



L-R: Addressing a campaign rally at the Circuit House grounds in Mymensingh, BNP Chairman Tarique Rahman yesterday called on supporters to remain vigilant at polling centres and ensure that no votes are stolen; Jamaat-e-Islami Ameer Dr Shafiqur Rahman told supporters at a rally at the Circuit House grounds in Khulna that, if elected, his party would bring an end to dynasty politics.

PHOTOS: STAR, COLLECTED



Leadership change without change in policy futile: IAB chief

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

A change in leadership without a change in policy will not bring the desired outcome for the people, said Multi Syed Muhammad Rezaul Karim, ameer of Islami Andolan Bangladesh.

"Although the July mass uprising created an opportunity to change old policies and arrangements, political parties are instead working to preserve entrenched vested interests," he said while addressing a rally at the Fatema Halim High School ground in Tangail's Kalihati.



"Islami Andolan Bangladesh is fighting single-handedly against the old system," he added.

The IAB chief, also known as Charmonai pir, also addressed rallies in Tangail Sadar and Delduar from noon to evening yesterday.

At the Kalihati rally, presided over by Muhammad Ali Amzad Hossain, the party's candidate for Tangail 4, Rezaul Karim urged people to stand by Islami Andolan in its movement.

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'Vote for justice, defeat the looters' Says Asif Mahmud

STAR REPORT

National Citizen Party Spokesman Asif Mahmud Sajib Bhuiyan yesterday urged voters to elect candidates from the 11-party alliance to build a Bangladesh based on equality, human dignity, non-discrimination and justice.

"On February 12, people will determine the nation's future and elect the rightful leadership - it will be a historical day for Bangladesh," he said while addressing election rallies in Senbagh upazila of Noakhali and at Cumilla Town Hall ground. Bangladesh suffered under "Sheikh Hasina's fascism" for 17 years, and the country is witnessing the same pattern from a party even without it coming to power, Asif said.

Pointing figure at BNP, he said a party is trying to bring loan defaulters to power to loot public money.

Recalling the July uprising, he said around 1,400 students and low-income working people had lost their lives in the struggle against "fascism", while thousands of mothers had lost their children in the fight for a fascism-free Bangladesh.

He further alleged that although the party frequently speaks of reform at rallies, its top leadership has never publicly addressed reform or a referendum.

Mentioning the attack on two NCP candidates - Ariful Islam Adeb of Dhaka-18 and Nasiruddin Patwary of Dhaka-8 - Asif said: "If a fair election environment is not ensured, the people will defeat them at the ballot box. The people of Bangladesh will not give any mandate to terrorists, attackers, extortionists or bank looters."

At the Cumilla rally, he assured of creating Cumilla a division if the 11-party alliance is voted to power.

ELECTORAL CODE 144 breaches, Tk 9.05 lakh in fines so far

EC says polls results may come late night or next day

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least 144 violations of the electoral code of conduct were recorded across 128 constituencies nationwide between January 6 and January 24 ahead of the upcoming February 12 election, the Election Commission said yesterday.

So far, 94 cases have been filed, leading to fines amounting to a total of around Tk 9.055 lakh.

Meanwhile, the EC said results of the national election and referendum may be announced late that night or the following day.

Sharing the updates with reporters at the EC headquarters in the capital's Agargaon, Election Commissioner Anwarul Islam Sarkar said, "Compared to past elections, I would not say that the code of conduct has been enforced 100 percent this time. But if you go out on the streets, fields, or marketplaces, you will understand why things look so clean and orderly.... Candidates and parties made commitments along with their nomination papers, and what we are seeing is a reflection of those."

He further said that returning officers and officials deployed in the field are carrying out awareness and motivational activities.

"This country has seen many elections.... We believe the environment this time has been the best so far."

Asked how long it may take to get the results, he said, "At most, it may take until the very late hours of the night or the following day.... A referendum has been added alongside the election. Taking into account the highest level of caution and manpower requirements, we are making efforts to ensure the results are published within the desired timeframe."

About the demands submitted to the EC to ban the Jatiya Party while the party is contesting the election, Anwarul said, "We have not received any such order to ban any party. Therefore, all registered parties and those who have received nominations will contest the election."

He added that the commission has already taken necessary measures to address the allegations of attacks made by Jamaat-e-Islami and the National Citizen Party.

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Eggs hurled at Patwary

Nahid blames Mirza Abbas; BNP denies allegations

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Eggs were hurled at Dhaka-8 candidate Nasiruddin Patwary, also National Citizen Party chief coordinator, while he was attending an event at the Habibullah Bahar College in the capital.

NCP leaders claimed that the incident took place around noon when Patwary went to the college upon invitation to attend a pitha (cake) festival.



Hours later, speaking at a press conference in the Fakirapool area, NCP Convener Nahid Islam alleged that the attack was carried out "on the instructions of Mirza Abbas, with the consent of Tarique Rahman".

He also claimed that identified cadres of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal carried out the attack.

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24 hurt in pre-polls clashes in 5 districts

STAR REPORT

At least 24 people have been injured in clashes between political activists during electioneering in five districts since Monday night.

Most of the clashes occurred between activists of BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami.

In Netrakona, at least seven people were injured in a clash between supporters of BNP's Netrakona-3 candidate Islam Hilali, the party's district unit general secretary, and its

rebel candidate Md Delwar Hossain Bhuiyan, former vice-president of the same unit, yesterday.

The clash occurred in Jalli Purba Para village under Kendua upazila when both the groups faced off while campaigning around 2:30pm, said Md Mehdi Maksud, officer-in-charge of Kendua Police Station.

In Shariatpur's Naria upazila, five were injured in the Bhojeshwar Bus Stand area yesterday afternoon after a Jamaat activist published a Facebook

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Only 'yes' can bring change claim is 'misleading'

Says Brac ED Asif Saleh on referendum

STAR REPORT

Brac Executive Director Asif Saleh yesterday said the government's claim that change will come only if people vote "yes" in the referendum is "misleading".

In a Facebook post, he also raised concerns about the referendum process, its transparency and

the haste with which it is being conducted.

"Did you know that in this referendum you are also voting to separate Cumilla and Faridpur into different divisions? I didn't know. Not just me, everyone from my house help to my barrister friend is confused about this referendum," he wrote.

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ANFREL deploys 22 teams for polls monitoring

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Asian Network for Free Elections (ANFREL) yesterday launched its International Election Observation Mission (IEOM) for the upcoming 13th parliamentary elections and the referendum.

The mission, which began yesterday, will continue until February 17, ANFREL said in a statement.

As part of the IEOM, ANFREL will deploy 22 international observer

teams, supported by two electoral analysts and a mission management team, across all eight divisions of the country.

The teams will cover around 71 percent of Bangladesh's 64 districts.

According to ANFREL, the mission will observe the campaign environment and broader political climate, election-related violence and disputes, participation and inclusion of vulnerable groups,

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

FROM PAGE 1

Of the total, BNP has declared Tk 115.4 crore spending for its 288 candidates, Jamaat Tk 66.3 crore for 224 candidates, Jatiya Party Tk 30.8 crore for 192 candidates, Islami Andolan Bangladesh (IAB) Tk 29 crore for 253 candidates, Gono Odhikar Parishad Tk 12.3 crore for 90 candidates, and NCP declared the lowest - Tk 11.7 crore for 32 candidates.

Independent candidates together will spend a total of Tk 53 crore.

TIB's Outreach and Communication Director Mohammad Tauhidul Islam said they had compiled the information provided by candidates in their affidavits and elaborated that each political party's funding is also counted as a grant or donation.

"Similarly, when a supporter or well-wisher voluntarily contributes money to the party, it also falls under the category of grants or donations. In many cases, candidates also borrow from relatives or close acquaintances to cover expenses."

According to the TIB portal, BNP candidates announced that of the total funding, Tk 44.2 crore will come from donations or grants, Tk 6.8 crore from loans, and Tk 64.4 crore from the party's own funds.

Jamaat candidates declared that Tk 38.6 crore will come from donations and grants, Tk 10 crore from loans, and Tk 17.7 crore from its funds.

Jatiya Party candidates will get Tk 6.1 crore from grants and donations, Tk 6.9 crore from loans, and Tk 17.8 crore from own funds.

IAB candidates will get Tk 16.7 crore from grants or donations, Tk 1.6 crore from loans, and Tk 10.7 crore from its funds.

Gono Odhikar Parishad candidates will use Tk 2.8 crore from grants and donations, Tk 2.6 crore from loans, and Tk 6.9 crore from own funds.

NCP candidates will get Tk 7.3 crore from grants and donations, Tk 2.2 crore from loans, and the same amount from party funds.

The Representation of the People Order, 1972 allows a candidate to spend Tk 10 per voter, up to a maximum of Tk 25 lakh, based on the number of voters in the constituency.

In addition, candidates are required to submit a detailed return of their election expenses to the Returning Officer concerned within 30 days of the polls.

Asked about the affidavit declarations, polls expert and chief of the now-defunct Election Reform Commission, Badiul Alam Majumdar, smiled. "They are just mocking us... We all know that even securing a nomination requires candidates to spend several crores."

other stakeholders, while two focused group discussions were held.

Researchers also gathered data from secondary sources, including government publications, prominent international organisations, and academic literature examining the political economy of Bangladesh.

During the campaign phase, candidates need to spend Tk 3 crore to Tk 5 crore or more, depending on the constituency and level of competition.

PARTY WISE ELECTION EXPENSES (IN CRORE TAKA)

PARTY	GRANTS/DONATIONS	LOANS	PERSONAL FUNDS	TOTAL
BNP	44.2	6.8	64.4	115.4
Jamaat	38.6	10	17.7	66.3
Jatiya Party	6.1	6.9	17.8	30.7
Islami Andolan Bangladesh	16.7	1.6	10.7	29.0
Gono Adhikar Parishad	2.8	2.6	6.9	12.3
NCP	7.3	2.2	2.2	11.7

He added that candidates never keep their expenses within the ceiling.

According to a February 2025 report titled "The cost of politics in Bangladesh" by the Westminster Foundation for Democracy, elections in Bangladesh are an expensive affair, with candidates spending between Tk 5-10 crore to secure nominations and run their campaigns.

The rising costs of electioneering have created barriers for many aspiring politicians, particularly those from less affluent backgrounds and marginalised communities, including women, the report said.

The research for the report was conducted between July and December 2024. As many as 25 in-depth key informant interviews were conducted with former members of parliament, election officials, and

They also have to spend money on polling day to secure votes. A minimum of Tk 50 lakh was spent on average per candidate on election day, according to the report.

"Vote buying" was a feature of all 2024 polls, with payments per vote ranging from Tk 1,000 to Tk 5,000.

Even after winning the election, some candidates need to spend another Tk 4-5 lakh to expedite administrative processes, such as the official publication of election results or other necessary documentation.

According to a TIB study on the 2024 election, the average expenditure of each candidate from before the announcement of the schedule until voting day was Tk 1.57 crore - six times higher than the limit authorised by the Election Commission (maximum Tk 25 lakh

per candidate). The study covered 50 seats.

TIB Executive Director Iftekharuzzaman said, "Considering the overall activities and spending pattern of the parties, it can reasonably be assumed that they have already crossed the prescribed limits long ago."

He added, "Nothing will change much unless our political leaders reform themselves and their parties. In the meantime, at least some visible changes could be expected if three key relevant oversight institutions - EC, ACC [Anti-Corruption Commission] and NBR [National Board of Revenue] - had the courage and commitment to play their due roles to ensure accountability for non-compliance."

"For the EC, this means questioning the validity of candidacy in cases of campaign overspending or discrepancies between affidavit disclosures and reality; for the NBR, ensuring accountability for tax evasion reflected in affidavit data and campaign expenses; and for the ACC, acting against corruption, including the accumulation of wealth and income beyond legitimate means."

Contacted by The Daily Star yesterday, a top EC official admitted that candidates spend more than they declare in their affidavits.

"They are required to maintain a separate bank account for campaign expenses. In practice, however, much of the financial flow often bypasses formal banking channels. Large sums of money - sometimes in crores - are exchanged informally, making it extremely difficult to detect or prove instances of bribery or illicit transactions."

Officials acknowledge that scrutiny of these accounts remains a major challenge.

Election Commissioner Abdur Rahmani Masud said they will examine the submitted accounts carefully. "If black money is used to buy votes, it undermines the people's free will and distorts the democratic process.... We will strengthen scrutiny of expenditure reports for the upcoming polls."