

## Transcom

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accused were discharged as there was no substance to frame charges against them.

The four other accused in the case are Transcom Group top officials Kamrul Hassan, Mohammad Mosaddaque and Abu Yusuf Md Siddik, and stamp vendor Shamsuzzaman Patwari.

Advocate Siddique said, "Today [yesterday] a hearing was held on the charge sheet submitted in the case. The investigator failed to provide any specific evidence in the charge sheet. Despite this, allegedly influenced by the complainant, the investigator submitted the charge sheet to the court. So, the court reprimanded the officer in this regard."

He further said that necessary steps would be taken to initiate departmental action against the officer for submitting a "false charge sheet".

"The complainant, Shahzreh Huq, had filed four false cases against her elder sister. With today's [yesterday] order discharging six individuals, there are now no pending cases against Simeen Rahman," he added.

According to the lawyers, Shahzreh Huq filed the case with Gulshan Police Station on February 22, 2024. Following an investigation, PBI Inspector Syed Sajedur Rahman submitted the charge sheet to the court on January 11 this year, accusing six individuals, including Simeen.

During yesterday's hearing, defence lawyers argued that in the share transfer forgery case, the charge sheet was submitted without recovering the share transfer deed Form-117 or conducting any expert examination. The charge sheet was filed considering some stamps printed in 2023 as affidavits regarding the transfer of shares in the case. However, the shares in dispute had been fully transferred in 2020 and accepted by the Registrar of Joint Stock Companies and Firms (RJSC) in the same year. Therefore, stamps supplied in 2023 could not possibly have been used earlier, making their use before printing impossible. Finding no substance to frame charges, the court discharged the accused in the case.

Latifur Rahman was the founding chairman and CEO of Transcom Limited. He executed a deed of settlement on June 12, 2020, regarding the future management of the company and the distribution of his personal shares after his death. In addition to Latifur, all family members – his wife Shahnaz Rahman, eldest daughter Simeen Rahman, younger daughter Shahzreh Huq and son Arshad Waliur Rahman – signed the deed, agreeing to all its terms. It was later approved at a board meeting.

Following the execution of the deed, Latifur signed share transfer Form-117 issued by the RJSC and transferred 14,160 of his 23,600 shares in Transcom Limited to Simeen, 4,720 shares to Shahzreh, and 4,720 shares to Arshad. Later, when the Form-117s were submitted to the RJSC, the RJSC updated the shares as usual and issued Schedule-X containing the number of shares to the shareholders.

Latifur passed away on July 1, 2020. For nearly four years after his death, the company continued to operate smoothly. In the 2021–2022 and 2022–2023 tax years, his offspring also declared in their personal income tax returns the shares transferred to them from the total of 23,600 shares.

Nearly four years after Latifur's death, on February 22, 2024, Shahzreh filed three cases with Gulshan Police Station against Simeen, who was then leading the company, and their mother, while they were in Singapore for medical treatment. These were registered all under similar allegations and sections. As a result of these cases, Simeen and her mother faced restrictions on entering Bangladesh and filed a writ petition in the High Court, which allowed them to return on March 21, 2024. Allegedly to obstruct Simeen's return, Shahzreh also filed a murder case with the same police station on March 22, 2024, centring the natural death of Arshad, which had occurred nine months earlier. The Police Bureau of Investigation (PBI) investigated the murder case and, finding no evidence, submitted a final report. The court later accepted it and exempted the accused.

All four cases were investigated by the PBI. In one case, it was alleged that after Latifur's death, his wife Shahnaz – as nominee – withdrew his money and bought 9,000 shares of Transcom Electronics Limited. After investigation, the PBI found no irregularities in the withdrawal or the purchase of the 9,000 shares and submitted a final report, which the court later accepted, exempting the accused.

In another case, filed on the allegation that the deed of settlement executed by Latifur had been created through forgery, the investigator seized the deed and documents of the meeting at which it was approved and had them examined by experts at the Criminal Investigation Department (CID). According to the expert opinion, the signatures of Latifur, Arshad, and even the complainant Shahzreh on the deed of settlement and the board meeting documents were found to be genuine. Based on this, the PBI submitted a final report, which the court accepted and exempted the accused.

## Before Bangla became a demand

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On September 15, 1947, he published Rashtr Bhasha Bangla Na Urdu?, the first booklet containing the demand for Bangla as a state language. He was also the founder of the Language Movement's mouthpiece, Weekly Sainik.

Here, we publish translated excerpts from an interview with this historical figure. The interview was published in Bhasha Andolon Shatchallishh Thake Baana (1993), compiled by Mostafa Kamal.

How was the Language Movement initiated?

The Language Movement was initiated through the Tamaddun Majlish (TM). On September 1, 1947, it was established at 19, Azimpur. I was a professor in the Physics Department and used to live at 19, Azimpur. I used to think deeply about Bangla as a state language and as a medium of instruction. I shared my ideas with my friends. Syed Nazrul Islam and Shamsul Alam were directly involved in the establishment of TM.

What were the primary actions that TM took to create awareness about Bangla as the state language?

Organising literary meetings and seminars in different places, including the university campus, was among the many primary initiatives of TM. These meetings used to take place on the lawn, which back then was adjacent to the south-west of the University of Dhaka, and at the Muslim Hall auditorium. Moreover, to create public opinion, we used to publish statements and handbills. The first book that demanded Bangla as the state language, Pakistaner Rashtr Bhasha Bangla Na Urdu?, was published by me as its editor. The main point of the book was that the language which ensures that the strength of the

nation is not wasted, and the language which its citizens can easily learn, speak, and write, should be the state language of the country.

What kind of attention did Rashtr Bhasha Bangla Na Urdu? receive from university students?

To be honest, we did not find even five people on the campus willing to buy this book. The attainment of Pakistan had captivated the whole nation. At that time, everyone used to try to make us understand how "dangerous" it would be to raise the issue of more than one state language, and how "unrealistic" a proposal it would be for Pakistan, in particular, to have two state languages.

Did you carry out any activities outside the campus back then?

Yes. We discussed this issue with certain government officials and literateurs, and achieved some success there. At that time, we collected the signatures of several eminent personalities of the country and prepared a memorandum. The memorandum was presented to the government and published in some newspapers. The local newspapers of that time did not give this issue much importance. Ittehad, based in Kolkata and edited by Abul Mansur Ahmad, and Weekly Insaaf, gave tremendous support to this cause.

How did Sainik start its historic journey?

Sainik, a weekly publication, was first published on November 14, 1948. A few sincere employees helped me to publish this revolutionary newspaper as the mouthpiece of TM. It played a historic role in the Language Movement.

When was the Rashtr Bhasha Sangram Parishad formed? Why did you feel the necessity to establish such a platform?

After the meeting at Fazlul

Haq Hall [October 1947], we, the members of TM, decided to form the Rashtr Bhasha Sangram Parishad. There were various discriminatory practices against Bangla, such as the use of only Urdu and English on postcards, money order forms, rail tickets, and currency, as well as the omission of Bangla from the syllabus of the Pakistan Central Public Service Commission.

The Education Minister, Fazlur Rahman, even pleaded that Urdu should be the only state language. Unfortunately, students, teachers, and the intellectual community were quite lenient about the degrading status of their mother tongue. We feared that the government would try to impose Urdu as the sole state language by exploiting this state of leniency. So we took the initiative to mobilise people against this one-sided decision.

How did the Parishad start working?

We went to meet the Education Minister, Fazlur Rahman, at Nazira Bazar. We had a heated debate over the question of Bangla as a state language. He treated us badly, and that infuriated us. We took the initiative to present a memorandum demanding Bangla as a state language. We collected thousands of signatures in favour of this demand and submitted the memorandum to the East Pakistan government. We appealed to the government to immediately declare Bangla as the state language and the medium of instruction in East Pakistan.

Can you remember the statement issued against the decision of the Pakistan Central Public Service Commission to omit Bangla from the syllabus of the Civil Service Examination?

## Defence deals needed, but their timing 'questionable'

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(defence studies) at the Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies, said the signing of these deals should have taken place much earlier.

"Such deals are important to improve Bangladesh's defence capability because there was almost no buying of jet fighters over the last 15 years.... During that period, there was development of infrastructure and the equipment mainly for the UN Peacekeeping missions, but not much for our own security."

He added Bangladesh has some fighter jets but there is no air defence system, which should be part of building a credible deterrent.

He, however, said one may question the timing of the deals given that this is an interim government but these deals have far-reaching implications.

Security analyst Air Cdre (Retd) Ishfaq Illahi Choudhury said it is

important to boost Bangladesh's defence, equip the military with advanced technologies and skills as the world has rapidly progressed in this regard. "We don't have an enemy to fight, but we need to improve defence technologies for both deterrence and UN Peacekeeping Missions. UN Peacekeepers are a soft diplomacy for us."

For long, Bangladesh's major source of defence equipment has been China. According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, Bangladesh bought about 72 percent of its total arms from China between 2019 and 2023.

Ishfaq said from the diversification point of view, Japan, the UK, and Turkey are also good sources. "Even, South Korea can also be included." Security analyst Brig Gen (Retd) Shahedul Anam Khan said while Bangladesh needs to boost defence as

well as diversification of the sources, "too much diversification is not a good idea".

"When needs arise, alignment of technologies becomes very important. If there are too many technologies, the alignment becomes more complex."

While both Anam and Ishfaq agreed that boosting defence and building a credible deterrent of the country's armed forces is imperative, they said it is not ideal for the interim government to sign such deals.

"It is because the elected government will have to take responsibility for economic and diplomatic implications, if any," Anam said.

Large-scale defence purchases require large amounts of money and whether the economy permits that at this moment or the near future is something that should be decided by the political government, he added.

In November 1947, the Secretary of the Pakistan Central Public Service Commission issued a circular to the public universities outlining the syllabus of the civil service examination. There were 31 courses, of which nine were on languages such as Urdu, Hindi, English, German, French, and even dead languages like Latin and Sanskrit. But Bangla, the language of the majority of Pakistan, was omitted from the syllabus. This was proof of sheer disregard and negligence towards the Bangla language. I sent a statement of protest to Ittehad, severely criticising this malicious intent of the government. It was published around the end of December, along with an editorial by Abul Mansur Ahmed, who also vehemently opposed the government's decision. Later, the concerned ministry expressed regret, describing it as an inadvertent mistake. This casual response infuriated us even more.

Did the Rashtr Bhasha Sangram Parishad take a lead role in launching the programmes of March 11, 1948, demanding Bangla as the state language?

Yes, a meeting was held by the Sangram Parishad on March 7 at Fazlul Haque Hall, where it was decided that a strike would be observed on March 11 in Dhaka and across the state. The programme was highly successful. The police charged the crowd with batons and tear gas. Many students were injured, and many others were arrested. As a result of the movement of March 11, the demand for Bangla as the state language gained new momentum.

[The interview has been translated by Samia Huda]

"Defence purchases have long-term implications in foreign relations. For example, buying fighter jets from Pakistan would create concerns for India.

"What we want and how we want as far as defence purchase is concerned are crucial issues to be weighed with utmost care."

About these last-minute agreements, Foreign Adviser Touhid Hossain said the deals signed by the interim government are meant to make things easier for the next government, "not to leave behind any burden".

"The agreements – trade or defence – did not emerge suddenly; rather the initiatives had begun earlier.

"Over the past 1-1.5 years, we followed them up and brought them close to fruition. In fact, some could have been concluded a month earlier, but we found a few points that we were not satisfied with, so we renegotiated them."

## The pitchman's big promises but small gains

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its image as a struggling delta and emerged as a "regional manufacturing powerhouse," a bridge connecting the Himalayas to the Bay of Bengal. In this cinematic future, his successor would be addressing the 10th investment summit, celebrating a nation that had seamlessly integrated East and West.

It was a slick, high energy performance, typical of Chowdhury's near empty tenure. There were references to emotional selfies from the 2024 uprising and even a playful promise to "throw a Nobel Prize winner" (Yunus) at investors to secure their confidence. The narrative was intoxicating: a nation energised and ready to leapfrog into the ranks of Asia's economic giants.

Yet, as the applause faded, the gap between Chowdhury's overly optimistic vision and the sepia-toned reality began to resemble not a bridge, but a chasm.

Chowdhury – an avid skydiver and former banker – has been among the most visible salesmen Bangladesh has fielded in years. Yet, while he spun visions of a 2035 utopia, the economic machinery of 2025 slowed, and the Bangladesh Investment Development Authority (BIDA) under his leadership showed little meaningful progress.

Holding a dual mandate as CEO of the Public-Private Partnership Authority (PPPA), Chowdhury sought to transform a controversial port deal with the UAE-based DP World into a logistical revolution. His focus was on the New Mooring Container Terminal (NCT) at Chittagong Port. The proposal, initiated under the previous Awami League administration, became central to Chowdhury's own agenda.

The strategy appeared simple and compelling: by pursuing a government-to-government arrangement with the UAE, the interim administration hoped to bypass the complexities and opacity of traditional open bidding. However, the deal ultimately collapsed under mounting protests, exposing the limits of Chowdhury's authority and offering a bruising lesson to the interim government.

BLEAK INVESTMENT DATA

Data compiled by The Daily Star reveals a sobering reality: the apparent recovery in early 2025 was little more than a mirage, followed by a renewed collapse.

The downturn had begun earlier. In 2023, net foreign direct investment slipped to \$1.46 billion from about \$1.51 billion the previous year. Then came 2024, another year of decline. Even before the political upheavals of August, investor confidence had weakened significantly. In the first half of 2024 (January-June), inflows fell to \$675 million. In the second half, marked by unrest and uncertainty, inflows dropped further to \$594 million, leaving the annual total at just \$1.27 billion.

The story of 2025 was one of uncertainty. During the first half (January-June), inflows nearly doubled to \$1.09 billion year-on-year. This figure became a convenient talking point for the government, suggesting that interim stability was restoring confidence. It provided the "pitchman" with a hopeful narrative. In the third quarter (July-September), inflows touched \$315 million, bringing the total to only \$1.4 billion so far, according to available data. How Chowdhury performed in the fourth quarter remains to be seen.

Even more troubling was the collapse in the investment pipeline. According to the Economic Review 2025, registered private investment projects dropped by 58 percent year-on-year. This forward-looking indicator suggested that the cautious "wait-and-see" approach of 2024 had hardened into a decisive "go elsewhere" stance by 2025.

Private-sector credit growth also slowed to a four-year low of 6.1 percent, far below the central bank's target. When domestic entrepreneurs – who understand the landscape best – hesitate to borrow and expand, it is unrealistic to expect a surge in foreign investments.

"Unless local investors have the confidence to invest, one cannot expect foreign investors to do so," said Mustafizur Rahman, a distinguished fellow at the Centre for Policy Dialogue.

Foreign direct investment consists of three components: equity capital,

reinvested earnings, and intra-company loans. Equity capital – the infusion of fresh funds to build factories and expand operations – is the most critical indicator of long-term commitment. Yet in fiscal 2024–25, this key component weakened. Equity capital fell nearly 17 percent to \$554.77 million. A decline in equity signals hesitation among new investors.

"Without a credible medium-term to long-term roadmap, investment will remain in low gear well into 2026," said M Masrur Reaz, chairman and chief executive of Policy Exchange Bangladesh, describing the past year as one of missed opportunities.

REFORMS IN THE SLOW LANE  
Chowdhury's flagship reform, the One Stop Service (OSS), reflects this broader dysfunction. Last year, he promised a "true" OSS, complete with relationship managers who would guide investors much like corporate bankers.

The image was reassuring. The reality, however, resembles a digital façade masking deeper inefficiencies. By Chowdhury's own admission, of the 194 government-to-business services required to establish and operate a company, only 51 are available online – and just eight are fully digital.

In practice, the OSS remains a "many-stop" obstacle course. The remaining 143 services require investors to physically navigate ministries and offices, where files often move at a glacial pace. Chowdhury himself acknowledged that manual systems continue to dominate and undermine efficiency. Yet recognition alone does not amount to reform.

For an agency chief to lament the state of digitisation 18 months into his tenure suggests limited political leverage. BIDA was supposed to clear red tape; instead, it is becoming a spectator, curating digital brochures for polished presentations.

In an interview, Chowdhury identified energy shortages as the greatest constraint on growth. "If we can't guarantee uninterrupted gas and electricity, other reforms won't matter," he said.

Perhaps the most damaging issue

## Tarique gives up

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According to the RPO, a vacant parliamentary seat must be filled through a by-election within 90 days of declaration. The EC is therefore required to arrange a by-poll in Bogura-6 following completion of the gazette process.

The 13th parliamentary election was held on February 12 across 299 constituencies. In Sherpur-3, polling was cancelled following the death of a Jamaat candidate.

The EC must now also conduct a fresh election in Sherpur-3 alongside the Bogura-6 by-election.

Meanwhile, Tarique has resigned from the post of acting editor and publisher of the Dainik Dinkal, a Bangla-language newspaper. Atiqur Rahman Rumon, convener of Amra BNP Poribar, has replaced him.

## NCP signs July

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On October 17, the charter was signed at the South Plaza of the Jatiya Sangsad by the National Consensus Commission and 24 political parties, with another party joining a few days later, bringing the total to 25.

Speaking at yesterday's signing event, Yunus said, "The nation always believed that NCP would sign this charter, and today that belief has been fulfilled. With NCP's signature, the July National Charter is now complete. I thank NCP for joining this noble effort."

He said everyone must remain constantly aware so that the document helps build a new Bangladesh, a more humane Bangladesh, through action at every step.

The chief adviser also said the newly elected members of parliament will take the oath today and wished everyone well in the days ahead.

## Police file GD

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complaint, it will be registered as a regular case."

He, however, declined to disclose the contents of the GD despite repeated requests.

Dr Shirin Sultana, head of the medical team in charge of the case, told reporters yesterday that they have conducted the tests following the letter from the police. "Samples have been sent to the Noakhali Government Medical College laboratory for DNA testing, with results expected within three to five days."

MA Wadud, sub-inspector of the hospital's One-Stop Crisis Centre (OCC), noted that medical examinations in such cases should ideally be conducted within 72 hours, "but legal complexities caused the delay".

Noakhali Civil Surgeon Dr Maryam Simi emphasised that while 72 hours is the ideal window, forensic evidence can still be collected from clothing or through DNA testing even if samples have dried.

However, the OCC's legal officer Mohsina Akter Simu on Sunday said the hospital authorities had already collected and preserved the woman's samples ahead of the police order.

The 32-year-old mother of three alleged she was raped and tortured at her home in Hatia on February 13 for supporting National Citizen Party candidate Abdul Hannan Masud in the recently concluded national election.

Speaking to reporters from the hospital on Saturday, she claimed that three men broke into her house around 11:00pm on Friday and detained her husband, before raping her.

She alleged the attackers were activists of the local BNP and its youth wing, including Jubo Dal leader Rahman Hossain, 30, along with another individual. She said Hossain was the one who raped her while the others stood guard at the door.

Hossain denied the allegations, claiming he does not even know the woman. He added that he was attacked by NCP supporters on Friday night and admitted to hospital around 10:30pm in an injured state, presenting medical documents to support his claim.

## Israel's West

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Jonathan Mizrachi, the Israeli NGO's co-director, told AFP yesterday that the measure would attribute new resources for land registration in the occupied West Bank.

The process will take place only in Area C, which constitutes some 60 percent of West Bank territory and is under Israeli security and administrative control.

"There was a lot of ambiguity regarding the land, and Israel decided now to deal with it," he said, adding that the existing ambiguity over Area C land ownership is likely to be used against Palestinians.

"A lot of land that Palestinians consider theirs, they will find out it's not theirs under this new registration process," he said, adding the move will further the Israeli right's annexation agenda.

Palestinians see the West Bank as foundational to any future Palestinian state, but many on Israel's religious right want to take over the land.