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## Bangladesh at a crossroads following polls

Say speakers at discussion by Commonwealth Parliamentary Association UK



BULBUL HASAN, London

Bangladesh now faces a decisive period that will determine whether the latest vote leads to structural reform or reinforces familiar patterns of power, said senior policymakers and analysts at a discussion in London yesterday.

The discussion, titled "Bangladesh: After the Elections", was organised by the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association UK at Westminster Hall.

At the discussion, Baroness Ann Winterton, the UK's

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Unauthorised makeshift shops have spilled onto the main road in Dhaka's Gulistan area, overtaking a pedestrian walkway and worsening traffic congestion in one of the capital's busiest parts. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

## Tarique seeks action plans from new city administrators

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Tarique Rahman has asked administrators of six newly appointed city corporations to submit action plans within seven days after identifying key problems and crises in their respective cities.

Dhaka South City Corporation Administrator Md Abdus Salam told reporters at the Secretariat yesterday that the instruction came following a meeting with the prime minister after he took charge.

The government had issued a gazette notification on Monday appointing administrators to the six city corporations.

Abdus Salam said the prime minister tasked them with addressing stagnation in city corporations that have long remained without elections. He added that they were instructed to remain vigilant against dengue and give greater emphasis to mosquito control.



## Khalilur leaves for KSA today

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Foreign Minister Dr Khalilur Rahman is scheduled to leave for Saudi Arabia today, making it his first official foreign trip since his appointment.

Humayun Kabir, adviser to Prime Minister Tarique Rahman, will also be part of the visit to attend the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) foreign ministers-level meeting in Jeddah, reports UNB, quoting foreign ministry officials.

The OIC will hold the emergency meeting of the Open-ended Executive Committee at the level of foreign ministers on Thursday at the OIC General Secretariat in Jeddah.

The meeting will discuss the illegal Israeli occupation decisions aimed at promoting settlement, annexation and attempting to impose alleged Israeli sovereignty

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## 1,202 'politically motivated' cases to be withdrawn

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Ministry of Home Affairs in a statement yesterday said the government has approved the withdrawal of 1,202 more "politically motivated" cases filed during the tenure of the Awami League government.

The decision comes as part of the government's ongoing move to scrap what it calls "harassment cases" against opposition leaders and activists.

"Approval has been given to withdraw another 1,202 political harassment cases filed against leaders and activists of opposition parties during the 17-year rule of the previous fascist government," the statement said.

Earlier, on February 22, the ministry had approved the withdrawal of 1,006 similar cases.

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## 17 YEARS OF BDR CARNAGE

# 139 appeals over death penalty still pending

ASHUTOSH SARKAR

Seventeen long years have passed since the BDR carnage, but neither the Sheikh Hasina-led Awami League government nor Prof Muhammad Yunus-led interim government took any extensive steps to settle the appeals in the Appellate Division, leaving the death penalties of 139 convicts unexecuted.

Asked about the current BNP government's plan on this issue, Law Minister Md Asaduzzaman refused to make any comment. "I am not making any comment on anything. Let me settle down a bit first," he told The Daily Star on February 20.

However, Attorney General (in charge) Md Arshadur Rouf told this correspondent on February 20 that the Appellate Division will start hearing the appeals in the BDR mutiny case when the chief justice orders to include the appeals in the list for their hearing and disposal.

The old cases are now being heard and settled in the Appellate Division, he added.

A total of 74 people, including 57 army officials, were killed in the mutiny that took



place in the capital's Pikhana headquarters of the erstwhile Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) on February 25 and 26 in 2009.

The incident of mutiny had left the nation numb, as people stood aghast at the extent of the barbarity perpetrated at the headquarters of the paramilitary force, later renamed Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB).

A couple of days later, police filed a case with Lalbagh Police Station on various charges, including murder and use of explosives. The case was transferred to New Market Police Station on April 6 that year and

then split into two cases -- one for murder and the other for the use of explosives.

On November 5, 2013, a Dhaka court sentenced 150 BDR members and two civilians to death and jailed 160 others in the murder case. Another 256 people, mostly BDR soldiers, were awarded varying jail terms, and 278 were acquitted.

While disposing of an appeal by the prosecution, the HC in November 2017 reduced the number of individuals sentenced to death to 139, awarded life imprisonment to 185, and sentenced 228 others to various prison terms ranging from one to 13 years.

It also acquitted 283 people and exempted 15 others from the case.

The 35 appeals filed challenging the High Court verdict that confirmed the death sentences of the 139 convicted accused in November 2017 are still pending with the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court.

It is still uncertain when the victims' wait for justice will come to an end, since the Appellate Division has yet to start hearing the pending appeals.

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PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

Zarina Begum applies pesticides in a Boro paddy field at Gangarampur village in Batiaghata, Khulna, as the farmer hopes for a good yield if weather remains favourable. Timely and measured pesticide application prevents insect infestation and boosts production. According to the Department of Agriculture, Khulna, Boro paddy has been planted on 65,778 hectares in the district this year. The photo was taken yesterday.

## Looking forward to working with new Bangladesh PM

Says South Korean president

UNB, Dhaka



President of the Republic of Korea Lee Jae Myung has said he is confident that Bangladesh will continue to achieve sustained economic growth and social prosperity under the leadership of Bangladesh Prime Minister Tarique Rahman.

"Korea and Bangladesh have expanded cooperation in various fields, including education and investment, development cooperation, and people-to-people exchanges, based on longstanding friendship and mutual trust," said the

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## Portfolios allocated to PM's 10 advisers

5 granted ministerial rank, 5 state minister status

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government issued a gazette notification yesterday, allocating portfolios to 10 advisers appointed to Prime Minister Tarique Rahman with the status of minister and state minister.

According to the gazette, five of them will hold the status of minister and five others state minister.

Among the advisers holding the status of minister, Mirza Abbas Uddin Ahmed, Nazrul Islam Khan, and Ruhul Kabir Rizvi Ahmed have been appointed as political advisers, while Ismail Zabyullah has been made adviser to the Ministry of Public Administration, and Rashed Al Mahmud Titumir, adviser to the ministries of finance and planning.

Among the advisers holding the status of state minister,

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## 'Will review Mamun file before action'

Says new ICT chief prosecutor

STAFF CORRESPONDENT



Newly appointed Chief Prosecutor of the International Crimes Tribunal Aminul Islam yesterday said he will review the case file before deciding on any legal steps in the case involving former inspector general of police Chowdhury Abdullah Al Mamun.

Responding to allegations that Mamun was made an approver in exchange for large sums of money, Aminul said he had not yet examined the file and would act if any irregularities were found. "If there is scope for legal action, we will take fresh steps," he told journalists on his first day at the ICT.

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