

# Prison Insight

January- June 2025 | Decage's Half-yearly Report on  
Prisons in Bangladesh



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## PREFACE

Decage is a Dhaka-based non-profit organization that works to address the structural neglect and legal invisibility in the criminal legal system with a particular focus on prisons and the Child Development Centres. How many people are truly aware of the real situation inside Bangladesh's prisons? What is the actual condition of prison facilities? How are the inmates being treated? Also, are the prisons genuinely serving as correctional institutions? Such questions have inspired us to publish a half-yearly report, shedding light on what is really happening inside the prisons. Prison Insight is the half-yearly secondary data-based report that aims to highlight key trends, contemporary incidents and institutional responses that impact the function of prison system. It offers insights into crucial areas such as prison population, healthcare, rehabilitation programme, administrative accountability and the treatment of vulnerable groups. At present, there are 13 central prisons and 55 district prisons in Bangladesh. The Department of Prisons oversees these facilities. This publication marks the beginning of Decage's journey toward creating evidence-based awareness and advocacy for prison reform in Bangladesh. We hope that Prison Insight will serve as a resourceful report for policymakers, researchers, journalists and human rights activists to make our correctional institutions more humane, transparent and accountable.

## INTRODUCTION

Despite Bangladesh's prisons undergoing significant modernization, remnants of the old system remain deeply entrenched, both of which are comprehensively discussed in this report. A country's overall condition is often reflected within its prison system. In many European countries, prisons are literally used as correctional institutions in the true sense of the term. In Bangladesh, the Department of Prison has already proposed changing its official name to "Correction Services Bangladesh". Prison Insight aspires to meaningfully contribute in this transformation. The framework and the division of chapters are regulated by the data collection. Initially, data were collected from three national daily newspapers—Prothom Alo, Jugantor and The Daily Star. However, to broaden the scope and diversity of data the number of national newspapers surveyed was later increased to thirteen. Prison Insight is a half-yearly report that illustrates data gained from different news reports as well as from the Department of Prisons. The first chapter reviews gender and age-based statistics, total number of prisoners as well as prison babies. The second chapter highlights various allegations and complaints concerning prisons, In some instances, the Department of Prisons took responsive action; however, in other cases, notable instances of negligence were observed. The third chapter discusses the nature and causes and of unfortunate deaths of prison inmates. Additionally, topics such as women in prisons, drugs, suicides and cases of wrongful arrests (Aynabazi) have been described in different chapters. The report does not focus solely on the negative aspects of prisons; since the data were collected from diverse newspapers, efforts were also made to present the positive developments and reforms within the prison system. The eighth chapter discusses the strategic planning and reform initiative aimed at improving prison conditions. The later parts of this report illustrate celebrations inside prisons during religious festivals and cultural events such as the Bengali New Year. Critically, conducting direct interviews with relevant prison authorities would have further enhanced the paper's validity. Despite this limitation, we believe that such initiatives should be carried out on a larger scale to help the public gain a deeper understanding of the realities inside prisons.

# Chapter 1

## PRISON: POPULATION AND TRENDS

This chapter provides a comprehensive analysis of Bangladesh’s prison demographics and notable trends, particularly from January to June 2025. The analysis begins with the depiction of fluctuations in the overall prison population and identification of their causes. Common factors including under trial and convicted prison populations, age-based and gender-based distributions of prisoners, and the lives of prison babies are comprehensively illustrated in this report.

### FLUCTUATIONS IN THE PRISON POPULATION

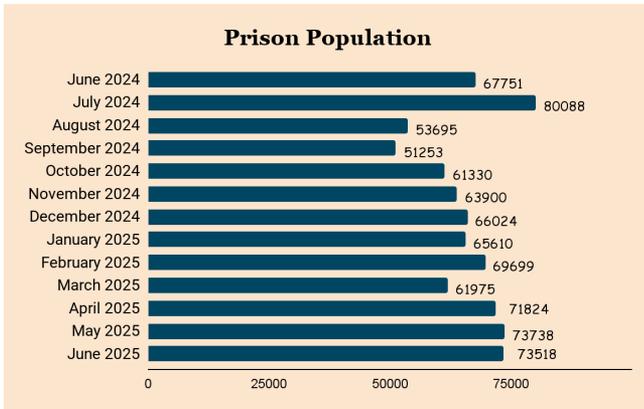


Figure 1: Prison Population (Department of Prisons, 2025)

Bangladesh’s prison population has been mounting in the last two decades driven by policy changes and the inefficient criminal legal system. Data from June-July 2024 presents how political events shape prison population. A noticeable fluctuation in the prison population is observed in the first three months (June 2024 to August 2024) as shown in the chart. The number of incarcerated people in June 2024 was 67,751 which was increased by about 18% and stood at 80,088 in the next month. Surprisingly, the population dropped suddenly to 33% in August 2024. What are the reasons behind these sudden fluctuations observed over such a short period? During the July mass uprising, many protestors who took part in the quota

reform movement were detained causing the number of prisoners reach its highest point. The Daily Star reported that more than 1,100 people were detained throughout Dhaka and other districts within 36 hours on July 23, 2024.<sup>1</sup>

However, the number had drastically dropped when the interim government came into power. Unfortunately, it has also been reported that a large number of inmates escaped from many prisons in the post-July period and they are yet to be caught. Syed Mohammad MotaHER Hossain, the Inspector General of Prisons, said in a press briefing that more than 2200 prisoners escaped on and after August 5, 2024 and around 1,500 have been rearrested so far.<sup>2</sup> Kaler Diganta reported that during the mass uprising in July–August of 2024, unprecedented incidents of prison revolts took place in 17 prisons across the country. In fact, prison guards had to fire when terrorists and other ordinary inmates attempted to escape taking advantage of the situation.

Consequently, 13 inmates were killed in the Gazipur High Security Prison and Jamalpur Prison. A total of 282 prison guards were injured across 17 prisons.<sup>3</sup> The lowest prison population rate is identified in September 2024 which is ironically 16% higher than the maximum capacity of the prison population. Population rate spiked almost 20% upward in October 2024, and since then it has been increasing gradually. From September 2024 to June 2025, it increased nearly by 44%. Why has the prison population been on the uptrend since the interim government came into power? Most of the people sent to prison have been political leaders, activists, and supporters of the Awami League, including individuals accused of drug-related cases. Officials from the Department of Prisons stated that the number of inmates has increased because many individuals have been arrested in connection with cases related to casualties as well as other criminal offenses during the July mass uprising.<sup>4</sup>

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1 The Daily Star- July 23, 2024: Mass arrests and crackdown continue-<https://www.thedailystar.net/the-july-rocked-bangladesh/news/july-23-2024-mass-arrests-and-crackdown-continue-3945611>

2 The Daily Star- Over 700 escaped prisoners still at large- <https://www.thedailystar.net/news/bangladesh/news/over-700-escaped-prisoners-still-large-3768306>

3 Kaler Diganta- জুলাইগণ-অভ্যুত্থানে ১৭ কারাগারেবিদ্রোহ ও হামলা- <https://kalerdiganta.com/785>

4 Prothom Alo- কারাগারগুলোতে এখন বন্দী ৭৭ হাজার, ধারণক্ষমতার দেড়গুণের বেশি- <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/hv2u4tvo11>

## UNDER-TRIAL AND CONVICT PRISONERS

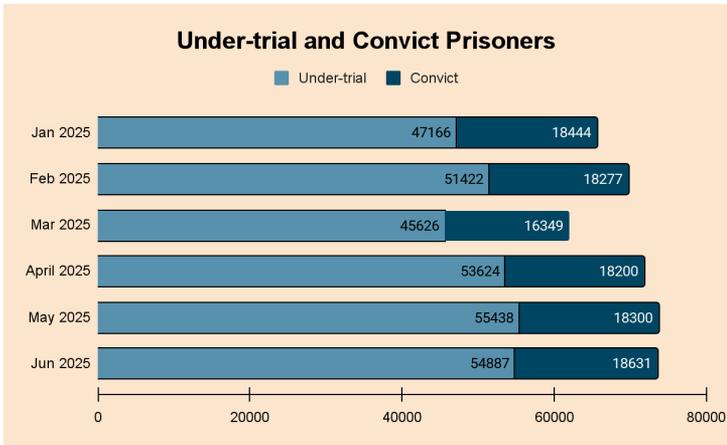


Figure 2: Under-trial and Convict Prisoners (Department of Prisons, 2025)

Under-trial detention means that an accused is detained while he awaits a trial to decide whether he is guilty or not of a crime.<sup>5</sup> Contrarily, a convict is a person who has been found guilty of a crime after a trial.<sup>6</sup> According to Penal Reform International, about one-third of the prison populations around the world are under-trial detainees. Many of these individuals are incarcerated not because they are dangerous or guilty but because they are too impoverished to pay for the legal fees or they lack options like house arrest, probation, etc. It violates the principle of “innocent until proven guilty,” and therefore, prisons become overcrowded.<sup>7</sup> In Bangladesh Prison, the mean of pretrial detainees is 73.97% between January and June in 2025, in contrast to this, the mean of convict prisoners is 26.03%. Bangladesh Prison holds a much higher percentage of under-trial detainees than the global average of one-third, as reported by Penal Reform International. The highest under-trial detention rate

5 <https://www.fairtrials.org/campaigns/pre-trial-detention/>

6 Legal Information Institute- <https://www.law.cornell.edu/wex/convict>

7 Penal Reform International- <https://www.penalreform.org/issues/pre-trial-justice/issue/>

is recorded in May 2025 which is 75.18% and the lowest is 71.89% in January 2025. This statistic clearly demonstrates why the prison population in our country remains overcrowded, and many prisoners remain behind bars for a long time due to financial constraints.

## GENDER BASED PRISON POPULATION

### Male Prisoners

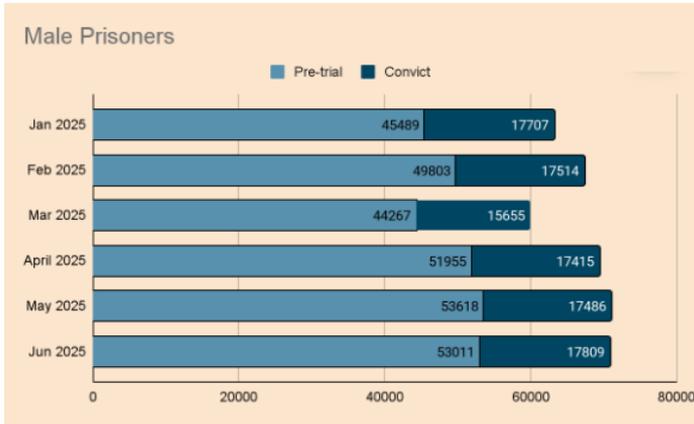


Figure 3: Male Prisoners (Department of Prisons, 2025)

The above bar chart shows the monthly trend of the male prison population in Bangladesh, separately illustrating under-trial detainees and convicted prisoners. Overall, it shows an upward trend during this period. Initially, the number stood at 63,196 in January, which gradually increased to 12.06% and stood at 70,820 in June 2025. Throughout the six-month period, under-trial detainees consistently made up a significant portion of the male prison population illustrating the mean of male pretrial detainees as 74.21%. The number of under-trial male detainees increased from 45,489 (in January 2025) to 53,011 (in June 2025), indicating a notable rise over the six-month period. On the contrary, convicted prisoners demonstrate a comparatively moderate trend, indicating that the number of sentenced inmates remained relatively constant. The chart therefore suggests that three-fourths of the male prison population in Bangladesh remain in under-trial detention, reflecting systematic challenges such as case backlogs, slow trial processes, and limited opportunity to bail. However, addressing these issues

could help reduce overcrowding and improve prison management effectively.

### Female Prisoners

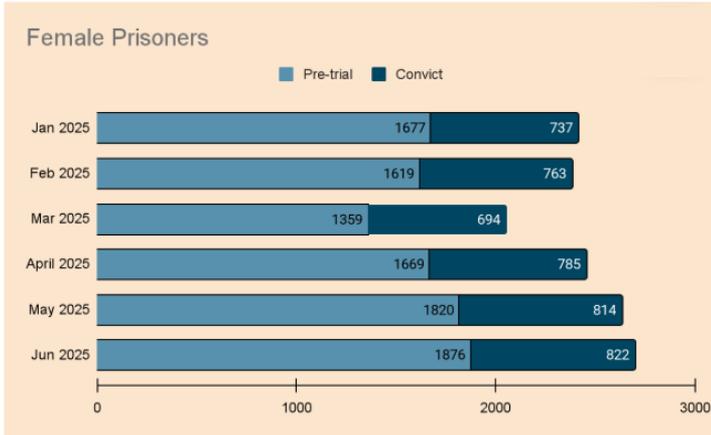


Figure 4: Female Prisoners (Department of Prisons, 2025)

The above bar chart shows the monthly trend of the female prison population in Bangladesh, separately identifying under-trial detainees and convicted prisoners. Overall, it shows an upward trend over the six-month period. Initially, the number stood at 2,414 in January, which gradually rose to 2,698 in June 2025 indicating an increase of 11.76%. This increasing rate nearly aligns with the overall growth rate of male prisoners which is 12.06%. Throughout the six-month period, under-trial detainees consistently made up a significant portion of the female prison population. As shown above, the mean of female pretrial detainees is 68.47%. In the case of the female prison population, both under-trial and convicted prisoners show a steady rise. However, the overall population shows a gradual increase.

### AGE BASED PRISON POPULATION

This pie chart below presents data on different age groups within the prison as of September 2025, when the total number of inmates was 75,564, with under-trial prisoners accounting for 74.41% of the total population. The chart identifies a total of 9,418 prisoners

belonging to the 18–22 age range. Among them, 7735 were under-trial prisoners, and 1683 were convicted. This age group represents 12.5% of the total prison population. In the 23–30 age range, there were 18,490 prisoners, of whom 14,950 were under-trial and 4,146 were convicted. This group constitutes 24.5% of the total prison population. There were 21,840 prisoners aged 31–40 years, the highest among all age groups. Of them, 16117 were under-trial prisoners, and 5723 were convicted. Individuals in this group constitute 28.9% of the total prison population.

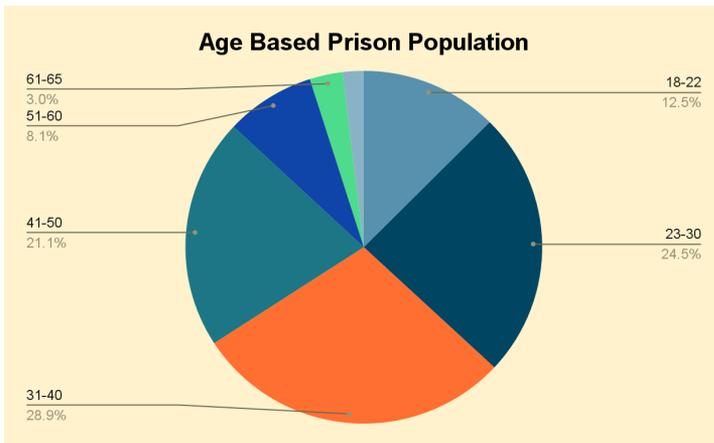


Figure 5: Prison Population Based on Age (Department of Prisons, 2025)

Decage arranged a seminar on July 7 2025 titled ‘Right to Employment in Prison: Employment as a Basic Human Need’. The keynote speaker was the Inspector General of Prisons named Syed Mohammad Motaher Hossain. He discussed different aspects of prison employment in Bangladesh and talked of upcoming reform initiatives such as the open prison concept, increasing wages of prisoners, the Correctional Industrial Park in Bangladesh (CIPB), the Correctional Services Act of 2025 and so forth. Comparing the ratio of prisoners based on age, we see that most inmates are people of working age, comprising three-fourths of the total prison population. Imprisonment not only causes unemployment but also contributes to the hardship in the families when the earning members are captured. Thus, considering the socioeconomic conditions of our society, prison employment is a very crucial issue. The 41–50 age group consisting of 15968 prisoners accounts for 21.1% of the

total population. Among them, 11404 were under-trial prisoners, and 4,564 were convicted. There were 6146 prisoners aged 51–60 years, representing 8.1% of the total population. Of them, 3,913 were under-trial prisoners, and 2,233 were convicted. In the 61–65 age range, 2,250 were reported as prisoners, which is 3% of the total prison population. Among them, 1367 were under-trial, and 883 were convicted. Finally, there were 1452 prisoners aged above 65 years, the lowest among all age groups. Of them, 744 were under-trial prisoners, and 708 were convicted, representing 1.9% of the total prison population.

### Age-Based Male Prisoners

This pie chart below presents data focusing on different age groups within the population of male prisoners as of September 2025. As shown above, 9103 individuals belong to the 18–22 age group. Among them, 7,476 were under-trial prisoners, and 1,627 were convicted. This age group constitutes 12.6% of the total prison population. Moving on to the next group would reveal a total of 17,127 prisoners in the 23–30 age range, among whom 13,819 were under-trial and 3,308 were convicted. This age group represents 23.7% of the total prison population. Additionally, the number of prisoners aged between 31–40 years was counted as 20,969, the highest in number among all male age groups. Of them, 15523 were under-trial prisoners, and 5446 were convicted. Individuals in this group make 29% of the total prison population. Furthermore, the 41–50 age group counts 15,439 prisoners that is 21.4% of the total population. Among them, 11020 were under-trial prisoners, and 4,419 were convicted.

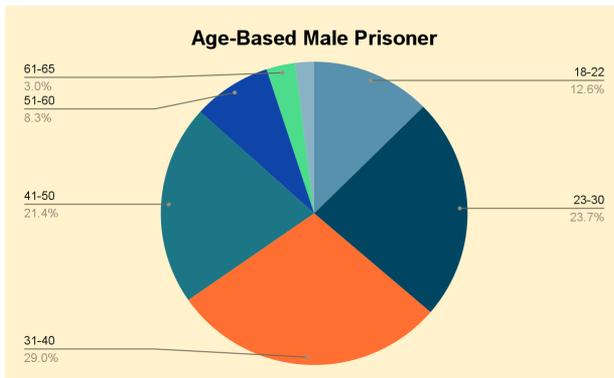


Figure 6: Male Prisoner Based on Age (Department of Prisons, 2025)

In addition, 5989 prisoners aged between 51–60 years represents 8.3% of the total prison population. Among them, 3821 were under-trial prisoners, and 2168 were convicted. Similarly, in the 61–65 age group, the number of prisoners is 2202 prisoner indicating 3% of the total population. Among them, 1,339 were under-trial, and 863 were convicted. Finally, the number of prisoners aged between 65 years is 1,436 indicating the lowest among all male age groups which. Of them, 736 were under-trial prisoners, and 700 were convicted, representing 2% of the total prison population.

### Age Based Female Prisoners

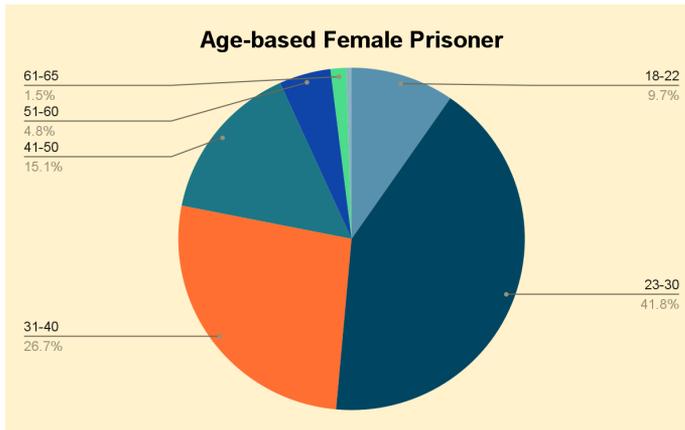


Figure 7: Female Prisoner Based on Age (Department of Prison, 2025)

This chart presents data focusing on different age groups within the population of female prisoners as of September 2025. There were a total of 315 individuals belonging to the 18–22 age group. Among them, 259 were under-trial prisoners, and 56 were convicted. This age group constitutes 9.7% of the total prison population. In terms of the 23–30 age group, the number of the prisoners is 1,363 prisoners, among whom 1131 were under-trial and 232 were convicted. This age group represents 41.8% of the total prison population, the highest among all female age groups.

Moreover, there were 871 prisoners aged between 31–40 years, of whom 594 were under-trial and 277 were convicted. Individuals in this age group comprise 26.7% of the total prison population. Furthermore, in the 41–50 age group, there were 493 prisoners, accounting for 15.1% of the total population. Among them, 348 were

under-trial prisoners, and 145 were convicted. In addition, there were 157 prisoners aged between 51–60 years, representing 4.8% of the total prison population. Among them, 92 were under-trial prisoners, and 65 were convicted. Similarly, in the 61–65 age group, there were 48 prisoners constituting 1.5% of the total population. Among them, 28 were under-trial, and 20 were convicted. Finally, prisoners aged above 65 years identify the lowest number among all female age groups that is 92. Of them, 8 were under-trial prisoner and 8 were convicted, representing 0.5% of the total prison population.

## Chapter 2

### ALLEGATIONS AND IRREGULARITIES AGAINST PRISON DEPARTMENT

Gathered statistics from the first half of 2025 reflects certain factors such as significant administrative weaknesses, political influence, corruption, discrimination in favor of VIP prisoners, security failures and inadequate healthcare support. Prisoners obtain forged bail orders or receive special privileges and luxurious cells through bribery while ordinary and poor prisoners remain helpless, face torture and are exposed to health risks.

### POLITICAL INFLUENCE AND IRREGULAR APPOINTMENTS

On 16 January 2025, 12 individuals were announced as private inspectors, and their appointments were approved in a letter signed by the Chattogram Divisional Commissioner, Md. Zia Uddin. Of these twelve, eight were leaders or activists of BNP or its affiliated organizations. One was a coordinator from Students Against Discrimination, while another was a social worker. The leaders and activists of the Awami League and their allied organizations previously occupied these positions. Akhtar Kabir Chowdhury, an editor of Shushashoner Jonno Nagorik (Shujan) Chattogram, said that human rights activists should be appointed to these positions, not any party members, so that they can prevent corruption and work for the poor.<sup>8</sup>

### RELEASE OF DETAINEES THROUGH FAKE BAIL ORDERS

In Habiganj District Prison, an unprecedented incident occurred where four drug-related accused named Rubel Ahmed (26), Afzal Hossain (22), Azad Mia (23), and Soyeb Mia (27) were released using forged bail orders. On January 6 of 2025, they were arrested by RAB with 35 kg of marijuana and handed over to Madhabpur Police Station. They got released through forged documents inside

8 Prothom Alo- ১২ কারাপরিদর্শকের ৮ জনইবিএনপিরনেতা-কম্বী- <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/district/w516myl615>

Habiganj District Prison, although bail bonds had been rejected twice by the Senior Judicial Magistrate as well as the District Court. In this context, Md Monir Hossain Chowdhury, the prisoner of Habiganj District Prison said that they released the four accused after receiving the bail order through the proper procedure. However, how the fake bail order had been created to be examined in the court.<sup>9</sup> This incident not only exposes administrative weakness but also showcase inaccurate verification procedures between courts and prisons.

## **PERSONAL BUSINESS USING ADMINISTRATIVE POSITION**

Tipu Sultan, the Deputy Inspector General of Prisons of Chattogram Division, used to supply milk from his own farm to the Chattogram Central Prison and sell it at a higher price than the market price. The Prison Code states that ‘any officer or employee of the prison or any person trusted or employed by him cannot sell or rent any goods to any prisoner or accept any benefit or money from the sale or rent of any goods or enter into any other business dealings directly or indirectly with any prisoner.’<sup>10</sup> However, such behavior from a high official creates a conflict of interest encouraging the normalization of corruption. In response to this incident, the Department of Prisons has issued directives prohibiting the use of government employees and granting funds for cattle farming inside prisons.<sup>11</sup>

## **BAIL GRANTED YET NOT RELEASED FROM PRISON**

Mawlana Muhibullah was kept in Kashimpur Central Prison for several days even after getting bail from the High Court. He was arrested on 23 March 2023 in connection with a case filed under the Anti-Terrorism Act, 2009, at Belaichari Police Station. He got bail from the High Court on 30 January 2025. Apart from this, there were two more cases against him in the Demra and Belaichari police stations. He has already been granted bail in those two cases, and the bail papers reached the Kashimpur Central Prison four days earlier. Despite that, the prison authorities did not release him and

9 Jugantor- ভূয়াজমিননামায়কারাগারথেকেবেরিয়েগেছেমাদকমামলার ৪ আসামি- <https://www.jugantor.com/country-news/910625>

10 Prothom Alo- চট্টগ্রামকারাগারেদুধবিক্রিকরছেনডিআইজিপ্রজ্ঞন- <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/district/1bli9n0n1o>

11 Prothom Alo- কারাগারেগুরুপালনেসরকারিকর্মচারী ও অর্থব্যবহারকরাযাবেনা- <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/district/ib0wmoj1tf>

continued to keep him detained. He was later released after his followers protested in front of the prison. Allegedly, the prison super physically abused him and deliberately delayed his release. After his release, Maulana Muhibullah gave a speech to the protestors and complained, “The former prison super of the prison, Subrata Kumar Bala, tortured him, and he was kept to torture us. Despite all this, he has been transferred. Is that enough? I demand the maximum punishment against him by firing him from the job.”<sup>12</sup>

## ALLEGATIONS OF PRISONERS ESCAPING FROM PRISONS

On 19 July 2024, shortly before the fall of the Awami regime, a shocking incident of attack, vandalism, and arson took place at the Narsingdi District Prison. A total of 826 prisoners including 9 militants escaped from the prison that day. At the same time, 85 firearms and more than 7,000 rounds of ammunition were looted.<sup>13</sup> Although law enforcement agencies have conducted several operations and arrested 35 individuals including 6 militants, 145 prisoners remain missing.<sup>14</sup> On 6 August 2024, a total of 202 convicts including Muntasir (accused in the murder of Abrar Fahad) escaped by breaking the walls of Kashimpur High Security Central Prison situated at Gazipur, a consequence of the mass uprising. 87 of them were sentenced to death. Later, 53 people were arrested in a police operation, but 146 are still absconding themselves.<sup>15</sup> Moreover, a 19-year-old inmate, Md. Tanim attempted to escape from Noakhali District Prison by climbing over the wall. The incident occurred on 7 May 2025, and the video of the attempt quickly went viral on social media. However, the prison authorities promptly took action and recaptured him.<sup>16</sup>

Earlier, on the 1<sup>st</sup> May of 2025, Md. Imran escaped from Chattogram Central Prison. According to the complaint, although there are

12 Prothom Alo- কাশিমপুরকারাফটকেবিক্ষোভেরপরমুক্তিপেলেনমাওলানা মুহিবুল্লাহ- <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/district/dggy9cmu5j>

13 The Daily Star- Narsingdi Prison Break: Six months on, 184 fugitives still at large- <https://www.thedailystar.net/news/bangladesh/crime-justice/news/narsingdi-prison-break-six-months-184-fugitives-still-large-3825136>

14 Daily Janakantha- ১০ মাসপরেওধরাছোঁয়ারবাইরেনরসিংদীজেলাকারাগারথেকেপালানো ১৪৫ কয়েদি- <https://www.dailyjanakantha.com/bangladesh/news/812325>

15 Prothom Alo- বুয়েটশিক্ষার্থীআবরারফাহাদকেহত্যারদায়েমৃত্যুদণ্ডপ্রাপ্তমুনতসিরকারাগারেরদেয়ালভেঙেপালিয়েছেন- <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/8f4fwl9r30>

16 Samakal- দেয়ালটপকেকারাগারথেকেপালানোরচেষ্টাআসামির, ভিডিওভাইরাল- <https://samakal.com/whole-country/article/294361>

provisions in the prison code to file a case at the police station, raise an alarm, and inform the administration when a prisoner escapes, nothing was done in this incident. Imran broke a window and exited through the prison's main gate and was re-arrested from his home at around 10 pm but the matter was kept secret. Unfortunately, nothing was reported to the local police station, and he was sent back to prison without being produced in court as per the legal process. After 10 days, the prison authorities formed an inquiry committee, but sources said there had been no visible progress in the investigation so far. Prison security experts believe that concealing the escape of prisoners in this way is not only an administrative irregularity but also creates a serious security risk for future. If such a precedent is created, the urge to escape may spread among other prisoners which poses a serious threat to the law and order of the prison.<sup>17</sup>

### **PROLONGED IMPRISONMENT OF SEVEN YEARS DESPITE BEING ACQUITTED**

In 2003, the lower court found Ibrahim Ali guilty and sentenced him to death in connection with a murder case at Batiaghata police station. Later, the case was appealed to the High Court Division of the Supreme Court of Bangladesh and acquitted in 2017. He was found guilty in four cases and sentenced to death in the murder case and life imprisonment in the Explosive Substances case. He was sentenced to 10 years and 7 years of imprisonment respectively in the other two cases. Acquitted from death penalty and the life imprisonment sentences and served more than the sentencing period of the other two cases, he remained in prison as no order was processed. Claiming his innocence, Ibrahim Ali Sheikh said:

“I was not involved in the murder for which I lost 21 years of my life. The person who was killed was like a brother to us. I got entangled in the case merely out of suspicion. Since then, I’ve had nothing. The responsibility of my family was on my shoulders. I used to earn my living through hard work. I worked as a night guard at Joypur Bazar and also used to pull a van. I couldn’t afford a lawyer of my own; the case was handled by a state-appointed one. Maybe that’s why I didn’t get a fair outcome.”

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17 Prothom Alo- চট্টগ্রামে কারাগার থেকে কেবন্দী পালানোর ঘটনা ‘আড়ালের’ চেষ্টা-  
<https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/district/1tivuqje2>

Ibrahim befriended another inmate when he was imprisoned. Ibrahim appealed to the High Court against the judgment of the trial court through an acquaintance. According to him, the person who worked on the case for him told him that he had been acquitted and could finally get released soon. After that, they made him sign the vakalatnama (legal authorization for the lawyer). A few days later, Ibrahi heard that his lawyer had passed away. After that, there was hardly anyone left to look after his case. He was later transferred to Khulna Central Prison. After some time, he heard that his documents had arrived there but he never got any further information about them.” Explaining how he was eventually released, Ibrahim Ali Sheikh recounted:

“About a month and a half ago, while watching TV, I saw a helpline number. On the day designated for death-row inmates to make phone calls, I dialed that number. That’s when things finally started to move regarding my case.”

In August 2023, Ibrahim was transferred from Khulna Central Prison to Jashore Central Prison. Khulna Prison Superintendent Md. Nasir Uddin Pradhan told Prothom Alo that they had sent the prisoner’s release documents and a photocopy of the High Court Division order to the Senior Prison Super of Jashore Central Prison in due time. He added that they could not say why there was a delay in the order reaching its destination.<sup>18</sup>

## **ACCUSATIONS OF MISCONDUCT AND CORRUPTION BY PRISON ADMINISTRATION**

A rare and hotly debated incident took place in the Khagrachhari District Prison in the middle of 2025 which clearly reveals the internal crisis of the country’s prison administration. The prison guard protested against their prisoner, Akhter Hossain Sheikh, accusing him of public misbehavior, bribery, and abuse of power. According to the complaint, the prisoner routinely extorted money from inmates in exchange for transfer to better cells, hospital shifts or special privileges. Not only the prisoners but also the prison guard were victims of his injustice. Demanding money from the staff’s salaries, issuing threats, and using abusive language were part of his

18 Prothom Alo- খালসেরপরও ৭ বছরকারাগারেরফাঁসিরসেলেবন্দীছিলেনইব্রাহিম-  
<https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/district/bpb91i22gv>

daily behavior. At one stage, the enraged prison guards locked him inside his own office and began a protest calling in local journalists. They alleged that they had been under psychological pressure for a long time because of Akhter Hossain Sheikh's behavior. Despite reporting the matter to higher authorities, no action had been taken. A prison guard said, "We cannot work with injustice. It has become impossible to work under the daily pressure of insults and bribes." When the news of this incident was published in the media, the district administration formed an inquiry committee, and the initial investigation found most of the allegations to be true. But till now, no strict administrative action has been taken against him.<sup>19</sup> Serious allegations of corruption and violations of prisoners' rights have been raised against the authorities of Sunamganj District Prison. Former prison inmates reported that essential items in the canteen are sold at three to four times higher than the regular prices, and bribes are taken for phone calls, visits, and better accommodation facilities. Some even claimed that drugs enter the prison through corrupt guards. Despite these irregularities, the Prison Super has only promised to investigate the matter following complaints raised in an Anti-Corruption Commission public hearing.<sup>20</sup>

## SPECIAL PRIVILEGES FOR VIP PRISONERS

In early 2025, there were allegations against VIP prisoners receiving special benefits in Dhaka Central Prison which raised serious concern about the transparency of the country's prison system. According to the complaint, these influential prisoners could regularly bring in cooked food from outside, have special visits with relatives, illegally use mobile phones and even enjoy extended stays in hospitals. In addition, some staff of the prison administration were accused of embezzling money from prisoners, using prison pickups for personal purposes, burning trees without permission and creating fire alarms. According to the report, former minister and Awami League leader Anisul Haque, Shahjahan Khan, Salman F Rahman and some other influential persons are alleged to have received this privilege. Investigation revealed that these prisoners were kept in luxurious wards and bribes ranging from Tk 100 to Tk 200 per minute were taken for using the phone.<sup>21</sup>

19 Prothom Alo- কারারক্ষীদেরহাতেঅবরুদ্ধখাগড়াছড়িকারাগারেরকারাধ্যক্ষ-  
<https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/district/o77qd9j194>

20 Samakal- একডিম ৫৫ টাকাচারটিপান ৩০- <https://samakal.com/whole-country/article/299669>

21 Jugantor- নানাঅপকর্মেভরাকেন্দ্রীয়কারাগার- <https://www.jugantor.com/>

A powerful syndicate has reportedly been formed inside the prison under the leadership of Prisoner AKAM Masum. The members of this syndicate are Deputy Prisoners Tanzil Hossain, Delwar Hossain, Jannat, Yusuf, Sergeant Instructor Aminul Islam, Subedar Saiful, and Ataur among others. The syndicate members are accused for receiving various benefits and privileges from VIP prisoners associated with the fascist government. When contacted, Jailor AKAM Masum told Jugantor that:

“The allegations brought to me about the prison are politically motivated. I cannot say who is spreading such false information.” DIG Prisons Jahangir Kabir stated, “The allegations that have been made are completely false and baseless propaganda. Those who previously enjoyed illegal privileges are the ones spreading these rumors.”<sup>22</sup>

Since 5 August 2024, allegations regarding special privileges provided to Awami League leaders and influential prisoners at Khulna District Prison have become widely discussed issues. Despite the prison’s capacity of accommodating 678 inmates, it is currently holding more than twice that number, resulting in severe overcrowding, mismanagement, and inequality. Amid this situation, many local Awami League leaders, former members of parliament, and party organizers are reportedly using political influence and lobbying to secure special privileges inside the prison. Former Land Minister and Member of the Parliament Narayan Chandra Chandra converted a common cell into a “division room” and is living in a comfortable environment equipped with modern facilities. Similarly, former Member of the Parliament (Khulna-6), Mohammad Rashiduzzaman, has also formally applied for division benefits. Besides, other local Awami League leaders, former councilors and leaders of party organizations are having the opportunity to stay in prison hospitals or special rooms on the pretext of illness. Even instances of using mobile phone have been detected, which is strictly prohibited under the prison code. Moreover, in Mymensingh Central Prison, influential Awami League leaders and their associates are reportedly leading a luxurious lifestyle. With the cooperation of prison authorities, they are enjoying special privileges such as separate seating arrangements, better food, and the opportunity to

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national/924477

22 Jugantor- টাইমসোফলাইভিং- <https://www.jugantor.com/tp-city/925113>

organize political meetings.<sup>23</sup>

## INTERNAL SYNDICATE AND FINANCIAL EXPLOITATION

In the Cox's Bazar District Prison, a horrendous picture of corruption emerged which is locally known as the "Dandaberi trade." This means that every basic right of the prisoners is bought and sold for money. For instance, bribes have to be paid for a better seat, food, or a chance to talk to relatives. There are regular incidents of torture and beating directed at penniless prisoners. All these activities are allegedly overseen by Jailor Abu Musa, who has been accused of acting as the principal orchestrator of the hospital, canteen, and illicit drug operations within the prison. According to reports, the prison hospital has now become a rest house for Yaba traders and influential inmates. To get a seat, inmates have to pay 20 thousand taka advance besides a monthly payment of 15-20 thousand taka. Currently, around 40-45 Yaba traders are comfortably spending their time inside the prison. Awami League leaders and activists are also paying bribes of 20-50 thousand taka to get a place in the hospital.<sup>24</sup>

In Dhaka Central Prison, an influential syndicate led by Jailor AKAM Masum arranges luxurious living for VIP prisoners in return for money, with special menus adding fish and meat to the meals. Even iPhones and mini-laptops are claimed to have been recovered from some of the prisoners. It is reported that the Managing Director of Desh TV, Arif Hasan, occupies three rooms in the Suryamukhi cell in exchange for money and lives alone with the privilege of using mobile phones secretly. Even some influential prisoners are extorting money from other prisoners "in the name of building village mosques." The most brutal allegation is reflected in the case of the torture of death row convict Naeem Chowkidar who was allegedly beaten up by some officials and inmates, including the Jailor AKAM Masum, for seeking treatment. Naeem told his brother and wife over the phone that money was demanded for treatment; otherwise, he would be tortured. Meanwhile, trade and looting are also going on in the prison canteen, where essential products including cigarettes, bananas, and meat are sold at twice the market price, and the profit is shared with the prison administrators.<sup>25</sup>

23 Jugantor- সুবিধাপেতেআ.লীগনেতাদেরদৌড়ঝাঁপ- <https://www.jugantor.com/tp-city/953094>

24 Jugantor- কারাগারে 'ডান্ডাবেড়িবাণিজ্য'- <https://www.jugantor.com/country-news/928836>

25 Jugantor- টাকাইষেখানেশেষকথা- <https://www.jugantor.com/tp->

In Mymensingh Central Prison, a powerful prison syndicate has been reportedly formed involving influential Awami League leaders, prison authorities and staff. In fact, leaders enjoy luxurious privileges, including special cells, medical treatment, and protection from standard prison rules, all in exchange for substantial bribes. Some leaders are quietly released on bail and allowed to travel abroad bypassing normal legal procedures. The syndicate also enables political meetings, coordination, and intimidation inside the prison, with ordinary inmates often exploited or threatened. This system has created a culture of corruption, impunity, and favoritism, undermining the integrity of the prison administration.<sup>26</sup>

## INCIDENTS OF TORTURE AND ABUSE

The first incident took place on the 2<sup>nd</sup> January of 2025 in Manikganj District Prison where Raju Mandal, an under-trial detainee of a murder case, was allegedly beaten by three prison guards (Rafiqul Islam, Kohinur, and Zahid Hossain) following an argument over fruit prices in the prison canteen. The family alleged that the incident was kept secret and that, due to his injuries, Raju could not even attend the court. Later, when a written complaint was made to the Deputy Commissioner, action was taken against two of the prison guards in the preliminary investigation.<sup>27</sup> Later on 17 January 2025, there was brutal torture on Chhatra League leader Zubair in Jhalakathi District Prison. Zubair's lawyer stated that prison guards regularly demanded money and that, when he refused to comply, the Subedar and the Chief Warden, along with others, beat him, resulting in a fracture to his right hand. The family alleged that he was not given medical treatment after being beaten. However, the prison authorities claimed that it was the result of an argument among inmates and that no guards were involved.<sup>28</sup> Again on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of March in 2025, an incident known as 'Chola Chor' describes six under-trial detainees being brutally beaten in Cox's Bazar District Prison for allegedly stealing chickpeas and convicted without any investigation. In February, seven prisoners were allegedly shackled and detained in the cell under the 'Dandaberi trade. Ten lakh taka

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city/925113

26 Amar Desh- কারাগারে আওয়ামীদের রাজকীয় জীবন, প্রশাসন নীরব- <https://www.dailyamardesh.com/amar-desh-special/amdqvvvr0onqd>

27 Jugantor- হাজতিকে পেটাল তিন রক্ষী- <https://www.jugantor.com/tp-news/911550>

28 Prothom Alo- কারাগারে ছাত্রলীগ নেতাকে পিটিয়ে হাত ভেঙে দেওয়ার অভিযোগ- <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/district/52f9b0wmmr6>

was demanded for their release.<sup>29</sup>

## **MEDICAL NEGLIGENCE AND THE HEALTH CARE CRISIS**

There are more than 75,000 inmates across 68 prisons in Bangladesh, yet only two full-time doctors are available to serve all these facilities—one in Manikganj and the other in Kashimpur. As a result, there are no doctors appointed in remaining 66 prisons except pharmacists and nurses providing medical services. Therefore, most of the prisoners get sick and do not receive proper treatment. According to the rules, if a prisoner falls ill, a doctor is supposed to arrive within 20 minutes, but in practice, it often takes up to 20 hours. There are no doctors specializing in heart, nerve, and mental diseases in prisons. Many times, bribes are required to send sick prisoners to the hospital. In turn, the influential prisoners spend their days in luxurious rooms in the hospital with false reports to rest and not being punished. Doctors complain that working in prisons is difficult and humiliating, and many do not want to take this responsibility because of the misbehavior of inmates and officials. As a result, poor and marginalized prisoners are pushed to death.<sup>30</sup>

## **ADMINISTRATIVE NEGLIGENCE TOWARDS JUVENILES**

A 12-year-old boy was kept in the same cell with adult prisoners for six days in Patuakhali District Prison despite a court order to send him to a Child Development Center. This incident is not only an administrative negligence but also a clear violation of the Children Act, 2013. As a result, the child faced serious physical and psychological harm.<sup>31</sup>

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29 Jugantor- কারাগারে ‘ডাভাবেড়িবাগিজ’- <https://www.jugantor.com/country-news/928836>

30 Kaler Kantho- কারাগার ৬৮, ডাক্তারদুজন- <https://www.kalerkantho.com/print-edition/last-page/2025/04/07/1501042>

31 Prothom Alo- শিশুউন্নয়নকেন্দ্রনা পাঠিয়ে ১২ বছরের শিশুকে ছয়দিন রাখা হলে কারাগারে- <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/district/t5czb9kwfd>

## Chapter 3

### INMATE DEATHS IN PRISONS: TRENDS AND CAUSES

Between January and June 2025, a total of 28 deaths of prisoners have been reported in various national dailies and online newspapers. Although the actual death toll of inmates in prison is likely to be higher, this analysis is presented based on the death cases of those 28 inmates. Based on the collected data, among the deceased prisoners, 27 were men (96.43 percent) with a single woman (3.57 percent). Twenty of them were under trial prisoners (71.43 percent), 7 were convicted (25.00 percent) and the status of the remaining ones was unknown. Among them, 10 cases are related to murder and drugs, which account for one-third of the total cases.



Figure 8: Reported Deaths of Prisoners (Department of Prisons, 2025)

There are also reports regarding deceased inmates accused of robbery, dowry and violence against women. With an aspiration to provide an account of the state of health care, human rights, and oversight on legal procedures in Bangladeshi prisons, this chapter identifies why and where such deaths occurred. This six-month review reveals the highest death rate to be in April with seven registered cases marking the peak for that period. In contrast, March and June registered the least rate with each reporting only three fatalities within the same period. Most of the deaths occurred due to illness, heart disease, or stroke. For the rest, however, torture or beating was alleged. However, an analysis of the reasons behind the death of inmates figures out that most of the deaths occurred due to chronic or acute bodily disease. In fact, as shown below, 12 deaths

accounting for 42.9 percent of the total number were shown due to illness. Most of these prisoners had long-standing ailments relating to lungs, liver and kidney while living inside prison. In most news reports, the reason behind the death was sudden illness without any reference to diagnosis, medical history, or hospital reports. Most of these prisoners died either before or after taken to the hospital. These occurrences indicate gross deficiencies in elementary and emergency medical care in prisons. Majority of those who died were elderly, and others were suspects in drug related crimes.

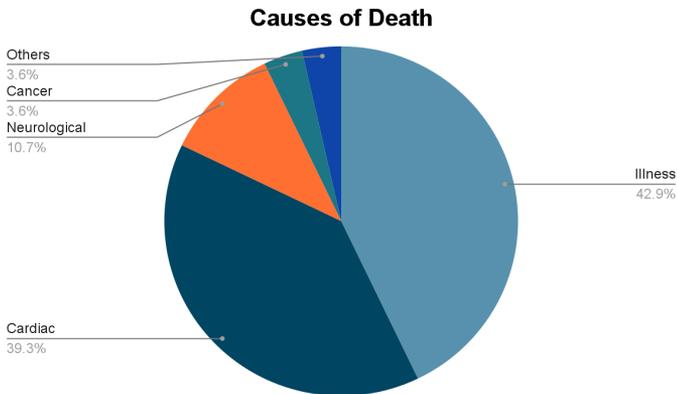


Figure 9: Causes of Death (Department of Prisons, 2025)

Heart disease is referred to in 11 cases (39.3 percent) making it the second most frequent reason for the loss of life. Chronic stresses, anxiety, malnutrition, unavailability of medical drugs, hot and humid weather contribute to the risk of heart disease among prisoners. The fatalities happened frequently during the night or early morning following sudden chest pain or shortness of breath. Although stroke deaths were comparatively fewer, accounting for just three cases (10.7 percent), these cannot be overlooked. Such deaths occurred mainly among elderly prisoners and high blood pressure patients. Another inmate succumbed to cancer after a long period of sickness, reportedly without receiving adequate specialized treatment.

These results have raised several significant questions that are as follows:

1. The healthcare system in prisons is poor and lacks physicians and has a shortage of essential medicines.
2. Illnesses are often detected late, and there are noticeable

delays in treatment, making deaths almost inevitable.

3. Inadequate coverage of cardiac emergency units in prisons is a major deficiency. Professional medical staff with adequate equipment could have prevented most of these deaths.
4. Inadequate guidance on blood pressure control as well as follow-up on health check-ups result in these deaths.

These results conclusively highlight the necessity to establish a permanent medical facility to treat convicts suffering from chronic conditions. The following table provides a comprehensive and detailed overview of the detained prisoners between January and June 2025.

Deaths of Prison Inmates in Bangladesh (January–June 2025) Reported in News Media					
No	Name	Age	Prison	Type of Case	Cause and Place of Death
01	Hadikul Islam <sup>32</sup>	54	Chapain-awabganj District Prison	Sentenced (Cheque fraud, 2 years)	Died of heart disease at Rajshahi Medical College Hospital
02	Colonel (Retd.) Abdul Kader Khan <sup>33</sup>	78	Dhaka Central Prison, Keraniganj	Sentenced to death (Murder case)	Died of brain stroke at BSMMU Hospital
03	Shabid Ullah <sup>34</sup>	60	Kashimpur Central Prison	Sentenced to death	Illness (unspecified), died at Dhaka Medical College Hospital

32 Jugantor- রামেকেকয়েদিরমৃত্যু- <https://www.jugantor.com/country-news/909776>

33 Prothom Alo- গাইবান্ধারমৃত্যুদণ্ডপ্রাপ্তসাবেকসংসদসদস্যকর্ণেলকাদেরখানমারাগে- <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/district/whwg9gb1mx>

34 Prothom Alo- ঢাকামেডিকেলস্মৃত্যুদণ্ডপ্রাপ্তআসামিসহদুইবন্দীরমৃত্যু- <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/ho1gu1seo7>

04	Suman Mia <sup>35</sup>	43	Narayan-ganj District Prison	Undertrial (Theft case)	Illness (unspecified), died at Dhaka Medical College Hospital
05	Abdul Hamid <sup>36</sup>	28	Sylhet Central Prison	Undertrial (Murder and theft case)	Felt chest pain, admitted to prison hospital, died on the way to Osmani Medical College Hospital
06	Enamul Haque <sup>37</sup>	51	Jessore Central Prison	Sentenced to death (Murder case)	Presumed heart disease, died at Jessore General Hospital
07	Akter Shikdar <sup>38</sup>	44	Khulna District Prison	Undertrial (Political case)	Presumed stroke, died at Khulna Medical College Hospital
08	Aleya Begum <sup>39</sup>	60	Rajbari District Prison	Undertrial (Drug case)	Chest pain, died at Rajbari Sadar Hospital

35 Bangladesh Pratidin- ঢামেকহাসপাতালেমৃত্যুদণ্ডপ্রাপ্তআসামিসহদুইকারাবন্দিরমৃত্যু- <https://www.bd-pratidin.com/city-news/2025/02/01/1080203>

36 Amar Desh- সিলেটকেন্দ্রীয়কারাগারেহতামামলারআসামিরমৃত্যু- <https://www.dailyamardesh.com/bangladesh/sylhet/amd5ympckbkng>

37 Amar Desh- যশোরকারাগারেফাঁসিরআসামিরমৃত্যু- <https://www.dailyamardesh.com/bangladesh/khulna/amd8hurejvgws>

38 Prothom Alo- খুলনায়কারাগারেআওয়ামীলীগনেতারমৃত্যু- <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/district/xqzjjs01bc>

39 Jugantor- রাজবাড়ীকারাগারেনারীহাজতিরমৃত্যু- <https://www.jugantor.com/country-news/915235>

09	Sheikh Jobayer Hossain <sup>40</sup>	65	Dhaka Central Prison, Keraniganj	Sentenced (Former BDR member)	Died from unspecified illness while under treatment at Dhaka Medical College Hospital
10	Dulal Uddin <sup>41</sup>	52	Kashimpur Central Prison Part-1	Life-time imprisonment (Murder case)	Cancer patient, died at Tajuddin Ahmad Medical College Hospital
11	Siddik Hossain Molla <sup>42</sup>	45	Naogaon District Prison	Undertrial (Counterfeit currency case)	Sudden illness, died at Rajshahi Medical College Hospital
12	Emdadul Haque (Bhottu) <sup>43</sup>	51	Bogra District Prison	Undertrial (Explosives and vandalism case)	High blood pressure and heart complications, died at Shaheed Ziaur Rahman Medical College Hospital

40 RTV- ঢাকামেডিকেলসাবেকবিডিআরসদস্যসহ ২ কারাবন্দিরমৃত্যু- <https://rtvonline.com/capital/315893>

41 Prothom Alo- গাজীপুরেরদুইকারাগারেদুজনকয়েদিরমৃত্যু, একটিরঘটনায়তদন্তকমিটি- <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/district/cqxx0d84qt>

42 Prothom Alo- রাজশাহীমেডিকেলনওগাঁকারাগারেরহাজতিআওয়ামীলীগনেতারমৃত্যু- <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/district/fv3woupmoo>

43 Prothom Alo- বগুড়াকারাগারেআরওএকআওয়ামীলীগনেতারমৃত্যু- <https://www.>

13	Sujit Chandra Dey <sup>44</sup>	40	Kishoreganj District Prison	Undertrial (Student protest attack case)	Chest pain, died at Shaheed Syed Nazrul Islam Medical College Hospital
14	Riazul Islam <sup>45</sup>	74	Sunamganj District Prison	Undertrial (Special Powers Act case)	Multiple complications, including kidney, heart, and respiratory issues, died at Sylhet Osmani Medical College Hospital
15	Saiful Islam (Tukun) <sup>46</sup>	40	Narayanganj District Prison	Undertrial (Murder case)	Stroke, died at Dhaka Medical College Hospital

prothomalo.com/bangladesh/district/65neh4vi3v

44 Bangladesh Pratidin- কিশোরগঞ্জ কারাগারে হাজারটির মৃত্যু- <https://www.bd-pratidin.com/country/2025/04/02/1101723>

45 Prothom Alo- সুনামগঞ্জে 'সন্দেহভাজন' হিসেবে গ্রেপ্তার, কারাগারে অসুস্থ হয়েই উপি-চেয়ারম্যানের মৃত্যু- <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/district/3ql4vwhstv>

46 Prothom Alo- ঢাকাকেন্দ্রীয় কারাগারের এক বন্দীর মৃত্যু- <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/crime/r9biq80e0a>

16	Farzan Hossain Sajib <sup>47</sup>	36	Chattogram Central Prison	Undertrial (attempt to commit robbery case)	Chest pain, family alleged assault, died at Chattogram Medical College Hospital
17	Fazlur Rahman <sup>48</sup>	58	Brahmanbaria District Prison	Undertrial (Murder case)	Chest pain, died at Brahmanbaria District Sadar Hospital
18	Roiujuddin (Imam) <sup>49</sup>	—	Gazipur District Prison	Undertrial (Rape case)	Fell ill after mob lynching, died at Shaheed Tajuddin Ahmad Medical College Hospital
19	Rokon Mia <sup>50</sup>	32	Narsingdi District Prison	Sentenced (Dowry case, one-year sentence)	Physical illness, family alleged negligence in treatment, and died at Narsingdi District Hospital

47 Bangladesh Pratidin- চট্টগ্রাম কেন্দ্রীয় কারাগারে বন্দির মৃত্যু- <https://www.bd-pratidin.com/chittagong-pratidin/2025/04/26/1109850>

48 Jugantor- হত্যামামলায় কারাগারে থাকা হাজতির মৃত্যু- <https://www.jugantor.com/country-news/946897>

49 Jugantor- গণখোলাইয়ের শিকার ইমামের কারাগারে মৃত্যু- <https://www.jugantor.com/country-news/947204>

50 Jugantor- নরসিংদী কারাগারে এককয়েদির মৃত্যু- <https://www.jugantor.com/country-news/948096>

20	Mojibur Rahman <sup>51</sup>	65	Dhaka Central Prison, Keraniganj	—	Died of unspecified illness at Dhaka Medical College Hospital
21	A K M Mo-zammel Haque <sup>52</sup>	59	Dhaka Central Prison, Keraniganj	Undertrial (Anti-Corruption Commission case)	Fell ill in the early morning, declared dead at Dhaka Medical College Hospital
22	Lal Ple King Bom <sup>53</sup>	27	Chattogram Central Prison	Undertrial (KNF case)	Suffered a seizure, died of cardiac arrest at Chattogram Medical College Hospital
23	Md. Ratan Molla <sup>54</sup>	45	Gopalganj District Prison	Undertrial (Robbery case)	Illness, died before reaching the hospital

51 Prothom Alo- ঢাকামেডিকলেএককরাবন্দীরমৃত্যু- <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/al5e6mj6u9>

52 Prothom Alo- ঢাকাকেন্দ্রীয়কারাগারেরএকহাজতিরমৃত্যু- <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/75tpr0vsq1>

53 Prothom Alo- চট্টগ্রামকেন্দ্রীয়কারাগারেবন্দীকেএনএফসদস্যেরমৃত্যু- <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/district/4dzcj9bz4k>

54 Bangladesh Pratidin- গোপালগঞ্জকারাগারেহাজতিরমৃত্যু- <https://www.bd-pratidin.com/country/2025/05/22/1119110>

24	Imam Hossain (Bachchu) <sup>55</sup>	44	Comilla Central Prison	Undertrial (Murder and attempted murder case)	Chest pain, heart disease, died at Comilla Medical College Hospital
25	Mohirul Islam <sup>56</sup>	40	Chuadanga District Prison	Undertrial (Drug case)	Illness; family claimed beating, prison authority claimed stroke, died at Chuadanga Sadar Hospital
26	Junaid Mia <sup>57</sup>	32	Brahmanbaria District Prison	Undertrial (Drug case)	Drug addiction and illness, died at Brahmanbaria General Hospital

55 Prothom Alo- কুমিল্লা কেন্দ্রীয় কারাগারে বন্দী স্বেচ্ছাসেবক লীগ নেতার মৃত্যু- <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/district/9rt5nqoq9n>

56 Jugantor- চুয়াডাঙ্গায় হাজতীর মৃত্যু, নির্যাতনের অভিযোগ পরিবারের- <https://www.jugantor.com/country-news/961830>

57 Jugantor- ব্রাহ্মণবাড়িয়া কারাগারে হাজতীর মৃত্যু- <https://www.jugantor.com/country-news/966682>

27	Mahmud Shahriar (Monir) <sup>58</sup>	46	Kashimpur Central Prison	Undertrial (Women and Children Repression case)	Died from unspecified illness at Shaheed Tajuddin Ahmad Medical College Hospital
28	Shamsul Alam <sup>59</sup>	44	Dhaka Central Prison, Keraniganj	Undertrial	Died from unspecified illness while under treatment at Dhaka Medical College Hospital

Table 1: Deaths of Prison Inmates in Bangladesh (Newspaper Reports, 2025)

## SUICIDES IN PRISONS

The cases of suicide inside prisons across the country are rising alarmingly. Rising stress, uncertainty, and administrative negligence have caused both prisoners and prison guards to take their own lives. Over the past six months, two inmates and one prison guard took their own lives in three reported incidents revealing the deep-rooted humanitarian and administrative crisis within the prison system.

### SUICIDE OF AN INMATE IN GAZIPUR DISTRICT PRISON

Omar Faruk, a 33-year-old inmate serving a two-year term of imprisonment in Gazipur District Prison, attempted to take his own life by hanging himself with a blanket tied to the bars of his cell. The incident occurred between 2:30 am and 3 am on 10 February 2025. An on-duty prison guard noticed the incident and immediately rescued him providing primary medical treatment. However, as his

58 Samakal- কাশিমপুরকারণারেএকহাজতিরমৃত্যু- <https://samakal.com/whole-country/article/301820>

59 RTV- ঢাকামেডিকেলসাবেকবিডিআরসদস্যসহ ২ কারাবন্দিরমৃত্যু- <https://rtvonline.com/capital/315893>

condition deteriorated, he was taken to Shaheed Tajuddin Ahmad Medical College Hospital in Gazipur, where the attending doctor declared him dead. The death certificate mentioned that he was “brought dead.”<sup>60</sup>

## **SUICIDE OF A FORMER UNION CHAIRMAN IN DHAKA CENTRAL PRISON**

On 13 June 2025, former union parishad chairman and member of the Savar Upazila Awami League, Saidur Rahman Sujon died by suicide at around 11:15 a.m in Dhaka Central Prison’s “Surjomukhi” building. He hanged himself using a towel tied to a window grille. Hearing screams of fellow inmates, a prison guard rushed in to take him to Dhaka Medical College Hospital, where doctors pronounced him dead.<sup>61</sup> Prison sources said that he was charged with fifteen cases, including allegations of political violence, land grabbing, and abuse of power. The Inspector General of Prisons stated that an investigation is underway. However, the deceased’s family rejected the claim of suicide. His wife, Roksana Rahman, said, “My husband was healthy. Fellow inmates said he was doing fine. How could a healthy man suddenly commit suicide?” Senior Prison Superintendent Suraiya Akter denied the family’s allegation, saying, “At the time of the incident, no other inmate was awake. In a secure place like a prison, there is no opportunity for any other incident to occur.”<sup>62</sup>

## **SUICIDE OF A PRISON GUARD IN PATUAKHALI DISTRICT PRISON**

Prison guard Shajidul Islam (42) of Patuakhali District Prison, died by suicide reportedly due to mental stress. On 2 April 2025, he was found absent during roll call. His colleagues went to check on him and found his barrack room locked from the inside. After breaking into the room, they discovered that he had hanged himself from a ceiling fan. He was immediately taken to Patuakhali General

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60 Prothom Alo- গাজীপুরের দুই কারাগারে দুজন কয়েদির মৃত্যু, একটি রঘটনায় তদন্ত কমিটি- <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/district/cqxx-0d84qt>

61 Jugantor- ছাত্র আন্দোলনে গুলিকর কারাগারে ফাঁস দিয়ে সাবেক চেয়ারম্যানের আত্মহত্যা- <https://www.jugantor.com/country-news/965807>

62 Daily Ittefaq- কেন্দ্রীয় কারাগার থেকে আওয়ামীলীগ নেতার মরদেহ উদ্ধার- <https://www.ittefaq.com.bd/736582>

Hospital where doctors pronounced him dead.<sup>63</sup> According to his wife Fatema Begum, he had been unwell for several days and applied for leave. However, the prison superintendent allegedly denied his request, verbally abused him, and threatened to transfer him to Bandarban. In fact, the psychological pressure led him to take his own life. The Superintendent of Police in Patuakhali stated that the incident is under investigation. The tragedy has left his colleagues and family members in deep shock and mourning.<sup>64</sup>

## ANALYSIS

All three incidents raise grave concerns about the physical and mental safety of the inmates and guards in Bangladeshi prisons. Prolonged judicial entanglement, separation from family, uncertainty about the future, and the administrative neglect has left the prisoners psychologically distressed. Similarly, limited manpower, excessive workload and corrupted mindset of the superior officers severely affect the mental stability of prison guards. Suicide, in this context, not only showcases personal weakness but also identifies the inefficiency in institutional mismanagement as well as the absence of mental health care. Most prisons lack counseling, psychological support, or mental health monitoring. Therefore, such suicidal attempts could be reduced if every Prison appointed trained psychologists, established mental health cells, and ensured humane and empathetic administrative behavior.

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63 Jugantor- কারাগারথেকেকারারক্ষীরবুলন্তলাশউদ্ধার- <https://www.jugantor.com/country-news/936511>

64 Kaler Kantha- কারাগারথেকেকারারক্ষীরবুলন্তমরদেহউদ্ধার- <https://www.kalerkantho.com/online/country-news/2025/04/03/1499633>

## Chapter 4

### WOMEN IN PRISON AND PRISON BABIES

Kashimpur Women Central Prison is a specialized prison for female inmates. It has now turned into a severely overcrowded and inhumane institution. Although its official accommodation capacity is show as 200 inmates, more than 450 women are currently accommodated making it twice of the actual limit. As a result, infectious skin diseases along with mental stress among women prisoners have increased alarmingly. The situation has become more dire due to unhygienic conditions, poor sanitation, and the absence of a resident doctor. Not only is the women's section of Kashimpur Central Prison overcrowded, the same picture prevails in other women's prisons across Bangladesh. While the total capacity for women prisoners in Bangladesh is 1,929, the number of prisoners has reached approximately to 3,299 (as of September 2025). Some prisoners are temporarily transferred to district prisons to lessen overcrowding, a practice that contradicts the principles of a modern correctional system. In this context, ensuring human rights of inmates has become an urgent necessity. It increases the risks of violence and causes the rehabilitation of keeping habitual offenders and first-time offenders together.

Moreover, the 2023 report of the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) reveals widespread irregularities and corruption within the prison administration. Meanwhile, a modern facility for women prisoners has already been constructed within the Dhaka Central Prison in Keraniganj. It was initially built to locate women prisoners, facilitating individual space for juvenile inmates, special wards for those with mental health issues, and a day-care center for female inmates with children.<sup>65</sup> However, the government has now decided to use this facility as a “special prison” for high-profile male inmates, including former Awami League ministers, Members of Parliament, as well as senior bureaucrats.<sup>66</sup> Despite these challenges, some reform initiatives have been undertaken for women prisoners. Home Affairs advisor Lt Gen (Retd.) Md Jahangir Alam Chowdhury has announced plans to establish a correction center within Kashimpur

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65 The Daily Star- Ensure rights of women prisoners- <https://www.thedailystar.net/opinion/editorial/news/ensure-rights-women-prisoners-3820461>

66 Daily Janakantha- পতিত আ. লীগেরএমপি-মন্ত্রীদেবজন্যতেরিহছেবিশেষকারাগার!-<https://www.dailyjanakantha.com/national/news/798666>

Women’s Prison. The center will allow inmates to engage in productive work and send part of their earnings to their families. Finally, the chief advisor said that most of the detained women are involved in drug-related crimes, emphasizing the need to raise public awareness against drug abuse.<sup>67</sup>

### BABIES LIVING WITH PARENTS INSIDE PRISON

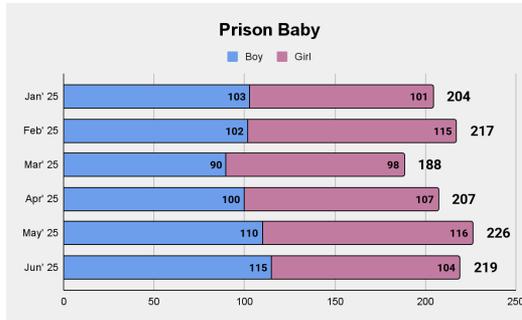


Figure 10: Prison Babies (Department of Prison, 2025)

This chart on Prison Babies presents monthly data focusing on the number of children under six years of age living in prisons with their mother from January to June in 2025. The total number of children fluctuates between 188 and 226, showing a slight increase over time. In January, there were 204 prison babies in total, among whom 103 were boys and 101 were girls. In February, there was an increase in the total number of prison babies that makes it 217. Among them, 102 were boys and 115 were girls. This indicates a slight decrease in the number of boys but an increase in the number of girls. Contrarily, a noticeable decrease in the total number is seen in March 2025 which ranked the lowest during the given period. There were 188 prison babies with 90 boys and 98 girls. Nevertheless, in April, the number of prison babies rose again making it 207. Among them, 100 were boys and 107 were girls. In May, the total number increased further to 226, the highest figure within the January–June period. In this month, there were 110 boys and 116 girls, the highest numbers recorded for girls. However, in June, the total number of prison babies declined slightly to 219. Interestingly, the number of boys the highest that is 115 while the number of girls decreased to 104.

67 The Daily Star- Correction centre to be set up at Kashimpur Women’s Prison: home adviser- <https://www.thedailystar.net/news/bangladesh/news/correction-centre-be-set-kashimpur-womens-prison-home-adviser-3913966>

## Chapter 5

### DRUGS IN PRISONS: REALITY AND CHALLENGES

Smuggling as well as high consumption of drugs inside prisons has become a matter of serious concern. Recently, multiple reports presented inmates carrying Yaba tablets inside their stomachs, visitors hiding marijuana in shoes or different parts of their bodies, and even illegal drug transactions taking place inside prisons. Prisons are supposed to serve as centers for correction, but in many cases, they have turned into secondary hubs for the drug trade. The incidents mentioned in the news report partly represent the ideal scenario, but it is even worse than it appears in reality.

### CURRENT SCENARIO AND TRENDS

Drug recovery incidents from multiple central prisons that have been reported in the media between January and June 2025 are considered as the tip of the iceberg in this context. For instance, Md. Saifullah and Md. Iqbal were both separately imprisoned in Chattogram central prison for drug related issues. Surprisingly, despite the imprisonments happening at different times, the nature of both cases was the same. The prison authorities became suspicious due to their physical discomfort and abnormal behavior. During questioning, they admitted to carrying yaba inside their stomachs. It caused severe physical pain in their bodies due to the prolonged presence of yaba tablets in their stomachs. However, the tablets were later recovered through special medical procedures and 450 yaba pills were rescued from Md. Saifullah and 200 from Md. Iqbal.<sup>68</sup>

Another case reports visitors attempting to smuggle marijuana into the Comilla Central Prison but it was foiled. Shanto, a young man, was arrested while trying to deliver marijuana to an undertrial inmate named Motaleb Hossain. He had hidden 3 packets of marijuana (weighing 91 grams) wrapped in white polythene inside the shoe sole. The prison guard became suspicious about him during the depositing of the shoes and clothes and found marijuana inside the shoe soles.<sup>69</sup> Another incident describes a visitor named Md.

68 Jugantor- চট্টগ্রাম কারাগারে দুই হাজতির পেটে সাড়ে ৬শ ইয়াবা- <https://www.jugantor.com/country-news/924613>

69 Prothom Alo- কুমিল্লা কারাগারে হাজতিকে অভিনবকৌশলে গাঁজা দিতে গিয়ে তরুণ আটক- <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/district/4zy8r7c7kd>

Kamal Hossain meeting an undertrial prisoner in Comilla Central Prison. When the prison guards searched him, they found 13 grams of marijuana in his possession.<sup>70</sup> Reportedly, a large quantity of drugs, cash, and mobile phones were recovered in 275 raids from Dhaka's Central Prison at Keraniganj just three months. This refers to the presence of drug syndicate as well as the practice of unauthorized communication inside prisons. Inspector General of Prisons, Syed Md Motafer Hossain stated that some prisoners are smuggling drugs and mobile phones into prisons secretly or through other tricks.<sup>71</sup> Allegations of bribery, extortion and involvement of prison guards were also found in Sunamganj District Prison. A recently released political activist reported that there were cases that describes yaba tablets being thrown over the boundary walls and hidden in soft lumps of soil with the help of the corrupt prison guard.<sup>72</sup>

## CAUSES OF DRUG RELATED ISSUES IN PRISONS

The root causes of this problem can be identified at three levels. Firstly, Institutional Corruption enables dishonest prison guards to facilitate the entrance of illicit drugs for financial gain. Secondly, lack of rehabilitation for drug addicts causes an increase in the spread of drug related issues. Due to the lack of adequate rehabilitation centers and lack of quality treatment, many addicts relapse into drugs. Thirdly, lack of adequate technology trained manpower prevents the proper detection and monitoring of drug related cases inside prisons.

## PRISON ADMINISTRATION'S RESPONSE

Additional Inspector General of Prisons Colonel Mohammad Mustafa Kamal stated that 25 percent of inmates in the country's 68 prisons are drug addicts. Those accused in drug-related cases usually spend very little time inside prison and often return to

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70 Amar Desh- কুমিল্লাকেন্দ্রীয়কারাগারেগাঁজাসহদর্শনার্থীআটক- <https://www.dailyamardesh.com/bangladesh/amdbtb8fhlc2u>

71 Daily Ittefaq - অভিনবকৌশলেকারাগারেপ্রবেশকরানোহচ্ছেমাদক ও মোবাইল- <https://www.ittefaq.com.bd/722708>

72 Samakal- একডিম ৫৫ টাকাচারটিপান ৩০- <https://samakal.com/whole-country/article/299669>

prison repeatedly.<sup>73</sup> Eliminating drugs from prisons cannot happen overnight, but the authorities are working under a “zero tolerance” policy. He further mentioned that several prison officers have already faced disciplinary action over drug-related allegations, and the process is ongoing. Following the formation of the interim government after the July uprising, initiatives have been taken to reform the prison system, including the inspection of all prisons across the country.<sup>74</sup>

## PROSPECTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The government has initiated a project worth 1,400 crore taka that approves building drug rehabilitation centers and separate prisons for drug addicts in seven divisional cities. This project approved by ECNEC aims to provide social reintegration, rehabilitation and medical treatment to drug addicts inside prisons. In addition, the Department of Narcotics Control has been strengthened with new policies, weapons and training programs.<sup>75</sup>

The following section points some policy guidelines and recommendations:

1. Installation of advanced scanners and body detection technology in all prisons.
2. Accountable monitoring system and strict anti-bribery policy for prison guards.
3. Regular counseling and drug rehabilitation services for prison inmates.
4. A strict screening and digital registration system at visitors' entry.
5. Involving non-governmental organizations and religious leaders in prison reform and public awareness activities.

Therefore, controlling illicit drugs inside prisons is merely impossible through administrative operations. An integration of social, administrative, and rehabilitation procedures would mitigate the consumption and smuggling of illicit drugs.

73 Jugantor- মাদকনির্মূলেআলেমদেরনিয়েকমিশনগঠনেরপ্রস্তাব- <https://www.jugantor.com/national/906548>

74 Kaler Kantha- 'কারাগারথেকেরাতারাতিমাদকনির্মূলকরাসম্ভবনয়'- <https://www.kalerkantho.com/online/country-news/2025/06/20/1534700>

75 Jugantor- ৭ বিভাগীয়শহরেমাদকনিরাময়কেন্দ্রওপৃথককারাগারনির্মাণকরাহবে- <https://www.jugantor.com/national/970490>

# Chapter 6

## PRISON ESCAPE AND AYNABAJI

### ESCAPES FROM PRISON: RAISING QUESTIONS ABOUT SECURITY

Cases of accused or detainees escaping from courts, prisons, or hospitals are being reported frequently in the newspapers. In recent years, more than ten incidents have been reported reflecting a raise in the accountability of police and prison administrations as well as their security system. Shaiful Islam, accused of murder, escaped from the premises of Dhaka Metropolitan Sessions Judge Court on 19th June of 2025. Death row convicts namely Moinul Hasan Shamim, alias Sifat Samir and Md. Abu Siddiq Sohel alias Sakib, had their associates snatch them away from the police at Dhaka Chief Judicial Magistrate Court Gate on 20 November, 2022. On 6th March of 2021, an accused person named Farhad Hossain Rubel escaped from Chattogram Central Prison. Md. Polash, an arrest warrant, escaped from police in Bijoy Nagar, Brahmanbaria on the 26<sup>th</sup> of December, 2020. Moreover, Abu Bakar Siddiq, sentenced for life imprisonment, escaped Kashimpur Central Prison using a ladder on August 6, 2020. There are also other incidents occurred, such as Sahabuddin Alias Shujan escaped from Noakhali District Judge Court Custody Cell in 2019; Mokhlesur Rahman escaped from Chandpur District Prison in 2017; Rubel escaped from Dhaka Metropolitan Magistrate Court in 2016; Nurul Huda escaped from Cox's Bazar Teknaf in 2016; Atiqur Rahman escaped from Dhaka Pallabi Thana in 2015; and four murder accused escaped from the dock of the court in 2014.

These incidents show that negligence of duty, misconduct, and the granting of privileges to accused or detained persons created opportunities for escapes from custody, courts, or prisons. As a result, justice is obstructed, victims are put at risk, and witnesses of the case are threatened. Section 29 of the Police Act, 1861, clearly mentions penalties for negligence of duty by police officers. However, the duty officers are temporarily suspended or withdrawn from duty, but many are exempted due to political influence or special protection. This makes it clear that institutional accountability is still not

adequate. Therefore, Prison supers and Jailors should inspect regular monitoring, and Deputy Jailor should conduct routine inspections of their designated areas and motivate prison guards to perform their duties with dedication and sincerity. Police manpower needs to be increased to take accused persons to the court.<sup>76</sup>

## **AYNABAJI (IMPERSONATION FOR IMPRISONMENT)**

It's really rare to find someone in this generation who doesn't know about the film Aynabaji. The main character of the film volunteers imprisonment on behalf of real convicts in exchange for money. Besides perceiving such incidents as merely real in movies, we also witness similar cases in real life. A drug-addicted neighbor is described to be serving incarceration in place of the real accused while in the other case, an innocent person is imprisoned under someone else's name in the hope of getting a job. These two incidents in Chapainawabganj and Chattogram reflect both weaknesses in the legal system and irregularities in the verification and monitoring by the authorities.

### **INCIDENT ONE: MITHUN**

Setaur Rahman was accused in a case regarding a dishonored cheque in Chapainawabganj Court. It was discovered later that a drug-addicted neighbor of Setaur Rahman named Mithun had been sent to prison. The former union council member, Setaur, allegedly persuaded Mithun to surrender on his behalf to avoid serving his sentence. When Mithun appeared in court, the plaintiff, who was also a lawyer, identified that the person was not the real Setaur Rahman. Mithun's family stated that he agreed to the arrangement due to financial hardship. He was told that he would be bailed soon but later became distressed since he was not released and detained for a long time. On the other hand, Setaur Rahman, the real accused, was roaming around freely and has not been arrested yet. This incident raised serious concerns about the monitoring and verification process of the prison administration.<sup>77</sup>

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76 Kaler Kantho- কারাগার ও হেফাজত থেকে আসামিরা পালায় কিভাবে? - <https://www.kalerkantho.com/print-edition/sub-editorial/2025/06/26/1537337>

77 Prothom Alo- প্রতিবেশীকে কৌশল কারাগারে পাঠিয়ে বাইরে ঘুরছেন দণ্ডিত আসামি - <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/district/pbat21dlph>



## INCIDENT TWO: AJIR UDDIN

Voters' fingerprints are stored in the National Identity Card database. This method is called the Fingerprint Identification and Verification System. Chattogram Prison Authority officially started using this method from January, 2023. A person surrendered in a fraud case at the Chattogram court; however, verification revealed that he was not the actual accused as his acquaintance, Azir Uddin, had been imprisoned in his place, instead of Nabeez Uddin. The entire fraud was caught during the fingerprint verification in prison. Azir admitted that he had done this on the advice of Nabij's brother Najmul Hossain with the hope of getting a job. The senior judicial magistrate of the court himself filed a fraud case against Azir and Nazmul. Investigations also found that a forged copy of the national identity card was used to carry out the deception.<sup>78</sup> To prevent such incidents, making digital fingerprint verifications compulsory in central and district prisons, modernizing the exchange of case files and bail bonds between courts and prisons, and ensuring a transparent administrative structure free from external influence are crucial.

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78 Prothom Alo- তিনিআসামিহীন, তবুকেনকারাগারে- <https://www.prothom-alo.com/bangladesh/district/mdajb5vih5>

## Chapter 7

### **DETAINED BANGLADESHI CITIZENS ABROAD: REPATRIATION IN PERSPECTIVE**

Many Bangladeshi citizens have been detained for long periods in Indian prisons who illegally attempted to cross borders, fell victim to human trafficking, or strayed into Indian waters while fishing. In recent times, the issue has gained importance in bilateral diplomatic discussions between Bangladesh and India, and the process of exchanging prisoner has also begun to accelerate.

### **NUMBER OF BANGLADESHI PRISONERS IN INDIAN PRISONS**

Moyeenul Islam Chowdhury, the retired High Court judge Justice and chairman of the Commission of Inquiry on Enforced Disappearances asserted that a total of 1067 Bangladeshi citizens have currently been imprisoned in various Indian prisons over the past two and a half year. At a press conference on the 4 March 2025, he stated that Ministry of Foreign Affairs generated the list based on the names and addresses of the detained individuals provided by Indian authorities.<sup>79</sup>

### **LONG-TERM DETENTION IN WEST BENGAL AND THE INTERVENTION OF THE INDIAN SUPREME COURT**

In February 2025, The Supreme Court of India directed the central and West Bengal state governments to explain why Bangladeshi nationals are being held in prisons for years even after the expiry of their sentences. According to data from West Bengal prisons (as of January 1, 2024), 2,501 foreign prisoners, 1422 under trial Bangladeshis, 777 Convicted Bangladeshi completely served their sentence but remain imprisoned. Such prolonged detention violates the Foreigners Act and central policy and can be considered a breach of human rights. The court has instructed both local and central governments to submit detailed reports.<sup>80</sup>

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79 Amar Desh- ভারতের কারাগার বন্দি ১০৬৭ বাংলাদেশি- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e2Ax47OHHxY>

80 Manab Zamin- বাংলাদেশের বেআইনি অভিবাসী, কেন বন্দির পরবছর কারাগারে আটকে রাখা হয়েছে জবাব চাইলো ভারতের সুপ্রিম কোর্ট- <https://mzamin.com/news.php?news=147267>

## **TRANSFER OF THE CROSS-BORDER PRISONERS**

Under the Bangladesh-India extradition treaty, 31 Indian fishermen were detained in Bangladesh who were released and handed over to the Coast Guard from the Patuakhali District Prison on January 2, 2025. Another 64 Indian fishermen held in Bagerhat District Prison were awaiting release. moreover, the process to free 90 Bangladeshi fishermen detained in Indian prisons is ongoing. After the completion of all legal procedures, the prisoners will be formally exchanged through the maritime border and sent back to their respective countries.<sup>81</sup>

## **RETURN OF BANGLADESHIS AFTER COMPLETING PRISON SENTENCES**

Twelve Bangladeshi citizens, including eleven men and one woman, returned home after serving prison sentences in India. Two years before, they had been lured by brokers with false promises of employment and was arrested and prisoned later. On 6 January of 2025, the Petrapole Immigration Police handed them over to Bangladeshi authorities at the Benapole border under special travel permits. After formal processes, they were taken to the Benapole Port Police Station. The local NGO “Rights Jessoré” took responsibility for providing shelter, mental support, and rehabilitation of the returnees. The organization will also assist in reuniting them with their families.<sup>82</sup> Their repatriation was made possible through the cooperation of both Bangladeshi and Indian embassies.

## **REPATRIATION OF TRAFFICKED CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS**

A total of 21 Bangladeshi nationals, particularly children who were trafficked to India, returned home through Benapole land port. Among them were one young man and a woman, ten girls, and nine boys aged between one year and seven months. They had crossed the border either by brokers’ deception or with their guardians’ help and were later detained for illegal entry. After serving time in custody, they were repatriated to Bangladesh under special travel permits issued by the Indian government. Following immigration

81 Prothom Alo- পটুয়াখালী কারাগার থেকে মুক্তি পেলেন ভারতের ৩১ জেলে- <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/district/mmopqr2b>

82 DhakaTribune- 12 Bangladeshis return home after serving prison term in India- <https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/nation/370488>

formalities, they were handed over to the Benapole Port Police Station. Later they reunited with their families through two non-governmental organizations.<sup>83</sup> Another incident describes thirty-six Bangladeshi children returning home who had been trafficked to India. The children, aged between ten and eighteen, were held in safe shelters in West Bengal for two to eight years. Some have already been reunited with their families, while others remain in safe shelters.<sup>84</sup> They were repatriated under the joint repatriation program between Bangladesh and Indian government. Human rights organizations such as Justice and Care, Bangladesh National Women Lawyers Association, and Rights Jessore played crucial roles in this context.

## **RETURN OF BANGLADESHIS FROM MYANMAR PRISONS**

Bangladesh Navy brought twenty youths home who had been imprisoned in Myanmar after falling victim to human trafficking. The naval team brought the detainees home while returning from a humanitarian relief mission in an earthquake-affected area of Myanmar. Bangladeshi Embassy in Myanmar verified their identities before their return. Later, the Chattogram district administration formally handed them over to their families during a ceremony attended by Additional Deputy Commissioner (General) Md Kamruzzaman, and several executive magistrates.<sup>85</sup>

## **REPATRIATION OF AN INDIAN CITIZEN FROM BANGLADESH**

Arsalan Hossain, a resident of Darjeeling in India, was detained in Bangladesh for illegal entry. Although the court sentenced him to fifteen days imprisonment, his repatriation was delayed due to legal complications. After receiving clearance from the Ministry of Home Affairs and the Indian High Commission, he was repatriated to India through the Sonamasjid land port in Chapainawabganj on 11 May 2025. Arsalan's brother, Faisal Hossain, was present at the

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83 Prothom Alo- ভারতেরসাজাভোগশেষেদেশেফিরলশিশুসহ ২১ জন- <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/district/5ixddy3eja>

84 প্রথমআলো- ভারতেরসাজাভোগেরপরদেশেফিরল ৩৬ শিশু- <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/district/60ro9n7761>

85 কালেরকণ্ঠ- মায়ানমারেরকারাগারথেকেফেরতএলো ২০ কিশোর-যুবক- <https://www.kalerkantho.com/print-edition/news/2025/04/16/1504772>

border to receive him.<sup>86</sup> Journalist Shamsul Huda has contributed to reunite foreign prisoners with their families. Therefore, these incidents indicate a deep-rooted problem and humanitarian crisis in the border areas of the two countries, with issues of illegal infiltration, human trafficking, and detention of fishermen. Long-term detention of Bangladeshi prisoners in Indian prisons stands against international human rights treaties. Similarly, Bangladesh's efforts to promptly repatriate Indian citizens are considered positive initiatives. Bilateral MoUs and the facilitation of regular consular access could end such long-term detention situations.

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86 প্রথমআলো- অবৈধভাবেবাংলাদেশেএসে ৯ মাসকারাগারেকাটিয়েভারতীয়একযুবকেরদে-  
শেফেরা- <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/district/ilc8v3iagp>

## Chapter 8

### SPECIAL OCCASIONS, HUMANITARIAN AND REFORM INITIATIVE

A prison is not only a place of punishment but also a space for the humane rehabilitation of prison inmates. During yearly occasions including national and religious festivals, special events are organized in prisons. This brings joy to the prisoners as they can participate to socialize with other inmates. The following section briefly illustrates some of the special days observed in different prisons from January to June 2025.

#### RAMADAN AND EID-UL-FITR

During Ramadan in 2025, 17 prison administrations within the Dhaka Division arranged special Iftar and Suhoor arrangements for the prison inmates. Hot food was provided at Suhoor time and Iftar menu included all the traditional items. The usual three times daily meals remained the same with separate cooking on behalf of fasting prisoners. The Department of Prisons ensured that no leftover food was served.<sup>87</sup> Brahmanbaria District Prison provided Iftar with seasonal fruits to approximately 1,300 prisoners. Prison officials monitored the daily distribution of food and special arrangements were also made for Tarawih and Jumma prayers.<sup>88</sup> During the Eid-ul-Fitr celebration, all central and district prisons organized special cuisines. Detainees were treated with rice pudding, Shemai and puffed rice in the morning as well as Polao or khichuri, with roasted chicken, beef and mutton curry, salad, sweet, and betel leaf at noon. The dinner meal consisted of rice, spicy potatoes, and eggs. Eid was followed by various cultural programmes held within the prisons, and inmates were allowed to remain in contact with their family members through phone calls and visits throughout the three days of Eid.

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87 Daily Ittefaq- রমজানের কারাগারে বন্দিদের জন্য সেহরি ও ইফতারে যথাক্রমে-  
<https://www.ittefaq.com.bd/721603>

88 Daily Janakantha- বন্দিদের ইফতারে মৌসুমি ফল! ব্যতিক্রমী উদ্যোগ ব্রাহ্মণবাড়িয়া কারাগার কর্তৃপক্ষের- <https://www.dailyjanakantha.com/bangladesh/news/786485>

## BENGALI NEW YEAR

Bengali New Year was celebrated with various festive events in the central and district prisons of Bangladesh. The event begins with Breakfast with Panta-ilish (fermented rice along with fried hilsa), followed by special meals at lunch and dinner, along with a cultural evening. At Dhaka Central Prison in Keraniganj, prison inmates were provided with panta rice and fried hilsa in the breakfast meal, polao with beef/lamb at lunchtime, and rice with potato curry/lentils at dinnertime.<sup>89</sup> After the twelve-year gap, around 5,000 prisoners at Chattogram Central Prison celebrated the Bengali New Year with a grand panta-ilish feast. Similarly, at Thakurgaon District Prison, family members were invited to enjoy lunch with the prisoners. The program also included painting and art competition and a medical camp.<sup>90</sup>

## SEASONAL FRUIT FESTIVAL

Nilphamari District Prison organized a “Seasonal Fruit Festival” for 319 prison inmates on 4 June 4 2025. All the inmates received lychees initially and two mangoes each the next day. Apart from this, lungis and sarees were distributed to male and female prisoners as Eid gifts. Sixteen needy prisoners’ families also received Eid gifts, including sarees, dresses, rice, shemai, sugar, milk, oil, and other daily essentials.<sup>91</sup>

## EID-UL-ADHA

During Eid-ul-Azha, prisons across Bangladesh observed an air of festivities and celebrations including prayers, special feasts and cultural programs. Authorities ensured that the prison inmates also tasted the festival wholeheartedly. Dhaka Central Prison provided 600 lungis and 850 shirts to needy prisoners. Besides, eight cows and ten goats were slaughtered and thus polao, roast, beef and mutton curry along with dessert and beverages were provided to

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89 Daily Ittefaq -পহেলাবৈশাখটাকা কেস্ট্রীয় কারাগারে বন্দীদের জন্য থাকছে বিশেষ আয়োজন- <https://www.ittefaq.com.bd/726780>

90 Bangladesh Pratidin- কারাগার বের বরণ রেনানা আয়োজন, বন্দরি খলেনে পানতা-ইলিশ- <https://www.bd-pratidin.com/national/2025/04/14/1105629>

91 Daily Janakantha- কারাগারে ‘লিচু-আম উৎসব’! নীলফামারীতে ৩১৯ বন্দির মুখে মৌসুমি ফলের হাসি- <https://www.dailyjanakantha.com/bangladesh/news/814668>

the prisoners.<sup>92</sup> A cultural program was also held on the occasion wherein the renowned singer Mainul Ahsan Nobel performed for the prisoners.<sup>93</sup> Similarly, at Chattogram Central Prison, all prisoners regardless of class and status received delicious food during Eid celebrations. Also, 50 prison babies inside the prison got new dresses, and for three consecutive days after Eid, prisoners were allowed to eat home-made food provided by their relatives, exchange visits, and make short telephone calls lasting for five minutes.<sup>94</sup> In Kurigram District Prison, inmates received special privileges for a period of three days. They could eat food supplied by their family members, enjoy seasonal fruits like lychees and jackfruit, and speak to family members over the telephone. Family members were allowed to visit inmates and offer flowers to showcase an expression of love.<sup>95</sup>

## HUMANITARIAN VOLUNTEER INITIATIVE

An outstanding humanitarian effort was inaugurated at Dhaka Central Prison in Keraniganj involving local school and college students who volunteered to facilitate the distribution of homemade meals provided by families during Eid. Since the processes of food inspection and distribution are both time-consuming and labor-intensive, the prison authorities recruited enthusiastic students to serve as volunteers. Under the oversight of trained prison guards, these students contributed by sorting, inspecting, and distributing food, although they remained outside the prison facility itself. Even though there were concerns about involving students in the case of this pilot project, Inspector General of Prisons Brigadier General Syed Mohammad Motaher Hossain explained that the entire process was strictly monitored. He further stated that if the pilot project remains successful, it will be introduced in other prisons across the country.<sup>96</sup>

92 Amar Desh- কারাগারে এবার ঈদ করছেন প্রায় ৭০ হাজার বন্দি- <https://www.dailyamardesh.com/national/amdkoityilwjs>

93 Daily Ittefaq- ঈদের দিন কারাগারে গলাছে ড়ে গাইলেন নোবেল- <https://www.ittefaq.com.bd/735571>

94 Prothom Alo- সাধারণ বন্দিদের সঙ্গে আছেন 'ভিআইপি' রাও, কীথাকে কারাগারের ঈদের খাবারে- <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/district/6inb8honje>

95 Kaler Kantha- ঈদে কারাবন্দিদের বিশেষ সুবিধাদিচ্ছে কুড়িগ্রাম জেলা কারাগার- <https://www.kalerkantho.com/online/country-news/2025/06/08/1529304>

96 The Business Standard- Students bringing smiles to inmates with 'Eid Meal Initiative' in prison- <https://www.tbsnews.net/bangladesh/students-bringing-smiles-inmates-eid-meal-initiative-prison-116184>

## REUNITING FAMILIES ACROSS BORDERS

Indian citizen Bijli Roy was arrested in Shariatpur in between May and June of 2021. A case was filed at Zajira Police Station for illegal entry and after a trial he was sentenced to six months in prison. He was sent to Chapainawabganj District Prison to serve the sentence. After the sentence, the BGB attempted to return him to his home country, but it failed due to the absence of the legal guardian's address. Bijli Roy did get mentally unstable and could not get a chance to return home alive in the end; his lifeless body remained in the morgue of Rajshahi Medical College for two months. Shamsul Huda, organizational secretary of the Bangladesh Amateur Radio Society, took the responsibility of safely delivering Bijli Roy's body to the family. For a long time, he has been working to connect the Bangladesh-Indian prisoners with their families. He said that he had contacted 43 individuals held in prisons in Bangladesh and India with their families. In the case of Bijli Rai, he corrected inconsistencies of documents and village names to accurately identify the address. Therefore, contacting the family along with coordinating with Rajshahi District Prison, the BGB, and the Indian Embassy helped him complete all procedures for transporting the body to Muzaffarpur in India through Sonamasjid border.<sup>97</sup>

## PRISON AUTHORITY'S HUMANITARIAN INITIATIVE

The prison administration of the Thakurgaon District Prison is reported to provide food supplies to the children of an orphanage. The deputy Jailor Md Shahriar Alam Chowdhury said that “there was a plan to provide some food supplies for the orphaned children of the Jamiatul Madrasah. Following this, Prison Super and Jailor agreed upon this, and we made some food supplies. We believe that prison authorities can carry out humanitarian work not only for the inmates but also for society.

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97 Prothom Alo- ভারতে ফেরার ব্যবস্থা হচ্ছে তেজকারাবন্দী বিজলির মুক্তা, অবশেষে গেল লাশ- <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/district/4w8otr4ode>

## PHYSICAL ACTIVITIES IN PRISON: AN EFFORT FOR MENTAL TRANSFORMATION



The ‘Prisons Football Tournament’ organized in Moulvibazar District Prison has set a new precedent as a part of the efforts to calm and rehabilitate the prisoners. 16 teams of prisoners and prison guards participated in this tournament. Such arrangements protect the mental balance of the prisoners, and they hope it will help foster teamwork and positive thinking.

### STRUCTURAL REFORM INITIATED IN BANGLADESH PRISON

Over the past six months, various initiatives for reform and reconstruction within Bangladesh’s prison system have been applied. Alongside the government, the Department of Prisons has been working to transform old facilities into modern correctional institutions. Some prisons are about to complete reconstruction, while others are being prepared for reopening or expansion.

### RESHAPING BANGLADESH PRISON LOGO

The new logo features a baton and a key replacing the boat symbol, where the baton represents “discipline” and the key represents “return to the path of light”. Additional Inspector General of Prisons Colonel Mohammad Mustafa Kamal stated that the logo of the prison authorities around the world is designed in alignment with

their goals and vision and therefore, they chose these symbols to balance between authority and rehabilitation.<sup>98</sup>



Figure 12: Left :Old Logo, Right: Updated New Logos

On 26 January 2025, Home Affairs Advisor Lt Gen (retd.) Md. Jahangir Alam Chowdhury inaugurated the emergency hotline service (09612021690) at the premises of the Dhaka Central Prison in Keraniganj.<sup>99</sup> In the same year, another hotline number (16191) was introduced to contact prison officials responsible for communication regarding inmates. Dialing the hotline number, people can receive information about inmate visits, locations, and sentences in prison as well as directly reach relevant officials.<sup>100</sup>

## CONCLUSION

This study has shown that Prison in Bangladesh remains severely overcrowded, with under-trial detainees making up nearly three-fourths of the total prison population. The system continues to face serious allegations of corruption, existence of syndicates, torture, abuse, and an alarming healthcare crisis. Many facilities have also become sources of synthetic drugs and safe spaces for their consumption. The AIG of Prisons Colonel Mohammad Mustafa Kamal has also admitted that around one-fourth of all prisoners are drug addicts. The persistence of a traditional and outdated system

98 DhakaTribune- Department of Prisons logo changed- <https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/government-affairs/372560>

99 Jugantor- ৭০০'র মতোবন্দিএখনওপলাতক: স্বরাষ্ট্রউপদেষ্টা- <https://www.jugantor.com/national/908715>

100 Prothom Alo- কারাগারেচালুহলোহটলাইননম্বর- <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/e0smpdyx24>

highlights deep inefficiencies within the criminal justice process. Overcrowding will remain unsolved unless effective alternative measures are introduced for under-trial detainees. Administrative limitations further reveal the government's failure to ensure accountability and humane treatment. Bangladesh's prisons still operate as punitive institutions for the poor and marginalized, while offering comfort and privilege to so-called VIP prisoners. To address these issues, several urgent reforms are needed. Every central and district prison should implement a mandatory fingerprint verification system for identifying detainees and convicts upon entry. Prison authorities must ensure the immediate release of prisoners once bail orders are received from the court. To prevent fraud, the entire bail verification process should be digitalized. Additionally, body scanners, luggage scanners, and mobile jammers must be installed across all prisons. It is equally essential to appoint qualified doctors and psychiatrists in every facility to safeguard the physical and mental health of prison inmates. In conclusion, genuine reform of Bangladesh's prisons requires not only infrastructure development but also a transformation towards an accountable administrative mindset. In brief, a humane, transparent, and rehabilitative prison system is essential for ensuring justice, protecting human dignity, and strengthening public trust in the rule of law.