

20 October | 2025

Bangladesh Foreign Policy Watch

cgs Centre for
Governance Studies



A Bi-Weekly Roundup of Key Events

06 October

Bangladesh, Saudi Arabia Finalise Landmark Recruitment Deal

Bangladesh and Saudi Arabia signed a historic agreement in Riyadh to formally regulate the recruitment of general workers—the first such accord in their five decades of bilateral relations. The deal was signed by Expatriates' Welfare Adviser Dr Asif Nazrul and Saudi Minister Ahmed bin Sulaiman Al-Rajhi. It aims to expand opportunities for Bangladeshi skilled and semi-skilled workers across multiple sectors while ensuring stronger protections and more transparent recruitment processes. Bangladesh stressed the importance of faster exit visa processing and employer responsibility for residence permit renewals, while Saudi Arabia pledged close cooperation. Senior officials from both sides attended the signing, underlining the pact's strategic significance for future labour migration.

07 October

UN Praises Chief Adviser's UNGA Leadership

UN Resident Coordinator Gwyn Lewis paid a farewell visit to Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus at the State Guest House Jamuna, commending his leadership at the 80th UN General Assembly in New York. She praised Bangladesh's inclusive delegation—comprising representatives from six major political parties—and Yunus's focus on the Rohingya issue. Reflecting on her tenure, Lewis highlighted the UN–Bangladesh Cooperation Framework (2022–2026), which promotes inclusive development, human rights, and environmental resilience. She also noted milestones such as the opening of the OHCHR office in Dhaka and Bangladesh's global leadership in the Early Warning for All and Transforming Education initiatives.

Bangladesh and Saudi Arabia Deepen Trade and Investment Ties

Foreign Adviser Md Touhid Hossain inaugurated the Saudi Arabia–Bangladesh Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Dhaka, marking a new chapter in bilateral economic relations. Emphasising shared historical and spiritual links, he noted that over three million Bangladeshis work in Saudi Arabia—with plans to raise the number to five million by 2030. He urged diversification beyond manpower export, inviting Saudi investment in energy, infrastructure, AI, biotechnology, and FinTech sectors. Praising Saudi Vision 2030, Hossain proposed combining Saudi capital with Bangladesh's youthful workforce. He reaffirmed solidarity on global Muslim issues and support for Palestine.

Erdogan Invites Chief Adviser to Visit Türkiye

Turkish Deputy Foreign Minister Ambassador Berris Ekinci met Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus in Dhaka, delivering President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's formal invitation for an official visit to Türkiye. The meeting discussed expanding cooperation in education, healthcare, and technology. Yunus highlighted the deep cultural bonds between the two nations and expressed appreciation for Türkiye's support, including medical aid for victims of the July Revolution. Ambassador Ekinci praised Bangladesh's hospitality and reiterated Türkiye's commitment to student scholarships and exchange programmes, marking renewed diplomatic momentum following recent political transitions.

08 October

Touhid Hossain Slams India's Remarks on Polls

Foreign Affairs Adviser Md Touhid Hossain denounced comments by India's Foreign Secretary on Bangladesh's upcoming elections as "completely unwarranted," reiterating that electoral matters are internal affairs. He clarified that a recent presidential letter reflected personal sentiments and had already circulated on social media before being received. Hossain dismissed claims about removing the President's portrait from foreign missions and confirmed that diplomats' visits to a former minister's residence were within legal bounds. On Türkiye, he described military cooperation as routine.

Addressing visa backlogs for students and workers, he cited high demand and limited capacity, stressing the need to curb document fraud to restore Bangladesh's global reputation.

Chief Adviser Pushes to Expand Labour Market in Eastern Europe

Chairing a meeting of the National Steering Committee on Bangladesh's LDC graduation strategy, Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus urged swift action to overcome visa complications hindering labour market expansion in Eastern Europe. He directed the Foreign Ministry to intensify engagement, noting that many Eastern European countries lack embassies in Dhaka, forcing applications through New Delhi. Yunus referenced recent talks with Albanian and Kosovan leaders in New York, who expressed interest in hiring Bangladeshi workers. He called for eliminating bureaucratic delays to seize these emerging opportunities. Senior officials and business leaders attended, highlighting coordinated efforts to diversify labour markets beyond traditional destinations.

Bangladesh Seeks WB and ADB Support for Trade Negotiations

Bangladesh plans to seek technical assistance from the World Bank and Asian Development Bank to strengthen its capacity for future trade negotiations, as it pursues free trade agreements with Japan, South Korea, Singapore, the UAE, and Malaysia. At a high-level meeting chaired by Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus, officials underscored the need to develop negotiation expertise, boost ICT job creation, and redirect export incentives toward frontier technologies such as AI. The meeting also reviewed preparations for the 2026–2028 import policy, stable energy supply—particularly natural gas—for industries, and investments in LNG infrastructure and education reforms to align skills with industrial demand, ensuring a smooth transition after LDC graduation.

09 October

Bangladesh Welcomes Hamas–Israel Dialogue

Bangladesh welcomed the ongoing dialogue between Hamas and Israel aimed at ending the Gaza war, expressing hope for a permanent ceasefire and the creation of an independent Palestinian state. In a statement, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs reaffirmed Dhaka's unwavering support for a two-state solution based on pre-1967 borders,

with East Jerusalem as Palestine's capital. Bangladesh emphasised that diplomacy and dialogue remain the only sustainable paths to peace and commended all parties facilitating the process. The government reiterated its readiness to assist in peacekeeping and Gaza's reconstruction, underscoring its commitment to peace, stability, and justice in the Middle East.

UK Trade Envoy Meets Chief Adviser



UK Trade Envoy Rosie Winterton met Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus at the State Guest House Jamuna to discuss trade, investment, and bilateral cooperation. The discussion covered clean energy, airport management, and Bangladesh's democratic transition. Professor Yunus reaffirmed the government's commitment to holding a free and fair election in February. Both sides explored cooperation in education, aviation, and maritime security, including Bangladesh's planned purchase of HMS Enterprise.

10 October

Chief Adviser Congratulates Nobel Laureate María Corina Machado

Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus congratulated María Corina Machado on winning the 2025 Nobel Peace Prize for her courageous advocacy of democracy in Venezuela. In his message, Yunus praised her resilience in the face of oppression and her unwavering commitment to freedom and justice. As a fellow Nobel Peace Laureate, he lauded Machado as a symbol of democratic resistance and echoed the Nobel Committee's recognition of individuals who "refuse to stay silent."

Yunus Thanks Erdoğan for Shahidul Alam's Release

Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus expressed deep gratitude to Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan for his role in securing the

release and repatriation of renowned Bangladeshi photographer and human rights activist Shahidul Alam from Israel. According to the Chief Adviser's Press Wing, Alam departed Israel aboard Turkish Airlines flight TK 6921, which was scheduled to land in Istanbul around 2:30 p.m. local time. The gesture reflected Türkiye's strong diplomatic support and the growing cooperation between Dhaka and Ankara.

12 October

Kosovo Ambassador Visits ULAB

The University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh (ULAB) hosted Kosovan Ambassador Lulzim Pllana for the second session of its Global Talks lecture series, focusing on education and trade as bridges between Kosovo and Bangladesh. Ambassador Pllana highlighted Bangladesh's recognition of Kosovo in 2017 and its peacekeeping role following the 1999 conflict. He also encouraged Bangladeshi entrepreneurs to explore opportunities in Kosovo as a gateway to European markets and emphasised youth collaboration in innovation and entrepreneurship. The event concluded with a screening of *Hive*, a Kosovar film celebrating women's resilience and empowerment.

Chief Adviser Departs for World Food Forum in Rome

Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus departed for Rome to attend the World Food Forum (WFF), the flagship event of the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). Scheduled to deliver a keynote address at the main session, Yunus is also expected to meet Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni and leaders of international organisations to discuss food security, poverty reduction, and sustainable development. Held from 10–17 October at FAO Headquarters, the WFF serves as a global platform for policymakers, researchers, and entrepreneurs to shape the future of food systems. Yunus's participation underscores Bangladesh's active role in international development dialogues.

13 October

IFAD President Meets Chief Adviser

International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) President Alvaro Lario met Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus at his hotel in Rome. The meeting highlighted Bangladesh's growing

engagement with global development partners and its proactive outreach during Yunus's visit to Italy for the World Food Forum.

Yunus Meets Brazilian President Lula da Silva

Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus met Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva on the sidelines of the World Food Forum at FAO Headquarters in Rome. The meeting underscored Bangladesh's growing outreach to Latin American partners and its commitment to multilateral cooperation in global food and development initiatives.

Rome Mayor Gualtieri Meets Chief Adviser

Following the WFF plenary session, Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus met Rome Mayor Roberto Gualtieri in Italy. The discussion was part of a broader diplomatic effort that also included engagements with other international leaders such as President Lula da Silva. The meetings highlighted Bangladesh's expanding role in global development dialogues and commitment to strengthening bilateral and multilateral ties.

FAO Chief Meets Bangladesh Leader

FAO Director General Dr Qu Dongyu met Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus at FAO Headquarters in Rome, concluding a series of high-level engagements during the WFF. While specific topics were not disclosed, the meeting reaffirmed Bangladesh's collaboration with global institutions dedicated to food security, sustainability, and inclusive growth.

14 October

Djibouti PM Seeks Yunus's Guidance on Microfinance

Djibouti's Prime Minister Abdoukader Kamil Mohamed met Bangladesh's Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus at FAO Headquarters in Rome during the World Food Forum. The Djiboutian leader expressed keen interest in replicating Bangladesh's microfinance model and sought Yunus's expertise. In response, Yunus invited a Djiboutian delegation to Bangladesh for hands-on training with leading microfinance institutions.



The two leaders also discussed bilateral trade, regional geopolitics, and the Rohingya crisis. Djibouti's Minister for Microfinance attended the meeting. Praising Yunus's global leadership, Prime Minister Mohamed invited him to visit Djibouti, while Yunus identified opportunities for expanding trade, particularly in garments and pharmaceuticals.

FAO Pledges Support for Bangladesh's Fisheries and Fruit Exports

FAO Director-General Dr Qu Dongyu reaffirmed the organisation's commitment to supporting Bangladesh's deep-sea fishing and fruit export sectors during a meeting with Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus at FAO's 80th anniversary celebrations in Rome. Dr Qu commended Yunus's contributions to rural development and pledged technical assistance through South-South cooperation. Yunus highlighted Bangladesh's underutilised maritime resources and sought help in developing expertise in fish processing, mobile cold storage, and post-harvest management. Dr Qu suggested involving Chinese experts to assess fish stocks and shared insights from China's success in fruit exports. The meeting also acknowledged Yunus's forthcoming Nobel Peace Prize anniversary in 2026.

WFP Acting Chief Reaffirms Commitment to Rohingya Support



World Food Programme (WFP) Acting Executive Director Carl Skau met Chief Adviser Professor

Muhammad Yunus in Rome, reaffirming WFP's ongoing support for 1.3 million Rohingyas in Bangladesh. Their discussion covered the Rohingya crisis, famine situations in Gaza and Sudan, and global funding shortages. Skau lauded Yunus's leadership and Bangladesh's efforts at the 30 September UN meeting, which renewed global focus on the issue. Both sides urged increased donor commitments. Skau confirmed the continuation of \$12 monthly food stipends for Rohingyas and announced new aid pledges from the US and UK. They also discussed expanding Bangladesh's school feeding programme and WFP's broader hunger-relief initiatives.

15 October

Yunus Inaugurates Global Alliance Against Hunger and Poverty

Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus joined Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva and FAO Director-General Dr Qu Dongyu in inaugurating the new office of the Global Alliance Against Hunger and Poverty at FAO Headquarters in Rome. Co-founded by Bangladesh and Brazil, the Alliance marks a significant milestone in global efforts to combat food insecurity amid ongoing crises in Gaza, Sudan, and other regions. Yunus emphasised collective global action, while President Lula and Dr Qu highlighted the importance of coordinated international responses. The ceremony was attended by senior Bangladeshi officials, including Food Adviser Ali Imam Majumder and Fisheries Adviser Farida Akhter.

Touhid Hossain Reaffirms Bangladesh's Commitment to NAM

Foreign Affairs Adviser Md Touhid Hossain reaffirmed Bangladesh's unwavering commitment to the principles of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) during the 19th Mid-Term Ministerial Conference in Kampala, Uganda. He called for inclusive reforms, institutional accountability, and people-centred development—rejecting wealth concentration and unsustainable mega-projects. Highlighting Bangladesh's humanitarian role in sheltering 1.3 million Rohingyas, he urged the global community to ensure their safe repatriation. Touhid condemned violence against Palestinians, advocated for nuclear disarmament, and criticised unilateral sanctions outside UN frameworks. Stressing NAM's continued relevance amid global polarisation, he called for unity, reform, and

solidarity to achieve shared prosperity and sustainable peace.

18 October

Italy Offers Technical Support for Fire and Trafficking Investigations

Bangladesh and Italy held a bilateral meeting in Rome, where Italy offered technical assistance to strengthen Bangladesh's capacity in investigating fire incidents, combating human trafficking, and addressing financial crimes. The meeting, led by Home and Agriculture Adviser Lt Gen (Retd) Md Jahangir Alam Chowdhury and Italian Interior Minister Matteo Piantedosi, emphasised enhanced cooperation in security, intelligence sharing, and law enforcement. Both sides agreed to explore the formation of a joint task force to prevent trafficking, and to sign Mutual Legal Assistance and extradition agreements. They also discussed expanding legal migration channels. The talks marked a significant step toward a deeper strategic partnership between Dhaka and Rome.

19 October

Bangladesh and EU to Begin Post-LDC FTA Negotiations

Bangladesh has launched formal discussions with the European Union (EU) to establish a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) that would preserve its export privileges following its graduation from the Least Developed Country (LDC) category in 2026. A Commerce Ministry study deemed the FTA essential, as duty-free access under the EU's Everything But Arms (EBA) scheme will end in 2029. While Bangladesh may qualify for the GSP+ scheme, 94% of its exports—mainly garments—could face up to 12% tariffs due to stricter origin rules and sectoral restrictions. Experts are divided on whether to pursue GSP+ first or initiate FTA talks early. Bangladesh is also preparing a Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) with the EU to enhance collaboration on governance, labour standards, and human rights, with progress expected during an EU delegation's November visit.

Bangladesh Urges Azerbaijan to Recruit Skilled Workers

Bangladesh has called on Azerbaijan to recruit more skilled workers and expand cooperation in the labour sector during a bilateral meeting in Baku between Labour Adviser Brigadier General (Retired) Dr M Sakhat Hossain and Azerbaijani Minister of Labour and Social Protection Anar Aliyev. The discussions centred on improving the rights, safety, and living standards of Bangladeshi workers currently employed in Azerbaijan, as well as streamlining visa procedures and enhancing technical collaboration. Bangladesh also invited Azerbaijani investment in its special economic zones and proposed closer coordination within the framework of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). In response, the Azerbaijani minister suggested forming a joint working group to advance labour and investment initiatives and encouraged Bangladesh to ratify the OIC Labour Statute to strengthen institutional engagement.

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