

29 December | 2025

# Bangladesh Foreign Policy Watch

CGS Centre for Governance Studies



## A Bi-Weekly Roundup of Key Events

### 02 December

#### Bangladesh Secures 2.2 Lakh Tonnes of US Wheat

The government has approved the import of 2.20 lakh tonnes of wheat from the United States under a government-to-government deal to bolster food stocks and support social safety net programmes. The purchase, valued at Tk 842 crore at \$312.25 per tonne, brings total US wheat imports this fiscal year to 6.60 lakh tonnes. Nearly 2 lakh tonnes have already arrived. Officials said the move would also help safeguard Bangladesh's exports to the US and narrow the bilateral trade gap.

### 03 December

#### Bangladesh, China Launch Joint Cardiovascular Clinic

Bangladesh and China have launched their first joint cardiovascular disease clinic at the National

Institute of Cardiovascular Diseases in Dhaka under the Health Silk Road initiative. A medical team from Yunnan Fuwai Hospital is supporting the programme. Officials from both countries described the clinic as a milestone in bilateral health cooperation, aimed at improving medical technology, training and public health governance.

#### Bhutan Trials Transit Cargo Through Bangladesh

Bhutan has successfully completed its first trial shipment through Bangladesh, marking progress in regional connectivity. A container carrying consumer goods from Thailand was cleared at Chattogram port and transported via Burimari land port to Bhutan. The move follows the Bangladesh-Bhutan transit agreement, offering Bhutan an alternative sea route through Chattogram.

## 04 December

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### **UK Universities Restrict Applications from Bangladesh and Pakistan**

Several UK universities have suspended or restricted applications from Bangladesh and Pakistan amid rising student visa refusals and tighter Home Office compliance rules. Universities cited pressure after compliance thresholds were reduced to 5 percent. Bangladesh and Pakistan accounted for nearly half of recent visa rejections. Education advocates warned the measures could penalise genuine students.

### **Bangladesh Extends Support to Flood-Hit Sri Lanka**

Sri Lankan Prime Minister Harini Amarasuriya thanked Bangladesh for its support following devastating floods and cyclones during a phone call with Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus. Bangladesh reaffirmed its commitment to send emergency assistance and disaster-response experts, with both sides discussing further cooperation in disaster management.

### **India Pushes 30 More People into Bangladesh**

India's Border Security Force pushed 30 people into Bangladesh through the Meherpur border, the BGB said. The group included Rohingyas and Indian nationals detained earlier in India. Since May 7, more than 2,400 people have reportedly been pushed into Bangladesh, according to border officials.

### **Two Bangladeshi Youths Killed by BSF, Two Missing**

Two Bangladeshi youths were shot dead by India's Border Security Force in separate incidents in Lalmonirhat and Moulvibazar, while two others remain missing after a reported chase near the Chapainawabganj border. Bangladesh has protested the killings. Rights groups say at least 34 Bangladeshis have been killed by BSF since August 2024.

## 05 Dec

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### **Fourth US Wheat Shipment Arrives in Bangladesh**

Bangladesh received its fourth consignment of wheat from the United States, totalling 60,950 tonnes, at Chattogram Port under the government-to-government agreement G2G-01. The shipment, carried by MV Lowlands Patrasche,

brings the total wheat imported under the deal to 239,586 tonnes of the agreed 440,000 tonnes. Earlier consignments arrived on October 25, November 3, and November 15. The Food Ministry has begun sample testing of the latest shipment and will proceed with unloading once quality checks are completed, ensuring a steady supply under the Bangladesh-US wheat import programme.

### **Bangladesh Signs Trade MoU with China's Yunnan Province**

Bangladesh's Export Promotion Bureau has signed a memorandum of understanding with the Department of Commerce of China's Yunnan Province at the Mekong-Lancang Fruit Festival in Kunming, where Bangladeshi fruit exporters are participating for the first time. The MoU aims to expand market access and diversify exports by offering Bangladeshi enterprises rent-free bonded warehouses and exhibition space, digital marketplace access, logistics incentives, and faster customs clearance for perishable goods. The agreement underscores Bangladesh's efforts to explore new markets and strengthen trade ties with China, particularly in agricultural and processed food exports.

### **Bangladesh Envoy Calls for 'New Canvas' in Ties with India**

Bangladesh High Commissioner to India Muhammad Riaz Hamidullah said Dhaka is working to articulate a "new canvas" for India-Bangladesh relations based on a shared future, despite sensitive and divergent issues. Speaking in Kolkata, he described the relationship as organic and rooted in people-to-people ties, with bilateral economic engagement exceeding \$25 billion. Hamidullah cited growing trade, mobility, and logistics cooperation, noting a 12 percent rise in trade. Dhaka is still awaiting India's response on the repatriation of ousted prime minister Sheikh Hasina.

## 06 Dec

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### **Jaishankar Comments on Sheikh Hasina's Stay in India**

India's External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar said Sheikh Hasina's continued stay in India depends on the circumstances of her arrival in New Delhi last August, following the student protests that toppled her government. Speaking at the 23rd Hindustan Times Leadership Summit, he noted that the situation is influenced by the conditions under which she came and added that the

decision ultimately rests with her. Hasina fled Bangladesh on August 5, ending her 15-year rule. In November, Bangladesh's International Crimes Tribunal sentenced her and former home minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal to death for crimes against humanity. India emphasised its commitment to Bangladesh's peace and stability while engaging constructively with all stakeholders.

### **310 Bangladeshis Repatriated from Libya**

Another 310 Bangladeshi nationals were repatriated from Libya on Friday by a chartered flight. The operation was coordinated by the Bangladesh Embassy in Libya, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment, and the International Organization for Migration. Officials said most returnees had entered Libya with the help of human traffickers while attempting to reach Europe illegally. Many faced abuse, kidnapping, and detention. At the airport, officials and IOM representatives received them. IOM provided travel allowance, food, and basic medical support, while authorities urged awareness against irregular migration.

**07 Dec**

### **Yunus Seeks Deeper Ties with Azerbaijan**

Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus underscored the need to strengthen trade, energy, and economic cooperation between Bangladesh and Azerbaijan during a meeting with Leyla Aliyeva and Arzu Aliyeva, daughters of Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev, at State Guest House Jamuna. The visit marked their first trip to Bangladesh. Discussions focused on expanding cultural, environmental, and people-to-people exchanges. Leyla Aliyeva conveyed the president's greetings and urged closer environmental cooperation. Azerbaijan also signalled plans to open an embassy in Dhaka after the upcoming election.

### **Dialogue Calls to End Digital Violence Against Women in Politics**

The Royal Norwegian Embassy and the Embassy of Switzerland, along with UN Women, hosted a high-level dialogue in Dhaka titled Power Without Fear: Ending Digital and Gender-Based Violence Against Women in Politics under the 16 Days of Activism campaign. Held at the Norwegian Residence, the event brought together political leaders, young women, civil society members,

academics, journalists, and diplomats. Speakers highlighted how online harassment, misinformation, and intimidation are undermining women's political participation ahead of national elections. The ambassadors of Norway and Switzerland stressed the need for stronger protections, accountability, and safer digital spaces to ensure women can engage in politics without fear.

### **India Reaffirms Commitment to Bangladesh Ties**

Indian High Commissioner Pranay Verma said India seeks a stable, positive, and mutually beneficial relationship with Bangladesh based on equality and mutual respect, with people at the centre. He made the remarks while celebrating the 54th anniversary of Maitri Dibas at the Indian Cultural Centre in Dhaka, marking India's recognition of Bangladesh on December 6, 1971. Calling Maitri Dibas a historic milestone, Verma expressed optimism about deeper cooperation. The event featured theatre, dance, and music by Bangladeshi artistes, highlighting shared heritage and friendship.

### **BGB Arrests Two Indian Cattle Smugglers in Chapainawabganj**

Border Guard Bangladesh detained two Indian cattle smugglers, Abdul Qadir and Delwar Hossain, along with a Bangladeshi accomplice, Md Maruf, during a raid at the Manaksha border under Shibganj, Chapainawabganj. Acting on secret information, BGB intercepted the group after the Indians crossed from Malda district with four cows and coordinated with the local smuggler. Increased patrols forced them to hide in a Padma River char before being apprehended in Thuthapara. The detainees were handed over to Shibganj police. Lt Col Kazi Mustafizur Rahman emphasised BGB's ongoing vigilance against illegal infiltration and smuggling.

### **Bangladesh, Thailand Explore Maritime Trade Expansion**

Dhaka and Bangkok on Sunday discussed expanding bilateral trade and improving maritime transport links. Thai Ambassador Thitiporn Chirasawadi met Commerce Adviser Sk Bashir Uddin at the Bangladesh Secretariat to propose the first maritime trade route between Ranong Port and Chattogram Port and a potential free trade agreement. The route could cut shipping time from 14–15 days to 4–7 days. Adviser Bashir highlighted investment opportunities in Bangladesh's pharmaceuticals,



shrimp, furniture, and tourism sectors. Both sides stressed strengthening logistics connectivity to boost trade and investment. Additional Secretary Md Abdur Rahim Khan and the Thai Embassy's Minister Counsellor were also present.

## 08 Dec

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### **Bangladesh to Repatriate 47 Indian Fishermen**

Bangladesh is set to hand over 47 Indian fishermen, recently released from Bagerhat District Jail, to the Indian Coast Guard. Following a court order, the fishermen were transferred to the Bangladesh Coast Guard in the presence of officials from the Indian High Commission and local authorities. Detained for illegally fishing in Bangladeshi waters, they were arrested during routine naval patrols. The exchange is expected to coincide with the return of Bangladeshi fishermen held in India. One Indian fisherman, Babul Das, died of illness in custody in November, and his body was later returned under official supervision.

### **Denmark Strengthens Bangladesh Dairy Cooperation**

A delegation from Denmark's veterinary and food administration has visited Bangladesh to strengthen cooperation on food safety across the dairy value chain. Organised by the Bangladesh Safe Food Authority, the visit covered livestock management, milk processing, and preservation practices. The delegation inspected a milk chilling centre in Tangail, reviewed cold chain systems, and examined equipment from Danish-supported projects dating back to the 1970s. Both countries reaffirmed their commitment to improving food safety governance, productivity, and sustainability in the dairy sector.

### **Bangladesh, Maldives Explore Youth Collaboration MoU**

Bangladesh and the Maldives have discussed a possible memorandum of understanding to deepen cooperation in youth empowerment, arts, and information exchange. During talks in Malé, Bangladesh High Commissioner Md Nazmul Islam and Maldivian Youth, Information and Arts Minister Ibrahim Waheed explored joint initiatives, including cultural exhibitions, film festivals, media

exchanges, and digital empowerment programmes. Bangladesh proposed formalising cooperation through an MoU, while the Maldivian side expressed interest in developing practical, youth-focused programmes.

## 09 Dec

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### **US Deports 31 Bangladeshis Amid Migrant Crackdown**

The United States deported 31 Bangladeshi nationals to Dhaka on Monday amid intensified immigration enforcement. The returnees arrived at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport on a US military flight after a nearly 60-hour journey, during which they were reportedly restrained. Most were from Noakhali, with others from Sylhet, Feni, Shariatpur, and Cumilla. Several had travelled legally to Brazil before attempting irregular entry into the US. Brac provided immediate assistance, while rights advocates raised concerns over the treatment of deportees and called for greater accountability of recruitment agencies.

## 10 Dec

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### **Bangladesh, Italy Partner on Satellite and Earth Observation**

Bangladesh Satellite Company Limited has signed a memorandum of understanding with Italy's Thales Alenia Space to strengthen national capabilities in Earth Observation systems and satellite data use. Witnessed by senior officials from both countries, the partnership will focus on capacity building, training, academic collaboration, and cyber security. The initiative aims to support disaster management, climate monitoring, agriculture, urban planning, and land administration, marking a long-term collaboration in advanced space technologies.

### **Bangladesh, India Conduct Fishermen Repatriation Swap**

Bangladesh and India carried out a reciprocal repatriation of fishermen along the Bay of Bengal's International Maritime Boundary Line. Under the coordinated operation, 32 Bangladeshi fishermen detained in India and 47 Indian fishermen held in Bangladesh were returned to their respective countries. Fishing vessels from both sides were also exchanged. Authorities said the process involved multiple ministries and agencies, with additional Bangladeshi fishermen detained in India's Meghalaya state expected to be repatriated

separately via a land port.

## 11 Dec

### Canada Honours Bangladeshi Human Rights Defenders

The High Commission of Canada in Bangladesh recognised Kalpona Akter and Rani Yan Yan for their outstanding contributions to human rights. Akter, founder of the Bangladesh Centre for Worker Solidarity, was honoured for her work in advancing labour rights, while Yan Yan, adviser to the Chakma Circle, was recognised for advocating Indigenous and women's rights in the Chittagong Hill Tracts. The ceremony, held at the High Commissioner's residence to mark International Human Rights Day, highlighted their leadership, advocacy, and partnership-building efforts. Both have received international recognition for their work, including awards from the US State Department and the United States Institute of Peace.

### Bangladesh, Italy Sign LOI for Eurofighter Typhoon

The Bangladesh Air Force and Italian defence firm Leonardo S.p.A. signed a letter of intent on to procure Eurofighter Typhoon fighter jets. The signing took place at Air Force Headquarters, with Chief of Air Staff Air Chief Marshal Hasan Mahmood Khan and Italian Ambassador Antonio Alessandro in attendance, along with the Principal Staff Officer of the Armed Forces Division and Italian representatives. The agreement marks a step towards modernising the Air Force's frontline fleet with advanced multi-role combat aircraft.

### Bangladesh, Mongolia Sign Diplomatic Visa Waiver

Bangladesh and Mongolia signed a mutual visa waiver agreement for holders of diplomatic and official passports. Signed at the home ministry in Dhaka by Senior Secretary Nasimul Ghani and Mongolian non-resident ambassador Ganbolt Tambazao, the agreement allows eligible passport holders to enter, exit, and transit through the other country visa-free for up to 30 days. The deal, effective indefinitely unless terminated with 90 days' notice, aims to strengthen diplomatic and economic ties. Mongolia indicated interest in extending visa waivers to the general public in the future. Bangladesh now has 34 visa exemption agreements in place.

## 12 Dec

### JICA Eyes Investment in Bangladesh Higher Education

The Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) has expressed interest in investing in Bangladesh's higher education sector, planning a five-year project from 2028 to enhance science and technology education at leading universities. The proposal was conveyed during a courtesy call on University Grants Commission Chairman Professor SMA Faiz. The eight-member JICA delegation, led by Deputy Director General Daisuke Ueda, met with UGC members and officials. If implemented, the project will directly link Bangladeshi universities with Japan's top research and technology institutions, fostering collaboration and strengthening academic and research capacities.

## 13 Dec

### Iran Seizes Oil Tanker in Gulf of Oman

Iran has seized an oil tanker carrying six million litres of contraband diesel in the Gulf of Oman, Iranian media reported. The vessel, with 18 crew members from India, Sri Lanka, and Bangladesh, had its navigation systems disabled. The interception follows Iran's regular enforcement actions against illegal fuel transport, driven by the country's low domestic fuel prices. The seizure comes two days after the United States impounded a tanker near Venezuela allegedly transporting oil linked to Iran, highlighting ongoing tensions and scrutiny over regional fuel shipments.

### Bangladesh Cadet Wins Dual Honours at Sandhurst

Bangladesh Army officer cadet Sakib Ahsan Rifat has become the first Bangladeshi to receive both the International Sword of Honour and the International Award simultaneously at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst, UK. Selected from nearly 200 cadets from 40 countries, Rifat was recognised as the best-performing international cadet for outstanding military performance and ranked third overall in combined academic and military results. Princess Anne conferred the awards during the passing-out ceremony. Rifat trained at RMAS from November 2024 to December 2025 after excelling at Comilla Cadet College and the Bangladesh Military Academy, reflecting exceptional merit and dedication.

## **Bangladeshi Peacekeepers Killed in Sudan Attack**

Six Bangladeshi Army peacekeepers were killed and eight others injured in a terrorist attack on a UN base in Abyei, Sudan, according to the Inter Services Public Relations. Abyei, an oil-rich and disputed region on the Sudan–South Sudan border, remains volatile, with UN peacekeepers maintaining fragile stability amid ethnic tensions. Bangladesh, the third-largest contributor of UN peacekeepers, has over 5,600 personnel deployed in conflict zones including Abyei, the Central African Republic, the DR Congo, Lebanon, South Sudan, and Western Sahara. The incident underscores the risks faced by Bangladeshi peacekeepers and their vital global role.

**14 Dec**

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## **Bangladesh Condemns Drone Attack on UN Peacekeepers in Sudan**

Bangladesh has strongly condemned a deadly drone attack targeting its peacekeepers serving under the United Nations mission in Abyei, Sudan, which killed six soldiers and injured eight others. In a statement, the foreign ministry expressed deep condolences to the families of the deceased and prayed for the recovery of the wounded. It requested the UN to ensure the best possible medical treatment for the injured and said Bangladesh's Permanent Mission in New York is coordinating closely with UN authorities to provide full support to the contingent.

## **Indian High Commissioner Recalls 1971 Legacy, Stresses Dhaka-Delhi Ties**

Indian High Commissioner to Bangladesh Pranay Verma highlighted the enduring friendship between the two countries, rooted in the shared sacrifices of the 1971 Liberation War. Speaking at a programme organised by Itihash O Oitijjo Parishad, he paid tribute to Bangladesh's martyrs and underscored the importance of passing on the values of courage, freedom, and historical memory to future generations. He also emphasised close economic and social ties and the significance of commemorating milestones such as Maitri Dibas.

## **UN Chief Condoles Bangladesh Over Peacekeepers' Deaths**

UN Secretary-General António Guterres called Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus to express condolences over the deaths of six Bangladeshi peacekeepers in a drone attack in Abyei.

He conveyed solidarity with Bangladesh and asked that his condolences be passed on to the bereaved families. Professor Yunus urged the UN to ensure proper medical care for the injured and the swift repatriation of the bodies. They also discussed Bangladesh's upcoming general elections, with Yunus reiterating his commitment to a free and fair poll on February 12.

## **Bangladesh Summons Indian Envoy Over Hasina's Statements**

Bangladesh's foreign ministry has summoned Indian High Commissioner Pranay Verma to express concern over statements made by former prime minister Sheikh Hasina from India, which Dhaka claims could incite violence. The interim government urged India to prevent activities it said could undermine the February 12, 2026 elections and called for cooperation on extradition. India rejected the allegations, reiterating its support for free and peaceful elections in Bangladesh and denying that its territory is being used for anti-Bangladesh activities.

## **US Embassy Launches Money Laundering Bench Book**

The US Embassy in Dhaka, in collaboration with the Supreme Court of Bangladesh and the Ministry of Law, has launched the Money Laundering Bench Book to strengthen judicial handling of financial crimes. Developed with support from the US Department of State and the US Department of Justice, the guide provides practical tools for judges, prosecutors, and investigators. The embassy said the initiative aims to improve enforcement of anti-money laundering laws, protect financial integrity, and support sustainable economic growth.

**15 Dec**

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## **US Embassy Issues Security Alert Ahead of Bangladesh Elections**

The US Embassy in Dhaka has issued a security alert advising American citizens to remain vigilant ahead of Bangladesh's upcoming elections. The embassy warned that demonstrations intended to be peaceful could escalate into violence as the February 12, 2026 parliamentary election and national referendum approach. In a notice posted on its verified Facebook page, the embassy urged citizens to avoid large gatherings, monitor local media, and exercise caution amid heightened political activity.



**16 Dec**

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## **Indian and Bangladeshi Veterans Exchange Visits for Victory Day**

Veterans and serving officers from India and Bangladesh exchanged visits to mark Victory Day and Bijay Dibas, commemorating the shared sacrifices of the 1971 Liberation War. An Indian delegation of eight war veterans and two serving officers arrived in Dhaka on December 14, while a Bangladeshi delegation comprising eight freedom fighters and two officers visited Kolkata. The visits include meetings with veterans and senior military officials from both countries, reinforcing defence ties and the historic friendship between the two neighbours.

**17 Dec**

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## **EU Garment Imports Fall as Bangladesh Sees Sharp October Decline**

Garment exports from Bangladesh and other major suppliers to the European Union declined sharply in October 2025 amid weak consumer demand, according to Eurostat. Bangladesh's exports fell 19.67 percent year-on-year to 1.4 billion euros, while overall EU apparel imports dropped 14.55 percent. Despite the monthly decline, Bangladesh's exports to the EU rose 9.45 percent to 16.67 billion euros during January–October. Exporters cited inflation, sluggish demand, and rising competition from China and India as key pressures.

## **EU to Deploy Up to 200 Election Observers in Bangladesh**

The European Union will deploy between 175 and 200 observers to monitor Bangladesh's 13th parliamentary elections, Election Commission senior secretary Akhtar Ahmed said. A tripartite agreement has been signed to facilitate logistics and movement, with observers required to follow local protocols, particularly in the Chittagong Hill Tracts. The commission said preparations with the foreign ministry are complete and that enhanced candidate security will not conflict with the election code of conduct.

## **India Summons Bangladesh Envoy Amid Security Concerns**

India summoned Bangladesh High Commissioner Riaz Hamidullah to convey concerns over security threats allegedly linked to extremist elements and the safety of Indian interests in Dhaka. Indian officials cited a deteriorating security environment and said Bangladesh had not provided evidence

regarding recent incidents. The Indian Visa Application Centre in Dhaka closed early due to security concerns. Bangladesh, meanwhile, reiterated its call for India to prevent fugitive leaders from engaging in activities it says could disrupt the upcoming elections.

**18 Dec**

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## **Bangladeshi Peacekeepers' Injury Toll Rises in Sudan Drone Attack**

The number of Bangladeshi peacekeepers injured in a drone attack in Sudan has risen to nine, according to the Inter-Services Public Relations. Another soldier was wounded following the December 13 strike on a UN mission camp in Abyei. The injured are being treated in Nairobi and are reportedly out of danger. The bodies of six peacekeepers killed in the attack will be repatriated to Dhaka on December 20, where state honours will be accorded.

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## **Protesters Demand Extradition of Fugitive Sheikh Hasina**

Thousands of demonstrators, many linked to the July uprising, marched in Dhaka demanding the extradition of former prime minister Sheikh Hasina and others accused of crimes during the 2024 unrest. Police halted the procession near Uttar Badda, and the protest ended peacefully. Heightened security led to the early closure of the Indian Visa Application Centre. Protesters criticised what they described as foreign interference and vowed continued resistance, while the government reiterated its commitment to holding free and fair elections on February 12, 2026.

28 Dec

## Pakistan Envoy Meets Chief Adviser to Deepen Bilateral Ties



Pakistan's High Commissioner to Bangladesh, Imran Haider, paid a courtesy call on Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus in Dhaka. Discussions focused on expanding cooperation in trade, investment, and aviation, alongside strengthening cultural, educational, and medical exchanges. Mr Haider noted a 20 percent increase in bilateral trade, while Professor Yunus emphasised deeper people-to-people engagement and the need to explore new investment opportunities.

### **Contributors**

**Nuzhat Tabassum**

Program Assistant at Center for Governance Studies (CGS)  
nuzhat@cgs-bd.com

**Bahauddin Ahmed**

Digital Coordinator at Centre for Governance Studies (CGS)  
bahauddin@cgs-bd.com

**Tanzila Hosain Tonny**

Research Intern at Center for Governance Studies (CGS)  
tanzila@cgs-bd.com