

## Bangladesh Elections: Political Analysis of the situation

**EBF Special:** Bangladesh is all set to hold its parliamentary elections on the 30th December this year. It's election linked activities have entered into a feverish pitch due to multiple factors. This time, the ruling party Awami League (AL)'s principal adversary Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) has decided to contest which is very significant. Also, noteworthy is the participation of Dr Kamal Hossain, leader of Gono Forum and head of the newly formed political consortium called the Oikya Manch. Dr Kamal was a close confidante of Bangladesh's father of the nation Sheikh Mujibur Rahman (also father of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina) and during his prime ministership, Dr kamal was the law minister. He is an internationally renowned constitutional expert with a high degree of credibility.

What is important is that Dr. Kamal has changed camps and is supporting the BNP which has baffled all the political commentators.

Disturbingly, it is BNP has fielded so far 25 who are to be Jamaat in mindset activities. If Jamaat power or even as in parliament, it is be a major setback for liberation and secular. Because Jamaat and known as far right, and reactionary forces.



because candidates reported and comes to opposition going to the pro-forces. BNP are communal. This will

give a psychological boost to the Jihadi elements. Bangladesh had had numerous terror-strikes and there are innumerable jihadi outfits in the country. With the presence of nearly 7 million Rohingya refugees in the country, chances of radicalization are there as hostile and inimical forces are trying hard to fan communal discord and promote anti secular feelings. This doesn't look palatable at all.

There are other communal outfits like Hizbut Tehreer, Hefazat e Islam, Ansar Bangladesh etc. who are tainted because of fomenting terror and not allowing Hasina to support the minority and secular forces. As the election dates come closer, the Jihadi forces are waiting in the wings to hit. Their task looks simple because now BNP is in the election fray which was a partner of Jamaat in the governance of the country and these Jihadi elements will feel emboldened to subvert peace in the country and harm the polity. This needs to be contained with a fool proof unity among the democratic and forward-thinking forces to defeat the communal attempts by the divisive forces. A diplomatic offensive also needs to be launched so that BNP and its affiliates don't have a breathing space to gain legitimacy. There are, meanwhile, indications that BNP leader Khaleda Zia's son Tarique Rahman, who is sheltered in London, is garnering support from some extraneous quarters to cause damage in order to come back to power by hook or by crook. He has the support in his blueprint from the extremist lobby and that's a matter of disquiet. So, to defeat the BNP and Jamaat forces it seems imperative to neutralise them with a firm hand.

## EBF Seminar at House of Lords: Call to fight Militant and Communal Extremists for Free and Fair Election in Bangladesh

London, October 25: Speakers at a seminar at the House of Lords in London on "Challenges to Parliamentary Democracy and Threats of Radicalisation in Bangladesh: Way Forward" on 25 October 2018 called upon the European governments to reassess their views of Jihadist groups and said, Europe needs to understand that the rise of radicalisation and religiously-motivated violence is not a localized phenomenon in Bangladesh and in the South Asian countries, it has serious ramifications for Europe too. They called for effective engagement with the Bangladesh authorities to combat fanatic indoctrination, terrorism and other forms of political violence.

Organised by European Bangladeshi diaspora organisation, European Bangladesh Forum (EBF) the seminar was hosted by Lord Paul Bew, Patron of EBF. The speakers at the seminar were: Jim Fitzpatrick, Member of the British Parliament and Vice Chairman of All-Party Parliamentary Group on Bangladesh, Syed Badrul Ahsan, Chief Editor of The Asian Age, Bangladesh, Roberta Bonazzi, founder and President of the European Foundation for Democracy & head of Brussels chapter of Counter Extremism Project (CEP), Dr. Siegfried O Wolf, German political scientist and Director of South Asia Democratic Forum, Shahriar Kabir, President of Forum for Secular Bangladesh and Martin Frampton of Queen Mary University of London. Ansar Ahmed Ullah, President of EBF gave the welcome speech.



The seminar was held at a time when Bangladesh is preparing for the next general elections in December this year amidst threats of boycott by one of the major political parties, BNP. BNP had earlier threatened to boycott the elections if they are not held under a non-elected, non-party caretaker government.

Speakers in the seminar said, secular politics is today in broad outlines restored in a significant way, but warned at the same time, the forces against secularism should not be underestimated or ignored, especially at a time when Bangladesh prepares for the next general elections end of the year. They hoped that there will be a free and fair elections where all can exercise their rights of franchise.

Dr. Siegfried Wolf said, western government should not allow parties supporting or patronising terrorism to use their territories and must stop granting them safe-haven, freedom of movement. Political parties that directly or indirectly associate – either through individual members or third entities (Muslim Charity and



cultural organisations) – with violent Jihadist organisations must be considered as a part of the Jihadist movement, he opined.

Writer and journalist from Dhaka, Shahriar Kabir said, from 2001 to 2006 Bangladesh witnessed an unprecedented persecution of religious minorities, mostly the Hindus. In order to convert Bangladesh into a monolithic Muslim country he added, BNP-Jamaat alliance forced more than a quarter million hapless Hindus to leave Bangladesh and take shelter in neighboring India. Despite protests the then BNP coalition



government did not take any measure, on the contrary several secular civil society leaders were thrown behind the bar, he added.

Roberta Bonnazi said, radicalization is a global phenomenon and it has no boundary. That is why it needs multilevel cooperation among civil societies and

also in the government levels. In this respect Bangladesh needs support and cooperation from European countries and at the same time Europe has a lot to learn from Bangladesh from its successful operation against militancy and religion-based extremism.

Earlier, Lord Paul Bew in his welcome address said, we have to look at the root of violent extremism and religion-based violence, which is not only the significant issue for Bangladesh, but also significant for the European countries including United Kingdom. Through the analysis of the European and global perspectives of the militancy and terrorism, we have to increase mutual understanding and cooperation to ensure the sustainable policy and strategy to fight against all sorts of extremist threats and violence. Among others, General Secretary of World Sindhi Congress Lakhu Luhana, Director of Humane First Ajanta Deb Roy and writer Priyajit Debsarkar spoke in the seminar.

About 50 participants from Bangladeshi and European representatives from UK, Switzerland, Belgium, Netherlands and Germany took part in the seminar. Among others, President of UK Awami League Sultan Mahmud Sharif, President of EBF Ansar Ahmed Ullah, Vice President B. Chowdhury, Senior Journalist Syed Anas Pasha and President of Bangladesh National Human Rights Alliance Arun Barua spoke in the views exchange held after seminar.



## **‘Jamaat a threat to democracy, progress in Bangladesh’ - US Congressman Jim Banks**

United States Congressman Jim Banks has said the US stands with Bangladeshi people seeking free, fair and safe democratic elections but cautioned that Islamist groups like Jamaat-e-Islami pose a great threat to the country’s democracy and progress. “Bangladesh is a young democracy that struggles with radical groups attempting to subvert Bangladesh’s progress all while seeking political power for themselves,” Jim Banks,



US Representative for Indiana's 3rd congressional district, said while speaking at a panel discussion on ‘Stability, Democracy, and Islamism in Bangladesh’ at Hudson Institute in Washington, DC yesterday. The discussion was organized by Hudson Institute (<https://www.hudson.org>) on 13 December to discuss politics in Bangladesh and the country’s upcoming elections. Opening remarks were delivered by Congressman, US Representative for Indiana’s Third congressional district Jim Banks (R-IN). Panelists included founder of Liberty South Asia Seth Oldmixon, Director of Islamist Watch, Middle East Forum Sam Westrop, and Senior

Intelligence analyst of Investigative Project on Terrorism Abha Shanker. The panel was moderated by Ambassador Husain Haqqani, Hudson Institute director for South and Central Asia programming.

These violent theocratic groups have committed violent acts against religious minority Christians, Hindus, Buddhists and moderate Muslims in an attempt to silence their voices and discouraged them from participating in a democratic process, he said, according to a press release of Bangladesh embassy in Washington, DC. Just days ago, two campaign workers were killed and dozens injured as tensions rise before the elections scheduled to be held on December 30. Other political actors see these groups as a threat as well, he also said.



“The United States should support the efforts of Bangladesh government to combat the radical Islamist groups and to reaffirm the rights of the religious minorities,” the congressman said. The resolution he introduced has called on the USAID and the US State Department to refrain from any partnership or any funding arrangement from any organisation affiliated with radical Islamist groups in Bangladesh, the press release added. He recalled that previous elections have been the breeding grounds for these violent radical groups who have committed hundreds of acts of violence against religious minorities, minority-owned businesses and houses of worships. Terming Bangladesh a booming democratic country in the South Asia region with a growing presence in the global stage, Congressman Banks said, “Islamist groups like Jamaat-e-Islami threatened the country’s prosperity.” Watch at: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9o\\_qxz1LiCU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9o_qxz1LiCU)

## SADF & EBF meeting held in Brussels for future collaboration to fight radicalization and ensure secular democracy

Brussels: The Brussels-based European think tank, South Asia Democratic Forum (SADF-[www.sadf.eu](http://www.sadf.eu)) and Europe-based organization, European Bangladesh Forum (EBF-[www.ebforum.eu](http://www.ebforum.eu)) held a joint meeting in Brussels on 28 November 2018 to discuss the possibility of future collaboration between the two organisations on the issues of secular democracy, fight against Islamic fundamentalism and extremism in Europe and the region. SADF hosted this lunch meeting at a local restaurant where key members of both the organisations were present. The SADF was represented by its founder Executive Director Paulo Casaca, former MEP from Portugal for 10 years, Director of SADF Dr. Siegfried O Wolf, Policy advisor of SADF Susan Guarda (who was a member of the Fact-finding mission of European politicians and returned from Dhaka on 27 Nov 2018), Manager SADF Stephan Lampe and SADF intern Akshay Sharma from Warsaw. The EBF was represented by its President Ansar Ahmed Ullah (UK), Vice President B. Chowdhury and Board member Zamal Khan (UK).



(Photo: EBF-SADF meeting in Brussels. From right: Paulo Casaca, B. Chowdhury, Dr. Siegfried Wof, Akshoy Sharma. From left: Ansar Ahmed Ullah, Susan Guarda, Zamal Khan & Stephan Lampe)

Both the groups agreed upon that even if Awami League returns to power in the coming elections, Jamaat and BNP will still remain a major threat and challenge to secular democracy, not only in Bangladesh but also in the whole region and in Europe. As these organizations have a strong footings in Europe they remain a threat. The leaders of the two organisations underscored the need to continue their efforts to build up public opinion among the mainstream population in Europe and lobby with the European politicians, so that the European governments do not allow these organisations and individuals to hatch conspiracy to destroy the democratic process in Bangladesh.

They underscored the need to raise the issue of **‘international recognition of the 1971 Genocide in Bangladesh’** and decided to organize a seminar/discussion on this issue at the European Parliament in Brussels with European MPs and MEPs in mid-March 2019. They said, it will have more impact if ‘we could hear the story of the atrocities direct from the victims or members of the victims’ family.

Later, Executive Director of SADF Paulo Casaca hoped that the collaboration between his organization and EBF would continue further in the days ahead. It may be mentioned that Director of SADF Dr Siegfried O Wolf was one of the key speakers at the three last conferences organized by EBF in Brussels and UN Geneva. Vice President of EBF in his turn thanked SADF for hosting this ‘lunch meeting’.



# EIU forecasts Election win for Awami League

The Economist Intelligence Unit, or EIU, expects the ruling Awami League will return to power in the Dec 30 parliamentary election. In the latest country briefing note, the EIU, the research and analysis division of the Economist Group, said the party has overseen solid economic growth and its reelection will be assisted by patronage at local level.

The political environment will be characterized by frequent bouts of social unrest during the 2019-23 forecast period, according to the report released this month. Along with the immediate threat of terrorist attacks, opposition protests and public demonstrations will pose risks to political stability, it said. According to the forecast by the London-based group, Bangladesh's economic growth would remain robust and real GDP will grow by an average of 7.7 percent per year in 2018/19-2022/23, bolstered by strong increases in private consumption and gross fixed investment.

The report also specifically mentions the reputation of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina as being the key factor in election. It states that Hasina remains the "most popular candidate", according to numerous local opinion polls. The country's impressive record of economic growth and socio-economic development under the Awami League administration, coupled with a lack of an effective opposition election campaign, will be enough to fend off any challenge posed by the BNP or the Jatiya Oikya Front more broadly, the EIU said.



The report adds that a **win for the Awami League will be important in sustaining foreign investment**, and will also support the administration's drive to expand and deepen private sector participation in the economy. Following such a win, Bangladesh is expected to continue to exploit its strategically important location on the Bay of Bengal to extract concessions and economic assistance from India, China and Japan.

## ELECTION WATCH

Despite the BNP's decision to participate, as part of a larger political alliance-the Jatiya Oikya Front-the EIU expects the AL to maintain its majority in parliament, partly owing to its well-entrenched system of patronage at local level and also because it has overseen a period of solid economic growth. "However, the risks to our call of an AL victory have risen markedly," said the EIU. The Jatiya Oikya Front is led by Kamal Hossain, a veteran politician and key author of Bangladesh's first constitution. He is seen as a secular icon, who will help soften the impact of the BNP's nationalist reputation on the overall image of the alliance.

The government's hardline response to recent student protests over road safety has reduced AL support among younger voters, according to the report. In addition, recent arrests of opposition leaders may play on voter sympathy in favour of the BNP, it said. **However, the current prime minister, Sheikh Hasina, remains the most popular candidate, the EIU said citing numerous local opinion polls.** It is likely, however, that the BNP's participation will reduce the AL's margin of victory to some extent, the EIU said.

## BNP leader Mosharraf faces sedition charges over 'ISI audio'

Dhaka: An intercepted telephone conversation this week purportedly between a top BNP leader and a senior official of a Pakistani spy agency has set the social media ablaze. With the audio leaks out in the open, BNP leader Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain now faces a sedition case that accuses him of plotting to “sabotage” the national election set for Dec 30.

YouTube feeds well into the allegation that the opposition intelligence outfit. The ruling Ali Sumon, a retired army Upazila Parishad in Cumilla with the police.



The conversation available on ruling Awami League’s longstanding party has ties with the military party seized the moment. Mohammad major and chairman of Daudkandi filed the case against the BNP leader

Mosharraf Hossain has been general election in that based operative of Pakistan’s in the case. Mosharraf Hossain, on the other hand, dismissed the audio as ‘fake’ saying he never spoke to anyone from the ISI. Daudkandi police chief Alamgir Hossain said they accepted the allegation from Ali, but any sedition case needs permission from the home ministry to proceed. “We’re preparing to send the matter to the top authorities,” OC Alamgir Hossain said. Mosharraf Hossain, a BNP standing committee member, is contesting as a candidate from the BNP and the Jatiya Oikya Front for Comilla-1 and 2 seats in the election. Ali, the complainant of the case, is the son of Awami League candidate for the Comilla-1 constituency Subid Ali Bhuiyan. (BD NEWS24)

## EBF holds meeting with Community Leaders in London

EBF organized a dinner meeting on 25 October 2018 at a local restaurant at Brick Lane, the center-point of the Bangladeshi community in London. Chaired by EBF President Ansar Ahmed Ullah, the meeting was addressed among others by veteran organizer of the liberation war of Bangladesh in Britain, Sultan Sharif, writer and journalist from Bangladesh Shahriar Kabir, EBF Switzerland Joint Coordinator Arun Barua, London-based senior journalist Syed Anas Pasha, Community activist Jamal Khan and EBF Vice President Bikash Chowdhury.



Speakers called upon the Bangladeshi community to remain vigilant against all sorts of conspiracies of Jamaat an BNP to undermine the forthcoming elections, which the present government is trying to hold free and fairly. Addressing the meeting Shahriar Kabir said, relying on BNP, Jamaat is conspiring

(Photo: Sultan Sharif is speaking at the dinner meeting of EBF in London. On his left are: EBF President Ansar Ahmed Ullah and Switzerland EBF Joint Coordinator Arun Barua) to create another massacre

before the election the way they did in 1971 in Bangladesh. To take revenge of their leaders hanged following the war crime trial they are determined to do so, he warned. The recent alliance of the opposition parties

shows that the conspiracy of Jamaat this time is more serious, planned and dangerous. He added, Jamaat leaders will contest the elections with the symbol of BNP. We talked to the Election Commission on this issue and said, no Jamaat leaders will be allowed to contest the coming elections. But unfortunately, the role of Election Commission in this regard is not clear, he opined. Expressing his utter frustration Shahriar Kabir said, Election Commission should now come to a decision to keep the Jamaat leaders away from contesting the elections.

Bangladeshi liberation war organizer in Britain Sultan Sharif said, Jamaat is a threat for the existence of secular Bangladesh. This party, he added, has emerged to destroy the four basic foundations of Bangladesh. He said, there is no reason to feel safe that registration of Jamaat has been cancelled. We have to make sure that Jamaat cannot put its candidate to fight the elections under the banner of other party.

## High level European delegation to Bangladesh: Express satisfaction at progress

Brussels, EBF Report: A high level European delegation with the European Parliamentarians and officials visited Bangladesh from November 23-25. Headed by Rupert Oliver Matthews, MEP of the European Conservatives and Reformists Group, and accompanied by his assistant Marc-Andre Desmarais the delegation included; 1) Fulvio Marticiello, MEP of the Group of the European People's Party; 2) Alberto Cirio, MEP

European the Portuguese including 3) the Socialist 4) Joana de Socialist Pereira of They were Sharma, European Social



of the Group of the People's Party; and Members of the Parliament Sandra Pereira of Democratic Party; Lima, of the Party; and 5) Joao the People's Party. joined by 6) Madi Member of the Economic and Committee; and 7)

Susan Guarda and 8) Laura da Silva, both representing SADF. (Photo: members of the delegation met PM at Gonobhavan). The Brussels-based think tank, South Asia Democratic Forum (SADF) organized the visit of the European delegation to Bangladesh. Referring to the visit Policy advisor of SADF Susan Guarda told EBF, Europeans don't know much about the progress Bangladesh has been making in the field of democracy, economy. To fill this gap SADF organized the visit of this high-level delegation to Bangladesh. The delegation met Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at her official residence, Gonobhavan and shared with them her vision for the country that her father and the country's first President Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

Talking to EBF Vice President Ms Susan Guarda, Policy advisor of SADF and a member of the delegation said, 'before we arrived in Bangladesh, many of us had a different picture of Bangladesh. But on arrival after going through many areas including garments factory, outside Dhaka we were overwhelmed. She said, the delegation felt that there was a need for the continuation of the democratic government to keep the pace of present progress in Bangladesh. Ms. Susan said that the PM drew the attention of the delegation to bring the perpetrators of the 1971 genocide by Pakistan against Bengali people to justice, when millions of people were killed, women raped and villages burnt.



## Call to remain vigilant against Jamaat & BNP in Polls: Belgium AL

After the lunch leaders of EBF and SADF went together to the nearby Residence Palace, International Press Centre, where Belgium Awami League organized an exhibition on the subject, “Bangladesh: On the way to Development and Democracy with Challenges” and a discussion. Bangladesh ambassador in Belgium Shahdat Hossain inaugurated the exhibition which depicted the atrocities committed by the BNP-Jamaat-led so-called violent movement by throwing petrol bombs at the running public buses and other vehicles.

*(Photo: Bangladesh ambassador with glass among others after the inaugural of the photo exhibition)*



The discussion

meeting chaired by Belgium AL President Shahidul Hoque was addressed by Bangladesh ambassador in Belgium Mohammed Shahdat Hossain as chief guest, SADF head Paulo Casaca as special guest, EBF President Ansar Ahmed Ullah, EBF Vice-President B. Chowdhury Barua, SADF Director Dr. Siegfried O Wolf and SADF Policy Advisor Susan Guarda. General Secretary of Awami League Jahangir Chowdhury Rata conducted the meeting. In his speech Paulo Casaca said, Bangladesh today is the model of development in the world and the elections that Bangladesh is going to organize in December will be a model to the whole world. But he at the same time said, we have to be vigilant so that in the name of democracy the 1971 war criminals and their allies cannot create anarchy and chaos in the country. He called BNP to discard Jamaat and join the democratic forces and called upon the Bangladeshi people to elect AL so that Hasina government can continue the process of development.

### UK Journalist delegation to Dhaka, led by EBF President

A six-member team of journalists from the UK is going to Bangladesh to attend a leading media event ‘Media Dialogue with Bangladesh Press’ aimed at engaging and interacting with UK-based journalists and leading Bangladeshi media houses prior to the run up to general elections scheduled on 30 December 2018. The trip will also provide an opportunity to see some of the significant development and success stories of Bangladesh.

The team is being led by EBF President Ansar Ahmed Ullah who is also a journalist (London Bangla Press Club & Daily star UK representative). Other members of the team include Duncan Bartlett - Editor, Asian Affairs Magazine, Farhan Masud Khan, Head of Programs, Channel S TV, Kois Miah, Photojournalist, Matiar Chowdhury – NNB, Writer Sebastian Dunn and Syed Anas Pasha, Editor-in-chief. The team will be flying out to Dhaka on 18 December and returns on 22 December.

## Britain releases radical Islamist preacher under strict controls

A radical Islamist preacher convicted in 2016 of inspiring support for the Islamic State group and described by a British prison official as “genuinely dangerous” to public safety was released from jail Friday under strict controls on his travels and use of the internet. The preacher, Anjem Choudary, 51, was released from the Belmarsh high-security jail in London and moved to a probation hostel, also in the capital, where he will spend at least six months.

Earlier this week, he was freed from the maximum-security prison in the northeast on automatic 5 1/2-year sentence for Islamic State terrorist group, detective familiar with the *York Times*. For the remainder of his sentence, he will be barred from leaving without permission, organizing meetings and will also be restricted to one monitored by counterterrorism officials, and he will be permitted to interact only with people approved by authorities.



He moved to the jail after being granted parole after serving half of his sentence. A former counterterrorism arrangement told *The New York Times*, he will remain in London, using the internet to speak to children, attend certain mosques. He will have one phone call a day, which will be monitored.

David Videcette, a former counterterrorism detective who investigated the July 7, 2005, terror attacks in London, said in an interview that Choudary was dangerous because he had influence over a “particularly violent” network and was “particularly good” at recruiting extremists. Before his release Friday, Choudary was placed on a UN sanctions list, which resulted in his assets being frozen. In order to cover his living expenses, he will have to apply for exceptions and will be required to disclose the purpose of all his payments, according to the former counterterrorism detective.

Last month, the prisons minister, Rory Stewart, warned that Choudary’s release would pose a “genuinely dangerous” threat to public safety because of his “deeply pernicious, destabilizing influence.” Choudary, a former lawyer and leader of a banned extremist group, played cat and mouse with British authorities for 20 years. Then, along with an associate, Mohammed Mizanur Rahman, he was accused of pledging allegiance to the leader of the Islamic State in social media posts. The oath was circulated online on the ninth anniversary of the 7/7 terrorist attacks. Choudary was arrested in 2014, charged with inciting support for the Islamic State and convicted in 2016 in London’s central criminal court for inviting support for the militant group.

Before his conviction, Choudary led the extremist group Al-Muhajiroun, which had inspired more than 100 Britons to join the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria and has since splintered off into smaller groups that have incited terrorism, counterterrorism officials say. Khalid Masood, who killed five people after driving into a group of pedestrians in Westminster in 2017, was also a member of Al-Muhajiroun. The Islamic State described Masood as a disciple and a hero for the deadly assault carried out in the shadow of Big Ben. Choudary’s wife, Rubana Akhtar, 43, currently runs the female wing of Al-Muhajiroun and was under police investigation for 18 months after a video of her promoting Islamic State ideology emerged online. The investigation was dropped last month after police concluded that she had not committed any terrorism offenses. (*The NY Times*).

## Murad-from Jihadists' Slave to Nobel Laureate

Nadia Murad survived the worst cruelties inflicted on her people, the Yazidis of Iraq, before becoming a global champion of their cause and winning the Nobel Peace Prize. Murad and Congolese doctor Denis Mukwege were jointly awarded the prize for their "efforts to end the use of sexual violence as a weapon of war," Nobel committee chairwoman Berit Reiss-Andersen said in unveiling the winners in Oslo recently.

The 25-year-old Murad, her thin, pale face framed by her long brown hair, becomes the first Iraqi to win the Nobel Peace Prize. She once lived a quiet life in her village in the mountainous Yazidi stronghold of Sinjar in northern Iraq, close to the border with Syria. But when the so-called Islamic State jihadist group stormed across swathes of the two countries in 2014, her fate changed forever and her nightmare began. One day up trucks bearing the black flag of the jihadists swept in August that year, pick-flag of the jihadists swept fighters set about killing across swathes of the two changed forever and her in August that year, pick-flag of the jihadists swept fighters set about killing captive to train them as thousands of women to a sexual slavery.



IS fighters wanted "to take their honour," said Murad, goodwill ambassador for trafficking. It is an evil she during a harrowing three captured by IS fighters, to Mosul, the de facto declared caliphate. During her ordeal she was held captive and repeatedly gang-raped, tortured and beaten. The jihadists organised slave markets for selling off the women and girls, and Yazidi women were forced to renounce their religion.

For the jihadists, with their ultra-strict interpretation of Islam, the Yazidis are seen as heretics. The Kurdish-speaking community follows an ancient religion, revering a single God and the "leader of the angels", represented by a peacock. Like thousands of Yazidis, Murad was forcibly married to a jihadist, beaten and forced to wear makeup and tight clothes -- an experience she later related in front of the UN Security Council. "The first thing they did was they forced us to convert to Islam," Murad told AFP in 2016. Shocked by the violence, Murad set about trying to escape, and managed to flee with the help of a Muslim family from Mosul. Armed with false identity papers, she managed to cross the few dozen kilometres (miles) to Iraqi Kurdistan, joining crowds of other displaced Yazidis in camps. There, she learnt that six of her brothers and her mother had been killed. With the help of an organisation that assists Yazidis, she joined her sister in Germany, where she lives today. She has since dedicated herself to what she calls "our peoples' fight", becoming a well-known spokeswoman even before the #MeToo movement swept the world.

Slight, and softly-spoken Murad has now become a global voice, campaigning for justice for her people and for the acts committed by the jihadists to be recognised internationally as genocide. (AFP)



## Two million Bengali & Burmese migrants without ID in Pakistan

Pakistan's Prime Minister Imran Khan announced recently to offer Pakistani citizenship to hundreds of thousands of Bengalis born to refugee families his country, according to Pakistani media outlets. The prime minister said that the identity crisis of thousands of Bengali and Afghan immigrants is pushing them to crime.

"Terrorism and target killing has declined in Karachi but there is a major reason behind the street crimes. It is an underclass. jobless. They are the Bengalis living in Pakistan. These here for decades, their children don't have identity cards and "The people of this deprived without ID cards and passports, decided to issue them identity cards and passports,"



They are illiterate and and Afghans who are immigrants have lived were born here, but they passports," he said. class can't get jobs so our government has computerised national Khan added.

Pakistan has the largest refugee population in the world. The United Nations refugee agency and local officials said that there are 2.7 million Afghans, including 1.5 million registered as refugees, in Pakistan. According to Pakistani media outlets and local sources, there are around two million Bengali and Burmese migrants in Pakistan. They either do not possess ID cards or their cards have been revoked on suspicion of being illegal immigrants.(Dhaka Tribune)

### BNP discusses militancy issue with diplomats

Diplomats of different missions in Bangladesh recently held a meeting with BNP leaders at the party's chairperson's office at Gulshan in Dhaka to discuss militancy issue and present political situation in the country.

BNP Secretary General Alamgir led the meeting which ended at 5:00pm. Talking to meeting, Fakhru said that it was a did not elaborate on its outcome. discussed about the party's stance creation of a common platform of political and social organisations militancy and extremism and on



Mirza Fakhru Islam started at 4:00pm and reporters after the routine meeting, but The BNP leaders and its planning on the with the participation against the rise of the ongoing political

situation. Ambassadors of Spain and Norway, acting ambassador of Saudi Arabia, acting high commissioner of Australia, deputy ambassadors of Germany and Indonesia, and a counsellor of Singapore embassy were present at the meeting. The meeting was organised after nine alleged militants were killed recently during a special drive of the joint forces in Dhaka's Kalyanpur, ending an overnight standoff that ensued with a raid to hunt down militants' den.