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EC, govt going full steam ahead with polls prep

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR and REJAUL KARIM BYRON

With the national election slated for February drawing near, the Election Commission and the state machinery are in full gear to complete preparations before the schedule is likely announced in early December.

Yesterday, the EC published the final voter list, confirmed the registration of two new political parties, and launched a mobile app to help expatriate Bangladeshis register as voters.

On the same day, the government rolled out a massive awareness campaign across all 64 districts and 300 upazilas, aiming to engage citizens at the grassroots and make the polls festive.

Meanwhile, reshuffles in top administrative positions are currently underway, with deputy commissioners across 50 districts already replaced. The transfer process for police superintendents also started on Monday.

These steps, officials say, are part of a broader effort to make the highly anticipated polls more inclusive and transparent.

Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus yesterday reaffirmed the interim government's commitment to holding a free, fair, and festive election in the first half of February.

During a meeting with the visiting Dutch Vice-Minister for International Cooperation, Pascale Grotenhuis, Yunus reiterated that the Awami League would not be able to participate in the election because its activities have been banned and its registration has been suspended by the Election Commission.

"It's a historic moment. The young people who filled the walls in Dhaka and elsewhere with graffiti and drawings during the July uprising will now come to vote," said the chief adviser.

At a press conference yesterday, EC Senior Secretary Akhtar Ahmed announced that 12.76 crore registered voters are expected to exercise their franchise in the upcoming national election.

Of them, 6.48 crore are male, 6.28 crore are female, and 1,234 belong to the hijra community.

Voting is expected at 42,761 polling centres, with a total of 2,44,739 booths.

Meanwhile, the EC has granted registration to two political parties -- the National Citizen Party (NCP) and Bangladesh Samajtantrik Dal (Marxist).

According to an EC official, despite overall preparations gathering pace, progress remains slow in two areas: holding talks with political parties and finalising the list of local observers.

The commission has so far engaged in dialogue with

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TOTAL VOTERS 12,76,95,183
Male: 6,48,14,907
Female: 6,28,79,042
Hijra: 1,234
App launched for expatriate voters
Registration from Nov 19 to Dec 23
EC provides registration to NCP and Basad (Marxist)
To sit with BNP, Jamaat, NCP today



A VICTORY 22 YEARS IN THE MAKING
Bangladesh forward Sheikh Morsalin wheels away in celebration after scoring an 11th-minute opener against India in their AFC Asian Cup Qualifiers fixture at the National Stadium in Dhaka yesterday. The 20-year-old's seventh international goal sealed a memorable 1-0 victory for the hosts in front of a capacity crowd -- their first win against the neighbours in 22 years and a first win of the qualification campaign.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Only 44% make it to class 10 after primary

Shows recent BBS-UNICEF survey on 63,000 households across country

WASIM BIN HABIB and TUHIN SHUBHIRA ADHIKARY

Although 84 percent of children in Bangladesh complete primary school, less than half go on to finish secondary education, a government survey has revealed, highlighting the large number who drop out long before higher studies.

The Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey-2025, launched on Sunday, found that children from low-income households, mostly girls, are more likely to leave before completing secondary school.

At the lower secondary stage (classes six to eight), however, boys lag behind girls in completion.

The survey, conducted by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics with technical and financial assistance from UNICEF, shows that 63 percent boys complete lower secondary, compared to 76 percent girls.

Conducted for over a year in nearly 63,000 households, it divides the secondary education into two levels, lower and upper (classes nine and ten).

According to data from the Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics, over 81 lakh children study at

- Attendance falls sharply from primary to secondary
- Girls complete lower secondary at higher rates than boys
- Poor children, girls are the least likely to stay at upper secondary level
- Sylhet records the lowest completion and attendance nationwide
- Early marriage and income pressure drive most dropouts

18,968 general secondary schools across the country.

Education experts attribute socio-economic realities and structural weaknesses in education as key reasons behind students leaving school before completing secondary level.

Noted educationist Rashed K Choudhury said, "This is a worrying picture. Similar declining trends in completion rates have also been found in other independent studies."

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AMENDED LABOUR LAW Unions applaud, factory owners push back

REFAYET ULLAH MIRDHA

The union leaders welcomed the amended labour law, but factory owners rejected some of the clauses as their demands went unaddressed.

The amendment elaborated the definition of a worker, which will ensure the protection of jobs of many executives in the factories, said Labour Reform Commission Chief Syed Sultan Uddin Ahmed.

Previously, under the narrower definition, managerial executives were not counted as workers, which allowed factory management to fire them without paying service benefits in many cases.

But in the amended law they are recognised as workers and their jobs are more protected now, said Ahmed, who also heads the Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies.

Moreover, the domestic workers have also been recognised in the amendment, whose gazette was published on November 17.

"This was long overdue."

The lowering of the minimum number of signatories needed to register a trade union to 20 is a positive side, as the previous requirement of 20 percent of workers' signatures was difficult to meet, he said.

However, small factories will face difficulties in forming the trade unions as their number of workers is low, he said.

Nazma Akter, president of the Sammilito Garment Sramik Federation, also welcomed the majority of the amended clauses of the labour law, including recognition for domestic workers and the lowering of the threshold for union formation.

However, the five unions in a factory may be a challenge for maintaining the standards of the unions particularly in the small factories, she added.

Amirul Haque Amin, president of the National Garment Workers Federation, praised the elaboration of the definition of the workers as many were not entitled to job protection due to not being considered workers of the factories

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198 murders in 10 months 'tolerable' for Dhaka: DMP

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka Metropolitan Police recorded at least 198 murders in the capital over the past 10 months, a figure the force termed "within a tolerable range" given the city's size and socio-economic realities.

Taleb Rahman, deputy commissioner of DMP's media and public relations division, shared the data with The Daily Star yesterday afternoon.

"On average, around 20 murder-related crimes occur each month. These include cases stemming from family disputes, previous enmity, establishing dominance, and even the recovery of bodies of unidentified newborns -- each of which leads to the filing of a murder case."

He added that detectives have solved most recent murder cases and brought those involved under the purview of the law.

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A teacher and his students at a class submerged in ankle-deep water at Madhabkati Bilpatiala Govt Primary School in Khulna's Dumuria yesterday. The school and the surrounding area have remained waterlogged for five months because the only drainage system, the Shoalmari river, has been blocked by siltation, causing thousands of people to suffer.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

JUBO DAL LEADER'S KILLING Suspects may have ties to underworld

Say cops; wife files case; one held

SHAHEEN MOLLAH and TOUSIF KARIUM

A dispute with a gang linked to the underworld may have led to the killing of Jubo Dal leader Golam Kibria, police said.

Kibria was shot dead inside a shop in the capital's Pallabi area on Monday evening.

Investigators said they have got some names of people directly involved in the murder and are examining whether it was driven by political rivalry, underworld ties or tensions over blocking drug sales in the neighbourhood.

Locals suspect the murder was carried out by associates of listed criminal Mamun, who was involved in drug trading, extortion, and land grabbing across Pallabi.

They said Kibria was close to Mamun but after becoming influential following the July uprising, he began obstructing Mamun's drug operations.

Listed criminal Mamun, also known as "Dha Block Mamun", has long been linked to the underworld. His elder brother Zamil was once involved in similar illicit activities.

A few years ago, Zamil fled after a dispute over Tk 7 crore in extortion money, locals said. They added that Mamun and his younger brother Mashiur now control

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Golam Kibria