

BRAIN Newsletter



BANGLADESH RESEARCH ANALYSIS
& INFORMATION NETWORK

APRIL 2025



Introducing BRAIN: A New Platform for Research and Democratic Engagement

The Bangladesh Research Analysis & Information Network (BRAIN) was founded in early 2023 as a response to the growing need for an organized force to defend democracy and liberty in Bangladesh. A group of longstanding political activists, both within Bangladesh and in the diaspora, came together to form the network, aiming to counter the forces of authoritarianism that had plagued the nation for over a decade. Initially operating virtually, BRAIN focused on documenting the repressive actions of the Awami regime and advocating for the democratic aspirations of the Bangladeshi people. Their efforts included preparing reports, articles, and other materials to shed light on the political and civil rights struggles faced by the people of Bangladesh under Sheikh Hasina's regime.

The turning point for BRAIN came during the July Uprising of 2024, which culminated in the fall of Sheikh Hasina's decade-long authoritarian rule. Recognizing the need for a more permanent and formal presence to protect Bangladesh's fragile democracy, the network decided to establish a physical office in Dhaka in August 2024. This marked the official birth of BRAIN as an institutionalized organization committed to defending liberal democracy, chronicling the events of the July Uprising, and documenting the crimes of the Awami regime. With its mission firmly set on promoting democratic values, archiving critical historical events, and building both domestic and international activist networks, BRAIN positioned itself as a key player in the ongoing struggle for democracy in Bangladesh.

Newsletter will include

Objectives of
BRAIN

Events

Conversations

Lorai Nirontor

Nuraldeen
Podcast

Archive and
Publication

OBJECTIVES



The objective of the Bangladesh Research Analysis & Information Network (BRAIN) is committed to preserving the democratic spirit and legacy of the people's struggle in Bangladesh—from the anti-colonial resistance, the Liberation War of 1971, and the mass movement of 1990 to the July Uprising of 2024—through research, documentation, activism, and global solidarity. To achieve this objective, the Brain shall:

Promote Democratic Values: Advocate for political pluralism, civil liberties, and the rule of law in Bangladesh by actively resisting both foreign and domestic threats to democratic governance.

Expose Authoritarian Trends: Systematically document and analyze political repression, corruption, human rights violations, state violence, and undemocratic foreign policies that enabled authoritarianism and contributed to democratic backsliding in Bangladesh.

Archiving the July Uprising: Archive and disseminate text, video, images, and analytical content related to the 2024 July Uprising to ensure its historical significance is preserved and its spirit is carried forward.

Campaign for Justice and Healing: The Society is committed to acknowledging the scale of violence inflicted on the people of Bangladesh by the Awami regime and state actors, advocating for justice and accountability, and addressing the trauma of victims through sustained campaigns, programs, and initiatives aimed at healing and national reconciliation.

Recover Historical Truth: Conduct in-depth research on the formative political period from 1970 to the present to challenge state-sponsored myths and construct an accurate, people-centered historical narrative.

Preserve Victims' Testimonies: Record and preserve personal testimonies of political activists and victims of state repression during the authoritarian era as vital parts of the national memory.

Extensive Research: Undertake comprehensive, interdisciplinary research on the political economy, social structure, state institutions, bureaucratic systems, and environmental dynamics of Bangladesh to generate empirically grounded insights that can inform the formulation of democratic, accountable, and inclusive public policies by future governments.

Produce Policy Reports: Generate regular reports and analysis on economic, social, environmental, human rights, and foreign policy issues to inform future governance and policy reform in a democratic Bangladesh.

Strengthen National and Transnational Solidarity: Coordinate with domestic and global networks of pro-democracy activists, including the Bangladeshi diaspora—whose role has been historically pivotal in democratic struggles, from the Liberation War of 1971 to the July Uprising of 2024—to amplify Bangladesh's democratic aspirations on the international stage and advance the nation's interests through sustained transnational advocacy.



Roundtable Discussion on People's Election Pulse: February-March 2025

On Saturday, March 15, 2025, Bangladesh Research Analysis and Information Network (BRAIN), Innovision, and Voice of Reforms hosted a roundtable titled "People's Election Pulse: February-March 2025" to discuss the findings of a recent survey conducted by Innovision Bangladesh. The survey, which gathered responses from 10,690 individuals across all 64 districts, delved into public opinions on elections, political preferences, and key issues affecting voter decisions.

The roundtable featured several notable participants, including Innovision's Managing Director Md. Robayet Sarwar, economist and political analyst Jyoti Rahman, Voice of Reforms convener Fahim Mashroor, writer and NCP's joint convener Sarwar Tusher, Dhaka University professor Samina Luthfa, political analyst Said Abdullah, BRAC professor Imran Matin, and economist Anannya Raihan. Md. Robayet Sarwar presented the methodology and findings of the survey, which revealed that the primary concern among respondents was the economic crisis.

The survey revealed that economic concerns, especially inflation, were at the forefront for most respondents, with 69.6% prioritizing inflation control. Additionally, 58.17% preferred elections within 2025.

The survey also highlighted shifting political preferences, with 41.7% supporting BNP, 31.6% favoring Jamaat-e-Islami. A significant portion of voters (29.4%) remained undecided.

Economist Jyoti Rahman discussed the rise of Jamaat-e-Islami and the decline of Awami League, while political analyst Said Abdullah emphasized the volatility of Generation Z voters. Other speakers, including writer Sarwar Tusher and professor Samina Luthfa, underscored the importance of engaging marginalized groups and women, who made up a substantial part of the undecided electorate.

The conversation also explored the emergence of a youth-led political party and its potential impact on the elections.

The discussion was moderated by BRAIN's chief coordinator, Shafiqur Rahman, and offered valuable insights into the shifting political dynamics as Bangladesh moves toward its next elections.





BRAIN Honors Foreign Friends of Bangladesh's Democracy

The Bangladesh Research Analysis and Information Network (BRAIN), a civil society organization advocating for democracy, honored four foreign nationals for their contributions to Bangladesh's pro-democracy movement at an iftar event held at Hotel Sarina on Saturday (8 March 2025).

The distinguished honorees were Ambassador William B. Milam, former U.S. diplomat Jon Danilowicz, Professor Ashok Swain, and investigative journalist David Bergman.

On behalf of BRAIN, a few prominent members of the political and civil society handed over crests to them.

Dr. Rumi Ahmed Khan, Convenor of BRAIN, delivered the welcome speech, while Shafiqur Rahman, Executive Officer of BRAIN, made the concluding remarks.

The organizers of the event emphasized the significance of these individuals' contributions, stating, **"These four distinguished figures have given Bangladesh something invaluable—the courage to resist, the clarity to see through deception, and the integrity to fight for what is right."**

They also said, "Their efforts and contributions remind us that, democracy is not a gift but a hard-won achievement through relentless struggle. This journey is shaped by various catalysts, and as allies, their activism stands as a testament to our shared fight. Their commitment reinforces the truth that injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. **No matter how uncomfortable, truth must always emerge, even in the face of power's fiercest scrutiny.**"

The event was attended by members of Bangladesh's interim government, leaders of BNP, NCP, and other political parties, as well as prominent figures from civil society and the business community.



Distinguished Honorees



William B. Milam

Ambassador Milam, who served in Dhaka between August 1990 and October 1993, has been a vocal supporter of Bangladesh's democratic aspirations in his capacity as a Senior Policy Scholar at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars in Washington, D.C.



Jon Danilowicz

Mr. Danilowicz, a former American diplomat who was posted to Dhaka multiple times from the 1980s to the early 2010s, has been a persistent advocate against the erosion of democracy, human rights abuses and rise of fascism in Bangladesh.



Ashok Swain

Professor Swain, an Indian-born Swedish scholar, has gained recognition for his fearless critiques of rising hate politics in India. Declared persona non grata in his homeland, he continues to champion democracy, justice, and human dignity on a global scale through his academic work and public engagements.



David Bergman

Mr. Bergman, an investigative journalist, was recognized for his role in exposing the flaws of Bangladesh's International Crimes Tribunal. Amidst state-sponsored reactive fervor, he stood as a rational voice, systematically gathering data to expose a serious miscarriage of justice.



NO MATTER HOW UNCOMFORTABLE, TRUTH MUST ALWAYS EMERGE, EVEN IN THE FACE OF POWER'S FIERCEST SCRUTINY.





4-5 FEBRUARY 2025

Empowering Women: A Workshop on Political Participation, Mental Health, and Cyber Security

The Bangladesh Research, Analysis, and Information Network (BRAIN) successfully hosted a two-day workshop titled "Women's Political Participation in Bangladesh: Know My Name" on February 4-5, 2025, at the Bishwo Shahitto Kendro. The event aimed to enhance women's political awareness, inspire leadership through shared experiences, and address important topics like mental health and cyber security.

Day 1: Women in Politics

The first day focused on the theme "Women in Politics," creating space for open dialogue on the challenges and opportunities facing women in Bangladesh's political landscape. The session was opened by Dr. Shamaruh Mirza, Medical Scientist and Founder of SiTara's Story Inc. (Australia), whose vision helped shape the overall structure of the program.

A high-powered panel featured some of the most prominent female figures in Bangladeshi politics, including Shama Obayed, Advocate Nipun Rai, Barrister Rumin Farhana, Advocate Farzana Sharmin, Sanzida Islam, and Samanta Sharmin.

The speakers shared personal narratives of resilience, courage, and determination, offering critical insights into how women can break barriers and assume leadership roles in political spaces historically dominated by men.

The discussions highlighted systemic challenges—ranging from patriarchal norms to institutional roadblocks—while emphasizing the importance of mentorship, solidarity, and policy reforms. Attendees actively engaged with the speakers during the Q&A and networking sessions, setting the tone for a vibrant and inspiring learning environment.



Day 2: Mental Health and Cyber Security

The second day shifted focus to “Mental Health and Cyber Security,” crucial areas often overlooked in conversations about political participation. The session addressed the emotional and psychological toll public engagement can take on women, as well as the increasing threats of online abuse and harassment in the digital age.

Monira Rahman, a renowned mental health professional from the Innovation for Wellbeing Foundation, led a dynamic workshop on building emotional resilience, managing stress, and creating safe mental health practices for women engaging in public and political life.

Following that, Suman Ahmed Sabir, Chief Technology Officer of Fiber@Home Ltd., delivered a critical session on cyber security, offering practical tools and strategies to combat online harassment, protect digital identity, and use technology effectively for activism and advocacy.

Throughout both days, the workshop provided an inclusive and empowering platform for women of all ages and backgrounds—particularly students, young professionals, and aspiring politicians—to connect, learn, and grow.

By combining political education with wellness and digital safety, BRAIN's “Know My Name” workshop addressed the multifaceted challenges facing women leaders in contemporary Bangladesh.

BRAIN plans to expand this initiative into a longer-term program, aimed at sustained leadership development and political participation for women across the country.





29 JANUARY 2025

Discussion on Bangladesh's Proposed Truth, Justice, and Harmony Commission

On January 29, 2025, a pivotal discussion was held on the proposed Truth, Justice, and Harmony Commission for post-Hasina Bangladesh. The event, organized jointly by the Diaspora Alliance for Democracy and the Bangladesh Research, Analysis, and Information Network (BRAIN), took place at the Supreme Court Bar Association Auditorium.

The panel of renowned legal experts, including Shafiqul Alam (Press Secretary, Chief Advisor), Barrister Sara Hossain, Barrister Jyotirmoy Barua, Journalist Tasnim Khalil, and Barrister Sakib Mahbub, engaged in an insightful conversation based on international precedents for such commissions. The discussion centered on proposals for uncovering truth, achieving justice, and fostering societal healing in a post-authoritarian Bangladesh.

The session was moderated by Dr. Shamaruh Mirza and Ashrafur Hasan, with Syed Abdullah as the MC. This event marked a significant step in exploring the potential for truth and justice in Bangladesh's future, encouraging a broader understanding of the ways to heal and rebuild society.



22 JANUARY 2025

Discussion on Future Politics of Bangladesh

On January 22, 2025, BRAIN organized a dynamic discussion titled "Politics of the Future: Society and State Systems" at the Bangla Academy auditorium.

The event featured a distinguished panel of speakers, including Faham Abdus Salam (Author), Zahed Ur Rahman (Political Analyst), Rumin Farhana (Politician), Sarwar Tusher (Researcher), and Jyoti Rahman (Economist).

The conversation covered key topics such as global politics, the rise of personality cults and dynastic politics, the role of religion in society and governance, the quest for social justice, and the historical significance of 1947, 1971, and 2024 in shaping the country's political trajectory.

The discussion provided valuable insights into the challenges and future of Bangladesh's political and social systems.





4-5 FEBRUARY 2025

BRAIN Hosts Discussion on Enforced Disappearances and Memory

On November 22, 2024, the Bangladesh Research Analysis and Information Network (BRAIN) hosted a thought-provoking discussion titled "Gum-er Jabanbandi o Smritir Protirodh" ("Testimonies of the Enforced Disappearance and the Resistance of Memory") at the main auditorium of the National Museum in Dhaka.

The event brought together victims' families, researchers, and activists to reflect on the pressing issue of enforced disappearances in Bangladesh and the struggle to preserve memory and demand justice.

Among the key speakers were Shafiqul Alam, Press Secretary to the Chief Adviser of the Interim Government, who emphasized the state's responsibility in ensuring accountability.

Tahsina Rushdir, wife of disappeared BNP leader M. Ilias Ali, who gave a moving account of personal loss and continued silence; and Sanjida Islam Tuli, organizer from Mayer Dak, who highlighted the importance of collective memory in resisting impunity.

Also speaking were Dr. Mobashar Hasan, postdoctoral researcher at the University of Oslo, who contextualized disappearances within global authoritarian trends; Michael Chakma of the United Peoples Democratic Front (UPDF), who underscored the political nature of targeting marginalized voices.

Zahed Ur Rahman, member of the Election System Reform Commission, who called for institutional reforms to prevent future violations.

The discussion served as a powerful reminder of the enduring impact of state violence and the vital role of remembrance in the pursuit of justice.





The Journey of Democracy: Challenges and the Way Forward

On October 24, 2024, a public dialogue titled “The Journey of Democracy: Challenges and the Way Forward” was jointly organized by Adarsha and BRAIN at the Bangla Academy auditorium.

Speakers underscored that genuine democracy cannot be achieved through elections alone—deep institutional and political reforms are essential.

Key speakers included Professor Ali Riaz (Chair, Constitution Reform Commission), Professor Asif Nazrul (Legal Adviser), Zahed Ur Rahman (Election System Reform Committee Member), journalist Monir Haidar, and Anti-Discrimination Student Movement leaders Hasanat Abdullah, Sarjis Alam, and Umama Fatema.



They criticized both past and present failures of governance, emphasized national unity, and called for a long-term, inclusive democratic transformation beyond surface-level changes.





BRAIN Commemorates 10th Death Anniversary of Professor Piash Karim

On October 12, 2024, the Bangladesh Research Analysis and Information Network (BRAIN) hosted a special event titled “Piash Karim: The Helmsman in Troubled Times” to mark the 10th death anniversary of eminent political commentator and sociologist Professor Piash Karim.

Held at the Central Shaheed Minar in Dhaka, the event brought together notable speakers including Dr. Asif Nazrul, Syeda Rizwana Hasan, Jahed Ur Rahman, Sayem Sakhawat, and Professor Rushad Faridi. They reflected on Professor Karim’s bold and critical stance on nationalism, secularism, civil society, and the political culture of Bangladesh.

Professor Piash Karim passed away on October 13, 2014, leaving behind a legacy of fearless intellectual engagement and public discourse.



21 SEPTEMBER 2024

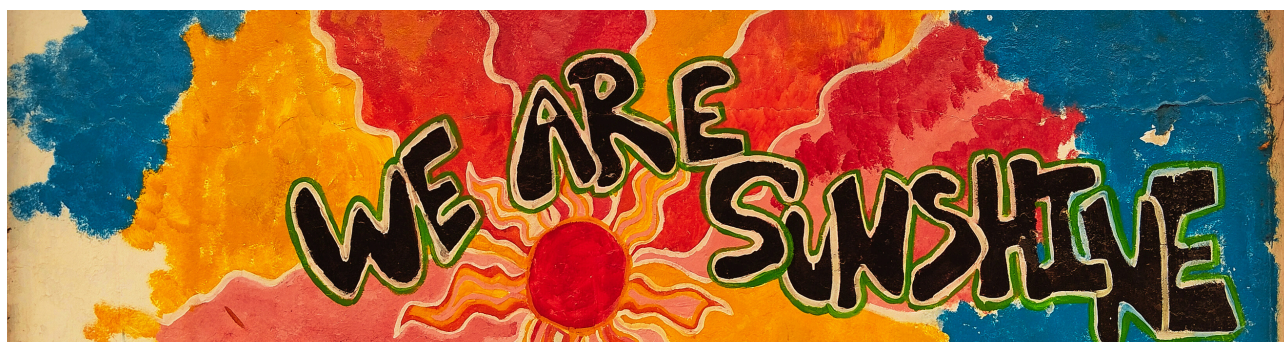
Road to July: Context and Reality

On September 21, 2024, Brain organized an engaging and thought-provoking discussion titled “Road to July: Context and Reality” at Hall 103 of Bishwo Shahitto Kendro.

The event brought together a diverse panel of speakers including political analyst Zahed Ur Rahman, activist Sayeed Abdullah, and politicians Rumeen Farhana and Kamrul Hasan.

The discussion delved into the multifaceted dimensions of the July uprising, offering critical insights into its background, implications, and the broader political landscape.

The event began at 4:00 PM and was well-attended by participants interested in contemporary political discourse.





BRAIN Conversation

- BRAIN hosts a regular YouTube program titled BRAIN Conversation, where leading experts engage in in-depth discussions on Bangladesh's politics, economy, governance, and society.
- Through thoughtful dialogue, the series explores pressing national issues and future pathways.
- Until April 2025, 19 episodes have been aired, featuring expert perspectives on a wide range of timely and critical topics.

EXPERT
INSIGHTS ON
BANGLADESH'S
PRESENT AND
FUTURE

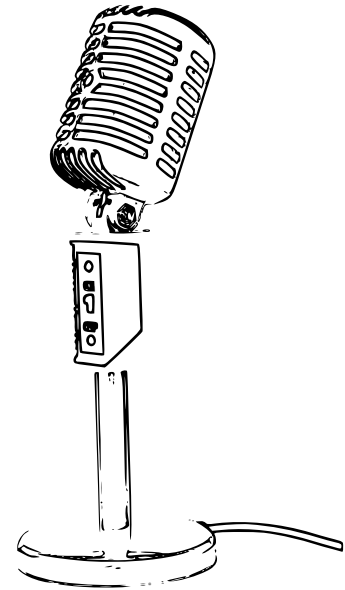


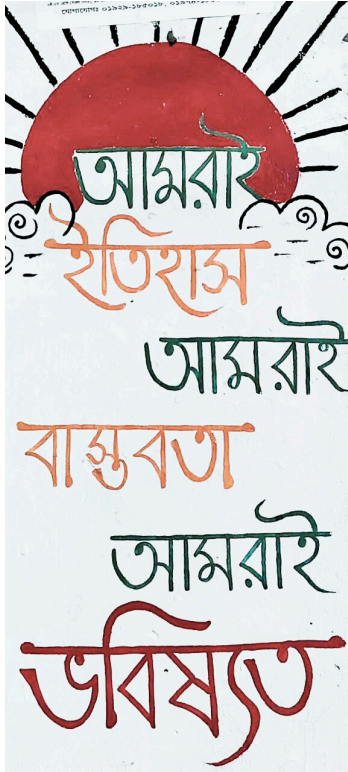


NURALDEEN PODCAST

Voices on Bangladesh's Political Landscape

- BRAIN hosts the Nuraldeen Podcast, a platform dedicated to exploring the political realities of Bangladesh.
- Featuring insightful conversations with experts, activists, and thought leaders from both home and abroad, the podcast delves into key political developments, challenges, and the ongoing struggle for democracy.
- As of April 2025, eight episodes have been aired, offering in-depth analysis and critical perspectives on the evolving political landscape.





THE STRUGGLE OF MAN
AGAINST POWER IS THE
STRUGGLE OF MEMORY
AGAINST FORGETTING.

Milán Kundera

BRAIN's Archival Initiatives

Documenting Resistance, Preserving Memory

As part of its mission to build a rich archive of Bangladesh's political history and democratic struggles, BRAIN has launched several important archival projects:

Newspaper Collection

BRAIN is systematically collecting newspapers from across Bangladesh to build a comprehensive archive of political reporting and public discourse. This archive will support research, analysis, and education.

'Lorai Nirontor' Testimonial Archive

Founded by BRAIN member Sadiq Mahmood, this initiative documents firsthand accounts of individuals who faced persecution under the Awami League's prolonged rule. These oral histories preserve the voices of resistance for future generations.

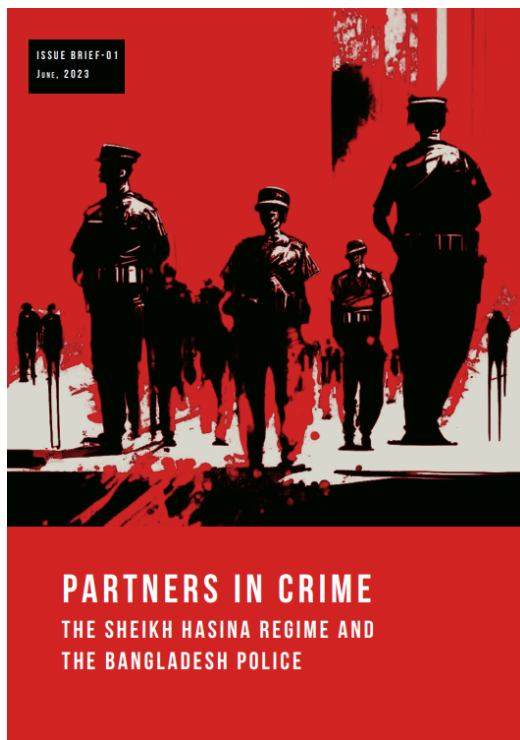
Graffiti Documentation of the July Uprising

BRAIN has collected and archived all protest graffiti from the July 2024 Uprising in Dhaka—capturing the spontaneous and creative expressions of dissent that marked the movement.

Video Archive of the July Uprising

This ongoing project compiles video testimonies, footage, and stories of state violence, resistance, and martyrdom during the uprising. It aims to create a living memory of the events that shaped this historic moment.





Partners in Crime

The Sheikh Hasina Regime And The Bangladesh Police

June, 2023

BRAIN has released a research report titled "PARTNERS IN CRIME: The Sheikh Hasina Regime and the Bangladesh Police," shedding light on the instrumental role of the Bangladesh Police in upholding the Awami League's authoritarian regime (2009–present).

While the Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) has often been labeled as a "death squad" for its involvement in extrajudicial killings and enforced disappearances, this issue brief underscores that the Bangladesh Police have been equally—if not more—complicit in systemic violence, torture, and repression.

Acting as a partisan force, the police have been used to silence dissent, suppress opposition, and perpetuate fear among the public.

The report provides evidence-based analysis that links the police force to numerous crimes against humanity, exposing their central role in the regime's coercive machinery.





All graffiti used in this newsletter are part of BRAIN's archive, collected from walls across Bangladesh.

Thank you for reading!

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