

EC sets stage for early Feb vote

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Online Desk : Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) AMM Nasir Uddin said on Wednesday that preparations are underway to hold the 13th parliamentary election in February, ahead of Ramadan, and that he expects to soon receive a formal letter from the chief adviser (CA) directing the Election Commission (EC) to arrange the polls. Later in the day, the Chief Adviser's Office confirmed that such a letter has now been sent. In a formal communication to the senior secretary of the Election Commission, Principal Secretary to the Chief Adviser M Siraj Uddin Mia urged the commission to take all necessary measures to hold a free, fair, peaceful and festive national election of the expected standard within the specified timeframe.

The letter noted the chief adviser's call for immediate preparations and institutional arrangements, stressing that citizens have been deprived of their right to vote over the past 15 years and that the upcoming election should be remembered as a grand celebration of democracy. It also conveyed the chief adviser's aspiration for the polls to be an unforgettable event marked by joy, peace, discipline, high voter turnout, goodwill and sincerity, and emphasised the importance of using appropriate technology.

The government assured the Election Commission of its fullest cooperation to ensure the election meets the highest standards. Speaking earlier at a press briefing at his office in the Election Commission Secretariat at Agargaon in the capital, the CEC said the schedule would be announced roughly one to two months before polling day, once the letter is received and discussions are held. "There has been discussion over the past few days about the polling date. Despite the various challenges of holding the election in February, our preparations are moving forward. We have been preparing for a long time to ensure a proper and fair election," he said.

Meanwhile, Finance Adviser Dr Salehuddin Ahmed, responding to a question about the election budget, assured reporters on Wednesday that funding would not be an issue. "Whatever money is needed for the election will be provided. There is no problem in this regard," he said. The government has set aside Tk 2,956 crore for the Election Commission in the current fiscal year – nearly Tk 2,000 crore more than the previous year, as show in official documents for the national budget for the current 2025-26 fiscal year.

On the same day, Home Affairs Adviser Lt Gen (Retd) Jahangir Alam Chowdhury announced that transfers of superintendents of police (SPs) and officers-in-charge (OCs) would be carried out through a lottery system to ensure transparency. "As per the chief adviser's directive, these transfers will be conducted via lottery. Those currently holding these posts will also be reassigned through the same process," he said after a high-level meeting at the secretariat. That meeting focused on drawing up action plans for law enforcement agencies to ensure a smooth parliamentary election, with secretaries from relevant ministries and senior police officials in attendance.

In his televised address on Tuesday, marking the July Mass Uprising Day, Chief Adviser Prof Yunus said the interim government would begin the process of handing over responsibility to an elected administration. "On behalf of the interim government, I will send a letter to the Chief Election Commissioner requesting that the Election Commission arrange national elections in February 2026, before Ramadan," he said. "The chief adviser has said he wants to see an election in a festive atmosphere, like Eid day. That's the vision we are working toward.

"Law and order is improving. In the coming months, the situation will get even better. We want to deliver an election as transparent as a mirror," Nasir Uddin said, adding that preventing the misuse of artificial intelligence would also be a priority. He said that alongside public confidence, the commission must also win the trust of political parties and ensure high voter participation. Comparing the present security situation to that of a year ago, he remarked, "That previous situation no longer exists. Things have improved

significantly.”

Updating the voter list remains one of the commission’s key tasks. A draft will be published soon and finalised by 31 August, with a supplementary list to be compiled before the schedule is announced to include eligible young voters. Party registration verification is ongoing, and those meeting the criteria will be subject to further scrutiny. After that, a 15-day notification will be issued for objections. The CEC confirmed that the procurement process for the election is targeted to finish by 30 September, with tenders already issued. Delimitation of constituencies has been completed transparently, and hearings are now being wrapped up. “All major tasks are expected to be completed by September, InshaAllah,” he said.

Training will be provided for between 8,00,000 and 9,00,000 election officials, alongside preparations for law enforcement and postal ballots for polling staff. “This time, we will try to bring about 1 million personnel under the postal ballot system. Journalists were unaware of this – now it’s noted,” he said. While the polls are expected to be held in the first half of February before Ramadan, the schedule is likely to be declared in late December. Calling on political parties to cooperate in creating a level playing field, the CEC appealed, “Don’t try to win the election through questionable means. For God’s sake, help me. I want to deliver a beautiful, credible, and transparent election. I can’t do it without your cooperation. If all players enter the field intending to commit fouls, then the referee cannot prevent the match from being spoiled. How many red cards can one show?”

He emphasised that political parties are key stakeholders. “Our duty is to create a level playing field for them. We want them to have equal opportunities, and we are working towards that. But its implementation depends on you. If you don’t help me, I won’t be able to do it,” he said. The CEC identified restoring public trust as the biggest challenge ahead. “People have lost trust. Restoring that trust is now the number one challenge. It’s pointless to blame the voters. They have lost faith in the Election Commission and the electoral process. We will take every possible measure to ensure a free and fair election,” he said.

Electoral Code of Conduct to be finalised on Thursday : The Election Commission is set to approve the “Code of Conduct for Political Parties and Candidates 2025” in its ninth meeting on Thursday, ahead of the 13th National Parliamentary Election. The agenda will also include discussions on the Representation of the People Order (RPO), 1972 (Amendment) Ordinance, 2025 and other matters. This was revealed in an office order signed by EC Deputy Secretary Md Shah Alam. The draft code, given preliminary approval on 19 June, proposes several new rules, including banning election posters, capping fines for violations at Tk 1.5 lakh, and requiring eco-friendly campaign materials.

Public feedback was sought from parties, organisations, and individuals, with over 42 submissions received, including from at least eight political parties and groups such as Transparency International Bangladesh and the Institute for Environment and Development. Concerns raised in the feedback included the misuse of artificial intelligence and social media, the need for regulations on digital campaigning, and a total ban on election posters.

EC seeks magistrates’ details from past elections : The commission has requested detailed information on executive magistrates who served alongside law enforcement during the 2014, 2018, and 2024 national polls, following a request from the Police Bureau of Investigation (PBI). The PBI, which is investigating a case filed with Sher-e-Bangla Nagar police station, had earlier sought similar information on returning officers, presiding officers, assistant presiding officers, and polling officers from those elections. In its latest directive to divisional and district commissioners, the EC asked for names of the magistrates, along with their parents’ names, addresses, NID numbers, passport numbers (if any), mobile numbers, and other relevant details. The data will be forwarded to the PBI once compiled. The PBI is believed to be reviewing and assessing the roles of administrative officials during those election periods as part of its investigation.