

## A painting depicting Lady Justice, the personification of the law. She is a woman with long dark hair, blindfolded with a white cloth, and holding a pair of golden scales of justice. She is dressed in a simple white tunic. The background is a chaotic, dusty room filled with large stacks of old books and papers, some of which are covered in spider webs. In the background, several figures in dark uniforms and hats are visible, suggesting a scene of investigation or a courtroom setting. The overall style is that of a classical or romanticized painting.



The Yunus-led interim government entered office promising something different. It presented itself not as a political authority, but as a moral one; an administration built on reform, transparency, and accountability. In the absence of an electoral mandate, this moral positioning became its primary source of legitimacy. The message was clear: this government would correct the system, clean up corruption, and govern in the public interest rather than for personal or political gain.

### **Interim Government Under Fire for Inability to Control Corruption**

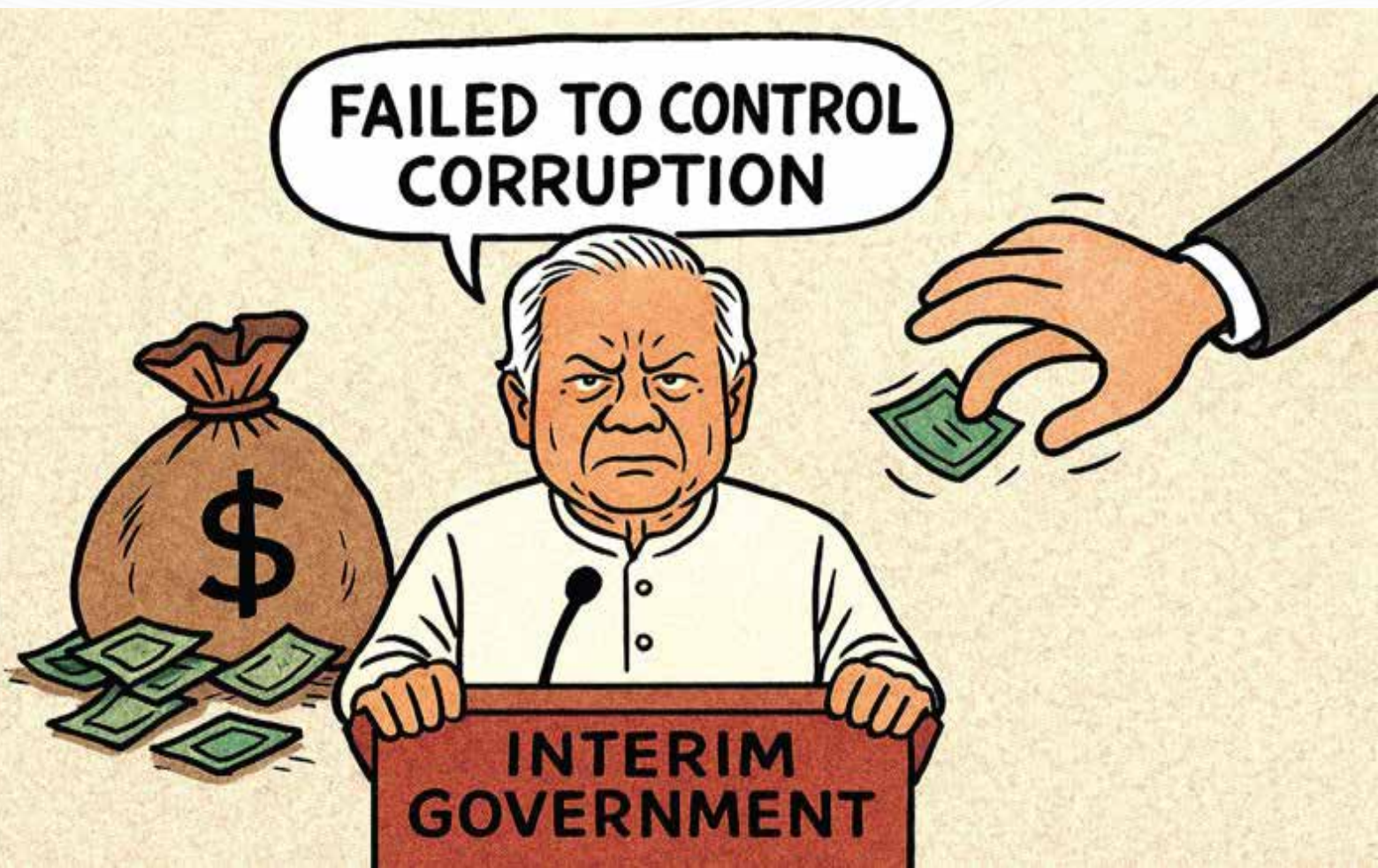
Yet the reality that has emerged tells a very different story. Corruption has not been eliminated under the interim government; it has been reshaped. Instead of being confronted openly, it has been absorbed into the system and protected by careful language and selective silence.

Allegations involving advisers, their close aides, and networks connected to state power continue to surface, but meaningful accountability rarely follows. Investigations begin, then slow down. Institutions hesitate. Explanations remain vague. Over time, public attention fades, without answers ever being provided.

What makes this especially unsettling is how sharply it contrasts with the ideals that were invoked during the July uprising. That moment was framed as a collective demand for fairness, dignity, and equal treatment under the law. Today, however, it increasingly appears that the uprising was not followed by equality in practice, but by a rush to control influence and resources. The language of reform has remained, but it has often been used to justify decisions rather than to question them. In effect, power has changed hands without changing how it operates.

This article argues that the Yunus government did not remove corruption from governance; it reorganized it. A new system has taken shape, one where moral claims replace transparency and where scrutiny is treated as hostility rather than necessity. This is not a historical comparison, nor an attempt to revisit past governments.

The focus here is entirely on the present: on how corruption functions within the current system, how it is protected, and how a government that promised accountability has repeatedly avoided being held to it.





## From Protest to Privilege: How Student Leaders Became Instruments of Corruption

Early in its tenure, the Yunus government pledged a defining act of transparency: public disclosure of advisers' income and asset statements. The promise was framed as a clean break, proof that moral authority would be matched by verifiable openness.

### Advisers' Income and Asset Declarations Still Undisclosed After a Year

A year later, that promise remains unmet. No disclosures have been made public. No deadlines have been offered. Instead, the decision to disclose has been left entirely to the chief adviser's discretion, quietly turning what was announced as a public obligation into a private choice.

This lack of transparency has shaped how corruption now surfaces within the system. Allegations do not usually point directly to advisers; they appear around them. The names that emerge are those of assistants, personal officers, and close aides, individuals who operate at the nerve center of decision-making but remain formally expendable.

### Unbounded Corruption' Alleged Against Eight Advisers of the Interim Government

Examining corruption allegations involving current and former advisers makes clear that this pattern is not accidental, but structural.

01

Asif Mahmud Sajeed Bhuiyan



### Power, Nepotism, and the Protective Layer of APSs

Former Youth and Sports and Local Government Adviser Asif Mahmud Sajeed Bhuiyan's rise from protest icon to state power broker illustrates how moral legitimacy was converted into administrative insulation. While publicly positioned as a reformist figure, the controversies surrounding his office reveal a structure designed to redirect accountability downward while authority remained untouched.

**Allegations of corruption worth tens of billions of taka against Asif Mahmud**



### ○ The APS as a Containment Mechanism

- His former APS, Md. Moazzem Hossain was investigated by the ACC for illicit wealth accumulation, extortion, and tender manipulation; a Dhaka court imposed a travel ban and blocked his NID over allegations involving assets worth hundreds of crores.
- Despite court orders, the probe stalled amid document barriers and investigator changes; Moazzem was removed, while Asif remained institutionally unaffected.





## ○ Preferential Control of Public Resources

- Projects worth approximately Tk 2,400 crore were disproportionately approved for Cumilla, drawing criticism for political favoritism without transparent development justification.
- Sudden special allocations to Dhaka-10 and two other constituencies ahead of electoral timelines further raised concerns about the strategic use of public funds.



## ○ Allegations Beyond Formal Spending

- Persistent local reports accused networks linked to Asif's circle of coercive fundraising and late-night extortion drives, claims that circulated widely but never reached formal resolution.



## ○ Family Conflict of Interest

- Asif publicly apologized after his father obtained a contractor's licence while Asif held advisory authority, acknowledging the lapse without any institutional conflict-of-interest inquiry.



## ○ Public Pressure, No Closure

- Civil society groups demanded wealth disclosures and publication of investigation records; political figures questioned his moral legitimacy.
- Despite this, Asif described his tenure as a "proud experience" upon resignation, leaving core allegations unresolved.





02

## Nurjahan Begum

### When the PO Becomes the Fall Guy



Health Adviser Nurjahan Begum reflects the same insulation pattern seen elsewhere. Her former Personal Officer (PO), Tuhin Farabi, was investigated alongside other aides for unexplained wealth and influence-peddling.



The PO was removed following the allegations.



The investigation slowed, and the adviser remained politically unaffected.

No public explanation was offered as to how a personal officer, whose authority derives entirely from proximity to the adviser, could allegedly engage in large-scale corruption without institutional awareness. No internal review followed. Responsibility stopped at the expendable layer.

### **This is managed impunity by design:**

the PO absorbs exposure; the adviser disappears from scrutiny.

03

## Sarjees Alam

### From Activism to Informal Enforcement



Beyond formal offices, the Yunus government's ecosystem includes informal power brokers. Sarjees Alam, once known for aggressive anti-broker activism, is now widely described as an enforcer operating without designation but with influence.



### **From Zero to Millionaire The Journey of Sarjees Alam**

- Local accounts allege intervention in tenders, administrative decisions, and fundraising framed as "gifts."
- His sudden wealth and displays of power, including reports of a 100-vehicle motorcade, remain unexplained.



Despite persistent discussion, no agency has clarified the source of his authority or income. Bribes are reframed as loyalty, coercion as assistance, and an intimidation economy shielded by proximity to power.



04

## Hasnat Abdullah and Gazi Salahuddin Tanvir

Authority Without Accountability



If Sarjees represents street-level enforcement, Hasnat Abdullah and Gazi Salahuddin Tanvir represent institutional influence without office.



Hasnat's name surfaced during the mass dismissal of journalists from Somoy TV, widely viewed as politically motivated; no investigation followed.



Tanvir has been accused of meddling in DC-OC appointments, contracts, and education-sector decisions.



Neither holds an elected or accountable role. Yet both operate with visible confidence that consequences will not apply, an assurance that only systemic protection can provide.

05

## Naheed Islam and the Digital Laundering of Power



Former Information Adviser Naheed Islam, now central to the National Coordination Platform (NCP), represents corruption adapted to the digital age.



His aide, Atiq Morshed, has been accused of embezzling approximately Tk 150 crore through Nagad, alongside allegations of nepotistic recruitment.



Naheed himself, once claiming to have no bank account, is now rumored to control extensive cryptocurrency holdings, enabling opaque fund movement beyond regulation.

Alongside figures accused of siphoning hundreds of crores, this marks a shift toward digitally agile, institutionally protected corruption, where silence replaces accountability.





While corruption under the Yunus government is often projected as the excesses of advisers or aides, the record surrounding Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus himself points to something more fundamental: the systematic use of state power for personal legal, financial, and institutional advantage. The following actions, taken together, reveal a pattern of centralized privilege rather than incidental misconduct.



### Dr. Yunus's Nine Privileges: Corruption or Clever Management?

#### ○ Legal Immunity Through Executive Influence

- Despite being accused in multiple cases involving money laundering, labor law violations, and financial irregularities, all cases against Yunus were dismissed within a short span.
- No detailed prosecutorial explanations were made public.
- No prolonged judicial scrutiny occurred.
- The contrast with ordinary citizens, who remain trapped in courts for years, raises serious questions about the selective application of justice.

#### ○ Tax Exemptions Without Precedent

- Tk 666 crore in outstanding taxes owed by Grameen Bank were written off during Yunus's tenure.
- Future taxes for the next five years were also exempted, securing advance fiscal immunity.
- Such concessions are unprecedented in scale and unavailable to comparable institutions.
- The exemptions directly weakened state revenue without parliamentary debate or public justification.



#### ○ Strategic Reduction of State Oversight

- Government ownership in Grameen Bank was reduced from 25 percent to 10 percent.
- The reduction diluted public control over a nationally significant financial institution.
- Effective influence shifted toward unidentified private interests, beyond democratic scrutiny.
- No national consultation or transparent restructuring framework accompanied the decision.





## ○ Use of State Authority for Personal Branding

- "Grameen University" received approval through state channels.
- The institution aligns more with individual legacy-building than with a clearly articulated national education strategy.
- Public authority was used to reinforce a private brand, blurring lines between governance and self-promotion.



## ○ Market Capture Through Policy Decisions

- Grameen Employment Services was positioned to dominate overseas manpower export, centralizing control over a vital labor market.
- Grameen Telecom received approval to launch a digital wallet, creating the risk of monopolistic influence in financial transactions.
- Regulatory safeguards appear secondary to network proximity.

## ○ Direct Transfer of Public Funds

- Tk 700 crore from the Social Safety Security (SSS) fund was transferred to Grameen Trust.
- The transfer occurred without tender, competition, or open evaluation, using the SSS mechanism.
- This bypassed procurement norms designed to protect public interest.



## ○ Why the Center Cannot Be Exempted

- These actions are documented through government gazettes, board resolutions, court orders, and administrative records.
- They cannot be dismissed as rumors or overreach by subordinates.
- Blaming junior officials or young advisers while ignoring these decisions misrepresents where power truly resides.

What emerges is not fragmented corruption, but a coherent design, one where legal immunity, fiscal privilege, institutional control, and administrative loyalty converge at the center. Shielding that center does not protect reform; it dismantles it.



## Silent Watchdogs: How Anti-Corruption Bodies Protect Power Under Yunus

The true test of an anti-corruption system is not how loudly it speaks, but who it dares to investigate. Under the Yunus government, oversight bodies have shown a consistent pattern: silence in the face of current power, and theatrical aggression toward the past.

Allegations involving advisers, their aides, and informal power brokers have followed a predictable arc: announcements without outcomes, probes without conclusions, files that simply stop moving. Investigations are neither resolved nor closed; they are allowed to fade. Accountability is not denied; it is delayed into irrelevance.

At the same time, anti-corruption agencies remain conspicuously active in reviving allegations against the Hasina family, recycling old claims with no new evidence or breakthroughs. This fixation functions as deflection. It creates the illusion of vigilance while shielding those who currently control the state.

### ○ The contrast is revealing:

- Present power is met with hesitation and procedural paralysis.
- Absent power is pursued with performative intensity.

This is not institutional failure; it is institutional alignment. Anti-corruption bodies have been repurposed from watchdogs into tools of narrative management, loud against the powerless, silent before the powerful.

What this exposes is a deeper truth: power was not taken to dismantle corruption, but to rearrange its beneficiaries. Reform became a slogan. Control became the objective. And in a system where oversight looks backward but never upward, corruption no longer hides; it governs.



