

Tarique Rahman and the burden of leadership

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Tarique Rahman's formal elevation to the position of the chairman of BNP confirms what has effectively been the case for several years. Since Khaleda Zia's imprisonment in 2018, he has directed the party's strategy and organisation. What gives this moment significance is not the announcement itself, but the political conditions under which it arrives. Bangladesh is approaching a crucial political transition amid persistent economic strain, still-floundering institutions, and growing public exhaustion with confrontational politics.

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landscape is saturated (with increasingly assertive pressure groups), trust in state institutions remains persistently low, and public grievances are rising alongside expectations of redress.

Coming as it does at this critical juncture, the timing of his ascension leaves little room for adjustment. With the national election barely a month away, the gap between leadership consolidation and the possibility of governing is extremely narrow. At the same time, inflationary pressures, fragile law and order, and a deteriorating economic situation constrain policy choices at the national level. Regional and global uncertainties further reduce the margin for error. Leadership at this stage demands discipline, clarity, and restraint, not rushed improvisation.

One factor that defines the present political landscape is the absence of Awami League from active competition, particularly in the election. This absence does not simplify



BNP Chairman Tarique Rahman.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

law enforcement, institutional independence, and political inclusion are no longer tactical signals; they are read as indicators of future governance. Without an established governing party to absorb pressure, early missteps will carry outsized consequences.

The role of young people sharpens this pressure further. Bangladesh's youth were central to pushing the Hasina government out, driven by frustration with closed political space, limited economic opportunity, and a sense of stalled futures. This was not a symbolic protest; it was a generational intervention. Young people now make up the largest share of the population—constituting about 44 percent of the 12.76 crore listed voters—and they are no longer willing to accept symbolic change or recycled narratives.

For many young voters, BNP represents the organisation with the scale, experience, and reach necessary to govern. This, however,

does not amount to unconditional trust. It is a conditional expectation. This generation is not interested in revisiting old conflicts. It wants answers. How will jobs be created? How will the economy be stabilised? Will the persistent cost-of-living crisis be resolved? Will freedom of expression be protected? Will institutions function as they should? Will there be safety at home or on highways? Will the environmental crisis be addressed?

BNP's leadership history adds another layer of pressure. Khaleda Zia was widely regarded as a measured leader and never lost an election (at the constituency level) while heading the party. Even under hostile conditions, she maintained the party's electoral discipline and avoided overreach during campaigns. Her authority rested not only on legacy but also on results.

In this regard, the upcoming election represents untested ground for Tarique Rahman. This will be the first time he

contests a national election as the party's formal leader. More importantly, it is the first time he is leading an entire election from the front—shaping strategy, public messaging, alliances, and internal discipline while under intense public scrutiny. This is not only a test of electoral appeal; it is a test of judgement under pressure.

Tarique Rahman does enter this moment with one clear advantage: firm control over the party. Over the past seven or eight years, he has consolidated authority across leadership levels and grassroots networks. Organisational coherence provides stability. But party discipline does not automatically translate into governing capacity. Managing a state demands a different set of skills, particularly in a political environment without traditional counterweights.

Age and experience heighten expectations rather than reduce them. Ziaur Rahman formed BNP at 42. Khaleda Zia assumed leadership at 38. Tarique Rahman takes charge at 60, after many years outside the country. That distance offered time for reflection and reassessment, but it also raised expectations of restraint, foresight, and institutional thinking.

One reality is unavoidable. BNP is now led by a second generation, while Bangladesh is navigating a critical political transition without its oldest and longest-serving ruling party in the field. Legitimacy in such moments cannot be inherited or deferred; it must be built through conduct, early signals, and respect for institutions.

So, for Tarique Rahman, this moment cannot be defined simply by winning office. It will be defined by whether his leadership can meet the unusually concentrated expectations without any escalation or exclusion. Whether this transition marks renewal or repetition will be decided by decisions made when pressure is at its highest.

BNP has now fully entered its second generation of leadership. This carries symbolic weight, but it also concentrates responsibility. Ziaur Rahman founded the party while in power, with state institutions and public momentum working in his favour. Khaleda Zia assumed leadership during a difficult period, but it was a time when a degree of tolerance and political courtesy still shaped competition, and pro-democracy parties could unite around a common goal. Tarique Rahman takes charge in a far more fragile environment.

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politics; it intensifies it. Without a dominant ruling party in play, the usual mechanisms of counterbalance and shared accountability are missing. Expectations no longer disperse across multiple actors; they converge on those closest to power.

In this setting, BNP is no longer viewed as one contender among many. It is being evaluated as the central political force in waiting. Decisions and statements on dissent,

The ‘rial revolt’ and the geopolitics of Iran’s cracking regime



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Iran's newest wave of unrest began because of money. When shopkeepers in Tehran's Grand Bazaar shut their doors on December 28, 2025, in protest of a collapsing rial and soaring prices, an economic strike rapidly turned into a national political challenge. The state's answer has been blunt: lethal force, mass arrests, and a near-total internet blackout that Amnesty International says is being used to obscure grave abuses.

The obvious comparison is the 2022 “Woman, Life, Freedom” movement after the custodial death of Mahsa Amini, a 22-year old detained over alleged hijab violations, an episode condemned by human rights experts. That movement attacked Iran's claim to moral guardianship. This one attacks something even more foundational: the regime's promise that it can keep society afloat, and that sacrifice today will yield stability tomorrow.

The economic roots of the protest are neither mysterious nor temporary. Iran is trapped in a cycle of sanctions pressure, corruption, and opaque institutions that punish productivity while rewarding loyalty. Chronic inflation has become a form of daily dispossession. The International Monetary Fund projects consumer price inflation in 2026 in the low 40 percent range, a level that shreds wages and savings. Currency collapse is not a technical problem in Iran; it is a political event that tells citizens the state has lost control of the most basic guarantee of economic order.

Economics alone does not topple regimes. What turns economic pain into regime rejection is coalition. In Iran, protests have often been segmented: students, women, workers, and ethnic peripheries, each rising and then being isolated. A bazaar strike changes that geometry. The bazaar is a social institution as much as

a market, and it signals when private frustration has become public refusal. When merchants join street politics, the regime cannot dismiss dissent as marginal. It reads as an economic vote of no confidence.

That is why the communications blackout matters. Internet shutdowns are not just censorship but a counterinsurgency tool designed to prevent coordination and hide the scale of violence. But

Geopolitically, Iran is not merely another state facing street anger; it is a strategic hub in an already unstable region. Tehran's rulers have spent decades building influence through aligned armed actors and political partners across the Middle East, a posture the Council on Foreign Relations tracks from Lebanon to Yemen and Iraq. Supporters call this deterrence. Many Iranians see it as an expensive foreign policy that delivers prestige to the security elite while ordinary life becomes a permanent austerity exercise.

The regime's strategic environment has also tightened. Syria is the clearest reminder that systems that look permanent can crumble quickly. The fall of Bashar al Assad in December 2024 disrupted an arena where Iran had long sought strategic depth. Then came a direct

the US is “locked and loaded” if Iranian authorities kill peaceful protesters. Such statements may aim to deter bloodshed. They also risk reinforcing Tehran's narrative that dissent is a foreign plot, a frame that can harden the security apparatus and split wavering constituencies who fear chaos more than they hate the state.

So what comes next for Iran? Survival through repression remains possible, but it has a shelf life when the economy offers no credible route back to dignity for a young population. Collapse through exhaustion is also possible if protests persist, strikes deepen, and elite cohesion frays. Succession uncertainty around an ageing supreme leader only deepens the sense of drift. The least violent outcome would

dissolve when a patron weakens. Some act autonomously, some splinter, and some escalate to secure relevance. The timing is combustible because the wider region is already traumatised by the Gaza war, with the UN's humanitarian reporting continuing to track catastrophic loss of life.

The energy dimension turns Iran's crisis into a global risk, and it matters for Bangladesh. Iran sits beside the Strait of Hormuz, through which about one-fifth of global petroleum liquids consumption flowed in 2024, according to the US Energy Information Administration. Even without a deliberate disruption, miscalculation can raise prices. Bangladesh is exposed to these shocks because its fuel supply chains

depend on Gulf stability, a vulnerability that has already been flagged in the context of earlier Iran-Israel tensions.

The central geopolitical truth is that Iran's legitimacy crisis at home and the region's crisis abroad have fused. Tehran's leaders have treated nuclear brinkmanship and regional militancy as tools of survival. Iran's protesters increasingly see these tools as drains on a society that cannot afford them. Supporting Iranians' rights to protest and communicate is essential. Turning their revolt into another externally managed project would be a strategic and moral failure. The rial's fall is not only a financial story but also a warning signal for the entire region.



Protesters gather as vehicles burn during an evolving anti-government unrest in Tehran, Iran, in this screen grab obtained from a social media video released on January 9, 2026.

SOURCE: REUTERS

they also advertise fear. Under a blackout, casualty and arrest figures vary and are hard to verify, yet the trend is clear. Overseas rights monitors point to dozens killed and thousands detained in Iran as protests expand. The movement has rapidly shifted from economic grievances to explicit denunciations of Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei and the Islamic republic itself, with some demonstrators invoking the exiled Reza Pahlavi, reflecting both deepening anger and a fractured opposition.

military shock: in June 2025, the US struck three Iranian nuclear sites, described in a Congressional Research Service brief as intended to destroy or severely degrade Iran's nuclear programme. Whatever one thinks of the legality or wisdom of those strikes, the political message landed: escalation did not protect the economy, and restraint did not prevent humiliation.

External responses may shape the trajectory, but not always as intended. President Donald Trump has warned that

be a negotiated transition that protects state institutions while opening the political system. The most dangerous outcome would be a sudden vacuum where coercive networks fragment and rival factions fight over money, weapons, and immunity.

If Tehran's current order falls, the Middle East will not automatically become calmer—it will become less predictable. Iran's regional partners could face major constraints, shifting the balance in Lebanon and Yemen, yet proxies don't always

মোবারকগঞ্জ সুগার মিলস্ লিমিটেড

পোঃ নলডাঙ্গা, জেলাঃ বিনাইদহ

তারিখঃ ০৮.০১.২০২৬খ্রিঃ

মোড়িক/বারি/প্রচার-৪০/২০২৫-২৬/১২৯

টেভার বিজ্ঞপ্তি

ব্যবস্থাপনা পরিচালক, মোবারকগঞ্জ সুগার মিলস্ লিমিটেড, পোঃ নলডাঙ্গা, জেলাঃ বিনাইদহ কর্তৃক অত্র মিলের ১নং বয়লারের ডাঙ্কসহ চিম্নী পরিবর্তন কাজের জন্য প্রকৃত ঠিকাদার/সংশ্লিষ্ট কাজের অভিজ্ঞতাসম্পন্ন প্রতিষ্ঠানের নিকট হতে সীলমোহরযুক্ত নামে দরপত্র আহবান করা যাচ্ছে। বিস্তারিত বিবরণ সম্বলিত টেভার সিডিউল প্রতি সেট নির্ধারিত মূল্যে (১) অত্র মিলের হিসাব বিভাগ (কাশ) ও (২) ব্যবস্থাপক (কাশ), বিএসএফআইসি, চিনিশিল্প ভবন, ৩, দিলকুশা বাণিজ্যিক এলাকা, ঢাকা এর দস্তর হতে ক্রয় করা যাবে। দরপত্রসমূহ আগামী ২৭.০১.২০২৬খ্রিঃ তারিখ বেলা ১২-০০টা পর্যন্ত বিএসএফআইসির প্রধান (বিপণন) এর অফিস ও মিলের মহাব্যবস্থাপক (প্রশাসন) এর দস্তরে রক্ষিত টেভার বাগে একযোগে গ্রহণ করা হবে এবং সকল দস্তর হতে দরপত্র প্রাপ্তি সাপেক্ষে ২৮.০১.২০২৬খ্রিঃ তারিখ বেলা ১১.০০ ঘটিকায় মহাব্যবস্থাপক (প্রশাসন) এর দস্তরে খোলা হবে। টেভার গ্রহণের দিন কোন টেভার সিডিউল বিক্রয় করা হবে না এবং বিলম্বে প্রাপ্ত কোন দরপত্র গ্রহণযোগ্য নয়।

কর্তৃপক্ষ কোন কারণ দর্শানো ব্যতিরেকে এ বিজ্ঞপ্তি সংশোধন/বাতিল করার ক্ষমতা সংরক্ষণ করেন।

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মোহাম্মদ মিজানুর রহমান

মহাব্যবস্থাপক (প্রশাসন)

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Office of the Project Director

Maintenance & Rehabilitation of Railway Track in Eastern Zone of Bangladesh

Railway Project

Bangladesh Railway, CRB, Chattogram

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e-Tender Notice

Reference No. 54.01.1500.109.07.067.25

Dated: 06.01.2026

The following e-Tenders have been invited in the National e-GP Portal System (<http://eprocure.gov.bd>) for the procurement of Goods:

Sl. No.	Tender Reference No.	Tender ID No.	Procurement nature and name	Tender method	Tender document last selling (date and time)	Tender closing (date and time)
1.	e-Tender/GD-1/2025-2026	1191055	Goods: Procurement of Rails	OTM (ICT)	17-February-2026 at 17:00 Hrs.	18-February-2026 at 12:30 Hrs.
2.	e-Tender/GD-2/2025-2026	1200707	Goods: Procurement of Sleepers & Fittings	OTM (ICT)	17-February-2026 at 17:00 Hrs	18-February-2026 at 12:30 Hrs

N.B.:
1. Tenderers, registered in the e-GP System who meet the eligibility criteria are requested to participate through e-GP System.
2. Tenderers are requested to purchase the tender documents and submit the tender security from a schedule bank through e-GP System.

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Md. Tanvirul Islam

Project Director

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