

Tarique pulls off a STUNNING SWEEP

Poised to be the prime minister after years of struggle, exile, trauma

WASIM BIN HABIB and SAJJAD HOSSAIN

BNP Chairman Tarique Rahman is set to become the next prime minister after his party swept to a stunning landslide in yesterday's peaceful and festive election, winning more than two-thirds of the parliamentary seats.

The party's resounding victory, along with Tarique's wins in two constituencies in his maiden election, marks one of the most significant political comebacks in recent history. It not only restores the BNP to power after two decades but also closes a long, tumultuous chapter of exile and uncertainty for its top leader.

His party alone won 209 seats and its alliance partners three, show unofficial results from 297 seats. BNP's opponent Jamaat-e-Islami and its allies secured 77 seats, according to the Election Commission.

Jailed and later exiled in the UK, the 60-year-old returned home last December after more than 17 years to contest, for the first time in his political career, one of Bangladesh's most consequential elections.

Tarique took over leadership of the party from his mother, former prime minister Khaleda Zia, a giant of Bangladesh politics, 10 days after her death.

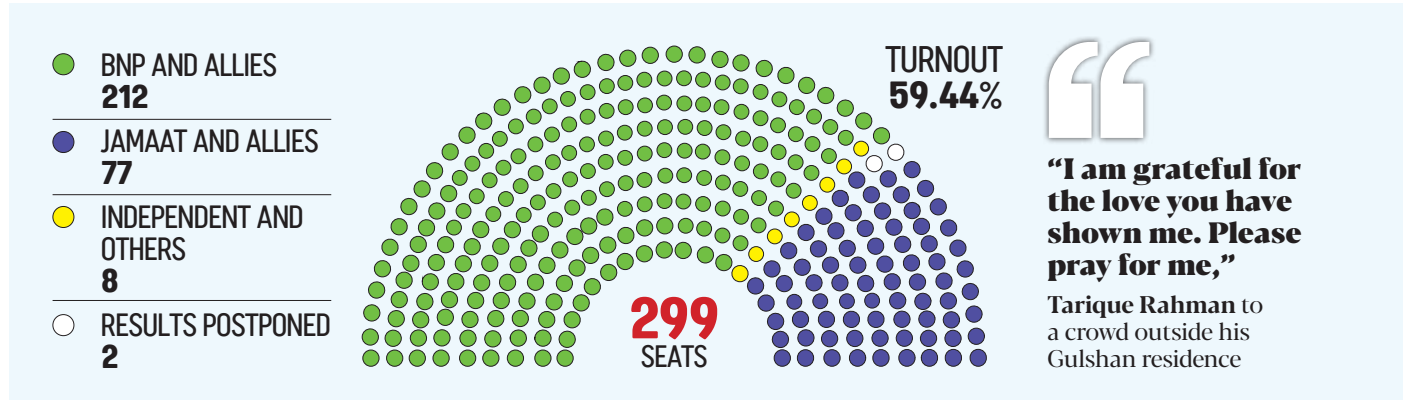
From then on, he worked tirelessly to consolidate BNP's ranks, touring districts with promises of curbing corruption and carrying out electoral reforms and socio-economic development. He mobilised thousands of supporters in what became the most

the long-standing duopoly that has dominated the country's political landscape for almost three decades.

However, his climb to the pinnacle of power was anything but easy, shaped by the trauma of his father's assassination and years of exile, all while facing

1991, 1996 and 2001 under her leadership.

Tarique, who spent his childhood and adolescence in Dhaka, became a member of the Gabtali upazila BNP in Bogura in 1988 at the age of 22. However, he got involved in politics much before he formally joined the party. He took to



vigorous campaign of his career.

He went on to lead his party to a landslide victory in the 13th national election held 18 months after an unprecedented student-led uprising toppled the Awami League government.

Tarique's ascension to the position of prime minister would dismantle

persistent accusations of corruption and nepotism from his political detractors.

His father, late president Ziaur Rahman who founded BNP in 1978, had been assassinated in a military coup in 1981 when Tarique was a teenager.

Since then, Khaleda led the party which went on to form governments in

the streets with his mother during the anti-Ershad movement.

Tarique was made the first joint secretary of the party in June 2002, around a year after the BNP returned to power in 2001 with Khaleda as the prime minister.

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FILE PHOTO: AFP

BNP's long march back to power

Jamaat scores biggest win yet; former allies now face each other across parliament



“Although there were negative perceptions about the BNP's involvement in extortion after August 5, Tarique Rahman's return to Bangladesh had a cooling effect. His presence restrained some of the party's controversial elements...”

DU Political Science Professor Sabbir Ahmed

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

The 13th national election will be remembered as the one when voters reclaimed their franchise.

But it will also be remembered as a turning point in Bangladesh's political history -- the day the BNP regained power after 17 years, and the day Jamaat-e-Islami, the country's largest

Islamist party, made its most significant stride so far, securing the highest number of seats in its history.

For Jamaat, this was more than just an electoral victory. It marked its transformation into the main opposition, a position it had never

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New govt likely to be sworn in on Monday or Tuesday

BAHARAM KHAN and MD ABBAS

The government is making all-out preparation to conduct swearing-in for MPs-elect after gazette notification within a day or two and the oath-taking of BNP-led government as the interim administration wants to hand over power at the earliest.

Following the 13th national election on Thursday, Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus has instructed the Cabinet Division and the law ministry to expedite the power transfer process, said multiple officials.

A top government official communicated with the BNP high-ups carrying a message from the head of government, the officials told The Daily Star yesterday.

In forming a new government, the president first administers the oath to the prime minister, followed by ministers. The cabinet secretary is responsible for conducting the ceremony.

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Landslides, close calls define the election

ZYMA ISLAM

The results of the 13th national election reveal a striking mix of nail-biting contests and easy rides.

In many constituencies, candidates did not simply win -- they towered over rivals in strongholds. At the same time, the polls exposed a surprising number of swing seats, where close calls had the potential to tip the scales.

BNP BASTIONS

In all three hill districts, BNP candidates soared far above the reach of their closest rivals.

Dipen Dewan of Rangamati won six and a half times more votes than his closest rival, independent Pohel Chakma, with 2.02 lakh votes to Pohel's 31,222.

In Bandarban, Saching Prue Jerry outpaced NCP's Abu Sayeed Md Suja Uddin by a margin of five and a half times, securing 1.4 lakh votes.

Abdul Wadud Bhuiyan of Khagrachhari more than doubled the tally of independent Dharma Jyoti

Chakma with 1.5 lakh votes.

Similarly, BNP's Md Harun-Or-Rashid from Rajbari-2 and Md GK Gouse from Habiganj-3 each won more than three times the votes of their nearest rivals, NCP's Md Abdullah Al Mamun and Jamaat-e-Islami's Kazi Mohsin Ahmed.

In Brahmanbaria-6, Ganosamhati Andolon's Zonayed Saki secured over 94,000 votes, two-thirds more than Jamaat's Md Mohsin.

Both Chattogram-7's Humam Quader Chowdhury and Chattogram-13's Sarwar Jamal Nizam won by margins of two and a half times over their opponents, Jamaat's ATM Rezaul Karim and Islami Front's SM Shahjahan.

Sunamganj-3's Md Koyson Ahmed, Munshiganj-2's Abdul Salam Azad, and Kushia-1's Reza Ahmed Bacchu Mollah also doubled or more the votes of their rivals.

JAMAAT STRONGHOLDS

Jamaat candidates likewise dominated in several constituencies.

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World leaders congratulate the BNP

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Foreign leaders including Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar and Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif have congratulated the BNP and its Chairman Tarique Rahman for the party's landslide victory in the 13th parliamentary elections.

They committed to working with the new leadership of Bangladesh to strengthen bilateral relationships and advance common development goals.

Modi was the first foreign leader to speak with and congratulate Tarique yesterday as the BNP secured 212 parliamentary seats out of 299 in the historic election, which took place 18 months after the July uprising that ousted Sheikh Hasina months into her fifth term as the prime minister.

“Delighted to speak with Mr Tarique Rahman.

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PETALS ON PATROL ... Amid intensive election security duties, female members of the Bangladesh Police share a light moment, tucking yellow dahlia flowers into their hair and taking selfies before returning to the barracks yesterday. With Pahela Falgun today, the scene offered a quiet hint of spring. The photo was taken in the capital's Shahbagh.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

‘Yes’ wins but ...

- “Yes” secures 62.74% support
- Turnout recorded at 60.25%
- 4,80,74,429 votes cast for “Yes”; 2,25,65,627 for “No”
- 74,02,285 ballots cancelled, accounting for 9.61%
- “No” prevails in 11 constituencies, including three Gopalganj seats, hill districts

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR and ARAFAT RAHAMAN

The “Yes” vote in Thursday's referendum received comparatively lower support than in the previous three plebiscites.

In the referendum on the constitutional issue of the July National Charter, 4,80,74,429 votes were cast in favour of “Yes”, while 2,25,65,627 voters chose “No”, Election Commission Senior Secretary Akhtar Ahmed told reporters at the EC office yesterday.

The turnout rate was 60.25 percent. Later, the EC's public relations office released detailed figures showing that a total of 7,69,51,382 votes were cast.

According to the breakdown, the “Yes” vote secured 62.74 percent support, while the “No” vote obtained 29.32 percent. The remaining 74,02,285 ballots, or 9.61 percent, were cancelled.

EC officials said ballots are usually cancelled if a voter does not mark any option, marks all options, or places the mark incorrectly.

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