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# Unity, not divisions or vengeance

Says Tarique in first press conference after victory



## KEY POINTS

- Reviving economy, ensuring law and order, depoliticising institutions, establishing good governance top priorities
- Will facilitate more businesses so that they can create jobs, boost the economy
- Pledges Bangladesh-first foreign policy
- Will hold talks with neighbours on reviving SAARC

### STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Calling for national unity, BNP Chairman Tarique Rahman has said that any division will weaken Bangladesh at a time when the country, faced with numerous challenges, is entering a new phase after the parliamentary election.

"Our paths and opinions may differ, but we must remain united in the interest of the country. I firmly believe that national unity is our collective strength, while division is our weakness," Tarique

said at a post-election press conference in a city hotel following his party's landslide victory.

He noted that political forces must stay united so that "no evil force" can re-establish autocracy, and Bangladesh is not turned into a "subservient state".

Tarique said while competing against one another, misunderstandings or discord may have arisen in some places during the election. "I urge everyone to ensure that such disputes do not turn into revenge or retaliation," UNB quoted him as saying.

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City dwellers who had travelled to their constituencies to vote in Thursday's national election return to the capital, as offices are set to reopen today. The photo was taken at Kamalapur Railway Station yesterday.

PHOTO: MEHEDI HASAN

## BNP's average win margins dwarf Jamaat's

### ZYMA ISLAM

In the 13th National Parliamentary Election, the two main political alliances produced sharply different patterns in their winning margins, revealing a clear imbalance in electoral dominance.

The BNP-led alliance swept to power with a commanding landslide, recording a median winning margin of 45,214 votes across the 212 seats it secured.

On average, BNP candidates won with 53.54 percent more votes than their nearest rivals, underlining the scale of its nationwide victory.

By contrast, the Jamaat-e-Islami-led 11-Party Alliance posted more modest margins. Across its 77 seats, the alliance achieved a median winning margin of 23,787 votes, with an average vote advantage of 23.57 percent over runners-up.

Several of Jamaat's victories were narrow. The alliance won by fewer than 1,000 votes in two constituencies — Madaripur-1 and Sirajganj-4, with margins of 384 and 594 votes respectively.

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VOTES FOR BNP, ALLIES	3,73,41,504
VOTES FOR JAMAAT, ALLIES	2,73,10,687
DIFFERENCE	1,00,30,817

In four seats — Rajshahi-1, Rangpur-6, Dhaka-11, Dhaka-4 and Netrokona-5 — the winning margin for Jamaat alliance candidates ranged between 1,000 and 3,000 votes.

They won another four seats — Bagerhat-1, Pabna-3, Dhaka-16 and Pabna-4 — by margins between 3,000 and 5,000 votes.

Taken together, these seats recorded percentage margins of victory below 5 percent.

In nine seats, Jamaat won by margins between 5,000 and 10,000 votes, translating into percentage margins of 5 to 13 percent.

At the other end of the spectrum, the alliance won by over 50,000 votes

## 'Will be in JS, on the streets'

Shafiqur says Jamaat accepts outcome

### STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Jamaat-e-Islami-led 11-Party Alliance will jointly pursue a dual strategy — acting as an opposition in parliament and in street protests — while seeking legal redress over alleged irregularities in the 13th parliamentary election, the coalition said yesterday.

Jamaat Assistant Secretary General Hamidur Rahman Azad announced the decisions at a briefing at the party's central office in Moghbazar, Dhaka, following a meeting of the alliance's liaison committee.

The alliance would act as a constructive opposition in parliament, but if lawful avenues are blocked, the option of taking to the streets would remain open, he said.

"It was decided that our electoral alliance will act jointly both inside and outside parliament. Since we contested the election together, we will also perform our parliamentary role jointly," he said, adding that the alliance would take unified decisions in line with the country's political context and act in the interest of the nation and the public.

Alleging "election engineering" and result manipulation, Azad said several seats were lost by narrow margins or recorded questionable victory gaps. Although applications seeking recounts were filed in those constituencies, many candidates could not complete the process as the gazette was published late at night on Friday, he claimed.

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### THE THIRD VIEW



MAHFUZ ANAM

## The likely PM's first crucial challenge

**Choose cabinet with utmost care, for it may determine success or failure**

READ THE FULL ARTICLE ON PAGE 6

## US trade deal: devil hidden in the fine print

### REFAYET ULLAH MIRDHA

The real problem for Bangladesh's \$47 billion garment industry lies deep in the technical details of the new trade deal with the US. When Dhaka and Washington signed the reciprocal trade agreement on February 9, it was celebrated as a diplomatic success. But that early optimism has now turned into confusion over the "cotton clause" — a vague rule that waives "reciprocal tariffs" only if garments are made with American cotton.

## NEWS ANALYSIS

For a country where garments make up 86 percent of total merchandise exports to the US, this deal has created uncertainty that threatens its expected benefits.

The main concern is how the new tariff system works. Under the deal, Bangladesh faces a 19 percent reciprocal tariff on top of the existing most-favoured-nation (MFN) duty of about 16.50 percent. Without any relief, the total tax on Bangladeshi garments entering the US market rises sharply to 35.5 percent.

Commerce Adviser Sk Bashir Uddin tried to reassure the industry at a press conference on February 10, saying the reciprocal tariff would be removed for garments made with US cotton. However, industry leaders warn that removing the reciprocal tariff does not mean the products become duty-free.

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## MPs, cabinet to take oath at South Plaza on Tuesday

### BAHARAM KHAN

Breaking tradition, the cabinet swearing-in will not be held at Bangabhaban's Darbar Hall. For the first time, an incoming government will begin its journey under the open sky, with cabinet members taking the oath of office at the South Plaza of the Jatiya Sangsad on Tuesday afternoon. The newly elected MPs will also be sworn in at the same venue in the morning.

Multiple sources from the Chief Adviser's Office, Cabinet Division, and Parliament Secretariat confirmed the matter to The Daily Star last night.

Officials are moving forward with plans to hold the MPs' oath at 10:00am and the cabinet's oath at 4:00pm on Tuesday.

Traditionally, MPs are sworn in at the parliament's oath room and the cabinet at Bangabhaban's Darbar Hall.

However, this time, both ceremonies will be held at the parliament's south plaza, as preferred by the incoming government, officials said.

President Mohammed Shahabuddin will administer the oath to the prime minister and cabinet members. While either Chief Election Commissioner

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A man examines result sheets from the 13th national election, displayed for all constituencies on a wall outside the Election Commission headquarters in the capital's Agargaon. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

## This election has set a 'new benchmark'

Say foreign observers, flag gaps in inclusion

### DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The EU Election Observation Mission described Thursday's parliamentary election as credible and competently managed, while noting concerns over limited political space for women and persons with disabilities that undermined equal participation.

Chief Observer Ivars Ijabs said the polls set a new benchmark for future elections in Bangladesh and marked a pivotal step towards restoring democratic governance and rule of law.

The Commonwealth Observer Group similarly termed the election peaceful but stressed the need for progress on inclusion and accessibility.

The group also noted isolated reports of post-election tensions and urged stakeholders to maintain calm and resolve disputes through legal channels.

Both missions presented their findings at separate press conferences at the InterContinental Dhaka yesterday.

About 200 EU observers and 12 Commonwealth experts monitored the election and referendum held nationwide on February 12.

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