

Political somersault, thy name is art

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representing the Janata Party
Bangladesh.

In 1986, he won as a BAKSAL nominee, followed by another victory in 1988 as a Jatiya Party candidate. He lost the 1991 and June 1996 elections contesting from the same party. In 2001, he ran from another faction of the Jatiya Party (JP) but was defeated. He also lost elections as a BNP candidate in 2008 and 2018. Most recently, in the 2024 election, he contested as the acting chairman of the Bangladesh Nationalist Movement but was again defeated.

Zalar is not alone in this game of switching loyalties. There are several others who have joined new parties – or dissolved their own – ahead of the February polls.

Redwan Ahmed resigned from the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and formally joined the BNP on December 24 to secure a nomination for Cumilla-7. The businessman was first elected as an MP in 1986 on a JP ticket. In 1991, he won as an independent and in 2001 as a BNP candidate. In 2006, he left the BNP to join Oli Ahmed's LDP, which he recently quit.

Meanwhile, the LDP of Oli Ahmed, a freedom fighter and retired colonel, recently joined the Jamaat-e-Islami-led electoral alliance for the next election.

Oh had begun his political life in 1980 by joining the BNP. He won a by-election that year and went on to win the seat four times between 1991 and 2001 on a BNP ticket. In 2006, he was among the founders of the Liberal Democratic Party, which later became part of the AL-led alliance. He won the 2008 polls as part of the AL-led alliance and joined a BNP-led alliance in 2012. However, in December 2025, the LDP left the alliance over a seat-sharing disagreement.

The Amar Bangladesh (AB) Party was formed in May 2020 by a group of Jamaat reformists. The group included former Jamaat and Shibir leaders who were disgruntled over their then party's refusal to apologise for its role in the Liberation War and its failure to pursue pragmatic reforms. Recently, the AB Party, led by Mojibur Rahman Monju, joined the Jamaat-led alliance. In its electoral debut, Monju is running from Feni-2.

Bangladesh LDP Chairman Shahadat Hossain Selim dissolved his party to join the BNP and is running from Laxmipur-1. Selim was the founding general secretary of Chattogram Metropolitan Chhatra Dal and later a joint secretary of BNP's Chattogram metro unit. He joined the LDP in 2006 but formed Bangladesh LDP in 2019.

Reza Kibria, son of slain former Awami League stalwart Shah AMS Kibria, joined Gonoform ahead of the 2018 polls and contested that election using the BNP's electoral symbol under the Jatiya Oikyafront alliance. In 2021, he joined Gono Odhikar Parishad as its founding convenor but left in 2024. He joined the BNP in December 2025 and is contesting from Habiganj-1.

Rustum Ali Faraj was first elected MP in 1996 on a JP (Ershad) ticket. He joined the Manju faction following a split in 1988. He joined the BNP and was elected MP in 2001. In 2014, he was an independent and joined JP (Ershad) again. In 2018, he was elected as an

Awami League alliance candidate. He lost the 2024 polls as an independent and later joined Islami Andolan Bangladesh in August 2025. He is contesting from Pirojpur-3.

Ahead of the next polls, Syed Ehsanul Huda dissolved the Bangladesh Jatiya Dal; Rashed Khan resigned as general secretary of Gono Odhikar Parishad; and Bobby Hajaj relinquished his chairmanship of the Nationalist Democratic Movement (NDM) to join the BNP. Huda is contesting from Kishoreganj-5, Rashed from Jhenaidah-4, and Bobby Hajaj from Dhaka-13. All three are running with the BNP's sheaf of paddy symbol.

Professor Abu Sayeed is contesting as an independent from Pabna-1. He was first elected as an Awami League MP in 1970. Later, he joined the Abdur Razzaq-led BAKSAL and contested the 1991 polls. He returned to the Awami League and won in June 1996. During the army-backed caretaker government in 2007, he was labelled a "reformist," and therefore was denied nominations in the next two elections. He contested the 2014 election as an independent, joined Gonoform ahead of the 2018 polls, and contested using the BNP symbol.

Frequent change of loyalty is hardly a novelty in Bangladesh and has been part of electoral politics for decades.

Anisul Islam Mahmud was elected in 1979 on a BNP ticket and later won elections in 1986 and 1988 as a Jatiya Party candidate. He was elected in 2008, 2014, 2018, and 2024 as a JP nominee under the Awami League alliance. In August 2025, he became leader of a faction of the Jatiya Party. His nomination for Chattogram-5 was rejected by the returning officer, and the Election Commission has not changed its decision upon appeal. The only resort left is to seek redress in the High Court.

Election expert and a former additional secretary of the Election Commission, Jesmin Tuli, said politicians who frequently change parties are not concerned with the betterment of parties – let alone the country. "When someone leaves a party and contests under another symbol, it shows that the party itself is not their priority; winning is," she said.

Another election expert, Abdul Alim, said many now view political parties as a business. "They think becoming an MP is a huge investment followed by a big return," he said, adding that once elected, many see themselves as the absolute authority of their constituency.

Alim said in Bangladesh, people still vote for the symbol, and the chance of victory is always higher for the big parties.

Both Tuli and Alim said a provision of the Representation of the People's Order Act stipulating three years of party membership to be eligible for a nomination was omitted when the RPO was amended and passed by the

parliament in 2013. It is essential to bring it back, both said.

PAST RECORDS

Frequent change of loyalty is hardly a novelty in Bangladesh and has been part of electoral politics for decades.

One name that comes first in this regard is Shah Moazzem Hossain. Elected from the Awami League (AL) in 1973, he was the first chief whip. After his party leader Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was assassinated, he joined then president Khondakar Mostaq Ahmad's Democratic League. Following BNP founder Ziaur Rahman's assassination and EM Ershad's takeover, Shah Moazzem joined hands with Ershad and was among the founders of Janadul, which later transformed into the Jatiya Party led by Ershad. He was elected MP twice on Jatiya Party tickets. He later joined the BNP in 2006 and contested the 2008 and 2018 elections as their nominee, losing both times.

Mizanur Rahman Chowdhury was elected an AL MP in 1973. After the assassination of Bangabandhu, he led an AL faction and won in the 1979 election. In 1984, he too joined Janadul. He became prime minister in 1986 under Ershad and was elected MP again in 1991. In 2001, he rejoined the Awami League and served as the party's adviser until his death.

Moudud Ahmed was elected in 1979 as a BNP candidate, later winning elections in 1986, 1988, and 1991 as a JP nominee. He returned to the BNP in 1996 and won the Noakhali-1 seat in 2001. In 2008, he won Bogura-7 (vacated by Khaleda Zia) but lost in 2018.

Salahuddin Quader Chowdhury won Chattogram-6 in 1979 on a ticket from the Muslim League and the Islamic Democratic League, an alliance which fielded candidates jointly. He also won elections as a JP nominee in 1986 and as a National Democratic Party nominee in 1991. He won as a BNP candidate in 1996, 2001, and 2008.

Former speaker Shamsul Huda Chowdhury was elected MP in 1979 under the BNP banner. In 1986 and 1988, he ran as a JP candidate, and in 1996 as an AL nominee.

Suranjit Sengupta lost in 1973 as a NAP (Mozaffar) candidate. He won in 1979 with a Jatiya Ekota Party ticket. In 1986, he won as a National Awami Party candidate and in 1991 as a NAP candidate. He later joined the Awami League. Although he lost in June 1996, he returned to parliament through a by-election in October 1997 and went on to serve three consecutive terms until 2014.

KM Obaidur Rahman began with the Awami League, winning in 1973. He joined the BNP in 1978 and was elected in 1979. He won the June 1996 and 2001 elections. He served as a cabinet member under Khondakar Mostaq Ahmad and later formed Janadul under the Ershad era.

Bangladesh's first female MP, Sveda Razia Faiz, was elected in 1979 by election from the Muslim League led by Khan A Sabur. In 1987, she joined the Jatiya Party and became a minister. She contested the 1991 and 1996 elections from the same party. Later, in 2008, she joined the BNP and remained with the party until her death.

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protection student Mohammad Maruf Hossain told the media that peaceful protests against injustice should not be labelled "mob violence", adding that delays in the inquiry process had prompted the protests.

On January 19, both teachers wrote to the University Grants Commission Chairman Prof SMA Faiz.

In her letter, Prof Layeqa wrote that the UAP VC told her on December 14 to resign, and that she met him, the pro-VC and the Board of Trustees chairperson the following day, seeking a formal investigation. She added that the university later invited complaints and formed an inquiry committee amid online harassment.

She said she filed a general diary with Tejgaon Police Station on December 22, and that officials from the Detective Branch and Dhaka Metropolitan Police visited the university on January 12.

Layeqa further alleged that the authorities asked her to resign instead of being suspended, saying she would receive all benefits if she resigned but would "lose everything" otherwise. She said she declined and chose to stand for her lawful rights.

An inquiry committee was formed for her, but she said no report was submitted before the termination

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The following day, the university announced that all classes would be suspended until further notice, saying the situation was not favourable for continuing regular academic activities.

Meanwhile, students continued their protests yesterday, demanding the resignation of UAP Vice Chancellor Prof Qumrul Ahsan.

The controversy dates back to December 10, when Prof Layeqa made a Facebook post, which she said was shared only with friends on her profile.

In the post, she expressed opposition to face covering, commonly known as niqab, and said religion did not require it. She described the practice as objectionable and said it "heightens the risk of criminal behaviour".

She cited the Mohammadpur double-murder incident, saying the domestic worker who committed the killings had kept her face covered.

The post triggered backlash from a section of former and current students, who demanded her termination.

As criticism intensified, she made another Facebook post on December 17, saying the remarks were personal and written from a standpoint of personal security following the Mohammadpur double-murder. She apologised if anyone felt hurt and said the post had no connection with her workplace.

The protesters also demanded the termination of Prof ASM Mohsin, the department chairperson, for allegedly not taking any action against Prof Layeqa. They further alleged that he turned down proposals for setting up an Islamic club and hosting a Seerat Conference (a gathering held to honour the life, teachings and character of Prophet Muhammad [PBUH]).

On January 18, before the terminations, students accused Layeqa of making derogatory remarks about Islamic practices.

After the terminations the same day, protesting student Mohammad Maruf Hossain told the media that peaceful protests against injustice should not be labelled "mob violence", adding that delays in the inquiry process had prompted the protests.

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of OC said, adding that intelligence sources, however, informed them that Mehedi may have been freed.

Of the three, Zahidul Islam Jony and Khondoker Imran Hossain, a lance corporal of the army, were arrested from Dhaka and Magura yesterday. Another suspect, Bachchu Mia held from Chattogram on Sunday was placed on a three-day remand.

Sub-Inspector Kamrul Islam of Uttara West Police Station yesterday produced Jony and Imran before a Dhaka court with a forwarding report, which mentioned that Jony was arrested from the Gulshan area and Imran from Magura.

The two admitted their involvement in the incident before the court.

The report said Imran told interrogators that around 10 months ago, he became acquainted with Mehedi over phone. "Mehedi introduced himself as the personal secretary of the chief adviser's daughter and claimed that he lived at the Bangabhaban..."

Mehedi then asked Imran to give him an account number, saying that

money would be sent there to buy a flat.

Imran and his colleague Al Sadi, who is also an army member, were posted at the Bangabhaban. Imran discussed the matter with Al Sadi, who provided his elder brother Borhan's account number," the report read.

Police said Tk 60 lakh was deposited into the account in two instalments. Borhan later withdrew the money and handed it over to Mehedi, following instructions from Imran and Al Sadi.

The report added that the group later tried to trace the source of the money and learnt that a man from Kushtia paid Tk 40 lakh after being promised a nomination for the upcoming polls.

Mehedi also took Tk 20 lakh from the man, promising to arrange a "Bangladesh Bank loan".

After the fraud was discovered, the man from Kushtia allegedly pressured Borhan, Imran, and Al Sadi to return the money.

Police said the three then approached a political leader, who allegedly took Tk 1.5 lakh in cash from Imran, claiming that he would recover

Students have been demonstrating

the money from Mehedi, but Mehedi could not be traced.

The report also mentioned that on Friday, the political leader, along with Imran, Al Sadi, and Borhan, went to the spot in Uttara and injured Mahbub, the gunman of abductee Mehedi.

Police added that the suspects took Mehedi with them in a car.

Over the assault on Mahbub, who later died from his injuries, his son filed a case with Uttara West Police Station against six unidentified individuals.

Md Moniruzzaman, inspector (investigation) of Uttara West Police Station, told The Daily Star that Mehedi was fraud who, at different times, introduced himself as the chief adviser's personal secretary or as the personal secretary of the chief adviser's daughter to maintain ties with high-profile individuals.

"We are investigating the matter," he added.

When contacted over the Uttara incident, ISPR said the army would take all necessary steps to ensure whatever is required to maintain law and order under existing laws in Bangladesh.

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and administrative authority fully centralised.

All such provisions have been removed from the final draft.

Instead, the colleges will continue to operate independently with their existing administrations. However, they will follow academic programmes approved by the proposed university.

One of the most criticised clauses in the earlier draft required the university to use the colleges' physical infrastructure daily from 1:00pm to 7:00pm. Teachers and administrators warned the arrangement would disrupt classes, examinations and office work, particularly in already overcrowded institutions.

Locals said Sabuj is a "drug addict".

OC Monirul Islam of Louhajanj Police Station confirmed that Sabuj is not accused in any case there.

campus". Until then, academic and administrative activities will be conducted from rented premises.

According to the final draft, the proposed university will primarily function as an affiliating and regulatory body.

The earlier draft had also sought to

tightly regulate academic arrangements by assigning specific schools and faculties to particular colleges, such as placing science disciplines at Dhaka College and Eden Mohila College. It further mandated a "hybrid method" of education, requiring 35 to 40 percent of classes to be held online.

These provisions have also been scrapped.

Under the final draft, the university's

Academic Council will determine how and where schools and departments are established. The mandatory online

class requirement has been scrapped, allowing academic decisions to align with prevailing practices at other public universities.

Sources familiar with the drafting process said the changes were intended to avoid rigid structures that could prove unworkable.

To strengthen coordination between the university and the affiliated colleges, the ordinance introduces a new statutory post titled "Higher Education Coordinator", a position absent from the earlier draft.

According to the ordinance, the coordinator will oversee academic coordination among the affiliated colleges, including curriculum implementation and scheduling, to

address concerns over fragmented authority following the shift away from a full merger model.

2 UAP teachers terminated

decision. A January 15 letter gave her until January 22 to submit a written response, but she was terminated on January 18.

Contacted by The Daily Star, she asked, "On what basis can someone be permanently removed without concluding the inquiry?"

She also alleged that the authorities emailed the entire student body inviting complaints after the committee was formed.

Layeqa said she no longer believed the