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2 DAYS TO VOTE



BNP Chairman Tarique Rahman greeting a rally in the capital's Jatrabari on the final day of campaigning yesterday. PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

Campaigning draws to a close

WASIM BIN HABIB

The curtain has fallen on 20 days of intense electioneering as Bangladesh heads into its 13th national parliamentary polls on Thursday, a pivotal moment of democratic transition marked by cautious optimism among voters.

Campaigning officially ends at 7:30am today, closing a frenetic stretch of rallies, street meetings and door-to-door canvassing by major political parties and independent candidates.

Since the campaign began on January 22, BNP, Jamaat-e-Islami, Islami Andolan Bangladesh (IAB), the National Citizen Party (NCP) and others crisscrossed the country to drum up support.

Leaders and candidates remained locked in a war of words while leaning heavily on social media to mobilise supporters and shape narratives.

For the country's 12.76 crore voters, Thursday's



Jamaat-e-Islami Ameer Shafiqur Rahman, and other leaders of the 11-party alliance at a rally in the capital's Mohammadpur yesterday. PHOTO: MEHEDI HASAN

BNP will build safe, self-reliant country

Tarique apologises for past mistakes, vows clean governance

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Acknowledging shortcomings while in power earlier, BNP Chairman Tarique Rahman, in an address to the nation yesterday, apologised to the people, saying his party has learned from past mistakes and is committed to building a safer Bangladesh for all.

"In the past, with your support, BNP governed the country several times. While running the state, we may have made unintentional mistakes in some areas. For that, I sincerely apologise to the people of

this country."

In his speech, broadcast on BTV at 7:15pm, he pledged strict anti-corruption measures, the restoration of the rule of law, and accountable governance.

Calling for a fresh mandate, Tarique added, "Learning from past mistakes and building on our achievements, I once again seek your support in the February 12 national election to build a safe Bangladesh for present and future generations."

He said that if the BNP is given the

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- No rally, procession will be allowed after this morning
- Restrictions will remain in force for 48 hours after voting ends
- Candidates expected to continue outreach through social media

Jamaat pledges 'Bangladesh 2.0'

In televised speech, party chief outlines plans for justice, governance, economic overhaul

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Jamaat-e-Islami Ameer Shafiqur Rahman yesterday pledged to build a "Bangladesh 2.0" by placing the young generation at the forefront of state leadership and carrying out reforms in the judiciary, education, and the economy.

In a televised address to the nation on Bangladesh Television and Bangladesh Betar around 6:15pm, Shafiqur said Jamaat envisioned a Bangladesh where citizens would no longer be forced to take to the streets to secure their rights.

"We do not want another July. We want such a Bangladesh where people will never again have to come out onto the streets," he said.

He said the July uprising reflected people's collective aspiration for a discrimination-free Bangladesh and a break from entrenched and dark political practices.

Shafiqur said the country's young generation now wants to see a new Bangladesh they can proudly call their

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Officials prepare election materials ahead of their distribution to polling centres at Azimpur Girls' School and College in the capital yesterday. PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Governor's BB reform mission stalls

Ahsan Mansur's planned ordinance gets stuck

REJAUL KARIM BYRON and MD MEHEDI HASAN

When Ahsan H Mansur took office as governor of Bangladesh Bank in August 2024, he spoke with the urgency of a reformer determined to rebuild credibility in a fragile financial system. About 18 months later, his tone has become more restrained, reflecting both progress in stabilisation and frustration that a cornerstone reform -- full legal autonomy for the central bank -- has suddenly hit the wall.

The shift in mood was evident at a monetary policy briefing at the central bank, where Mansur again pressed for stronger independence. The same day, Bangladesh Bank officials gathered inside the compound, expressing dissatisfaction over the government's decision not to approve proposed amendments to the Bangladesh Bank Order, the foundational law governing

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US lowers tariff for Bangladesh to 19% from 20%

REFAYET ULLAH MIRDHA

The United States has reduced its reciprocal tariff on Bangladeshi exports to 19 percent from 20 percent, as the two countries signed a new trade agreement last night to strengthen economic ties.

Under the deal, the US will grant duty-free or reduced-duty access to around 2,500 Bangladeshi products, while Bangladesh will allow about 4,400 American products into its market on similar terms.

Bangladesh will gradually extend duty-free access to more US goods over the next decade, Commerce Secretary Mahbubur Rahman told The Daily Star after the signing ceremony, held in a hybrid format.

Garments made with US cotton will enjoy zero-duty access to the US market, alongside pharmaceuticals, fisheries products, particle board and food items.

The agreement was signed by Commerce Adviser Sheikh Bashir Uddin and National Security Adviser Khalilur Rahman for Bangladesh, and by US Trade Representative Ambassador Jamieson Greer for Washington, following negotiations that began in April last year and stretched over more than nine months.

According to a statement from the Chief Adviser's Office, Ambassador Greer praised Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus for his leadership. "This agreement will fit Bangladesh into US trade policy," Greer said.

Adviser Bashir Uddin called the deal "a historic new phase in bilateral trade relations", while NSA Khalilur Rahman said the tariff

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