters also participated in a referendum on the July National Charter, which proposed constitutional reforms including a two-chamber parliament, stronger checks on executive power, and expanded fundamental rights. The charter received just over 60% approval, signaling public support for reform. However, the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), which won a landslide in the parliamentary vote, had previously expressed doubts about parts of the charter, creating potential tension between the referendum mandate and the party's own agenda as it assumes power. Implementation of the reforms will now test the BNP government's commitment to balancing its electoral promises with constitutional changes.

### **Foreign Affair**

## **Budget 2026: India Halves Aid to Bangladesh Amid Diplomatic Strain ([FirstPost](#))**

India has reduced its financial assistance to Bangladesh by 50% in the Union Budget 2026–27, allocating Rs 60 crore compared to Rs 120 crore last year. The move comes amid strained ties between New Delhi and Dhaka, particularly over reported attacks on minorities and Bangladesh's growing engagement with Pakistan under Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus. Since 2024, Dhaka has expanded cooperation with Islamabad, including restoring direct flights, boosting trade links, and reviving bilateral commissions. Meanwhile, India continues to raise concerns over minority safety in Bangladesh. Separately, India made no allocation for the Chabahar port project this year, while Bhutan remains the largest recipient of Indian foreign aid.

## **Regional Leaders Invited to BNP's Swearing-In Ceremony in Bangladesh ([The Daily Star](#))**

Bangladesh's new government, led by the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) under Tarique Rahman, has invited over a dozen heads of government from South Asia and other Asian countries to its swearing-in ceremony on February 17, 2026. Invited leaders include Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. While Modi is expected to decline due to prior commitments, he may send a senior representative. BNP officials stated that the invitations aim to strengthen bilateral relations and demonstrate mutual



respect, building on recent gestures such as Modi's call to Rahman and India's attendance at former Prime Minister Khaleda Zia's funeral.

### **China Pledges Support for Bangladesh's Development as BNP Wins Elections ([Dhaka Tribune](#))**

In February 2026, China expressed its readiness to work with Bangladesh to maintain steady development and strengthen their Comprehensive Strategic Cooperative Partnership. Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Lin Jian stated that China was prepared to deepen bilateral cooperation with Dhaka. The statement noted that Bangladesh's parliamentary election had been conducted smoothly, with the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) winning more than half of the seats based on preliminary counts. China also expressed its expectation that BNP Chairman Tarique Rahman would assume the office of Prime Minister and reaffirmed its commitment to promoting stable and sustained growth in Bangladesh-China relations.

### **China Warns Against Interference in Dhaka-Beijing Relations Amid US Concerns([Dhaka Tribune](#))**

China stated that its relations with Bangladesh and other South Asian countries were not aimed at any third party and would not be swayed by external forces. The Chinese Embassy in Dhaka emphasized that attempts to interfere or obstruct these relations were "doomed to fail," responding to recent remarks by US Ambassador Brent T. Christensen, who had expressed concern over growing Chinese influence in South Asia. The embassy reaffirmed that China and Bangladesh maintain friendly, mutually beneficial cooperation that supports regional peace, stability, and development.

### **US Seeks Closer Defence, Trade Ties with Bangladesh Amid Rising Chinese Influence ([Dhaka Tribune](#))**

The United States signalled its readiness to provide Bangladesh with defence equipment from the US and allied countries as alternatives to Chinese systems. Ambassador Brent T. Christensen cited concern over China's expanding influence in South Asia and pledged to engage the incoming Bangladeshi government on the risks of certain security cooperation with Beijing. The statement comes after Bangladesh's 2024 Gen Z-led uprising ousted pro-India premier Sheikh Hasina, opening the door for closer ties with China, including a planned drone factory near the Indian border and potential JF-17 fighter jet purchases from Pakistan. Christensen also emphasized the importance of improved Bangladesh-India relations for regional stability. Beyond defence, the US stressed commercial

diplomacy, urging the new government to demonstrate openness to foreign investment. On humanitarian matters, Washington reaffirmed its role as the largest donor for the Rohingya refugee response while calling for greater international support for over one million refugees in Bangladesh.

### **US Secretary of State Congratulates Tarique Rahman, Pledges Cooperation with Bangladesh's New Government ([Dhaka Tribune](#))**

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio congratulated the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), its Chairman Tarique Rahman, and the people of Bangladesh following BNP's landslide victory in the 13th National Parliamentary Election. Rubio emphasized the importance of bilateral relations and expressed Washington's commitment to working with the new government to strengthen regional prosperity, stability, and security. He shared the message on social media platform X, highlighting the US's eagerness to collaborate with Bangladesh's elected leadership on both economic and security matters.

### **EU Observers Praise Bangladesh's 2026 Election as Competitive ([Dhaka Tribune](#))**

The EU Election Observation Mission described Bangladesh's 2026 parliamentary polls as "acceptable" and competitive, praising the Election Commission for transparency. Concerns were raised over low female representation, minority participation, and sporadic local political violence. Observers will continue monitoring and release a final report soon.

## **Border Security Updates**

### **BGB Steps Up Security in Dhaka Ahead of National Election ([BSS](#))**

Over 35,000 members of the Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) were deployed nationwide to maintain law and order for the 13th parliamentary election on February 12. A total of 1,210 platoons operated across all 64 districts, with some already stationed in key areas. In Narayanganj, 17 platoons were active across five upazilas, with 11 base camps established, while 12 platoons covered four upazilas in Brahmanbaria and Cumilla. A Quick Response Force remained on standby, and drones, along with mobile and static patrols, monitored polling centers. Ahead of the election, the BGB also launched special patrols across key areas of Dhaka to ensure public safety, prevent untoward incidents, and boost voter confidence, while personnel underwent election drills and training with specialized equipment to support smooth electoral operations.

### **BGB Seizes Foreign Firearms Ahead of Bangladesh Election ([Views Bangladesh](#))**

Rajshahi Battalion-1 of the Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) recovered two foreign pistols, four magazines, and eight rounds of ammunition near the Raotha border in Bagha on February 6. The weapons were found on a motorcycle abandoned by fleeing smugglers. A similar seizure had occurred on January 17 in Katakhalī municipality. Ahead of the 13th national parliamentary election, BGB strengthened security in the region with 10 base camps, 28 platoons of mobile striking force, a K-9 unit, seven speedboats and fast patrol crafts, deploying a total of 700 personnel across 64 polling centers in three border-adjacent upazilas.

### **20 BGB Platoons Deployed in Rangamati and Chattogram for Election Security ([BSS News](#))**

A total of 20 platoons of Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) were deployed across seven upazilas—five in Rangamati and two in Chattogram districts—ahead of the 13th national parliamentary election. Operating from seven base camps, they secured 267 polling stations, conducting regular patrols, vehicle checks, and surveillance using drones and body-worn cameras. Special coordination with the army, local law enforcement, and civil administration ensured continuous monitoring and public safety throughout the election period.

### **BSF and Assam Police Seize Rs 55 Lakh Worth of Yaba Tablets in Mankachar ([India Today NE](#))**

A joint operation by the Border Security Force (BSF) and Assam Police intercepted 11,000 Yaba (Methamphetamine) tablets near the Indo-Bangladesh border in South Salmara Mankachar on February 16, 2026. Two men, Abu Sama (37) and Ekramul Hoque (43), were arrested while attempting to smuggle the drugs across the border. Officials also seized a motorcycle and two mobile phones used in the operation. The contraband, valued at Rs 55 lakh, was tested on-site, confirming Methamphetamine, and a case was registered under GDE No. 13. Investigations are ongoing to trace the smuggling network.

### **BJP's Suvendu Adhikari Flags Border Security Concerns Post-Bangladesh Polls ([The Print](#))**

Kolkata, Feb 15 – Senior BJP leader Suvendu Adhikari expressed concern over security along the Bangladesh border following political shifts in Dhaka after the 2026 elections. He claimed Jamaat-e-Islami won 68 constituencies in districts bordering West Bengal, urging heightened

vigilance and stronger border infrastructure. Adhikari highlighted the strategic importance of the Siliguri corridor, linking India's northeast with the mainland, and warned that ideological consolidation in the region demands robust security measures.

### **Defence Updates**

#### **Bangladesh Army Deploys 1 Lakh Troops for February 12 Elections ([The Business Standard](#))**

The Bangladesh Army deployed 1,00,000 troops nationwide to support civil authorities ahead of the 13th parliamentary elections and referendum on February 12. This marked a significant increase from 40,000–42,000 troops in the 2024 polls, reflecting heightened security concerns and the need to boost voter confidence. A total of 544 army camps were established, with 5,000 patrols assigned to polling station peripheries. Sensitive areas, including the Chittagong Hill Tracts and Rohingya camps, were closely monitored under defined Rules of Engagement, emphasizing non-lethal force. Coordination cells at district and upazila levels were set up to provide verified updates and counter misinformation. Chief of Army Staff General Waker-Uz-Zaman inspected operations, stressing professionalism, neutrality, and citizen-friendly conduct.

#### **Commonwealth Observer Group Meets Bangladesh Army Chief Ahead of Elections ([Twitter](#))**

A delegation from the Commonwealth Observer Group, led by H.E. William Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo, former President of Ghana, paid a courtesy call on the Chief of Army Staff at Army Headquarters. The delegation discussed the overall security situation ahead of the upcoming national elections and reviewed arrangements to ensure the safety and smooth functioning of foreign election observers.

#### **German Ambassador Meets Bangladesh Army Chief to Discuss Defence Ties ([Twitter](#))**

H.E. Dr. Rüdiger Lotz, Ambassador of Germany to Bangladesh, led a delegation in a courtesy call on the Chief of Army Staff at Army Headquarters. The meeting focused on strengthening defence cooperation between Bangladesh and Germany. The Ambassador also lauded the professionalism of the Bangladesh Army and its significant contributions to United Nations Peacekeeping Operations.



### **EU Ambassador Meets Bangladesh Army Chief to Boost Defence Ties ([Twitter](#))**

H.E. Michael Miller, Ambassador of the European Union to Bangladesh, led a delegation in a courtesy call on the Chief of Army Staff at Army Headquarters. The meeting focused on strengthening defence cooperation between Bangladesh and the European Union, with both sides exchanging mutual greetings and perspectives.

### **Bangladesh Evaluates KAI Light Armed Helicopter and Surion Rotorcraft ([Aviation Week](#))**

The Bangladesh Air Force and Army have shown strong interest in Korea Aerospace Industries' (KAI) Light Armed Helicopter (LAH) and Surion rotorcraft, potentially marking KAI's first major export in the region. The evaluation was highlighted during the Singapore Airshow, signalling Bangladesh's intent to modernize its rotary-wing fleet.

### **Rohingya Updates**

### **Rohingya Refugees Restricted Ahead of Bangladesh Elections, Human Rights Group Urges Action ([Fortify Rights](#))**

In February 2026, Fortify Rights reported that the incoming Bangladesh government needed to end restrictions on the freedom of movement for Rohingya refugees in mainland camps and on Bhasan Char. Ahead of the February 12 national elections, Bangladesh Election Commission officials and security forces, including the Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB), sealed camps and blocked refugees from leaving—even for medical reasons. Several refugees described being stopped at checkpoints, forced to undergo body scans, and denied access to hospitals in Cox's Bazar despite presenting valid medical prescriptions. Fortify Rights emphasized that such confinement violated both Bangladesh's constitution and international law, including the ICCPR, which protects refugees' right to freedom of movement, and urged the new government to ensure their safety and mobility.

### **Bangladesh Cracks Down on Illegal Rohingya Settlements, Relocates Residents to Official Camps ([Muslim Network TV](#))**

Bangladeshi authorities launched a crackdown on an alleged land and rental syndicate operating illegal Rohingya settlements in Cox's Bazar. Hundreds of makeshift hillside shelters, rented to displaced Rohingya families, were dismantled, and residents were relocated to government-registered camps. Several individuals involved in managing the settlements were

arrested, and legal action was taken. Officials cited environmental risks, overcrowding, and exploitation of refugees as key reasons for the operation.

**Rohingya Refugees Risk Lives at Sea Amid Dire Camp Conditions in Bangladesh ([Global issues](#))** Thousands of Rohingya refugees in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, are undertaking dangerous sea journeys to Malaysia and other countries due to overcrowding, lack of livelihoods, and restricted freedoms in camps. Many face trafficking, exploitation, and death at sea. Humanitarian experts stress that improving camp conditions and long-term political solutions in Myanmar are essential to prevent such perilous migrations.



## 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 centres 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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