

Gaibandha AL leader dies in jail custody

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

A local Awami League leader of Gaibandha's Palashbari upazila died at Rangpur Medical College Hospital while in jail custody early yesterday.



The deceased, Shamikul Islam, 60, of the Bairiharimari area of Palashbari municipal town, was the president of Palashbari upazila Awami League. He had been serving as vice principal of Palashbari Mohila College, said police.

Anwar Hossain, jail superintendent of Gaibandha District Jail, said Shamikul was sent to jail on October 18, 2025 in a case filed over vandalism and assault. He had long been suffering from heart disease and diabetes.

Last night, when he suddenly felt unwell, he was taken to Gaibandha Sadar Hospital. As his condition deteriorated, he was quickly referred to Rangpur Medical College Hospital.

Harpada Sarkar, head of the Cardiology Department at Rangpur Medical College Hospital, said that Shamikul was admitted to the hospital around 2:50am today (yesterday). At that time, he was suffering from breathing difficulties and chest pain. He died around 3:50am while undergoing treatment.

Hospital sources said after the autopsy, the body will be handed over to his family.

The Gaibandha jail sources said after the Awami League-led government was ousted from power on August 5, 2024, multiple cases were filed against Shamikul. In one of the cases, he was arrested in Dhaka on December 8 of that year and remained in jail for a long time. Although he was later released on bail, he was re-arrested in another case and sent to jail last year.



BNP Chairman Tarique Rahman speaks with NCP Convener Nahid Islam at his residence on Bailey Road in the capital yesterday.

PHOTO: BNP MEDIA CELL

NUCLEAR DEAL WITH US

Ready for compromise if US lifts sanctions: Iran

AGENCIES

Iran is ready to consider compromises to reach a nuclear deal with the United States if Washington is willing to discuss lifting sanctions, Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister Majid Takht-Ravanchi told the BBC in an interview published yesterday.

Iran has said it is prepared to discuss curbs on its nuclear programme in return for the lifting of sanctions, but has repeatedly ruled out linking the issue to other questions including missiles.

Takht-Ravanchi confirmed that a second round of nuclear talks would take place tomorrow in Geneva, after Tehran

and Washington resumed discussions in Oman earlier this month.

"(Initial talks went) more or less in a positive direction, but it is too early to judge," Takht-Ravanchi told the BBC.

Meanwhile, President Donald Trump and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu agreed at a White House meeting on Wednesday that the US would work to reduce Iran's oil exports to China, Axios reported, citing two US officials briefed on the issue.

"We agreed that we will go full force with maximum pressure against Iran, for example, regarding Iranian oil sales to China," Axios reported on Saturday,

quoting a senior US official.

Asked about the report, China's foreign ministry said yesterday that "normal cooperation between countries conducted within the framework of international law is reasonable and legitimate, and should be respected and protected."

China accounts for more than 80 percent of Iran's oil exports. Any reduction in that trade would mean lower oil revenue for Iran, reports Reuters.

Iranian authorities have without prior warning transferred Nobel Peace Prize winner Narges Mohammadi to a prison in the north of the country as concern grows over her health, her family said on Saturday.

Reconciliation key to post-polls confidence Says ANFREL

UNB, Dhaka

The Asian Network for Free Elections (ANFREL) said yesterday that the confidence gained on Election Day in Bangladesh will last only if post-election governance focuses on reconciliation through transitional justice and accountability under the rule of law.

In its interim assessment, ANFREL also stressed the need for enforceable oversight of political and campaign finance, clear complaint mechanisms, and reforms to reduce patronage, coercion, and recurring political unrest.

The group, Asia's first regional civil society network on elections and monitoring, based in Bangkok, said governance remains central to building long-term public confidence.

Bangladesh's 2026 parliamentary elections and referendum took place in a transition context shaped by the July 2024 youth-led uprising and amid heightened public scrutiny of state institutions.

Against that backdrop, ANFREL observed an Election Day environment that was generally peaceful, orderly, and safe in the areas covered.

This was a product of the Bangladesh Election Commission's visible operational planning and its coordination with security forces, including risk-based deployments and the use of transparency measures such as centralised monitoring and technology-enabled oversight.

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POST-POLLS VIOLENCE

Nine more hurt in five districts

STAR REPORT

At least nine people were injured and a house was set on fire in post-election violence in five districts on Saturday.

Six of them were wounded as two groups of BNP activists clashed in Natore's Lalpur upazila at night.

Farzana Sharmin Putul contested the election with the party ticket and won, while Taiful Islam Tipu, BNP's expelled assistant office secretary of the central committee, ran as an independent candidate.

Locals and police said tension had been prevailing between the groups for the last few weeks over the polls. They clashed at Walia Bazar around 9:00pm on Saturday.

"At least six people were injured during the clash," said Md Mojibar Rahman, officer-in-charge of Lalpur Police Station.

Two were arrested and a firearm was recovered from the spot. A case was filed in this connection, he added.

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Two-thirds are first-timers

FROM PAGE 1

According to parliamentary records, Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina served as the Leader of the House five times. She first assumed the role in the seventh parliament, and then for four consecutive terms from the ninth to the 12th parliament. She was first elected a lawmaker in 1986.

BNP leader Khaleda Zia, who was elected an MP for the first time in 1991, held the position of the leader of the House three times. She first assumed the role in the fifth parliament, and then in the sixth and eighth parliament.

The position was also held by leaders from other parties. Jatiya Party leaders Kazi Zafar Ahmed and Moudud Ahmed assumed the role in turn in the fourth parliament; JP leader Mizanur Rahman Choudhury in the third parliament; BNP leader Shah Azizur Rahman in the second parliament; and Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and AL leader Mansur Ali in the first parliament.

Two JP leaders also held the position of the opposition leader — GM Quader in the 12th parliament, and Raushon Ershad in the 11th and 10th parliament.

Khaleda held the position in the ninth and seventh parliament, while Hasina assumed the role in the eighth, fifth and third parliament. JSD leader ASM Abdur Rab held the position in the fourth parliament as the representative of the Combined Opposition Parties (COP), and Asaduzzaman Khan, leader of an AL faction, in the second parliament.

THE 13TH PARLIAMENT

In the new parliament, at least 209 out of 297 lawmakers (70 percent) are first-timers.

Businesspeople far outnumber politicians

FROM PAGE 1

From Jamaat, they are Rangpur-2's ATM Azharul Islam and Rajshahi-1's Md Mujibur Rahman.

At least 10 doctors were elected to parliament — three from Jamaat and the rest from the BNP.

While the highest-earning doctor is Jamaat's Md Moselehuddin Farid, who practices and earns abroad, the average income of the doctor-lawmakers is Tk 18 lakh annually.

Other members of parliament include retired professionals, private job holders and scientists.

The top earner in parliament is BNP's Zakaria Taher from Cumilla-8, with an annual income of Tk 59.1 crore. He also has the highest movable assets, amounting to Tk 172.3 crore.

Zakaria, however, is an outlier. The second-highest earner is Dhaka-8's Mirza Abbas from the BNP, whose

The BNP, which won 209 seats, has 132 newcomers, meaning 63 percent of its parliamentary contingent will enter the House for the first time. In comparison, Jamaat has a higher ratio of first-timers than BNP — 59 of the 68 MPs (86 percent) from the Islamist party are newcomers.

Smaller parties are entirely represented by first-time lawmakers. All six NCP lawmakers are first-timers as are the six MPs from Islami Andolon Bangladesh; Bangladesh Khelafat Majlis; Khelafat Majlish; Gono Odhikar Parishad; and Gano Samhati Andolon.

Moreover, six of the seven independent lawmakers are first-timers.

The February 12 polls were Tarique's first-ever electoral contest. He contested two seats — Bogura-6 and Dhaka-17 — and won both.

Shafiqur vied for Moulvibazar-2 in the 2001 and 2018 elections, but lost. As Jamaat was banned from taking part in the 2018 polls, he contested Dhaka-15 with the BNP's electoral symbol, but lost. This time, he has won the constituency.

In 2018, Saki contested Dhaka-12 on Revolutionary Workers Party ticket but suffered defeat. This time, he has won Brahmanbaria-6, using his party symbol, but with BNP's support.

Gono Odhikar Parishad leader Nurul Haque Nur won Patuakhali-3 in his first-ever electoral contest with BNP's backing.

Similarly, Nahid Islam, one of the front-line leaders of the July mass uprising, contested for the first time and won Dhaka-11. Five other NCP leaders also won the polls in their first attempt. They all were part of the Jamaat-led 11-party alliance.

Nizam Ahmed, also a former

professor of public administration at Chittagong University, said that at the beginning, the first-time lawmakers will face some problems in following the rules of procedure of parliament.

They will have to follow the principle of "learning by doing", as it will be difficult to learn everything at once, he said.

Prof Sk Tafique M Haque, director of the South Asian Institute of Policy and Governance at North South University, hopes that the first-timers will be able to learn the rules of procedure quickly.

It is not correct that newcomers won't be able to run parliament effectively. Past records show that it is the old parliamentarians who made the Jatiya Sangsad dysfunctional, he said.

"If we look at the period from 1991 to 2008, the traditional leaders were in charge — be it in the opposition or in the government. They failed to make parliament effective. In other words, the established politicians of both parties bear this responsibility."

Having new members in parliament creates an opportunity for change, especially because change in leadership was one of the major aspirations of the 2024 mass uprising, he observed.

If the newcomers can bring a change in mindset, debates and dialogue will take place inside parliament, and political parties will not take to the streets to air their grievances.

Tafique believes that the surge in the number of first-time parliamentarians reflects the aspirations of the mass uprising.

"People wanted a change in old leadership. They wanted new faces, they wanted young people," he added.

annual income is Tk 9.26 crore.

The candidate with the second-highest value of immovable assets is BNP's Md Jalal Uddin of Chandpur-2. The assets were valued at Tk 55.2 crore at the time of purchase, but their current value has risen to Tk 220.7 crore.

Meanwhile, the lawmaker with the lowest income is also from the BNP — Noakhali-4's Md Shahjahan, whose annual income is Tk 32,822 from share investments.

Shahjahan, however, has nearly Tk 18 lakh in cash, while his wife has Tk 12.3 lakh in cash. His bank deposits are Tk 31.5 lakh, and both he and his wife have Tk 1.25 crore each in bonds and stocks. He also owns vehicles worth Tk 60 lakh, while his wife has immovable properties worth Tk 1.9 crore.

BNP lawmaker Naser Rahman of Moulvibazar-3 has the highest

immovable assets at Tk 56.6 crore, with a stated current value of Tk 87 crore.

All of the top 20 lawmakers with the highest movable and immovable assets belong to the BNP.

Independent lawmakers have the highest annual income on average — Tk 37.5 lakh.

The average annual income of BNP lawmakers is Tk 20.9 lakh, while Jamaat lawmakers average Tk 5.9 lakh.

The sole Islami Andolon Bangladesh lawmaker, Barguna-1's Oli Ullah, has total assets worth Tk 1 crore.

Among parliamentarians from the National Citizen Party, Dhaka-11 lawmaker Nahid Islam has the highest income, earning Tk 16 lakh from consultancies, while Kurigram-2 elect Atikur Rahman Mojahid earns the least. He also has the lowest assets, amounting to Tk 7.32 lakh.

Heads of govt, ministers to be at swearing-in ceremony

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Modi would not be able to attend due to the India-AI Impact Summit taking place in New Delhi from February 16-20 and would be represented by Indian Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla.

In a statement, India's external affairs ministry said Birla's participation at the important event underscores the deep and enduring friendship between the peoples of India and Bangladesh and reaffirms "India's steadfast commitment to the democratic values" that bind the two nations.

"As neighbours united by a shared history, culture and mutual respect, India welcomes Bangladesh's transition to an elected government under the leadership of Tarique Rahman, whose vision and values have received an overwhelming mandate of the people," it added.

Indian Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri is likely to attend the ceremony, said a diplomatic source in Dhaka.

Leaders of China, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, the UAE, Qatar and Brunei were invited, among others.

"We are expecting at least two heads of government and foreign ministers of other countries. Some countries will send their ambassadors to the event as their representation," a foreign ministry official told The Daily Star.

The newly elected MPs will take their oaths tomorrow morning, while

the new cabinet led by Tarique will be sworn in by President Mohammed Shahabuddin at the South Plaza of the national parliament around 4:00pm.

Meanwhile, more foreign leaders and organisations have congratulated the people of Bangladesh and Tarique on the successful election and the BNP's victory.

The Japanese embassy in Dhaka said they wholeheartedly appreciate the credible conduct of the 13th parliamentary elections by the people of Bangladesh.

"We would like to extend our sincere congratulations to all the political parties and leaders, particularly to the BNP and its Chairman, Mr. Tarique Rahman, for their victory. We expect the smooth and peaceful formation of a new government and look forward to further advancing our Strategic Partnership," it said in a statement.

Australian Foreign Minister Penny Wong said Australia and Bangladesh share a strong partnership and they look forward to deepening cooperation with Bangladesh for the peace, stability and prosperity of the region.

The Thai embassy in Dhaka wished Bangladesh every success in this new chapter of democratic development and the implementation of political reforms.

"Thailand looks forward to forging

even closer ties and strengthening the enduring friendship between our two nations in the years ahead," it said in a statement.

Bangladesh Christian Association (BCA) President Nirmol Rozario and Secretary General Hemanta I Corraya have extended their heartfelt congratulations and best wishes to the BNP and Tarique.

In a statement, they said they firmly believe the newly elected government will be capable of playing an effective role and providing strong leadership in upholding communal harmony, human dignity, modern state-building and ensuring the rightful and just rights of all citizens.

They also expressed hope that this victory would mark the beginning of a new chapter of overall progress and stability for Bangladesh, one in which the people's aspirations, responsible leadership and the nation's future potential would be brought together in unity.

The BCA expressed its strong commitment to standing beside it with a spirit of cooperation for the welfare of the nation.

The Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation and the International Centre for Climate Change and Development also extended their congratulations to Tarique.

Tarique trying to balance fresh faces

FROM PAGE 1

Zahid Hossain are expected to join the cabinet. Newly elected MPs such as Shama Ubaed (Faridpur-2), Afroza Khanam Rita (Manikganj-3), and Barrister Farzana Sharmin Putul (Natore-1) are also under consideration.

For technocrat posts, the party has shortlisted Standing Committee member Nazrul Islam Khan, Senior Joint Secretary General Ruhul Kabir Rizvi, Joint Secretary General (International Relations) Humayun Kabir, and Advisory Council Member Ismail Jabiullah. Either Nazrul or Rizvi may serve in the Prime Minister's Office, in which case only one of them will be included in the cabinet.

Other potential names from the list of MPs include Fazlur Rahman (Kishoreganj-4), Abdul Awal Mintoo (Feni-3), Muhammad Naushad Zamir (Panchagarh-1), Sayeed Al Noman (Chattogram-10), and ANM Ehsanul Hoque Milon (Chandpur-1).

Habiganj-1 winner Reza Kibria,

who joined the party ahead of the polls, and Bhola-1 winner Andaleev Rahman Partho, chairman of Bangladesh Jatiya Party (BJP), are also likely to be included.

Party Vice Chairman Kazi Shah Mofazzal Hossain Kaikobad, Chairperson's Adviser Khandaker Abdul Muktedir, Executive Committee member Ruhul Quddus Talukder Dulu, Joint Secretary General Shahid Uddin Chowdhury Anee, Student Affairs Secretary Rokibul Islam Bakul, Publicity Secretary Sultan Salahuddin Tuku, Kishoreganj BNP President Shariful Alam, and Co-Organising Secretary Mir Mohammad Helal Uddin — all of whom won in the election — are also on the draft list.

Some senior leaders not likely to be included in the new cabinet may instead be appointed to Tarique's advisory council.

Meanwhile, sources noted little enthusiasm within party leaders about taking responsibility for the home or information ministries, as not many are willing to shoulder the

pressure or public scrutiny.

According to insiders, Tarique has already held discussions with several Standing Committee members, seeking their opinions and exploring possible ministerial roles for them.

Meanwhile, senior party leaders said the chief is seeking individuals free from controversy, without corruption charges or allegations of abuse of power.

Sources said the party believes it has been voted to power to curb corruption, leaving little chance for those facing such allegations to enter the cabinet.

The high command is prioritising skilled, competent, and educated leaders.

The BNP will place special emphasis on the foreign, finance, law, and information ministries, which the party considers crucial in the post-uprising context.

Leaders also noted that ensuring representation of women and minority communities in the new cabinet is under consideration.