



INSTITUTE OF REGIONAL STUDIES
PESHAWAR

BANGLADESH ELECTIONS 2026

An Analysis

Report of the IRS Delegation's Study Visit to Bangladesh

29 May – 6 June 2026



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Political Transition • Democratic Governance • Regional Implications

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BANGLADESH ELECTIONS 2026 AN ANALYSIS

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INSTITUTE OF REGIONAL STUDIES PESHAWAR

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Executive Summary

Between 29 May and 6 June 2026, a three-member delegation (Dr. Iqbal Khalil, Prof. Dr. Fazlur Rahman, and Mufti Dr. Ibraheem) undertook a study visit to Bangladesh during a period of profound political transition. The visit coincided with the aftermath of the February 2026 general elections, which reshaped Bangladesh’s political order and created new opportunities and risks for democratic consolidation.

Key Themes Emerging from the Visit

Political Realignment

The elections produced a decisive two-thirds majority for the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), ending over a decade of Awami League dominance. Respondents described this as both a “historic opening” and a potential source of instability if reforms are not inclusive. The re-emergence of Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) was seen as a revival of religious politics, while the rise of the National Citizen Party (NCP) reflected generational demands for transparency and accountability. According to Saif ul Alam (Member of Parliament, Dhaka City) *“The electorate expects us to deliver governance that is transparent and credible, not just rhetoric,”* he noted, highlighting coalition expectations.

Governance and Institutions

Across interviews, a recurring concern was the fragility of institutions. Lawyers warned of judicial vulnerability, academics stressed the need for structural reforms, and civil society leaders emphasized inclusivity. Respondents agreed that exclusionary politics could reignite unrest, underscoring the importance of strengthening rule of law, parliamentary transparency, and regulatory autonomy. Mabruur Ahmad (Spokesperson, JI) *“Jamaat’s participation in parliament must be seen as constructive engagement, not confrontation,”* he explained, stressing inclusivity in governance. A.K.M. Rafiqun Nabi (Managing Director, Ibn Sina Group Investment Co. Ltd.) *“Private sector partnerships will determine whether reforms translate into real growth,”* he observed, stressing business confidence.

Media Environment

Journalists and scholars highlighted the precarious state of press freedom. While censorship has eased since the elections, harassment of journalists persists. One editor noted that “Local publications became platforms for opposition voices,” illustrating the media’s central role in shaping narratives. Respondents emphasized that institutional guarantees are needed to protect pluralism and prevent backsliding. Abduzzahir Bhuiyan Anas (Ekattor TV) observed that *“Journalists remain under constant pressure — while censorship has eased, harassment and surveillance continue to shape how we report on politics.”* His testimony underscores that democratic consolidation cannot succeed without institutional guarantees for media independence. According to Muhammad. Zainal Abadin (Senior Reporter, Kaler Kantho) *“Press freedom remains fragile — journalists may speak more openly now, but the threat of intimidation and surveillance still hangs over every newsroom.”*

Academic Perspectives

Universities remain key sites of debate and mobilization. Academics stressed that intellectual communities must guide democratic consolidation by advocating evidence-based reforms. Several respondents highlighted the role of academic exchanges in fostering regional cooperation, suggesting that Bangladesh's universities could serve as bridges between civil society and policymakers.

Civil Society and Youth Activism

Civil society leaders underscored the role of grassroots mobilization in shaping the transition. Youth activists within the NCP were described as “the conscience of the new Bangladesh,” demanding accountability and transparency. Muhammad Kadir Mahmood (Civil Society Activist) *“Youth networks are demanding accountability — ignoring them will weaken democratic consolidation,”* he noted. NGOs highlighted governance and empowerment, while humanitarian workers in Cox's Bazar emphasized the refugee crisis as a test of Bangladesh's commitment to human rights. Dr. Ridwanur Rahman (WAMY, Dhaka) said that *“Bangladesh's youth networks are not isolated — they are part of a wider regional movement. If Pakistan and Bangladesh collaborate through NGOs and academic forums, we can build a South Asian model of social justice and democratic resilience.”*

Regional Implications

Bangladesh's trajectory will influence South Asian politics, with direct implications for Pakistan's foreign policy, trade, and academic cooperation. Respondents noted that Pakistan should engage constructively through diplomacy, security cooperation, and academic exchanges. Several interviewees emphasized that Bangladesh's transition could serve as a model for democratic resilience in the region, provided reforms are institutionalized.

Cross-Cutting Observations

Opportunity vs. Risk: The transition is widely seen as a historic opportunity, but respondents warned that exclusionary politics could undermine stability.

Institutions Matter: Strengthening rule of law and protecting civil liberties were identified as essential for durable reform.

Youth and Media as Drivers: Both were repeatedly cited as engines of accountability and transparency. Dr. Shariful Islam Imshiat was of the view that *“media and communication channels are the lifeblood of accountability in Bangladesh's transition,”* stressing the need for independent regulation to protect journalists.

Regional Engagement: Constructive cooperation with Pakistan and South Asia is vital for stability.

Introduction

Bangladesh's political trajectory in 2026 represents one of the most significant transitions in South Asia in recent decades. The departure of Sheikh Hasina Wajid following the 2024 'student-led uprising' (in which around 1,400 people were martyred, the majority of whom were youth) created a vacuum in governance that was rapidly filled by opposition forces. The February 2026 elections marked the first competitive polls in decades, reshaping the country's political order (United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights [OHCHR], 2025).

Objectives of the Visit

Assess the evolving political landscape in Bangladesh following the elections.

Engage with key stakeholders including academics, journalists, civil society leaders, and policymakers.

Main objective was to understand perspectives on governance, democracy, and reform.

Evaluate regional implications for Pakistan and South Asia, particularly in trade, education, and security cooperation.

Contextual Significance

Bangladesh's transition is not only a domestic matter but also a regional one. As the BRAC Institute of Governance and Development (2026) observed, "Bangladesh's governance reforms are shaped by both domestic pressures and regional dynamics." Similarly, the European Parliament (2026) noted that "Bangladesh has turned the page, but the durability of its democratic transition remains uncertain."

This report, prepared for the Institute of Regional Studies, Peshawar, seeks to provide a comprehensive, evidence-based analysis of Bangladesh's transition, integrating primary fieldwork with secondary sources. It is structured to reflect think tank standards, combining empirical findings with policy recommendations for Pakistan's engagement with Bangladesh.

Methodology

The visits to Bangladesh employed a qualitative research design, combining semi-structured interviews, direct observation, and document review. This approach was chosen to capture the complexity of Bangladesh's political transition and to ensure that diverse perspectives were represented.

Research Design & Triangulation

The delegation adopted a triangulated methodology, integrating three primary modes of inquiry:

Semi-structured interviews with academicians, journalists, civil society leaders, and policymakers.

Direct observation of public forums, universities, and humanitarian projects.

Document review of local publications, policy papers, and secondary think tank reports.

Data Collection Components

Semi-Structured Interviews

Over forty interviews were conducted during the visit. Respondents were selected based on their expertise, influence, and relevance to Bangladesh's political and social landscape:

A.K.M. Rafique Nabi, Chairman of The Weekly Sonar Bangla, emphasized the role of grassroots mobilization in JI's electoral gains (Persons Interviewed, 2026).

Prof. Dr. Choudhry Mahmood Hasan highlighted that the fall of Sheikh Hasina created a vacuum quickly filled by opposition parties (Hasan, personal communication, June 2, 2026).

Civil society leaders stressed the importance of youth activism, echoing Transparency International Bangladesh's (2025) findings on grassroots mobilization.

Field Observations

The delegation attended public forums, visited universities in Dhaka and Chittagong, and observed humanitarian assistance projects in Cox's Bazar. These observations provided insights into the lived experiences of citizens and the operational challenges faced by institutions.

Documentary Review

The delegation analyzed local publications and secondary reports to contextualize field findings. Key references included:

- BRAC Institute of Governance and Development's State of Governance in Bangladesh 2026.
- European Parliament's Bangladesh Has Turned the Page (2026).
- Freedom House's Freedom in the World: Bangladesh (2026).
- Reporters Without Borders' World Press Freedom Index (2026).

Analytical Framework & Ethical Considerations

Triangulation: Cross-checking interview data with observations and secondary sources to ensure reliability.

Citation Practice: Following APA 7th edition guidelines, interviews are cited in text as personal communications.

Limitations: Interviews, though cited in text, are not publicly retrievable and are therefore excluded from the reference list. The delegation's limited timeframe (nine days) also constrained the breadth of coverage.

Ethical Considerations: All interviews were conducted with informed consent, ensuring confidentiality where requested.

Political Context

The February 2026 general elections marked a watershed in Bangladesh's political trajectory. According to Reuters (2025), Bangladesh's Election Commission suspended the registration of Sheikh Hasina's Awami League, barring it from future elections after the interim government led by Muhammad Yunus banned all party activities under the Anti-Terrorism Act. The decision

followed deadly protests that forced Hasina into exile and triggered war crimes investigations against party leaders. Once dominant for over two decades, the Awami League is now excluded from politics until tribunal proceedings conclude. India, long aligned with Hasina, voiced concern over shrinking democratic space and urged free and inclusive elections, highlighting both Bangladesh's political uncertainty and shifting regional dynamics. The delegation's visit coincided with the immediate aftermath of this transition, allowing for direct engagement with political actors, academics, journalists, and civil society leaders.

Election Outcomes

The Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) secured a two-thirds majority in parliament, consolidating its dominance and enabling it to form government without coalition dependence. Respondents described this as a "mandate for change," reflecting public discontent with authoritarian governance and economic stagnation.

Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) re-emerged as a significant parliamentary force, leveraging grassroots mobilization and religious networks. While some respondents viewed this as a revival of divisive politics, others argued that JI's presence could serve as a counterbalance to BNP's dominance. According to Dr. Shafiqur Rahman (Opposition Leader, JI Amir) *"Our victory is not just about seats; it is about restoring pluralism in Bangladesh's politics,"* he remarked, emphasizing that Jamaat's role is to ensure opposition voices remain central to democratic consolidation.

The National Citizen Party (NCP), a new entrant, reflected the growing influence of youth activism. Its success in urban constituencies was repeatedly cited as evidence of generational demands for transparency, accountability, and participatory governance.

Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir's election as President symbolized BNP's consolidation of power. Respondents noted that this outcome underscored the electorate's desire for leadership change, but also raised questions about the durability of reforms under a single dominant party.

Transition Dynamics & Institutional Fragility

The fall of Sheikh Hasina Wajid created a political vacuum quickly filled by opposition parties. Respondents emphasized that while the transition was largely peaceful, it carried risks of instability if governance remained exclusionary. Several interviewees warned that sidelining certain parties or groups could reignite unrest, particularly in rural areas where political loyalties remain fluid.

Across interviews, a recurring theme was the fragility of Bangladesh's institutions. Parliament, judiciary, and regulatory bodies were described as "weakly insulated" from political interference. Lawyers such as Advocate Shah Muhammad Mahfuzul Haq highlighted judicial vulnerability, noting that courts remained susceptible to political pressure. Civil society leaders emphasized inclusivity as a safeguard against instability. Mahima Akhtar noted that "Exclusionary politics is the quickest path back to unrest," while Dilawar Hussain Shishir stressed the importance of integrating youth voices into governance structures. According to Colonel (Retd.) Ashraf Al Deen (Dhaka, Bangladesh) *"Democracy cannot survive without stability. Political reforms must be matched by security sector reforms to prevent polarization from spilling into unrest."*

While Major General (Retd.) Salahuddin (Bangladesh Army) opined that *"The armed forces remain a stabilizing institution, but their role must be carefully balanced — supporting democracy without overshadowing civilian authority."*

Opportunities & Regional Implications

Despite these challenges, respondents consistently identified opportunities for structural reform. The new government was seen as having a historic chance to strengthen judicial independence, protect civil liberties, and empower youth. Furthermore, Bangladesh's transition carries significant regional implications, with Pakistan presented with opportunities for diplomatic, trade, and academic engagement.

Governance and Institutions

Bangladesh's political transition in 2026 has opened a window for reform, but respondents consistently emphasized that the durability of this change will depend on the strength of its institutions. The delegation's interviews revealed widespread concern about judicial independence, parliamentary transparency, and regulatory autonomy.

Key Institutional Pillars

Judicial Independence

Lawyers and legal scholars described the judiciary as vulnerable to political pressure. Advocate Shah Muhammad Mahfuzul Haq noted that "courts remain susceptible to partisan influence," warning that without reforms, judicial decisions could be reversed or manipulated. Transparency International Bangladesh (2025) highlighted corruption within lower courts. Advocate Aminul Islam (Lawyer, Dhaka) told that *"Without genuine autonomy, our courts cannot protect citizens from partisan influence. Judicial reform must move beyond promises to enforceable constitutional safeguards."*

Parliamentary Transparency

Respondents described parliament as the "heart of democratic consolidation," but one that has historically been weakened by executive dominance. The BNP's two-thirds majority was seen as both an opportunity and a risk. Prof. Dr. Choudhry Mahmood Hasan emphasized that "parliament must become a forum for genuine debate, not a rubber stamp."

Regulatory Autonomy

Bangladesh's regulatory institutions - including election commissions, anti-corruption bodies, and media regulators were described as fragile and politicized. The BRAC Institute of Governance and Development (2026) stressed that regulatory reform must be prioritized, particularly in areas of electoral integrity and financial transparency.

Respondent Perspectives & Action Roadmap

Academicians stressed structural reforms over partisan fixes. Lawyers warned of judicial vulnerability. Civil society leaders emphasized inclusivity, while journalists noted that weak institutions leave media freedom dependent on political goodwill. Empower youth and civil society through legal protections and financial support.

Opportunities for Reform include: establishing constitutional guarantees for judicial independence, enhancing parliamentary oversight, empowering regulatory bodies, and institutionalizing transparency through public data access.

Media Environment

The delegation's study visit revealed that Bangladesh's media landscape remains one of the most contested arenas of democratic transition. While the February 2026 elections created space for greater pluralism, respondents consistently emphasized that press freedom is fragile, dependent more on political goodwill than institutional guarantees.

Current State & Harassment Dynamics

Bangladesh ranked 152nd globally in the 2026 World Press Freedom Index (Reporters Without Borders, 2026). A.K.M. Rafique Nabi, editor of The Weekly Sonar Bangla, explained that "grassroots publications became platforms for opposition voices during the transition." However, several journalists described ongoing harassment, surveillance, arbitrary arrests, and threats from political actors.

Role of Social Media & Digital Discourse

Respondents highlighted the growing influence of social media platforms in shaping political discourse. Youth activists within the NCP described social media as "the conscience of the new Bangladesh," enabling rapid mobilization and accountability. However, several interviewees warned of misinformation and polarization.

Academic Perspectives

Bangladesh's universities and intellectual communities remain central to the country's democratic transition. Respondents consistently emphasized that academia is not only a site of debate but also a driver of reform, shaping governance, civil society, and regional cooperation.

Universities as Sites of Debate & Intellectual Leadership

Academic institutions have historically been incubators of political activism in Bangladesh. Prof. Dr. Choudhry Mahmood Hasan stressed that "intellectual communities must guide democratic consolidation by advocating structural reforms." Dr. Muhammad Umer Faruq emphasized integrating historical and cultural perspectives into reform processes, while Prof. Dr. Abdur Rabb underscored the role of academic exchanges in fostering regional cooperation. Dr. Mohammad Abul Kalam Azad argued that "*Islamic studies must be part of the democratic discourse, not sidelined,*" suggesting that inclusive governance requires integrating cultural and religious perspectives.

Challenges & Regional Academic Collaboration

Challenges include political interference in appointments/funding, severe resource constraints, and remaining threats to freedom of expression. However, respondents emphasized that academia can serve as a bridge between Bangladesh and Pakistan, depoliticizing bilateral relations through joint research initiatives and faculty exchanges. Prof. Dr. Abdur Rabb (Vice Chancellor, Manarat International University) highlighted the role of universities as incubators of reform: *“Academic exchanges with Pakistan can depoliticize relations and build trust through shared research.”*

Civil Society

Civil society in Bangladesh has long been a critical force in shaping political transitions. Grassroots mobilization, youth activism, and NGO engagement were central to the February 2026 elections and remain vital for sustaining democratic consolidation.

Grassroots, Youth & NGO Activation

Mahima Akhtar noted that "exclusionary politics is the quickest path back to unrest," while Dilawar Hussain Shishir emphasized that grassroots mobilization was decisive. The rise of the NCP was repeatedly cited as evidence of generational demands. Furthermore, NGOs in Dhaka/Chittagong and humanitarian workers in Cox's Bazar highlighted human rights and refugee management as central tests. Muhammad Hussain (Jogan Nath University) observed that *“youth activism is reshaping Bangladesh’s political culture,”* pointing to the NCP’s rise as evidence of generational demands for transparency. Muhammad Mazharul Islam (Nazim-e-A’la, Islami Chhatra Shibir) asserted that *“The student movement is the conscience of Bangladesh’s democracy. Our role is to ensure that youth voices are not sidelined, but integrated into governance and reform.”*

Challenges Facing Civil Society

Legal restrictions on NGOs and non-profit organizations.

Financial constraints undermining sustainability and operational independence.

Harassment and intimidation when challenging dominant political narratives.

Lack of inter-organizational coordination reducing collective impact.

Anti-Corruption Move

Corruption has long been identified as one of the most persistent challenges undermining governance and democratic consolidation in Bangladesh. The delegation's interviews revealed that the February 2026 elections were widely interpreted as a public rejection of entrenched corruption. Muhammad Mozammel Haq (Professor, Retd., Dhaka University) warned that *“corruption in lower courts remains the Achilles’ heel of governance,”* underscoring the urgency of judicial reforms and regulatory autonomy.

Public Demand & Institutional Weaknesses

Transparency International Bangladesh (2025) reported that corruption remained the most cited grievance among voters. The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) was repeatedly described as politicized and under-resourced. Advocate Shah Muhammad Mahfuzul Haq noted that "without autonomy, the ACC cannot credibly investigate high-level corruption."

Government Initiatives & Forward Framework

The new government has announced several initiatives: judicial reforms, parliamentary oversight mechanisms, digital governance platforms to reduce bribery, and civil society monitoring partnerships.

Regional Implications

Bangladesh's political transition in 2026 carries consequences that extend well beyond its borders, reshaping South Asia's political landscape with implications for diplomacy, trade, security, and academic cooperation.

Bilateral & Multilateral Dynamics

Bangladesh-India Dynamics

Era of Awami League Dominance: For more than a decade, India exercised considerable influence over Bangladesh's domestic and foreign policy through its close partnership with the Awami League. Cooperation extended to security coordination, trade agreements, energy projects, and connectivity initiatives, making Dhaka a reliable ally for New Delhi.

Shift in the Strategic Equation: With the Awami League ousted by Parliamentary Act, India faces the loss of its most dependable partner. The new government led by BNP and supported by JI inherits a delicate balancing act:

- On one hand, Bangladesh cannot afford to alienate India due to geographic proximity, economic interdependence, and shared infrastructure projects.
- On the other hand, public sentiment in Bangladesh often views India's role as hegemonic, creating pressure on the new leadership to assert greater independence.

Challenge of Indian Hegemony: The central question now is how the new government will cope with India's entrenched influence:

- India may attempt to leverage trade, transit routes, and border management to maintain dominance.
- Bangladesh's leadership will need to diversify foreign relations, strengthening ties with China, Pakistan, and regional organizations to reduce reliance on India.

- A more assertive foreign policy could emerge, emphasizing sovereignty and balanced diplomacy.

Independent Foreign Policy Prospects The durability of Bangladesh’s independent foreign policy will depend on:

- **Institutional strength:** Whether the new government can consolidate reforms and resist external pressure.
- **Regional alliances:** Engaging constructively with Pakistan, China, and ASEAN to broaden strategic options.
- **Domestic legitimacy:** Ensuring that foreign policy decisions reflect popular aspirations rather than elite bargains.

Bangladesh-Pakistan Relations

Joint research initiatives, academic exchanges, and humanitarian cooperation regarding Cox's Bazar present strong avenues for depoliticizing and strengthening bilateral ties. Muhammad Wasif (Deputy High Commissioner, Pakistan High Commission, Dhaka) stressed that *“Bangladesh’s democratic transition is an opportunity for Pakistan to reset relations on the basis of mutual respect, academic exchange, and economic cooperation. Diplomacy must move beyond rhetoric to structured engagement.”* Athar Hameed Khan (Counsellor, Pakistan High Commission, Dhaka) said that *“For Pakistan, constructive diplomacy with Bangladesh must be continuous and institutionalized — not limited to high-level visits. Everyday cooperation in trade, academia, and civil society is what builds trust.”*

Regional Organizations & Security

Dhaka's renewed emphasis on democratic consolidation could reinvigorate SAARC and BIMSTEC. Meanwhile, the resurgence of Jamaat-e-Islami requires inclusive governance to maintain internal and regional stability.

Economic & Trade Opportunities

Expanding trade ties in textiles, agriculture, and technology offers significant mutual economic benefits. Rafe Samnan (CEO, Al BALAD Exim Ltd.) argued *“Economic diversification is the key. Bangladesh and Pakistan can unlock trade in textiles, agriculture, and digital services if barriers are reduced,”*

Policy Recommendations

To ensure that reforms are durable and inclusive, the delegation synthesizes seven key policy recommendations:

1. **Strengthening Institutions:** Establish constitutional safeguards for judicial independence, enhance parliamentary oversight, and empower regulatory bodies.
2. **Combating Corruption:** Grant full autonomy/funding to the ACC, institutionalize open data platforms, and tackle cross-border illicit trade.
3. **Protecting Media Freedom:** Enact constitutional protections, establish independent regulators, and support grassroots journalism.
4. **Empowering Civil Society:** Expand legal protections for NGOs, support youth participation, and build coordination networks.
5. **Academic Engagement:** Protect academic freedom, fund joint research, and promote student/faculty exchanges with Pakistan.
6. **Regional Cooperation:** Deepen diplomatic engagement through SAARC/BIMSTEC, expand bilateral trade, and collaborate on refugee management.
7. **Inclusive Governance:** Ensure opposition and minority participation in decision-making processes.

Conclusion

The delegation's visit to Bangladesh (29 May - 6 June 2026) took place during a period of profound political transition. The February 2026 general elections reshaped the country's political order, with the BNP securing a two-thirds majority, JI re-emerging as a major force, and the NCP representing youth activism.

Key Findings Summary

Opportunities for Reform: A historic chance to strengthen institutions and enhance accountability.

Risks of Instability: Without inclusive governance, political unrest could re-emerge.

Regional Significance: Proactive Pakistani engagement in diplomacy, trade, and academia is vital.

Lessons for Pakistan & Final Reflection

Bangladesh stands at a crossroads. While challenges remain, its democratic transition offers a historic opportunity to build an inclusive political order. For Pakistan and South Asia, constructive engagement with Bangladesh's evolving landscape will be vital for regional stability.

Recommendations for Pakistan

1. **Diplomatic Engagement:** Initiate structured dialogue and track-II diplomacy.
2. **Trade & Economic Cooperation:** Expand trade in textiles, agriculture, and renewable energy.
3. **Academic & Research Collaboration:** Launch joint university research initiatives and student exchanges.
4. **Civil Society Partnerships:** Facilitate NGO collaboration on transparency and refugee rights.
5. **Anti-Corruption Cooperation:** Share best practices in digital governance and institutional reform.

6. **Security & Stability:** Engage in constructive dialogue on counter-extremism and regional security frameworks.

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Appendix A: Complete Respondent List

Academics and Researchers

- Prof. Dr. Choudhry Mahmood Hasan – Senior academic in pharmacy and public health
- Dr. Shariful Islam Imshiat – Associate Professor, Media & Communication, North South University
- Dr. Mohammad Abul Kalam Azad – Associate Professor, Islamic Studies, Manarat International University
- Prof. Dr. Abdur Rabb – Vice Chancellor, Manarat International University
- Muhammad Hussain – Professor, Jogan Nath University
- Muhammad Umer Faruq – Associate Professor, Department of Islamic History and Culture, Dhaka University
- Md. Mozammel Haq – Professor (Retd.), Department of Microbiology, Dhaka University

Civil Society Leaders and Activists

- Dilawar Hussain Shishir – Civil society activist, Dhaka
- Md. Kadir Mahmood – Civil society activist, Dhaka
- Mahima Akhtar – Civil society activist, Dhaka
- Md. Nazmul Islam – Civil society activist, Dhaka
- Md. Riazul Islam – Civil society activist, Dhaka
- Noshad Ali Farhad – Civil society activist, Dhaka
- Adzhar Jadda Madjid – Civil society activist (regional contact)
- Ridwanur Rahman – WAMY, Dhaka

Journalists and Media Professionals

- A.K.M. Rafique Nabi – Chairman, The Weekly Sonar Bangla
- Abduzzahir Bhuiyan Anas – Senior Reporter, Ekattor TV
- Md. Zainal Abadin – Senior Reporter, Kaler Kantho

Legal Professionals

- Advocate Aminul Islam – Lawyer, Dhaka
- Advocate Shah Muhammad Mahfuzul Haq – Lawyer, Judge Court Dhaka / Hatiya Court Noakhali

Political Leaders

- Saiful Alam – Member of Parliament, Dhaka City
- Dr. Shafiqur Rahman – Ameer, Jamaat-e-Islami Bangladesh; Opposition Leader
- Ahmad Maburur – Spokesperson, Jamaat-e-Islami Bangladesh
- Muhammad Mazharul Islam – Nazim A'la, Islami Chhatra Shibir
- Mutasim Billah – Islami Chhatra Shibir activist

Business and Professional Figures

- A.K.M. Rafiqun Nabi – Managing Director, The Ibn Sina Group Investment Co. Ltd.
- K.G. Kuddus – Proprietor, Hotel International, Chittagong
- Rafe Samnan – CEO, Al BALAD Exim Ltd., Dhaka

Military and Diplomatic Contacts

- Col. Ashraf Al Deen (Retd.) – Bangladesh Army
- Maj. General (Retd.) Salahuddin – Bangladesh Army
- Muhammad Wasif – Deputy High Commissioner, Pakistan High Commission, Dhaka
- Athar Hameed Khan – Counsellor, Pakistan High Commission, Dhaka

Annex B: Methodological Note

The visit to Bangladesh (29 May – 6 June 2026) employed a qualitative research design focused on semi-structured interviews (45–90 minutes duration across Dhaka and Chittagong). Ethical considerations included informed consent and confidentiality. Findings were triangulated against secondary think tank literature.

Annex C: Questionnaire for Respondents

Section 1: Political Context

1. How do you assess the significance of the February 2026 general elections in reshaping Bangladesh's political order?
2. What opportunities and risks do you foresee in the current political transition?
3. How has the change in leadership affected democratic pluralism and inclusivity?

Section 2: Governance and Institutions

4. In your view, what are the most urgent institutional reforms needed to consolidate democracy?
5. How effective are current parliamentary and judicial mechanisms in ensuring accountability?
6. What role should regulatory bodies (e.g., Election Commission, Anti-Corruption Commission) play in strengthening governance? Are you satisfied with the results of recent elections?

Section 3: Civil Society

7. How do you evaluate the role of civil society organizations in Bangladesh's transition?
8. What challenges do civil society organizations and grassroots movements face in sustaining democratic accountability?
9. How can youth activism be harnessed to promote inclusivity and long-term reforms?

Section 4: Anti-Corruption Efforts

10. What are the main obstacles to combating corruption in Bangladesh?
11. How effective has the Anti-Corruption Commission been in addressing governance failures? Will it be able to address the grievances of the public?
12. What reforms would you recommend to strengthen transparency and accountability?

Section 5: Media Environment

13. How would you describe the current state of press freedom in Bangladesh?
14. What challenges do journalists face in reporting on political and governance issues?
15. How can media pluralism be protected and expanded during this transition?

Section 6: Academic Perspectives

16. What role should universities and research institutions play in guiding democratic consolidation?
17. How has academic freedom been affected by recent political changes? Will recent elections of students' union bring any positive change in the political culture of Bangladesh?
18. What opportunities exist for regional academic cooperation, particularly with Pakistan?

Section 7: Regional Implications

19. How do you see Bangladesh's transition influencing South Asian politics?
20. What implications does this transition have for Pakistan's foreign policy, trade, and security? And how do you foresee India will respond to this transition?
21. What forms of regional cooperation (diplomatic, academic, civil society) would be most beneficial?

Section 8: Concluding Reflections

22. What is your overall assessment of Bangladesh's democratic trajectory?
23. What lessons can Pakistan learn from Bangladesh's experience?
24. What recommendations would you give to policymakers in Bangladesh and Pakistan to ensure stability and inclusivity?