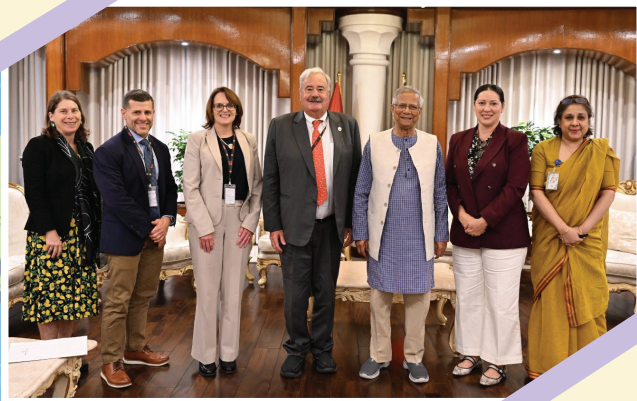


03 November | 2025

# Bangladesh Foreign Policy Watch

CGS Centre for Governance Studies



## A Bi-Weekly Roundup of Key Events

20 October

### German ambassador meets Mahfuj Alam

German Ambassador to Bangladesh Ruediger Lotz met Information and Broadcasting Adviser Md Mahfuj Alam at the Secretariat in Dhaka. During the meeting, Alam affirmed the government's commitment to holding national elections in early February 2026, emphasising there is no uncertainty regarding the timeline. He also stated that media in Bangladesh operates independently without government interference. Ambassador Lotz expressed interest in enhancing economic and trade ties between Germany and Bangladesh, and discussed expanding educational opportunities for Bangladeshi students in German universities. The meeting was also attended by Sharnila Nuzhat Kabir, Political and Press Officer at the German Embassy.

### Canada reaffirms support for democracy

Canada reaffirmed its strong support for Bangladesh's democratic transition, commending the signing of the July National Charter as a pivotal moment in the country's political evolution. Canadian High Commissioner Ajit Singh emphasised the importance of free, fair, inclusive and participatory elections, noting that the Charter outlines essential democratic reforms. The signing, witnessed by diplomats and political leaders, was hailed as a symbol of unity and a commitment to transparent governance. Chief

Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus expressed optimism for a harmonious and festive national election in February 2026. Canada's continued engagement reflects its longstanding partnership with Bangladesh across governance, education, gender equality and human-rights sectors.

## Bangladesh, Kuwait to boost defence and labour ties

Bangladesh and Kuwait held their inaugural Political Consultation in Dhaka, agreeing to enhance cooperation in political, economic, defence, labour and cultural sectors. The two sides reviewed Bangladesh's contributions to Operation Kuwait Punargathan and pledged to expand collaboration in training, disaster response and cybersecurity. They discussed boosting trade and investment, particularly in energy, infrastructure, ICT and halal food, and finalising a labour memorandum of understanding aligned with Kuwait Vision 2035.

Plans were made for biennial consultations, a Bangladesh–Kuwait Business Forum in 2026 and further cooperation in renewable energy, climate-resilient infrastructure, aviation and multilateral humanitarian efforts, including the Rohingya response.

## China supports Mongla Port plan

During a bilateral meeting in Shanghai, China committed to supporting the transformation of Bangladesh's Mongla Port into a regional hub by enhancing its capacity and infrastructure. Bangladesh's Shipping Ministry

Adviser Brigadier General (Retd) M Sakhawat Hussain and Chinese Transport Minister Liu Wei discussed ongoing port modernisation, including collaboration with China's Exim Bank and the Port of Yantai. Both sides highlighted joint efforts in port management, maritime training through Guangzhou Maritime University and employment opportunities for Bangladeshi seafarers in China. The Chinese minister reaffirmed China's role as a key development partner, building on Bangladesh's early endorsement of the Belt and Road Initiative.

## Fourteen Indian fishermen detained

The Bangladesh Coast Guard detained 14 Indian fishermen for illegally entering Bangladeshi waters near the Sundarbans and engaging in unauthorised fishing. The fishermen were apprehended along with their trawler and handed over to the Mongla police station. Authorities stated that the group had crossed the maritime boundary without permission and violated local fishing

regulations. Legal proceedings are underway, and the incident underscores ongoing concerns about cross-border maritime violations and resource protection in the ecologically sensitive Sundarbans region.

## BIDA chief leads strategic mission to South Korea

From 20 – 24 October 2025, a high-level Bangladeshi delegation led by BIDA Executive Chairman Chowdhury Ashik Mahmud Bin Harun visited South Korea to attract foreign direct investment and strengthen institutional ties.

Supported by the IFC, the mission included officials from BEZA, BEPZA and NBR, and held government-to-business meetings with major Korean firms in electronics, shipbuilding, textiles and power sectors. A key event was the "Gateway to Growth: Invest in Bangladesh" seminar in Seoul, co-hosted by BIDA and the Bangladesh Embassy, highlighting Bangladesh's investment potential. The delegation also discussed the Korea–Bangladesh Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement and trade issues with MOTIE.

## 21 October

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## IRI delegation confirms election observers

The US-based International Republican Institute (IRI) confirmed to Bangladesh's Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus that it will deploy at least 10 international observers for the February 2026 national elections. During a meeting at the State Guest House Jamuna, IRI Board Member Christopher J. Fussner emphasised that robust observation could help reduce electoral violence.

The delegation, including experts from IRI, CNAS and NDI, is assessing the pre-election environment and engaging with political parties. Concerns about disinformation and AI misuse were raised, with Yunus reaffirming Bangladesh's commitment to a peaceful, inclusive election and praising the enthusiasm of youth voters.

## Bangladesh cancels one Indian deal

Bangladesh's Foreign Affairs Adviser Md Touhid Hossain announced the cancellation of a

tugboat procurement deal with India, deemed unbeneficial to Bangladesh. The cancellation was mutually agreed with New Delhi.

Several other Indian-funded projects, including the Adani power agreement under India's Line of Credit, are under review due to concerns over their feasibility and benefits. Touhid also addressed Bangladesh's request for the extradition of former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, with no update from India. Regarding the killing of three Bangladeshi nationals in Tripura, he rejected India's narrative and called for justice under both countries' laws.

## 22 October

### Bangladesh to import rice from the UAE and Myanmar

Bangladesh's advisory council committee on government purchase has approved the import of 100,000 tonnes of rice from the United Arab Emirates and Myanmar, totalling approximately Tk 721.49 crore. The Myanmar Rice Federation will supply 50,000 tonnes of non-boiled rice under a government-to-government deal, while M/S Credent One FZCO of the UAE will provide 50,000 tonnes of parboiled non-basmati rice via open tender.

These imports are part of a broader plan to bring in 900,000 tonnes of rice in FY 2025–26 to stabilise domestic prices and build buffer stocks. Additionally, the committee sanctioned the import of 1.05 crore tonnes of fertiliser from Saudi Arabia, Morocco and Russia to support agricultural needs.

### ILO and Bangladesh to boost decent work and investment climate

Newly appointed ILO Country Director Max Tuñón has reaffirmed the organisation's commitment to promoting decent work, social justice and sustainable investment in Bangladesh. After presenting his credentials to Foreign Affairs Adviser Md Touhid Hossain, Tuñón emphasised the urgency of inclusive economic growth, especially as two million young people enter the labour market annually. He highlighted the ILO's ongoing support for labour law reforms, occupational safety and skills development, aiming to enhance

employability and entrepreneurship.

Drawing on his experience in labour reform across Asia and the Middle East, Tuñón pledged to work closely with the government and social partners through the Decent Work Country Programmes to ensure fair and dignified employment opportunities.

### Nepal seeks stronger trade and energy ties

The Nepalese Ambassador to Bangladesh, Ghanashyam Bhandari, has called for deeper bilateral cooperation in trade, investment, energy, education, tourism and LDC graduation. Speaking at Daffodil International University in Dhaka, he emphasised the historic friendship and evolving partnership between the two nations, advocating for stronger economic and educational linkages to unlock their full potential. Bhandari also highlighted Nepal's foreign-policy priorities and the importance of regional frameworks like SAARC, BIMSTEC and BBIN for shared prosperity. During his visit, he engaged with students and faculty in a dialogue on regional cooperation and explored academic collaboration opportunities, including faculty and student exchanges.

### German envoy meets Bangladesh chief



Newly appointed German Ambassador to Bangladesh, Rudiger Lotz, paid a courtesy visit to Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus at the State Guest House Jamuna in Dhaka. During the meeting, both parties expressed optimism about strengthening bilateral ties, with Lotz voicing support for the interim government and its electoral preparations for February 2026.

He praised the July National Charter and the inclusive political dialogue it fostered. Discussions also touched on rising interest among Bangladeshi students in studying in

Germany, the Rohingya crisis and Germany's role as Bangladesh's largest European trade partner. Professor Yunus emphasised youth empowerment and cautioned against disinformation ahead of the election.

## 23 October

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### Indian fishermen intrude into Bangladeshi waters

Fisheries and Livestock Adviser Farida Akhter reported that Indian fishermen violated Bangladesh's 22-day hilsa fishing ban in the Bay of Bengal, intended to protect the species during spawning. Speaking at a workshop in Savar, Akhter explained that the ban aligns with lunar cycles around the full and new moons in the Bengali month of Ashwin, rather than fixed calendar dates.

She emphasised the importance of hilsa conservation, noting that the Coast Guard has been instructed to act against illegal fishing. Akhter highlighted that Bangladesh's approach is based on scientific research and community input, despite differing schedules in neighbouring countries.

### Yunus hails ILO labour convention ratifications

Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus hailed the ratification of three key International Labour Organisation (ILO) conventions as a landmark moment for labour rights in Bangladesh. Speaking at the signing ceremony in Dhaka, he emphasised that this step marks a long-awaited fulfilment of promises made after the 2013 Rana Plaza disaster. The ratified conventions—Nos. 155, 187 and, 190—cover occupational safety, health frameworks and protections against violence and harassment. Yunus stressed that while signing the documents is significant, the real challenge lies in sincere implementation and public awareness. He credited persistent advocacy and institutional collaboration for reaching this milestone, framing it as a moral responsibility to honour the sacrifices of past victims.

### China eyes import of Bangladeshi fruits

Chinese Ambassador to Bangladesh Yao Wen announced that China is working to open its market for Bangladeshi jackfruit and guava, following the successful export of fresh mangoes. Speaking at the Bangladesh–China Green Textile Expo 2025 in Dhaka, he highlighted the growing trade and investment ties, noting that China has been Bangladesh's top trading partner for 15 years, with bilateral trade exceeding US\$24 billion.

Over 20 Chinese firms have signed nearly US\$800 million in investment deals since August 2024. China has also granted zero-tariff access to all Bangladeshi taxable products until 2028, reinforcing its commitment to shared prosperity and green transformation.

### Bangladesh and Korea boost investment ties

Bangladesh and South Korea are progressing towards a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) to strengthen bilateral trade and investment. In a high-level meeting in Seoul, BIDA Executive Chairman Chowdhury Ashik Mahmud Bin Harun and South Korean Trade Minister Yeo Han-koo emphasised the need to finalise CEPA before Bangladesh graduates from LDC status.

The agreement aims to attract diversified Korean investments in sectors such as electronics, mobility, renewable energy, textiles and infrastructure. BIDA is addressing investor concerns on customs, remittance and taxation through a 32-point reform agenda. South Korea, Bangladesh's fifth-largest investor, views CEPA as a strategic tool to boost Bangladesh's manufacturing and services sector.

## 23 October

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### Pakistan envoy meets foreign adviser

Pakistan High Commissioner Imran Haider made his first courtesy call on Bangladesh's Foreign Affairs Adviser Md Touhid Hossain at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Dhaka. Both sides expressed appreciation for recent high-level engagements, including the August 2025 visit of Pakistan's Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister and the 6th Foreign Secretary-level Bilateral Consultations held in April.



They welcomed the upcoming 9th Joint Economic Commission meeting scheduled for 27 October, marking a revival of institutional dialogue. Discussions also covered progress in visa facilitation and air connectivity, with both parties reaffirming their commitment to strengthening cooperation across multiple sectors.

### **Dhaka denounces Israeli West Bank claim**

Bangladesh has condemned Israel's recent legislative move to impose "sovereignty" over the occupied West Bank, deeming it a violation of international law and UN Security Council Resolution 2334. In a formal statement, Bangladesh reaffirmed that Israel holds no legitimate claim over any part of the occupied Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem.

Dhaka welcomed the International Court of Justice's Advisory Opinion issued on 22 October 2025, which condemned Israel's actions under international humanitarian law, including the use of starvation as a weapon of war. Bangladesh reiterated its steadfast support for Palestinian self-determination and a sovereign state based on pre-1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital.

### **Dhaka denounces Israeli West Bank claim**

On the occasion of United Nations Day 2025, Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus emphasised the urgent need for the UN to evolve and adapt to meet global aspirations for peace and multilateralism. Marking the organisation's 80th anniversary, he reaffirmed Bangladesh's commitment to the UN Charter and its active role in peacekeeping, sustainable development and human rights.

Yunus highlighted the strain on multilateral diplomacy due to rising unilateralism and

global conflicts, including the crisis in Gaza and the persecution of the Rohingyas. He called for renewed global solidarity, especially from the Global South, to uphold a rules-based international order and ensure a world free from fear and want.

## **25 October**

### **US wheat shipment reaches Chattogram Port**

Bangladesh has officially commenced wheat imports from the United States under a memorandum of understanding between the Directorate General of Food and the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The first shipment, totalling 56,959 metric tonnes aboard the MV Norse Stride, arrived at the outer anchorage of Chittagong Port.

Of this, 34,170 metric tonnes will be unloaded at Chittagong, while the remaining 22,789 metric tonnes are designated for Mongla Port. This shipment is part of a broader agreement to import 440,000 metric tonnes of wheat, with sample testing already completed to facilitate prompt unloading.

### **IMF praises Bangladesh's reserve growth**

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has praised Bangladesh for successfully building its foreign exchange reserves, a key goal of the IMF-supported programme addressing balance-of-payments challenges. Thomas Helbling, Deputy Director of the IMF's Asia and Pacific Department, highlighted that this reserve accumulation is vital for reducing external vulnerabilities.

As of 16 October, Bangladesh's reserves reached US\$27.35 billion, up from US\$19.93 billion a year earlier, driven by higher inflows and central bank market interventions. An IMF mission is set to visit Bangladesh this month for the fifth review of the US\$5.5 billion loan programme, including an assessment of exchange-rate policy alignment.

### **International experts join HSIA investigation**

Experts from England, Australia, Turkey and China have been invited to investigate the

recent fire at the import section of the Cargo Village at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport (HSIA), according to Home Affairs Adviser Lt Gen (Rtd.) Jahangir Alam Chowdhury.

Speaking at a press conference, he clarified that the airport's fire service responded promptly, with units arriving within four minutes, though delays in backup support may have contributed to the fire's spread. The presence of chemicals in the warehouse further complicated firefighting efforts, which lasted nearly 27 hours. The adviser also mentioned ongoing discussions to reduce passport fees for remittance workers.

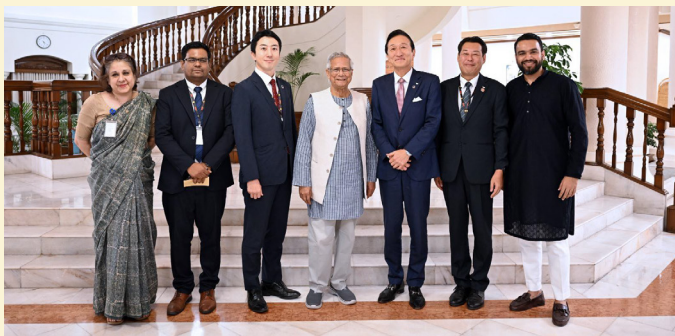
## 26 October

### Pakistan military chief meets CA Yunus

General Sahir Shamshad Mirza, Chairman of Pakistan's Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee, visited Bangladesh's Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus at the State Guest House amuna in Dhaka. The meeting focused on strengthening Bangladesh–Pakistan bilateral relations, particularly in trade, investment and defence cooperation.

General Mirza highlighted shared historical and cultural ties and Pakistan's interest in expanding connectivity through the operational Karachi–Chattogram shipping route and the upcoming Dhaka–Karachi air link. The discussion also covered regional stability, with both leaders stressing the need to address misinformation and social-media misuse by non-state actors. National Security Adviser Dr Khalilur Rahman and Pakistan High Commissioner Imran Haider attended.

### Japan establishes school for drivers



Japanese entrepreneur and politician Miki Watanabe has announced plans to establish a driving school in Bangladesh to recruit skilled drivers for Japan, addressing high demand in

his home country. During a meeting with Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus in Dhaka, Watanabe revealed plans to acquire a 12,000-square-metre site near the capital. This initiative is part of a broader agreement to recruit 100,000 Bangladeshi workers over five years. Watanabe has already set up a language-training academy in Narsingdi, successfully placing 52 workers in Japan's construction and agriculture sectors. Yunus encouraged expanding training to caregiving, nursing and farming.

## 27 October

### Bangladeshi youth shot dead at the border

Shakil Ahmed, a 25-year-old Bangladeshi youth, was shot dead by Indian nationals near the Kanaighat border in Sylhet while allegedly attempting to smuggle betel nuts across the border. Local reports indicate Shakil and four others crossed into Indian territory when members of the Khasi community opened fire, critically injuring him. He was brought back to Bangladesh but died en route to a health complex. Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) officials stated Shakil died about 500 metres inside Indian territory. The BGB is preparing a formal complaint to Indian authorities. This incident adds to a recent surge in border violence, including killings in Tripura.

### Bangladesh and Pakistan hold JEC talks

After a 20-year hiatus, Bangladesh and Pakistan are holding a Joint Economic Commission (JEC) meeting in Dhaka, led by Bangladesh's interim finance adviser Salehuddin Ahmed and Pakistan's petroleum minister Ali Pervaiz Malik. The session, taking place at the National Economic Council conference room, is expected to result in several memoranda of understanding across sectors such as agricultural research, IT, shipping and food.

This renewed engagement follows a commerce-level meeting in August after the Awami League regime change. Despite the JEC's dormancy since 2005, private-sector trade has persisted, though the balance remains unfavourable to Bangladesh—with imports from Pakistan far exceeding exports. Both countries have recently eased visa processes to facilitate business ties.

## Japan plans to recruit 100,000 workers

A Japanese delegation, representing over 65 companies, met Professor Muhammad Yunus in Dhaka to discuss recruiting 100,000 skilled Bangladeshi workers over five years. Under a memorandum of intent, recruitment will begin with 2,000 workers in 2026, scaling up to 18,000 by 2028.

Key sectors include construction, service, aviation, garments and agriculture, with additional demand in driving, automotive and recycling. Two training centres in Khulna and Gazipur are operational, but language proficiency remains a challenge. Yunus proposed virtual and in-person training by Japanese instructors, emphasising the potential of Bangladeshi women in caregiving. Bangladesh is monitoring the recruitment process closely.

## Stray bullet from Myanmar alarms Teknaf

A stray bullet fired from across the Myanmar border pierced the tin roof of a house in Teknaf's Whykong union, triggering panic among residents. The incident occurred around 8:00 am at Ayub Islam's home in Amtali village, located roughly 2.5 kilometres from the border. Family members reported hearing gunfire before discovering the bullet lodged in an inner wall.

A similar incident the previous day injured a woman when a bullet struck a computer shop in the Techchi Bridge area. Local authorities, including the Teknaf Upazila Nirbahi Officer, have urged residents not to panic and confirmed that Border Guard Bangladesh is actively monitoring the situation.

## Rizwana: UK-BD partnership to strengthen flood forecasting

Environment Adviser Syeda Rizwana Hasan announced that the UK-Bangladesh EnRICH Project will enhance flood forecasting and early warning systems in Sylhet, Sunamganj, Comilla and Feni from September 2025 to March 2026. At a national event in Dhaka, she emphasised the need for improved meteorological analysis, highlighting collaboration between the UK Met Office, RIMES, BWDB and BMD.

Rizwana stressed the ecological significance of the Haor region, warning that its collapse would

jeopardise food security. She also mentioned progress on the National Haor Master Plan and legal measures to protect Hakaluki and Tanguar Haor, proposing a boat-based hospital for Haor communities.

## 28 October

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## No issues in US wheat import

The Ministry of Food of Bangladesh has rejected claims of overpricing in wheat imports from the United States, following a report alleging irregularities due to a government-to-government agreement. In a statement, the ministry clarified that the wheat was procured under a memorandum of understanding, with contracts for 220,000 metric tonnes in two phases at prices of US\$302.75 and US\$308 per tonne (CIF liner out).

The ministry criticised the report for misleadingly comparing these prices to the FOB price of Russian wheat, emphasising that CIF includes additional costs. It defended the price difference, citing the higher quality of U.S. wheat and a transparent procurement process.

## Dhaka fosters balanced US-China ties

Foreign Affairs Adviser Md Touhid Hossain reaffirmed Bangladesh's commitment to a balanced and pragmatic foreign policy, maintaining strong ties with both the United States and China. Addressing U.S. concerns over growing engagement with Beijing, he emphasised that Bangladesh's foreign policy is rooted in mutual respect, constructive cooperation and national interest. Hossain expressed confidence that future governments would continue this approach.

His remarks followed U.S. Ambassador-designate Brent Christensen's statements, pledging to strengthen bilateral ties while addressing concerns regarding Chinese influence in the region. Hossain reassured that there is no cause for alarm regarding Bangladesh's diplomatic relations with both powers.

## EU to send election observer team

The European Union will send a large election observer mission to Bangladesh for its February 2026 general election, marking the first such deployment since 2008.

EU Ambassador Michael Miller confirmed that the mission could involve 150 to 200 observers, with some arriving six weeks prior to the election. The EU will also support local observer deployment.

In a meeting with Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus, Miller discussed governance reforms, election preparations, judicial and labour improvements and trade relations. He praised Bangladesh's July National Charter and legal reforms as critical steps towards democratic transition and highlighted EU support for Bangladesh's LDC graduation and investment projects.

## 29 October

### IMF commends Bangladesh's reserves and inflation management

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has praised Bangladesh's efforts to manage inflation and maintain foreign currency reserves following the first round of meetings in its fifth Review Mission in Dhaka. Led by Chris Pappageorgiou, the IMF delegation will stay until 13 November to conduct a comprehensive review with Bangladesh Bank and various ministries.

A senior central-bank official highlighted the IMF's recognition of inflation's downward trend and its recommendation for continued contractionary monetary policies. Discussions also covered banking-sector reforms, liquidity monitoring, risk-based supervision and the financial health of merged banks.

### 174 undocumented Bangladeshis return from Libya



A total of 174 undocumented Bangladeshi nationals were repatriated from Libya via a Burak Air flight, coordinated by the Government of Libya and the International Organisation for Migration (IOM). The Bangladesh

Embassy in Tripoli, alongside the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates' Welfare, facilitated their voluntary return.

Most returnees had entered Libya through human traffickers with false promises of migration to Europe, enduring abduction and torture. Upon arrival in Dhaka, they received travel allowances, food and medical aid from the IOM. The Foreign Ministry urged them to share their experiences to raise awareness about the risks of irregular migration.

### Indian man gains Bangladesh citizenship fraudulently

Saher Ali Sardar, an Indian national from Murshidabad in West Bengal, allegedly obtained Bangladeshi citizenship using false identity documents. After entering Bangladesh years ago, he concealed his identity, married in Rajshahi's Puthia upazila and secured a birth certificate and national ID under the name Md Akash Pramanik. The issue arose when Asma Begum, listed as his mother in Bangladeshi records, filed a complaint demanding the cancellation of his citizenship. She claimed Saher misused her and her husband's ID details. Saher admitted his Indian nationality but denied wrongdoing, claiming the documents were arranged by Asma and her husband. Authorities have launched an investigation.

## 3 Nov

### Turkish parliamentary delegation calls on Chief Adviser

A five-member Turkish parliamentary delegation led by Mehmet Akif Yılmaz, Chairperson of the Türkiye–Bangladesh Parliamentary Friendship Group, met Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus at the State Guest House Jamuna.

Both sides discussed expanding cooperation in trade, investment, and humanitarian initiatives. Mr Yılmaz highlighted shared cultural ties and Türkiye's humanitarian support in Cox's Bazar. Professor Yunus thanked Türkiye for aiding the Rohingya community and invited Turkish entrepreneurs to invest in Bangladesh, underscoring its export potential. He urged the world not to forget the Rohingya crisis and praised President Erdoğan's continued solidarity with Bangladesh.

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