



"Cuba is willing to engage in dialogue with the United States, a dialogue on any topic... but without pressure or preconditions."  
Cuban President Miguel Diaz Canel

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## BNP promises a govt answerable directly to citizens

Party manifesto outlines 9 priority sectors, accountability, comprehensive reforms

SAJJAD HOSSAIN and MD ABBAS

BNP yesterday unveiled its election manifesto, pledging nine key commitments across critical sectors and vowing to establish an accountable, responsible, and a "just state" directly answerable to the people.

If voted to power, the party said it would build a sustainable democratic framework through constitutional and electoral reforms under the core principle "Bangladesh Before All."

The nine major commitments include family and farmers cards, a corruption-free and humane healthcare system, and an employment-oriented education system. Other pledges focus on youth job creation, technical and language skill development, environmental protection, climate resilience, excavation and re-excavation of 20,000 kilometres of rivers and canals, religious and social harmony, and expansion of the digital economy and global connectivity.

The manifesto was designed in line with former president Ziaur Rahman's 19-point programme, former prime minister Khaleda Zia's Vision-2030, and Chairman Tarique Rahman's 31-point agenda.

For the first time, the manifesto, which sets out 51 commitments under five broad sections, was presented by Tarique at the Sonargaon Hotel in

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Rows of campaign posters for MP candidates competing in the February 12 national election stretch endlessly over the Kalshi Road in the capital's Mirpur. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN



## T20 World Cup begins amid political chaos

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The 10th edition of the ICC Men's T20 World Cup begins today in India and Sri Lanka against the backdrop of a chaotic build-up dominated by political turmoil, which eventually saw Bangladesh replaced by Scotland and Pakistan boycotting their high-stakes group-stage fixture against arch-rivals India in solidarity with Bangladesh.

When the first ball is finally bowled after the turbulent lead-in, Pakistan will open the tournament against the Netherlands in Colombo in the morning.

Scotland, called up at the 11th hour to replace Bangladesh, will take guard on the opening day when they face the West Indies in Kolkata in the afternoon.

Meanwhile, defending champions and tournament favourites India will make their tournament bow in the night match on day one against the USA in Mumbai, carrying the hopes of more

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### KEY PLEDGES

Balance of power between PM, president

100-member upper chamber

Formation of 'truth and healing' commission

Reform charter, justice system

One trillion dollar economy by 2034

Insaaf-based Bangladesh

Foreign policy based on national interest

Allocation of 5% GDP each to edn, health

Family, farmers cards

Independent media regulator, review of DSA

Expansion of digital economy, connectivity

Guarantee religious freedom

Restoration of interim govt system

Curb graft, improve law, order

Self-reliant "Made in Bangladesh" defence industry

## Shafiqur vows to uproot graft, restore justice

STAR REPORT

Jamaat-e-Islami Ameer Shafiqur Rahman yesterday said his party has never been involved in extortion and will not allow anyone to do so if it comes to power.

"We have not engaged in extortion, land grabbing, or trade over false cases. After August 5 [2024], we stood as protectors of people's lives, property, and dignity, while others focused on making themselves rich," he told an election rally in Barishal's Mehendiganj upazila in the morning.

He added that politics should be about serving people, not personal gain. "The July martyrs sacrificed their lives to create this environment. They wanted a Bangladesh free from discrimination."

Referring to the upcoming elections, he said if the IJ party alliance wins with people's votes, the country will win. "We will establish justice in the country."

Highlighting Jamaat's stance against corruption, he said strict action would be taken if the party gets the opportunity to run the country. "We will not just cut the branches of corruption; we will uproot it."

The Jamaat ameer also criticised the selective enforcement of law, saying it is

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5 DAYS TO VOTE

## Young candidates dominate race

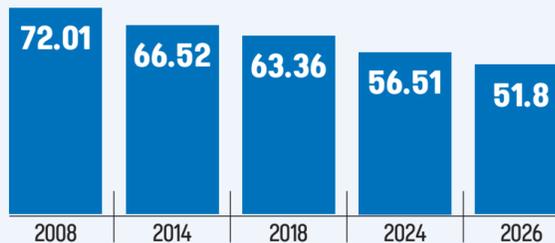
MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR and DIPAN NANDY

The student-led uprising that toppled the Awami League government not only reopened the path to competitive elections and a democratic transition, but also reshaped the slate of candidates aspiring to become

International Bangladesh's (TIB) Know Your Candidate portal, 27.56 percent of the candidates in the upcoming polls are aged between 25 and 44.

Candidates aged 25-34 account for 9.41 percent of the aspirants this year. This marks a significant jump from 3.96 percent in 2024; 0.16 percent in 2018; and zero in the 2014 election.

### AVERAGE AGE OF CANDIDATES



parliamentarians.

For the first time in decades, Bangladesh's ballot papers are no longer dominated solely by elderly politicians. Young aspirants – many of whom were on the streets during the 2024 mass uprising – have entered the electoral race in greater numbers.

According to Transparency

Under the National Youth Policy 2017, citizens aged between 18 and 35 are classified as youths.

The proportion of candidates above 65 has also fallen sharply this time to 17.35 percent from 66.39 percent in 2014. Moreover, 1,518 candidates – nearly three-fourths of the total

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## Star evacuates office over security concerns

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Daily Star evacuated its office on Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue in Dhaka yesterday evening following information from Tejaon police about a potential threat of mob attack.

Acting on the information, Editor and Publisher Mahfuz Anam of the newspaper visited the office and instructed an immediate evacuation of the premises, and journalists and staff left the office around 5:30pm.

Shortly afterwards, additional police personnel were deployed at the office to prevent any untoward incidents, while security remained on high alert for several hours.

Around 10:00pm, police informed the newspaper that the threat subsided and there was no immediate risk.

The Daily Star is publishing today's issue from outside its office.

## JUSTICE FOR HADI At least 70 hurt as cops, protesters clash in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least 70 people were injured yesterday as police and protesters clashed for hours near Hotel InterContinental and the Shabbagh intersection in the capital during demonstrations demanding justice for slain Inqilab Moncho leader Sharif Osman Bin Hadi.

The clashes unfolded in two major phases in the afternoon and evening, turning one of Dhaka's busiest corridors into a battlefield as police used sound grenades, tear gas and water cannons to disperse demonstrators.

The first major confrontation erupted around 4:30pm in front of the Hotel InterContinental, leaving several activists injured, including Inqilab Moncho Member Secretary Abdullah Al Jaber, the platform's Dhaka University

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Inqilab Moncho activists come face-to-face with police after being stopped from marching towards the chief adviser's residence, Jamuna. The protesters demand a UN-led neutral investigation into the killing of former Inqilab Moncho spokesperson Sharif Osman Bin Hadi. The photo was taken yesterday afternoon in front of the InterContinental hotel.

PHOTO: MEHEDI HASAN

In the run-up to February 12 polls, Shakeel Anwar goes on the road for STAR to hear directly from voters about their hopes, demands and expectations.

## At a tea stall, the meaning of an election in hills

SHAKEEL ANWAR, from Bandarban

In Bandarban, one of the country's three hill districts, politics intertwines deeply with memory, land, and security.

My first stop was Hangsama village, around eight miles from Bandarban town, reached via a narrow road winding through forested hills. The village unfolds quietly along



a slope, with most houses raised on wooden stilts, their walls woven from bamboo and their roofs patched with tin. At the entrance is a small tea shop built on a bamboo platform, part meeting place, part lookout, where villagers gather to talk and watch the outside world pass by.

It was here I met Omenu Marma, a middle-aged Marma woman who runs the tea stall. She knew an election was approaching and said she would vote. "There will be a new

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