

# BCB's cycle of political interference



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Faith to build strong institutions continues to undermine many sectors in Bangladesh, preventing them from achieving their desired goals. When allowed to function independently and sustainably, institutions strive towards good governance and development, but when political interference takes hold of them, short-term interests get priority over long-term stability.

The recent developments at the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) highlight this persisting national predicament. The trajectory involving three former national captains—Faruque Ahmed, Aminul Islam Bulbul, and Tamim Iqbal—is not merely a sequence of power transitions but a reflection of how governance of an apparently autonomous body repeatedly gets disrupted by external influence.

Faruque's appointment as BCB president in August 2024, following the exit of then board chief Nazmul Hassan Papon as a result of the Awami League government's fall, initially raised hopes of reform in the national regulatory body for cricket. But his subsequent removal less than a year later, followed by a politically charged comeback as the vice-president through the election in October 2025, underscored how fragile leadership positions in the BCB have become. The pattern repeated with Aminul Islam Bulbul, first installed as president through a National Sports Council-backed process, then elected in a highly controversial election, only to be removed amid allegations and counterclaims just six months later. Now, the sudden emergence of Tamim Iqbal at the helm of an ad hoc committee, accompanied by individuals with clear political affiliations, continues a familiar cycle.

Such frequent leadership shuffles, driven or influenced by government intervention, fundamentally weakens the institutional spine of the BCB. And it is cricket that suffers the most.

Whoever assumes power in Bangladesh begins with a familiar promise: to keep

sports free from political influence. The newly appointed state minister for youth and sports, Md Aminul Haque, echoed that commitment recently. Yet, the events unfolding at BCB suggest that such promises remain easier said than done.

The dissolution of the elected board led by Aminul and the installation of an 11-member ad hoc committee headed by Tamim, mandated to hold an election within 90 days, have exposed a deep institutional vulnerability. This is not merely a clash of individuals but the result of long-standing constitutional contradictions that have never been properly resolved. At the centre of the crisis lies the BCB constitution which, instead of safeguarding the board's autonomy, enables interference. One of the most glaring issues is the role of National Sports Council (NSC), the government's apex overseeing agency for sports, which retains the power to nominate two directors to the BCB board. This provision institutionalises government presence within the cricket body and creates a fundamental contradiction: a board that claims autonomy while structurally accommodating external influence.

The BCB constitution further allows intervention under the NSC Act, including the dissolution of an elected body, as seen in the recent turn of events. While such authority may be justified in exceptional circumstances, its broad and ambiguous scope leaves the door open for discretionary use.

The root of the problem also lies in the councillor nomination process. The clause allowing district sports associations to send representatives "if" no district cricket association exists has long been exploited. This ambiguity has repeatedly enabled manipulation of the electorate, undermining the integrity of elections before they even take place. The constitution should clearly prioritise district cricket associations—much like district football associations in football governance—with well-defined

criteria for councillor eligibility.

These structural weaknesses are rooted in a critical moment in the board's history: the controversial 2012 constitutional amendment. At that time, amendments to the BCB constitution were introduced but subsequently altered by the NSC before approval. This raised serious legal questions about the limits of the NSC's authority. The matter eventually reached the courts, where

issues. The latest episode is, therefore, not an isolated incident but a continuation of that history.

BCB's centralised nature is another constitutional weakness. Despite a long-standing commitment to decentralise cricket administration, power remains overwhelmingly concentrated in Dhaka. Club representatives, particularly from established clubs in the capital, dominate

reform committee before it could present its recommendations, reportedly under pressure from Dhaka clubs threatening to boycott the leagues.

Financial considerations further complicate matters. With crores of taka in revenue and reserves, the BCB is not just a sporting body but a powerful economic entity. Without strong institutional safeguards, such financial weight inevitably attracts political interest, intensifying competition for control. What is most concerning is that the current transition, instead of breaking this cycle, risks reinforcing it.

Tamim Iqbal's appointment to lead an ad hoc committee could be another opportunity for genuine reform. But reform requires more than administrative reshuffling. It demands structural correction. Before moving towards a fresh election, the priority must be to address the constitutional flaws that have repeatedly undermined the board's credibility. Without reforming the framework, any election, no matter how efficiently conducted, will only reproduce the same problems.

Tamim's first responsibility, therefore, is to ensure that the system under which he is supposed to hold the election is fair, transparent, and free from political manipulation. He has already expressed his desire to contest the polls, which raises a question about the whole agenda. This includes revisiting provisions that allow NSC intervention, clarifying councillor nomination rules, reducing structural ambiguities, and ensuring that the BCB exercises its rightful authority to frame its own constitution in line with both legal rulings and international standards. Otherwise, the risk is clear: a hurried election under an unreformed constitution will simply mark another phase in the ongoing cycle of politicisation.

The lesson extends far beyond cricket. Institutions cannot be strengthened through rhetoric or periodic resets. They require consistent commitment to rules, respect for autonomy, and the courage to implement reform, even when it challenges entrenched interests.

The endurance of institutions is not optional; it is essential. And unless Bangladesh learns to protect its institutions from political encroachment, even its most cherished sectors, such as cricket, will continue to struggle between promises and paralysis.



ILLUSTRATION: BIPOLOB CHAKROBORTY

it was clearly established that the BCB, as an autonomous body, retains the right to frame and amend its own constitution, subject only to approval—not alteration—by the NSC.

The court's ruling was a defining moment. It reaffirmed institutional autonomy and provided the BCB with an opportunity to correct the structural flaws in its governance framework. But that opportunity was lost.

Instead of addressing the inconsistencies exposed by the ruling, the BCB proceeded with elections under the same contested framework. In doing so, it effectively legitimised a flawed structure rather than reforming it. The failure to "right the wrongs" of 2012 has since haunted the institution, with each subsequent crisis tracing its root back to those unresolved

the board. Out of 25 directors, a significant portion (12) comes from club affiliations, an imbalance rarely seen in other cricketing nations. This structural bias entrenches a narrow power base and sidelines regional cricket development.

With 25 members, the BCB has the largest board of directors among all Test-playing nations—more than twice the size of most, and in some cases, more than three times as large. The question inevitably arises: why?

After the AL government's ouster, there was genuine hope that the interim authority would seize this rare opportunity to introduce reforms in the BCB, paving the way for genuine cricket organisers to reclaim the board. But those expectations quickly faded when the Faruque-led board suspended the much-talked-about constitution

# Can a bank resolution framework work if discredited owners return?



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I worked with senior officials at Bangladesh Bank in developing the framework for the 2025 Bank Resolution Act, which is similar to India's Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016, and analogous frameworks in Indonesia and a few other comparable economies. The primary purpose of this arrangement was to protect banks from their old, defaulting owners, who were reluctant to recapitalise their institutions to cover capital shortfalls arising from continuous insider lending and bad loans, which had crippled internal cash generation and stunted future growth.

The people spearheading this process sincerely believed that without increasing the capital base, banks could neither generate fresh loans nor repay small depositors. Although the government itself recapitalised the Sammito Islami Bank, the destination model of the original merger framework was always predicated on owners or strategic investors coming forward to inject fresh, risk-based capital. This was especially critical given that most of the previous defaulting owners had either fled the country to evade legal action or simply lacked the financial capacity to inject funds into ailing, cash-strapped banks.

The recent amendment to the Bank Resolution Ordinance 2025, now passed as legislation by the BNP government in 2026, has created a mechanism through which previously merged banks can revert to their former owners. Under this provision, former shareholders may reacquire control by paying just 7.5 percent of the total funds disbursed by the government and Bangladesh Bank for operating the merged entities. This is where alarm bells ring loudly.

According to a *Samakal* report, the central bank had internally opposed this provision. Parliamentary opposition parties also raised objections. Nevertheless, the bill was passed with Section 18(A) intact.

The section states that former shareholders listed under the Bank Resolution Ordinance 2025 or any individual deemed suitable by Bangladesh Bank may apply to the central bank as resolution authority to reacquire the bank's shares, assets, and liabilities. Applicants must submit undertakings covering: repayment of all government and central bank funds; injection of fresh capital to address existing shortfalls; settlement of all depositor, creditor, and third-party claims; discharge of all tax and regulatory obligations; compensation to parties that incurred losses during resolution; and full compliance with any governance reform conditions stipulated by Bangladesh Bank. On financial terms, applicants must furnish a pay order equivalent to 7.5 percent of total injected funds within three months of final approval, with the remaining 92.5 percent repayable within two years at simple interest of 10 percent per annum.

The concern is unmistakable. In Bangladesh's institutional context, once ownership reverts (even conditionally), dislodging incumbents again becomes an extraordinary challenge. A 7.5 percent upfront threshold is a nominal commitment against the magnitude of systemic damage already inflicted.

Equally troubling is how Section 18(A) entered the bill in the first place. A 10-member review committee constituted on April 1 and led by an additional secretary of the Financial Institutions Division

had recommended reducing the ordinance from 98 to 74 sections after careful deliberation. But this committee, comprising members from the Ministry of Finance, the Legislative and Parliamentary Affairs Division, and Bangladesh Bank, reportedly did not recommend this clause. According to the *Samakal* report, it was inserted just before the bill was tabled in parliament. Bangladesh Bank apparently only learned of it the following morning and formally requested the Ministry of Finance not to proceed, to no avail.

Regulators rightly argued that any such provision should have explicitly barred those responsible for a bank's deterioration from reacquiring ownership. Full repayment of depositor and creditor liabilities should have been a precondition, not a forward-looking undertaking. The distinction carries enormous practical weight.

The scale of the damage clarifies why. Under the Bank Resolution Ordinance 2025, five Shariah-compliant banks—EXIM Bank, Social Islami Bank, First Security Islami Bank, Union Bank, and Global Islami Bank—were merged into a consolidated Islamic bank. The entity carries paid-up capital of Tk 35,000 crore, with the government contributing Tk 20,000 crore and the remaining Tk 15,000 crore from the institutional deposits of the banks and the Deposit Insurance Trust Fund.

As of last December, the five merged banks held combined loans of Tk 196,827 crore, of which Tk 165,781 crore, or 84.23 percent, had turned non-performing, against a sector-wide default rate of 30.60 percent. Besides, last December, 22 banks faced a banking capital shortfall totalling Tk 282,603 crore, of which Tk 150,691 crore was the capital shortfall of just these five institutions. EXIM Bank, formerly under Nassa Group's control, is in relatively better shape with a 62.45 percent default rate and a capital shortfall of Tk 22,625 crore. The remaining four (previously controlled by S. Alam Group) tell a grimmer story: Union Bank has 97.64 percent of its loans classified

as defaulted; First Security Islami Bank, 96.43 percent; Global Islami Bank, 96.27 percent; and Social Islami Bank, 75.73 percent, with combined capital deficits running into tens of thousands of crores.

This raises the billion-dollar question: when these banks' former owners bled the banks dry and literally plundered the institutions' assets

in connivance with their friends and families, as the central bank's large loans restructuring scrutiny committee revealed, can the banks then ultimately be rescued? Or are we simply opening a new Pandora's box?

Bangladesh's banking, hitherto characterised by high non-performing loans, weak risk management, low capital, rampant insider lending,

and outright plundering by owners, warrants an overhaul, not any piecemeal solution. We desperately need to come out of political cronyism to bring back confidence into the system. Independence, prevention of conflict of interest, and regulatory compliance should be the way forward, not the distortion of the original purpose to rescue the banking sector.

## Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Office of the Executive Engineer

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[www.pwd.gov.bd](http://www.pwd.gov.bd)

Memo No. 1375(3)

Dated: 12/04/2026

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01	1257196	03 May-2026 10:00am	03 May-2026 12:01pm

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