

Another blow to Mamata

After MLA revolt, 21 of 28 Lok Sabha TMC MPs now want to join ruling NDA

AGENCIES

After a revolt of TMC MLAs against Mamata Banerjee in West Bengal, at least 21 party MPs from the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha are likely to switch their loyalty to the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA).

According to multiple reports, the MPs, led by Kakoli Ghosh Dastidar and Sukhendu Ray, met Union Minister and BJP's West Bengal in-charge Bhupendra Yadav in New Delhi.

West Bengal Chief Minister Suwendu Adhikari was also reportedly present during the meeting, which came hours after an unconfirmed number of TMC MLAs allegedly wrote to Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla, urging him to allot them seats as a separate faction.

According to NDTV, Kakoli Ghosh, who was upset with the party after being removed from the post of Whip, said that going by the people's verdict, they believe their "future political course should be aligned with the NDA."



Foreign Minister Khalilur Rahman and his Russian counterpart Sergei Lavrov attend a press conference following their talks in Moscow, Russia, yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Efforts on to strengthen banking sector

BB governor tells Editors' Council

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Bank has taken initiatives to amend the Money Loan Court Act to accelerate the disposal of default loan cases and strengthen the country's loan recovery framework, Mostaqur Rahman, the central bank governor, said yesterday.

The central bank is also drafting a Distressed Asset Management Company Act to facilitate the resolution of non performing and unrecoverable loans, the governor said.

As part of the government's Stolen Asset Recovery Initiative, assets worth approximately \$25 million have already been frozen in the United Kingdom, Rahman said, adding that efforts are underway to repatriate the funds at the earliest opportunity.

The governor made the comments at a meeting with leaders of the Editors' Council at Bangladesh Bank headquarters in Dhaka.

Highlighting the need for a sound and resilient banking sector, the governor stressed the importance of insulating banks from political influence.

He said the ongoing reform programme is focused on strengthening professionalism, accountability and corporate governance in bank

SEE PAGE 9 COL 1

Tk 1,243cr flowed to PM's fund

FROM PAGE 1

Bangladesh Bank guidelines require CSR programmes to focus on sustainable, long-term projects and prioritise sectors including education (30 percent), health (30 percent), environment and climate adaptation (20 percent), income-generating activities for underprivileged groups, disaster management, infrastructure, sports and culture. The guidelines also allow banks and financial institutions to provide grants to government entities or institutions, including the Prime Minister's Office, if considered eligible.

The audit showed that Tk 1,111 crore went to the Prime Minister's Relief and Welfare Fund in the name of relief, flood response and education assistance.

Another Tk 374 crore was donated to Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Memorial Trust, nearly half of it for programmes marking Bangabandhu's birth centenary.

Shuchona Foundation received around Tk 26 crore.

The remaining funds were distributed among bodies including the Bangladesh Olympic Association, Bangladesh Football Federation, Sheikh Russel Jatio Shishu Kishore Parishad, named after Hasina's slain younger brother, and individuals whose family members were killed during the 2009 BDR mutiny.

Hasina served as chairperson of the Bangabandhu memorial trust, while her daughter Saima Wazed founded and chaired Shuchona Foundation.

In March 2025, the Anti Corruption Commission sued Saima, alleging abuse of power, fraud and forgery in securing the position of regional director at the World Health Organization's South-East Asia Regional Office.

She also faces allegations of coercing member banks of BAB into depositing Tk 33.05 crore into Shuchona Foundation accounts.

The Awami League government had declared March 17, 2020 to March 16, 2021 as Mujib Borsho (Mujib Year) to commemorate Bangabandhu's birth centenary.

As part of the year-long observance, Mujib Corners were established in many offices and numerous programmes were sponsored by banks.

According to the audit, Tk 173 crore was raised solely for Mujib Borsho celebrations, including Tk 75 crore spent on sports events and sponsorship of a film on Sheikh Mujib's life.

The forensic audit was conducted by chartered accountancy firm A Qasem & Co, commissioned by the new BAB board formed after Nazrul's tenure ended following Hasina's fall in August 2024 after the July uprising.

The audit aimed to identify discrepancies, possible fraud and misappropriation based on available records and responses from BAB and member banks.

The report relied on information provided by BAB and participating banks. Of 41 member banks, only 29 fully responded, while 12 did not submit data.

BAB's fundraising began on a limited scale in 2014 before expanding significantly.

Syed Mahbubur Rahman, managing

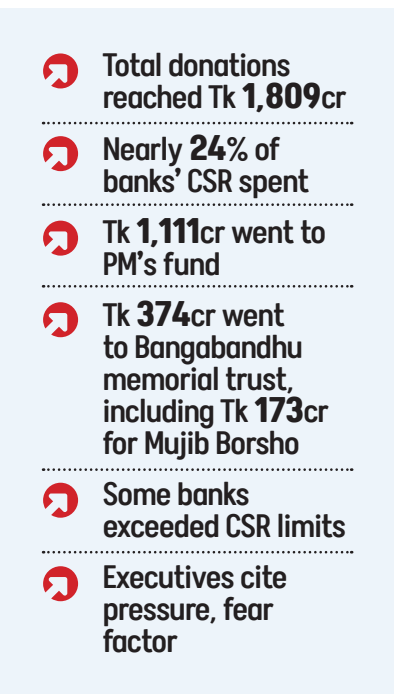
director and CEO of Mutual Trust Bank, said the banks had initially resisted contributing.

However, some executives later faced pressure, including threats from law enforcement and removal from their institutions.

"The then BAB chairman had personally followed up collections. If anyone failed to contribute, complaints would be made to higher government authorities," he said.

As a result, executives and board members often felt unable to reject requests. Some banks exceeded their CSR limits because of the pressure, he added.

"If we had not provided funds to prescribed sectors, we could have spent more on education and health. Now our bank runs a school because such requests have become optional," Mahbubur said.



He added that while banks still receive recommendation letters from BAB, contributions are no longer "mandatory".

Anis A Khan, former chairman of the Association of Banks, Bangladesh (ABB), said, "I have witnessed all of these with my own eyes, but we had no option but to comply."

He said banks had occasionally questioned repeated requests but encountered difficulties. "Paying such large amounts to a single fund reduces resources available for other CSR spending. In many cases, banks did not have sufficient profits to contribute."

Anis also said banks had no control over how donated funds were ultimately used.

Prof Mustafizur Rahman, distinguished fellow at the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), said CSR funds had at times been used politically and diverted from serving broader social goals.

He said the alternative use of such funds could have benefited marginalised people through education and healthcare, while limited

transparency and accountability created opportunities for misuse.

He recommended revisiting CSR rules and regulations to ensure better use and oversight.

OTHER FINDINGS

The auditors identified Tk 533 crore in questionable payments and expenditures over the decade, categorising them as ineligible due to being unrelated to business activities or unsupported because of missing documentation.

"These spending represent potential financial mismanagement," the report said.

Of this, around Tk 470 crore involved donations reported by member banks that could not be verified through available records.

The audit also identified Tk 24.8 crore in donations lacking supporting documents such as recipient acknowledgements or banking details.

Other findings included understatement of closing bank balances by Tk 14 lakh, cash donations worth Tk 99 lakh, and procurements worth Tk 76 lakh from non-existent suppliers or without competitive bidding.

The auditors further identified undocumented overtime payments, personal credit card use for business transactions, payments routed through employee accounts, multi-vendor payments through single cheques, irregular training and meeting expenses, unauthorised honorarium increases and potentially fabricated invoices.

They also found Tk 6.35 crore had been reallocated from originally stated purposes without approval.

In one instance, funds raised on the claim of supporting Palestinians were instead provided to a specialised school for autistic children.

In another case, Tk 1 crore was transferred through an account-payee cheque to a senior law enforcement official although the fundraising had cited support for the cultural affairs ministry.

Nazrul chaired BAB throughout the period under review. The founder of Nassa Group was arrested on October 2, 2024, from Dhaka's Gulshan area and later sent to jail in a case over the death of a protester in Jatrabari on August 5 during the 2024 uprising.

He also faces allegations of amassing Tk 781.31 crore in unexplained wealth and conducting trade-based money laundering worth Tk 16,000 crore.

Following the fall of the Awami League government, Bangladesh Bank restructured EXIM Bank's board, ending Nazrul's long influence there.

As Nazrul remains in jail, The Daily Star could not reach him for comment. Hasina fled to India after the uprising, while Saima currently lives abroad.

Abdul Hai Sarker, current BAB chairman, told The Daily Star, "Whatever happened in the past, we are not continuing it."

"If the government wants to take action against those involved in the past, it can do so. We are running BAB with full transparency and accountability," he added.

transparency and accountability created opportunities for misuse.

He recommended revisiting CSR rules and regulations to ensure better use and oversight.

OTHER FINDINGS

The auditors identified Tk 533 crore in questionable payments and expenditures over the decade, categorising them as ineligible due to being unrelated to business activities or unsupported because of missing documentation.

"These spending represent potential financial mismanagement," the report said.

Of this, around Tk 470 crore involved donations reported by member banks that could not be verified through available records.

The audit also identified Tk 24.8 crore in donations lacking supporting documents such as recipient acknowledgements or banking details.

Other findings included understatement of closing bank balances by Tk 14 lakh, cash donations worth Tk 99 lakh, and procurements worth Tk 76 lakh from non-existent suppliers or without competitive bidding.

The auditors further identified undocumented overtime payments, personal credit card use for business transactions, payments routed through employee accounts, multi-vendor payments through single cheques, irregular training and meeting expenses, unauthorised honorarium increases and potentially fabricated invoices.

They also found Tk 6.35 crore had been reallocated from originally stated purposes without approval.

In one instance, funds raised on the claim of supporting Palestinians were instead provided to a specialised school for autistic children.

In another case, Tk 1 crore was transferred through an account-payee cheque to a senior law enforcement official although the fundraising had cited support for the cultural affairs ministry.

Nazrul chaired BAB throughout the period under review. The founder of Nassa Group was arrested on October 2, 2024, from Dhaka's Gulshan area and later sent to jail in a case over the death of a protester in Jatrabari on August 5 during the 2024 uprising.

He also faces allegations of amassing Tk 781.31 crore in unexplained wealth and conducting trade-based money laundering worth Tk 16,000 crore.

Following the fall of the Awami League government, Bangladesh Bank restructured EXIM Bank's board, ending Nazrul's long influence there.

As Nazrul remains in jail, The Daily Star could not reach him for comment. Hasina fled to India after the uprising, while Saima currently lives abroad.

Abdul Hai Sarker, current BAB chairman, told The Daily Star, "Whatever happened in the past, we are not continuing it."

"If the government wants to take action against those involved in the past, it can do so. We are running BAB with full transparency and accountability," he added.

BSF takes back 21 stranded people

FROM PAGE 1

support border management and security operations.

According to a press release issued by Bangladesh Ansar yesterday, the deployment aims to strengthen border security, safeguard national sovereignty, and help prevent cross-border crimes.

It said Ansar-VDP personnel are operating alongside the BGB in Chapainawabganj, Naogaon, Joypurhat, Jashore, Jhenaidah, Satkhira, Thakurgaon, Dinajpur, Sylhet, Jamalpur, and Khagrachhari. Additional members have been kept on standby for rapid deployment if needed.

The developments came amid growing tensions over an increase in alleged push-in attempts by Indian authorities, ahead of the 57th director general-level talks between the BGB and BSF, which began in New Delhi yesterday.

The talks are expected to focus on Bangladesh's demand for an end to unilateral push-ins and extrajudicial border killings, among other longstanding issues straining relations between the two border forces.

According to BGB officials, BSF personnel removed 10 people from the zero line along the Barabari-Pradhanpara border in Panchagarh Sadar upazila around 2:40am yesterday after border security lights were switched off.

Lt Col Md Sirajul Islam, commanding officer of BGB-56 Battalion in Nilphamari, told The Daily Star that five men, two women, and three children had been stranded there since Friday morning after the BSF allegedly attempted to push them into Bangladesh.

BGB personnel blocked their entry, citing the absence of identity verification and any formal repatriation process.

The 10 people remained stranded on a narrow embankment in cropland along the zero line for nearly three days, enduring intense heat and

intermittent thunderstorms. Two rounds of meetings between the border forces of the two countries, at battalion and company commander levels, failed to resolve the issue.

In a similar incident, BSF personnel removed another 11 people – three men, four women, and four children – from near the zero line along the Mashalgaon border in Thakurgaon's Haripur upazila around 3:30am yesterday.

Lt Col Abdullah Al Moin Hasan, commanding officer of Dinajpur BGB-42 Battalion, said the group had been stranded near the border since early Saturday after another alleged push-in attempt by the BSF.

BGB officials said they prevented the group's entry, citing the same reasons.

According to BGB data, at least 2,303 people were pushed into Bangladesh between May 2025 and January this year. Among them were 126 Indian nationals and 38 Myanmar nationals.

Since early June alone, there have been around 20 push-in attempts involving several hundred people, including those stranded in no man's land.

SURVEILLANCE STRENGTHENED

The BGB-55 Battalion in Habiganj has introduced thermal drones for surveillance, intensified round-the-clock patrols, and launched awareness campaigns involving local residents to strengthen border security.

Lt Col Md Tanzilur Rahman, commanding officer of BGB-55 Battalion in Habiganj, said the battalion has issued the highest level of alert across the border area.

"Every inch of the border is being monitored with the involvement of local residents, village police, and Ansar-VDP members."

He added that thermal infrared drones are being used for nighttime surveillance, while community courtyard meetings have been expanded.

Tanzilur also said that although

reports of recent push in incidents have emerged from different parts of the country, no such infiltration has occurred through the Habiganj border so far.

"However, we remain on high alert."

On Saturday night, BGB personnel made public announcements in several border areas, urging residents to remain vigilant. They also held courtyard meetings, encouraging people to promptly inform the BGB of any suspicious individuals or activities. Local village police and Ansar-VDP members have been involved in these efforts.

Residents of the border area have welcomed the initiative.

STATE RESPONSE

Speaking to reporters at the foreign ministry yesterday, State Minister for Foreign Affairs Shama Obaed Islam said Bangladesh is strongly protesting India's reported push-in attempts and is not allowing such actions.

"There is a mechanism between Bangladesh and India, as there is between all countries, to verify nationality and repatriate individuals who have entered another country illegally," she said, adding that bypassing this process and pushing people across the border is unacceptable.

She said the foreign ministry has already sent 12 to 13 letters to New Delhi on the issue and continues to raise concerns whenever reports of push-ins emerge.

"We expect the Indian government to take the matter seriously and resolve it through the proper mechanism and diplomatic channels."

The state minister also said continued push-ins could negatively affect bilateral relations.

"If India continues to resort to push-ins instead of following the established process, it will not be good for us," she said, adding that resolving border issues through proper channels is key to advancing bilateral relations.

intermittent thunderstorms. Two rounds of meetings between the border forces of the two countries, at battalion and company commander levels, failed to resolve the issue.

In a similar incident, BSF personnel removed another 11 people – three men, four women, and four children – from near the zero line along the Mashalgaon border in Thakurgaon's Haripur upazila around 3:30am yesterday.

Lt Col Abdullah Al Moin Hasan, commanding officer of Dinajpur BGB-42 Battalion, said the group had been stranded near the border since early Saturday after another alleged push-in attempt by the BSF.

BGB officials said they prevented the group's entry, citing the same reasons.

According to BGB data, at least 2,303 people were pushed into Bangladesh between May 2025 and January this year. Among them were 126 Indian nationals and 38 Myanmar nationals.

Since early June alone, there have been around 20 push-in attempts involving several hundred people, including those stranded in no man's land.

SURVEILLANCE STRENGTHENED

The BGB-55 Battalion in Habiganj has introduced thermal drones for surveillance, intensified round-the-clock patrols, and launched awareness campaigns involving local residents to strengthen border security.

Lt Col Md Tanzilur Rahman, commanding officer of BGB-55 Battalion in Habiganj, said the battalion has issued the highest level of alert across the border area.

"Every inch of the border is being monitored with the involvement of local residents, village police, and Ansar-VDP members."

He added that thermal infrared drones are being used for nighttime surveillance, while community courtyard meetings have been expanded.

Tanzilur also said that although

intermittent thunderstorms. Two rounds of meetings between the border forces of the two countries, at battalion and company commander levels, failed to resolve the issue.

In a similar incident, BSF personnel removed another 11 people – three men, four women, and four children – from near the zero line along the Mashalgaon border in Thakurgaon's Haripur upazila around 3:30am yesterday.

Lt Col Abdullah Al Moin Hasan, commanding officer of Dinajpur BGB-42 Battalion, said the group had been stranded near the border since early Saturday after another alleged push-in attempt by the BSF.

BGB officials said they prevented the group's entry, citing the same reasons.

According to BGB data, at least 2,303 people were pushed into Bangladesh between May 2025 and January this year. Among them were 126 Indian nationals and 38 Myanmar nationals.

Since early June alone, there have been around 20 push-in attempts involving several hundred people, including those stranded in no man's land.

SURVEILLANCE STRENGTHENED

The BGB-55 Battalion in Habiganj has introduced thermal drones for surveillance, intensified round-the-clock patrols, and launched awareness campaigns involving local residents to strengthen border security.

Lt Col Md Tanzilur Rahman, commanding officer of BGB-55 Battalion in Habiganj, said the battalion has issued the highest level of alert across the border area.

"Every inch of the border is being monitored with the involvement of local residents, village police, and Ansar-VDP members."

He added that thermal infrared drones are being used for nighttime surveillance, while community courtyard meetings have been expanded.

Tanzilur also said that although

intermittent thunderstorms. Two rounds of meetings between the border forces of the two countries, at battalion and company commander levels, failed to resolve the issue.

In a similar incident, BSF personnel removed another 11 people – three men, four women, and four children – from near the zero line along the Mashalgaon border in Thakurgaon's Haripur upazila around 3:30am yesterday.

Lt Col Abdullah Al Moin Hasan, commanding officer of Dinajpur BGB-42 Battalion, said the group had been stranded near the border since early Saturday after another alleged push-in attempt by the BSF.

BGB officials said they prevented the group's entry, citing the same reasons.

According to BGB data, at least 2,303 people were pushed into Bangladesh between May 2025 and January this year. Among them were 126 Indian nationals and 38 Myanmar nationals.

Since early June alone, there have been around 20 push-in attempts involving several hundred people, including those stranded in no man's land.

SURVEILLANCE STRENGTHENED

The BGB-55 Battalion in Habiganj has introduced thermal drones for surveillance, intensified round-the-clock patrols, and launched awareness campaigns involving local residents to strengthen border security.

Lt Col Md Tanzilur Rahman, commanding officer of BGB-55 Battalion in Habiganj, said the battalion has issued the highest level of alert across the border area.

"Every inch of the border is being monitored with the involvement of local residents, village police, and Ansar-VDP members."

He added that thermal infrared drones are being used for nighttime surveillance, while community courtyard meetings have been expanded.

Tanzilur also said that although

Swechchhasebak Dal man stabbed to death

FROM PAGE 1

in Mouchak.

According to the deceased's nephew, Md Mobarak Hossain Akash, he was assaulted by several individuals near Anarkali Market earlier in the evening. Following the attack, he called his uncle, Billal, to help resolve the dispute.

An arbitration was subsequently held at the spot. During the meeting, Billal got into an argument with

Didarul Islam Babu, convener of Ramna thana Jubo Dal, and Lutfor, the unit's secretary, Akash alleged.

At one stage, Billal was stabbed in the chest by Babu's followers, allegedly acting under his directions, Akash said.

Critically injured, Billal was taken to DMCH, where doctors declared him dead around 9:15pm.

Assistant Commissioner of Police (Ramna Zone) Majharul Islam told

The Daily Star that police have already visited the scene and launched an investigation.

"We are collecting CCTV footage from the surrounding areas and examining the evidence to identify those involved," he said.

Meanwhile, Jubo Dal expelled Babu and dissolved its Ramna thana committee, according to a press release issued by the ruling BNP's youth wing following the incident.

Push-in bids will not be accepted

FROM PAGE 1

deputy director (media) of Border Guard Bangladesh, said the border force has resisted around 30 attempts to push people into Bangladesh by the BSF in recent weeks.

Meanwhile, West Bengal Chief Minister Suwendu Adhikari, speaking in the capital Kolkata on Sunday, said nearly 5,000 Bangladeshi citizens had been deported across the border, reports AFP.

"We have started the work of deporting Bangladeshi infiltrators who do not fall under the purview of the Citizenship Amendment Act," Adhikari said, saying the government had "established holding centres in all districts of the state" in May.

"From these centres, 4,800 Bangladeshi infiltrators have already been deported so far. Another 836 people are currently in the holding centres... we are making arrangements

to deport the 836 soon," Adhikari said.

There have been longstanding political tensions over immigration in the border state, and the deportation campaign comes after Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Hindu-nationalist party swept to power in West Bengal last month.

Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) won a sweeping victory in elections in the eastern border state of more than 100 million people, promising to "detect, delete and deport" illegal migrants.

India shares a long and porous border with Bangladesh, where migration has historically been driven by economic hardship and longstanding family links.

On taking power, the new West Bengal government ordered the establishment of detention centres for undocumented Bangladeshis and Rohingya refugees, a mainly Muslim

people who fled persecution in Myanmar.

Top Indian officials have referred to migrants as "termites" and "infiltrators".

Critics say the BJP's rhetoric and policies have added to the unease and marginalisation of India's more than 200 million Muslims, accusing the party of conflating religious identity with illegal migration.

Rights groups have previously accused India of also pushing hundreds of Bangalee Muslims into Bangladesh without due process.

Relations between India and Muslim-majority Bangladesh soured after a 2024 revolution in Dhaka ended the autocratic rule of then-prime minister Sheikh Hasina, an ally of New Delhi, who fled to India.

A new government in Dhaka was elected in February, and relations have since slowly improved.

Iran, Israel halt strikes on each other for now

FROM PAGE 1

proceeding, subject to ignorance or stupidity getting in its way." He added that a US blockade of Iranian ports would remain in place till a final deal was reached.

The Israeli premier, though, said in a televised statement he had told Trump that "Israel has a full right to self-defence, and we are exercising it as required".

In a sign that both sides expected the ceasefire to hold, Israel's education ministry announced that schools would reopen today, having closed because of the missile threat, while Iran's Civil Aviation Organisation said it was reopening the country's airspace.

Iran fired nearly 30 missiles at Israel

overnight, according to the Israeli military, and Israel responded by targeting military sites in the Islamic republic.

No casualties have been reported in either Israel or Iran after the exchange of fire.

Katz said Israel's armed forces "will continue to operate in Lebanon against the terrorist organisation Hezbollah."

"We categorically reject Iran's threats. Any Iranian attempt to link Lebanon and Iran and attack Israel will be met with great force, as happened yesterday," Katz said.

Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf, Iran's parliamentary speaker and chief negotiator, yesterday said the US is

"neither seeking a ceasefire nor seeking dialogue", and Iran should respond "decisively to defend the rights of the Iranian people".

Oil prices surged more than five per cent on worries that the war would resume, with hopes of a rapid end to the standoff that has seen shipments of the Gulf's oil and gas all but halted through the Strait of Hormuz now punctured.

The strikes also came at a critical moment for diplomatic efforts to end the conflict involving mediator Pakistan.

Iranian foreign ministry spokesman Esmail Baghaei yesterday warned at a press conference in Tehran that diplomacy was continuing but could be affected by the fighting.