BANGLADESH
Weekly Security Report
28 March 2017
Executive Summary

Bangladesh Weekly Security Report

Summary

♦ For the period of 21 to 27 March 2017 there were 108 security incidents reported across Bangladesh, resulting in at least 82 people killed and 136 others injured. The security environment in Dhaka and across the country remains fluid following this week’s Islamist attacks, with a heightened risk of further bombings and clashes with militant supporters over the short term.

♦ Police operations throughout the past week accounted for 53% of the total incident pool, with militant-related police operations accounting for 23% of all police activity recorded this week. Crime rates also remained high, with gang-related violence, murder and drug trafficking accounting for the majority of criminal activity recorded across Bangladesh. Protest activity decreased to 8% this week from 10% recorded during the previous reporting period.

♦ A number of Islamist-related attacks were recorded this week in Bangladesh. Most notably, on 24 March, at approximately 1945hrs a man detonated an explosive attached to his waist outside a police checkpoint overlooking the intersection at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport in Dhaka’s Ashkona area. The attacker died in the blast, with no other casualties reported.

♦ In Sylhet, on 24 March, at 0830hrs police surrounded a safe house of an offshoot of Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB), Neo-JMB, at Dakshin Surma’s Shibbari area triggering a prolonged siege which lasted for three days. At approximately 1845hrs on 25 March, a man detonated a suicide vest while in a crowd gathered about 250 metres away from the surrounded building. Minutes later another bomb exploded as the police’s bomb disposal unit was trying to diffuse it outside the militant compound. At least six people, including two police officers, were killed and 40 others injured in the two blasts. The raid concluded on 27 March, when army commandoes killed all four militants. Clearance operations at the time of writing remain ongoing, with all client personnel advised to avoid the area over the coming 72 hours.

♦ This week’s terror incidents demonstrate the continued presence and capability of extremist cells to carry out attacks both in and beyond Dhaka. While the Islamic State claimed responsibility for both bombings, the government has instead blamed home-grown militants. The threat of further bombings and clashes between the police and Islamist supporters will remain heightened into the short term. While extremist groups will continue to pose a threat to western targets, largely in the form of lone-wolf attacks, the capability of militant elements to mount a sustained campaign against international assets is assessed as limited at present.

♦ On the economic front, the Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation announced it will now import 2,200 liters of diesel monthly for a period of 15 years at a price of USD 5.50 per barrel from India’s Numaligarh refinery to meet demand in the northern part of the country.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary 2
Significant Events 3
Political & General 4
Security 6
Outlook 13
Forecast of Events 2017 14
About Constellis 15
Significant Events: 21 March - 27 March 2017
Bangladesh Weekly Security Report

Dinajpur: 21-22 March
35 individuals were arrested on various charges during overnight raids across nine upazilas in Dinajpur district. Three known drug dealers were among the detained. 253 bottles of phenesedyl and 1.5 kilograms of hemp were seized.

Sharsha: 23 March
The Detective Branch of police arrested 28 Bangladesh National Party activists during a raid at Sharsha’s Navaran Bazar area. 15 crude bombs and leaflets with extremist content were seized.

Dhaka: 24 March
At approximately 1945hrs a man detonated a bomb attached to his waist outside a police check post overlooking the intersection at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport in Dhaka’s Ashkona area.

Dakshin Surma: 24-27 March
At 0830hrs on 24 March police surrounded a safe house of an offshoot of Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB), Neo-JMB beginning a protracted clearance operation. A day later at approximately 1845hrs on 25 March, a man detonated a suicide vest while in a crowd of 500 to 600 people who had gathered about 250 metres away from the surrounded building, followed shortly afterwards by a second detonation. At least six people, including two police officers, were killed and 40 others injured in the two blasts. The raid ended on 27 March, when army commandoes killed the compound’s last remaining militant suspects.

Dhaka: 23 March
At least 11 people, including four policemen, were injured in a clash between garment workers and police personnel at Dhaka’s Rampura area. The workers protested against the relocation of their factory. Police fired rubber bullets and tear gas shells to disperse the crowd; demonstrators retaliated by throwing brickbats.
Immediately Suspend Imminent Executions - HRW

Human Rights Watch (HRW) this week have called on the Bangladesh government to immediately halt the imminent execution of three men convicted of a May 2004 grenade attack, which targeted the then British High Commissioner, Anwar Choudhury. Although the official survived the assassination attempt that took place outside the Hazrat Shahjalal shrine in Sylhet district, he was among dozens injured by the blasts, while three police officers were killed. On 19 March 2017, the country’s apex court rejected the final review application of the three men on death row, all alleged members of the banned militant group Harkat-ul-Jihad (HuJI). The three men are: Mufti Abdul Hannan, HuJI founder and two activists of the group, Sharif Shahedul Alam Bipul and Delwar Hossain Ripon.

“Criminals need to be punished, but Bangladesh is moving in the wrong direction by invoking the death penalty,” said Brad Adams, HRW’s Asia director. “Bangladesh should instead initiate an immediate moratorium on capital punishment because it is inherently cruel and irreversible, and should never be used, regardless of the crime.” The evidence against the three men is primarily based on their confessions, statements that magistrates said were freely given in front of them but that the men have said were forcibly extracted through torture in police custody. HRW has previously documented numerous cases of torture to coerce confessions, and due process violations in the Bangladesh criminal justice system that have made it difficult for defendants to receive a fair trial, including in capital cases. Noting that "custodial torture has become a persistent trend in Bangladesh," the country’s National Human Rights Commission recently said that "indiscriminate order of remand for extracting confessions immensely contributes to a culture of custodial torture."

Court documents show that Hannan had spent 77 days, and Bipul and Ripon 40 days each, in police custody prior to giving their confessions. During this time and throughout their interrogation, the accused were not provided access to any legal representation. All three confessions were made during this period. Bangladesh courts have accepted allegations in previous cases that torture takes place in police custody, and local, and international human rights organizations contend that the practice is widespread. Nevertheless, the appeals court stated that “these confessions are natural, voluntary, inculpatory, and corroborative to each other,” and were not “procured from them by means of coercion, duress, or torture.”

US may accuse North Korea in Bangladesh cyber heist: WSJ

US prosecutors are building potential cases that would accuse North Korea of directing the theft of $81 million from Bangladesh Bank’s account at the Federal Reserve Bank of New York last year, and that would charge alleged Chinese middlemen, the Wall Street Journal.
reported on Wednesday 22 March. The US Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) believes that North Korea is responsible for the heist, an official briefed on the probe said. Richard Ledgett, deputy director of the US National Security Agency, publicly suggested on Tuesday 22 March that North Korea may be linked to the incident, while private firms have long pointed the finger at the reclusive state. FBI offices in Los Angeles and New York have been leading an international investigation into the February 2016 incident, in which hackers breached Bangladesh Bank’s systems and used the SWIFT messaging network to request nearly $1 billion from its account at the New York Fed. The branch of the US central bank rejected most of the requests but filled some of them, resulting in $81 million disappearing into casinos and other entities in the Philippines. A senior police investigator in Dhaka in December said that some Bangladesh Bank officials deliberately exposed its computer systems, enabling the hackers to get in. The incident exposed bungling and miscommunication between central banks, and left the Fed, Bangladesh, SWIFT, and the Philippine lender that initially received the funds trading blame for months.

You Tube training videos key tool for Bangladeshi militants

Bangladeshi law enforcement agencies claimed homegrown extremist groups are using videos from the Internet to train their recruits. An offshoot of the extremist group Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB), Neo-JMB, has been using online videos of foreign militants for combat training, said the Rapid Action Battalion. A search on YouTube using the terms “jihad training” results in many videos that show militants doing weapons training, battle formations and hand-to-hand combat. There are also thousands of videos from the Syrian war filmed by Al-Nusra Front using GoPro. Intelligence agencies claimed the extremist groups have been exploiting the Internet due to the lack of government monitoring. Experts said the government should introduce measures to block such videos in the same manner that pornographic websites were controlled. The Bangladesh Police’s HQ Assistant Inspector General said there are plans to block such videos, with the government already discussing the issue with social media platforms.

Bangladesh celebrates 46th Independence Day

Bangladesh on Sunday 26 March celebrated its 46th year of independency from Pakistan. President Abdul Hamid and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina paid their tribute to the martyrs of the 1971 Liberation War by placing wreaths at the National Memorial in Dhaka’s Savar area. President Hamid also hosted a reception at Bangabhaban attended by the Prime Minister, freedom fighters and various other political leaders and socialites. No representatives of the main opposition party, the Bangladesh National Party (BNP), however, were present.
Dhaka Security Overview

The security environment in Dhaka is expected to remain fluid following another Islamist-related attack recorded in the capital over the past week. The incident along with the two militant attacks recorded over the previous reporting period will serve to increase the likelihood of further bombings, retaliatory strikes and clashes between the police and militant supporters in the city. In other developments, criminal activity in the city increased over the reporting period, while demonstrations registered a decrease.

Terrorism

On 24 March, at approximately 1945hrs a man detonated an explosive device attached to his waist outside a police checkpoint overlooking the intersection at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport in Dhaka’s Ashkona area. The attacker died in the blast, with no other casualties having been reported.

COMMENT: This is the third attack recorded in Dhaka’s Ashkona area in recent months. Last week, on 17 March, at approximately 1300hrs a man detonated a suicide explosive vest outside the Rapid Action Battalion’s (RAB) compound, approximately 500 metres away from the 24 March blast. The bomber died, while two RAB members were injured. Earlier on 24 December, a woman detonated a suicide explosive vest after leaving a three-storey building, which police units had surrounded. Four other suspects, believed to have ties to the 1 July Gulshan attackers were also arrested by police units after voluntarily surrendering, while a further male suspect, wearing a suicide vest, was later found dead within the building. The 24 March
incident is also the third attack recorded in the capital over the past two weeks, with another assailant shot and killed, as he attempted to attack a RAB check post at Dhaka’s Khilgaon area on 18 March.

The three attacks are the most significant Islamist-related incidents to have occurred in the capital since the 24 December raid. They also came days after the Islamic State released a video, featuring a Bangladeshi suicide bomber in Tikrit, calling for suicide attacks in Bangladesh. Even though the Islamic State claimed responsibility for the 17 and 24 March attacks, Bangladesh authorities have blamed an offshoot of the domestic militant organisation Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB), Neo-JMB, which has also pledged allegiance to Islamic State. According to the Bangladesh police it is very likely that the 24 March attacker is Ayad Hasan Khan - one of two cousins reported ‘missing’ in August last year. The families of Ayad and his cousin, Ahmed Rafid Al Hasan, filed missing persons reports when the two left home at Monipur, Mirpur, leaving behind a note saying, "We have found our path." The security forces, however, are yet to confirm the identities of the individuals who perpetrated all three attacks.

Dhaka’s Metropolitan Police’s commissioner said that the 24 March attacker was carrying a bomb in a trolley bag to take somewhere inside the airport when he became nervous during his encounter with the police, causing a bomb attached to his waist to explode. Three other devices concealed in the trolley were diffused, with two officers sustaining injuries. The targeting of police check posts as well as the suspected planned attack on Dhaka’s airport is most likely retaliatory in nature given the intensified government crackdown on militancy launched on 9 March across the country. It is also symbolic in so far as it demonstrates both the continued presence of Islamist organizations in the capital and their capability to carry out attacks in spite of the security forces’ efforts to curb militancy.

Recent Islamist-related incidents have clearly demonstrated the enduring presence and substantial capability of extremist cells that is no longer confined to the capital but extends beyond Dhaka to areas such as Chittagong and Sylhet, where militant organizations have been historically largely inactive. The threat of terrorism, particularly in the capital, remains high. The security environment is expected to remain fluid and clients are advised to consider limiting their movements beyond the diplomatic quarter of the capital into the coming days, as details of the cases continue to emerge.

**COMMENT ENDS**

In other developments, a man handed over his two sons to police for their suspected involvement in militancy in Karful on 25 March.

**Crime**

Criminal activity in Dhaka city this week accounted for 49% of total incidents recorded in the capital, thus, marking an increase from last week’s 31%. On 21 March, six...
members of a kidnapping gang were detained during Rapid Action Battalion raids at Dhaka’s Demra and Narayanganj’s Fatulla areas. The gang was reportedly involved in the abduction of the principal of Daricahr Khejuria Nesaria Fazil Madrasah at Mehediganj, Barisal, Anisur Rahman, who was kidnapped from Fatulla on 13 March. Rahman was lured to Fatulla by one of his acquaintances, who is among the detained gang members. He was released following the payment of a Tk 136,000 (USD1,690) ransom, claiming that he was assaulted during his captivity.

**COMMENT:** Kidnappings occur frequently in Bangladesh, although foreigners are rarely targeted. Violent crime tends to be situational, with the perpetrators having some level of familiarity with the victims. Organised criminal groups involved in drug trafficking, property crimes, extortion and kidnapping are active in Dhaka, however, such groups have historically not posed much of a threat to foreign interests.

**COMMENT ENDS**

On 22 March, Rapid Action Battalion personnel detained nine members of a human trafficking gang during raids across undisclosed locations in the capital. Nine victims were also rescued and a large quantity of passports, counterfeit visas, visa-making materials and cash were seized. On 23 March, Rapid Action Battalion personnel arrested three suspected thieves during a raid at Dhaka’s Sher-e-Bangla Nagar area. A number of firearms were recovered. Also on 23 March, the Rapid Action Battalion detained three members of a gang specialising in cyber crime from Dhaka’s Mohammadpur area. Reportedly, the detainees impersonated Microsoft officials and befriended a man on Facebook, having taken Tk922,000 (USD11,500) in several instalments from him to release a parcel for the victim that was allegedly being held by customs authorities. On 24 March, police shot and killed a thief when he tried to escape with his motorcycle after having stolen a woman’s bag at Dhaka’s AGB Colony kitchen market. Another suspect escaped.

A number of incidents were recorded at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport this week. On 24 March, customs officials arrested a man carrying 10 gold bars concealed in his socks. The detainee arrived in Dhaka on a US-Bangla Airlines flight from Malaysia. The value of the gold was estimated at Tk 50,000 (USD624). Another individual was arrested in an attempt to smuggle 16 gold bars worth an estimated Tk750,000 (USD120,000) on 24 March. The detainee arrived in Dhaka on a Tiger Airways flight from Singapore. On 26 March, Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport customs officials seized gold worth over Tk 35 million (USD436,545) during a search of a Thai Airways plane that arrived in Dhaka from Bangkok. The gold was found under a seat. No arrests have been made.

On 25 March, Rapid Action Battalion personnel detained three people at Al-Falah hotel in Dhaka’s Vatara area for their alleged
Involvement in Human Trafficking

In the wider Dhaka area, on 24 March, locals clashed with the police during an anti-narcotics raid at Kaliganj’s Darhparha area. Also on 24 March, police detained 91 individuals on various charges during raids at Faridpur. On 26 March, at least 10 people were injured in a clash between two groups of activists of the ruling Awami League party during the celebrations of Bangladesh’s Independence Day at Srinagar Bazar in Munshiganj. Gunfire was reported, with police dispersing the crowd by firing tear gas shells and blank shots. On 27 March, Rapid Action Battalion personnel arrested two individuals for abducting a 50-year-old man and his 17-year-old son. The victims were taken from Tangain’s Gharinda bypass area on 15 March. The gang demanded a Tk 200,000 (USD 2,500) ransom, with the father released after the payment of Tk 40,000 (USD 500) by his family members. The father was sent to collect the remaining ransom amount in order to ensure the release of his son. Two of the kidnappers were arrested from Tangail’s Ashekpur area, where the payment was scheduled to be made. The remaining gang members escaped.

Civic Unrest

Protest activity in the capital decreased over the reporting period, accounting for 14% of the total incident pool in Dhaka. Most notably, on 23 March, at least 11 people, including four policemen, were injured in a clash between garment workers and police personnel at Dhaka’s Rampura area. The workers of Lyric Industries Pvt Ltd staged a demonstration outside the company’s premises protesting against the relocation of the factory. Demonstrators alleged that Lyric Industries did not inform them of the relocation of the factory to Gazipur and failed to pay them outstanding benefits. Police attempted to disperse the crowd, firing rubber bullets and tear gas shells, with demonstrators retaliating by throwing brickbats.

**COMMENT:** Protest activity related to local economic grievances, particularly in terms of workers seeking higher pay, is very common. Demonstrations are usually sporadic and can occur with little prior warning as do clashes. Although protests do not typically target foreigners, client personnel are at a risk of being collateral, which is why it is advised that large crowds and gathering are avoided.

**COMMENT ENDS**

**Northern Region Security Overview**

Heightened Islamist-related activity was recorded in the north of the country over the past week, with one attack having been reported amid a raid on a militant hideout in Sylhet’s Dakshin Surma’s area that started on 24 March and concluded on 27 March with army commandoes having killed four militants. Extremist groups have been historically largely inactive in northeastern Bangladesh, with the 24 March raid and 25 March suicide bombing attack representing the most significant development in Sylhet’s security environment over the past year. These incidents will also serve to increase the likelihood of further clashes with Islamist supporters and bombings into the
short term.

**Terrorism**

On 24 March, at 0830hrs police surrounded a safe house of an offshoot of Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB), Neo-JMB, at Dakshin Surma’s Shibbari area. Approximately 150 civilians were reported to have been evacuated, while power lines in the area were cut. Following police requests to surrender peacefully, a female militant was reported to have shouted that they have chosen the path of Allah and do not fear the police. Grenade explosions and sporadic gunfire were also reported. The standoff continued on 25 March, when one man was reported to have sustained bullet injuries during a shootout between the police and the militants inside the building. At approximately 1845hrs on 25 March, a man detonated a suicide vest while in a crowd of 500 to 600 people who had gathered about 250 metres away from the surrounded building. The attacker was killed in the blast. Minutes later another bomb exploded as the police’s bomb disposal unit was trying to diffuse it outside the surrounded building, injuring a number of police officers. At least six people, including two police officers, were killed and 40 others injured in the two blasts. The raid, code named “Operation Twilight”, concluded on 27 March, when army commandoes killed one female and three male militants, two of whom were wearing explosive vests. Clearance operations, however, continue, as army officials reported that the building has been booby-trapped.

While the identity of the Islamists has not been confirmed, there have been reports that the female militant is the sister of one of the militants, who died during a 19 hours long raid on a Neo-JMB hideout in Chittagong’s Sitakunda upazila on 16 March.

**COMMENT:** “Operation Twilight” represents the most significant development in Sylhet’s security environment this year. While some militant activity has been reported in the past, the JMB has been largely inactive in the area, with no significant evidence of the group’s operational capability having been recorded throughout the past year. Even though Islamic State claimed responsibly for the suicide bombing that occurred nearby the surrounded building, the Bangladesh government has denied such claims, instead blaming the JMB. The incident came a day after a suicide bomber blew himself up at a security checkpoint near Dhaka’s airport, an attack also claimed by Islamic State. Both Islamic State and al Qaeda have made competing claims over killings of foreigners, liberals and members of religious minorities in Bangladesh over the past couple of years. The government has, however, consistently ruled out the presence of international terrorist groups, blaming domestic militants instead.

Police investigations and follow-up operations are expected to
continue into the coming days. Travel to Sylhet is advised against, as details of the case continue to emerge. The incidents will also serve to increase the likelihood of further clashes between the police and militant supporters as well as Islamist attacks in the region into the short term. COMMENT ENDS

In other developments, on 24 March, police arrested two Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh militants during a raid in Dinajpur’s Chirirbandar area. 10 improvised explosive devices, jihadi books and knives were recovered. On 27 March, police arrested six women for their alleged involvement in militant activity from Panchagarh. On 27 March, police arrested two suspected militants travelling on a Dhaka-bound bus at a police check post in Rajshahi’s Seroil area. Four kilograms of gun powder were seized.

**Crime**

Criminal activity in the north of the country decreased over the past week. On 22 March, a man was hacked to death at Santhia’s Paikpara area. The deceased was reportedly murdered by his neighbor over a land dispute. Police arrested the suspected murderer later during the day. Also on 22 March, a former Gaibandha Union Parishad member was stabbed and killed at Palashbari’s Manohorpur village by the husband of a woman he was having an affair with and one of his associates. The perpetrators were arrested. On 23 March, a man was beaten to death allegedly by his brother-in-law over a land dispute at Sherpur’s Daripara village. Also on 23 March, police arrested a woman and seized 42 bottles of phenesedyl from her possession at Gurudaspur’s Kachikata Toll Plaza area. On 26 March, a security guard was killed during an armed robbery on a jewelry shop in Bogra’s New Market area. The owner of the shop claimed the burglars had stolen gold worth over Tk 200,000 (USD2,500) but failed to open a safe located in the shop. Also on 26 March, a man was hacked to death over a land dispute at Fulbaria’s Boratola Bazar. On 27 March, police arrested two drug dealers during a raid at Beanibazar’s Nidanpur area. A CNG rickshaw and 65 liters of liquor were seized.

Heightened police activity was recorded in the northwest of the country over the past week. Between 21 and 22 March, 35 individuals were arrested on various charges during overnight raids across nine upazilas in Dinajpur district. Three known drug dealers were among the detained. 253 bottles of phenesedyl and 1.5 kilograms of hemp were seized.

**Southern Region Security Overview**

Islamist-related activity decreased in the south of the country over the reporting period following a spate of attacks and police raids on militant hideouts in Chittagong Division over the past two weeks. Nonetheless, the security environment remains fluid, with a high risk of further clashes with militant supporters as well as Islamist attacks into the short term.

**Terrorism**

While no Islamist-related attacks were recorded in the south of the country over the reporting period, a
number of police operations targeting Islamist supporters were recorded. On 23 March, the Detective Branch of police arrested 28 Bangladesh National Party activists during a raid at Sharsha’s Navaran Bazar area. 15 crude bombs and leaflets with extremist content were seized. The detainees were charged with planning subversive activities. On 27 March, Border Guard personnel recovered a pistol and a bomb during a raid at Benapole’s Baropot border area. No arrests were made.

In Chittagong Division, on 23 March, police arrested two suspected militants during a raid at Bandarban’s Baishari area.

Crime
On 21 March, the Detective Branch of police arrested two drug dealers nearby Monihar Cinema Hall in Jessore. 400 yaba tablets were seized. On 23 March, a school teacher was hacked to death and his wife was critically injured in their home at Nazirpur. One individual was arrested in relation to the case. Police suspect the teacher and his wife were attacked over a land dispute. On 24 March, Rapid Action Battalion personnel detained a female drug dealer and seized 200 yaba tablets during a raid at Benapole’s Kagoj Pukur Rail Gate area. On 25 March, police arrested a man in possession of 5,000 yaba tablets from Jessore’s New Uposhohor area. The detainee was a wanted drug dealer.

Criminal activity in Chittagong Division remained limited over the reporting period. On 21 March, police arrested two people during a raid at Chittagong’s Dhaniyapara area. A revolver and one bullet were seized. One of the detainees was reportedly wanted on four criminal cases related to drug trafficking. On 22 March, a suspected gang leader was arrested during a raid at Teknaf’s Shaplapur area. The detainee is wanted on five criminal cases. Firearms and ammunition were recovered from his possession. Also on 22 March, the Bangladesh Navy intercepted a trawler and arrested 10 Myanmar nationals as they entered Bangladeshi territorial waters to commit armed robbery nearby St. Martin’s Island in the Bay of Bengal. Three daggers and two machetes were recovered.

On 23 March, highway police arrested a man in possession of 3 kilograms of cannabis from Chandina’s Teerchar area. In Alekharchar, on 23 March, highway police arrested three people and seized drugs worth Tk 136,000 (USD1,696) from a gas station on the Dhaka-Chittagong highway. Also on 23 March, police intercepted a bus at Harisardar road in Chauddagram upazila. One man was arrested and 23 smuggled gold bars worth Tk 52,000 (USD648) were seized. On 25 March, a suspected drug dealer was killed in a gunfight with the police in Brahmanbaria. Two police officers were injured. The family of the deceased, however, has alleged that he was arrested by plainclothes policemen earlier and there was no gunfight. On 26 March, Coast Guard personnel rescued seven kidnapped fishermen and arrested 13 pirates in Kutubdia’s Matarbari Channel. Two bullets, 10 machetes, 10 mobile phones and Tk 6,000 (USD75) in cash were seized.
Security

The threat level in Dhaka, Chittagong and Sylhet remains high following a spate of militant attacks over the past three weeks. Bangladeshi police stations and prisons are on high alert, with enhanced security measures implemented across all airports. Further clashes between police and militant supporters, as well as retaliatory strikes by family members of Islamist sympathizers cannot be ruled out. This week’s incidents in Dhaka and Sylhet will serve to increase the risk of further clashes and targeted bombings over the short term. Client personnel are advised to consider limiting their movements beyond the capital’s diplomatic quarter and within Chittagong and Sylhet cities, with travel to both Chittagong and Sylhet advised against, into the coming week.

Protest activity in the capital is also to be expected. The Hawkers Association has planned to hold a hartal in Dhaka on 29 March, protesting against the eviction of hawkers from various areas in the city without compensation. Violence has been recorded during previous protests, against the eviction operations and an underlying risk of further clashes with the police remains. While hartals do not typically directly affect foreigners, client personnel are at a high risk of being collateral, which is why it is advised that crowds and gatherings are avoided, particularly as clashes and demonstrations can occur with little prior warning.

Political

A rising number of Islamist-related incidents across the country as well as Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina’s visit to India on 7 April will continue to fuel tensions between the ruling Awami League (AL) party and the main opposition party, the Bangladesh National Party (BNP). The BNP maintains its position that the AL is exploiting militancy issues to advance its own political agenda, while the AL from its part accused the BNP of having militant links. The BNP also reiterated its strong opposition to a potential security agreement between India and Bangladesh. BNP’s senior joint secretary general, Ruhul Kabir Rizvi, claimed this week that Sheikh Hasina is sacrificing the country’s sovereignty and that the government is not taking any steps to resolve problems, including water and border issues, in order to avoid antagonising India. The defence deal, if signed, will cause further turmoil into the coming month.

Economy and Social

The Bangladesh Bank’s monetary policy has failed to accelerate private investment, the South Asian Network on Economic Modelling (SANEM) said in its latest quarterly review on the Bangladesh economy. “The monetary policy has been, in general, able to maintain a so-called stable ‘status quo’ but failed to generate a big push to accelerate private investment,” SANEM’s Executive Director, Selim Raihan, said, adding that recent banking scams and the increase in non-performing loans show major institutional weaknesses in the financial sector. He identified five issues relating to further growth acceleration in Bangladesh - accelerating private investment, diversifying the economy, improving efficiency, mobilising political capital and promoting inclusive growth.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>EVENT</th>
<th>COMMENTS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>29 March</td>
<td>Hartal</td>
<td>The Hawkers Association will hold a hartal in the capital, protesting against the eviction of hawkers without compensation. Increased security measures and traffic disruptions are likely; violence possible</td>
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<tr>
<td>30 March</td>
<td>Election</td>
<td>Comilla City Corporation election and by-polls for Sunamganj-2 constituency will be held. Increased security measures and traffic disruptions likely; violence possible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 April</td>
<td>Bangla New Year</td>
<td>National holiday - Widespread business closures; increased security and traffic disruptions likely; violence possible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 May</td>
<td>May Day</td>
<td>National holiday - Widespread business closures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 May</td>
<td>Buddha Purnima</td>
<td>Religious holiday – the largest Buddhist religious festival held in Bangladesh. Widespread business closures, traffic disruptions and assembly of large crowds, petty crime and violence possible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27 May</td>
<td>Ramadan</td>
<td>Ramadan marks the ninth month of the Islamic calendar, during which Muslims worldwide fast to commemorate the first revelation of the Quran to Muhammad</td>
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<tr>
<td>23 June</td>
<td>Anniversary of the founding of the Awami League party</td>
<td>Rallies and demonstrations; violence possible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 August</td>
<td>National Mourning Day</td>
<td>National holiday - Marks the anniversary of the assassination of the former President Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. Widespread business closures; transportation disruptions possible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 September</td>
<td>Eid al-Adha</td>
<td>Religious holiday - Widespread business closures, traffic disruptions and assembly of large crowds, petty crime and violence possible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 October</td>
<td>Islamic New Year</td>
<td>National holiday - Widespread business closures; increased security and traffic disruptions likely; violence possible</td>
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Constellis is a leading provider of risk management, protective security, crisis management and enabling support services to governments, international organisations and major corporations across the globe. We specialize in serving the energy, construction, extractives, critical infrastructure, development and national security sectors—assisting our clients in understanding risk and in conducting their operations safely and securely, no matter their location. Constellis takes pride in our strict adherence to an exacting code of ethics and rigorous focus on standards and compliance—reinforcing the pioneering role we play in fostering stability, efficiency and sustainable economic development.

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Ultimately, our commitment is to prioritize local talent and local suppliers and to develop a profound understanding of the societal, legislative and operational situation ‘on the ground’. This affords us and our clients a unique freedom of movement and enables us to create safe and secure environments in a discrete and sustainable manner.

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Constellis’ intelligence analysts and security consultants produce bespoke political and security reports, threat assessments and security risk assessments to inform decisions and to protect people and assets across the South Asia and the Middle East.

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