



## Biggest batch of foreign poll observers since 2008 expected

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR and AHMED DEEPTO

The number of foreign observers preparing to monitor the February 12 polls has already exceeded that of the last two national elections, in a sign of heightened global interest in Bangladesh's democratic transition.

So far, the EU has confirmed sending at least 175 international observers, while the US-based International Republican Institute (IRI) said it will dispatch 10 observers.

A total of 158 international observers monitored the 2024 polls and 125 observed the 2018 election.

"The international interest in how free and fair the election will be has grown compared to before because the last three elections were not credible," said Munira Khan, president of Fair Election Monitoring Alliance.

Another reason is the interim government led by Nobel Laureate Muhammad Yunus, she added.

Several international organisations including the US-based National Democratic Institute, the Commonwealth-SAARC countries, some Asian countries as well as the Asian Network for Free Elections (ANFREL) will send observers to monitor the upcoming election, according to Election Commission and foreign ministry officials.

On October 28, EU Ambassador to Bangladesh Michael Miller in a meeting with Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus conveyed the EU's plan to deploy a large delegation of election observers to Bangladesh for the upcoming general election, marking the first such mission since 2008.

The size of the EU observer mission is yet to be confirmed but could comprise

between 150 and 200 members, with some arriving about six weeks before the election and others joining a week prior to polling day, he said.

EU's pre-election observation mission had visited Bangladesh in September and submitted an assessment report to the EU

NUMBER OF INTERNATIONAL OBSERVERS	
Feb 12, 2026	185 so far
Jan 7, 2024	158
Dec 30, 2018	125
Jan 5, 2014	05
Dec 29, 2008	593
Oct 1, 2001	225

afterwards.

Based on the report, the EU has decided to send a full-fledged election observation mission this time.

Ivars Ijabs, member of the European Parliament, will be the chief observer of the EU delegation.

On October 21, in a meeting with Yunus, an IRI delegation confirmed that the American non-profit organisation will send at least 10 international observers for Bangladesh's national election.

"We will have robust election observation in February," said the delegation head Christopher J Fussner, also an IRI director.

Deployment of election observers

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A massive mound of garbage dumped along the roadside at the entrance to Rangamati town. Around 30 to 40 tonnes of waste from different parts of the town are discarded daily in this open space, which slides down the slopes and contaminates nearby streams and the lake. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: RIKORS CHAKMA

## Migration trapped in a broker-dominated system: CA

BSS, Dhaka



Bangladesh is facing a deep and complex crisis in overseas employment due to entrenched broker syndicates, document forgery and systemic failures, Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus said yesterday.

"Overseas migration has become dangerously entwined with brokers and fraud. Until we are free from this, there is no reason to believe that meaningful progress has been made," he said.

He made the remarks at a programme marking the International Migrants Day and National Expatriates Day at the Osmani Memorial Auditorium.

Highlighting different initiatives of the government to

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## BANGLADESHI MIGRANT WORKERS Still plagued by high costs, low safeguards

Experts warn labour export model remains fragile

MD ABBAS

After sending over a million workers overseas this year, experts warn Bangladesh remains locked in a fragile, low-skilled labour-export model dependent on one market, exorbitant recruitment costs, and inadequate protection for migrant workers.

According to data from the Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training (BMET), 10,71,570 Bangladeshis travelled

abroad for work so far this year, with Saudi Arabia alone absorbing 712,044 workers -- more than half of the total. Experts say such concentration leaves Bangladesh dangerously exposed to policy shifts in the kingdom.

Despite the high numbers, structural weaknesses persist.

Female migration fell to 40,088 by September from 61,158 last year -- a drop of more than one-third -- with no clear

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## Delhi advising Dhaka on polls 'unacceptable' Says Touhid

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Foreign Adviser Touhid Hossain has pushed back against India's



prescriptions on Bangladesh's elections, calling such acts by New Delhi "utterly unacceptable".

He was replying to reporters' queries on the matter yesterday amid renewed tensions over deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina making statements from India, where she has been sheltering after her ouster in August last year.

Police stopped a procession when several hundred people under the banner of "July Oikya" marched towards the Indian High Commission in Gulshan yesterday, demanding the return of Hasina and others who fled to India during and after the July uprising last year.

The announcement to lay a siege to the Indian High Commission prompted the Indian Visa Application Centre at the Jamuna Future Park to close at 2:00pm yesterday.

The Indian Ministry of Foreign Affairs also summoned Riaz Hamidullah, the Bangladesh high commissioner in

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Advertorial

## Receives CIP Award in NRB Category

Rafaan Seraj has been awarded the Commercially Important Person (CIP) status for the 2024-25 fiscal year in recognition of his significant contribution to Bangladesh's economy through remittance and investment. The CIP Award was formally handed over by Dr. Asif Nazrul, Adviser of the Government of Bangladesh, at a special ceremony held at the Osmani Memorial Auditorium on the occasion of International Migrants Day and National Expatriates Day.

Rafaan Seraj was recognized as one of the highest foreign currency remitters through legal channels, reflecting the critical role played by non-resident Bangladeshis in strengthening the national economy.

He is one of the partners of Kloth Studio, a Bangladesh-origin global brand specializing in bespoke uniforms for the international hospitality industry. Kloth Studio supplies workwear to leading luxury hotels and restaurants, including Four Seasons, Rosewood, and Shangri-La, positioning Bangladesh as a trusted source of high-quality, ethically produced hospitality uniforms.

The CIP Award was received on behalf of Rafaan Seraj, by his brother, Shayaan Seraj, who accepted the honour during the National Expatriates Day ceremony, underscoring the family's continued commitment to contributing Bangladesh's global reputation and economic progress.



Rafaan Seraj



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## BANK of THE YEAR 2025

The Banker, an affiliate publication of the world-renowned *Financial Times UK*, has awarded City Bank the 'Bank of the Year 2025' in Bangladesh.

This rare honour recognises our strategic clarity, pioneering innovation, climate-conscious banking, robust corporate governance and digital leadership. It strengthens our enduring commitment to serving the nation.

Thank you to everyone for standing by City Bank.



BANK OF THE YEAR AWARD 2025

Bangladesh  
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On the trophy is Brendan Bracken, founder of *The Banker* magazine in 1925