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The July 36 Expressway, also known as the 300 Feet Road, area was brimming with people yesterday afternoon, when BNP acting chairman Tarique Rahman delivered his address to the nation shortly after arriving in Dhaka from London, marking an end to his 17 years in exile.

PHOTO: STAR

‘NCP leaning towards seat-sharing deal with Jamaat’

SHAMIMA RITA

The National Citizen Party is increasingly tilting toward a seat-sharing arrangement with Jamaat e-Islami, as party leaders fear that a deal with the BNP would yield too few seats and create cracks within their newly formed alliance.

Several senior NCP leaders, speaking on condition of anonymity, said Jamaat has so far agreed to give up 30 seats for NCP to contest in the February general election, substantially more than what the BNP is prepared to offer.

They said the BNP initially indicated it might concede six to seven seats, but in final negotiations, the offer would likely shrink to no more than three.

The BNP, they added, also imposed conditions requiring the NCP to dissolve itself or break the Gonetantrik Songskar Jote to join the party.

“We are holding discussions with both the BNP and Jamaat, but we are moving forward with the understanding with Jamaat,” said a senior NCP leader.

However, he noted that further talks with the BNP could still take place as its acting chairman Tarique Rahman returned to the country yesterday after 17 years in exile.

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A bride for 17 days, Salma’s life ends too soon

Lakshmipur BNP leader loses another daughter to arson

SHAHEEN MOLLAH

Just 17 days ago, 18 year-old Salma Akter Smriti got married over the phone to an expatriate living in Oman. The couple had planned for a formal wedding reception in Bangladesh during Ramadan, once he returned.

But all the wedding planning and accompanying joys came to a sudden halt on December 19, when a group of miscreants locked Salma’s family inside their home in Bhabaniganj of Lakshmipur Sadar, and set it ablaze.

While she, her father -- Belal Hossain, a businessman and assistant organising secretary of Bhabaniganj Union BNP -- and her 14 year-old sister Samia Akter Bithi suffered severe burns, her seven-year-old sister Ayesha Akter died on the spot.

After battling for her life for six days with 90 percent burns, Salma passed away around 12:30am yesterday in the ICU of the National Institute of Burn and Plastic Surgery, said resident surgeon Shaon Bin Rahman.

Salma’s relatives yesterday received the

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‘I HAVE A PLAN’

Says Tarique, pleads for calm and cooperation, vows to shape a Bangladesh that embraces all people, across faiths and regions

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP acting chairman Tarique Rahman has called for calm and cooperation to implement his plan for the nation, in his first speech on Bangladeshi soil in close to two decades.

“Standing on Bangladesh soil today, as a member of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party, I want to say before all of you that I have a plan for the people of my country, for my country,” he said while addressing party members and the nation at a reception in the capital yesterday.

Before making the remark, Tarique recalled the historic speech delivered 62 years ago by American civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr. On August 27, 1963, addressing a massive gathering at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, King spoke of his vision for a US free from racial discrimination and said, “I have a dream.”

Tarique said that he doesn’t have a dream but a plan. The plan is aimed at serving the people’s interests, driving development and changing the fortunes of ordinary people.

“If this plan and these actions are to be implemented, then I will need the cooperation of every person present in

this sea of people, and of all those who represent the democratic forces across Bangladesh. If you stand by us and support us, God willing, we will be able to implement this plan.”

walks of life -- including students -- had protected Bangladesh’s independence and sovereignty in 2024.

“Today, the people of Bangladesh want to regain their right to speak. They



PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

Beginning his address with the words, “Dear Bangladesh”, Tarique said just as the people of the country had achieved independence in 1971, citizens from all

want their democratic rights restored. They want to receive their fair rights based on merit.”

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Tarique returns to a roaring reception

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Six thousand, three hundred and fourteen days.

As the plane carrying the BNP acting chairman entered Bangladeshi airspace, Tarique Rahman wrote on his verified Facebook page that it had been this many days since he was last under Bangladesh’s skies.

Tarique had left Bangladesh on September 11, 2008 -- a bruised and battered man, who had faced torture for over a year and a half in the hands of a military backed caretaker government after his arrest in March 2007.

Archival news reports from that year said he had suffered fractures to the spine and fallen sick during multiple court appearances, before the courts finally granted him bail on medical grounds on August 28, 2008. He was freed from jail on bail on September 3 that year.

Returning home yesterday, he stood tall as he received a hero’s welcome.

As his flight -- Biman Bangladesh Airlines flight BG202 tracked on plane-spotting websites by nearly 50,000 people -- taxied on the tarmac of the capital’s Hazrat

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Mother, son reunite at Evercare

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia met her elder son Tarique Rahma at Evercare Hospital in Dhaka yesterday after a separation of more than seven and a half months as the party’s acting chairman returned home, ending a 17-year exile.

Tarique entered the hospital at 5:54pm and went straight to his mother’s intensive care unit room, where he sat beside her.

While the street in front of the hospital was bustling with BNP leaders and activists celebrating Tarique’s return, the mother-son reunion was quiet inside.

As Tarique watched her quietly, Khaleda noticed him and gently moved her hand, said a doctor, speaking on condition of anonymity.

During the visit, Tarique spoke with members of the medical board overseeing Khaleda’s treatment, enquiring about her physical condition. He also thanked the doctors for their care.

He was accompanied by his wife Zubaida Rahman, their daughter Zaima Rahman, and several senior BNP leaders during the nearly two-hour visit.

Before visiting the hospital, Tarique sought prayers for his mother at a public reception upon arrival from London.

After the hospital visit, he went to his Gulshan residence with his family.

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Contraceptive shortage puts family planning at stake

Experts warn supply dearth may drive up fertility rate further

CONTRACEPTIVE USE OVER THE YEARS			
CONTRACEPTIVE	CONSUMPTION SEPT 2025	CONSUMPTION SEPT 2024	CONSUMPTION SEPT 2019
Condom	41.52 lakh	47.65 lakh	97.48 lakh
Oral pill	24.36 lakh	6.50 lakh	66.49 lakh
Injectable	5.21 lakh	5.14 lakh	8.85 lakh
Implants	25,943	33,345	41,295
IUD	5,416	8,362	14,887

SOURCE: DGFP

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

The government’s family planning programme has been hit by a fund crunch and manpower shortage, with the supply of contraceptives dwindling steadily over the last few years, say officials.

The Directorate General of Family Planning (DGFP) may not be able to distribute condoms -- the most widely used contraceptive -- for at least a month early next year, as stocks are likely to run out in 39 days. The development comes at a time

when the country has seen a rise in the total fertility rate (TFR) for the first time in 50 years, with officials and experts warning that TFR could increase further due to the shortage of contraceptives.

A recent national survey revealed that the use of contraceptives and access to modern contraception have declined, indicating a direct link between the rise in TFR and the shortage of contraceptives.

Government-led programmes helped reduce TFR to 2.3 in 2012 from 6.3 in 1975. The Population

Policy 2012 set a target of bringing down TFR to 2.1 within 2015 by raising the contraceptive prevalence rate to 72 percent.

However, the government could not achieve the target and the rate remained stagnant for more than a decade till 2023.

The Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2025, published last month, showed that TFR rose to 2.4 from 2.3 last year.

The use of contraceptives by married women aged 15 to 49

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JUDICIARY IN 2025

Key reforms rolled out but case backlog persists

ASHUTOSH SARKAR

Over the past year, the judiciary has seen several key reforms, including the establishment of the Supreme Court Secretariat aimed at safeguarding its autonomy, but no progress has been made in reducing the case backlog.

The authority over promotions, postings, and transfers of lower court judges was shifted from the law ministry to the SC Secretariat through an ordinance issued last month.

To expedite case disposal, the law ministry separated civil and criminal courts in September so that district court judges no longer have to handle both types of cases simultaneously.

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The separation of civil and criminal courts at the district level, along with court digitisation initiatives, will improve public access to justice.

Imran Siddiq, SC lawyer