



ALLIANCE FOR FAIR ELECTION AND DEMOCRACY

ELECTION DAY OBSERVATION PRELIMINARY STATEMENT 13 FEBRUARY 2026

Citizen election observers witnessed well-conducted elections in a peaceful and festive environment

Election Day took place in a largely festive and peaceful environment, without major incidents of violence or disruption. The overall management of the electoral process was observed as professional throughout the day, from the opening of the polls to the closing and counting. AFED election observers were not granted full access to observe the counting in a fifth of polling stations observed, constraining transparency at this stage of the process.

Background

12 February 2026, marked an important moment for Bangladesh with citizens voting in national parliamentary elections and a referendum on the same day. The election marks the end of a transitional process. For the first time since 2008, the elections are taking place in a competitive environment, with political parties and candidates undertaking extensive campaigning in the run-up to the vote to increase their support among voters. More than 127 million voters have been registered to vote in some 42,700 polling centers across the country, underscoring the scale of logistical coordination required to ensure a credible, peaceful, and inclusive Election Day. For the first time, voting procedures included postal voting from abroad as well as in-country postal voting for persons engaged in the conduct of the election and prisoners.

AFED and Methodology

AFED is a national platform of 30 reputable civil society organizations, established in July 2025, working to promote transparency, accountability, and public confidence in Bangladesh's electoral process through non-partisan, independent and evidence-based citizen observation. The alliance reflects broad geographic coverage and meaningful representation of women, youth, minorities, and persons with disabilities.

AFED's methodology combines long-term observation and short-term Election Day observation, which makes our findings and assessments rigorous and aims to contribute to post-election reforms. AFED has deployed 175 Long-Term Observers across the country since 28 December 2025. On Election Day, overall 2.800 accredited observers were deployed in proportion to geographic areas. All observation activities were conducted independently and impartially by trained observers adhering to a strict Code of Conduct, with conclusions and recommendations derived from verified field data. AFED's election observation activities are supported by the European Union and the European Partnership for Democracy (EPD).

Observations of Election Day

Set-up and opening of the polling centers

The opening of the polling centers was scheduled for 7:30 am and nearly all observed polling stations were ready to open on time. Polling stations were well set up, ballot boxes were seen to be empty, shown to those present, and properly sealed prior to the start of voting. AFED observers noted that in almost all the centers, polling stations were arranged in a manner that ensured the secrecy of the vote. Furthermore, candidates polling agents were present in more than 90 percent of the locations visited, contributing to enhance transparency in the process.

Voting process and closing in the stations

Voters were lined up in an orderly and peaceful manner, with effective queue management by polling station officials observed in at least 98 percent of cases. Integrity measures for voters' identification were largely respected in the observed PS. In at least 88 percent of the polling stations observed, polling officials checked voters' identity and photographs against the voter lists before issuing ballot papers and at least in 90 percent of observed cases, the ink appeared to be properly applied. There was an overall good work flow in the polling stations, with only a few isolated incidents of the voting process being interrupted or stopped.

Elderly, persons with disability, and pregnant women were given priority to vote in 97 percent of the polling stations AFED observed. However, polling centers were accessible for voters with mobility limitations in only three quarters of the locations observed.

AFED observers noted that uniformed security personnel were present throughout the day in nearly all polling centers, contributing to general order.

The closing of the polling stations was observed as orderly. AFED observers noted that, in over 90 percent of the polling stations where closing was observed, voters in the queue were allowed to vote in line with established procedures.

Counting process

The counting operations started timely in at least 90 percent of the polling stations observed.

Invalid and valid ballots were assessed accurately, with no complaints recorded in at least 88 percent of observed counting locations. In a vast majority of observed

counting locations, there was no interference, intimidation, or harassment during the counting process.

Authorized party and candidate agents were allowed to stay in the polling stations after closing to observe the count, thus supporting transparency. During counting, BNP party or candidate agents were present in 92 percent of the locations, Jamaat-e-Islami agents in 78 percent, NCP agents in 16 percent, and independent candidate agents in 48 percent.

The results of the parliamentary elections were publicly posted in over 95 percent of the polling centers observed, promoting transparency and building confidence in the results of the election.

AFED observers witnessed the counting of postal ballots at Returning Officers' locations in about one third of all constituencies. These observations indicate issues with the validity of postal ballots and the use of technology in this process.

Participation of women and marginalized communities

Whilst women representation in the leadership structures within the Election Commission is limited, they constituted a crucial work force on Election Day. AFED noted that polling officials in two thirds of the polling stations observed were women, underlining their important role in the overall electoral process

AFED observers reported that the majority of national minority voters were treated in the same manner as other voters in terms of access to polling stations and voting procedures.

The accessibility of polling centers for persons with disabilities remained a concern throughout Election Day.

Access to observers

AFED observers were generally granted access to observe the opening and the voting processes. However, in some 20 percent of cases, observers were not given access at the stage of the count. This raises concerns regarding transparency at this critical stage of the process.

Recommendations

- We call on the Election Commission to continue upholding transparency in the results process. We urge the Election Commission to publicise detailed results per polling center and to ensure transparency around the integration of the postal vote into the constituency level results.
- Election observers must be granted access to the remaining stages of the electoral process, including the final consolidation of results..
- We call on all electoral stakeholders to channel any complaints they may have through the appropriate complaints mechanisms and encourage the Election Commission to address all complaints in a timely manner.

- We call on political stakeholders to act responsibly throughout the remainder of the electoral process, which is still ongoing. Political parties should refrain from inflammatory rhetoric and allow the consolidation of final results to proceed in accordance with established procedures.

Acknowledgments

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The findings shared in AFED's press release and preliminary statement are solely the views of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union.

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