



AL govt's secret SURVEILLANCE STATE

The regime spent at least Tk 1,382cr to equip NTMC, Rab, police with surveillance infrastructure from 2016-24

ZYMA ISLAM, MOHAMMAD SUMAN and MAHMUDUL HASAN

From snooping devices carried in backpacks for locating people through their phones to a massive infrastructure that can intercept even end-to-end encryption from a central command centre, the Awami League government had been on an increasingly aggressive trajectory towards building a powerful surveillance state.

Between 2016 and 2024, the National Telecommunications Monitoring Centre (NTMC), police and Rab collectively purchased surveillance equipment worth

over Tk 1,382 crore, according to import data and a contract agreement.

Over the years, the NTMC developed a sweeping infrastructure called "Integrated Lawful Interception System (ILIS)" that can intercept, decrypt, inspect, and store enormous volumes of national internet and telecom traffic, enabling real-time, centralised surveillance across agencies.

The Rab and police, on the other hand, acquired mostly target-based snooping devices.

Such devices in Rab's possession include mobile and

vehicle mounted jammers, backpack IMSI catchers, and mobile communication analysers, allowing them to block signals and conduct surveillance on mobile activities of specific individuals, documents show.

Police built a broader tactical surveillance capacity, and their purchases included high-end IMSI catchers, GPS trackers, satellite communication analysers, speaker recognition systems, and Man-in-the-Middle tools capable of intercepting encrypted communications and injecting spyware.

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SPENDING ON SURVEILLANCE EQUIPMENT



As part of the reform process, NTMC, under the Ministry of Home Affairs, is working on formulating an Act/ordinance related to lawful telecommunication interception with special attention to privacy of the citizens and maintaining international standard.

—NTMC

Big win in banking, lost opportunities in investment, jobs

Says CPD in its assessment of one year of interim govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Despite progress in the banking sector, exchange rate, remittance, export, and reserves, the interim government has failed to curb high inflation, revive stagnant investment, or generate new jobs, the Centre for Policy Dialogue said yesterday.

It also underlined a lack of reforms in the education and healthcare sectors as major cause for concern.

"One year is a very short time, but the government had ample opportunity to bring positive change to the lives and livelihoods of the people," said Fahmida Khatun, CPD's executive director.

While presenting the think tank's report titled "365 Days of the Interim Government: Economy in Retrospect" at Lakeshore Hotel in Dhaka, she credited the government with averting an "impending economic disaster" through decisive actions in the banking sector.

However, she added, the original promise of building a discrimination-free society with employment at the centre of the economy had faltered without fresh investment.

"The movement aimed to create

Areas of Concern	CPD Assessment
Reform the banking sector	■
Reform the central bank	■
Remove price fixing	■
Prevent bank plunderers from fleeing	■
Ensure accurate, reliable banking data	■
Restore trade flows & foreign bank links	■
Reform the bond market	■

■ Substantial progress | ■ Partial progress | ■ No significant progress

a discrimination-free society, with employment as the key focus, and an economy whose fruits of growth are shared by all. But investment was necessary for that. There was stagnation in investment, and Bangladesh must turn around from that stagnation," she said.

While significant local or foreign investment may not come during the interim tenure, the foundation must be laid now so that future elected governments can attract it immediately, she added.

Mustafizur Rahman, Distinguished Fellow at CPD, said the economy was at a critical juncture after the previous government's collapse, burdened by depleting reserves, sluggish growth, soaring inflation, rising unemployment, increasing non-performing loans, and falling remittances.

On August 14, 2024, after a student-led movement toppled the Awami League government, the CPD held a dialogue on macroeconomic,

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CONSENSUS COMMISSION Talks begin on implementation of July Charter

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The National Consensus Commission has entered the third phase of its work, focusing on securing a legally binding framework for the July Charter and determining how it will be implemented before the next national election.

"We are now seeking a sustainable and strong path through which the charter will be implemented," commission vice-president Prof Ali Riaz told The Daily Star after a meeting yesterday.

"Many alternatives were discussed today [yesterday], but nothing was finalised. We want to review all options and their implications thoroughly before moving forward."

The third phase of discussions began yesterday at the Jatiya Sangsad LD Hall, where the commission met with leading legal experts, including former Supreme Court Justice MA Matin, Justice Moinal Islam Chowdhury, Dhaka University Law Faculty Dean Mohammad Ikramul Haque, Senior Supreme Court Advocate Sharif Bhuiyan, Barrister Tanim Hossain Shawon, and Barrister Imran Siddique.

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Education left behind

Govt misses opportunity for reforms as sector sees unrest on campuses, forced resignations of teachers

ARAFAT RAHAMAN

One year into its tenure, the interim government is struggling to bring stability to the country's educational institutions, beset by campus unrest and disruptions to academic activities.

Many of the institutions have seen student protests, politically influenced appointments, forced resignations of teachers, and public humiliation of educators, underscoring the administration's lack of resolve to restore order in the education sector.

Upon assuming office, the interim government pledged to initiate sweeping reforms across key sectors through the formation of 11 reform commissions. However, education sector was left out.

Some educationists have described the past year as a lost opportunity, urging the administration to form a specialised, non-partisan commission to stabilise the sector and draft a long-term policy roadmap to guide the next government.

Following the fall of Awami League government, nearly all vice-chancellors of public universities resigned – many under pressure from protesters due to their ties with AL. Their sudden departure disrupted academic and administrative activities at the universities.

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RMG work orders rebounding

REFAYET ULLAH MIRDHA

Bangladesh has been witnessing a rebound in garment work orders from American clothing retailers and brands for the next season after securing a competitive tariff rate from the Trump administration in the final settlement.

Buyers are also confirming the pending work orders with a much more favourable tariff rate of 20 percent.

India and Vietnam, Bangladesh's competitors in the apparel trade in the US, secured 50 percent and 20 percent tariff respectively.

It is expected that a significant volume of work orders will shift from China and India to Bangladesh due to higher tariffs levied by the Trump administration.

"We can sense the rebound of work orders, the buyers are coming here and confirming the pending work orders and negotiating for next season," Mohammad Sohel Sadat, chairman of Shin Shin Group, an exporter to the US, told The Daily Star.

The inflow of work orders for the next season looks good, said SM Khaled, managing director of Snowtex Group, one of the major garment exporters.

It is also expected that a significant volume of work orders will shift from China and India to Bangladesh due to higher tariffs levied by the Trump administration.

However, the prices of apparel may go up in the American market as the buyers will have to pay a higher tariff on the import of goods, he added.

The retailers and brands are still offering lower prices, and in some cases, some of the buyers are asking for a

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A HISTORIC FEAT: Bangladesh celebrate scoring the opener against South Korea during their final match of the 2026 AFC Women's U-20 Asian Cup Qualifiers in Laos yesterday. The match, however, ended in a 6-1 defeat but the reigning SAFF champions secured their first-ever spot in the continental finals, advancing as one of the top 11 teams among 32. They will join hosts Thailand in the main tournament, scheduled for April 1-18 next year.

PHOTO: BFF

MOB ATTACK Wedding plans dashed, family now prepares for funeral

S DILIP ROY, from Rangpur

On Saturday night, Ruplal was hurrying home on a rickshaw van to begin planning for his daughter's wedding. His relative Pradip was driving the van as they were possibly talking about all that was still left to do.

But neither could have imagined that their plans would be shattered by a horrific turn of events.

On the way, an agitated crowd waylaid the two, accusing them of stealing the van. The two tried to explain it was a misunderstanding – that they weren't thieves, and the van was theirs.

But reason found no audience. The mob grew increasingly violent and, at one point, beat the two men to death.

The incident took place around 9:30pm in the Burtirhat area of Rangpur's Taraganj upazila.

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