

Nat'l election, referendum set for Feb 12 : EC announces schedule

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Online Desk : Bangladesh will hold its long-awaited national election along with a referendum on the July (Reform) Charter on February 12, 2026, marking the first time in the country's history that a general election and a referendum will take place simultaneously. The polls will be held under a non-political administration for the first time in 18 years, according to the schedule announced by the Election Commission on Thursday evening. Chief Election Commissioner AMM Nasir Uddin disclosed the schedule in a pre-recorded speech broadcast on Bangladesh Television and Bangladesh Betar at 6 PM.

As per the announcement, the deadline for submitting nomination papers is December 29, while scrutiny will take place from December 30 to January 4. The last date for withdrawal of candidature is January 26 and election campaigning will formally begin on January 22. Voting will run uninterrupted from 7:30 AM to 4:30 PM on February 12. The Chief Election Commissioner expressed optimism that the election would be festive and widely participated in, noting that 12.76 crore voters will be able to cast their ballots at more than 42,000 polling stations across the country's 300 constituencies in the 2026 general election.

The upcoming polls will differ significantly from previous ones. The use of posters has been banned, while digital campaigning and billboards will be allowed. For the first time, the Election Commission has introduced an IT-supported hybrid postal balloting system, enabling expatriates, government officials, polling personnel and individuals in legal custody to vote through digital registration and manual submission of ballots.

Although the postal voting provision existed in law, it had never been implemented in earlier elections. This will be the first parliamentary election since 2008 to be held under a non-political administration. The last three general elections; held in 2014, 2018 and 2023, took place under the Awami League government. The 9th parliamentary election, held on December 29, 2008, was conducted under the army-backed caretaker government.