

Putin, Sonia, Rouhani

FROM PAGE 1

extended his heartiest congratulation to Hasina on her party's election victory.

Hasina, the longest serving Bangladesh prime minister, is set for a fourth term, third in a row since she returned to power after the 2008 national election.

"The Russian president sent a message to the prime minister, greeting her, Bangladesh Awami League and the people of Bangladesh on securing her party's landslide victory in Sunday's national polls," reports BSS, quoting PM's Press Secretary Ihsanul Karim.

Putin also wished success of the prime minister and continued peace, progress and prosperity of Bangladesh, he said.

Sonia Gandhi, chairperson of Indian Congress Party, sent a similar congratulatory message to Hasina yesterday, reports UNB, quoting the press secretary.

Her greetings came days after Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi phoned his Bangladeshi counterpart Hasina on Monday to convey

yesterday.

"I would like to intimately congratulate you on the successful holding of the latest parliamentary election in Bangladesh as well as on the victory of the Awami League under your excellency's leadership," said Rouhani.

Chinese President Xi Jinping and PM Li Keqiang also extended their heartfelt congratulations to Hasina on Monday. The Chinese leadership hoped that Bangladesh would soon be able to bring down poverty rate to zero due to the farsighted programmes taken by the Bangladesh prime minister.

King Salman of Saudi Arabia, Crown Prince Muhammad Bin Salman, King of Bhutan Jigme Singye Wangchuck, Bhutan's Prime Minister Lotay Tshering, Qatari Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, West Bengal and Tripura chief ministers -- Mamata Banerjee and Biplab Kumar Deb -- also congratulated Hasina and her party.

Sri Lanka President Maithripala Sirisena and Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe greeted Hasina on Tuesday for her party's overwhelming



Legislators walk behind a group of anti-gun supporters during the opening day of the House of Representatives at the New Hampshire State House, where the House will vote on a bill which currently allows people to carry guns in the House Chambers and other parts of the State House in Concord, New Hampshire. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Most of the JP MPs-elect for joining govt

FROM PAGE 1

body will decide its role in the 11th parliament.

"Our newly elected MPs will join the parliamentary party meeting tomorrow [today] after taking the oath," Quader added.

Meanwhile, the oath-taking ceremony of MPs-elect will be held at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban today, said a parliament secretariat press release yesterday.

At 11:00am, Speaker Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury will administer the oath.

At the briefing, Quader said, "The parliamentary party meeting will decide what will be the Jatiya Party's role in parliament, considering the interest of the country and the grand

alliance."

He added that they would talk about the issue with the alliance after the meeting.

"We are in the grand alliance and contested the election with the alliance partners with identical goals. So, we'll finalise all the decisions through discussions."

The JP co-chairman, who presided over yesterday's meeting, said they discussed the country's political situation at the joint meeting.

Party Secretary General Moshir Rahman Ranga said they would take some organisational steps to strengthen the party.

He added that parliamentary party members would sit with the AL-led grand alliance to determine the party's

role in parliament.

JP Chairman HM Ershad and Senior Co-chairman Raushan Ershad were not present at the meeting.

On Tuesday, Moshir said they would decide yesterday whether they would remain as the opposition or part of government in the House.

OFFICIAL POLLS RESULTS

In another development, the Election Commission yesterday in its official results said the AL bagged 257 seats and the JP 22 seats in Sunday's national election.

Chief Election Commissioner KM Nurul Huda at a post-election press conference on Monday and EC Secretary Helal Uddin Ahmed at the end of announcement of unofficial results of the polls said the AL won in

259 constituencies and the JP in 20.

EC officials said they made the mistake while preparing the list of all winning candidates hurriedly.

The commission yesterday published a gazette notification of all 298 winning candidates.

According to the official results of the December 30 polls, the AL-led grand alliance bagged 288 seats while the BNP-led Jatiya Oikyafront got seven.

Voting was suspended at three polling stations in Brahmanbaria-2 over violence. Voting in those centres will be held on January 9.

Election in Gaibandha-3 was rescheduled for January 27 after Oikyafront candidate TIM Fazley Rabbi died on December 20.

3 suspected

FROM PAGE 16

and seized the lorry, he said, adding that they also recovered a firearm, 13 bullets, and 250kg of marijuana.

Doctors at Feni Sadar Hospital conducted autopsies and no one came to claim the bodies as of filing of this report around 6:15pm, a correspondent reported.

In Cumilla, an alleged drug peddler, Saiful, 24, was killed in a "gun-fight" with police in Monagram area of the Sadar upazila around 11:00pm.

Abu Faysal Miah, officer-in-charge (OC) of Kotwali Model Police Station, said Saiful had been facing three cases filed under the narcotics act.

With the three, at least 269 suspected drug peddlers and dealers have been killed since the anti-narcotics drive began on May 4 last year. Most of them were killed in so-called shoot-outs involving Rab or police.

The previous "shootout" before these two took place on December 14.

Key accused

FROM PAGE 16

"sheaf of paddy", the electoral symbol of the BNP, during Sunday's national polls.

But the list of the accused in the case did not include the name of the former union parishad member Ruhul Amin who, according to the victim, allegedly ordered his men to rape her because of who she voted for.

Ruhul, who claimed to be the publicity affairs secretary of Subarnachar Awami League, denied the allegation.

NHRC

Meanwhile, a three-member inquiry team of the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), headed by its director Al-Mahmud Faizul Kabir, went to Noakhali and spoke to the victim, her husband, the physician looking after her, the police administration and locals.

"Since we could not get the pathological report, we could not come to any conclusion about the rape. But she [the victim] was brutally beaten," Kabir told The Daily Star.

The MJF believes women are being attacked and becoming victims of sexual violence in many situations due to lack of exemplary punishment and accountability.

Bangladesh Nari Shangbadik Kendra also condemned the incident and demanded stern punishment of the culprits through proper investigation.

Candidates

FROM PAGE 2

a landslide victory in Sunday's polls.

The BNP-led Jatiya Oikyafront rejected the results and demanded a fresh election.

Chief Election Commissioner KM Nurul Huda rejected the demand.

Barbie will soon be 60 – and is still going strong

AFP, El Segundo

She is turning 60 this year and still doesn't have a single wrinkle.

Blonde or brunette, slender or curvy, black or white, princess or president, Barbie is a forever favorite for young girls, even if she has caused controversy over the years.

The iconic doll has evolved to keep up with the times -- check out her Twitter feed.

And despite fierce competition in the toy industry, 58 million Barbies are sold each year in more than 150 countries.

"In an industry where success today is three to five years, 60 years is a huge deal!" said Nathan Baynard, director of global brand marketing for Barbie.

Around the world, Barbie is as universally known as Coca-Cola or McDonald's, Baynard said during a recent visit to Mattel's design studio in El Segundo, a suburb of Los Angeles.

In all, more than one billion Barbie dolls have been sold since she made her debut at the American Toy Fair in New York on March 9, 1959.

She was invented by Ruth Handler, the co-founder of Mattel, who was inspired by her own children to create the doll.

"Her daughter Barbara was limited in the choices of her toys -- the only ones were baby dolls," Baynard recounted.

"The only role she could imagine through that play was caregiver, mother," whereas Handler's son "could imagine being an astronaut, cowboy, pilot, surgeon."

Barbie is, of course, a shortened version of Barbara.

The doll was supposed to teach girls "that they had choices, that they could be anything. In 1959, it was a radical idea!" Baynard said.

15 injured

FROM PAGE 16

Mir Hossain, general secretary of Subochoni Bazaar committee, said shop owners have been demanding compensation for their loss.

In Laxmipur, at least 10 people, including four policemen, were wounded yesterday morning and the Sadar hospital was vandalised when local AL men tried to attack one of their fellow activists who was admitted there, reports our Noakhali correspondent.

The incident happened after police tried to stop a group of alleged AL activists from attacking an injured Jubo League man inside the hospital, police said.

Quoting locals, police said a series of events led to the rampage at the hospital.

Jubo League activist Delower Hossain who was released on bail on Tuesday attacked local AL leader Abdur Rahman Fazlu yesterday.

He was jailed in a case filed over an earlier attack on Fazlu.

Yesterday, Delower reportedly attacked Fazlu with a knife around 9:00am. Party men then beat him up and handed him over to police, locals said.

Both Fazlu and Delower were admitted to Laxmipur Sadar Hospital. Around 11:00am, a group of alleged activists went to the hospital and tried to beat up Delower again.

When policemen present at the facility tried to stop the group, the activists attacked police, witnesses said.

The incident left 10 injured including Sub-Inspector Abdul Alim, Assistant SI Gias Uddin, constable Nayan, Jubo League leader Mehedi and Upazila Parishad Chairman Salah Uddin Tipu, locals said.

Hospital properties were damaged at the time.

Police have arrested 14 suspects, said ASM Mahatab Uddin, superintendent of police in Laxmipur.

He added that there was a family feud between Fazlu and Delower.

Australia closes controversial detention centre

AFP, Melbourne

Australia announced the closure of Melbourne's controversial Maribyrnong detention centre on Wednesday, one of several facilities used to lock up immigrants who arrived without papers.

The government said the decision to close the much-criticised facility was "another milestone in the ramping-down of Australia's onshore immigration detention network."

Maribyrnong opened in the middle of the last century, but has recently been the site of hunger strikes and other protests over harsh treatment.

Xi threatens

FROM PAGE 16

declared formal independence from the mainland.

Relations have been strained since the 2016 election of President Tsai, who has refused to acknowledge Beijing's stance that the island is part of "one China".

"Democratic values are cherished by the Taiwanese people, it's their way of life," Tsai told reporters in a press conference arranged in response to Xi's speech.

She also accused Beijing of provocations that strained people's "emotional connection" to the mainland such as "buying off" Taiwan's few diplomatic allies and increased military drills near the island.

Taiwan's foreign ministry released a terser response.

"If the Chinese government cannot treat its own people kindly, cannot guarantee human rights and will not let its own people vote... then Taiwanese will look at China's intent with suspicion," it said.

Though Xi's speech takes a strong stance against Taiwanese separatists and pushes for reunification, it is aimed mostly at domestic audiences, analysts say.

"It's rather empty and doesn't have any new points except that cross-strait unification would not affect the interests of other countries," said Fan Shih-ping, political analyst at National Taiwan Normal University, adding that Xi's words may also be intended for the US.

In 2018, the US sent multiple ships through the Taiwan Strait -- which China considers its territory but the US and others see as international waters open to all -- infuriating Beijing.

Washington remains Taipei's most powerful unofficial ally and its main arms supplier despite switching diplomatic recognition to Beijing in 1979.

To accommodate differences in Taiwan's political system and civil society, China has proposed adopting the "one country, two systems" policy, which was implemented in Hong Kong after the British handed the city back to China in 1997.

But some say the erosion of civil liberties in Hong Kong sets a negative precedent for Taiwan.

"They (China) are gobbling up Hong Kong, not just politically but culturally and economically too", Claudia Mo, a pro-democracy Hong Kong lawmaker, told AFP.

"It's so obvious that they're trying to assimilate Hong Kong into wider mainland China in every way. How would any Taiwanese think that's going to work for them?"

Last October, tens of thousands of Taiwan independence campaigners took to the streets in the first large-scale protest calling for an outright independence vote since the island first became a democracy more than 20 years ago.

But some in Taiwan say worsening relations with Beijing have harmed business, as cuts to pensions and a reduction in public holidays compound frustrations over a stagnant economy where salaries have not kept

up with the rise in cost of living.

Last year, President Tsai's ruling Democratic Progressive Party suffered a massive defeat in mid-term polls, causing Tsai to resign as party leader, while the main opposition Kuomintang, which oversaw an unprecedented thaw with Beijing before Tsai took office in 2016, made gains.

Journo placed

FROM PAGE 16

produced Hedayet before the court and sought a seven-day remand.

"I prayed for my client's bail as he is a cardiac patient. But the court put him on remand," Hedayet's lawyer Tarik Mahamud told The Daily Star.

Hedayet, also the city editor of local daily "Probaha" and the immediate-past treasurer of Khulna Press Club, was arrested on Tuesday noon in the case filed for publishing "false" information on the number of votes cast in a constituency in the district during Sunday's polls.

Batiaghata Upazila Nirbahi Officer Debashish Chowdhury, also the assistant returning officer, filed the case with Batiaghata police against Hedayet and Rashidul Islam, staff reporter of the daily Manab Zamin.

The case statement said the accused published false, fabricated and provocative information on the voting with the use of electronic devices, including laptops, which might confuse people and create chaos.

Such activities made the "fair election" questionable, the statement said.

According to the initial announcement of the election results, the number of votes cast in Khulna-1 was higher than the total number of voters in the constituency.

As the matter was brought to the returning officer's attention, he said it was a mistake and later came up with a correction, said local journalists.

By the time the correction could be made, the two media outlets ran reports saying the number of votes cast was around 22,000 higher than the actual number of voters, they said.

Documents provided by the returning officer's office showed 45,000 of the 2,59,420 voters did not cast their ballots.

Meanwhile, Ain o Salish Kendra (ASK) in a statement yesterday demanded the immediate release of the arrested journalist and expressed concern over the "use of the Digital Security Act".

The statement said the law would squeeze the scope for independent journalism and urged the authorities to withdraw the case.

Mohammad Shah Alam, secretary of Khulna Union of Journalists told The Daily Star that they would follow the legal procedures to deal with the matter. They would also hold a human chain in front of the Returning Officer's office in the district to "ensure justice for the two journalists", he added.