

The weight of a supermajority in parliament

A CLOSER LOOK

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Large mandates are usually treated as moments of political triumph. In institutional terms, however, they are something else: a change in the conditions under which power operates. Beyond a certain parliamentary threshold, debates give way to convenience. The real test begins later, in how systems run when resistance is no longer a risk.

A parliamentary majority is familiar territory in democracies. Governments win them, lose them, negotiate around them. A two-thirds majority belongs to a different category. It alters the temperature of the room. It changes how institutions behave, where allies place themselves, and most importantly, how opponents calculate their moves. The numbers look like celebration material. Administratively, they function more like a structural shift.

That distinction is easy to miss in the first days after a result. Public attention tends to rest on spectacle—gestures, statements, the choreography of optics. Systems, however, respond to incentives, not spectacle. And incentives change when parliamentary arithmetic crosses certain thresholds. What becomes possible on paper begins to influence behaviour in practice. Not immediately. Gradually. Sometimes almost humbly.

Tarique Rahman's political story has long unfolded at a physical distance. For years, his presence in Bangladesh's political life was shaped by absence. That absence carried a curious advantage. Distance allows projection. Supporters imagine possibilities. Critics imagine risks. Neither has to confront the administrative reality of governance. Proximity removes that buffer. Once authority is exercised from within the system, expectations acquire weight. They stop being rhetorical. They start becoming procedural. Earlier in December, I wrote about the expectations surrounding his return in an article published in this daily. That question has already been answered. The one that matters now is how power settles once it arrives.

A supermajority adds another layer to that



FILE PHOTO: AFP

The BNP-led alliance achieved a decisive victory in the general election, winning 212 seats.

transition from expectation to execution. While it reduces friction, challenges arise when legislative resistance becomes harder to organise. Committees fall into alignment more easily. Amendments that once required negotiation start looking easily achievable, at least numerically. None of this is automatically harmful. Some governments use strong mandates to clear policy backlogs or stabilise long stalled reforms. If leveraged correctly, this can be a benefit for a political landscape such as ours that is still navigating a deeply unsettled institutional transition.

For a start, the prime minister designate has identified the right pressures. Speaking at his first press conference following the results, he framed his message around unity rather than division, restraint rather than retaliation, and order rather than spectacle—acknowledging, at least rhetorically, the institutional anxieties that tend to surface

when mandates become overwhelming. How Tarique Rahman will translate these assurances into actions will determine how institutions—and by extension the nation—will read the mandate itself.

The watchout is that institutional atmosphere shifts all the same. The system senses that fewer obstacles remain between intention and implementation.

Political history suggests that this is

redesign without institutional consultation. The difference lies less in ideology than in method. In international perception, stability is essentially behavioural before it is political.

Inside the parliament, the atmosphere is more textured. A dominant majority narrows the space available to opposition actors. Sometimes that encourages constructive adaptation. Most of the time, though, it encourages withdrawal. Much depends on how the governing side treats the absence of immediate challenge. Systems tend to function best when authority acts as though scrutiny were constant, even when it is not. Administrative restraint, practiced early, often prevents built-up confrontation. Once institutions begin adjusting defensively, restoring confidence becomes slow work.

There is also a subtler institutional question beginning to form. Large mandates can create a sense of political invulnerability within the ruling party itself. Members feel they are participating in a turning point. That sentiment can enervate unrestrained ambition. It can also test patience with procedural delays. Bureaucratic caution, judicial review, regulatory pacing: these can start to look like obstacles rather than safeguards. Whether they are treated as pain points or as stabilisers will shape how this phase is remembered.

None of this predicts inevitability. Democratic systems around the world have accommodated dominant governments before. Some used their position to deepen institutional credibility. Others discovered, too late, that numerical strength does not automatically translate into sustainable authority. Longevity in office has rarely depended on margins alone. It has depended on whether governance practices convince citizens and stakeholders that rules still matter when they become inconvenient. The 2024 toppled regime has learnt this lesson the hard way.

For a first-time prime minister, the learning curve is rarely about politics. It is about managing administration. Decisions that look straightforward in opposition often become layered once one sits inside the machinery of state. Issues resurface with new challenges or urgency. Laws overlap or contradict with other laws. Agencies operate according to routines that resist change. Navigating this landscape requires a different discipline from mobilising voters. It requires patience with process, as a matter of method and discipline.

This is where large mandates change the

test facing leaders, especially when they are holding overwhelming power for the first time. When parliamentary numbers guarantee passage, debate inside the parliament becomes less necessary. The real persuasion shifts elsewhere: toward civil institutions, professional bodies, regulators, courts, and international partners. They cannot be directed in the same way as party members are directed. They respond to signs of continuity, legality, predictability and stability. If those signals are steady, confidence grows. If they fluctuate, uncertainty spreads faster than official assurances can contain it.

Bangladesh has seen moments of political consolidation before. Each has left behind a different institutional aftertaste. Some periods strengthened administrative coherence. Others generated long rippling consequences that outlasted the governments that produced them. The pattern suggests that outcomes are shaped by what power decides to do once resistance becomes nominal.

That choice appears in ordinary decisions. Whether an appointment prioritises competence or loyalty. Whether criticism is answered with explanation or dismissal. Whether procedural delay is tolerated or circumvented. Whether disagreement is treated as a platform for inclusive decision-making or dissent. While individually these might look like isolated acts, together they form the behavioural pattern of a government.

The true weight of power is measured not by how it is won, but by how it is exercised when it no longer needs to prove itself to mobilise vote banks.

The moment power stops needing permission is the moment it requires discipline. The current result carries a responsibility that is heavier than triumph. It places the ruling party leadership in a position where constraint must increasingly come from within. External limits have already thinned. Internal discipline will have to thicken to compensate for it.

Voters have delivered their verdict. The institutional story begins now.

Earlier, the question was whether expectation would weigh on Tarique Rahman. That question has already run its course. A different burden now begins. The one Kundera described belongs to the phase before power settles. This one arrives afterward, in the period when authority must prove it can govern. What lies ahead is not the weight of expectation, but the treacherous lightness of power.

Without SME-friendly steps, green funds won't work

RMG NOTES

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A news report published in The Daily Star early this month highlighted many factory owners' struggle to access the much-heralded Green Transformation Fund (GTF). As a garment factory owner, the struggle felt uncomfortably familiar to me. Everyone agrees we must modernise. Everyone says "go green." Yet, when a factory tries to invest, our financial system too often responds with delays, duplicated paperwork, and shifting requirements. If we, as garment makers, fail to shift to renewable energy and cleaner production, our customers will go elsewhere. That is the direction of travel in global sourcing.

Brands are setting climate targets, investors are asking questions and regulators are tightening rules on carbon claims. Buyers are increasingly demanding evidence from their supply chains, which include factories like mine. Bangladesh Bank's Tk 10,000 crore GTF was meant to be a solution to many of the challenges factories face in accessing so-called green finance. Yet, SMEs struggle to access it, while larger, better-connected groups are more successful.

The 2024 white paper on financing highlighted three distinct dimensions: availability, accessibility, and affordability of funds. On paper, availability is not the core problem. Bangladesh does have green funds. The deeper issue is accessibility. Many facilities are effectively directed towards top-tier companies with scale, strong balance sheets, and the in-house expertise to navigate complex financial processes, including energy managers and corporate counsel to structure deals. Affordability is the third dimension, and it is critical. Interest rates are closely linked to credit ratings. SMEs, by definition, are more likely to face higher

borrowing costs. Even where funds exist, the total cost of capital can make projects unviable.

At the same time, the cost of "going green" is real upfront. Consider the example of rooftop solar. This is often the first project factories consider when going green because it is visible, measurable and, in many cases, economically sensible. Global cost projections for rooftop solar photovoltaic (PV) systems show that around \$530 per kilowatt is needed for investment, depending on system design and scale. For an industrial facility requiring several megawatts of capacity, that translates into significant capital expenditure. In a sector already squeezed by tight margins, volatile order books and rising compliance costs, that is not a minor decision.

Then there is the wider "green factory" push. Bangladesh is rightly proud of its LEED-certified garment factories and has become a global leader in the number of LEED-rated facilities. But building or upgrading to green standards can require 20 to 30 percent additional investment compared to conventional construction. For a large group with cheap capital, that may be manageable. But for an SME, the same can be prohibitive.

Meanwhile, the demands from brands know no end. H&M has publicly stated ambitions to source 100 percent renewable electricity in its garment production supply chain by 2030, covering tiers 1 to 3, and has said it will not onboard new factories using on-site coal. Inditex expects at least 50 percent of the electricity used in manufacturing processes in its supply chain to come from renewable sources by 2030.

A large factory group can spread the cost of an energy manager, an

environmental engineer, and a compliance team across multiple sites. An SME cannot. A large group can negotiate better loan terms, access corporate Power Purchase Agreements or co-invest with developers. An SME is often asked for hard collateral, bank guarantees, or even personal assets that are already pledged to banks.

If we are serious about implementation, several improvements are needed. Access must be simpler. Application and due diligence processes should be streamlined, with clear documentation requirements and predictable timelines. Factories should not face multiple layers of repetitive scrutiny from different agencies for the same project.

Even when green investment pays back over time, the cash flow gap is the killer. You cannot tell a bank, "This will save energy in year three," if you cannot survive year one. Nor can you promise a buyer renewable energy by 2030 if you cannot secure financing this year.

This is why credit guarantees are so critical, and why their design matters. If such facilities are structured as effectively risk-free instruments that only support the strongest borrowers, they will never reach those who actually need support. Credit risk guarantees must address multiple dimensions of risk.

First comes the risk of project implementation. SMEs may have lower technical capacity, fewer specialised staff, and less experience managing complex renewable installations. A well-designed guarantee should recognise this and incorporate technical assistance, not penalise it. Second, payment risk. SMEs often operate with thinner margins and more volatile cash flow. Guarantee structures

must reflect the reality of vulnerable borrowers rather than assuming uniform repayment profiles. Third is interest rate risk. If interest rates remain high because of perceived credit risk, the entire logic of making a green transition collapses for SMEs. Charging high rates to finance decarbonisation undermines the purpose of climate finance.

If we are serious about implementation, several improvements are needed. Access must be simpler. Application and due diligence processes should be streamlined, with clear documentation requirements and predictable timelines. Factories should not face multiple layers of repetitive scrutiny from different agencies for the same project.

Risk sharing must be realistic. Finance should not be designed only for the perfect borrower with the perfect project and a ribbon

around it. SMEs with credible, well-structured projects should have a viable route to funding even if their balance sheets are smaller. Verification requirements should also be proportionate. For some schemes, including projects financed through Infrastructure Development Company Limited (IDCOL), factories are required to report onerous proof-of-performance and face penalties if external auditors disagree on measured outcomes. Excessive post-project verification increases uncertainty and hidden costs.

Moreover, the total cost of capital must be reduced. Beyond nominal interest rates, there are transaction costs, consultancy fees, monitoring expenses and ongoing reporting requirements. Collateral requirements must also be reconsidered. Alternative approaches, including partial guarantees or cash flow-based lending, should be explored.

Bangladesh has the opportunity to use renewables efficiently to strengthen competitiveness, cut exposure to volatile fuel prices, and meet buyer expectations. But the pathway must work for the majority of factories, not just the largest ones. Brands, too, must share responsibility. If buyers want supplier decarbonisation, they should support longer-term commitments, co-financing mechanisms and credible structures that help suppliers secure capital.

Climate and competitiveness are now inseparable. If we delay for another two or three years, the market will not wait. If one sourcing country cannot offer a credible pathway to renewable energy and lower emissions, another will. If we can get this right, we can protect jobs, attract long-term customers, and build resilience. If we get it wrong, we will keep talking about "green transformation" while orders move elsewhere.

e-Tender Notice

Ref: HEAT-11026-MBSTU-Tender Notice-1 Date: 16/02/2026

This is an online Tender, where only e-Tenders will be accepted in the National e-GP portal System and no offline/hard copied will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, please register on e-GP system portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>). e-Tenders are invited in e-GP portal system by the office of the sub project manager (BMB-11026), Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology, Mawlana Bhashani Science and Technology University, Tangail for the procurement of following items:

SL No.	APPID, Tender ID, Package No.	Package Name	Type of Tender	Online Tender Notice Publication Date & Time	Online Tender Closing/Opening Date & Time
1.	221342, 1224554, MBSTU/11026/G-6	Laptop and Desktop, Printer, High performing computer for NGS analysis	NTC, OTM	Date: 16/02/2026 Time: 11:59 am	Date: 08/03/2026 Time: 5:30 pm

e-Tender details can be downloaded from as stated above on e-GP system for purpose. The fees for the e-Tender documents from the e-GP system must be deposited online through any registered bank. e-Tenders will be accepted within the date and time stated and accepted tenders will be opened online immediately. Further information and guidelines are available in the national e-GP portal system and e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).

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