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for Electoral Systems

Election FAQs: Bangladesh

2026 General Elections

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Election Snapshot¹

- **Election Day:** February 12, 2026 (13th parliamentary election and concurrent national referendum)
- **Registered voters:** 127,711,793 (64,825,361 men, 62,885,200 women and 1,232 third-gender voters); includes 1,351,375 registered postal ballot voters (584,347 for in-country voting and 767,028 for out-of-country voting)
- **Voter eligibility:** Citizens who turned 18 by October 31, 2025, are included on the voter rolls.
- **Polling stations:** 42,766 permanent polling stations and 13 temporary. Each male booth serves 600 male voters and each female booth serves 500 female voters, totaling 247,499 booths (232,413 permanent booths and 15,086 temporary booths).
- **Parliamentary seats:** 300 single-member constituency seats and 50 reserved seats for women, allocated proportionally after the election.
- **Ballots:** Two ballots will be issued to each voter – a white ballot for the parliamentary election and a pink ballot for the national referendum (Yes/No on four sets of reforms).

Background

Following the mass uprising of July 2024 that led to the ousting of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, Bangladesh entered a political transition, with an interim government. A nationally negotiated reform process subsequently set out a roadmap for institutional and electoral reforms and paved the way for the 13th parliamentary elections, scheduled for February 12, 2026, along with a concurrent national referendum on a package of constitutional, electoral and institutional reforms.

The interim government was formed under revised constitutional and legal provisions to ensure the neutrality of the state administration, public order institutions and the electoral process during the election period, reflecting a restoration of caretaker-style safeguards that were removed in earlier electoral cycles.

The electoral environment for the 2026 polls differs significantly from that of 2024. The Awami League's registration and electoral activities have been suspended, pursuant to decisions taken under the Representation of the People Order, 1972 (as amended) and related legal instruments, reshaping the competitive landscape and affecting patterns of party participation, voter mobilization and campaign dynamics. Other registered political parties and independent candidates are competing under a revised regulatory framework that strengthens the authority of the Bangladesh Election Commission (BEC) to regulate campaigning, enforce the code of conduct, suspend polling and results where irregularities occur and administer overseas voting and referendum procedures.

In addition to electing Members of Parliament, voters will be asked to cast a second ballot – a national referendum on a set of institutional reforms, including changes related to the structure of government, the independence and powers of constitutional bodies and the conduct of future elections. Simultaneously holding a parliamentary election and a national referendum represents an unprecedented institutional moment in Bangladesh's electoral history, placing heightened importance on turnout, inclusiveness, transparency and public confidence in the credibility of the process and the acceptance of its outcomes.

Why are these elections important?

The February 2026 parliamentary elections and referendum represent a critical juncture for Bangladesh's democratic and constitutional order. For the first time since the caretaker government system was abolished in 2011, the electoral process is being conducted under an interim government framework. The elections are therefore both a mechanism for renewing political representation and a test of the reestablished institutional guarantees for electoral neutrality and competition.

The inclusion of a national referendum alongside the parliamentary polls further elevates the significance of the process. Through the referendum, voters will directly decide whether to endorse a package of constitutional and electoral reforms intended to address longstanding concerns regarding the balance of power among state institutions, the BEC's independence, the role of the caretaker

¹ These FAQs reflect information available as of February 5, 2026 to the best of our knowledge.

administration during election periods and the framework for future electoral integrity. The combined electoral and referendum process thus has implications not only for the composition of the next parliament, but also for the longer-term rules governing democratic competition and governance in Bangladesh.

Finally, the implementation and introduction of technology-supported out-of-country voting and in-country postal voting, revised dispute-resolution mechanisms, strengthened observer accreditation and expanded BEC powers make the 2026 elections the most procedurally complex in the country's history. The credibility and acceptance of the elections will be central to restoring public confidence in electoral processes and shaping political stability in the period following the vote.

When is Election Day?

The 13th parliamentary election and concurrent national referendum will be held on Thursday, February 12, 2026. Polling will take place during the hours specified in the official election schedule. The same polling stations, electoral staff and security arrangements will be used for the parliamentary and referendum ballots.

What is the structure of government?

Bangladesh is a multiparty parliamentary democracy with a nonexecutive president who serves in a largely ceremonial role. The president is elected by members of the National Parliament, or Jatiya Sangsad. Presidential candidates can be nominated by any political party that is represented in the parliament and must be (1) at least 35 years old, (2) have qualified for election as a Member of Parliament and (3) never have been removed from the office of president by impeachment.² Presidential election is not part of the February 2026 electoral cycle – the current president was elected in 2023 and is serving a five-year term

Under the legal framework in force for the 2026 electoral cycle, an interim government is responsible for administering the country during the election period. The interim government's mandate is limited to routine administration, maintaining public order and facilitating a free, fair and credible electoral process; it is prohibited from taking major policy decisions or actions that could advantage or disadvantage any political contestant. The president continues to exercise constitutional functions, including the appointment of the prime minister following the election, while the executive authority of the interim government during the electoral period is circumscribed by law and subject to oversight by the courts and the BEC.

The Jatiya Sangsad will continue to consist of 300 directly elected members and 50 women members allocated to reserved seats in proportion to party representation.

The outcome of the February 2026 referendum could introduce further institutional changes, including reforms affecting the balance of powers among the executive, legislative and constitutional bodies that, if approved by voters, will be implemented in accordance with the procedures and timelines set out in relevant constitutional amendments and enabling legislation.

Who and what are people voting for on Election Day?

Each voter will receive two ballots on Election Day. On the first ballot (white), voters will elect one Member of Parliament from their constituency. The second ballot (pink) will be for the national referendum. This ballot will present voters with a Yes/No choice on whether to approve the proposed package of reforms. The referendum will be conducted and counted separately from the parliamentary election, but in the same polling stations and under the supervision of the same electoral officials. The legal effect of the referendum result, including any approval thresholds and the procedures for implementing approved reforms, is defined in the referendum ordinance and circular adopted for the 2026 process.

² Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh (n.d.). Part IV: The Executive. Chapter I: The President. *The Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh*. <http://bdlaws.minlaw.gov.bd/act-367/section-24597.html>

What is the electoral system?

Bangladesh follows a parliamentary electoral system in which members of the Jatiya Sangsad are primarily elected through a first-past-the-post (FPTP) method. The country has 300 single-member constituencies; in each constituency, the candidate who receives the highest number of votes is elected as a Member of Parliament, regardless of whether they obtain an absolute majority. As in previous elections, candidates who contest and win in more than one constituency will be required to vacate all but one seat, triggering by-elections in the remaining constituencies. In addition, 50 seats reserved for women; these are allocated to political parties in proportion to the number of general seats they win and filled through indirect election by the elected members.

What is the referendum and what are voters being asked to decide?

The national referendum consists of a package of constitutional and institutional reforms addressing, among other matters, the framework for caretaker or interim administrations during election periods, the powers and independence of the BEC and other constitutional bodies and changes to electoral and governance arrangements. The referendum will be decided by a simple majority of valid votes cast, in accordance with applicable legal requirements. If approved, the result will trigger the constitutional and legislative procedures set out in the relevant legal instruments for implementing the endorsed reforms. The BEC is responsible for administering the referendum, including voter

National Referendum Text (Unofficial English Translation)

Do you approve of the July National Charter (Constitution Amendment) Implementation Order, 2025, and the following proposals for constitutional reform as recorded in the July National Charter?

- a. The caretaker government during election, the Election Commission, and other constitutional institutions shall be constituted in accordance with the process described in the July Charter.
- b. The next Parliament shall be bicameral. A 100-member upper house will be formed based on the proportion of votes received by political parties in the national election, and any constitutional amendment will require approval by a majority of the upper house.
- c. The 30 reform proposals on which political parties reached consensus under the July National Charter — including increased representation of women in Parliament, election of the Deputy Speaker and parliamentary committee chairs from the opposition, term limits for the Prime Minister, enhanced powers of the President, expansion of fundamental rights, judicial independence, and strengthening of local government — shall be binding on the parties that win the upcoming election.
- d. Other reforms outlined in the July Charter shall be implemented according to the commitments made by political parties.

The voter has to stamp either yes or no to the whole package a/b/c/d.

education, ballot design, polling, counting votes, certifying the results and resolving disputes. The referendum is observed and secured under the same institutional arrangements as the parliamentary election, ensuring that both processes meet standards of transparency, inclusiveness and integrity.

What is the Bangladesh Election Commission and what is its role?

The BEC is a constitutional body consisting of a chief election commissioner and four election commissioners.³ Its functions include supervising all matters related to the conduct of an election, including appointing poll workers and allocating polling centers.⁴ The BEC has the mandate to require any person or authority to perform such functions or render such assistance for the purpose of conducting an election. The BEC is supported by a Secretariat, whose role was strengthened with the

³ A M M Nasir Uddin is the current chief election commissioner. The four election commissioners are Abdur Rahmani Masud, Tahmida Ahmed, Md. Anwarul Islam Sarker, and Abul Fazal Md. Sanaulah.

<http://www.ecs.gov.bd/page/chief-election-commissioner-electioncommissioners?lang=en>

⁴ Chapter III, Representation of the People's Order (1972).

passage of the Election Commission Secretariat Act of 2009. The secretary is the administrative head of the Secretariat.

The chief election commissioner and election commissioners include must be Bangladeshi citizens, be at least 50 years old and have at least 20 years of experience working in governmental, semi-governmental, private, judicial, autonomous and/or other institutions.

Pursuant to amendments to the Representation of the People Order and related legislation adopted between 2023 and 2025, the BEC has been vested with expanded powers for the 2026 electoral cycle. These include the authority to suspend polling or counting beyond Election Day, where necessary, to ensure the integrity of the electoral process; to annul results and order re-polls at individual polling stations, constituencies or – in exceptional circumstances – wider electoral areas; to regulate and sanction violations of campaign and digital media rules; and to administer and oversee out-of-country voting and the conduct of the national referendum.

The BEC is also responsible for accrediting domestic and international observers for the parliamentary election and the referendum, managing the process of transmitting and publishing the results and coordinating with the interim government, law-enforcement agencies and the judiciary to ensure the effective enforcement of electoral laws and the timely resolution of disputes. The BEC's strengthened mandate reflects legal reforms that have been adopted in response to previous concerns regarding the adequacy of its powers to safeguard electoral integrity and public confidence.

What is the legal framework governing the elections?

The legal framework governing the February 2026 parliamentary elections and national referendum is based on the Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh and a series of amendments and ordinances adopted between 2023 and 2025. These include amendments to the Representation of the People Order that expanded the BEC's powers to suspend polling and results, order re-polls, regulate digital campaigning and administer overseas voting; the enactment of a referendum ordinance and circular establishing procedures for the conduct, counting, certification and legal effect of a national referendum; and constitutional and statutory provisions establishing an interim government to administer the country during the election period and ensure the neutrality of the state apparatus.

Additional amendments address campaign finance ceilings and disclosure, the accreditation and rights of domestic and international observers, the regulation of online political advertising and disinformation, and the creation of specialized election and referendum dispute resolution mechanisms. Together, these legal instruments define the respective roles of the BEC, the interim government, the courts, law enforcement agencies and other state institutions involved in conducting the 2026 electoral and referendum processes.

Who are the political parties?

Bangladesh has a multiparty political system in which political parties must register with the BEC to compete in parliamentary elections. For the 2026 electoral cycle, the political landscape has been significantly reshaped by legal and political developments following the 2025 transition. With the suspension of the Awami League's registration and electoral activities, pursuant to decisions taken under the Representation of the People Order and related legal instruments, that party will not participate in the February 2026 elections under its electoral symbol. Other major parties (including the Bangladesh Nationalist Party, Jamaat-e-Islami and the Jatiya Party), newly registered political formations and independent candidates are participating in the election, in accordance with the revised legal framework.

Political parties and candidates are required to comply with updated registration, nomination and code of conduct provisions – including rules governing campaign finance, media access, digital communication and use of state resources. The BEC retains the authority to sanction parties and candidates for violations through fines, disqualification and the suspension of campaigning in specific areas, in line with its expanded enforcement powers.

What is the nomination process and period for candidates?

The nomination process for the 13th parliamentary elections is being conducted in accordance with the election schedule the BEC issued for February 2026. Each registered political party may nominate one candidate per constituency; individuals also may run as independent candidates, subject to the verification requirements set out in law. Parties submit nomination papers to the respective returning officers within the period specified in the official schedule, followed by scrutiny, the opportunity for appeals and the finalization of candidate lists and electoral symbols.

All candidates are required to submit declarations of assets, liabilities, income and sources of campaign funding and to comply with updated eligibility and disqualification criteria. The revised legal framework provides the BEC with enhanced authority to reject nominations that do not meet the legal requirements and to act against false declarations or other violations.

How was voter registration conducted?

According to Article 11 of the Electoral Rolls Act of 2009, the voter list is updated annually to include the names of eligible voters who turned 18, remove the names of voters who have become ineligible since the last update and correct entries for people who have changed their place of residence. The BEC issues smart national identity cards to all voters.

In addition to these annual updates to the domestic voter roll, the 2026 electoral cycle introduces a structured out-of-country voting registration process for eligible Bangladeshi citizens residing abroad. Overseas voters are registered through diplomatic missions and designated online with in-person verification procedures. These voters are entitled to participate in the parliamentary election and the national referendum, in accordance with the amended Representation of the People Order and the Out-of-Country Voting Rules.

How many registered voters are there?

The voter list includes 127,711,793 voters – 64,825,361 men, 62,885,200 women and 1,232 third-gender voters – and covers citizens who had turned 18 by October 31, 2025. The BEC will publish the final voter list for the February 2026 parliamentary elections and the concurrent referendum in advance of polling day. The voter list includes all eligible voters, including citizens registered under the out-of-country voting and in-country postal voting systems. The total number of registered voters, disaggregated by sex and by domestic and overseas registration, is announced in the Official Gazette and on the BEC's website following completion of the voter roll update and registration of postal ballots.

Where will voters cast their ballots on Election Day?

The total number of polling centers and booths has been updated to accommodate the two separate ballots for February 2026. For the upcoming parliamentary election, 42,779 polling centers and 247,499 polling booths have been finalized nationwide. In view of the increased voting workload, the BEC has extended the polling time by one hour overall, with voting now scheduled from 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. (previously 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.).

Registered overseas voters will cast their votes through postal voting. In-country voting will include postal voting for government officials and employees engaged in electoral duties, government employees residing outside their designated voting areas and eligible prisoners who are registered through the Postal Vote BD app, in accordance with the procedures and timelines set by the BEC. Separate arrangements are made to ensure the secure transmission, storage and counting of postal ballots, which are subsequently integrated into the overall tabulation of results.

What are the arrangements for electoral security and electoral management?

For the 2026 elections and referendum, electoral security is provided under the authority of the interim government, in coordination with the BEC and in accordance with constitutional and statutory provisions requiring all executive authorities to assist the BEC. The BEC has the power to deploy and direct law enforcement agencies for election duties and, where legally authorized, to request

deployment of the armed forces to aid civil authorities in ensuring a secure environment for polling, vote counting and results transmission.

According to BEC sources, approximately 939,000 members of various law enforcement agencies will be deployed to maintain law and order for the 13th national parliamentary election. This includes personnel from the Ansar forces, Police, Border Guard Bangladesh, Bangladesh National Cadet Corps, Rapid Action Battalion, Army, Navy, Coast Guard and Air Force. The deployment forms part of a nationwide security plan, with agencies expected to remain mobilized before, during and after Election Day to ensure a free, fair, impartial and peaceful electoral environment.⁵

In parallel, the BEC has requested that the Ministry of Home Affairs ensure enhanced security for field-level election offices – regional, district, *upazila* and metropolitan *thana* offices – where voter lists, ballot boxes and other sensitive election materials are stored and distributed.

For election administration, the BEC has revised an earlier plan to appoint returning officers due to the prevailing political situation. Under the current arrangement, the following will act as returning officers, supported by 598 assistant returning officers: divisional commissioners of Dhaka and Chattogram, three regional election officers from Dhaka, Khulna and Chattogram, and all 64 deputy commissioners. A comprehensive assessment of polling officials and law enforcement personnel – covering political affiliations, polling station security risks, and operational considerations – is underway to support effective election management.

A national election and referendum situation room and results management system have been established to receive incident reports, coordinate responses and monitor the security and integrity of the process in real time. The revised framework emphasizes neutrality, proportionality and respect for fundamental rights in all security operations related to the conduct of the vote.

Who can observe during Election Day?

The BEC accredits domestic and international observers to monitor the parliamentary election and national referendum. Observers must be independent of political parties and candidates and must comply with the Code of Conduct for Observers issued by the BEC. Accredited observers are entitled to observe all stages of the process – voting, counting and tabulation – and to issue public statements in accordance with the relevant regulatory guidelines. Separate accreditation is not required for the referendum; observer mandates automatically extend to both ballots conducted on the same day.

Will there be out-of-country voting?

For the first time, a comprehensive out-of-country voting system, via the Postal Vote BD app, is being implemented for the national election and referendum. Overseas voters registered under the postal ballot system will cast their votes through postal voting. Overseas ballots will be issued, returned and counted under strict chain-of-custody, verification and secrecy procedures and be included in the official results for the relevant parliamentary constituencies and the national referendum tally. The BEC is responsible for ensuring the transparency, security and auditability of the out-of-country voting process and for integrating overseas voting into the overall results management and dispute resolution framework.

When will official results be announced?

The BEC will announce the official results of the parliamentary elections and the national referendum in accordance with the timelines set out in the election schedule and the referendum rules. Provisional results will be released on polling night, or as soon as practicable following the completion of the count, with final results published in the Official Gazette after the resolution of any pending complaints or legal challenges. Parliamentary and referendum results will be certified and announced separately, although the BEC will administer both processes.

⁵ Prothom Alo (English Edition). Election security planning reports. <https://en.prothomalo.com>

How will pre- and post-election disputes be adjudicated?

Disputes arising from the parliamentary elections and the national referendum will be adjudicated under the amended Representation of the People Order, the Referendum Act, and relevant constitutional provisions. Electoral inquiry committees, returning officers and the BEC investigate and address complaints related to violations of the code of conduct, polling and counting irregularities and campaign offenses. Decisions of the BEC and lower authorities may be challenged before designated election tribunals and, on points of law or constitutionality, before the higher judiciary.

Specialized procedures and timelines apply to referendum-related disputes, including challenges to the conduct of the poll, vote counting and results certification. The legal framework provides for expedited adjudication to ensure the timely finalization of parliamentary and referendum outcomes.

What are the campaign expenditure limits and disclosure requirements?

In Bangladesh, campaign expenditure limits and disclosure requirements are governed by the Representation of the People Order, 1972 (as amended), and regulations issued by the BEC. For parliamentary candidates, campaign spending is capped at 10 Bangladeshi taka (Tk) per registered voter in the constituency or Tk 2.5 million (about \$20,500 U.S. dollars), whichever is higher.

Campaign expenditure limits and disclosure requirements for the 2026 parliamentary elections and national referendum are governed by the amended Representation of the People Order, the Election Conduct Rules, and specific regulations on political finance and digital campaigning. Candidates and parties are required to submit detailed statements of income, assets, liabilities and campaign expenditures, as well as disclosures of the sources of funds and expenditures related to online and traditional media campaigning.

The BEC has enhanced authority to audit campaign accounts, investigate violations and impose sanctions – including fines, disqualification and criminal referral – for noncompliance with finance and disclosure rules.

Resources

In addition to the Constitution of Bangladesh and pre-existing electoral laws, the legal framework for the 2026 parliamentary elections and the national referendum includes the following documents:

- [Representation of the People \(Amendment\) Acts, 2023–2025](#)
- [Referendum Act and Referendum Rules, 2025](#)
- [The Representation of the People Order, 1972 \(President's Order\)](#)
- [Revised Code of Conduct for Political Parties, Candidates, and Observers](#)
- [BEC Out-of-Country Voting Portal](#)