

70-year-old woman burnt in acid attack in Natore

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

An elderly woman suffered burn injuries in an acid attack allegedly carried out by the stalkers of her granddaughter in Natore early yesterday.

The 70-year-old is a resident of Adarsha village of Gurudashpur upazila.

Her family members said the victim's college-going granddaughter had been facing harassment and stalking for a long time.

The girl, along with her grandmother, was going towards the outhouse around 2:00am when criminals threw acid at the girl.

The girl's mother said, "My daughter managed to save herself, but my mother was severely injured in the attack."

The elderly woman was initially admitted to the Gurudashpur Upazila Health Complex. Later, she was moved to Natore General Hospital as her condition deteriorated.

Natore District Civil Surgeon Muktaadir Arefin visited the patient around noon and assured her of all necessary treatment.



BNP Chairman Tarique Rahman speaks with Islami Andolan Bangladesh Ameer Syed Muhammad Rezaul Karim at the latter's residence in the capital's Siddheswari area yesterday evening.

PHOTO: BNP MEDIA CELL

5 of a family from Lakshmipur killed in KSA road crash

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Noakhali

Five of a family, including a one and a half-year-old girl, from Lakshmipur's Ramganj upazila were killed early yesterday in a road accident while travelling from Makkah to Abha after performing Umrah in Saudi Arabia.

The victims are Mizanur Rahman, 45, of Panchrukhi village; his wife Farzana Yasmin, 30; and their daughters Meher Afroz Sumi, 10, Faiza Islam, 8, and 18-month-old Farjin Nur, confirmed family members and police.

Firoz Uddin Chowdhury, officer-in-charge of Ramganj Police Station, said the accident took place approximately around 11:00pm (Saudi time) on Sunday (3:00am Bangladesh time yesterday) in the Taif region of Saudi Arabia.

Along with the five deaths, four others, including the driver, were injured and were in a critical condition in the ICU of a Saudi hospital, said the OC.

Baharul Alam, younger brother of the deceased Mizanur, said his brother was involved in hotel business in Abha, Saudi Arabia, for the past 20 years. On February 3, his wife and three daughters travelled to Saudi Arabia to perform Umrah with him.

Mizanur, his wife, and their three daughters died on the spot, he said, adding that Mizan's friend, Md Titu, called him around 3:15am yesterday (Bangladesh time) and confirmed the news.

OC Firoz said police will cooperate with the family in bringing the bodies back to the country.

Lobbying frenzy

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 centres of power.

Meanwhile, in a dramatic development, the civil service saw two of its most powerful figures – the cabinet secretary and the principal secretary – resign in the last three days.

After Sheikh Abdur Rashid resigned as cabinet secretary on Saturday, the interim government gave M Siraz Uddin Miah, principal secretary to the chief adviser, the additional charge of cabinet secretary.

Siraz was relieved of the role of cabinet secretary yesterday, and Home Secretary Nasimul Gani was named as the new cabinet secretary. Siraz resigned as principal secretary the same day.

These came just before the new cabinet's oath-taking, scheduled to be held today.

Their departure, unprecedented in the 54-year history of the civil service, has further fuelled speculation about the scale of changes awaiting the bureaucracy once the new government assumes office.

Over the past two days, multiple groups of officers reportedly met Public Administration Secretary Ehsanul Hoque, demanding the removal of "fascists" from top positions.

Ehsanul could not be reached for comments despite repeated attempts.

Experts note that while changes in key posts are normal during a transition of power, those acting before the new government takes office are effectively making the incoming BNP-led government controversial.

Even the interim government took its oath under the then cabinet secretary Mahbub Hossain after the Awami League government was overthrown through the July uprising in 2024.

Though many expected his immediate removal, the government allowed him to complete his contractual term and retire normally.

Asked about the reason for his resignation as cabinet secretary just four days before the oath, Rashid told The Daily Star that he had intended to resign before the election, which was finalised on February 14.

However, Cabinet Division sources suggest that after BNP's victory, he sought to meet the party's top leader with the chief adviser's message for government formation, as per tradition, but was not given the chance. Rashid then resigned.

Moin Uddin, a deputy secretary-level official, wrote on Facebook:

"I had conducted the Mushtaq government's oath, and recently Mahbub Hossain conducted the interim government's oath. Despite hostile environments, these are seen as bright examples of administrative norms."

Former officer Mahmudul Hasan commented on the post, "The departure of the cabinet secretary – the highest civil official – should be honourable. The way his contract was cancelled last Saturday feels indecent."

A new record has also been set in the appointment of cabinet secretaries. Typically, only one officer from a civil service batch reaches the post, but four from the 1982 batch have now held it. Besides Rashid, Siraz and Gani, former cabinet secretary Mohammad Shafiqul Alam was an officer from that batch.

Calling this unprecedented, an official noted that more officers from the same batch are currently lobbying for the position.

A former cabinet secretary, requesting anonymity, said, "Administrative decline has reached a point where these incidents no longer seem unusual."

He said while it is normal for a government to choose preferred officers, such a situation is unexpected.

Public administration expert Firoz Mia echoed this view, saying, "If the incoming government fails to learn from this and restructure the administration, it is doubtful they can manage the situation."

POLICE
 Political lobbying has also engulfed the police. Multiple sources in the force said lobbying has already started for top

positions, including inspector general of police (IGP), Dhaka Metropolitan Police commissioner, and director general of Rapid Action Battalion (Rab), as well as heads of key units such as Special Branch (SB) and Criminal Investigation Department.

A high-ranking officer at the Police Headquarters said officers aspiring to these posts have been contacting BNP leaders and influential quarters.

"The lobbying is likely to intensify after the cabinet is sworn in and ministers are appointed, particularly to the home ministry," said the officer, requesting anonymity.

An additional IGP, aware of the developments, said, "Huge lobbying and competition are taking place, especially for the IGP post."

Amid the situation, on Sunday evening, a rumour spread within the force that incumbent IGP Baharul Alam had resigned, nine months before the end of his tenure.

Police sources said he submitted a resignation letter to the home adviser, but it was not accepted. He was informed that the matter would be discussed after the new government assumes office.

Baharul was appointed as IGP on November 20, 2024, on a contractual basis for two years.

At least five additional IGP-rank officers, including two former officers, are being considered for the police chief post. All are known to be loyal to the BNP and were victims of suspension or attachment during the AL regime.

A superintendent of police, requesting anonymity, said, "A section of officers has spread the information about the IGP's resignation, which is unfortunate."

Regarding changes in top posts, he added, "Everything depends on the IGP post, and then it will change gradually. Things will escalate after the oath-taking ceremony."

Data shows that the tenures of both SB chief Golam Rasul and Rab chief AKM Shahidur Rahman will end on March 15, triggering lobbying for these two vital posts as well.

Former IGP Ashraful Huda said it would be "very sad, shameful, and unfortunate" if political influence returns to the force.

He said partisan grouping must not be allowed under any circumstances, adding that the responsibility to prevent it lies with everyone involved, including politicians.

Omar Faruk, professor of criminology and police science at Mawlana Bhashani Science and Technology University, said the situation was "very unfortunate" and would mean expectations of change would not be met.

After the fall of the AL government, the interim administration carried out sweeping changes in the police – a key force in the deadly crackdown on July uprising protesters. Then police chief Chowdhury Abdullah Al Mamun and several top officials were arrested, and cases were filed against at least 400 officials and members – from former IGP to constables – in different police stations in the capital.

Contacted for comments, Ittekkharuzzaman, executive director of Transparency International Bangladesh, said partisan political influence in recruitment, postings, promotions, and even rewards and punishment was a key catalyst behind the dysfunction and professional bankruptcy of public institutions, which later became pillars of authoritarianism and kleptocracy that the July uprising fought against.

Giving in to any forces that compromise meritocracy, expertise, and experience would betray the spirit and aspirations of the uprising and open the door to a return of authoritarianism and kleptocracy.

"The new government must remember that the whole nation, including those now elected as public representatives, was a victim of deep and widespread politicisation of nearly all institutions and professions," he added.

68.6% candidates

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 than the cap.

The average total expenditure of the National Citizen Party was Tk 54 lakh per candidate, which is 19.0 percent higher than the limit. About half of the NCP candidates exceeded their limits.

In addition, 27.8 percent of the Islami Andolan Bangladesh candidates, and 42.9 percent of the Jatiya Party candidates spent more than the legal ceiling.

The candidates from the surveyed seats paid Tk 2.52 lakh to the parties to secure their nomination before the declaration of the election schedule, and Tk 3.09 lakh afterwards.

Banners, billboards, rallies, festoons and mass outreach campaigns each cost a candidate between Tk 1.2 lakh on average, said TIB.

Almost all the candidates violated one or more clauses of the electoral code of conduct, the research found, adding that all parties violated sound pollution limits and rules for posting.

Seventy-five percent of Jamaat candidates, 65.2 percent of the BNP candidates, 47.2 percent of IAB candidates, and 57.1 percent of independents conducted campaigns inside religious institutions – a violation of the electoral code.

At least 33 percent of the BNP candidates and 5.8 percent of Jamaat's obstructed their opposition from campaigning.

Speaking at the report launch yesterday, TIB Executive Director Dr Ittekkharuzzaman said, "In many instances, contesting parties and candidates were not fully successful in complying with the code of conduct. Although the authoritarian government has fallen, the culture of 'must win at any cost' persisted among many parties and candidates."

Post-election, TIB found 45 incidents of violence between rival parties. There were 34 incidents in which parties threatened or harassed the voters, agents and supporters of their rivals, and 18 in which their homes and offices were attacked.

Ittekkharuzzaman said, "At the beginning of the electioneering, we observed elements of healthy competition; however, as election day approached, this gradually turned into unhealthy competition."

He added that despite the Election Commission's active engagement and goodwill, various limitations prevented

Struggle for a just Bangladesh

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of this country have gradually started to taste democracy, a welfare-oriented governance, freedom of speech, regain the ability to question and criticise power, and the ability to hold it accountable.

Yunus said the just concluded national election was not merely a transfer of power, but the beginning of a new journey for the country's democracy.

"We have delivered a festive, free, impartial, peaceful, clean, and credible national election, through which the people have regained their right to vote," he said, expressing his deep respect and gratitude to those who were behind this achievement.

Yunus paid tribute to the young protesters who took to the streets in July 2024, as well as to those who were injured or lost their lives. "This transformation would not have been possible without their unprecedented sacrifice."

Reflecting on his tenure, the chief adviser said he and his colleagues have tried to honour the aspiration of the people.

"Where we have succeeded and where we have fallen short, that judgment rests with the people."

He emphasised that his government placed accountability above political considerations, prioritising the

it from fully controlling irregularities committed by political parties as well as independent candidates.

"It is noteworthy that both principal rivals have raised allegations of bias against the commission, which may indirectly indicate the commission's effort to remain neutral."

Referring to the misuse of money, religion, muscle power, patriarchal and majoritarian forces in the election, TIB chief further said, "These factors disrupted the level playing field necessary for healthy competition. In many cases, such elements influenced nominations as well as campaign activities. As a result, the extent to which a truly level playing field was ensured is something that political parties need to reflect upon."

TIB also noted the role of the state-run television in creating a level-playing field.

BTV's 8:00pm bulletin gave disproportionate coverage to certain political parties, with the BNP receiving the most airtime, followed by Jamaat and the NCP.

Between October 1, 2025, and February 12, 2026, BTV spent a total of 593 minutes and 55 seconds covering political parties and candidates in its 8:00pm news bulletin – 59.3 percent of which was spent on the BNP, 21.6 percent on Jamaat and 11.9 percent on the NCP.

Independent candidates received only 10 seconds of the channel's airtime.

TIB noted that this parliament will have the lowest number of directly elected women since 2008, while the youth make up three percent of the parliament.

The parliament is very highly educated, with 84.8 percent having completed tertiary education.

Meanwhile, 13 lawmakers' net worth is over Tk 100 crore each.

The number of lawmakers with loans is less than in previous parliaments, while the amount of loans they collectively have due – Tk 11,356 crore – is much higher.

Of the lawmakers with loan burdens, 62 percent are from the BNP, while 16 percent are from Jamaat.

Among landowners, the BNP's Shariatpur-2 candidate Shafiqur Rahman Kiron owns the largest – 85.6 acres of land – with Bandarban BNP's Saching Prue trailing behind with 77.9 acres.

prosecution of crimes against humanity, corruption and systemic irregularities without regard for partisan interests or retribution.

Yunus said that when his administration assumed office, the country's law and order situation was deeply precarious.

"Police stations were empty, and public confidence had eroded, replaced by fear and uncertainty. Step by step, we have worked to restore stability and rebuild trust," he said.

"We have initiated administrative, commercial and financial reforms in fragile institutions to ensure that no future government can entrench itself against the will of the people," the chief adviser said.

Yunus expressed confidence that the people of Bangladesh and all political stakeholders will protect and enrich this democratic trajectory in the days ahead.

On matters of rights, independence and sovereignty, he urged steadfast commitment to building a beautiful Bangladesh for the next generation.

"On the eve of my departure from my duties, I express my heartfelt gratitude to all of you – the children, teenagers, young people, students, men and women, young and old – of the country. Please pray for me," the chief adviser said.

Work towards fulfilling

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Before the election, he toured different parts of the country and addressed at least 64 public rallies, seeking votes for the party's electoral symbol, the "Sheaf of Paddy".

During the campaign, he made more than a dozen area-specific pledges, promising job creation, welfare measures, healthcare improvements and development in infrastructure and agriculture.

He also pledged to establish what he described as an accountable and "just state" directly answerable to the people.

During the meeting, Tarique sought support to run the country peacefully and implement the party's election pledges, Shahadat Hossain Selim, who was elected from Laxmipur-1.

"He has expected responsible behaviour from us. He asked us to strengthen our connection with the people," Selim told The Daily Star.

Party leaders said the chairman made it clear that the election result was not merely a political victory but a responsibility.

"We have received a mandate from the people. Now we must prove that we deserve it," a senior leader quoted him as saying.

During the discussions, Tarique stressed that the rule of law would form the foundation of the new administration.

He told the MPs that no one would be above the law and that public office must not be used for personal gain.

The lawmakers would have to remain answerable for their actions and decisions.

Senior leaders present at the meeting said that internal conflicts, group rivalry and reckless behaviour by party members would not be tolerated.

They reminded the newly elected MPs that their conduct would reflect on the entire party and its image.

Tarique also spoke about people's welfare and national development, saying that improving law and order,

Jamaat will be a dutiful opposition

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the organs of the state that have become ineffective," he said.

Shafiqur assured the government of cooperation on matters of national interest but vowed to act as a "watchdog" if public interest is undermined.

He called for improving law and order, restoring social discipline, and protecting citizens' rights.

Paying tribute to those killed or injured in the July uprising, he said their sacrifices should be remembered

Four dead in Israeli strike in Lebanon's east

AFP, Beirut

Lebanon said an Israeli strike on Sunday evening near the Syrian border in the country's east killed four people, as Israel said it had targeted operatives from Palestinian group Islamic Jihad.

Despite a November 2024 truce that sought to end more than a year of hostilities between Israel and Hezbollah, Israel has kept up regular strikes on Lebanon, usually saying it is targeting the Iran-backed group but occasionally also targeting its

tackling corruption and reviving the economy would be among the government's immediate priorities.

He instructed the MPs to remain closely connected with their constituencies and to listen directly to people's problems and concerns.

According to insiders, Tarique directed lawmakers to maintain coordination with grassroots leaders and activists, but to ensure that all political activities remain within legal boundaries.

The top leaders said any wrongdoing at the local level would damage the party's credibility and weaken public trust.

During the meetings, Tarique stressed that the BNP must demonstrate that it can run the government responsibly and with maturity.

Several newly elected MPs expressed their commitment to supporting the chairman's vision and working in line with party directives.

Party leaders said Tarique's key message was that victory should not lead to arrogance. Instead, he urged humility, service and responsible conduct.

The leadership also instructed that no party member should engage in illegal activities, extortion, violence or any act that harms ordinary citizens.

"The party must set an example. If we break the law, we cannot speak about justice," he said, according to a participant.

Tarique also directed local leaders to cooperate with the administration and law enforcement agencies to help maintain peace in their respective areas.

Meanwhile, party leaders informed him about alleged irregularities during the election period, blaming rival groups for various incidents.

During the meetings, discussions were also held regarding the role of law enforcement agencies during the polls.

The leadership reiterated that BNP lawmakers must focus on governance and public service in the coming days, as the party prepares to assume office.

in the conduct of parliamentary affairs.

He also warned that forgetting the reasons behind the uprising may bring back a similar situation.

In a post on his Facebook page after the meeting, Shafiqur wrote, "Standing on the red blood of the July uprising, the entire nation is waiting to see how a new era of parliamentary politics begins from tomorrow."

He congratulated the people for participating in the election, adding, "Now begins the struggle to restore the people's looted rights."

Palestinian ally Hamas.

It appeared to be the first strike Israel has claimed in Lebanon against Islamic Jihad, which is also allied with Hezbollah, since the truce.

An Israeli drone "targeted a car on the Lebanese Syrian border", the state-run National News Agency said, adding that "four bodies" were inside the vehicle.

Lebanon's health ministry confirmed the toll in a statement.

The Israeli military in a statement said it "struck Palestinian Islamic Jihad terrorists in the Majdal Anjar area".