

Bangladesh sets record by parachute jumps with 54 flags

BSS, Dhaka

Bangladesh has secured a place in the Guinness World Records by setting a new record for flying the highest number of flags while parachuting on Victory Day, December 16, 2025.

On Monday, the World Records Management Team officially informed Team Bangladesh of the achievement, said a press release issued by the chief adviser's press wing yesterday.

According to the description published on the Guinness World Records website, "The most flags flown simultaneously while skydiving [parachute jump] is 54 and was achieved by Team Bangladesh in Dhaka, Bangladesh, on December 16, 2025.

The team attempted this record to unite skydivers from across Bangladesh in a single historic achievement and demonstrate national collaboration. The attempt was made to commemorate Bangladesh's 54th Victory Day."

Expressing joy at Bangladesh's official inclusion in the Guinness World Records, Chowdhury Ashik Mahmud Bin Harun, executive chairman of the Bangladesh Investment Development Authority (BIDA), said, "Today is a day of pride for everyone in the country. We want to share this joy with all the people of Bangladesh."



Firefighters work at the site of a private delivery company's logistics hub hit by Russian missile strikes in Kharkiv, Ukraine yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

'2,000 killed in Iran unrest'

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In a Truth Social post, Trump also urged protesters to take over institutions and record the names of "killers and abusers."

"Iranian Patriots, KEEP PROTESTING," Trump wrote yesterday. "I have cancelled all meetings with Iranian Officials until the senseless killing of protesters STOPS. HELP IS ON ITS WAY."

Asked what he meant by "help is on its way" to protesters in Iran, Trump told reporters that they would have to "figure it out".

On Monday, Trump announced a 25 percent tariff on any country doing business with Iran, intensifying pressure on nations that import oil from Tehran, including China.

The tariff would "immediately" target the Islamic Republic's trading partners that also do business with the US, Trump said in a social media post. "This order is final and conclusive."

The White House said Trump remained "unafraid" to deploy military force against Iran but was pursuing diplomacy as a first resort.

Axios, citing an unidentified senior US official, reported that White House envoy Steve Witkoff over the weekend met with Reza Pahlavi, the exiled son of Iran's last shah and a prominent voice in the fragmented opposition, to discuss the protests roiling that country.

Iranian authorities have insisted they have regained control after successive nights of nationwide protests since Thursday.

Rights groups, however, accuse the government of using live ammunition against demonstrators and obscuring the scale of the crackdown through an internet blackout that has lasted more than four days.

As international phone calls resumed after days of disruption, an Iranian official yesterday told Reuters that about 2,000 people, including security personnel, had been killed in the unrest.

Later, the US-based HRANA rights group said it had verified the deaths of 2,003 people during Iran's protests, including 1,850 protesters, 135 government-affiliated individuals, nine people aged under 18, and nine non-protester civilians.

The Norway-based NGO Iran Human Rights estimated that about 10,000 people had been arrested.

Iranian state media reported that dozens of security force members had been killed. Authorities have declared three days of national mourning.

The protests, which began on December 28, have spread across all provinces of Iran, according to the BBC and other international media. Protesters are now calling for an end to the clerical rule of Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

Meanwhile, the Tehran prosecutor's office said authorities would seek capital charges against some suspects arrested over the demonstrations.

State television quoted prosecutors as saying an unspecified number would be charged with "moharebeh," or "waging war against God," a Sharia law offence that carries the death penalty.

Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi

told Al Jazeera that the government had been "in dialogue" with protesters in the early phase of the movement and that the internet was cut only after authorities confronted what he described as "terrorist operations" directed from abroad.

Addressing Trump's threats, he said: "We are prepared for any eventuality, and we hope Washington will choose a wise option. It doesn't matter which option they choose—we are ready for it."

On Monday, the government sought to reassert control with mass nationwide rallies that Khamenei hailed as proof the protest movement had been defeated, issuing what he called a "warning" to the US.

Rising deaths drew condemnation alongside calls for restraint from regional and global powers.

The UN human rights chief said he was "horrified" by mounting violence against peaceful protesters.

Trump envoy met exiled Iranian crown prince: report

Iran seizes US arms, explosives: FM says protest 'planned'

UK, France summon Iran ambassador

UN slams 'horrific' killings; EU vows swift sanctions

"This cycle of horrific violence cannot continue. The Iranian people and their demands for fairness, equality and justice must be heard," Volker Turk said, also voicing concern that the death penalty could be used against thousands of detainees.

His remarks came amid reports that Erfan Soltani, a 26-year-old protester detained last Thursday, could be executed as early as tomorrow.

The EU said it stood "ready to propose new sanctions," adding to measures already in place.

"When a regime can only hold on to power through violence, it is effectively finished," German Chancellor Friedrich Merz said during a visit to India. "I believe we are witnessing the last days and weeks of this regime."

Reza Pahlavi, the US-based son of Iran's ousted shah, said Trump was a leader who "means what he says and says what he means."

"The red line has definitely been surpassed by this regime," he said.

Some countries, however, urged caution amid threats of US intervention.

Qatar called for restraint and said it was working to mediate rising tensions. "Any escalation would have catastrophic results in the region and beyond," Foreign Ministry spokesperson Majed al-Ansari said.

Russia's Security Council Secretary Sergei Shoigu condemned what he called "foreign interference" in Iran's internal affairs following talks with

Iran's National Security Council.

US TARIFF IRKS CHINA

China threatened retaliation after Trump announced the new tariffs.

Liu Pengyu, spokesperson for the Chinese embassy in Washington, said Beijing would "take all necessary measures" to safeguard its interests.

China is Iran's largest trading partner, purchasing 77 percent of its oil exports in 2024, according to Kpler. Other major partners include India, the UAE, Japan and South Korea.

It remains unclear how the tariff would be applied and whether it would be imposed in addition to existing US import taxes. China already faces tariffs of up to 45 percent, while India faces a 40 percent levy over Russian oil imports.

REGIME STILL FORMIDABLE FORCE

Analysts caution that despite the scale of protests, predicting the regime's immediate collapse would be premature.

Iran's security apparatus—anchored by the Revolutionary Guards and Basij forces numbering nearly one million—makes external pressure without internal fracture difficult, said Vali Nasr.

"For this to succeed, crowds must stay in the streets much longer, and parts of the state, particularly security forces, must defect," he said.

Supreme Leader Khamenei, 86, has weathered several uprisings since 2009, said Paul Salem of the Middle East Institute, calling this the fifth major challenge to the regime.

Alan Eyre, a former US diplomat, said protesters would need to overcome entrenched institutions, loyal constituencies and the scale of a country of 90 million people.

'IRAN SEIZES US ARMS, AMMO'

Iran's intelligence agency said it seized US-made weapons and explosives from "militants" who allegedly planned assassinations and sabotage. State television reported arrests of suspected "terrorist groups" linked to Israel in Zahedan.

Separately, Iran's top military commander accused the US and Israel of deploying ISIL fighters inside Iran, without presenting evidence.

Araghchi claimed authorities possessed recordings of foreign voices directing "terrorist agents" to fire on police and protesters.

TRUMP MULLS IRAN OPTIONS

The office of US Vice President JD Vance said senior officials were preparing diplomatic and military options for Trump.

Vice President Vance and Secretary of State Marco Rubio are presenting a suite of options ranging from diplomacy to military action," said Vance's communications director William Martin.

The remarks came as Senator Lindsey Graham urged Trump to escalate pressure, calling the collapse of Iran's clerical leadership the "biggest prize" of his presidency.

He said US action should target "the infrastructure that allows the killing," while warning that deploying US ground forces would risk heavy casualties.

The US last year bombed Iranian nuclear sites after joining Israel's 12-day war with Iran.

BNP man dies in army custody

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four rounds of ammunition, it added.

After the operation, Dablu reportedly fell ill and lost consciousness. He was immediately taken to the upazila health complex, where the on-duty physician declared him dead at around 12:25am, according to the release.

Describing the incident as "unexpected and unfortunate", the ISPR said it was "in no way acceptable". It added that the camp commander and all other army personnel concerned had been withdrawn to the cantonment following the death.

A high-level investigation committee has been formed to determine the actual cause of the incident, the release said, adding that legal action would be taken under army law against those found responsible.

Local Sramik Dal leader Shafiqul Islam Khoka said Dablu owned Hafiza Pharmacy, located opposite Jibannagar Upazila Health Complex.

He alleged that army personnel picked Dablu up from the pharmacy on Monday night and took him about 50 metres away to the BNP's local office.

Khoka showed journalists a room inside the office and claimed Dablu was assaulted there for nearly two hours.

He also alleged that Dablu was gagged during the assault.

Habibur Rahman, general secretary of BNP's Ward No. 8 unit in Jibannagar municipality, said he was present when Dablu was taken to the party office.

He told journalists that Dablu was tied up and slapped, after which the mobile phones of those present were seized.

Dablu was then taken inside, his

hands tied, and beaten severely for about one and a half hours, Rahman alleged, adding that he died there.

Army personnel later took Dablu to hospital, both Rahman and Khoka said.

Jibannagar Upazila Health and Family Planning Officer Mokbul Hossain said Dablu was brought to the health complex at 12:16am yesterday.

Speaking to The Daily Star at the health complex yesterday noon, Dablu's wife Jesmin Nahar said, "How can a healthy person die just after being picked up? This was a planned killing. Army personnel picked him up from his own pharmacy and killed him."

Chuadanga Deputy Commissioner Mohammad Kamal Hossain said the autopsy was completed yesterday at Chuadanga Sadar Hospital, and the body was handed over to family members in the evening.

Protesting the death, locals and BNP activists staged a demonstration from morning to noon, blocking the main gate of the Jibannagar Upazila Health Complex and chanting slogans demanding justice.

District BNP leaders also submitted a memorandum to the deputy commissioner, demanding a fair trial.

"We have already informed the Cabinet Division, the Election Commission and the home ministry about this matter," the DC said.

Chuadanga Superintendent of Police Mohammad Monirul Islam said police were not informed about the operation.

"The army conducted an operation around 11:00pm on Monday night. We later came to know about it. Police were not informed," he said, adding that doctors declared Dablu dead after he was taken to hospital.

11-party plans contingency

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They said Jamaat leaders yesterday held meetings with Islami Andolan and Bangladesh Khelafat Majlis to move the talks forward. Top leaders of the coalition members are expected to meet today.

Discussions with partners are ongoing, Ahsanul Mahbub Zubayer, assistant secretary general of Jamaat, told The Daily Star.

"Ameers [top posts in Islamic parties] could meet at any time tomorrow [today]. They will finalise the constituency-wise arrangement and announce the decision."

Maulana Jalaluddin Ahmed, secretary general of Bangladesh Khelafat Majlis, said, "Suppose we manage to reach an agreement in 260 to 270 seats but fail in 20, 30 or 40 seats. In that case, those may be kept open."

However, he maintained that their efforts to bring the votes of those who support Islamist parties into "one box" would remain intact even if some constituencies are left open.

Asked how that would be possible, he said, "If a decision is made to keep some seats open, those who wish to field candidates will do so. About a week after campaigning begins, the popularity of all candidates will be reviewed. Everyone except the one who is ahead of all others will step aside."

Talking to this correspondent, Khelafat Majlis Secretary General Ahmed Abdul Kader said, "So far, we have reached an agreement for 90 percent of the seats. The remaining five or 10 percent may have to be kept open. That is because two parties,

and in some cases even three, want these seats. There appears to be no alternative but to keep them open. But the alliance will remain... that is certain."

Meanwhile, several top coalition leaders have raised questions about Jamaat's "authoritarian approach" in the seat-allocation process.

Mojibur Rahman Monju, chairman of Amar Bangladesh (AB) Party, said everyone says this is an 11-party alliance. "But so far, we have not seen the 11 parties hold a joint meeting even once. That leaves us somewhat confused."

He said NCP and his party sought 50 seats – 35 for NCP and 15 for AB Party.

"Later, we saw that they [Jamaat] spoke with the NCP and with us separately. We expressed our dissatisfaction over this."

Although there has been discussion that a meeting of the coalition's top leaders is likely to take place today, Monju said he had not been invited as of yesterday evening.

Asked, Jamaat leader Zubayer said, "There are discussions with everyone, more or less. There is a liaison committee for seat-sharing talks, with members from eight parties. Representatives of three parties that joined the alliance recently may not be there, but contact is maintained with everyone as required."

On September 18 last year, Jamaat, Islami Andolan, Bangladesh Khelafat Majlis, Khelafat Majlis, Bangladesh Khelafat Andolan, Jatiya Ganatantrik Party (Jagpa), Nezame Islam Party and Bangladesh

NEWS

Court orders seizure of Saifuzzaman's foreign assets

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday ordered the relevant authorities to confiscate 330 foreign properties owned by former minister Saifuzzaman Chowdhury and his related persons and entities in connection with corruption allegations.

The properties include condominiums, apartments and villas. They were bought between January 2011 and September 2023, shows the documents submitted by the Anti-Corruption Commission before the court.

Of the 330 properties, 117 are located in Cambodia, 59 in the UAE, 47 in Malaysia, 40 in the US, 33 in Vietnam, 23 in Thailand, nine in India and two in the Philippines, according to ACC records.

Judge Md Sabbir Faiz of the Metropolitan Senior Special Judge's Court in Dhaka yesterday passed separate orders after ACC Deputy Director Md Moshirul Rahman, who is the head of the enquiry, filed eight applications with the court, said Riaz Hossain, bench assistant of the court.

"During the course of enquiry, it has been learned through confidential sources that Saifuzzaman Chowdhury along with his related persons and entities is attempting to transfer or dispose of their immovable properties to other parties," said ACC official Moshirul Rahman in the applications.

If the immovable properties are transferred or relocated, there is a strong likelihood of substantial loss to the state.

"So, it is imperative that the said properties be immediately confiscated and that the confiscation orders are transmitted to the concerned country through MLAR for collecting evidence," he added.

BCB unmoved in ICC video conference

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be co-hosted by India and Sri Lanka from February 7, has already been announced, as per the BCB press release issued after the meeting.