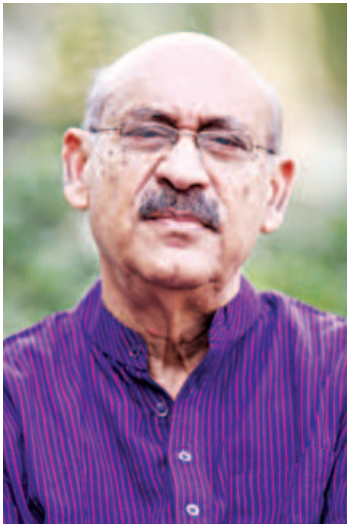


Showbiz veterans voice hopes for new government



Abul Hayat



Tariq Anam Khan



Salahuddin Lavlu



Gias Uddin Selim



Masum Reza

PHOTOS: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

SHAH ALAM SHAZU

With the country entering a new political chapter following the parliamentary election, attention is also turning to the future of the cultural sector. Artists across disciplines are hoping for stability, institutional support and an environment where creative expression can thrive without fear or disruption. Five prominent cultural figures; Abul Hayat, Tariq Anam Khan, Salahuddin Lavlu, Gias Uddin Selim and Masum Reza — shared their expectations with The Daily Star.

ABUL HAYAT:

Seeking the freedom to work Veteran actor Abul Hayat said he wishes to continue working as he always has, but without obstacles or restrictions. He hopes that

more meaningful and refined work, beneficial to the country, will be created. Artistes, he said, should have the freedom to work independently while remaining responsible and accountable. According to him, artistic work should reflect the voices and concerns of the people, and the new government should ensure a positive and open environment for cultural practice.

TARIQ ANAM KHAN: Less control, more opportunities

Tariq Anam Khan emphasised the importance of culture as a reflection of a country's identity. Music, theatre and films, he noted, have taken the nation's reputation to the international stage. However, over the past year and a half, the cultural

sector; especially theatre—has faced significant challenges.

He said that the less the government intervenes, the better it will be for the sector. Although Dhaka has expanded considerably, the number of theatre halls has not increased. Even in areas such as Uttara, Gulshan and Dhanmondi, adequate performance venues remain scarce. He expects the new government to develop infrastructure and safeguard freedom of expression.

SALAHUDDIN LAVLU:

The arts need security and investment

Salahuddin Lavlu said the country must prosper overall, as the cultural sector cannot advance without a strong national economy. Having

spent his life in acting and directing plays, he hopes for more work opportunities and greater investment in culture. At the same time, he stressed the importance of ensuring the safety and security of artistes and those involved in the industry.

GIAS UDDIN SELIM:

Culture builds a strong nation

Gias Uddin Selim believes the arts play a crucial role in building a strong nation. He said the cultural sector has often been neglected since the country's birth, adding that the more culture is practised, the more the nation will progress.

He noted that the sector cannot move forward with limited budgets and neglect. Alongside economic prosperity, he said, the country must also

invest in cultural development.

MASUM REZA:

No restrictions on festivals and exhibitions

Masum Reza said that in recent months, many drama performances and cultural festivals were cancelled. Numerous events organised outside Dhaka were also called off, including a major festival planned in his home district of Kushtia.

He said no clear explanation had been provided for these cancellations. Many Baul and traditional artistes were also unable to perform regularly. He hopes the new government will ensure that artistic activities continue without interruption and that artistes can work freely and independently.



Mosharraf Karim, Aisha Khan team up for two Eid dramas

Acclaimed actor Mosharraf Karim has resumed filming after returning from Umrah in Saudi Arabia, joining director Sagar Jahan for two Eid television dramas.

Karim returned on February 11 after spending 10 days in Saudi Arabia with his wife, Robena Reza Jui. He began shooting on February 15 for **Soda Shotto Bolibo** and **Adu Bhai**, both slated for Eid broadcast.

Soda Shotto Bolibo, written by Ashraful Chanchal, pairs Karim with Aisha Khan and will air on NTV. The drama centres on an honest man navigating a simple love story. **Adu Bhai**, penned by Arko Mostafa, also stars Aisha Khan and promises a comedic tone.

Mosharraf Karim and Sagar Jahan have previously collaborated on popular series, including **Sikandar Box** and **Average Aslam**.

WHAT'S THE HAPS?



‘Sangkalan’

A powerful archival exhibition revisits the 1952 Language Movement through seven decades of vernacular print culture. Newspapers, pamphlets and literary supplements sit alongside contemporary artistic responses, tracing how ink and paper shaped resistance, memory and identity. **Sangkalan** reframes print not as relic, but as living testimony.

Date: Friday–Saturday | February 20–28

Time: 3:00pm–9:00pm

Venue: Alliance Française de Dhaka, Dhanmondi

NEWS

A legacy reclaimed

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vigorous campaign, ultimately leading his party to a landslide victory in the 13th national election, held 18 months after an unprecedented student-led uprising that ousted the Awami League government.

However, Tarique's ascent to power was anything but easy, shaped by the trauma of his father's assassination, and then his long years in exile, all the while facing persistent accusations of corruption and nepotism from his political detractors.

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

Since then, Khaleda led the party, which went on to form government in 1991, 1996, and 2001 under her leadership.

Having spent his childhood and adolescence in Dhaka, Tarique became a member of Bogura's Gabtali upazila BNP in 1988 at the age of 22. However, he got involved in politics before he formally joined the party and had even taken to the streets with his mother during the 1990 anti-Ershad movement.

In 1994, Tarique married Zubaida Rahman, the daughter of the former Bangladesh Navy chief and a two-time minister in subsequent governments, late Rear Admiral Mahbub Ali Khan. They have a daughter — Barrister Zaima Zarnaz Rahman.

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.

Three years later, he convened a countrywide grassroots forum that covered every upazila. He visited all the upazilas, addressed grassroots leaders and activists, and had one-on-one conversations with locals.

It was during this period that Tarique was embroiled in controversy. He was accused of running "Hawa

Bhaban", dubbed an alternative power centre during the BNP-led coalition rule. He was also blamed for using his power to gain personal advantage.

Tarique consistently refuted all the allegations against him.

He was arrested on corruption charges during the military-backed caretaker government rule in 2007 and was reportedly tortured in custody for 18 months.

Archival news reports from that year said he suffered fractures in the spine and fell sick during multiple court appearances. He was finally granted bail on medical grounds on August 28, 2008, and was released



from jail on September 3 that year.

A week later, he left for London with his wife and daughter for medical treatment while facing multiple criminal cases at home.

On December 8, 2009, the BNP national council elected Tarique as senior vice chairman, ignoring the party charter that stipulates election to the posts. He was re-elected to the position at the sixth national council in 2016.

Earlier, on January 7, 2015, the High Court banned publishing, broadcasting, or reproducing speeches and statements by Tarique in all print, electronic, and social media as long as he remained absconding in London.

That year, tragedy struck again when his younger brother Arafat Rahman Koko passed away.

While in exile, he continued to shape the BNP's strategy and policies and served as the party's acting chairman after his mother was sentenced to prison in 2018.

Since then, he has led the party virtually from London, attending meetings and overseeing key organisational decisions.

According to his associates, Tarique gradually grew more measured, as years in exile left their mark on him — shaping his vision of greater tolerance in Bangladeshi politics.

He was convicted in absentia in five cases and faced a flurry of lawsuits, but all charges and rulings against him were dropped after the ouster of the AL government — clearing the legal barrier to his return.

Tarique returned home on December 25 last year to an ecstatic welcome. Addressing a massive crowd, he said, "... I have a plan for the people of my country, for my country," indicating his readiness to lead.

And thus began the party's campaign.

To strengthen the party's position, he attended numerous programmes across the country, addressing 64 public rallies, seeking votes for the "Sheaf of Paddy", the BNP's electoral symbol.

He made dozens of area-specific pledges, assuring people of job creation, welfare, healthcare, and the development of infrastructure and agriculture. His party also pledged to establish an accountable and "just state", directly answerable to people.

Tarique, nicknamed "Pinu", was born on November 20, 1967. After completing his initial studies at Dhaka's BAF Shaheen College, he was enrolled in the international relations department of Dhaka University in the 1980s.

In his election affidavit, his educational qualification was mentioned as "higher secondary."

New JS must meet within next 30 days

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the first sitting of parliament, an official of the parliament secretariat said.

Immediately after the House goes into its maiden sitting, the Speaker and deputy Speaker will be elected and sworn in by the president. After that, the session is likely to be adjourned for 15 to 20 minutes for their oath-taking.

The new Speaker will then preside over the House session.

The Business Advisory Committee of the new parliament will also be formed at the first sitting, with the new Speaker as its head.

The committee will decide the tenure of the inaugural session and other business of parliament.

The main task of the treasury bench at the first sitting will be to place those ordinances before the House which the government wants to turn into law.

The interim government promulgated or amended a total of 130 ordinances during its 18 months in office.

The president will also address the first sitting of the session in line with the Constitution, according to sources at the parliament secretariat.

The cabinet will approve the speech, and MPs will discuss the president's address.

Economy, rule of law, governance to be the focus

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Replying to a query about the commodity market ahead of Ramadan, he said, "We have just taken responsibility. I do not think there will be any trouble. There will be no more syndicates in Bangladesh."

Noting that poverty is rising, he said local and foreign investments are in decline, while employment opportunities are shrinking. Moreover, private sector growth remains weak.

"To move forward, we have to go for large-scale deregulation."

Khosru said the government aims to boost domestic and foreign investments, generate employment, and develop skilled manpower.

"Whether people work here or abroad, their living standards should improve."

Md Asaduzzaman, who is set to take charge of the law, justice and parliamentary affairs ministry, said his ministry's top priorities will be to establish the rule of law and uphold human rights and justice.

"As for the challenges in carrying out my responsibilities, I believe the biggest one will be to meet the nation's huge expectations. People have high hopes, and living up to those expectations is a formidable task," he told The Daily Star.

Major (ret'd) Hafiz Uddin Ahmed, who was sworn in as a minister, expressed hope that the cabinet would fulfil people's expectations.

Shafiqur leader of opposition

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members of parliament. At 12:27pm, they took oath as members of the Constitution Reform Council.

The ceremonies were held at the oath room of the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban, where Chief Election Commissioner AMM Nasir Uddin administered the oaths separately.

Around 1:00pm, the elected candidates of the NCP also took oath.

Following the oath-taking, members of the 11-party alliance held a meeting at the parliament complex.

Ahsanul Mahboob Zubair, Jamaat assistant secretary general and chief of the central publicity and media

Iqbal Hasan Mahmud Tuku, who took oath as a minister, said, "We will work to steer the country to a better position. Difficulties lie ahead, but we will overcome them no matter what..."

Speaking to reporters, Shahiduddin Chowdhury Anee, who was sworn in as a minister, said collective efforts would be essential to meet people's expectations.

"Differences in views may arise, but all must remain united for the sake of the country," he said, expressing hope that mutual cooperation would help build a prosperous Bangladesh.

Shama Obaid, who is tipped to assume the role of state minister for foreign affairs, said Bangladesh would maintain relations with all countries while safeguarding its interests.

"Under Tarique Rahman's leadership, we will prioritise our national interests and the rights of our people," she said.

Sultan Salahuddin Tuku, who took oath as a state minister, said he would discharge his responsibilities with honesty and dedication.

Zonayed Saki, who was sworn in as a state minister, said the new parliament must overcome challenges in various areas.

"Being part of a government does not mean we will agree on everything... There will be differences among us, but we will remain united," said Saki, who was elected a lawmaker from Brahmanbaria-6 with BNP's backing.

department, said the decision was taken at the meeting.

Shafiqur was elected from the Dhaka-15 constituency, defeating his BNP rival Md Shafiqul Islam Khan by 21,614 votes. He secured 85,131 votes in total.

In Cumilla-11 (Chouddagram), Taher won the election with the party's scales symbol, securing 133,308 votes and defeating Kamrul Huda, joint general secretary of BNP's Cumilla South district unit.

In Dhaka-11, Nahid was elected with 93,872 votes with the Shapla Koli symbol. His closest rival, BNP candidate MA Quayum, secured 91,833 votes.

Trump's new envoy arrives in S Africa with relations frayed

AFP, Johannesburg

A conservative media critic picked by President Donald Trump to be US ambassador to South Africa has arrived to take up his post, the US embassy said yesterday, with bilateral relations fractured over a range of issues.

Washington and Pretoria are at odds over a series of international and domestic policies, from South Africa's genocide case against Israel to Trump's disputed claims that white Afrikaners are being persecuted.

Brent Bozell, 70, needs to present his credentials to President Cyril Ramaphosa before officially taking up his post.

"I'm confirming that he's in (the) country," a US embassy official told AFP.

Trump chose the right-wing Bozell for the job in March, soon after expelling South Africa's ambassador on accusations that he was critical of Washington. Pretoria has yet to announce a successor.

Trump said at the time that Bozell "brings fearless tenacity, extraordinary experience, and vast knowledge to a nation that desperately needs it".

Bozell is founder of the Media Research Center, a non-profit that says it works to "expose and counter the leftist bias of the national news media".

A strong defender of Israel, he said at his Senate confirmation hearing in October that he would push Pretoria to end its genocide case.

South Africa's government filed the case with the International Court of Justice in 2023, alleging that Israel's war on Gaza — which followed the attack by militants from Palestinian group Hamas — breached the 1948 United Nations Genocide Convention. Israel has denied that accusation.

Bozell also told the Senators: "I will communicate our objections to South Africa's geostrategic drift from non-alignment toward our competitors, including Russia, China and Iran."