

The year in Review: Chronology of 1998

January

Jan 1: The sixth phase of repatriation of tribal refugees from India resumes, with a total of 941 people returning from Tripura to their homes in Chittagong Hill Tracts.

Jan 5: ICC chief Jagmohan Dalmiya announces in Calcutta that the Mini World Cup cricket tournament involving nine Test playing nations will be held in Dhaka from October 26 to November 4.

Jan 7: President Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed turns down the BNP request for a round-table conference on the CHT peace accord signed on December 2, 1997.

Jan 10: The three-nation Coca-Cola Independence Cup cricket tournament begins at the Dhaka National Stadium.

Jan 11: Air Parabat, the second private sector airline in the country, starts operations with two flights.

Jan 12: An agreement is signed in Manila to provide Bangladesh with 80 million US dollars concessional loan from Asian Development Bank for capital market development.

Jan 14: The 7th Jatiya Sangsad goes into its eighth session, with President Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed delivering the inaugural speech. BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami remain absent.

Jan 15: The Shantubahini announces that they will lay down arms at a ceremony in Khagrachhari on February 9.

Jan 18: India clinch the Coca-Cola Independence Cup, beating Pakistan in a record-breaking thriller by three wickets at the Bangabandhu National Stadium.

Jan 19: An agreement is signed in Manila, sanctioning Bangladesh a US\$110 million ADB loan for Jamuna Bridge Railway Link Project.

Jan 24: Bangladesh emerge champions in the plate competition of the MTN World Youth (under-19) Cricket Tournament beating West Indies by six wickets in the final in South Africa.

Jan 28: A gunshot is fired at the Prime Minister's Office.

February

Feb 3: The US State Department releases its human rights report '97 in which it chides Bangladesh for its alleged violations of fundamental rights, but praises the country's judiciary for a high degree of independence.

Feb 4: Bangladesh strongly protests the holding of a press conference by the US embassy without prior permission and release of the Human Rights Report on Bangladesh by the US State Department.

Feb 5: The US embassy in Dhaka says that there is no exaggeration in the contents of the Human Rights Report on Bangladesh and says it is based on a wide variety of sources.

Feb 9: BNP MP Hasibur Rahman Swapan is appointed Deputy Minister for Industries. BNP expels Swapan, a party MP from Siraganj, on charge of joining the government.

Feb 10: Some 739 Shantubahini guerrillas led by PCJSS chief Shantu Larma lay down their arms in Prime Minister Sheikh

Hasina's presence on the first day of surrender of arms at Khagrachhari stadium marking the end of decades-old insurgency in the CHT region.

Feb 17: Dr Mohammad Alauddin, a BNP lawmaker from the Rajshahi-5 constituency, is inducted into the council of Ministers. Subsequently, BNP expels Dr Alauddin from the party on disciplinary grounds.

Feb 27: Repatriation of the last batch of 199 refugees marks the end of the 12-year old Chakma problem.

March

Mar 1: The Appellate Division of the Supreme Court declares the detention order of deposed President H. M. Ershad under the Special Powers Act illegal.

Mar 8: Main opposition BNP returns to parliament, ending a six-month absence since August 30.

Mar 10: A girl, aged about six, is raped by an unidentified person inside the police control room of the first floor of the CMM's court building this afternoon.

April

Apr 1: Drive to check pilferage cut system-loss. Army deployed



FIGHT AGAINST A FAMILIAR FOE: Working the way through all-consuming flow

in power plants.

Apr 3: Technical fault in national grid, country without power for 40 minutes.

Apr 4: Seven party calls country-wide hartal on Apr 13 1500 vehicles stranded at Aricha.

Apr 12: CHT bill placed in JS.

Apr 15: Pandemonium in JP. BNP MPs rush towards Speaker damage TV cameras.

Apr 18: Govt-PCJSS talk on CHT begins.

Apr 19: Breakthrough in talks between gov-PCJSS.

Apr 20: Five years 1997-2002 import policy approved by the cabinet.

Apr 21: Norwester kills 12 in 4 districts.

Apr 24: First bankruptcy court opens in the country.

Apr 25: First SAARC information minister's conference in Dhaka.

Apr 29: Thai court allows Bazul Huda's extradition.

May

May 4: Rangamati Hill District Bill passed at Jatiya Sangsad

May 5: BUET VC resigns; teachers association goes on strike. Khagrachhari hill district bill passed.

May 6: Bandarban Hill district bill passed.

May 7: CHT regional council bill passed.

May 11: Train collision kills 17 in Laksham.

May 13: 21 JS standing bodies formed, 14 recast.

May 18: Bangladesh win first ODI beating Kenya by six wickets.

May 21: 3 killed, 100 hurt, tele link snapped in cyclone. BNP observes hunger strike at districts.

May 25: Sylhet Medical College closed sine die 2 killed as BCL-Shibir clash.

May 26: DSE adopts daily netting system

May 30: KS Nabi resigns as AG.

June

Jun 2: Writ challenging CHT regional council Act '98.

Jun 4: Corruption case; charge

Jun 23: Grand opening of Bangabandhu Jamuna Bridge

Jun 25: BNP returns to JS.

Jun 26: CSE trading floor closed replacing computer one line trading system.

Jun 29: Air Parabat plane crash landed on a jute field near Savar Bazar.

Jun 30: JS passes finance bill '98.

July

Jul 7: Bangladesh and the United States sign a memorandum of understanding to implement a US Peace Crops Programme in the country.

Jul 20: BNP retains Barisal-5 seat in the by-election.

Jul 21: Flood grips 29 districts, 64 lakh affected in floods.

Jul 27: Dhaka refuses to sign SOFA treaty with US.

August

Aug 2: Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina says there is no scope for India to deport any Bangladeshi national as no Bangladeshi is living in that country.

Aug 22: Flood situation takes a devastating turn with major rivers close to their highest ever level since 1954.

October

Oct 2: The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) urges international community to respond urgently to assist Bangladesh in its efforts to overcome the destruction caused by the recent floods.

Oct 8: Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina declares that trial of all killings, including former president Ziaur Rahman, Major General Monjur and Colonel Taher will be held in the country.

Oct 13: Bangladesh retains the ACC trophy with a thumping eight-wicket win over underdogs Malaysia in the final.

Oct 15: Twenty-three persons including the then president Khandaker Mushtaque Ahmed, are charge-sheeted by the CID in the jail killing case.

Oct 19: The government imposes new taxes and surcharges on a number of items and services with immediate effect to raise more funds for post-flood rehabilitation.

Oct 24: Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina formally opens the Wills International Cup cricket tournament at the Bangabandhu National Stadium.



DIAL P FOR PARLIAMENT: Looks good when it works

November

Nov 1: South Africa lifts Wills International Cup, beating West Indies by four wickets in the final.

Nov 5: The CID arrests five Bangladesh Television officials on charge of their involvement in the killing of four of their senior colleagues on November 7, 1975.

Nov 8: Twenty-three years, two months and three weeks after the fateful early hours of August 15, 1975, the historic judgement comes on the Bangabandhu murder case. The verdict: 15 guilty and four acquitted. The sentence: Death, by firing squad in public.

Bazul Huda, is brought back from Thailand.

Nov 12: The Governments of Canada and Zimbabwe assure Bangladesh of extending "full co-operation" in the return of three convicts of Bangabandhu murder case now living in their countries.

Nov 15: Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina declares that her party, Awami League, will never call hartal, not even as the opposition.

Nov 16: A bill seeking to mobilise Tk. 200 crore by levying surcharge for funding post-flood rehabilitation works is passed by the parliament.

Nov 17: Four Bangladeshi Citizens are shot dead by Indian border guards in two separate incidents at the frontier villages in Nallatabari and Jhinaigati.

Nov 25: The Jatiya Sangsad passes the Upazila Parishad Bill by incorporating a minor amendment moved by the BNP member about the election of women members.

December

Dec 9: India agrees to withdraw all non-trial barriers from Bangladesh exports.


Dec 10: Awami League candidate Air Vice Marshal (retd.) A K Khandaker wins the Pabna-2 by-election to the Jatiya Sangsad.

Dec 12: Eleven persons of two rival outlawed parties are killed in the village of Jessore.

Dec 22: The first-ever National Water Policy is announced aiming at ensuring optimal development and management of water resources.



ARMS DOWN: Peace in Chittagong Hill Tracts



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