



13th National Election of Bangladesh: Media Coverage, Political Dynamics, and Electoral Outcomes

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Abstract

This study analyses the pre-election media monitoring, political dynamics, and electoral outcome of the 13th National Parliamentary Election of Bangladesh, held on February 12, 2026. The election was the first since the July 2024 popular uprising that ended Sheikh Hasina's 16-year Awami League rule. The election resulted in a landslide victory for the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), with Jamaat-e-Islami emerging as the principal opposition. Drawing on a primary dataset of 1,423 news articles collected from 14 major Bangladeshi print and digital media outlets (October 21 - December 10, 2025), supplemented by data from the Human Rights Support Society (HRSS) and the Election Commission, this study traces electoral discourse across five thematic domains. The analysis reveals that pre-election media dynamics, particularly the saturation coverage of BNP's internal nomination disputes foreshadowed the party's organizational dominance on election day. Despite documented irregularities and structural constraints on electoral quality, the election is regarded as a significant milestone in Bangladesh's democratic history.

Keywords

BNP; Bangladeshi democracy; Bangladesh election 2026; Tarique Rahman

1. Introduction

On February 12, 2026, Bangladesh held its 13th National Parliamentary Election alongside the second-ever national constitutional referendum. The election was the first since the July 2024 mass uprising, during which the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR, 2025) estimated that 1,400 civilians were killed during the crackdown on protesters under Sheikh Hasina's government. Following Hasina's removal from office on August 5, 2024, an interim government led by Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus oversaw the country's political transition and organized what many observers have described as the most closely watched election in Bangladesh's recent history.

The Awami League, which had governed Bangladesh for 16 consecutive years, was excluded from the 2026 election after the Election Commission suspended its registration. This exclusion reshaped the competitive landscape: the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) went on to form the next government, while Jamaat-e-Islami, whose registration had been restored by the Supreme Court in June 2025, emerged as the largest opposition party. The student-led National Citizen Party (NCP), formed in February 2025 by leaders of the 2024 protest movement,

contested the election in alliance with Jamaat's 11-party coalition.

This study has two related aims. First, it documents the relative volume and topical focus of pre-election media attention using a systematically compiled log of 1,423 headline-level entries from 14 Bangladeshi outlets, covering October 21 to December 10, 2025. Second, it situates this pre-election period within the broader trajectory of the election by drawing on supplementary, independently sourced reporting and official data covering developments through February 14, 2026, including violence monitoring, public opinion polling, and certified results. The two evidentiary strands are kept analytically distinct throughout: claims about pre-election news volume and topic salience rest on the primary log, while claims about events, violence statistics, and outcomes after December 10, 2025, rest on the cited supplementary sources.

The remainder of the article is organized as follows. Section 2 reviews relevant literature on media attention and electoral competition in transitional and competitive-authoritarian settings. Section 3 describes the data sources and analytical procedures. Section 4 presents results on media coverage distribution, pre-election political dynamics, violence, public opinion, and the certified election outcome. Section 5 discusses the findings in relation to theories of democratic transition and electoral system design, and addresses limitations and policy implications. Section 6 concludes.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Media Attention and Electoral Competition

Scholarship on media and elections distinguishes between the volume of attention a topic receives and the way that topic is framed or evaluated (Entman, 1993). The present study is positioned within the first tradition: it measures how much pre-election coverage particular themes and outlets generated, without making claims about framing, tone, or persuasive effect, since the underlying dataset does not contain full article text. This distinction matters in media systems such as Bangladesh's, where outlet ownership and editorial alignment with political camps are well documented (Ali, 2021), and where attention volume alone can reveal which intra-party and inter-party conflicts dominated the pre-election news agenda.

2.2 Democratic Transition After Authoritarian Breakdown

The 2026 Bangladeshi election followed a pattern recognizable from the comparative literature on competitive authoritarianism and democratic transition: the sudden removal of a long-dominant incumbent creates an opening for competitive multiparty politics, but the quality of the resulting election depends on factors such as the inclusiveness of competition, the neutrality of the election administration, and the prevalence of political violence (Levitsky & Way, 2002). Transitional elections of this kind are frequently judged not only by their procedural conduct on polling day but also by the conditions, including exclusions, violence, and administrative reshuffling, that precede them. This framework motivates the attention given in this study to pre-election dynamics rather than polling-day administration alone.

2.3 Electoral Systems and Disproportionality

A further relevant body of work concerns the relationship between vote share and seat share under single-member plurality (first-past-the-post) electoral systems, which can produce parliamentary majorities considerably larger than the underlying vote share of the leading party

(Lijphart, 1994). This literature provides a frame for interpreting the seat distribution reported in Section 4.6, in which the leading party's share of declared seats substantially exceeded what most pre-election polling implied about its vote share.

3. Methodology and Data Sources

3.1 Primary Dataset

The primary dataset is a media log comprising 1,423 entries collected from 14 Bangladeshi news outlets between October 21 and December 10, 2025. Each entry records the article title, source URL, outlet name, and publication date; full article text was not systematically retained. Because the dataset captures headline-level metadata rather than article content, it is used in this study to measure the volume and topical distribution of pre-election news attention across outlets and themes, not to characterize media framing, narrative tone, or discourse. The 14 outlets are Prothom Alo, Jugantor, Kaler Kantho, Samakal, Daily Inqilab, Daily Janakantha, Naya Diganta, Ittefaq, Bonik Barta, Alokito Bangladesh, Amardesh, Daily Star, Times of Bangladesh, and Sangbad.

3.2 Supplementary Sources

Developments after December 10, 2025, including the formal election schedule, campaign-period violence, the public opinion survey, and certified results, are described using supplementary sources rather than the primary log. These include the Bangladesh Election Commission, the HRSS Election Observation Report, and contemporaneous reporting by Al Jazeera, Reuters, the Daily Star, Prothom Alo, and Dhaka Tribune. Because this supplementary material was assembled through targeted retrieval rather than systematic, outlet-controlled sampling, it is treated in this study as a chronological record of verified events rather than as data suitable for volume- or frequency-based analysis. Conclusions drawn from this material are limited accordingly to what each individual source reports, with citations provided throughout.

3.3 Analytical Approach

Entries in the primary log were classified into thematic categories based on title content, and outlet-level and theme-level frequencies were computed using descriptive statistics. Thematic categorization was cross-checked using Voyant Tools, an open-source text analysis platform applied to the compiled title corpus, to confirm that keyword-based groupings reflected the most frequent terms in the dataset. No sentiment, framing, or discourse analysis was conducted, consistent with the title-and-metadata-only structure of the dataset described in Section 3.1. Violence statistics in Section 4.4 are drawn directly from the HRSS (2026) observation report rather than from the primary log.

4. Results

4.1 Volume and Distribution of Pre-Election Media Attention

Table 1 reports the number of primary-log entries by outlet; the full dataset comprises 1,423 entries. Bangla-language dailies accounted for the large majority of coverage volume: Prothom Alo (278 entries) and Jugantor (270 entries) together accounted for 548 entries, or approximately 38.5% of the dataset (Figure 1). The Daily Star, Bangladesh's leading English-language daily, contributed 46 entries, concentrated on institutionally oriented themes such as the neutrality debate, amendments to the Representation of the People Order (RPO),

and international observer delegations. Naya Diganta and Daily Inqilab, both associated with Islamic-conservative readerships, together accounted for 246 entries, with a disproportionate share devoted to Jamaat-e-Islami's campaign activities, a pattern consistent with documented outlet-level political alignment in the Bangladeshi press. This study can characterize that alignment only in terms of attention volume; it offers no data on tone, evaluative content, or framing.

Table 1. Distribution of primary-log entries by media outlet (October 21 - December 10, 2025)

Media Outlet	Articles (n)	Primary Coverage Focus
Prothom Alo	278	Candidate nominations, party alliances, election prep, violence
Jugantor	270	BNP-Jamaat rivalry, seat-sharing, grassroots tensions
Daily Inqilab	146	Islamic party coverage, BNP voter base, neutrality demands
Daily Janakantha	139	Constituency-level races, BNP-Jamaat confrontations
Samakal	123	Electoral administration, EVM/ballot logistics, party splits
Kaler Kantho	116	Security arrangements, EC decisions, reform debates
Ittefaq	108	Diaspora voting, candidate lists, administrative reshuffles
Naya Diganta	100	Islamist parties, BNP manifesto, election sabotage concerns
Others (Bonik Barta, Alokito Bangladesh, Amardesh, Sangbad, Times of Bangladesh)	97	Constituency races, RPO amendment, BNP-Jamaat confrontations
Daily Star	46	Neutrality debate, RPO amendment, international observers
Total	1,423	

Note. Source: Compiled by author from the primary media log. Total entries (N = 1,423) include all 14 outlets in the dataset.

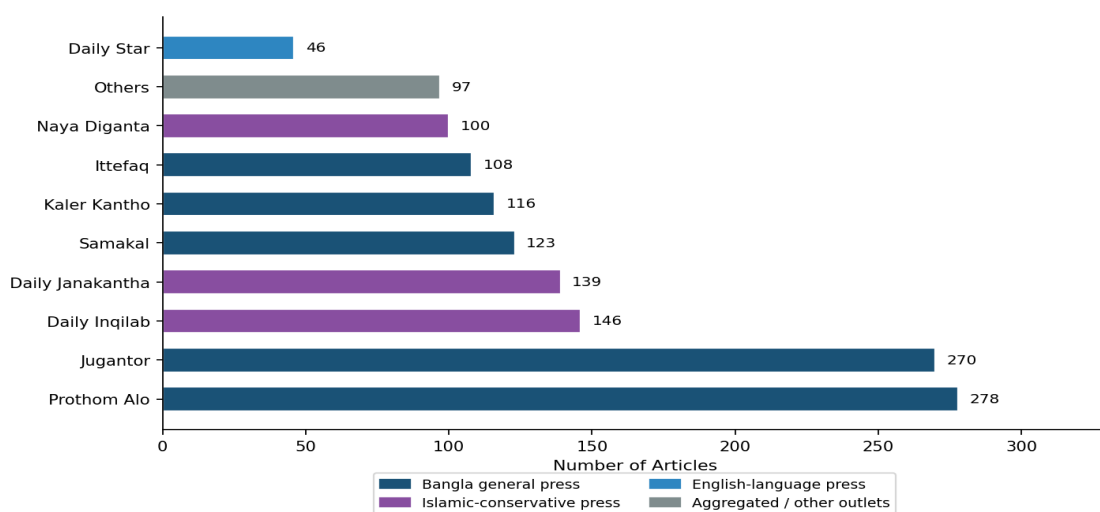


Figure 1. Distribution of primary-log entries by media outlet (October 21 - December 10, 2025; N = 1,423). Colour coding indicates broad outlet orientation. Source: Compiled by author from the primary media log.

4.2 Thematic Distribution of Pre-Election Coverage

Ten recurring thematic categories were identified within the primary log. The most frequent category was BNP's internal candidate-nomination disputes, which generated the largest concentration of entries from late October through early December 2025. Table 2 and Figure 2 summarize thematic intensity across three sub-periods, showing rising attention to electoral violence and NCP-related coverage as the election date approached. These patterns describe the volume of attention each theme received in the primary log; they do not indicate how any individual outlet evaluated or portrayed the parties involved.

Table 2. Thematic distribution of primary-log entries (October 21 - December 10, 2025)

Theme	Intensity	Period	Key Manifestations
BNP candidate nomination disputes	Very High	Oct 21 - Dec 10, 2025	Internal protests, road blockades, shroud marches
BNP-Jamaat seat-sharing tensions	High	Oct 22 - Dec 10, 2025	Competing candidacies in 6+ constituencies
Election Commission actions	High	Oct 21 - Dec 10, 2025	Voter rolls, symbol allocation, observer accreditation
NCP emergence & positioning	Moderate	Oct 31 - Dec 10, 2025	Solo run vs. alliance debate; 100-seat candidacy plan
Administrative reshuffles	Moderate	Nov 14 - Dec 10, 2025	826 judges and 64 police superintendents transferred pre-election
Diaspora (postal) voting	Moderate	Nov 18 - Dec 10, 2025	223,471 registered by Dec 7, 2025
Electoral violence & security	High	Oct 21 - Dec 10, 2025	Pre-polling clashes, weapons arrests, mock voting disorders
Referendum on July Charter	Moderate	Nov 13 - Dec 10, 2025	Yes/No vote held alongside parliamentary election
Awami League exclusion debate	Moderate	Oct 25 - Dec 10, 2025	No consensus; foreign pressure noted; EC stance: banned
International observer interest	Moderate	Oct 23 - Dec 10, 2025	EU, IRI, Commonwealth, UN delegations

Note. Source: Compiled by author from the primary media log.

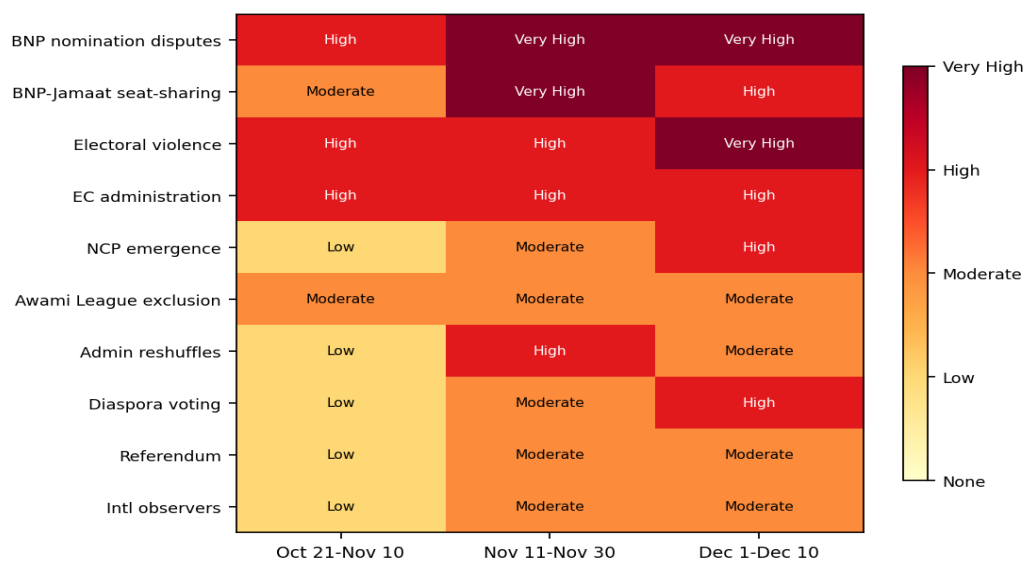


Figure 2. Thematic coverage-volume heatmap by sub-period (October 21 - December 10, 2025), based on primary-log entry counts. Intensity scale: Low, Moderate, High, Very High. Source: Author-compiled dataset.

4.3 Pre-Election Political Dynamics

4.3.1 BNP Candidate nomination disputes

The theme attracting the greatest volume of pre-election coverage was internal disagreement within the BNP over candidate selection. According to contemporaneous reporting, the party faced sustained pressure from local leaders who felt overlooked in the nomination process from late October 2025 onward, with protests reported in the form of road blockades, torch processions, hunger strikes, and announcements of independent candidacies in several districts simultaneously. Coverage also documented the party's nomination of at least 15 women and

recurring tension between central leadership and district-level organizations. By November 3, 2025, BNP had announced a preliminary candidate list across 237 constituencies (Staff Correspondent, 2025).

4.3.2 BNP-Jamaat competition for electoral ground

Reporting also documented a shift in the relationship between BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami, which had previously been coalition partners between 2001 and 2006 but contested the 2026 election as rivals in several constituencies, including at least six where both parties fielded candidates against each other, with particular intensity reported in Chattogram, Sylhet, and Rajshahi divisions. NCP ultimately joined the Jamaat-led 11-party coalition and contested 30 seats while retaining its own electoral symbol (The Business Standard, 2026a).

4.3.3 Electoral administration and reforms

Coverage of the Election Commission (EC), under Chief Election Commissioner AMM Nasir Uddin, focused on its handling of competing demands from at least 12 political parties regarding RPO amendments, party-symbol allocation, including a dispute over NCP's request for the 'Shapla Koli' symbol (The Business Standard, 2025), and the administrative arrangements for the simultaneous constitutional referendum. The EC announced the formal election schedule on December 11, 2025, setting February 12, 2026, as the polling date (Al Jazeera, 2025). The interim government also carried out a large-scale reshuffle of civil administration: a gazette notification on November 25, 2025, recorded the transfer or promotion of 826 judges (The Daily Star, 2025a), and a separate notification on November 27, 2025, recorded the transfer of 158 upazila-level officers (Dhaka Tribune, 2025).

4.3.4 Diaspora and postal voting

The 2026 election introduced postal voting for Bangladeshi citizens residing abroad. By December 30, 2025, more than one million diaspora voters had registered (Bangladesh Pratidin, 2025); by election day, 1,224,188 postal ballots had been cast, an 80.11% turnout rate among registered postal voters (The Business Standard, 2026c).

4.3.5 The Awami League exclusion debate

Whether the Awami League should be permitted to contest the election was a recurring point of debate throughout the pre-election period. Although the EC's suspension of the party's registration remained in force, several political and institutional voices, including BNP leader Ruhul Kabir Rizvi and the Bangladesh Army chief, called for broader inclusion, while NCP leader Nahid Islam and Jamaat's Shafiqur Rahman publicly opposed Awami League participation pending trials related to the July 2024 crackdown. A pre-election survey by Prothom Alo (2025) found that 69% of respondents favoured some form of conditional Awami League participation, though this sentiment did not translate into a change in the EC's position, and the party was excluded from the ballot.

4.4 Pre-Election and Election-Day Violence

The HRSS, which deployed 565 observers across all 64 districts, compiled violence data covering October 2025 through February 14, 2026 (HRSS, 2026). Table 3 and Figure 3 summarize this data by phase. During the campaign period (December 11, 2025 - February 11, 2026), HRSS recorded 254 incidents, 5 deaths, and 1,650 injuries; of these, clashes among

BNP supporters alone accounted for 68 incidents, 3 deaths, and 595 injuries, while BNP-Jamaat confrontations accounted for a further 100 incidents, 1 death, and 915 injuries. On election day itself, HRSS recorded 105 clashes between supporters, 59 allegations of ballot-box stuffing, 149 instances of disorder at polling centres, and 6 assaults on candidates, with no fatalities reported for that day specifically. Across the full observation window, HRSS recorded more than 700 incidents, 10 deaths, and 2,503 injuries. Separately, Transparency International Bangladesh attributed 91.7% of documented political violence following Hasina's removal to BNP-affiliated activists, with 20.7% attributed to Awami League-linked individuals and 7.7% to Jamaat-affiliated individuals (The Business Standard, 2026b); these category totals are not mutually exclusive of HRSS's incident counts and should be read as a separate attribution analysis rather than a reconciliation of the same events.

Table 3. Election-related violence by phase (October 2025 - February 14, 2026)

Period	Phase	Key Statistics
Oct 2025 - Dec 10, 2025	Pre-schedule period	Nomination clashes, BNP internal conflicts, Jamaat rally incidents (not disaggregated in source)
Dec 11, 2025 - Feb 11, 2026	Campaign period	254 incidents; 5 killed; 1,650 injured; 24 shot; 200+ properties attacked
Feb 12, 2026 (Polling day)	Election day	105 clashes; 59 ballot-stuffing allegations; 145 injured; 6 candidate assaults
Oct 2025 - Feb 14, 2026 (Total)	Full observation window	700+ incidents; 10 killed; 2,503 injured

Note. Source: Compiled by author from HRSS (2026).

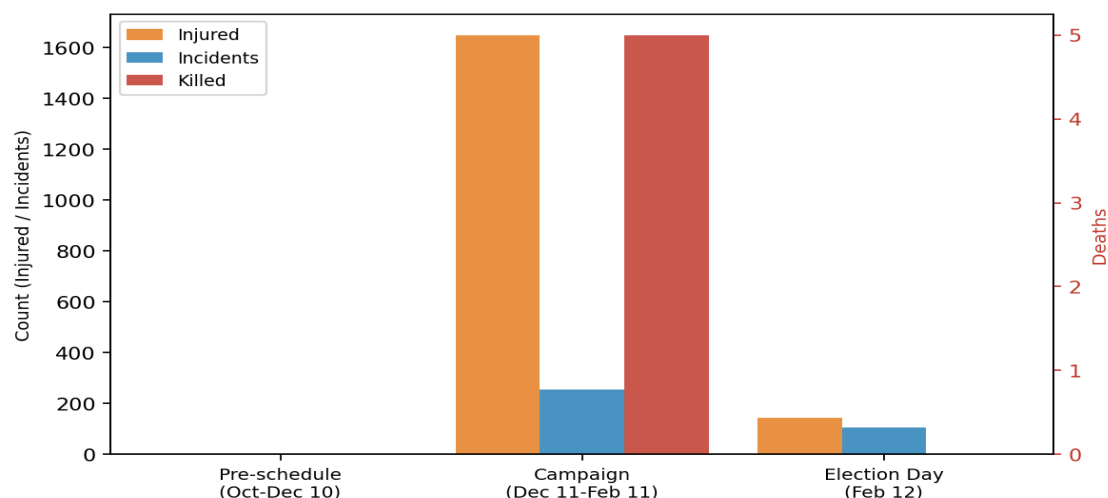


Figure 3. Election-related violence by phase: incidents, injuries, and deaths (HRSS, 2026). Pre-schedule-period totals were not disaggregated in the source report. Source: Compiled by author from HRSS (2026).

4.5 Public Opinion and Voter Expectations

A pre-election survey conducted by Prothom Alo (2025) and published on December 9, 2025, offers the only systematic public opinion data available for this study (Table 4; Figure 4). Sixty-six percent of respondents expected BNP to win the most seats, while only 50% believed the vote would be free and fair, indicating that expectations of a BNP victory coexisted with substantial public skepticism about electoral quality. Forty-seven percent considered it likely that Tarique Rahman would become Prime Minister.

Table 4. Selected public opinion and electoral participation indicators

Indicator	Figure	Source
BNP expected to win most seats	66%	Prothom Alo survey (Dec 9, 2025)
Vote expected to be free and fair	50%	Prothom Alo survey (Dec 9, 2025)
Tarique Rahman likely as PM	47%	Prothom Alo survey (Dec 9, 2025)
Awami League should participate (conditional)	69%	Prothom Alo survey (Dec 9, 2025)
Awami League should NOT participate	28%	Prothom Alo survey (Dec 9, 2025)
Final voter turnout (official)	59.88%	Bangladesh Election Commission (Feb 13, 2026)
First-time voters who participated	4.57 million	Bangladesh Election Commission data

Note. Source: Compiled by author from Prothom Alo (2025) and the Bangladesh Election Commission (2026).

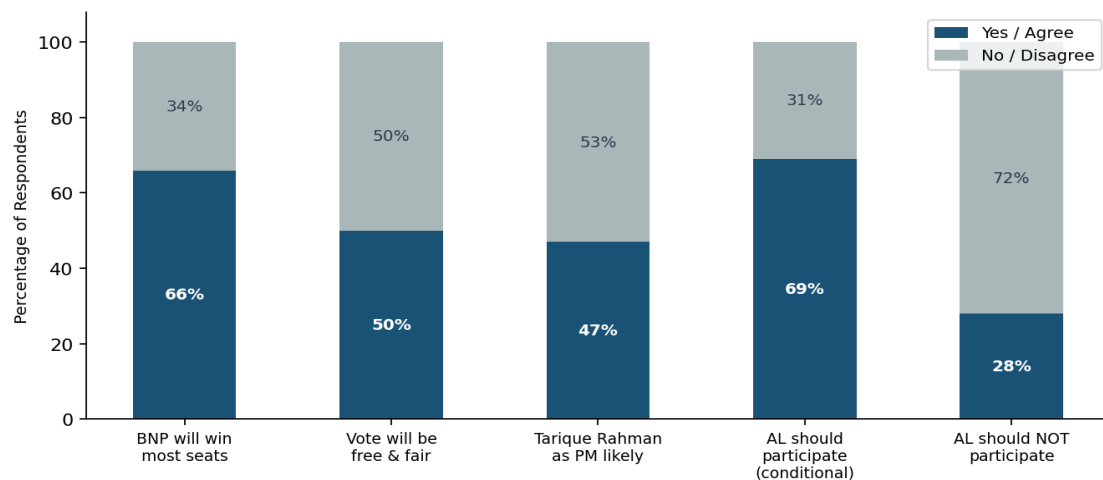


Figure 4. Pre-election public opinion indicators (Prothom Alo survey, December 9, 2025). Stacked bars show agree/disagree proportions for each survey item. Source: Prothom Alo (2025).

Final turnout, certified by the Bangladesh Election Commission (2026), was 59.88%, with 4.57 million first-time voters participating, a cohort with a documented connection to the July 2024 uprising whose turnout was concentrated in urban constituencies.

4.6 Certified Election Results

Polling was conducted at 42,761 centres across 64 districts for 300 constituencies. Voting was held in 299 constituencies after the death of a Jamaat-e-Islami candidate suspended the contest in Sherpur-3; court orders separately barred the publication of results from Chattogram-3 and Chattogram-8, leaving 297 constituencies with declared results at the time of reporting (Dhaka Tribune, 2026). Table 5 and Figure 5 report the outcome among these 297 declared seats.

Table 5. 13th National parliamentary election results, declared seats (February 12-13, 2026)

Party / Alliance	Seats Won	% of 297 Declared	Notes
Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP)	209	70.4%	Majority government; Tarique Rahman named Prime Minister-designate
Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami (BJI)	68	22.9%	Largest opposition party; most seats won by Jamaat in a single election
Independent candidates	8	2.7%	Several former BNP/Jamaat figures
National Citizen Party (NCP)	6	2.0%	Nahid Islam won; party contested 30 seats
Bangladesh Khelafat Majlish	2	0.7%	Small Islamic party gains representation
Other parties (7 parties)	4	1.3%	1 seat each: Workers Party, GOP, Islami Andolon, etc.

Note. Source: Bangladesh Election Commission (2026); Dhaka Tribune (2026). Percentages are calculated against the 297 declared seats at time of reporting.

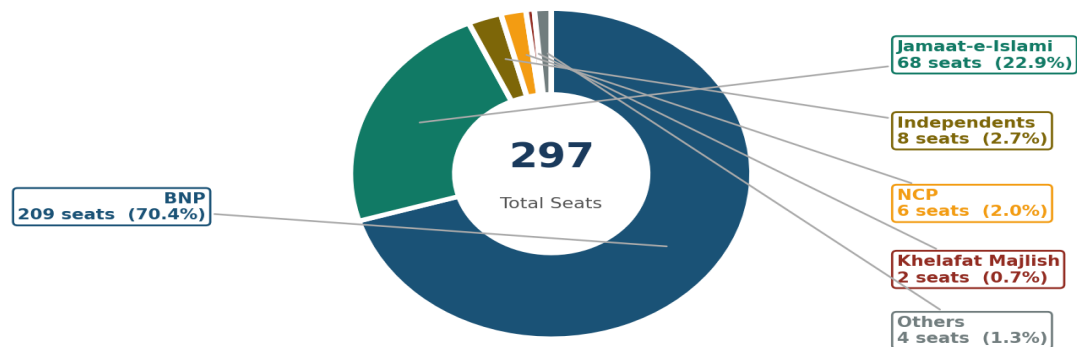


Figure 5. Seat distribution by party among 297 declared constituencies, 13th National Parliamentary Election (February 12-13, 2026). Source: Bangladesh Election Commission (2026); Dhaka Tribune (2026).

The BNP won 209 of 297 declared seats (70.4%). Because the full parliament comprises 300 seats, a constitutional supermajority requires 200 seats; BNP's 209 declared seats therefore met and exceeded the two-thirds threshold required for unilateral constitutional amendment, an outcome substantially larger than the 66% expectation recorded in the December 2025 Prothom Alo survey regarding the party's likely seat performance (Table 4). This gap between pre-election expectations and the certified outcome is discussed further in Section 5.3 in relation to the disproportionality typically associated with single-member plurality electoral systems. Jamaat-e-Islami won 68 seats (22.9%), its largest-ever result in a single election. NCP won 6 of the 30 seats it contested, including the seat of party leader Nahid Islam; NCP candidate Abdul Hannan Masud, aged 26, became the youngest member of parliament in Bangladesh's electoral history (Nath, 2026).

A constitutional referendum on the July National Charter was held alongside the parliamentary election, asking voters whether they supported the 'July National Charter (Constitutional Reform) Implementation Order, 2025' and four associated reforms: an election-time caretaker government system; a bicameral parliament with a proportionally allocated 100-member upper house; a binding requirement for winning parties to implement 30 consensus reform proposals; and other charter provisions. The referendum passed with 62.74% support.

The BNP government was sworn in on February 17, 2026, amid an opposition boycott by the Jamaat-NCP coalition over disagreements concerning the sequencing of July Charter implementation. International reaction was largely positive: the EU Election Observation Mission described the vote as a significant democratic milestone while noting that further reforms were needed (The Daily Star, 2026a), and the United States, which had previously criticized the conduct of Bangladesh's 2024 elections, characterized the 2026 vote as a success. Congratulatory messages followed from India, Pakistan, China, and Canada (CNN, 2026).

5. Discussion

5.1 Media Attention as an Indicator of Political Fragmentation

The concentration of pre-election media attention on BNP's internal nomination disputes, the largest single thematic category in the primary log, is consistent with the party's prominence as the presumptive election winner and with the scale of its internal organizational strain. A long-excluded party suddenly facing an abundance of aspiring candidates generated conflicts that were, by volume, the most heavily covered story of the pre-election period. The differential emphasis given to Jamaat-e-Islami's campaign by Islamic-conservative outlets

compared with general-interest outlets is consistent with documented patterns of outlet-level political alignment in the Bangladeshi press (Ali, 2021). Because the primary dataset records only headline-level metadata, this study can speak to the relative volume of attention different outlets devoted to different actors; it cannot characterize how that attention was framed, evaluated, or received by audiences, and no causal claim is made linking pre-election coverage volume to vote choice.

5.2 Structural Constraints on Electoral Quality

Evidence from the supplementary sources and the HRSS (2026) observation report points to several constraints on the quality of the 2026 election: substantial pre-election and election-day violence, a majority of which independent monitors attributed to BNP-affiliated activists; the exclusion of the Awami League, which removed a major political actor from competition despite documented public ambivalence about that exclusion; and election-day irregularities recorded by HRSS observers. These constraints should be weighed against indicators of a genuinely competitive process, including the participation of 51 registered parties, a turnout of 59.88%, and the introduction of diaspora postal voting. Read through the lens of transitional-election theory (Levitsky & Way, 2002), the 2026 election represents a meaningful opening for competitive politics whose durability depends on whether the incoming government implements the July Charter commitments that underpinned the transition.

5.3 Seat-Vote Disproportionality Under First-Past-the-Post

A central analytical finding concerns the gap between pre-election expectations and the certified seat distribution. BNP's 70.4% share of declared seats considerably exceeded the 66% expectation recorded in the December 2025 Prothom Alo survey regarding the party's likely seat performance, and substantially exceeded what a single-party vote share near a plurality would typically be expected to produce under proportional allocation. This pattern is consistent with the well-documented tendency of single-member plurality systems to convert a geographically concentrated plurality of votes into a disproportionately large parliamentary majority (Lijphart, 1994). Jamaat-e-Islami's 68 seats and NCP's 6 of 30 contested seats further illustrate how the electoral system rewards geographically concentrated support while constraining parties with more dispersed support bases. This dynamic is directly relevant to the proportional-representation reforms debated by Jamaat and NCP during the referendum campaign.

5.4 Scope and Limitations of the Primary Dataset

Several limitations qualify the conclusions that can be drawn from this study. First, and most importantly, the primary dataset consists of article titles, outlet names, URLs, and publication dates rather than full article text; it is therefore suited to measuring the relative volume and topical distribution of pre-election coverage but not to making claims about media framing, narrative construction, or the causal influence of coverage on the electoral outcome, and this study has limited its claims accordingly. Second, the 14 sampled outlets, while representative of major print and digital Bangla- and English-language media, likely undercount regional, broadcast, and social-media-native sources of political information, which played an increasingly prominent role in the 2026 campaign. Third, the supplementary sources used to describe the period after December 10, 2025, were assembled through targeted retrieval of credible journalistic and official reporting rather than systematic, outlet-controlled sampling; conclusions about this period are limited to what each cited source specifically reports, and should not be read as deriving from the same systematic method as the primary log. Fourth, the public opinion findings rest on a single survey conducted by one outlet, and have not been

validated against other polling. Fifth, the violence statistics in Section 4.4, while drawn from a credible and methodologically transparent civil-society monitor, reflect the observations of a single organization and may not capture the full universe of incidents.

5.5 Policy Implications

Three implications follow from these findings. For the Election Commission, the volume of pre-election media attention devoted to disputes over RPO amendments and symbol allocation suggests value in establishing a structured, earlier-stage consultation mechanism with contesting parties to reduce post-schedule disputes, alongside continued expansion of postal-voting infrastructure for the diaspora. For political parties, and particularly BNP given the violence attribution discussed in Section 4.4, the volume of coverage devoted to internal nomination disputes points to the value of more transparent candidate-selection procedures, while the seat-vote disproportionality discussed in Section 5.3 strengthens the case, raised by smaller parties during the referendum campaign, for considering proportional-representation elements in future electoral design. For researchers, this study's reliance on headline-level metadata illustrates both the value and the limits of large-scale media logs; future work would benefit from full-text content analysis, sentiment coding, and systematic inclusion of broadcast and social-media sources to test claims about media framing that the present dataset cannot support.

6. Conclusion

Bangladesh's 13th National Parliamentary Election, held on February 12, 2026, was the country's first genuinely multiparty competitive election since the July 2024 uprising ended 16 years of Awami League rule. BNP's majority victory, Jamaat-e-Islami's strongest-ever result, and the parliamentary entry of the newly formed NCP together reflect a political landscape substantially reshaped by the events of 2024.

This study's primary contribution is a systematic, if necessarily bounded, account of pre-election media attention: the volume and topical distribution of 1,423 headline-level entries from 14 outlets shows that BNP's internal nomination disputes, BNP-Jamaat competition, and Election Commission decision-making dominated pre-election news attention, with rising coverage of violence and NCP's positioning as the election date approached. Read alongside supplementary evidence on violence, public opinion, and certified results, these patterns describe an election that was neither without serious flaws, including substantial violence, the exclusion of a major party, and documented irregularities, nor without genuine competitive substance, including broad multiparty participation and meaningful turnout. The principal task facing Bangladesh's new BNP-led government will be to translate this qualified electoral legitimacy into governance consistent with the reform commitments that accompanied the 2026 transition.

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Conflicts of Interest

The author(s) declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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