

JS RESERVED SEATS

All 50 from AL, JP set to be elected

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League and Jatiya Party nominees in 50 seats reserved for women in the 12th parliament are set to win unopposed.

Candidates of the parties yesterday submitted their nomination papers to the returning officer.

They will be declared winner unopposed if their candidacy remains valid after the deadline for withdrawing nominations ends on February 25, said Election Commission officials.

The EC has announced the election schedule, setting March 14 as the polling day, but voting will not be required to elect the 50 lawmakers as there is no chance for anyone to be a candidate beyond the nomination.

AL General Secretary Obaidul Quader submitted the nomination papers of its 48 candidates for the reserved seats to the returning officer at the Election Commission.

Jatiya Sangsad Whip and AL Organising Secretary Abu Saeed Al Mahmud Swapan, Office Secretary Biplab Barua, and Deputy Office Secretary Sayem Khan were present at that time.

Thirty-four are fresh faces among the 48 nominees.

At least three AL nominees who lost the last January 7 election and whose candidature was cancelled had been picked for the reserved seats.

A total of 1,549 people bought AL nomination forms, each of which cost Tk 50,000.

Meanwhile, JP has nominated Salma Islam and Nurun Nahar as its candidates for the reserved seats.

The two, accompanied by party Secretary General Mujibul Haque Chunnunnu, submitted their nomination papers to the EC.

Women's seats are allocated in proportion to the number of seats won by a party in the general election. Members of parliament elected to regular seats are voters for the reserved seats.

The AL, with wins in 225 constituencies, gained 38 reserved seats proportionally.

The party also acquired 10 more seats through an agreement with the 62 AL leaders who won the last parliamentary election as independents.

The opposition in parliament, the Jatiya Party, which scored victory in 11 constituencies in the polls, has got two seats reserved for women.



Ukrainian servicemen pile up earthbags to build a fortification not far from town of Avdiivka in the Donetsk region, amid the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

PHOTO: AFP

Russia takes Avdiivka from Ukraine

Putin claims important victory; White House blames congressional inaction

REUTERS, Moscow

Russia yesterday said it had full control of the Ukrainian town of Avdiivka after Ukraine withdrew though Moscow said that some Ukrainian troops were still holed up in a vast Soviet-era coke plant after one of the most intense battles of the war.

The fall of Avdiivka is Russia's biggest gain since capturing the city of Bakhmut in May 2023, and comes almost two years to the day since President Vladimir Putin triggered a full-scale war by ordering the invasion of Ukraine.

A White House statement said President Joe Biden called Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky later on Saturday to underscore the US commitment to continue supporting Ukraine and reiterated the need for Congress to urgently pass the package.

The White House said the withdrawal had been forced upon Ukraine "by dwindling supplies as a result of congressional inaction," that had forced Ukrainian soldiers to ration ammunition and resulted in "Russia's first notable gains in months".

Russia's defence ministry said its troops had advanced 8.6 km (5.3 miles) in that part of the 1,000-km (620-mile) front line, and that Russian troops were pressing forward after a deadly urban battle that has left the town an almost completely depopulated

wreck.

Ukraine said it had withdrawn its soldiers to save troops from being fully surrounded after months of fierce fighting. Putin hailed the fall of Avdiivka as an important victory and congratulated Russian troops.

After the failure of Ukraine to pierce Russian lines last year, Moscow has been

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trying to grind down Ukrainian forces just as Kyiv ponders a major new mobilisation and President Volodymyr Zelensky appoints a new commander to run the war. "The head of state congratulated Russian soldiers on this success, an important victory," the Kremlin said in a statement on its website.

But Russia said some Ukrainian forces were still holed up at the Soviet-era coke plant, once one of Europe's biggest, in Avdiivka, which is key to Russia's aim of securing full control of the industrial Donbas region.

"Measures are being taken to completely

clear the town of militants and to block Ukrainian units that have left the town and are entrenched at the Avdiivka Coke and Chemical Plant," Russian Defence Ministry spokesman Igor Konashenkov said.

There was no public comment yet by Ukrainian authorities on this. Russian state television showed blue and yellow Ukrainian flags being taken down in Avdiivka and Russia's white, blue and red tricolour flag raised, including over the coke plant.

Russia cast the Ukrainian withdrawal as rushed and chaotic, with some soldiers and weapons left behind. The Ukrainian military said there had been casualties but that the situation had stabilised somewhat after the retreat.

Putin sent tens of thousands of troops into Ukraine in February 2022, triggering the full-scale war after eight years of conflict in eastern Ukraine between Ukrainian forces on the one side and pro-Russian Ukrainians and Russian proxies on the other.

Avdiivka, which is called Avdeyevka by Russians, has endured a decade of conflict. It holds particular symbolism for Russia as it was briefly taken in 2014 by Moscow-backed separatists who seized a swathe of eastern Ukraine but was then recaptured by Ukrainian troops who built extensive fortifications.

Madrasa teacher gets death penalty for rape

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A Chattogram court yesterday sentenced a madrasa teacher to death in a case filed over the rape of four students in Rangunia upazila.

Judge Joynal Abedin of Chattogram Women and Children Repression Prevention Tribunal 3 awarded capital punishment to the accused after the court found him guilty beyond doubt, said court sources.

Nasir Uddin, 47, was present in the dock at the time and was later sent to Chattogram jail, said Morshedul Alam, tribunal's bench assistant.

Public Prosecutor (PP) Advocate Jiku Barua confirmed the matter saying that 11 witnesses testified in the case.

According to the case, four students of a madrasa in Rangunia upazila were raped during the Covid pandemic.

After learning the matter, the father of a victim filed a case accusing Nasir.

After the investigation, police submitted a charge sheet and a court later framed charges against Nasir on January 24, 2022.

Rohingya man stabbed to death at Ukhiya camp

UNB, Cox's Bazar

A Rohingya man was stabbed to death by unidentified attackers at a refugee camp in Ukhiya upazila of Cox's Bazar.

The deceased was identified as Badsha Mia, 38, a resident of Jamtoli Rohingya camp.

Ukhiya Police Station's Officer-in-Charge Shamim Hossain said four or five people called Badsha out of his house and beat and stabbed him before fleeing the scene on Saturday night.

Locals took Badsha to MSF Hospital in the camp where a doctor declared him dead.

The body was later sent to Cox's Bazar Sadar Hospital morgue for an autopsy, said the OC.

The motive behind the murder is yet to be known, he added.

Two sisters die of unknown virus

UNB, Rajshahi

Two sisters, both below five years of age, died within a span of four days after contracting a viral infection, said doctors.

Muftaul Mashiyah, 4, and Muntaha Marisha, 2, were daughters of Poly Khatun, a homemaker, and Manjur Rahman, a mathematics teacher at Rajshahi Cadet College. They lived in the college's staff quarters in Sarda.

Marisha died on the way to Rajshahi Medical College Hospital (RMCH) on Wednesday, while Mashiyah passed away Saturday afternoon while undergoing treatment at the same hospital.

Their parents have been placed in RMCH's isolation ward.

Abu Hena Mostafa Kamal, an ICU physician at RMCH, mentioned the children had consumed unwashed fruits, which could potentially be linked to a viral agent.

The definitive cause of death awaits the results of the samples sent for testing, he said.

Record 4,552 returned home dead last year

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the Gulf region, the main destination for Bangladeshi migrant workers, and various other parts of the globe.

The WEWB published data of as early as 1993. Since then, Bangladesh received 51,956 corpses of migrant workers and 34,323 of those arrived in the last 10 years.

A multi-country study suggests alongside poor occupational health and safety practices, low-paid migrant workers in the Gulf region are exposed to a series of cumulative risks to their health, including heat and humidity, air pollution, abusive working conditions, psychosocial stress, hypertension and chronic kidney disease.

However, the deaths of migrants in the Gulf region in many cases remain "effectively unexplained" even though corpses continue to pile up, according to the report "The Deaths of Migrants in the Gulf", published in 2022 by the Vital Signs Partnership (VSP), a collaboration of migrant rights groups of labour-sending countries of south and southeast Asia, including Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit (RMMRU) of Bangladesh.

Between July 2017 and June 2022, Bangladesh received 17,871 dead bodies, 67.4 percent of which arrived from the six Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries: Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Oman, Kuwait, Qatar and Bahrain, according to WEWB annual reports.

Of the corpses, 5,666 arrived from Saudi Arabia followed by 1,913 from the UAE and 1,893 from Oman.

The six GCC countries together hired 76.3 percent of Bangladesh's total 1.6 crore outbound workers between 1976 and 2023, according to the Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training.

Many Bangladeshi migrant workers who died in the Gulf were at their young age, but there is a data deficiency on the underlying causes of the deaths, said Prof CR Abrar, executive director of RMMRU.

Most of the workers migrate abroad at the prime of their health conditions, as certified by the mandatory medical check-up at home before flying, he told this newspaper over phone.

However, they pay a hefty migration cost and face "ill-treatment" that together with a whole range of other

factors could augment their physical and mental stress. In spite of the odds, they want to stay back to recoup the invested money, he added.

The VSP report says despite the lack of data, it appears that as many as 10,000 migrant workers from south and southeast Asia die in the Gulf every year.

More than one out of every two deaths are effectively unexplained, which is to say that deaths are "certified without any reference to an underlying cause of death", instead using terms such as "natural causes" or "cardiac arrest", it says.

In the six GCC countries, migrant workers occupy the vast majority of the jobs in low-paid sectors such as construction, hospitality and domestic work, it adds.

Bangladesh as an origin-country should press the destination countries to follow the World Health Organisation guidelines for a proper record of the cause of migrant deaths, said Prof Abrar.

"This is the minimum thing that we can demand," he said, adding that such issues can be dealt bilaterally or addressed at regional forums like

the Colombo Process or Abu Dhabi Dialogue.

Alongside emergency cases, the Gulf countries need to ensure treatment of migrant workers and their access to medical facilities in case of non-emergency health problems, he added.

The death of young migrants can have multiple ramifications, including compensation for their families, he further said.

However, it becomes difficult to contest the cases legally since evidence remains at the disposal of the destination countries, Prof Abrar added.

Contacted over phone, Shoaib Ahmad Khan, director (finance and welfare) of WEWB, said while deaths of migrant workers abroad are not expected, at their end, they provide Tk 3 lakh each in compensation to the families of deceased migrant workers and Tk 35,000 for carrying and burial at home.

Besides, deceased migrant workers' families can claim a maximum of Tk 10 lakh under a mandatory insurance coverage depending on the nature of death, he added.

Robi has successfully conducted 5G trial runs and is ready to roll out the service any time, said Shahed Alam, its chief corporate and regulatory officer.

"However, we have to keep in mind the readiness of the 5G ecosystem as the technology is more focused towards B2B rather than individual customers," he added.

The rollout obligation contradicts the government policy as it forbids the mobile operators from launching Fixed Wireless Access (FWA), said Abu Saeed Khan, senior policy fellow at LIRNEasia.

FWA provides high-speed internet access through wireless networks to fixed locations like homes or businesses, extending broadband coverage efficiently, especially in areas with limited wired infrastructure.

Not possible to accept

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week, Sumbul Rizvi, chief of UNHCR in Bangladesh, proposed the country allow those Rohingya amid fighting between the Myanmar military and the Arakan Army.

Foreign Secretary Masud Bin Momen, however, made Bangladesh's position clear that the country is unable to accept any more Rohingyas, officials concerned told The Daily Star.

Bangladesh is already struggling to ensure humanitarian support amid declining funding, while repeated efforts to repatriate them did not materialise.

Meanwhile, at least 330 members of Myanmar border police, army and family members had fled to Bangladesh and were later repatriated.

Since early February, locals have been panicking over mortar shells and bullets landing on the Bangladesh part of the border.

About \$1 billion was sought from the international community every year since 2017 for Rohingyas but only 60-70 percent of the sum is met.

"Bangladesh already spends millions of dollars for maintaining law and managing the Rohingya camps. It has created both local and international challenges for us. We cannot afford one more single Rohingya," Hossain said.

Bangladesh, which already faces various economic and climate crises, cannot bear the brunt that it has been bearing since the 1980s.

The UN and the developed countries, which have vast land and low levels of population density, can take the Rohingya, he said.

They can also ask Myanmar authorities or the Arakan Army to provide a humanitarian corridor in Rakhine for the Rohingyas as long as the conflict goes on.

China, which maintains a relationship with both the Myanmar military and the Arakan Army, can help create such a humanitarian corridor, he added.

Hossain also suggested that Bangladesh engage with multiple actors of Myanmar – state and non-state – for Rohingya repatriation and to ensure that no further Rohingya influx takes place.

"Why should only Bangladesh take

responsibility? There are other countries that should support the Rohingyas in distress in the Rakhine State," said Sakhawath Hossain, senior fellow at the South Asian Institute of Policy and Governance of North South University.

During such conflicts, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) can and should work to protect civilians, especially in shelter, food and healthcare, said Hossain, also a security expert.

Meanwhile, the Bangladesh Border Guard and Coast Guard have continued to patrol the Naf river at the border as infiltration attempts by the Rohingyas continue with the intensifying fighting across the border of Shahporir Dwip in Teknaf.

Between January 25 and February 17, more than 200 Rohingyas were prevented from crossing over to Bangladesh, said Tahsin Rahman, media officer of Coast Guard East Zone (Teknaf).

Three people were sent back from Shahporir Dwip yesterday, he added.

People heard loud sounds of explosions in the Whykong Kanjorpara-Kharankkhal area of Teknaf from 8 to 10 pm last night, said Noor Ahmed Anwari, chairman of Whykong union parishad.

People of St Martin Island also heard the loud sound of three explosions three times in the afternoon.

Five Rohingyas including a woman, who sustained a bullet wound, arrived at the Shahporir jetty on Saturday evening, but were sent back after treatment, said Abdus Salam, member of ward no 9 Sabrang union in Teknaf.

What's happening

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Palestine who are suffering. At this time, she cited that Bangladesh has already sent some assistance for them.

Regarding a planned Israeli operation in the city of Rafah in the southern Gaza strip, Hasina said Bangladesh never supports such an offensive.

"There is a two-state theory in the 1967 UNO resolution. It should be implemented."