

## US immigrant

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administration's election promises, immigration laws have been enforced more strictly, with undocumented immigrants being deported.

Over the past year, the US repatriated about 300 irregular Bangladeshis, while more than 300 others are eligible for repatriation. In addition, over 4,000 cases are pending in court, according to a diplomatic source in Washington.

According to the Fiscal Year 2024 Entry/Exit Overstay Report by US Customs and Border Protection, Bangladesh recorded an overall overstaying rate of 5.73 percent. Of this, 5.60 percent were suspected in-country overstays, meaning more than 2,200 of 38,590 expected departures either overstayed their visas or were suspected of doing so.

The report said India's overstaying rate was 1.28 percent, Nepal's 3.12 percent and Pakistan's 3.46 percent.

Tamim said those who violate US immigration rules should face punishment, but questioned why genuine immigrants or visa seekers should suffer as a result.

During a recent meeting between Bangladesh National Security Adviser Khalilur Rahman and US Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Allison Hooker, the latter said the US government would positively consider Khalilur's request to ease travel and business visas for Bangladeshis, as bilateral trade was moving in a positive direction.

She said Washington may review the bond requirement if tourist overstays decline significantly, while also appreciating Bangladesh's cooperation in returning undocumented Bangladeshi nationals.

Mohammad Jalal Uddin Sikder, associate professor at the Department of Political Science and Sociology at North South University, said current US immigration policies could be used as bargaining tools with the countries concerned.

"However, the problem is that when you control legal migration pathways, illegal migration increases. This also creates new criminal networks," said the migration researcher.

The suspension of immigrant visas hampers family reunification, he said.

"This will create family distance and social problems. Parents will not be able to reunite with children, and wives with husbands. Sometimes this can also lead to inhuman conditions and even human rights violations," he said.

He expressed hope that the US would carefully consider these consequences.



Fishermen wrap up their nets at Kuakata sea beach after fishing in the bay before returning home in the afternoon. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: TITU DAS

## IAB leaves Jamaat-led alliance, to run solo

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He further said they would support candidates in the remaining 32 seats whose values align with the party's principles.

Ataur, also IAB senior joint secretary general, said the briefing was organised on the "instruction" of party Ameer and Chormonai Pir Multi Syed Rezaul Karim.

Asked whether the party left the combine because it did not receive the number of seats it expected, the Islami Andolok leader said, "The number of seats can be more or less. But here, in the process [of seat-sharing], our self-respect was hurt. That is also a major reason."

Ataur alleged that Jamaat's "authoritarian" conduct during the negotiations had "humiliated" them.

"We are compelled to declare before you today [Friday] that out of the 270 constituencies where Islami Andolok Bangladesh submitted nomination papers, two candidates were rejected on appeal. The candidacies of the remaining 268 nominees are valid. We have instructed them to contest the election. Not a single one will withdraw."

Islami Andolok had been part of the Jamaat-led 11-party bloc. However, tensions between the two sides over seat-sharing had been in the spotlight over the past several days.

After days of bargaining

and marathon meetings, 10 parties under Jamaat's leadership reached a seat-sharing arrangement.

On Thursday night, the alliance declared its nominees in 253 constituencies at a press briefing at the Diploma Engineers Institution in the capital, leaving 47 seats vacant for IAB and two other partners — Bangladesh Khilafat Andolok and Jatiya Ganatantrik Party.

Jamaat has been allotted 179 seats, National Citizen Party (NCP) 30, Bangladesh Khilafat Majlis 20, Khilafat Majlis 10, Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) seven, Amar Bangladesh (AB) Party three, while Bangladesh Nezam-e-Islam Party and Bangladesh Development Party have been allotted two seats each.

At yesterday's briefing, IAB leader Ataur said, "We know our path ahead may not be smooth, because we do not practise power politics. Our primary goal is Islam. We prioritise Islam and practise politics based on our principles. But here we see that on questions of principles, politics, and justice, we have faced hostility."

He also voiced concern about a "stage-managed election".

Referring to Jamaat Ameer Shafiqur Rahman's recent meeting with BNP Chairman Tarique Rahman, Ataur said that after the meeting, he stated that they

would form a post-election national government with the BNP and that they would run the state based on the platform of unity created by Khaleda Zia.

"... Since we are their competitors, he [Shafiqur] went and made this declaration with a rival force that he would form a national government and govern the state on their platform of unity. He did not discuss this with us or with other partners. He made the announcement unilaterally."

"Our concern now is that if an understanding and coordination are reached with a rival party even before the polls, will this election actually be stage-managed? Will it be an election, or will it be a selection? This doubt has now arisen among us."

The alliance took shape before the polls from a joint movement of eight religion-based parties to press home their demands, including elections under a proportional representation system and a referendum before the polls.

Initially, Jamaat, Islami Andolok, Bangladesh Khilafat Majlis, Khilafat Majlis, Bangladesh Khilafat Andolok, Jatiya Ganatantrik Party (Jagpa), Nezam-e-Islam Party, and Bangladesh Development Party were part of the platform.

As the 13th parliamentary election drew closer, discussions began on

turning the platform into an electoral alliance. On the eve of the nomination deadline, NCP, LDP, and AB Party joined the bloc.

Islami Andolok and Bangladesh Khilafat Majlis, among others, objected to NCP's inclusion. While Mamunul Haque's Bangladesh Khilafat Majlis was eventually persuaded, the distance between Jamaat and Islami Andolok widened.

At the briefing, IAB leader Ataur said there was also suspicion within the party that "something else is happening behind the scenes" despite talks of unity. "For political gain, Jamaat-e-Islami is moving away from its core slogans and treating power as the sole priority," he alleged.

### JAMAAT'S REACTION

Asked whether the alliance collapsed after Islami Andolok's exit, Ahsanul Mahboob Zubair, Jamaat's assistant secretary general and chief of central publicity & media department, said, "No. Why would it collapse? We did not form any formal alliance. It was an understanding. They [Islami Andolok] could not reach that understanding."

"We have kept a respectable number of seats for them. A liaison committee sat and decisions were made jointly by all parties. They did not even show up despite saying they would. These things happen

in politics."

In response to another query, the Jamaat leader said that no decision has been made yet regarding the 47 seats where no candidates were fielded. "This will be decided within a day or two."

### Alliance debacle

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popular vote, followed by 17 seats in 2001. The party boycotted the 2014 and 2024 elections and contested the 2018 polls under the BNP's paddy sheaf symbol as part of the BNP-led alliance. Its registration was cancelled in 2013 following a High Court verdict, but restored along with its symbol in June 2025.

IAB traces its roots to Islami Shashontara Andolok, founded in 1987 by Syed Fazlul Karim, the then Pir of Charmonai. After his death in 2006, leadership passed to his son, Syed Rezaul Karim. The party adopted its current name to meet Election Commission registration requirements ahead of the 2008 polls.

According to EC data, IAB secured 11,159 votes in June 1996 and more than 12 lakh votes in the 2018 election — the third highest tally after the Awami League and the BNP-led alliance — despite allegations of widespread ballot stuffing on the eve of polling. The party also boycotted the 2014 and 2024 elections.

## Noab, Editors' Council

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Journalists will speak at the convention on the need to protect democratic space and media freedom, ensure the safety of journalists, and uphold the professional dignity and rights of media workers.

Leaders of various journalist organisations, including the Association of Television Channel Owners, Broadcast Journalist Centre, Jatiya Press Club, Bangladesh Federal Union of Journalists, Dhaka Union of Journalists,

Dhaka Reporters Unity, Diplomatic Correspondents Association, Bangladesh Economic Reporters' Forum, Photo Journalists Association and Crime Reporters Association of Bangladesh, have been invited to the event.

Journalists working outside Dhaka, as well as editors, publishers, invited media professionals and columnists, will also take part in the programme, which aims to stand united in defence of responsible and courageous journalism.

## 'Board of peace'

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which Trump said Thursday he will lead as its chair, reports AFP.

Meanwhile, a senior figure in the armed wing of Hamas, a Hamas policeman, and a senior figure in the group Islamic Jihad were among at least ten people killed on Thursday in a series of Israeli strikes across Gaza, according to local sources.

Local medics and residents reported the deaths of senior Islamic Jihad operative Ashraf Al-Khatib in Nuseirat and a Hamas policeman in Gaza city. A Hamas source said that local commander Mohammed Al-Holy was killed in Deir al-Balah, earlier

in the day, reports Reuters.

The Israeli military did not immediately respond to requests for comment on the incident.

Hamas condemned the strikes on the Al-Holy family, in a statement that did not mention Mohammed or his role in the group. It accused Israel of violating the ceasefire deal in place since October, and attempting to reignite the conflict.

Health officials said the deaths included a 16-year-old.

More than 400 Palestinians and three Israeli soldiers have been reported killed since the ceasefire took effect in October.

## NPA debuts

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those committed to building a social democratic movement.

The NPA central council includes four former NCP leaders — Anik Roy, Moinul Islam Tuhin (Tuhin Khan), Alik Mru and Syeda Nilima Dola — who resigned from the NCP central committee between last September and December.

Anik previously served as general secretary of Chhatra Union and later as joint convener of the NCP. Writer and activist Tuhin Khan was the NCP's joint member secretary, while Alik Mru served as its joint chief organiser for the northern region.

Other leaders include former Chhatra Union president Baki Billah; former Dhaka University student leader Mir Huzaifa Al Mamduh; Meghmallar Bose, president of the Chhatra Union's DU unit; Sakhawat Fahad, former president of the same unit; and its general secretary Main Ahmed.

Young activists, student leaders, and people from various religious and ethnic communities have also joined the platform.

Those present at the event included poet, writer and thinker Farhad Mazhar, labour leader Moshrefa Mishu; journalist and writer Mashiul Alam; writer researcher Altaf Parvez; BASAD leader Sima Dutta; Rajshahi University teacher Bakhtiar Ahmed; Samageet artist, singer and composer Amal Akash; Rastro Songskar Andolok leader Didarul Bhuiyan; and poet Zahid Jagat.

## Bodies of missing

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On December 27, Rokeya's husband, Shahin Ahmed, filed a general diary with Keraniganj Model Police Station. Later on January 6, he filed a kidnapping case, accusing unidentified suspects, as his wife and daughter still remained missing.

Shahin told reporters they had suspected Mim from the beginning and repeatedly informed police.

OC Saiful Alam said Mim initially lowered suspicion by posing as a responsible tutor, claiming Fatema had left after lessons. CCTV footage showed Fatema entering and leaving the flat.

According to OC Saiful Alam, a quarrel broke out between Mim's younger sister and Fatema on the night of the incident. In anger, the younger sister strangled Fatema, who died instantly. When Rokeya arrived, she too was strangled with a scarf.

Investigators later found

that after Fatema was killed, Mim's younger sister wore her clothes and left the flat to mislead CCTV. She changed outside and returned minutes later.

Police said the motive stemmed from financial disputes. Rokeya had stood guarantor for an NGO loan taken by Mim, who failed to make regular payments, straining relations between the families.

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Meanwhile, New Zealand said yesterday it has temporarily closed its embassy in Tehran and flown out its diplomats because of worsening security in Iran, reports AFP.

Diplomatic staff left Iran safely on commercial flights overnight, a spokesperson for the foreign ministry said.

It is possible the fire started from these pipes or one of the kitchens, he said, adding that the bodies were handed over to the families without autopsies.

"I heard shouts of 'Fire, fire' in the morning and came down to see flames on the first and second floors. Many people on the upper floors were shouting 'Save us, save us,'" he said, adding that some were trying to break window grills with bamboo poles to escape.

The Criminal Investigation Department has sealed off the whole building.

## Iran protests ease

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according to security officials cited by the country's Tasnim news agency yesterday. Russia's UN Ambassador Vassily Nebenzia accused the United States of convening the Security Council in a bid to "justify blatant aggression and interference in the internal affairs of a sovereign state" and threats to "solve the Iranian problem through strikes aimed at overthrowing an undesirable regime."

"We strongly urge the hot heads in Washington and other capitals ... to come to their senses," he said.

Meanwhile, Russian President Vladimir Putin yesterday discussed the situation in Iran in separate calls with Netanyahu and

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian, and said that Moscow was willing to mediate in the region, the Kremlin said.

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Pezeshkian told Putin that the United States and Israel had played a direct role in the unrest, reports Reuters.

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The Tehran embassy's operations were moved to Ankara, Turkey, because of the "deteriorating security situation" in Iran.

## Google to develop

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Pixel Fold devices in the south east Asian country.

NPI is a key stage in bringing electronics to market. It covers process development, testing, verification and refinements before mass production begins. Development of the lower-priced Pixel A series is expected to remain in China for now.

The shift would further reduce Google's reliance on China's manufacturing ecosystem for Pixel devices, as more global tech firms expand capacity in south-east Asia. Samsung makes many of its products in Vietnam, while Apple has been gradually increasing production through suppliers in the country, reflecting a broader trend of diversifying supply chains.

Meanwhile, Google has attracted

manufacturers in part because labour and operating costs are typically lower than in China, where wages have risen over the past decade. A recent analysis by China Briefing estimated average monthly manufacturing wages in Vietnam at about \$250 to \$400, while overall operating costs in China can be roughly 50% higher — a gap that can be significant in a labour-intensive work such as smartphone assembly.

Vietnam's participation in free trade agreements, including the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) and the EU-Vietnam Free Trade Agreement, also offers exporters tariff advantages and easier access to major markets.



PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

## Uttara building fire claims six lives

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The landlord occupies one flat on the first floor and both flats on the second floor. None from the landlord's family was reported dead or injured. The landlord could not be reached for comment.

The injured were rushed to the nearby Kuwait Friendship Hospital.

Safayet Hossain, a senior teacher at Milestone School and College, who lives in a nearby building, witnessed the panic.

"I heard shouts of 'Fire, fire' in the morning and came down to see flames on the first and second floors. Many people on the upper floors were shouting 'Save us, save us,'" he said, adding that some were trying to break window grills with bamboo poles to escape.

He immediately rushed downstairs with his wife and child.

The landlord occupies one flat on the first floor and both flats on the second floor. None from the landlord's family was reported dead or injured. The landlord could not be reached for comment.