

# **Cross-Party Group on Bangladesh**

CPG Meeting – 10<sup>th</sup> December 2025

18:00-19:00, Teams

## **Minutes**

### **In Attendance**

### **MSPs**

Foyso! Choudhury MSP (Convenor)  
Miles Briggs MSP (Co-Convenor)  
Mercedes Villalba MSP

### **Non- MSP CPG Members**

M. Nazrul Islam, Deputy High Commissioner of Bangladesh to the UK  
Akbar Hossain, Minister (Press), High Commission of Bangladesh  
Warishul Islam, First Secretary, High Commission of Bangladesh  
Parveen Ishaq, ELREC  
Kabir Uddin Ahmed, University of Stirling  
Dr Shaif Uddin Ahammed, University of the West of Scotland  
Farhana Kabir, Hope for Rural People  
Abdul Mohit Khan, Representative of Bangladeshi Community in Scotland  
Yahya Khan  
Shakawat Islam Forazi

### **Guest Speaker**

Mirza Shawkat Ali, Director, Department of Environment, Bangladeshi Government

### **Apologies**

Sarah Boyack MSP  
Dr Mohammed Huq, Strathclyde Uni , Charity Education International (CEI)  
Aladin Ali  
Ayrin Khan

### **Welcome**

Convenor welcomed newly appointed Deputy High Commissioner of Bangladesh to the UK, M. Nazrul Islam, CPG Members and guests at the meeting; noted the session was non-political, focused on the interests of the Scottish Bangladeshi community and enhancing Scotland–Bangladesh relations.

## Agenda Item 1:

### AGM

- Approval of Minutes of 2024
- Election of Office Bearers (Convener, Vice Convener):
  - The Convener invited the Group to proceed to re-appoint the Office Bearers and Secretary until next election.
  - The group re-appointed Foysol Choudhury MSP as Convener and Miles Briggs MSP as Co-Convener
- High Commission of Bangladesh in London was nominated to continue as
  - Secretariat of the CPG.
- No objection raised. Seconded by Mercedes Villalba MSP.

## Agenda item 2:

### Update from M. Nazrul Islam, Deputy High Commissioner of Bangladesh, London

- M.Nazrul Islam introduced himself; noted he recently joined the Bangladesh High Commission in London; he expressed his appreciation for the work of Foysol Choudhury MSP and acknowledged the positive role of the CPG on Bangladesh in strengthening Scottish and Bangladeshi relations.
- M. Nazrul Islam provided an official statement on behalf of Her Excellency High Commissioner of Bangladesh Abdia Islam, covering the following key points:

#### ❖ Political Developments in Bangladesh

- Post–July 2024 mass uprising (“Monsoon Revolution”) marked a significant political transition, which led to the collapse of the previous government following allegations of: electoral manipulation, abuse of state power, restrictions on freedom of expression and enforced disappearances and extrajudicial killings.
- Formation of an Interim Government led by Nobel Laureate Professor Dr. Muhammad Yunus (Chief Adviser since August 2024).

#### ❖ Democratic and Institutional Reforms

- **Establishment of 11 reform commissions** which include; Electoral reform; Public administration reform; Judicial independence; Police oversight and Anti-corruption mechanisms.
- **Adoption of the July National Charter**; proposing a bicameral parliamentary system; independent judicial appointments commission; 10-year term limit for the Prime Minister and a mandatory national referendum for major constitutional amendments.

### ❖ **Electoral Reform and Upcoming Elections**

- Anticipated free, fair, and inclusive elections in February 2026
- Noting key electoral changes such as restoration of “No Vote” option; consideration of electronic voting machines.
- Enhanced powers for the Election Commission to annul flawed elections
- Overseas voting rights for Bangladeshi citizens abroad (for the first time)

### ❖ **Judicial and Human Rights Measures**

- Restoration of the non-partisan caretaker government system (Supreme Court ruling, November 2025)
- Release of political prisoners
- Ratification of international conventions on enforced disappearances
- Establishment of investigative commissions

### ❖ **6. Economic and Labour Reforms**

- Banking sector restructuring to address non-performing loans and solvency concerns
- Strengthening investor confidence
- Reform of the National Tripartite Consultative Council (December 2024)
- Ratification of ILO Conventions 155, 187, and 190 (November 2025):
  - ➔ Bangladesh became the first Asian country to ratify all fundamental ILO conventions
  - ➔ Supports Bangladesh’s eligibility for EU GSP+ trade status

### ❖ **Local Government**

- Legal reforms governing: city corporations, municipalities and local councils
- Shift toward decentralised and accountable governance

### ❖ **Education Reform and Digital Literacy**

- Curriculum modernisation with focus on Life skills; Climate education and Digital literacy.
- Investment in digital classrooms and online learning platforms
  - ➔ Target: 90% digital literacy among youth by 2030
- Increased funding for public university research and merit-based admissions.

### ❖ **Rohingya Refugee Crisis**

- Bangladesh continues to host over 1.2 million Rohingya refugees
- Severe humanitarian funding gap projected to exceed \$500 million in 2026
- Limited progress on repatriation: Myanmar verified 180,000 refugees but failed to begin returns
- Strong appeal for: continued UK and Scottish support; international pressure on Myanmar and sustained humanitarian funding

## **Agenda item 3:**

### **Climate Change Presentation: COP30 Debrief**

**Speaker:** Mr. Mirza Shawkat Ali, Director (Climate Change and Int'l Convention),  
Department of Environment, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

### **COP30, Belém, Brazil**

#### ❖ **Key Outcomes**

- Adoption of the Belém Political Package (“Mutirão” – collective effort)
- Emphasis on: protecting the Amazon and halting deforestation by 2030
- Reaffirmation of global targets:
  - ➔ 43% emissions reduction by 2030
  - ➔ 60% by 2035 (from 2019 levels)
  - ➔ Net-zero by 2050

#### ❖ **Paris Agreement Progress**

- Recognition of progress since Paris Agreement (10<sup>th</sup> anniversary)
- Revised global warming projection: reduced from 4°C to approximately 2.3–2.5°C
- Acknowledgement that progress remains insufficient for the 1.5°C goal

#### ❖ **Climate Finance**

- Reiteration of \$1.3 trillion per year climate finance target by 2035 and minimum \$300 billion annually for developing countries
- Strong emphasis on grant-based and concessional adaptation finance
  - ➔ Call to triple adaptation finance by 2035
- Establishment of a two-year climate finance work programme.

- **Loss and Damage Fund**
  - \$250 million available
  - Bangladesh encouraged to submit project proposals (\$5–20 million range)

## Agenda item 4: Open discussion

- Mercedes Villalba MSP asked how Scotland and the Scottish Parliament can best support Bangladesh's climate goals.

### Responses:

- ➔ Deputy High Commissioner responded noting need to increase political pressure on developed countries to fund adaptation.
  - Support for implementation of Bangladesh's National Adaptation Plan (NAP) and NDC
  - Engagement with Article 6 (carbon markets) and private sector investment
  - Technology transfer and expert collaboration
- ➔ Mirza Ali, Bangladeshi Environmental Department Director further responded mentioning UK and Scotland engagement with Bangladesh and vulnerable nations.
- ➔ Noted existing UK support via FCDO five-year climate programme (£120 million) and projects in the Sundarbans mangrove forest
- ➔ Emphasised that adaptation remains the most urgent need for Bangladesh
- ➔ Call for Scottish Parliament advocacy on adaptation funding

## Agenda 5: Closing Remarks

- **Deputy High Commissioner** thanked the Scottish Parliament and CPG. Reiterated urgency of Climate adaptation, the Rohingya refugee crisis and declining international funding
- **Mirza Shawkat Ali (Bangladeshi Environmental Dpt)** highlighted Bangladesh Climate Change Trust Fund; noted \$50 million in ongoing ecosystem-based adaptation projects and urgent need to focus on biodiversity and nature-based solutions
- **CPG Convenor, Foyso Choudhury MSP** reaffirmed commitment to raising rohingya crisis, climate change impacts on Bangladesh and other Bangladesh-related issues in Parliament.
- Convenor thanked all participants and formally closed the meeting.
- **Meeting concluded.**