

Bangladesh Update

August 13, 2024



The Anti-Discrimination Student Movement 2024

Why it happened?

Quota & Reform	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The movement that led to the resignation of Sheikh Hasina began in July, sparked by student protests against a quota system that allocated 30% of all government jobs to descendants of freedom fighters from Bangladesh's war of independence. Due to underemployment, job security, and socio-cultural norms government jobs are prestigious and the quota system meant the selection was not meritocratic. The protesters contended that the quota system primarily favored members of the Awami League (AL).2. Back in 2018, a similar protest took place and the government tried to violently suppress the movement back then too. Ultimately, the government agreed to abolish quota altogether to quell the movement and issued a government circular stating as such. But descendants of freedom fighters appealed against the order and High Court ruled the circular illegal on June 5, 2024.
Additional Factors	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. One of the key reasons that helped the 2024 movement to evolve into a mass uprising was the condition of the economy. An ailing banking sector riddled with non-performing loans (~10%) and capital flight (~ USD 94 Bn), high inflation (~9.72% in FY23-24), rapid devaluation of BDT against USD (1 USD = 86 BDT to 118 BDT within 2 years) further strained the economy, priming the populace for a revolution.2. With the introduction of Digital Security Act 2018, the regime started to suppress any constructive criticism and differing point of view. The law was widely used to arrest and abduct journalists, activists, opposition leaders, and even general students. It was used to suppress discussion on social media and traditional media too.3. Internet blackout (both broadband and 4G) from July 18 to July 24 exacerbated the condition as critical services (banking, healthcare, communication, utilities) depend on it. Businesses lost ~USD 10 Bn due to the blackout.
Outcomes	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. All of these reasons combined forced the masses to rise up against the regime to ensure democracy and rule of law. The army refused to open fire on the people to subdue the movement. Understanding that she will not be able to quell the movement anymore, Sheikh Hasina resigned and flew to India for a safe exit.2. During and follow up to this movement clashes with law enforcement agents, the armed party members of Awami League and students resulted in the death of at least 580 people, with over 10,000+ people detained including minors, and injured thousands more till August 12.3. On August 8, 2024 an interim government took oath headed by Professor Dr. Muhammad Yunus as the Chief Advisor. 16 additional advisors took oath as part of the government who will be working with Dr. Yunus.

Timeline of the Anti-Discrimination Student Movement 2024

How did it all unfold? (Slide 1 of 2)

<p>June 5-July 1 →</p> <p>Peaceful student demonstration and rally at the University of Dhaka (DU) after the High Court rules the previous government circular on the quota reform illegal.</p>	<p>July 2-9 →</p> <p>Peaceful Student blockade and demonstration across universities and cities.</p>	<p>July 10 →</p> <p>The Appellate Division imposed a status quo on quota for four weeks. Mass blockade across the country.</p>	<p>July 11-13 →</p> <p>Peaceful Student blockade and demonstration across the country.</p>	<p>July 14 →</p> <p>Addressing a press briefing at Prime Minister's (PM) residence, the PM said, 'If the grandchildren of freedom fighters don't get, should the grandchildren of Razakars (colloquial term for turncoats who supported the Pakistan military during the 1971 liberation war) get jobs?'</p> <p>At midnight, DU students erupted in protest alleging that they were demeaned. The students chanted, "We sought our rights, but have been made Razakars" during their protests. The regime used this incident to label the protestors as anti-liberation war and deny the merit of their demand.</p>	<p>July 15</p> <p>Awami League general secretary Obaidul Quader said Bangladesh Chhatra League (the student political wing of the party) is enough to give reply to the quota protesters who chanted 'Razakar' slogan. A clash broke out on DU campus around 3:00pm between Chhatra League and protesters, 297 protesters were injured. 4G service is suspended in 5 major universities including DU.</p>
<p>July 16 →</p> <p>Police, Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) and other ruling party men attacked the protesters. Six were killed in different parts of the country. Footages and pictures of Abu Sayeed, a student of Begum Rokeya University, being killed went viral. 4G service is suspended in 59 universities.</p>	<p>July 17 →</p> <p>Protesters drove out BCL leaders and activists from different campuses, and declared the campuses 'free from politics'. Prime minister Sheikh Hasina addressed the nation at 7:30 PM. 4G service was suspended across the country by the government.</p>	<p>July 18 →</p> <p>A total of 27 died as protests, violence, clash and firing flared up across the country. BCL and Police open fired on the students again. At least 1,500 were injured in these incidents. Broadband was suspended in the country, creating a complete internet blackout.</p>	<p>July 19</p> <p>A total of 103 were killed centering the protests in the country. Local people started joining the students in the protest. Students issued 9-point demand, including an apology from the PM. Curfew was imposed in the night, and the army is deployed.</p>		

Timeline of the Anti-Discrimination Student Movement 2024

How did it all unfold? (Slide 2 of 2)

July 21



Appellate Division sets 7pc quota, leaving remaining 93pc for merit-based recruitment. Meanwhile, death toll rises to 174 in five days. A total of 550 arrested over the country.

A joint statement from the protesters urged students to intensify the 'complete shutdown'. It added that the government cannot shun the responsibility of killing, simply using a court order.

July 22-24



The Appellate Division of the Supreme Court imposed a status quo on High Court's decision for four weeks. Mass blockade across the country, at least 201 deaths were reported as of July 24. Broadband internet service is resumed on the 24th with curtailed bandwidth. 4G service and social medias remain closed.

July 26



'Block raids' commence all over country. At least 555 cases filed, 6,264 arrested as of July 26. In Chattogram 30 students are said to have been arrested. Detective Branch (DB) of Police picks up three coordinators of the quota reform movement from the hospital. Three more coordinators (six in total) were picked up in the later dates under the false pretense of providing safety to them.

July 28



The six coordinators in a video message in DB custody announce withdrawal of all programmes. The wider students refuse the declaration.

July 30

Students declared 'March for Justice' programme. Many turn their Facebook profile red in respect for those who were killed in the clashes. They include teachers, journalists, persons from all walks of life. Meanwhile, the government supporters turn their Facebook profiles black.

August 1



Six coordinators freed from DB custody. Protesters hold mass processions and prayers for those killed. The coordinators say "statement of withdrawal made from DB office was not voluntary".

August 3



The 9-point demand is changed to a one point demand - the resignation of Hasina and the formation of a "national government" headed by an "acceptable to all" person. Hasina offers talks but students reject it.

August 4



Widespread clashes break out in Dhaka and in at least 21 districts of the country. Reports say at least 90 people are killed in the violence. Students announce a plan to hold a march to Dhaka from all parts of the country to force the government to resign.

August 5



Tens of thousands of people from different parts of Dhaka and the surrounding areas defy the curfew to converge on the capital's center. With a death toll of at least 330 (as of August 5), Hasina resigns to the President and flies to India. The army chief promises an interim government as per the students' demand.

August 6-8

Amid sporadic unrests existing political parties, the protesters, and the army chief engages in dialogue with the President to determine the members of the interim government. Dr. Yunus is appointed as the Chief Advisor of the *interim government* as per the students' demand. On August 8, Dr. Yunus and 16 additional advisors take oath to form the interim government.

Interim Government

The political solution to the current situation

Functions	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. According to the current constitution, national elections are to be held under the incumbent government after its term ends. This government will then transfer power to the winning political party or coalition. So, the most important function of the interim government will be to hold the general election.2. Maintaining law & order, and conducting day-to-day operations of the government.3. Introducing reforms across the governmental organizations and regulatory bodies, including reducing corruption and holding people accountable.4. Processing the release of the students and the political prisoners incarcerated by the Hasina regime.
Legal Basis	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. There used to be provisions to allow a caretaker government to arrange the general election as an alternative to one arranged by the incumbent government but the Supreme Court declared it unconstitutional. Later, during the Awami League's 2009-14 term, the 15th amendment to the constitution in 2011 abolished the caretaker government provision. Thus, questions have arisen about how it will be formed.2. Meanwhile, experts have pointed out the precedent of the late Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed leading a temporary government and have argued that such a provision can be created in times of state crisis, but it would need constitutional validation in the future and ratified by an elected parliament. As of now the Supreme Court has provided an advisory response to the President's letter in favor of the interim government.
Structure	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The President has dissolved the current parliament. The interim government will be in place till the general election can be held.2. The interim government will be headed by a Chief Advisor (equivalent to Prime Minister). 16 other advisors (equivalent to Ministers) will be under the chief advisor, each heading one or two ministries. Professor Dr. Muhammad Yunus has been appointed as the Chief Advisor, as per the students' proposal. The government includes economists, lawyers, diplomats, activists, religious and minority representatives, and students.
Timeline	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. It is being circulated by the wider media that the interim government may take upto 2-6 years before holding the general election.2. But one of the largest political parties in the country, Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) has hinted that they will demand the general election to take place within the next 3-6 months.

Economic Outlook

The positive trends and things to look out for

Positive Trends

Stock Exchange: DSEX, the benchmark index of the Dhaka Stock Exchange (DSE) in its four-session gaining streak increased by 786 points (~12% increase) while the market cap increased by ~USD 5.8 Bn as of August 11. Positive investor sentiment has built this momentum since Hasina's resignation on Monday last week. The major highlights has been the steady incline of the stocks of fundamentally sound businesses, showing early signs of an efficient market.

Institutional Reforms: There is a move for large scale institutional reforms underway. There is already change of guard with a new Supreme Court Chief Justice, Bangladesh Bank Governor, and Bangladesh Securities & Exchange Commission Chairman have both resigned according to newspaper sources. All of these were political appointments. We expect to see further changes at all other key institutions that will significantly improve governance and ultimately business confidence.

Renewed Positive Sentiment: The biggest positive outcome of the whole student movement was the country getting a politically active and conscious young generation. This has far reaching positive consequences as the students want to avoid the mistakes of the past and bring structural changes that will be long lasting. There is renewed positive sentiment among businesses as the economy resumes, with expectations of fairer market practices.

Things to Look Out for

Law & Order: RMG factories and other manufacturing facilities are still not operating at their capacity on grounds of security. Chittagong port is experiencing a gridlock of containers as it's currently housing ~50% more containers than usual as businesses were yet to resume releasing goods in full swing for security concerns. Additionally, 6,000 vehicles usually transport goods from the port each day. However, this number has now dropped to below 1,000; again due to security issues. The transportation cost on the Dhaka-Chittagong route has nearly doubled as a result.

Banking Sector: The banking sector had been suffering from high levels of non-performing loans, capital flight, and governance problems; all covered up by the regime. In the last few years the economy was impacted by high levels of inflation, declining FX reserves and slowing growth which put additional pressure on the banking sector.

Other Challenges: Other factors to look out for includes the energy sector where large payables have been built up, handling of the bureaucracy and government employees, and finally key constitutional reforms that has to be done with the support of the different political parties.

Geopolitics and International Relations

Bangladesh Receives Significant Attention in International Media

International Whirlwind

The Yunus Effect: Nobel Laureate Muhammad Yunus has been chosen as the consensus candidate to lead the interim government. He is globally respected, particularly in the West (North America & Western Europe), which will help Bangladesh attract both investments and development funding. Major economies, including the US, UK, Canada, and China, have already expressed their support for the new interim government.

Tricky Neighbor: The previous regime had strong ties with India, and the recent upheaval has caused concerns for the Indian establishment. The situation is uncomfortable for India, as Sheikh Hasina is currently residing in New Delhi, awaiting relocation to another country. Bangladesh is a key stakeholder for India due to its strategic location and existing transit arrangements to the "seven sister" states in the country's southeastern region.

Transit: The regime change may prompt a reevaluation of the recently signed rail transit deal between Bangladesh and India. The current arrangements allow India to transport passengers and cargo through Bangladesh to its southeastern region.

China: As Bangladesh's biggest trade partner and arms supplier, China maintained a cordial relationship with the previous regime. The interim government will seek to strengthen ties with China, especially given the potential weakening of its relationship with India due to India's preference for the Hasina regime.

Development Partners: The Western support for the interim government has likely encouraged backing from multilateral development partners. The IMF has fully endorsed the new government reiterating their commitment towards the financial aid package. Other major development partners have followed suit. Ambassadors from major economies attended the swearing-in ceremony.

"We welcome Dr Yunus's call for an end to the recent violence, and we stand ready to work with the interim government and Dr Yunus as it charts a democratic future for the people of Bangladesh," --US State Department

"Bangladesh is now entering a period of transition, and the interim government will have an important task to prepare the ground for democratic elections and ensure accountability for the deaths and violence that have occurred,"—Josep Borell, EU Foreign Policy Chief

The Movement in Pictures



Picture: The moment before Abu Sayeed was shot during the clash between police and protesters in front of Begum Rokeya University in Rangpur on July 16. (Photo Credit: Screenshot from video by The Business Standard)



Picture: Students clash with riot police during a protest in Dhaka, Bangladesh on July 18, 2024. (Photo Credit: Rajib Dhar / AP Photo)



Picture: Thousands gather at the Shaheed Minar on August 3 before the one-point demand is declared. (Photo Credit: Screenshot from video)



Picture: Students launched the "Bangla Blockade" following a one-point demand on August 4 (Photo Credit: Rayhan9d)

The Movement in Pictures



Picture: Protesters displaying Bangladesh's national flag as they stormed the former Prime Minister's official residence in Dhaka on August 5 (Photo Credit: AFP)



Picture: Local people guarding temples to deter attack on minorities on August 5 (Photo Credit: Republic)



Picture: Local people guarding temples to deter attack on minorities on August 5 (Photo Credit: Twitter)



Picture: Dr. Yunus taking oath as the chief advisor on August 8 (Photo Credit: bdnews24.com)

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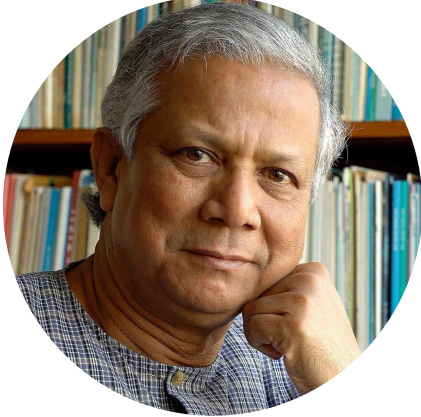
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Annex

Interim government members - Chief Advisor and the rest of the Advisors



Professor Dr. Muhammad Yunus
Chief Advisor



Dr. Salehuddin Ahmed



Professor Dr. Asif Nazrul



Adilur Rahman Khan



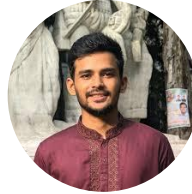
Syeda Rizwana Hasan



Nurjahan Begum



Md Nahid Islam



Asif Mahmud Shojib Bhuyain



Brigadier General (retired)
M Sakhawat Hussain



Farida Akhtar



Supradip Chakma



Bidhan Ranjan Roy



Faruk E Azam



AF Hassan Ariff



Md Touhid Hossain



AFM Khalid Hossain



Sharmeen Murshid



**Professor Dr.
Muhammad Yunus**

Chairman, Yunus Centre

In charge of - the Cabinet Division, Defence Ministry, Armed Forces Division, Education Ministry, Road Transport and Bridges Ministry, Food Ministry, Housing and Public Works Ministry, Land Ministry, Textiles and Jute Ministry, Agriculture Ministry, Science and Technology Ministry, Railways Ministry, Public Administration Ministry, Power, Energy and Mineral Resources Ministry, Shipping Ministry, Water Resources Ministry, Women and Children Affairs Ministry, Disaster Management and Relief Ministry, Information and Broadcasting Ministry, Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment Ministry, Commerce Ministry, Labour and Employment Ministry, Cultural Affairs Ministry, Civil Aviation and Tourism Ministry, Liberation War Affairs Ministry, Chittagong Hill Tracts Affairs Ministry, and Primary and Mass Education Ministry.

Dr. Yunus is a Nobel Laureate. He and Grameen Bank jointly won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2006 “for their efforts to create economic and social development from below”. Dr. Yunus completed his Ph.D in Economics from Vanderbilt University, U.S.A. in 1970. He was a Professor of Economics at Chittagong University and Director of Rural Economics Programme in Chittagong from 1975 to 1989. He was the Project Director of the Grameen Bank Project from 1976 to 1983, and Managing Director of the Grameen Bank from 1983 to 2011. He’s often considered as the father of microcredit, a concept he championed through the Grameen Bank.

He was the Chancellor of Glasgow Caledonian University, Glasgow, UK from 2012 to 2016. He is an Adjunct Professor at La Trobe Business School, in the Faculty of Business, Economics and Law, Australia since 2015. He is a Visiting Professor at Universiti Teknologi Petronas, Malaysia since 2018. He is also the Chancellor of Albukhary International University (AIU), Malaysia since 2020. He has been a member of Advisory Council for Sustainable Economic Development, World Bank, Washington DC, USA since 1993. He has been a member of the UN Expert Group on Women and Finance: Transforming Enterprise and Finance Systems, UNIFEM, Washington DC, USA; also since 1993.

For a comprehensive profile, you can visit [here](#).

Dr. Salehuddin Ahmed	Former Governor, Bangladesh Bank (the central bank); In charge of - Finance Ministry, and Planning Ministry Dr. Ahmed obtained his PhD in Economics from McMaster University, Canada in 1978. He started his career with a short period in the Planning Department of the Government of East Pakistan and later joined as a teacher in Economics at Dhaka University. Dr. Ahmed joined as the governor of the Bangladesh Bank on 2 May 2005 and completed his four-year tenure on 30 April 2009.
Professor Dr. Asif Nazrul	Law Department, Dhaka University; In charge of - Law Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Ministry Dr. Nazrul is a professor of law at Dhaka University. He completed his undergraduate in 1986 and his postgraduate in 1987 from the same department. In 1999, he earned his PhD from the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London. Later, he received a postdoctoral fellowship from the Environmental Law Center in Bonn, Germany. He also served as a Commonwealth Fellow at SOAS.
Adilur Rahman Khan	Secretary, Odhikar; In charge of - Industries Ministry Adilur Rahman Khan is a Supreme Court lawyer and the secretary of the human rights organisation "Odhikar". During the last BNP-Jamaat coalition government, he served as deputy attorney general, a role he continued during the military-backed caretaker government of the One-Eleven period. After the Awami League formed the government following the 2008 elections, he resigned from his position. Adilur Rahman Khan studied law at the University of Dhaka.
Syeda Rizwana Hasan	Chief Executive Officer, Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association (BELA); In charge of - Environment Ministry Syeda Rizwana Hasan is a Supreme Court lawyer and an environmental activist, serving as the Chief Executive of the Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association (BELA). Rizwana Hasan has received several prestigious awards for her work, including the "Goldman Environmental Prize," making her the first Bangladeshi to receive this honour. In 2009, she was named one of Time magazine's "Heroes of the Environment." She studied law at the University of Dhaka.
Nurjahan Begum	Managing Director, Grameen Shikkha; In charge of Health Ministry Nurjahan Begum served as the acting managing director of Grameen Bank after Muhammad Yunus. She is currently the Managing Director of Grameen Shikkha, a non-profit organisation under the Grameen family. Before this, she was appointed as the chairperson of Grameen Distribution in 2010. Nurjahan Begum was one of Professor Yunus's key associates when the Grameen Bank project began in 1976. At that time, she was a student at the University of Chittagong. <i>Source: The Business Standard, The Daily Star</i>

Md Nahid Islam	Student (one of the coordinators of the Students' Movement); In charge of - Information and Broadcasting Ministry Md Nahid Islam, a resident of Dhaka city, is a master's student of Sociology at Dhaka University. He is the key leader behind the Anti-Discrimination Student Movement which eventually led to the ouster of the Sheikh Hasina-led Awami League government. He is also the general secretary of the student organisation Chhatra Shakti at Dhaka University.
Asif Mahmud Sajib Bhuiyan	Student (one of the coordinators of the Students' Movement); In charge of - Youth and Sports Ministry Asif Mahmud is a master's student of linguistics from Dhaka University. Asif is one of the key coordinators of the Anti-Discrimination Student Movement. He was also the president of the student organisation Chhatra Odhikhar Parishad of DU.
Brigadier General (retired) M Sakhawat Hussain	In charge of - Home Ministry M Sakhawat Hussain is a former election commissioner of Bangladesh. Sakhawat graduated from the United States Army Command and General Staff College. He earned a Masters in Strategic Studies from the Quaid-i-Azam University in Islamabad, Pakistan. He achieved MPhil degree from Bangladesh University of Professionals (BUP) on "Electoral Reform in Bangladesh 1972-2008" and obtained PhD from the same university on Electoral Governance.
Farida Akhtar	Executive Director, UBINIG (Policy Research for Development Alternatives); In charge of - Fisheries and Livestock Ministry Farida Akhtar is a writer, researcher, and activist. She studied economics at the University of Chattogram. She has been actively involved for nearly three decades in issues related to women's development, the garments industry and workers, and developmental initiatives. She is serving as the executive director of UBINIG (Policy Research for Development Alternatives).
Supradip Chakma	Chairman, Chittagong Hill Tracts Development Board; In charge of - Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) Affairs Supradip previously worked as Bangladesh ambassador to Vietnam and Mexico and served as secretary of government. He also served in the Bangladesh embassy in Rabat, Bangladesh High Commission in Colombo, Bangladesh embassy in Brussels and Bangladesh embassy in Ankara in various capacities. He was a student of marketing department of Dhaka University.
Faruk E Azam	In charge of - Yet to be Decided Faruk-e-Azam, awarded Bir Pratik for his valiant role in the Liberation War, was a naval commando. He was a sub-commander of "Operation Jackpot", one of the biggest operations against the Pakistan occupation forces carried out in Chattogram port. <i>Source: The Business Standard, The Daily Star</i>

AF Hassan Ariff	<p>Head of Chambers, AF Hassan Ariff & Associates; In charge of - Local Government, Rural Development and Co-operatives (LGRD) Ministry</p> <p>AF Hassan Ariff is a senior advocate of the Supreme Court and has been practising since 1970. He was enrolled as an advocate of the Calcutta High Court, West Bengal India in 1967. Ariff held the office of attorney general for Bangladesh from October 2001 to April 2005. He was the law adviser of the caretaker government of Bangladesh from January 2008 to January 2009. He is a panellist in the pool of arbitrators of the Bangladesh International Arbitration Centre and SAARC Arbitration Council. Besides this, he is a court member of the ICC International Court of Arbitration.</p>
Md Touhid Hossain	<p>Former High Commissioner of Bangladesh to South Africa: In charge of - Foreign Affairs</p> <p>Md Touhid Hossain is a former foreign secretary of Bangladesh. He was the deputy high commissioner of Bangladesh in Kolkata from 2001 to 2005. From 17 December 2006 to 8 July 2009, he was the foreign secretary of Bangladesh. From July 2009 to July 2012, Touhid served as the principal of the Foreign Service Academy. In June 2012, he was appointed the high commissioner of Bangladesh to South Africa. He completed his master's degree in history from the University of Dhaka.</p>
Bidhan Ranjan Roy	<p>Physician; In charge of - Primary and Mass Education</p> <p>Bidhan Ranjan Roy is a psychology specialist. He was a director-cum-professor in the Department of Psychiatry at National Institute of Mental Health and Hospital. He completed his MBBS from Sir Salimullah Medical College, Dhaka. He was a former professor of psychiatry at Mymensingh Medical College.</p>
AFM Khalid Hossain	<p>In charge of - Religious Affairs Ministry</p> <p>AFM Khalid Hossain was the former nayeb-e-ameer of Hefazat-e-Islam Bangladesh, an education adviser to Islami Andolan Bangladesh, and a guest lecturer at the International Islamic University, Chattogram. He passed the Kamil exam (equivalent to Master's) under the Bangladesh Madrasa Education Board in 1975. In 1983, he obtained an MA in the same subject. He served as a professor and head of the Department of Islamic History and Culture at Chattogram's Omar Gani MES College (1992-2019).</p>
Sharmeen Murshid	<p>Chief Executive Officer, Brotee; In charge of - Social Welfare Ministry</p> <p>Sharmeen Murshid, chief executive officer of the non-government organisation and local election observer group "Brotee," has long been active in advocating for voting rights and freedom of speech.</p>

Source: *The Business Standard, The Daily Star*

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