



Vehicle requisition activities were underway at the Polo Ground in Chattogram city yesterday, ahead of the 13th national election and referendum scheduled for tomorrow. Sources said about 700 vehicles have so far been requisitioned, while the process of requisitioning another 200 is ongoing.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

ONLINE POLLS CAMPAIGN

Pro-BNP, Jamaat actors play the religion card

STAR REPORT

Election codes strictly prohibit exploitation of religious sentiments for gaining electoral advantage. These rules apply not only to candidates, but also their electoral agents and supporters, which took effect on December 11, the day election schedule was announced. It will remain in force until the gazette notification of the final results.

In practice, however, parties and candidates from across the political spectrum are running paid ads as well as non-sponsored content on Facebook to prove how the rival camps are "bad Muslims."

Analysis of 50 sponsored ads between December 23, 2025, and February 6, 2026 shows both BNP and Jamaat candidates sling slurs, each calling the other a "munafeq," the Islamic term referring to a person who outwardly professes faith but is actually a nonbeliever.

The Daily Star also analysed 55 similar religiously provocative posts from 33 Facebook pages, groups and profiles. Thirty of them appear to support the BNP and the Jamaat.

BNP supporters and anti-Jamaat activists are heavily promoting the claim that Jamaat-e-Islami leaders are promising "tickets to Jannah (paradise)" in exchange for votes.

SEE PAGE 10 COL 4

Parties spend crores on Facebook ads

ZYMA ISLAM

As the dust settles on election season with the last day of campaigning officially ending yesterday morning, the street rallies were complemented by a digital battle for the ballot, where political parties poured crores of taka into thousands of Facebook ads.

Many of these advertisers were masked as news outlets to bypass voter skepticism.

This analysis included only advertisers who spent more than \$100 on Meta ads in the last 30 days, because Meta does not disclose spending amounts below that threshold. As a result, the actual volume of spending and the total number of election-related ads are likely significantly higher than the figures reflected in this report.

SEE PAGE 10 COL 4

'BNP confident of decisive victory'

Tarique tells AFP and DW there are serious challenges ahead

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Chairman Tarique Rahman is confident of a decisive victory in the national election. If his party is voted to power, he says, his first priority will be restoring security to end the political turmoil that has gripped the country since the uprising.

"We need to ensure a normal situation in the country, so that people are safe," he told the AFP yesterday.

Stating that the economy has been destroyed, the party chief accused the ousted Awami League government of neglecting ordinary citizens.

The Sheikh Hasina regime destroyed the health system and energy sector, he said, adding that the task ahead in the South Asian nation of 170 million people would be daunting.

"What we see is that in the name of mega projects, mega corruption has taken place," said Tarique. "A few people were made very rich. But the rest of the country, the whole population, they were left with nothing."

The AFP report said that Tarique's BNP is a frontrunner in the polls, but faces a steep challenge from a coalition led by Jamaat-e-Islami, the country's largest Islamist party.

"We expect that we will have a clear mandate from the people -- a big mandate," Tarique said, adding he did not foresee the need for a coalition beyond his current party alliance.

"We'll have enough seats to form our own government," he added.

Referring to his parents, late president Ziaur Rahman and late prime minister Khaleda Zia, he stressed that he too had spent a lifetime in

SEE PAGE 10 COL 1



"We are hopeful, and people are hopeful too, that the election will be fair."

BNP Chairman Tarique Rahman

Bangladesh fares worse in TI's graft index

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh's ranking in Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) worsened, with the country placed 13th among the world's most corrupt nations out of 182.

The country ranked 14th in the CPI 2024. Its score increased by one point to 24 this year.

Bangladesh's score had remained between 25 and 28 from 2012 to 2022, before falling to 24 in 2023 and 23 in 2024, said Iftekharuzzaman, executive director of Transparency International Bangladesh, at the report's launch yesterday at its office in Dhanmondi.

Although the score rose by one point this year, trend analysis shows Bangladesh is now two points below its 2012 level, marking the second-lowest score in the past 14 years.

The slight increase reflects short-term optimism following the July uprising and expectations of democratic and accountable governance.

However, the data sources do not yet capture the later realities of the reform process.

The results indicate that despite the fall of authoritarian rule, meaningful changes in state and legal structures have not taken place.

"Over the past one and a half years, the interim government has failed to take effective and exemplary action against corruption. At the same time, proposed reforms by the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) and other institutions have largely been ignored or left unimplemented, weakening their ability to act independently," he said.

Sri Lanka recorded the greatest improvement with a three-point increase in South Asia, while Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and the Maldives each gained one point.

Bhutan and Afghanistan lost one point and Nepal remained unchanged.

Despite these changes, all South Asian countries except Bhutan scored below the global average, highlighting deep and widespread corruption across the region, the report said.

The global average score dropped to 42, the

- ▶ Bangladesh's score improves, ranking worsens
- ▶ Bangladesh ranks second-lowest in South Asia
- ▶ Denmark tops index, followed by Finland, Singapore
- ▶ South Sudan and Somalia jointly rank lowest, followed by Venezuela
- ▶ Yemen, Libya, Eritrea jointly ranked third from the bottom

lowest in more than a decade.

Bangladesh is among the countries failing to control corruption and ranks the second lowest in South Asia after Afghanistan, Iftekharuzzaman said.

Bangladesh's score of 24 is 18 points below the global average and 21 points below the Asia-Pacific average. It is also eight points lower than the average of sub-Saharan African countries, making the situation "extremely alarming".

SEE PAGE 10 COL 1

'People will deliver the right verdict'

Shafiqur says at press briefing after 11-party meeting

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami Ameer Shafiqur Rahman yesterday said they have great faith in the people and believe they will deliver the right verdict.

Addressing a press briefing after a meeting with leaders of the 11 party alliance at the party's Maghbar office, he said there is widespread enthusiasm among the people regarding the upcoming election.

"Those whose voter registration is in the villages are returning in groups, almost with the excitement and joy of Eid. They want to cast their votes and see a government of their choice," he said.

"We hope that if the people's verdict is reflected, Bangladesh will move toward a new kind of politics, and the new Bangladesh that the people hold in their hearts will be implemented," he added.

The Jamaat ameer said they believe the youth have not fallen asleep and that, to fulfil their unfinished responsibilities, they will make the election successful at any cost.

"If anyone tries to do otherwise, we will urge the people to stand firmly for their rights and give a clear response."

SEE PAGE 10 COL 1



"We, the 11-party alliance, are ready to help in every way to hold free and fair polls."

Jamaat Ameer Shafiqur Rahman

Limit SSC exams to five core subjects

Education consultation committee proposes

ARAFAT RAHAMAN

A government consultation committee has recommended limiting SSC exams to five core subjects -- Bangla, English, mathematics, science, and social science -- while keeping PSC and JSC exams in classes 5 and 8 scrapped.

It also proposed universal secondary education up to class 12, a unified school system under one authority, and constitutional recognition of education as a fundamental right through an Education Rights Act.

The suggestions were made in a draft report prepared by the Consultation Committee for Improvement of Secondary Education.

The 10-member committee, led by Emeritus Professor Manzoor Ahmed, submitted the draft to Education Adviser CR Abrar yesterday.

Committee member Md Mahboob Morshed, associate professor at Dhaka University's Institute of Education and Research, presented the recommendations.

Morshed explained that public examinations should focus on core competencies rather than testing every subject.

"Subjects such as ICT, religion, physical education and the arts would be excluded from written public exams and assessed by schools through practical, hands-on evaluation."

SEE PAGE 10 COL 1



An army patrol convoy moves from Kalabagan towards Dhanmondi 32 in the capital yesterday as part of election-time security arrangements ahead of the election tomorrow.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

17 hurt in pre-polls violence in 3 districts

'Mother dies' after BNP leader injured in clash with Jamaat

STAR REPORT

At least 17 people have been injured in electoral violence since Monday night across three districts.

In Bogura, six people were wounded in clashes between BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami activists on Monday night.

The mother of one of the injured -- a local BNP leader -- died reportedly after hearing that her son had lost an eye in the clash.

According to witnesses, a group of Jamaat activists was campaigning at Parshun village in Nandigram upazila around 7:30pm when BNP supporters intercepted them, alleging that Jamaat men were distributing money to buy votes.

The BNP activists then confined the Jamaat supporters and took them to the house of local BNP leader Masud Rana.

Soon after, a larger group of Jamaat activists attacked Rana's

SEE PAGE 10 COL 1