



# The Commonwealth

## 2026 Bangladesh Parliamentary Elections and Referendum

**Arrival Statement by H.E. Nana Akufo-Addo  
former President of the Republic of Ghana,  
Chairperson of the Commonwealth Observer Group**

*08 February 2026 Dhaka*

I am pleased and honoured that the Commonwealth Secretary-General, Hon. Shirley Botchwey, has invited me to serve as Chairperson of the Commonwealth Observer Group to Bangladesh's forthcoming Parliamentary Elections and Referendum.

Bangladesh is known as a country with rich history and deep cultural heritage, and the deep affection her people hold for their nation. Since our group arrived, we have experienced this firsthand through the warmth, hospitality, and openness of the Bangladeshi people.

These elections come at a significant and sensitive moment in Bangladesh's democratic journey. They follow a period of political contestation, public debate around governance, institutional reform, and the continued aspirations of citizens for inclusive, transparent, and credible democratic processes.

As one of the most populous democracies in the Commonwealth, the conduct of these elections will be closely watched both domestically and internationally.

Over the past 46 years, the Commonwealth has consistently worked to strengthen electoral democracy by supporting election management bodies, democratic institutions, and electoral processes across its member countries.

Democracy remains one of the most important pillars of the Commonwealth, enshrined in its Charter, a fundamental global value rooted in the principle that people have the right to express freely their

will and determine their own political, economic, social, and cultural systems.

I enjoin all stakeholders to uphold these important values for the benefit and prosperity of the people of Bangladesh.

Bangladesh is home to a remarkably youthful population, with a significant proportion of citizens under the age of 35. The engagement of young people in this electoral process is vital, not only for Bangladesh's democratic future, but also as an inspiration to young citizens across the Commonwealth who stand in solidarity.

The Commonwealth has previously observed elections in Bangladesh, and we now return once again to observe the progress the country and its institutions have made, as well as the challenges.

Bangladesh is an active participant in the Commonwealth Election Professionals Programme, an initiative that promotes professional development, knowledge-sharing, and peer support among electoral administrators across the Commonwealth. Three representatives of the Bangladesh Election Commission took part in the most recent regional training event held in Colombo, Sri Lanka. We hope that the lessons and good practices from this programme are reflected in the conduct of these elections.

Our mission here is simple: we are here to affirm the Commonwealth's continuing solidarity with the people of Bangladesh.

Our Group was constituted following an invitation from the Bangladesh Election Commission, and after a pre-election assessment mission in October 2025, which advised that Bangladesh would benefit from a Commonwealth Observer Group for this electoral process.

I am joined by 12 other eminent persons from across the Commonwealth, including representatives from Asia, Africa, the Caribbean, Europe, and the Pacific. My colleagues come from diverse professional backgrounds, including politics, civil society, election management, diplomacy, and law.

Members of the Group arrived on 4 February, and we will remain in Bangladesh until 18 February. As independent observers, our mandate is to observe, not to interfere in the electoral process, and to provide an impartial account of our observations.

We will assess the pre-election environment, polling day, and the post-election period. We will consider the electoral process as a whole and report on whether it has been conducted in accordance with national laws, Commonwealth values, and international standards to which Bangladesh has committed herself. We shall remain objective and impartial in discharging our mandate. The Group's assessment is independent and will be its own, not that of the Commonwealth Secretariat nor any individual member country.

Since the Group's arrival, we have received briefings from a wide range of stakeholders, including election officials, political party representatives, civil society organisations, law enforcement agencies, members of the diplomatic community, and domestic and international observers.

On 10 February, members of the Group will be deployed to selected divisions to observe the pre-election environment. Subsequently, we will observe the opening of polls, voting, closing, counting, and the management of results. We will issue an Interim Statement of our preliminary findings on 14 February.

A final report will then be submitted to the Commonwealth Secretary-General, the Government of Bangladesh, the Election Commission, political parties, and Commonwealth member governments, and will also be made available to the public.

We urge all stakeholders to play their part in ensuring inclusive, transparent, and credible elections and referendum.

On behalf of the Group, I would like to thank the people of Bangladesh for their warmth and hospitality, and for allowing us to be part of this important democratic process.

I THANK YOU.