

HASINA'S 5TH TERM A new team up against stiff challenges

PARTHA PRATIM BHATTACHARJEE and BAHARAM KHAN

Awami League President Sheikh Hasina took oath as the prime minister for the fourth consecutive term and formed government with 37 ministers yesterday.

This is her fifth stint as the PM.

The 76-year-old daughter of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman is already the longest serving prime minister of the country.

She became the prime minister for the first time in 1996. She returned to power in 2009 and has won three consecutive elections since then.

Her new cabinet has to hit the ground running given the pent-up issues that are threatening to blow up. From economy to geopolitics, labour dissatisfaction to declining investor confidence, impending LDC graduation to strained public finances – challenges are in every corner.

President Mohammed Shahabuddin yesterday administered the oath of office and oath of secrecy to Hasina and her new council of ministers – 25 ministers and 11 state ministers – at the Bangabhaban Darbar Hall. Cabinet Secretary Mahbub Hossain conducted the ceremony.

The Jatiya Sangsad speaker, the chief justice, the chief election commissioner, Supreme Court judges, MPs, political leaders, chiefs of the three services, journalists, and top civil and military officials were present at the event.

President's wife Rebecca Sultana and PM's sister Sheikh Rehana were there.



President Mohammed Shahabuddin swears in Awami League President Sheikh Hasina as prime minister at the Bangabhaban yesterday evening.

PHOTO: COURTESY OF YASIN KABIR JOY

The 76-year-old daughter of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman is already the longest serving prime minister of the country.

US Ambassador Peter Haas, Indian High Commissioner Pranay Verma, Chinese Ambassador Yao Wen, Russian Ambassador Alexander Mantyskiy, British High Commissioner Sarah Cooke and French Ambassador Marie Masdupuy were also present.

The ceremony was held a day after the Awami League Parliamentary Party unanimously elected Hasina as its leader, paving the way for her to be the PM.

After the swearing-in was over, Hasina, wearing a white saree and blue shawl, signed the oath of office and oath of secrecy.

Immediately after the cabinet members took oath, the cabinet division issued a gazette notification mentioning the portfolios.

The PM keeps the defence, power, cultural affairs, and labour ministries as well as the cabinet and armed forces divisions for herself.

Former foreign minister Abul Hassan Mahmood Ali is the new finance minister, replacing AHM Mustafa Kamal.

Previously, he was appointed as a minister for a year in the 9th parliament. He remained a minister through the full term of the 10th parliament.

Mohammed Hasan Mahmud, who served as the information minister in the immediate past cabinet, replaces AK Abdul Momen as the foreign minister.

In January 2009, Hasan Mahmud was appointed as the state minister for foreign affairs. But six months later, he was given the portfolio of state minister for environment. In November 2011, he was made the minister for environment.

AL central committee member Mohammad Ali Arafat has been appointed as the state minister for information.

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Turnout swung between the two extremes

512 centres posted below 10pc cast,
100 centres recorded over 90pc cast

ZYMA ISLAM and
MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

Two polling centres posted a hundred percent voter turnout each in Sunday's election, while two others recorded a 98 percent turnout, according to Election Commission's centre-wise data.

Montajul Ulum Madrasa of Sandwip, which falls under Chattogram-3 constituency, is one of the two centres that recorded 100 percent vote cast.

The centre had 3,980 voters. However, 2,357 of the votes were cancelled during counting.

Awami League candidate Mahfuzur Rahman took the seat with almost double the votes of his rival, who ran as a so-called independent candidate of the ruling Awami League.

The other centre that recorded 100 percent turnout is Shibpur Fazaria Fazil Madrasa of Gobindaganj in Gaibandha-4. All the centre's 2,450 votes were shown cast, although 662 votes were

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- 27 centres posted 0% turnout
- 6 centres posted 95% turnout
- 5 centres recorded 94% turnout

Xi, Putin greet Hasina on being re-elected PM

DIPLOMATIC
CORRESPONDENT

Chinese President Xi Jinping and Russian President Vladimir Putin, in separate messages yesterday, congratulated Sheikh Hasina on her re-election as the prime minister of Bangladesh.

With Hasina in her fourth consecutive and overall fifth term in office, President Xi expects to promote the high-quality Belt and Road cooperation and take the China-Bangladesh Strategic Partnership of Cooperation to new heights.

He pointed out that China and Bangladesh are neighbours with a long-established friendship, according to a message sent by the Chinese embassy in Dhaka to the media.

Xi said that over the past 49 years, since the establishment of the diplomatic relations, the

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254 MPs each own liquid assets worth Tk 1cr or more

TIB calls for confiscation of
illegal income and assets

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least 254 elected members of the 12th parliament, which is 85 percent of all the members, possess movable or liquid assets worth Tk 1 crore each or more, said a report by Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB).

In the 2008 parliamentary election, the figure was only 82. In 2018, it was 257.

The total value of movable assets of all lawmakers in the 12th parliament exceeds Tk 22,700 crore, with as many as 15 lawmakers having assets worth over Tk 100 crore.

The 15 include AL MPs Golam Dastagir Gazi with Tk 1,345.77 crore, Salman F Rahman with Tk 315 crore, and Abu Zafar Mohammad Shafi Uddin with Tk 306 crore, and independent MP SAK Ekramuzzaman with Tk 421 crore.

Movable or liquid assets refer to bank deposits, fixed deposits, savings certificates, government bonds and cash. Real estates are not liquid assets.

Comparing the last four parliaments, it was seen that the cumulative wealth of the 11th parliament was raised by over 75 percent than that of the 10th parliament, while

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BNP activists break padlock, enter office after 75 days

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The BNP reopened its central office in Dhaka's Nayapaltan yesterday after two and a half months.

A group of party leaders and activists, led by BNP Senior Secretary General Ruhul Kabir Rizvi, broke the padlock on the main gate around 10:30am and entered the office for the first time after it was locked by police in the aftermath of the October 28 violence in Nayapaltan.

Clashes broke out between police and BNP men that day when the party held a rally in Nayapaltan demanding resignation of the Awami League government and elections under a neutral administration.

Rizvi said they had to break the padlock with a hammer as police refused to provide the key.

Visiting the Nayapaltan

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BNP leaders and activists are back to the party's central office in the capital's Nayapaltan after two and a half months. The office had been locked since October 28 last year when a BNP rally ended in violence in the area. Leaders entered the office yesterday after breaking the padlock at the main gate.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

Energy supply main worry for businesses

Says World Economic Forum's
survey in Bangladesh

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh's business community views energy shortage, inflation, economic downturn, inequality, public debt and unemployment as the major challenges for the country in the next two years, according to the World Economic Forum's Global Risks Report 2024.

The report is based on a survey conducted among 1,100 business leaders from 113 countries. From Bangladesh, 71 businesses participated.

Though inflation is an important challenge, it is superseded by worries about the energy supply situation, said Khondaker Golam Moazzem, research director of the Centre for Policy Dialogue, which conducted the survey in Bangladesh on behalf of WEF.

Last year, business people were not concerned about energy shortage. The challenges in the 2023 report were rapid and/or sustained inflation, debt crisis, severe commodity price shocks, human-made environmental damage and geopolitical contestation of resources.

Due to the energy crisis, both small and large industries are being impacted, Moazzem said.

Already, the government is rationing gas to the industries.

Adequate import of liquefied natural gas is also tough amid the existing shortage of dollars, he said.

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