

## Bangladeshi shot dead by BSF in Indian territory

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

A Bangladeshi man was shot dead by the Indian Border Security Force (BSF) in Indian territory near the Dattagram border outpost (BOP) in Kulaura upazila of Moulvibazar on Saturday.

The incident took place around 7:30pm near the border Pillar 1852/M in Debipur area, under the jurisdiction of Kailashahar Police Station of Tripura's Unakoti district, said Lt Col ASM Zakaria, commander of the Border Guard Bangladesh 46 Battalion, in a press release issued yesterday.

The deceased is Pradeep Baidya, 22, a resident of Nishchintapur village in Sharilpur union of Kulaura upazila, said Azizul Haque Darud, a member of the Sharilpur Union Parishad.

The body of the deceased has been kept at Kailashahar Hospital in Tripura. BGB 46 Battalion is maintaining regular communication with BSF to facilitate the repatriation of the victim's body, according to the press release.

Additionally, BGB is preparing to send a protest letter to the BSF. Information is being gathered in relation to the deceased's entry into India and the circumstances surrounding the shooting, the press release stated.



Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus poses for a photo with China's Commerce Minister Wang Wentao, Chinese Ambassador to Bangladesh Yao Wen, Foreign Adviser Touhid Hossain, and BIDA Executive Chairman Chowdhury Ashik Mahmud Bin Harun, among other dignitaries, at the China-Bangladesh Conference on Trade and Investment held at the BIDA office yesterday. Story on Page 12.

## Ride-sharing biker sent to jail over rape of passenger

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Narsingdi

A Narsingdi court yesterday sent a man to jail after he was arrested in connection with the rape of a woman on May 28.

Senior Judicial Magistrate Meshkat Islam sent Shah Poran, 30, a ride sharing biker, to jail after recording his confessional statement, said Md Anwar Hossain, additional superintendent of Narsingdi police (Sadar Circle).

He said Poran of Dhaka's Keraniganj was arrested early yesterday by Narsingdi police after the woman filed a case with Palash Police Station on May 29 against Poran and two others.

According to the case statement, she got on a ride-sharing motorcycle from the capital's Mirpur-12 on May 28 to visit a doctor in Shyamoli.

After wearing the helmet Poran gave her, she started to lose consciousness. Poran then took her to Palash upazila in Narsingdi and raped her, it added.

Police rescued the victim and took her to a hospital after receiving a call on the national emergency hotline 999, said ASP Anwar.

He said police were trying to identify and arrest the two other suspects.

## Hasina charged with crimes against humanity

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the tribunal, originally set up in 2010 to try the 1971 war crimes.

The prosecutors produced 8,747 pages of documents and testimonies from 81 witnesses along with 135 pages detailing the formal charges.

The charges state that 1,500 people were killed and 25,000 others wounded during the protests in July and August last year when the law enforcers expended 3,00,011 rounds of ammunition.

Evidence also includes drone and CCTV footage, audio clips of telephone conversations, forensic reports of digital evidence, confessional statements, photographs and videos on social media and news outlets, reports from national and international organisations, and official documents from state agencies.

Audio clips include two phone conversations from July 16 and July 18 between Hasina and former Dhaka South mayor Fazle Noor Taposh, and another between Hasina and former Dhaka University vice chancellor Maksud Kamal in which Hasina said she had instructed the use of lethal weapons to kill the protesters, according to evidence submitted to the court.

of Begum Rokeya University in Rangpur.

Hasina is accused of making inflammatory remarks and ordering the use of deadly weapons against protesting students.

The two other defendants then, along with senior government officials, allegedly instigated, aided, and were complicit in the actions of their subordinate law enforcement personnel and armed Awami League cadres.

As part of the widespread and systematic attack on unarmed student protesters, on July 16, police shot Sayed several times without provocation. The defendants ordered, incited, abetted, facilitated, were complicit and conspired to commit crimes against humanity.

Count 4 accuses the defendants over the shooting and killing of six unarmed protesters in Dhaka's Chankharpul on August 5 last year.

The charges accuse Hasina of making inflammatory remarks and ordering the use of deadly weapons against student protesters. In response, the former home minister

The prosecution said that this was carried out knowingly with the defendants' orders, incitement, abetment, facilitation, complicity, and conspiracy, constituting crimes against humanity, including other inhumane acts such as torture and murder.

**'SYSTEMATIC ATROCITIES'**

In his opening presentation before the tribunal, Chief Prosecutor Tajul Islam described the July-August 2024 atrocities in Bangladesh as a "blood soaked chapter of history" that left the nation and the world stunned.

He accused the defendants of unleashing the state machinery to commit widespread, systematic atrocities -- murders, torture, and enforced disappearances.

Tajul said the uprising, dubbed "Monsoon Revolution", arose from years of political repression and human rights abuses. He said the accused, alongside state forces and political affiliates of the AL, coordinated an extermination campaign across the country.

"This trial is not merely a domestic



Chief Prosecutor Tajul Islam reading out the charges at the tribunal yesterday.

This case began with a complaint to the investigation agency on August 14 last year against Hasina. The first investigation officer, Jane Alam Khan, was later replaced by Alamgir Hossain who submitted the probe report on May 12.

Amid tight security, the tribunal judges walked into a packed courtroom at 12:10pm. For the first time in the country, the proceeding was broadcast live on TV.

There was a bit of anxiety as well, since two crude bombs went off at 5:50am outside the court. The police recovered a third bomb that did not go off.

**THE CHARGES**

Count 1 accuses the defendants of murder, attempted murder, torture, and other inhumane acts. They are accused of abetting, inciting, facilitating, being complicit in, and failing to prevent these crimes committed against civilians by law enforcement and armed cadres of the Awami League and its affiliates.

This count specifies that following Hasina's July 14 press briefing, former home minister Asaduzzaman, former IGP Mamun, and other high officials of the then government abetted, assisted, and were complicit in the severe and systematic attack on innocent, unarmed students and masses.

In count 2, Hasina is accused of ordering the use of drones and helicopters along with lethal weapons to subdue protesters. The prosecution charged Asaduzzaman and Mamun with facilitating and executing this directive by instructing law enforcers.

This count charges the defendants with ordering, facilitating, being complicit in, and conspiring to commit crimes against humanity, knowingly and systematically.

Count 3 accuses the defendants in the murder of Abu Sayed, a student

and former IGP, along with other senior government officials at the time, allegedly instigated, aided, and were complicit in the actions carried out by their subordinate law enforcement personnel and armed Awami League cadres.

The prosecutors said the atrocities in Chankharpul were carried out on the defendants' orders, and with incitement, abetment, facilitation, complicity, and conspiracy, constituting crimes against humanity.

In count 5, the defendants are accused in the shooting of six student protesters, five of whom were killed and burned, while the sixth was reportedly set on fire while still alive, in Ashulia on August 5 last year.

Hasina is accused of making inflammatory remarks and ordering the use of deadly weapons against student protesters. Following this directive, the defendants, along with other senior government officials at the time, allegedly instigated, facilitated, and were complicit in the actions carried out by their subordinate law enforcement personnel and armed Awami League cadres.

issue of Bangladesh. The crimes against humanity committed in July-August 2024 are also prosecutable under International Human Rights Law, the Rome Statute of the ICC, and the International Crimes (Tribunals) Act of 1973 of Bangladesh," he said.

Paying tribute to the victims of the July uprising, Tajul said, "This trial is not a pursuit of vengeance.

"We aim to prove that in a civilised society, where democracy and the rule of law prevail, genocide and crimes against humanity cannot be tolerated. In a country where justice exists, no one can stand above the law, no one will be above the law."

He also said, "We seek a trial that is impartial, evidence-based, and grounded in justice."

Two other prosecutors, Mizanul Islam and Abdus Sobhan Tarafdar, also read out parts of the formal charges that provided the historical background spanning five decades and added context to the trial, while Tajul read out the charges and took the opportunity to stress that Awami League, its affiliates and alliance partners were involved in these crimes. He said this was sufficient cause to recognise them as criminal organisations.

## A budget without illusions

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One critical area long left in the margins is unemployment. It deserves more attention from this government than ever before, as it aligns with Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus's vision for zero unemployment. For decades, the economy has grown -- but without growing jobs. It has built roads, buildings, and bridges, yet left millions without meaningful work. A job-scarce economy took shape in the shadows of progress, quietly eroding dignity and hope. Now, that silence can no longer be ignored. It is time -- long past time -- to confront the scourge of unemployment as a central test of the country's economic vision. Growth that does not employ is growth that forgets its people.

"A growing disconnect between the skills imparted by our education system and the requirements of the private sector continues to limit employment opportunities," said Selim Raihan, a professor of economics at Dhaka University. "At the same time, a significant portion of the workforce remains trapped in the informal sector, where job security and benefits are minimal or absent," he added.

The budget arrives at a moment when the political skies are overcast. Optimism is being tempered by uncertainty, as political parties continue to seek clarity on the election timeline. Discontent has begun to ripple outward.

Protests broke out at the National Board of Revenue over an IMF-backed ordinance, disrupting operations in the final stretch before budget day. Demonstrations hit the Dhaka South City Corporation over control of the mayoral office. Another wave of protest swept through the secretariat over yet another ordinance. All of it -- almost simultaneously.

**NO FANTASY**

In his pre-recorded speech, Ahmed won't peddle GDP fantasies. No rosy projections -- at least not this year. The government's growth forecast, 5.5 percent, lags behind even the IMF's cautious estimate. There will be no more chasing growth at any cost, no more hollow boasts.

Last week, Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics released its provisional estimate, and it confirmed what many feared. The economy in the current fiscal year grew just 3.97 percent, the slowest pace since the pandemic year. The slowdown came from within: agriculture.

Still, there's a big number on the table: Bangladesh's GDP is expected

to cross \$500 billion in the new fiscal year. Many will greet the estimate with scepticism, but in a year defined by restraint, it remains a milestone worth acknowledging.

Behind these numbers is a deeper story: a country in the midst of an economic reset. For the first time in years, the budget is being shaped by economic necessity, not political whims.

But some economists have voiced concern that the interim government has yet to design a clear roadmap for economic recovery. In their view, the numbers may be sober, even honest, but without direction, they risk drifting. A budget, they argue, is more than an annual ledger. It can be a moment, perhaps the best moment, to set out a coherent strategy for rebuilding, reforming and reimagining the economy.

The metrics of judgment will shift this year. Will subsidies continue? Only for food and agricultural inputs. Will infrastructure spending surge? Not likely. The focus will shift to what the rural economy needs, not what cities want.

"The government would do well to prioritise investment in labour-intensive sectors such as agro-processing, light engineering and ICT. A robust employment strategy that supports SMEs, promotes entrepreneurship, and expands access to vocational and technical training could make a meaningful difference," Raihan said.

And taxes? Ahmed's message leaves little room for ambiguity. "I'm in the mood to end every exemption," he said at an event on May 18. The age of selective generosity may be drawing to a close.

This government will not be judged by promises, but by the progress it makes on reforms. And reforms are never gentle. In the banking sector, the central bank acted swiftly, stamping out the first flames before they could swell into a full-blown inferno. Holding reckless banks to account requires more than policy -- it demands quiet resolve. In this, Bangladesh Bank passed its first true test.

Now, this administration will aim to ensure stability in the financial sector and reduce inflation. With that foundation, the forthcoming budget will prioritise social sectors to boost employment and inclusive growth.

Amid rising food prices and intensifying climate shocks, the government also plans to expand

its social protection programmes and fund food security initiatives, including subsidised food for low-income households. At the same time, agricultural transformation remains a core focus. Continued subsidies for mechanisation, irrigation, and seeds are aimed at rebuilding rural resilience and supporting smallholder farmers.

**DEBT ROULETTE**

Bangladesh still shoulders the financial burdens of the old regime. Officially, the aim is to lower the country's debt risk from moderate to low, as Ahmed indicated. It's not a small feat.

Yet here's the paradox: foreign borrowing will rise. Not for flashy megaprojects or political vanity, but to keep the lights on while cleaning up the mess. The higher foreign borrowing target reflects bills that can't be dodged. Energy sector gaps need plugging. The ghosts of overpriced infrastructure still haunt the balance sheet.

In a year of belt-tightening and caution, exports and remittances brought much-needed relief. Trade deficits narrowed. The current account, long in the red, showed signs of healing. Even the balance of payments, often a mirror of external vulnerability, began to tilt in the right direction. Foreign reserves hold steady at \$20 billion, a sign of resilience.

But the story isn't without shadows.

Imports have recovered, but only just. Machinery imports, a barometer of investment appetite, have fallen. Letters of credit for capital goods have declined, signalling hesitation in the economy.

Globally, the winds are shifting. The trading landscape is growing more turbulent. President Donald Trump's reciprocal tariffs introduce fresh uncertainty. Closer to home, India's rising non-tariff barriers threaten to constrict trade routes.

For all this, Bangladesh's ability to negotiate -- at home and abroad -- will be tested as never before. As the country moves toward LDC graduation in November 2026, the government will come under growing pressure to navigate the complex web of bilateral and multilateral negotiations that lie ahead.

The new fiscal year stretches like a steep mountain trail -- narrow, uncertain and demanding careful steps. In this fresh beginning, caution is the only sure path forward.

## Second round of talks with parties begins today

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electoral system, public administration, and the Anti-Corruption Commission.

The first phase of discussions, held between February 15 and May 19, involved meetings with 33 political parties.

Major political parties have reached consensus on a wide range of reforms, yet divisions persisted over some key issues during the first round of meetings.

Parties agreed to reinstate the non-partisan caretaker government system, though disputes remain over its formation and tenure, and the mechanism for appointing the chief

adviser.

There is also alignment on forming a bicameral legislature with a 100-strong upper house and granting the deputy speaker role to the opposition, regardless of the structure of the parliament.

The method of electing upper house members, such as via proportional representation or the traditional voting system, remains unresolved, while some parties still prefer the current unicameral system.

Parties are split over imposing term limits on the prime minister.

They are divided over the proposal to limit the powers of the prime

minister, specifically barring any individual from simultaneously holding the posts of prime minister, party chief, and Leader of the House.

Political parties are also sharply divided over the proposed formation of a "National Constitutional Council" to oversee key appointments and legal standards. Parties disagreed on the constitutional council's composition and powers.

While parties broadly agree on elevating "equality, human dignity, social justice, and democracy" as state principles, the term "pluralism" as a fundamental principle of the constitution failed to gain consensus.