

## BNP confident it'll win, form govt alone

Tarique tells FT and BBC that he'll return to Bangladesh soon

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP acting chairman Tarique Rahman, in his first interview in nearly two decades, said he would return to the country soon to contest the upcoming election.

In an interview with the Financial Times yesterday, he said, "We're confident we will win... We strongly believe that we're in the position to form the government alone. I think the time is very close for my return to Bangladesh."

The BNP leader spoke to two media outlets -- London-based newspaper the Financial Times and BBC News Bangla -- in separate interviews, both published yesterday.

Tarique, 59, has been living in London for almost 18 years since the last BNP government lost power in 2006. Party leaders have long said he is expected to emerge as the party's prime ministerial candidate after the election scheduled for February 2026.

Speaking to the Financial Times, Tarique said his party was prepared to form a government with other parties,



"During the past fascist government, a court order stopped my right to speak. If I wanted to say something to the media, maybe the media wanted to publish it, but they could not."

TARIQUE RAHMAN, BNP acting chairperson



including a new one led by students from the frontlines of last year's uprising that toppled Sheikh Hasina. He added that the BNP had long maintained that the sooner the election is held, the sooner stability will return to the country.

Tarique also said that if elected, he would continue the Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus administration's efforts to recover billions of dollars allegedly siphoned abroad by people close to Hasina.

During the BNP's last tenure, Bangladesh was ranked the world's most corrupt country five years in a row by Transparency International.

A leaked 2008 US diplomatic cable described Tarique as "a symbol of kleptocratic government and violent politics" and said he was notorious for "flagrantly and frequently demanding bribes".

Asked about BNP's past records, Tarique acknowledged that "any government has some flaws" but defended its performance on corruption, saying it was the BNP government that had established the Anti-Corruption Commission.

He claimed that "false narratives" circulated by Bangladeshi media had "formed the basis of the US cable", and said all cases against him were later dismissed.

After his father, former president Ziaur Rahman, was assassinated in 1981, his mother, former prime minister Khaleda Zia, led the BNP for decades as its chairperson.

Tarique was arrested on March 7, 2007, during the

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Construction of the Tekarghat bridge in Jessore's Abhaynagar has been halted for a long time, affecting the people of Abhaynagar and Manirampur upazilas. The work over the Teka river began in 2021 and was scheduled to finish by 2023. Locals now have to cross the river using a wooden bridge, top left.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

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## Most fertiliser plants starved of gas

Petrobangla pushing for gas price hike for fertiliser plants

ASIFUR RAHMAN

Most of the fertiliser factories are facing production losses every year due to gas shortages, forcing the government to import fertiliser from abroad at high prices.

year.

All the fertiliser factories are running below capacity except the newly-built Ghorashal-Palash Fertiliser, which started production in March last year.

For instance, Jamalpur's Jamuna

for 147 days due to gas scarcity.

The government had not only imported 16.44 lakh tonnes of urea from abroad that fiscal year but also needed to bear the cost of maintaining an idle workforce throughout the year for those

FACTORIES SHUTDOWN OVER LAST 3YRS	DAYS IN FY25	DAYS IN FY24	DAYS IN FY23
Shahjalal Fertiliser Company LTD	147	117	17
Chattogram Urea Fertiliser LTD	81	106	62
Jamuna Fertiliser Company LTD	351	250	210
Ashuganj Fertiliser and Chemical Company LTD	259	278	15
Ghorashal Palash Fertiliser PLC	0	*Started operation in March 2024	

Currently, the government needs to import as much as 50 percent of the country's annual urea demand of 30-32 lakh tonnes to maintain stable agricultural production.

In contrast, about 60 percent of local urea production capacity remained unused in the last fiscal

Fertiliser Company remained idle for 351 days in the last fiscal year. It produced about 4,000 tonnes of urea against the annual production capacity of 5.6 lakh tonnes.

Shahjalal Fertiliser Company in Sylhet, which is one of the modern factories in the country, was shut

plants, according to data from Bangladesh Chemical Industries Corporation (BCIC).

BCIC submitted the data to a public hearing yesterday, organised by the Bangladesh Energy Regulatory Commission (BERC),

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## Talks begin to end Israel's war in Gaza

Rivals start indirect talks in Egypt; Trump says first phase of his plan can be completed in a week

AGENCIES

Delegations from Israel and Hamas began indirect negotiations in Egypt yesterday that the US hopes will bring a halt to the violence in Gaza, facing contentious issues such as demands that Israel pull out of the enclave and Hamas to disarm.

Israel and Hamas have both endorsed the overall principles behind President Donald Trump's plan, under which fighting would cease, hostages would go free, and aid would pour into Gaza, the closest they have come to an end to fighting.

The plan also has the backing of Arab and Western states. Trump has called for negotiations to take place swiftly towards a final deal, in what Washington hails as the closest the sides have yet come to ending the fighting.

"I am told that the first phase should be completed this week, and I am asking everyone to MOVE FAST," Trump said in a social media post.

But both sides are seeking clarifications of crucial details, including over issues that have wrecked all previous attempts to end the war and could defy any quick resolution.

Trump has told Israel to suspend its bombing of Gaza for the talks. Gaza residents said Israel had scaled back its offensive substantially, although it had not halted it altogether.

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## Medicine Nobel for trio for research on autoimmune disease

AFP, Stockholm

A US-Japanese trio yesterday won the Nobel Prize in Medicine for research into how the immune system is kept in check by identifying its "security

break the news to them in person.

"If you hear this, call me," the secretary general of the Nobel committee, Thomas Perlmann, joked at the press conference announcing the winners.



## No surprises as Bulbul re-elected BCB chief

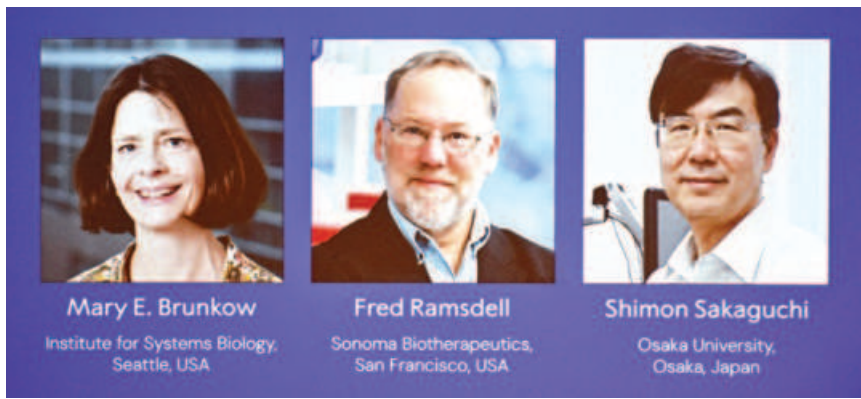
SAMSUL AREFIN KHAN

The board of directors' election of the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) ended without any surprises yesterday as former national captain Aminul Islam Bulbul was re-elected unopposed as president for the next four years.

Bulbul, who had earlier led the board for around four months in his first term, will now lead a 25-member board of directors, finalised through an election held at the Pan Pacific Sonargaon Dhaka on Monday.

On the day, 17 directors were elected in three categories, while six others had already been elected unopposed from the district and division category earlier. Two more directors -- Ishfaq Ahsan and Yasir Mohammad Faysal Ashik -- joined the board as National Sports

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Mary E. Brunkow

Institute for Systems Biology, Seattle, USA

Fred Ramsdell

Sonoma Biotherapeutics, San Francisco, USA

Shimon Sakaguchi

Osaka University, Osaka, Japan

guards", the Nobel jury said.

The discoveries by Mary Brunkow and Fred Ramsdell of the United States and Japan's Shimon Sakaguchi have been decisive for understanding how the immune system functions and why we do not all develop serious autoimmune diseases.

Sakaguchi, a professor at Osaka University, told a press conference in Japan he hoped the award would "serve as an opportunity for this field to develop further... in a direction where it can be applied in actual bedside and clinical settings".

The Nobel committee was unable to reach the two US-based laureates to

The three won the prize for research that identified the immune system's "security guards", called regulatory T-cells.

Their work concerns "peripheral immune tolerance" that prevents the immune system from harming the body, and has led to a new field of research and the development of potential medical treatments now being evaluated in clinical trials.

"The hope is to be able to treat or cure autoimmune diseases, provide more effective cancer treatments and prevent serious complications after stem cell transplants," the jury said.

Sakaguchi made the first key discovery in 1995.

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## IN MEMORIAM

One Year Death Anniversary of Lubna Choudhury

Founder Principal of BIT

Date of Death: October 7, 2024

Though our mother is no longer with us physically, her spirit lives on in every classroom, every student she inspired, and every life she touched. As we remember her today, may we all find comfort in these beautiful words she cherished:

"I am the thousand winds that blow  
I am the diamond glints in snow  
I am the sunlight on ripened grain,  
I am the gentle, autumn rain.

Do not stand  
By my grave, and cry—  
I am not there,  
I did not die." — Clare Harner

Her legacy of education and a love of literature continue to guide us all.

We humbly ask that you pray to Allah for her eternal rest.

Anika Rahman  
MD & CEO, BIT

Talita Choudhury  
Board Director, BIT

