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Bangladesh Foreign Policy Watch



A Bi-Weekly Roundup of Key Events

16 Feb

Maldives President to attend Tarique Rahman's swearing-in ceremony

Maldives President Dr Mohamed Muizzu is scheduled to arrive in Dhaka on February 17, 2026, to attend the oath-taking ceremony of Bangladesh's newly elected government led by Prime Minister Tarique Rahman. He will be accompanied by Maldivian Foreign Minister Dr Abdulla Khaleel, reflecting the Maldives' strong commitment to bilateral ties. Earlier, President Muizzu congratulated BNP Chairman Rahman on his party's decisive victory in the 13th national parliamentary elections held on February 12. In his message, Muizzu extended warm regards and expressed eagerness to work closely with Bangladesh's new leadership, reinforcing regional cooperation and friendship between the two nations.

BGB secures release of 73 fishermen from Arakan Army

Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) successfully repatriated 73 fishermen abducted by the Arakan Army from the Naf River and the Bay of Bengal. The handover occurred at Teknaf's Jaliapara transit jetty on February 16 after sustained negotiations. BGB Ramu Sector Commander Colonel Mohiuddin Ahmed confirmed that the fishermen were later reunited with their families through local representatives. The Arakan Army claimed the detentions occurred due to alleged border crossings into Myanmar waters. While this marks a significant recovery, reports suggest that around 200 fishermen remain captive, with talks ongoing to secure their release.

Sri Lankan health minister to attend Tarique Rahman's oath

Sri Lanka's Minister of Health and Mass Media, Dr Nalinda Jayatissa, will represent his country at the swearing-in ceremony of Bangladesh's new cabinet led by BNP Chairman Tarique Rahman on February 17, 2026. The minister departed Colombo for Dhaka earlier that day and was seen off by Bangladesh High Commissioner Andalib Elias. Rahman is set to assume office as Prime Minister following the BNP's landslide victory in the 13th

parliamentary elections. The participation of Sri Lanka's senior minister underscores the strong and friendly bilateral relations between Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, highlighting regional solidarity during Bangladesh's political transition.

17 Feb

Maldivian President meets Bangladesh PM Tarique Rahman



Maldivian President Dr Mohamed Muizzu met Bangladesh's newly elected Prime Minister Tarique Rahman at his Sangsad Bhaban office on February 17, 2026, shortly after Rahman took oath as the country's 11th Prime Minister. The meeting was attended by Rahman's daughter Zaima Rahman, new minister Dr Khalilur Rahman, and senior officials. President Muizzu arrived in Dhaka earlier that day to participate in the swearing-in ceremony of Bangladesh's new cabinet led by BNP Chairman Rahman. The visit marked a significant diplomatic engagement, underscoring the Maldives' commitment to strengthening bilateral ties with Bangladesh at the start of Rahman's tenure.

Bhutanese PM calls on Chief Adviser Yunus

Bhutanese Prime Minister Tshering Tobgay paid a courtesy call on Bangladesh's Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus at the State Guest House Jamuna. Tobgay praised Yunus for overseeing free, fair, and peaceful elections during a critical period in Bangladesh's political transition. He arrived in Dhaka to attend the swearing-in ceremony of the new cabinet led by BNP Chairman Tarique Rahman. Foreign Adviser M Touhid Hossain welcomed him at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport. The meeting underscored Bhutan's support for Bangladesh's democratic process and highlighted the strengthening of bilateral ties between the two neighbouring nations.

South Asian leaders attend Tarique Rahman's swearing-in

Senior leaders and representatives from across South Asia gathered in Dhaka on February 17, 2026, to witness the swearing-in of Bangladesh's new government led by Prime Minister-elect Tarique Rahman. The ceremony at Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban highlighted Bangladesh's regional importance and drew dignitaries including Maldives President Mohamed Muizzu, Bhutanese Prime Minister Tshering Tobgay, Indian Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla, Pakistan's Federal Minister Ahsan Iqbal Chaudhary, Nepal's Foreign Minister Bala Nanda Sharma, and Sri Lanka's Minister Nalinda Jayatissa. Their participation underscored collective regional interest in Bangladesh's political transition and signalled readiness to deepen cooperation under Rahman's leadership.

Pakistan minister Ahsan Iqbal Chaudhary calls on Chief Adviser Yunus

Pakistan's Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives, Ahsan Iqbal Chaudhary, met Bangladesh's Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus at the State Guest House Jamuna on February 17, 2026. The courtesy call highlighted Pakistan's diplomatic engagement with Bangladesh during its political transition. Chaudhary arrived in Dhaka to attend the swearing-in ceremony of the new cabinet led by BNP Chairman Tarique Rahman. The meeting underscored Pakistan's support for Bangladesh's democratic process and reflected the two nations' interest in strengthening bilateral cooperation. It marked an important moment of regional solidarity as Bangladesh welcomed international leaders during its leadership transition.

19 Feb

UK PM congratulates Tarique Rahman

British Prime Minister Keir Starmer has congratulated Prime Minister Tarique Rahman on his election victory, reaffirming the United Kingdom's commitment to strengthening bilateral relations with Bangladesh. In a formal letter, Starmer emphasised continued cooperation across key sectors, including trade and investment, climate action, migration, defence collaboration, and humanitarian assistance. He also reiterated the UK's support for Bangladesh's role in hosting displaced Rohingya populations. The message highlighted the long-standing partnership between the two countries and expressed optimism about expanding

mutually beneficial engagement in the coming years, underscoring a shared commitment to deepening strategic cooperation and advancing common development priorities.

Trump congratulates Tarique Rahman on election victory

US President Donald J. Trump has congratulated Bangladesh Prime Minister Tarique Rahman on his historic election victory. In a letter dated February 18, 2026, Trump expressed optimism about strengthening bilateral ties, highlighting cooperation in trade, defence, and regional stability. He emphasised the importance of a free and open Indo-Pacific and urged continued momentum in reciprocal trade agreements benefiting both nations. Trump also encouraged finalising defence deals to provide Bangladesh access to advanced American equipment. He affirmed confidence in US Ambassador Brent Christensen and expressed eagerness to deepen prosperity and security through stronger US-Bangladesh relations.

21 Feb

Delhi Seeks Stronger Ties with Dhaka

India has signalled its intent to reset relations with Bangladesh's new BNP-led government. Prime Minister Narendra Modi congratulated Tarique Rahman on his election victory, while Speaker Om Birla attended the swearing-in ceremony, delivering Modi's letter of support for a democratic and inclusive Bangladesh. In a key step, the Bangladesh High Commission in Delhi resumed visa services for Indians, suspended since December amid strained ties following political unrest and the death of activist Sharif Osman Hadi. Both sides now pledge to restore full visa operations, marking an early thaw in bilateral relations.

23 Feb

Dhaka, Washington Pursue Enhanced Partnership

Bangladesh and the United States reaffirmed their commitment to deepen bilateral relations during a meeting between Foreign Minister Dr Khalilur Rahman and US Ambassador Brent Christensen. Both sides highlighted shared democratic values and cooperation in trade, investment, defence, security, and people-to-people exchanges. The upcoming visit of US Assistant Secretary of State Paul Kapur was noted as a sign of continued high-level engagement. Rahman thanked

Washington for humanitarian support regarding the Rohingya crisis and urged sustained political backing for repatriation. Ambassador Christensen also met State Minister Shama Obaed Islam to discuss mutual priorities.

Chinese Envoy Invites PM to Visit Beijing



Chinese Ambassador Yao Wen met Prime Minister Tarique Rahman at the Bangladesh Secretariat, conveying congratulations from President Xi Jinping and Premier Li Qiang. He formally invited the prime minister to visit China, though no schedule was discussed. Foreign Affairs Adviser Humayun Kabir noted the government's focus on domestic priorities before foreign tours. He emphasised China's recognition of Rahman's strong electoral mandate and highlighted the historic partnership dating back to President Ziaur Rahman. Both sides reaffirmed commitments to deepen development cooperation and elevate bilateral ties, underscoring China's role as a key partner in Bangladesh's growth trajectory.

Bangladesh's Foreign Policy Anchored in Mutual Respect

Foreign Minister Khalilur Rahman affirmed that Bangladesh will resolve issues with other nations based on mutual respect and benefit, emphasising non-interference and sovereignty. Following the BNP's recent electoral victory, the new government is engaging diplomats from the EU, the US, China, India, Saudi Arabia, and Pakistan. Chinese envoy Yao Wen invited Prime Minister Tarique Rahman to visit Beijing, while EU officials urged the continuation of reforms and progress on a Partnership Cooperation Agreement. The US ambassador pledged cooperation for prosperity. Dhaka's foreign policy outline, branded "Bangladesh First," seeks dynamic, co-equal relations with global partners.

UAE-Bangladesh JV to Boost Composite Manufacturing

Integrated Composite Industries Ltd, a UAE-Bangladesh joint venture, signed a \$10 million land lease agreement with the Bangladesh Export Processing Zones Authority to set up operations at the BEPZA Economic Zone. The company will produce Fibre Reinforced Polymer (FRP) composite products, steel frames, bathtubs, Jacuzzis, and panel tanks, with an annual output of 6,174 tonnes. Most exports will target Dubai's shipbuilding and cruise industries. The venture is expected to create 906 jobs and diversify Bangladesh's industrial base beyond traditional sectors. BEPZA pledged full support, highlighting the initiative's role in expanding the country's export basket.

24 Feb

Bangladesh Seeks to Revitalise SAARC

Foreign Minister Dr Khalilur Rahman met SAARC Secretary General Md Golam Sarwar to explore ways of reinvigorating the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). The discussion focused on enhancing Bangladesh's proactive role in the regional body, with Sarwar noting that SAARC was prioritised in the government's election manifesto. He briefed the minister on the current state of SAARC and its ongoing activities, while Rahman sought ideas on how Dhaka could lead future initiatives. Talks also touched on the SAARC Summit, underscoring the administration's renewed emphasis on regional cooperation and collective progress.

New US Tariffs Take Effect After Court Ruling

The United States has imposed a uniform 15% tariff on imports under Section 122 of the Trade Act, following a Supreme Court decision striking down earlier IEEPA-based duties. The measure, announced by the Biden administration, requires congressional ratification within 150 days. Officials say the tariff aims to stabilise trade policy while addressing economic pressures. Analysts note potential impacts on global exporters, including Bangladesh, which is closely monitoring developments. The move underscores Washington's

shifting trade strategy and raises questions about future negotiations with key partners amid ongoing debates over fairness and compliance.

Bangladesh's RMG Exports to US Hit \$8.2B in 2025

Bangladesh exported ready-made garments worth \$8.2 billion to the United States in 2025, marking a 3.5% year-on-year growth despite global demand challenges. The US remained Bangladesh's single largest export destination, accounting for nearly 18% of total RMG shipments. Knitwear and woven items dominated the basket, with jeans and T-shirts leading sales. Industry leaders credited competitive pricing and compliance improvements for sustaining growth, though rising production costs and evolving US trade policies pose risks. The sector continues to anchor Bangladesh's economy, employing millions and driving foreign exchange earnings.

25 Feb

Commerce Minister: US Tariff Issue Still Evolving

Commerce Minister Khandaker Abdul Muktadir stated that Bangladesh has not yet received official communication from Washington on the newly announced US tariffs. Following a Supreme Court ruling invalidating earlier IEEPA duties, the US imposed a uniform 15% tariff under Section 122, pending congressional ratification within 150 days. Muktadir urged caution in commentary, calling the matter "very much evolving." He noted that the government is reviewing the recent US trade agreement and consulting industry leaders on broader export challenges. The minister also addressed Ramadan market stability, warning against opportunistic price hikes and pledging action against extortion in goods transport.

Bangladesh Seeks Deeper Chinese Investment and Security Cooperation

Home Minister Salahuddin Ahmed urged Chinese investors to expand their presence in Bangladesh, stressing that stability and security are vital for attracting foreign capital. In talks with Ambassador Yao Wen, both sides discussed renewing expired law enforcement training agreements, combating cybercrime, and joining China's international alliance against telecom fraud. Yao highlighted Bangladesh's political stability and noted that 10,000 Chinese nationals are currently working across sectors. Plans for ministerial visits to Beijing

and broader cooperation in policing, cyber security, and business expansion underscore Dhaka's intent to strengthen economic and strategic ties with China.

Saudi Arabia Halts Poultry Imports from Bangladesh

Saudi Arabia has imposed a ban on poultry and egg imports from Bangladesh and 39 other countries, citing concerns over avian influenza outbreaks. The decision affects Bangladeshi exporters who had been eyeing Gulf markets as a growth opportunity. Officials in Dhaka acknowledged the setback, noting that Bangladesh's poultry industry—valued at billions and employing millions—relies heavily on regional exports. Industry leaders urged the government to strengthen biosecurity measures and negotiate with Riyadh to lift the restrictions. The move underscores the vulnerability of Bangladesh's agribusiness to global health regulations and shifting trade dynamics.

26 Feb

Bangladesh Apparel Exports Defy US Market Decline

Despite a 1.74% drop in overall US apparel imports in 2025, Bangladesh posted robust growth, exporting \$8.20 billion worth of garments—up 11.71% from 2024. This lifted its share to 10.53% of the US market, the second-highest annual figure on record. While Vietnam led with 21.50% and China slipped to 13.66%, Bangladesh's resilience highlighted its competitiveness, diversification, and compliance strength. Industry leaders noted that even amid tariff uncertainty and subdued demand, buyers' confidence in Bangladesh remains strong, positioning it as a key sourcing hub in the shifting global apparel supply chain.

27 Feb

FM Holds Key OIC Sidelines Meetings

Foreign Minister Dr Khalilur Rahman engaged in several high-level meetings on the sidelines of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) summit. He discussed strengthening bilateral ties, regional

cooperation, and collective positions on pressing global issues. The talks emphasised solidarity among OIC member states, with particular focus on economic collaboration, humanitarian concerns, and political coordination. Rahman highlighted Bangladesh's commitment to advancing shared interests and enhancing its diplomatic profile within the Muslim world. These engagements underscored Dhaka's proactive role in shaping consensus and building partnerships across diverse fronts.

Bangladesh Condemns Israeli Annexation at OIC

Bangladesh has strongly denounced Israel's new land legislation aimed at annexing occupied Palestinian territory. Foreign Minister Dr Khalilur Rahman, speaking at the OIC Executive Committee Meeting in Jeddah, called for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza and reaffirmed support for a two-state solution based on the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as the capital. He warned that the law undermines Palestinian land rights and breaches international law. Rahman also urged unhindered humanitarian access to Gaza. On the sidelines, he met counterparts from Pakistan, Gambia, Palestine, Turkey, and Saudi Arabia, who congratulated Bangladesh's new government and backed its UNGA presidency bid.

28 Feb

OIC Backs Bangladesh UNGA Bid

Bangladesh has secured full backing from the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) for its candidacy to preside over the 81st UN General Assembly. Foreign Minister Dr Khalilur Rahman announced that OIC states will actively campaign worldwide, strengthening Dhaka's position against Cyprus. Palestine's withdrawal cleared the way for Bangladesh's run, with elections set for June 2 in New York. The Asia-Pacific Group rotation favours Bangladesh, which last held the post in 1986–87. OIC leaders expressed confidence in Prime Minister Tarique Rahman's leadership, highlighting political stability and development prospects.

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