

## We're ready to tackle any challenges: CEC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chief Election Commissioner Kazi Habibul Awal yesterday

said the commission is ready to tackle all challenges ahead of the upcoming national elections.

"They [political parties] have the democratic right to speak in favour or against the elections. If they [BNP] try to foil the elections and prevent voters from going to polling centres, that would be challenging. However, we are prepared to face it," he said.

The CEC made the remark while talking to the reporters after a meeting with the local administration and law enforcement agencies in Sylhet.

Awal said BNP, as a political party, boycotted the election and the party leaders are urging people

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Posters plague the capital's Khilgaon Taltola Market as candidates engage in electioneering in full swing before the January 7 national polls. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

## AL, JP can spend up to Tk 4.5cr each for electioneering

### Some EC officials say they lack mechanism to check spending

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

Although there are laws in place to limit the expenditure of political parties in electioneering ahead of polls, the Election Commission lacks a mechanism to monitor such spending, according to some EC officials.

According to the Representation of the People Order, 1972, a party that has fielded over 200 candidates can spend up to Tk 4.5 crore.

There are 266 candidates from Awami League and 265 from Jatiyo Party in the upcoming election. This means, both these parties can spend up to Tk 4.5 crore in campaigning.

"The Election Commission caps campaign spending for a party in line with the RPO. Parties are already aware about it," said EC additional secretary Ashok Kumar Debnath.

Besides, the EC allows each candidate to spend up to Tk 25 lakh for electioneering.

Several EC officials said the objective of setting expenditure caps is to prevent the spending of undisclosed money ahead of polls. However, they admitted that EC does not have any effective means to check whether the parties are abiding by the law and spending within their limits.

Asked, Ashok said, "I am not in a position to make any comments regarding the matter".

According to the RPO, parties that have fielded over 100 candidates but not more than 200 can spend Tk 3 crore.

Trinamool BNP and National People's Party fall in this category for the January 7 polls. The parties have fielded 135 and 122 candidates respectively.

Parties that have fielded more than 50 candidates but less than 100 are allowed to spend up to Tk 1.5 crore.

Bangladesh Congress has 95 candidates, Bangladesh Supreme Party 79, Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal 65, Bangladesh

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## Expatriates can be the face of 'positive Bangladesh'

Says foreign minister marking National Expatriates Day

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Expatriate Bangladeshis can play an important role in "branding" a positive Bangladesh across the globe under the government's public diplomacy effort, said Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen yesterday.

"I want to increase investment [in Bangladesh] and for this a change in branding is required. Our [present] branding is of a poverty-ridden Bangladesh," he said, adding, the world has yet to know that Bangladesh is going to be the ninth largest consumer market by 2030.

He was addressing an event marking the first National Expatriates Day organised by Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment Ministry at the capital's Bangabandhu International Conference Centre.

Last year, the government announced December 30 as National Expatriates Day which was observed for the first time this year.

Addressing yesterday's event as chief guest, Momen said as part of its public diplomacy, the foreign ministry has established "Bangabandhu Corners" at its 81 missions worldwide.

The initiative's one of the aims is to involve expatriates through workshops and seminars with media, universities, and opinion builders of those countries throughout the year.

He said many Bangladeshis have attained success overseas as



PHOTO: STAR

At the programme, the expatriates' welfare ministry recognised expatriates with "CIP (NRB) Awards" for their economic contributions. A total of 241 expatriates received the award for the years 2021, 2022 and 2023.

professionals and businesspersons by utilising their talent and working hard. He urged them to invest their assets in Bangladesh.

The government will provide all kinds of support and facilities for investing in Bangladesh, he added.

He also said on an average, Bangladesh received \$17.5 billion in remittance each year between 2009 and 2022, but the amount is not significant compared to the workforce sent abroad.

One main reason behind this is lack of skilled migrant workforce, he said, adding, only 1.5 percent Bangladeshis in the Middle East are professionals.

He said ensuring safe, orderly, regular and responsible migration is a duty of the government as well as other stakeholders like recruiting agencies and civil society.

Chairing the event, Expatriates' Welfare Minister Imran Ahmad echoed the same.

The world will seek to hire people from Bangladesh if they are prepared with adequate skills training, he said.

He emphasised that his ministry has ensured sending more migrant workers and called for relevant institutions to take adequate steps to increase remittance.

Mahtabur Rahman, president of NRB CIP Association, urged the government to readjust interest rate provided for US dollar bonds considering rates provided in the international market.

This can significantly address the country's ongoing foreign currency reserve crisis, he added.

Foreign Secretary Masud Bin

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## Candidacy of 48 restored following court order

Total candidates now 1,943 from 28 parties

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Election Commission reinstated candidature of 48 aspirants including three from Awami League and 10 from the Ganotantri Party following the order of High Court until Friday.

EC sources said they also have restored the candidacy of two aspirants from Trinamool BNP and one from Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (Inu) and 32 independents.

These candidates needed to move to the High Court as their candidacy were rejected by either Returning Officers or the Election Commission during the hearing of appeal.

With the restoration of candidacy of these 48 aspirants, the total number of candidates for January 7 polls increased to 1,943 from 28 parties and independents.

With the restoration of 32 independents, the total number of such candidates now stands at 414.

Seventeen political parties, including the major opposition BNP and its allies, are boycotting the upcoming polls, saying a free and fair election is not possible under the current government.

AL candidates who regained candidacy are Enamul Haque Babul for Jashore-4, Abdus Salam for Mymensingh-9 and Shahmim Haque for Faridpur-1.

The EC during the appeal, cancelled the candidature of Babul and Salam on the allegation of loan defaulting while it cancelled Shamim's candidacy for having dual citizenship.

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## 1.89 lakh cops deployed nationwide

89 cases filed over pre-polls violence, says PHQ

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Around 1,89,000 police personnel have been deployed nationwide to ensure law and order situation centring the upcoming national elections.

Besides patrolling and working in the strike teams, these officials will be on election duty with magistrates on the voting day.

Presently, the police have around 2.13 lakh personnel including civil staff.

Anwar Hossain, deputy inspector general (operation) at Police Headquarters, disclosed this while addressing the media yesterday.

"Police take every complaint seriously and investigate impartially. All candidates are equal to the police," he said.



**At least 125 people were injured in polls violence, 10 election camps were set on fire, and four structures were damaged.**

He also said it has been directed that all candidates will get equal opportunity in campaigning.

Regarding polls-related violence, Anwar said that a case is filed in connection with every incident.

"The police are arresting those responsible for such incidents. We are doing everything to maintain law and order and carrying out duties with professionalism and impartiality to conduct free and peaceful elections," he said.

According to PHQ, a total of 89 cases were filed in connection with political violence across the country against 1,110 people, and 132 of them were arrested since December 18.

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## UGC member show caused for taking part in father's campaign

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Election enquiry committee of Khulna issued a show-cause notice to the University Grants Commission member Prof Biswajit Chanda, on the allegation of breaching electoral code of conduct.

Earlier, independent candidate for Khulna-5 constituency Akram Hossain filed a complaint to the returning officer that Biswajit, despite being a government beneficiary, actively participated in the campaign for AL candidate Narayan Chandra Chanda.

The committee asked Biswajit, a son of Narayan Chandra Chanda, to give an explanation by today.

As per the electoral code of conduct, individuals benefiting from the government are prohibited from using government vehicles or availing other privileges during campaign-related activities.

## DMP issues directives for 31st night

BSS, Dhaka

Dhaka Metropolitan Police yesterday issued some directives over the 31st night celebration in the capital.

No gatherings or festivities can be held at road intersections, flyovers, streets, and public places in Dhaka on December 31 night, said a press release signed by DMP commissioner Habibur Rahman.

No events, gatherings, and cultural events can be held in open spaces, and no firecrackers, crackers, and lanterns shall be flown or bought or sold anywhere, the release read.

No outsider or vehicle will be allowed to enter the Dhaka University area after 6:00pm. Only vehicles carrying DU stickers can enter by providing identification.

The teachers, students, officers, and employees living on the DU campus will have to return to their respective areas by 8:00pm on December 31. In case of entry after 8:00pm, they will have to show their identity cards to policemen on duty.

Also, outsiders will not be allowed to enter Gulshan, Banani, and Baridhara areas after 8:00pm. However, residents of these areas can enter through Kamal Ataturk Avenue (Kakoli Crossing) and Mohakhali Amtali Crossing subject to identification after the scheduled time.

Residents of Gulshan, Banani, and Baridhara areas have been requested to return to their respective areas by 8:00pm on December 31.

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Gliding from one mist-drenched petal to another, a black ant sips dew droplets sparkling under the freshly risen sun in Khulna's Botiaghata upazila yesterday morning.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN