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## Growing global focus on February 12 vote

Number of foreign observers already past those in last three polls

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR and  
AHMED DEEPTO

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

The European Union has confirmed it will send at least 175 observers, and the US-based International Republican Institute (IRI) has said it will dispatch a 10-member team.

Officials from the Election Commission and the foreign ministry said they expect the US-based National Democratic Institute, the Commonwealth, SAARC countries, several other Asian nations, and Bangkok-based Asian Network for Free Elections (ANFREL) to also send observers.

A total of 158 international observers monitored the 2024 polls, 125 the 2018 election, and four the 2014 polls.

EC Senior Secretary Akhtar Ahmed yesterday also told this newspaper that the EU will send 175-200 international observers.

Munira Khan, president of the Fair Election Monitoring Alliance, said, "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."

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

The presence of foreign observers was comparatively limited in the previous three disputed elections. Two of those, in 2014 and 2024, were one-sided contests

boycotted by major opposition parties, while the 2018 election was marred by ballot stuffing on the night before polling day.

On October 28, EU Ambassador to Bangladesh Michael Miller, in a meeting

### NUMBER OF INTERNATIONAL OBSERVERS

Feb 12, 2026	185 so far
Jan 7, 2024	158
Dec 30, 2018	125
Jan 5, 2014	04
Dec 29, 2008	593
Oct 1, 2001	225

with Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus, conveyed the EU's plan to deploy a large delegation to observe the upcoming election, marking the first such mission since 2008.

Some of the EU observer mission is expected to arrive about six weeks before the election, and others may join a week before polling day, he said.

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

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

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Advertiser

### 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

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.

H i g h l i g h t i n g different initiatives of the government to

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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



Condition of Osman Hadi 'very critical'  
Singapore FM briefs CA Yunus

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The condition of Sharif Osman Hadi, the Inqilab Moncho spokesperson who was shot in the head on December 10, is extremely critical, the Chief Adviser's Press Wing said last night.

Singapore's Foreign Minister Dr Vivian Balakrishnan, after visiting Hadi in hospital, called Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus around 9:40pm and briefed him on his condition.

Yunus, the CA Press Wing added, has urged people to remain calm and pray for Hadi.

Also an independent aspirant for Dhaka-8, Hadi was shot while he was travelling on a battery-run auto-rickshaw on Culvert Road in the capital's Paltan. He was first taken to Dhaka Medical College Hospital and then moved to Evercare as his condition deteriorated.

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## India advising on our polls 'unacceptable'

Says Touhid; Delhi summons Bangladesh envoy

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT



India advising Bangladesh on the upcoming election after being "silent during the farcical polls" in the past 15 years is "utterly unacceptable", Foreign Adviser Touhid Hossain said yesterday.

He was responding to reporters' queries after India's Ministry of External Affairs said in a statement that it consistently called for free, fair, inclusive, peaceful and credible elections

in Bangladesh.

At the foreign ministry, Touhid told reporters, "In its latest statement, India has given us advice. I don't think there is any need for that. We don't seek advice from our neighbours on how the elections will be held in Bangladesh.

"This government has been saying clearly from day one that we want to create an environment where people can vote at a 'very high standard', which

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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  
City Bank Plc

On the trophy is Brendan Bracken, founder of *The Banker* magazine in 1926