

Onslaught of AI content aims to sway voters

Unofficial pro-BNP, pro-Jamaat actors flood social media with disinformation, manipulative narratives; pro-AL pages target interim govt, NCP's female politicians

ABDULLAH HEL BUBUN and ABIR AYON

On January 11, a Facebook reel featured a police officer at a staged press conference, where the official confidently predicted that Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami would secure 200 seats in the upcoming election. The clip also uses derogatory language to accuse the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) of systematic extortion.

Just days earlier, another reel featured a supposed Islamic preacher, vehemently criticising Jamaat for allegedly deviating from the principles of Islam practised in Madinah. In a third short clip, a purported news presenter claims that the United States is sparing no effort to ensure the Awami League's return to power.

But look closer, and the inconsistencies are glaring: facial movements such as blinking and lip-sync appear unnatural, the lighting and textures don't match, and backgrounds often show distortion. And the audio fails to align with the speaker's mouth movements.

Fact is, both videos are fake, made with deepfake and cheapfake artificial intelligence (AI) tools. Social media has no shortage of such content. As the February 12 election draws closer, AI-generated misinformation and disinformation are increasingly flooding Facebook, an investigation by The Daily Star

has found.

Between December 14, 2025, and January 14, 2026, this newspaper documented and analysed 97 pieces of AI-generated content on Facebook, most of them videos,

Many viewers were found to be believing the contents to be true, comment analysis shows.

Data also show an accelerating trend in such AI content as the election day nears. Between the



coming from 19 pages and profiles (see methodology online).

These contents pushed political agendas across parties, attacking

opponents or boosting

their own camps, often through manipulation and disinformation. Together, these contents drew 1.6 million engagements within the first 24 hours after they were posted, underscoring the vast number of users exposed to them and raising questions about their potential influence on voters.

first week and final week of data collection, incidents of spreading such content more than tripled from 9 to 33, or a 267% increase within this limited dataset.

Experts point out that AI content acts as a strategic tool to sway public opinion, although its danger must be measured by whether it crosses the "harm threshold" of inciting violence or suppressing voters.

Noting that social media platforms have the technical capacity to detect coordinated inauthentic behaviour, experts also stressed that the platforms should

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Bangladesh replaced by Scotland in T20 WC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh's hopes of featuring in the upcoming ICC Men's T20 World Cup ended yesterday after the International Cricket Council

Council confirmed Scotland as their replacement for the tournament, scheduled to be held in India and Sri Lanka from February 7 to March 8.

The decision brings to a close more than three weeks of uncertainty following the Bangladesh Cricket Board's (BCB) refusal on January 4 to travel to India for their scheduled matches, citing security concerns and the government's directive.

Thus, Bangladesh, a cricket-crazy nation that began its World Cup

journey at the 1999 ODI World Cup, will miss a cricket World Cup for the first time since.

In a media release yesterday, the ICC stated that following a meeting on Wednesday, the ICC Business Corporation (IBC) Board asked the BCB to confirm within 24 hours whether Bangladesh would participate as scheduled. As no confirmation was received within the stipulated deadline, the ICC moved forward with its replacement process.

In response, the BCB said it has accepted the ICC's decision and won't press the matter any further following a board of directors' meeting last night.



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MANIFESTO EXPECTATIONS

With the national election less than a month away, political parties are finalising their manifestos. The Daily Star spoke to experts to identify the pressing issues that should top the agenda for parties.

Commit to equity, quality in edn

ARAFAT RAHAMAN

Political parties must place education at the centre of their manifestos and pledge to address deep-rooted problems – from poor learning outcomes to widening inequality in the sector, say educationists.

They also stress the need for research-based policies and stronger governance to restore public confidence in the education system.

Manzoor Ahmed, professor emeritus at BRAC

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STORIES, PHOTOS FROM THE CAMPAIGN TRAIL ON PAGE 2



In the run-up to February 12 polls, Shakeel Anwar visits outlying constituencies to hear directly from voters about their hopes, demands and expectations.

An election in the shadow of grief

SHAKEEL ANWAR from Rangpur

As the February 12 elections approach, Bangladesh's political conversation is growing louder, shaped by party narratives, elite analysis and the arithmetic of power. I wanted to step away

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