

WOMEN'S RESERVED SEATS IN JS 49 aspirants submit nomination papers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Forty-nine aspirants yesterday submitted nomination forms for election to the parliamentary seats reserved for women. Election Commission said 43 Awami League candidates submitted nomination papers for the election to the 50 reserved seats of the 11th parliament. AL General Secretary Obaidul Quader, on behalf of the aspirants, submitted the nominations to returning officer Abul Kashem at the Nirbachon Bhavan in Dhaka's Agargaon in the afternoon. Four aspirants of Jatiya Party and one from Workers' Party of Bangladesh also submitted nomination papers. The JP nominees are Salma Islam, Raushan Ara Mannan, Masuda M Rashid Chowdhury and Nazma Akhter, while the lone candidate from Workers' Party of Bangladesh is Lutfunnessa Khan. Besides, one independent candidate -- Selina Hossain -- also submitted her nomination. Election Commission officials said these aspirants are set to win the election, as they are the only candidates from their respective areas. MPs who took oaths of office are allowed to vote in the election for the women's reserved seats, to be held on March 4.

The EC would scrutinise nomination papers today, and last date of withdrawal of candidature is February 16. The reserved seats for women are allocated to political parties in proportion with their number of seats in parliament. Accordingly, 43 seats are allotted to Awami League, four to Jatiya Party, one apiece for BNP and Jatiya Oikyafront, Workers' Party and independent candidates. Eight lawmakers were elected from the BNP-led Jatiya Oikyafront in December 30 polls, but they are yet to take oath. After submitting nomination papers, Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader told reporters that his party gave importance to dedication of grassroots workers while nominating candidates for reserved seats. BNP is making "hilarious" allegations that upazila election will not be free and fair, he said while commenting on BNP's decision to not join the Upazila Parishad election, set to begin on March 10. "They [BNP] are not taking part in upazila polls fearing disastrous results, as they faced debacle in last parliamentary polls," he said. "There allegations are baseless. They tried to make parliamentary polls questionable, but failed to do so," Obaidul said.



A group of volunteers stand on the Khamarbari intersection of Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue during a red light, with large placards strapped to their backs advising drivers to not talk on their phones while driving. Similar groups were seen at a few other major thoroughfares of the capital yesterday.

PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ

By women, for everyone

MATHEWS CHIRAN

National Poet Kazi Nazrul Islam believed that anything that was created in the world, half of the credit goes to men, and half to women. If one agrees with the poet, then literature is also an area where contributions of female authors should be acknowledged alongside their male counterparts. To support women writers and uphold their contributions, Bangladesh Lekhika Sangha, an organisation for women writers, has put up a stall at Bangla Academy premises in the ongoing Amar Ekushey book fair. The stall only features books of female authors. There are novels, short stories, and stories for children at the stall. "We set up our stall every year at the book fair to help women writers publicise their literary works," said Lipi Monoar, general secretary of the organisation. Begum Sofia Kamal was one of the founding members of the organisation, established in 1973. It was formed at a time when there was little choice for women to practice literature, said Monoara, also an author and playwright. Those who have published at least two books are members of the organisation. There are currently more than 200 members only in Dhaka city, while they have branches

in different districts of the country, she said. "We help female writers publish their books from our organisation, and introduce them to publishers," Monoara elaborated about activities of the organisation. The stall is showcasing books including "Konnakanini" and "Ek Bhoyonkor Sondhar Golpo" by Shiuli Khondokar; "Bodhodoy" and "Ami Juddho Dekhechi" by Lipi Monoar; and "Rinir Bhubonkhami" by Dilara Mesbah. One of the members of the organisation, Shiuli Khondokar said, "Such a group helps female writers a lot. It helps us exchange ideas and speak up on women's issues." Although she does not believe in classifying writers by gender, she said female writers face many challenges. Aside from the stall, different publication houses also have books by female authors. From Prothoma publication, books including "Puspa Kuntola" by Maleka Begum and "Alina" by Tanzila Hossain are new releases. Oitijhya publication brought out "Dhulay Dhusor Jothisnashishir" by Rafea Abedin and "Purush Path" by Nahida Nahid this year. Besides, books of noted writers Selina Hossain and Anwara Syed Haq are also available at the book fair.



A customer checks out books at the Bangladesh Lekhika Sangha stall. PHOTO: STAR

Freelance tutors can coach students: HC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday categorically said teachers employed at government or private schools, colleges and madrasa cannot run coaching classes. However, there is no bar on educated persons working as freelance tutors to coach students, the court also said. The bench of Justice Sheikh Hassan Arif and Justice Razik-Al-Jalil made the comment to Advocate Khurshid Alam Khan, lawyer for Anti-Corruption Commission, when he appeared before the court for moving a case. Recently, the ACC lawyer had mistakenly told a private television channel that no coaching centre can operate following the February 7 verdict. His comment came into notice of the HC judges. On February 7, the HC upheld the government's 2012 policy to stop "coaching business" by the teachers of government and private educational institutions.

More than one killer

Autopsy report of former Eden College principal confirms

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Former Eden College principal Mahfuza Chowdhury Parvin was strangled to death by more than one person, an autopsy report confirmed yesterday. "There are injury marks on her throat, mouth and fingers. She was choked to death at one stage of scuffle... It seems more than one person were involved in the killing," said Sohel Mahmud, head of forensic medicine department at Dhaka Medical College after conducting post-mortem. Parvin's maids -- Ruma alias Reshma, 30, and Swapna, 35, who are on the run -- are key suspects in the murder. Victim's husband Ismat Quadir Gama filed a case against them along with another unnamed, known as "Rakib-er Ma", with New Market Police Station. He alleged that the two domestic workers made away with Tk 50,000 in cash, 20 tola of gold jewellery worth around Tk 10 lakh and a mobile phone worth around Tk 60,000. The third accused provided the two maids -- Swapna 10 days ago, while Reshma one-and-a-half months ago -- to the victim's family, Gama told The

Daily Star yesterday. The victim, her husband and three domestic workers used to live in their duplex flat in Elephant Road area. The third house help, Rashida, was picked up by police but was released after interrogation yesterday. "The two maids were seen on CCTV footage, leaving the victim's home on Sunday evening. We are trying to arrest them," said Atikur Rahman, officer-in-charge of New Market Police Station. Police suspect the maids killed the elderly woman in between 3:30pm and 7:30pm when Rashida was sleeping and Gama was not home. Victim's sons do not stay with them. In the case statement, Gama mentioned that he returned home around 7:25pm and found his wife on bed, covered with a blanket. "After removing the blanket, I saw her hands twisted, a scarf around her neck and blood around her throat," he said. After autopsy, the body was taken to Eden College in the afternoon where colleagues and students paid their last respects and later buried at Banani graveyard.

An unthinkable murder

Man arrested after 6-year-old daughter's body found stuffed in cooking pot

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gazipur

Nasrin Akhter came home in Gazipur's Sreepur on lunch break from her nearby workplace on Sunday noon, to eat with her six-year-old daughter Munira and her ex-husband Rafiq, who had started living with them again six months ago. Everything seemed fine when she returned to work. But when she came home after a hard day's work, she could find neither her husband nor her baby girl. When she called her husband, what he said alarmed her, and she called the police, Nasrin told The Daily Star. The law enforcers arrived at her house, and recovered Munira's body, stuffed in a cooking pot, hidden under the bed. Javedul Islam, officer-in-charge of Sreepur

Police Station, said they detained Nasrin for questioning after finding the girl's body on Sunday, but after interrogation were convinced that she was not involved in the murder. In a drive, police arrested Rafiq early yesterday from the area, and showed him arrested later in a murder case filed by Nasrin yesterday noon, he said. Garment workers Nasrin and Rafiq were married in 2012, and were divorced a year and a half ago, OC Javed said. However, Rafiqul returned to Nasrin and they started living together again. On December 1 last year, they rented a house in Sreepur's Master Bari area, and got jobs at nearby Denimach garments factory. The couple had a scuffle on Saturday

Education key to fight communalism

Says Dipu Moni

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Education Minister Dipu Moni yesterday said everyone has to come forward to establish a non-communal education system. "If we want to ensure a Bangladesh free of extremism and communalism, we have to lay emphasis on education," she said. She was addressing a discussion titled "Prof Kabir Chowdhury Memorial Lecture-8", marking the 96th birth anniversary of the former national professor. Ekattorer Ghatok Dalal Nirmul Committee arranged the discussion at the Institution of Engineers, Bangladesh in the capital. Speaking as chief guest, Dipu Moni said students of government Alia madrasas are studying mainstream curriculum alongside getting religion-based lessons. Besides, over 15 lakh students of Qawmi madrasas have

Youth 'kills' sister-in-law, 'injures' mother

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A youth allegedly killed his sister-in-law and injured his mother with sharp weapon during a scuffle in Dhaka's Dakkhin Khan area yesterday evening. The diseased was Sharmin Akhtar, 30. Dakkhin Khan Police said Shafique Islam stabbed his mother Hamida Begum, 60, at one stage of altercation with a sharp weapon. He also stabbed his sister-in-law when she came to rescue Hamida, police said. They were rushed to Tongi General Hospital where doctors declared Sharmin dead. Hamida is undergoing treatment at the hospital. Officer-in-Charge (OC) of Dakkhin Khan Police Station Tapan Kumar Saha said Shafique migrated to Italy with a huge loan but returned to the country without doing any work there. Since his return, the mother and son had been arguing often over money issues, he said. Shafique is on the run.

Economic development and respect for democracy mutually reinforcing

Says visiting senior official of US Department of State

REZAUL KARIM

Despite having a dynamic and fast-growing economy, a senior official of the US Department of State believes that Bangladesh's future success is going to be fuelled by strengthening democratic institutions, governing structure, creating space for civil society and improving environment for economic growth. Bangladesh has much to be proud of when it comes to economic growth and development over the past decade, said Thomas L. Vajda, US acting deputy assistant secretary, Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs, while talking to reporters in Dhaka yesterday morning. "It is important that the government creates sound environment to attract foreign direct investment in Bangladesh," he said. Vajda, who arrived in Dhaka on February 9 for a three-day official visit had extensive interaction with government and private sectors, meetings with Minister for Post, Telecommunication and ICT Mostafa Jabbar, State Minister for Power, Energy and Mineral Recourses Nasrul Hamid, Foreign Secretary Md Shahidul Haque and the business community. "One message I conveyed in my meetings with government officials is economic

development and respect for democracy and human rights are mutually reinforcing, not competing objectives," he said. "American businesses want to invest in countries that operate transparently, uphold the rule of law, and protect individual rights, and they are watching developments in Bangladesh," he added. Progress in these areas will not only expand Bangladesh's ability to maximise the economic tools and security cooperation but also protect the country's long-term growth and stability, he said. He said Bangladesh simply needs to ensure that the procurement policies will be fair and transparent. And if the investment climate improves, Bangladesh will see an increase in investment from foreign companies. "Our economic commitment in Bangladesh is robust... We are Bangladesh's biggest export market, we are the largest foreign investor," he said, adding, "We have launched new initiatives under the Indo-Pacific vision to expand our partnership with the private sector in the areas of energy, digital economy and infrastructure." Indo-Pacific Strategy (IPS) is a concept reemphasised in 2017 by US President Donald Trump and it calls for a "free and

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

SAGAR-RUNI MURDER

Submit probe report within a week or face tough demo: journos

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Journalist leaders yesterday threatened to wage a tougher movement if the investigators once again fail to submit probe report of journalist couple Sagar-Runi murder case before the court by February 17. Alleging that the authorities concerned are unwilling to arrest the killers, they also demanded that the government end the culture of impunity by bringing the killers to book. The journalists were speaking at a programme at Dhaka Reporters' Unity, marking seven years of the murders. Runi's younger brother Nowsher Alam Roman and the couple's only son Mahir Sarowar Megh were present at the programme. Afterwards, a delegation of journalists met Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal at his secretariat office and submitted a memorandum. Meherun Runi, senior reporter of ATN Bangla, and her husband Sagar, news editor of Maasranga TV, were murdered on February 11, 2012. Megh, who was only five at the time, was in the apartment when his parents were murdered. Immediately after the incident,



Journalists at the rally in front of Dhaka Reporters' Unity. PHOTO: STAR

then home minister Sahara Khatun said the killers would be arrested in 48 hours. Police officials also claimed to have made "significant progress" in the investigation at the time. The murder triggered widespread outrage in the journalist community.

On several occasions, different courts have expressed dissatisfaction over the investigation. Meanwhile, Ain o Salish Kendra expressed deep concern as there was no headway in the murders in last seven years.