



ELECTION EXPENSES Affidavits say Tk 396cr, but is that the real cost?

Experts question credibility of disclosures, cite clash with ground reality

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

All 1,981 candidates contesting the upcoming February 12 polls have declared their election expenditures in their affidavits, bringing the combined total to a little under Tk 400 crore.

Experts, however, say the figure is far from realistic and does not reflect the true costs of poll campaigns.

According to Transparency International Bangladesh's (TIB) "Know Your Candidate" portal, BNP candidates plan to largely meet their expenses from personal funds, 56 percent coming from their own pockets.

In contrast, Jamaat-e-Islami reported that 58 percent of its campaign budget will be financed through grants and donations, including party funds. The National Citizen Party stated that 62 percent of its election spending will rely on grants and donations.

Across all parties, the total expenditure amounts to Tk 396 crore.

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PARTY-WISE BREAKDOWN

BNP	Tk 115.4cr
Jamaat	Tk 66.3cr
Jatiya Party	Tk 30.7cr
Islami Andolan Bangladesh (IAB)	Tk 29cr
Gono Adhikar Parishad (GAP)	Tk 12.3cr
National Citizen Party (NCP)	Tk 11.7cr
Independent candidates will spend a total of	Tk 53cr



SOURCES OF FUND

- Grant or donation
- Loan
- Personal fund
- Party fund

NUMBER OF CANDIDATES

BNP	288
Jamaat	224
JP	192
IAB	253
GAP	90
NCP	32



"They are just mocking us.... We all know that even securing a nomination requires crores."

Badiul Alam Majumder, chief of the now-defunct Electoral Reform Commission.

Under the RPD, a candidate is allowed to spend Tk 10 per voter or up to Tk 25 lakh in total.

Candidates are required to submit a detailed return of the election expenses to the Returning Officer within 30 days of the polls.

According to a TIB study on the 2024 polls, the average expenditure of each candidate was Tk 1.57 crore -- six times higher than the EC's authorised limit.



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



Sharsha: waiting for the border to breathe again

SHAKEEL ANWAR, from Sharsha, Jashore

As part of my series on voices from the ground ahead of the February 12 elections, I travelled to Sharsha, a remote frontier constituency in Jashore district, where politics is measured less in slogans than in prices, volumes and the daily pulse of the border, on Sunday.

Relations between Bangladesh and India have been in free fall since the collapse of the Hasina government in August 2024.

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MORE CAMPAIGN COVERAGE ON PAGE 2

A party is now echoing the language of a fascist

Says Tarique

SAJJAD HOSSAIN from Mymensingh

BNP Chairman Tarique Rahman, hinting at Jamaat, asked why its two leaders stayed in the BNP-led alliance government if that government was corrupt, as being claimed by the party now.

At an election rally in Mymensingh city yesterday, he said the party is criticising BNP using the same language once used by a fascist, who later fled the country.

"They are speaking against BNP in the same way the fascist used to speak. It too is now claiming that the BNP was the champion of corruption," the party chief told the gathering at the Circuit House ground.

"So, my question is, from 2001 to 2006, didn't they also have two members in the BNP-led government? They did. So, if the BNP was really that bad, why didn't the two step down?" Tarique said, "They did not resign ... because they knew very well that Khaleda Zia was cracking down on corruption with a firm hand."

He added that international statistics show Bangladesh began to diminish the level of corruption during Khaleda's tenure, starting in 2001.

"...The two members stayed in the government from the first day to the last day ... proving that how big a lie they are now telling."

From 2001-2006, Jamaat then chief Motiur Rahman Nizami and secretary general Ali Ahsan Mohammad Mujahid served as ministers

in the BNP-led four-party alliance government.

Tarique's Mymensingh trip was his first in 22 years. He reached the city by road from Dhaka around 3:30pm. His motorcade faced heavy congestion as security personnel struggled to clear the crowd and escort the vehicles to the rally venue.

His wife, Zubaida Rahman, accompanied him on the stage.

After making his way through the crowd, Tarique went to the stage at 4:03pm, where he met families of freedom fighters and those killed or injured during the July uprising.

Calling on party leaders and activists to remain vigilant on election day, Tarique asked them to perform Tahajjud prayers, offer Fajr prayers in front of polling centres, and then cast their votes.

"Why did I say this? It has been many years since we got the chance to vote, hasn't it? Because we did not get the chance to vote before, many people took away our voting rights in different ways. This time, we must stay alert so that no one can steal our votes."

A large number of activists gathered to catch a glimpse of him, while some climbed nearby trees to watch and listen to his speech.

Since the morning, party leaders and activists started arriving at the venue from Sherpur, Jamalpur, Netrakona, Mymensingh, and



'We seek no conflict, but will defend ourselves'

Says Shafiqur

STAR REPORT

Jamaat-e-Islami Ameer Shafiqur Rahman yesterday said the party did not seek to provoke conflict but warned that if attacked, they would retaliate.

"We do not want to provoke conflict by stepping on anyone's toes, but if someone comes to attack us, we will not let them go."

He made the remarks while addressing an election rally at the Khulna Circuit House ground yesterday.

He alleged that a "so-called friendly" political organisation was distributing family cards on one hand while assaulting women on the other.

"I call upon those who have disrespected mothers to offer an apology. Place your trust in the people's verdict. Those who failed to do so in the past did not meet a good end."

Earlier in the day, Shafiqur addressed a rally at the Eidgah ground in Jashore, where he spoke of ending what he described as dynasty-based politics and building a new political culture in the country.

"If Jamaat comes to power, there will be no dynasty politics in Bangladesh."

Hinting at the BNP, he said parties that failed to control their own activists would not be able to govern the country. "Restore discipline within your party first. If you need our cooperation, we will provide it. We stand for truth, justice and a new Bangladesh."

Referring to the victories of Jamaat-backed Chhatra Shibir candidates in the recent student union elections at public universities, Shafiqur said young voters had delivered their verdict in favour of justice and a new Bangladesh.



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Insane bounty for bureaucrats

Proposed pay hike leaves heavy burden for next govt; experts brand the move reckless

AHSAN HABIB

A proposed pay hike of as much as 142 percent for civil servants clashes with the government's austerity measures adopted after the 2024 uprising.

On the one hand, the interim government is engaged in belt-tightening, slashing development projects and squeezing the money supply to tame persistent inflation. On the other hand, a state-appointed commission has just recommended a mind-boggling pay rise for civil servants that would double the government's recurring wage bill. For a treasury already straining under the weight of debt and missed revenue targets, the proposal looks like a fiscal landmine waiting to explode (if implemented).

NEWS ANALYSIS

The rationale behind the Ninth National Pay Commission's report, submitted last week by former finance secretary Zakir Ahmed Khan, is not completely unwarranted. Civil servants have not seen a pay revision in a decade, during which their purchasing power has been eroded by inflation.

However, the mathematical reality is unforgiving. Implementing the new pay structure will require an additional Tk 1.06 lakh crore annually. This is on top of the Tk 1.31 lakh crore the state already spends on 14 lakh employees and nine lakh pensioners.

To put this largesse into perspective, the proposed increase alone is roughly 2.5 times the entire national

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Election stakes, coalition battles, and the AL issue

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Why women are being shut out of politics

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Iran wants talks: Trump

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This achievement was made possible through the dedication and hard work of our entire workforce, including workers, staff, and management.

This recognition is not only a proud milestone for MODELE Group, but also a significant achievement for the Bangladesh apparel industry, demonstrating its global capability and leadership.

MODELE Group expresses sincere thanks to PRIMARK Global team and the PRIMARK Bangladesh Office for their continuous guidance, cooperation, and trust, as well as all stakeholders who contributed to this success.



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