

## Khuda Baksh resigns from CA's special assistant post

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Md Khuda Baksh Chowdhury, special assistant to the chief adviser at the Ministry of Home Affairs, has resigned from his post.

The president has accepted his resignation.

The announcement was made last night through a gazette notification signed by Cabinet Secretary Dr Sheikh Abdur Rashid and issued by order of the president.

According to the notification, Chowdhury's resignation takes effect immediately, the Chief Adviser's Press Wing said.

No details were disclosed regarding the reasons behind the resignation.

Khuda Baksh, a former inspector general of police, was appointed special assistant to Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus on November 10, 2024.

## Tarique on his way home

FROM PAGE 1

The Dhaka Metropolitan Police has taken multi-layered security measures to prevent any untoward incident.

An additional 500 traffic police will be deployed to manage traffic during the gathering.

Additional police will be deployed to the airport area, Purbachal, and Firoza.

The security arrangements have been divided into three specific zones based on the gatherings. Special cards are being issued to those allowed to enter the red zone, and no one will be permitted entry without the card. A separate card will also be required to access the yellow zone and only cardholders will be allowed entry.

The DMP urged commuters to avoid the Purbachal Expressway from Mohakhali to Abdullahpur and the Kuril-Malibagh stretch from 4:00am to 10:00pm tomorrow and use alternative routes.

As part of security measures, 2,500 police members will be deployed, said a senior DMP official asking not to be named.

The party expects around 50 lakh people to gather in Dhaka on the day.

The overall responsibility for Tarique's security from the airport to Gulshan has been given to AKM Shamsul Islam.

Party-based security arrangements will be used to the fullest extent including the Chairperson's Security Force (CSF), Shamsul said at a briefing yesterday.

"Then there are our party leaders and activists, and above all, the general people of Bangladesh. This is the main foundation of our security. From the government's side, we are receiving the highest level of cooperation," he added.

The government has ensured the required security measures for Tarique's homecoming, said Shafiqul Alam, the chief adviser's press secretary.

"From our side, we have made the highest effort to ensure foolproof security," he said.

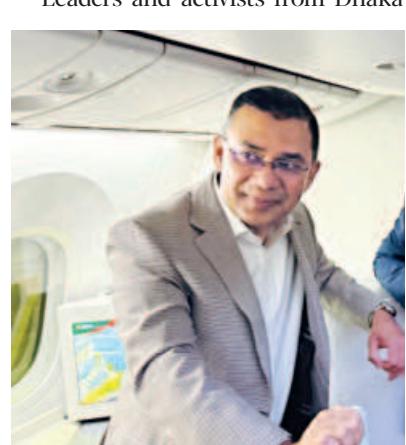
Centred on the 300 Feet area, party leaders and activists had already begun streaming into the venue last night.

Around 1,000 speakers are being installed across the airport



Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus cuts a cake and exchanges Christmas greetings with representatives of the Christian community at the state guest house Jamuna yesterday.

PHOTO: PID



Tarique Rahman inside the plane.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

and outside the capital were taking positions in the 300 Feet area from yesterday, the party said.

The BNP leaders and activists held celebratory processions in Dhaka and across the country.

Party activists and supporters from many districts arrived in Dhaka last night, using buses, cars and launches arranged by the party.

The Bangladesh Railway will operate 10 special trains to bring BNP supporters to the capital, earning around Tk 36 lakh in fares.

Some 20 medical camps complete with doctors, paramedics, medicines and ambulances are being set up across Dhaka. There will be a six-bed temporary field hospital in the 300 Feet area, with an ambulance with ICU facilities. The party has installed mobile toilets and will be providing drinking water. Several thousand volunteers will be engaged in the whole service.

Separate bus parking has been arranged at the main entrances to the capital to avoid traffic. To facilitate the movement of patient-carrying ambulances and international

passengers, help desks have been set up in Kakoli Mor, and in front of the airport and Abdullahpur.

The Directorate General of Health Services has directed all medical colleges and specialised hospitals to be prepared to deal with any situation as a huge number of people will gather in Dhaka. The Daily Star has learnt from people involved with the proceedings.

Dhaka Civil Surgeon and DGHS's divisional director have been asked to deploy additional medical teams.

In separate letters, hospital authorities across the country were asked to keep their emergency department and ambulance ready for three days starting today.

Also at yesterday's briefing, Salahuddin outlined Tarique's itinerary for the first two days following his return.

On Friday, after Juma prayers, Tarique will visit the grave of his father, President Ziaur Rahman, at Sher-e-Bangla Nagar in the capital. He will then go to the National Martyrs' Memorial in Savar to pay tribute to the martyrs of the Liberation War.

Two more programmes are planned for Saturday. Tarique will complete the formalities related to his national identity card. It will be decided later whether he will personally go to the Election Commission office in Agargaon for this purpose. All procedures required for voter registration will be completed on the same day.

Later, he will visit the grave of Sharif Usman Hadi at Dhaka University. After paying respects there, Tarique will go to the National Institute of Traumatology and Orthopaedic Rehabilitation in Shyamoli to visit those injured in the July uprising who are undergoing treatment there.

After his return, Tarique will regularly work from the BNP chairperson's office in Gulshan, where a new office has been prepared for him on the second floor. A separate chamber has also been set up at the party's central office in Naya Paltan.

During the 1/11-backed government, Tarique was arrested on March 7, 2007. He was granted bail on September 3, 2008, and left for London with his family for medical treatment.

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### RUSSIAN INVASION Zelensky reveals US-Ukraine plan to end war

#### Two police officers killed in explosion in Moscow

AFP, Kyiv

Ukraine won some concessions in the latest version of a US-led draft plan to end the Russian invasion, revealed by President Volodymyr Zelensky, though key questions remain over territory and whether Moscow could accept the new terms.

The 20-point plan, agreed on by US and Ukrainian negotiators, was being reviewed by Moscow, but the Kremlin is unlikely to abandon its hardline territorial demands for full Ukrainian withdrawal from the east.

Meanwhile, two police officers were killed in an overnight explosion in Moscow when they tried to stop a suspicious person, Russia's Investigative Committee said in a statement yesterday. The blast occurred close to the site where a Russian general was killed earlier this week.

Sarwar Tushar said, "Overall, discussions are ongoing. I hope we can reach a final decision soon."

Following the formation of the alliance, NCP on December 10 announced its nominees for 125 constituencies.

Among the 20 seats NCP sought from BNP are Dhaka 9, Dhaka-10 and Dhaka-11 under a seat-sharing agreement. Negotiations are ongoing as BNP has already announced nominees for these seats.

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However, Rastro Songsksar Andolon Joint General Secretary Didar Bhuiyan told this correspondent, "NCP informed us about this on Monday night. We're not willing to share seats with either

BNP or Jamaat.

"NCP is a major party in this alliance. If NCP reaches an agreement with another alliance, this coalition will automatically dissolve. The fate of the alliance will be decided tonight [last night], with a formal announcement to follow later."

Meanwhile, sources in the NCP said the party has asked for at least 20 seats from BNP and Jamaat each. While BNP is not willing to give up more than six to seven seats, Jamaat is ready to offer around 30.

However, party sources added that NCP is more interested in an alliance with BNP.

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## IAB condemns attack on Star

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Islami Andolan Bangladesh (IAB) yesterday strongly condemned the attack on the office of The Daily Star.

A three member IAB delegation, led by the party's Central Organising Secretary Shah Iftekhar Tariq voiced the criticism while visiting the The Daily Star Centre in the evening.

The two other members are Sheikh Fazlul Karim Maruf, central publicity secretary, and Md Elias Hasan, assistant secretary general.

"Expressing dissent through the use of force is entirely barbaric. If there is opposition, it must be expressed intellectually and through logic," Iftekhar said.

He said the attack on The Daily Star took place at a time when the country has reached a point where it is moving forward.

He said those who seek to drag the nation backward must not be given any opportunity.

"Therefore, I would like to call upon all to remember that the media is one of the key pillars in advancing a country. What we call the fourth pillar of the state cannot be dismantled if we are to build a civilised nation. Attacks on newspapers are deeply regrettable."

The IAB leader said, "We hope that the conscious citizens of the country will remain vigilant on this issue and that we will learn from this incident and move forward with greater caution. Those who are opportunistic will be carefully monitored by the state and restrained – we firmly believe this."

Kamal Ahmed, consulting editor of The Daily Star, thanked the IAB delegation for expressing solidarity with the newspaper.

"We certainly hope that healthy debate will continue. Political differences will exist, and differing opinions are normal. Discussions will be held on them," said Kamal Ahmed.

"The kind of violence we are witnessing is in no way acceptable. If you take a strong stand against terrorism – at home and abroad, both online and offline – it will serve the interests of the country. We hope you will continue to play that role," he added.

## Crisis Group calls for restraint in rhetoric

FROM PAGE 1

"Both sides have since taken steps that, fuelled in part by domestic politics, have further escalated tensions," the report said.

The findings are based on field research conducted in Bangladesh in March 2025, interviews with Indian experts in mid 2025, and more than six months of remote interviews with current and former diplomatic and security officials, diplomats from other countries, analysts, researchers and journalists.

The report's release comes at a time when Bangladeshi missions across India have faced protests, with both governments summoning each other's envoys. It noted that Dhaka-Delhi ties hit their lowest point in December 2024, when far-right Hindu groups attacked the Bangladeshi assistant high commission in Agartala.

"New Delhi should avoid wading further into the debate over the restrictions on the Awami League, even though India's concerns have some merit," ICG said.

While the temporary ban on the Awami League's activities may have disengaged some people, Dhaka's position is "also understandable", the report said. It noted that there remains considerable anger over the party leadership's apparent lack of remorse and warned that lifting the ban before elections would be unhelpful. "New Delhi should give Dhaka space to strike a balance that will serve domestic stability."

ICG said politicians on both sides of the border must act responsibly, noting that Bangladesh's geography means "any political entity with serious political aspirations needs to be able to work with New Delhi". Indian politicians, it added, should "stop bashing Bangladesh for mileage in the regional elections of Assam and West Bengal".

Calling on India to begin engaging with Bangladesh, the report said that "engagement does not have to equate to endorsement". It noted that India has

recently shown "flexibility in how – and more importantly who – it engages with in both Afghanistan and Myanmar", adding, "It should endeavour to replicate this approach in Bangladesh."

Regardless of who is in power, India's interests are best served by a capable and stable government in Dhaka, the report said. "Antagonising Dhaka further is also likely to push it towards China and even Pakistan."

I urged India to resume issuing visas, restore transport links and lift trade

restrictions. "On this last point, Bangladesh should reciprocate by lifting its own restrictions," it added.

Beyond diplomacy and trade, the report stressed the need for India to take border violence seriously. "India's BSF has a long record of violence against Bangladeshi civilians and, despite pledges over the years to work with the BGB to reduce border killings, has shown little sign of adjusting its behaviour. Fatalities along the border should be properly and jointly investigated."

It also warned that the failure to reach agreements on sharing the waters of the Teesta and the Ganges signals "an unwillingness to cooperate for mutual benefit".

At the same time, Bangladesh must take India's security concerns seriously, the report said. "Dhaka should stay clear of offering support to Indian insurgent groups using Bangladesh as a rear base – a clear red line for India. Dhaka should also prevent radical Islamist forces from taking root again, ensuring that counter-terrorism forces have the mandate and resources to look out for violent extremist organisations and respond as necessary."

"The Indian government's ideology is such that it will feel compelled to speak up for Hindus overseas it perceives as being vulnerable or under attack. But while it is legitimate for it to express concerns in some specific cases, it should avoid exaggerating the problem or echoing disinformation about the fate of Bangladesh's Hindu minority,"

the report said.

It noted that India's concerns about Bangladeshi Hindus are widely perceived in Bangladesh as politically motivated, particularly as Muslims in India are frequently targeted by communal violence and discrimination.

After ups and downs, Dhaka-Delhi relations improved during Hasina's 15-year rule. "But this closeness gradually became a political liability for Hasina," ICG said.

Although Indian policymakers privately recognised that her growing unpopularity was damaging India's image in Bangladesh, New Delhi was unwilling to distance itself from her, given the dividends she delivered – especially on security.

The report quoted a former Indian security official as saying, "Hasina was a horror and the people of Bangladesh deserve much better ... but it's not easy to tell a leader to step down, particularly one as haughty as Hasina."

Perceptions that India was exploiting Hasina's dependence, combined with its increasingly nationalistic and pro-Hindu domestic politics, were not the cause of her downfall, but they "further undermined her political standing in Bangladesh and helped create the conditions for her eventual removal", ICG said.

A prominent Indian journalist summed up New Delhi's dilemma, saying, "India has been losing the plot on Bangladesh for a decade. Domestic politics has been infecting our relationships with all our neighbours. August 2024 was just the climax of that problem."

"How Dhaka and New Delhi manage the coming years will have consequences beyond bilateral ties. Failure to build a working relationship could manifest in border violence, irregular migration, communal tensions and economic restrictions, whereas a strong, mutually beneficial partnership would enhance security, trade and regional stability," the report said.

## Islamist bloc wrangling

FROM PAGE 1

forms in several constituencies in the capital on December 17.

Dismissing speculations about tensions between Jamaat and Islami Andolan over seat sharing, Yunus Ahmed said, "These discussions are mostly centred on social media and have no basis in reality. The notion that such issues are causing delays in announcing the final candidate list is also incorrect."

Besides Jamaat and Islami Andolan, the bloc includes Bangladeshi Khelafat Majlis, Khelafat Majlis, Jatiya Ganatantrik Party (Jagpa), Nezame Islam Party, Development Party and Bangladeshi Khelafat Andolan.

Since September 18, the eight parties have jointly carried out a movement around largely identical demands, alongside behind-the-scenes talks on forming an electoral understanding. Due to ideological differences, particularly between Jamaat and parties from the Qawmi stream, the idea of a formal alliance was eventually dropped.

Instead, they agreed to contest the election under their respective party symbols without appointing an alliance leader. Under the arrangement, only one party will field a candidate in each constituency, while the others will support that nominee.

"Since there are eight parties involved, it is only natural that reaching an understanding will take some time," Bangladeshi Khelafat Majlis Secretary General Maulana Jalaluddin Ahmed said. "Now we are at the final stage of discussions."

Jagpa Co-Vice President and spokesperson Rashed Pradhan said, "We really do not want to make mistakes. The list we announce will be final, and that is the list with which we

want to go into the national election."</