

Russia takes two Ukrainian towns Pentagon warns Moscow over North Korean troops

REUTERS, Moscow

Russia said yesterday it had taken two eastern Ukrainian towns and open-source data indicated that Moscow's forces were advancing at their fastest pace in at least a year amid signs the conflict is drawing in new players such as North Korea.

The 2-1/2-year-old war in Ukraine is entering what Russian analysts say is its most dangerous phase as Moscow's forces advance, North Korea sends troops to Russia and the West ponders how the conflict will end.

Russia said its forces had seized control of the town of Selydove, which had a population of 20,000 before the war and had been under sustained attack over the last week.

Russian Defence Minister Andrei Belousov also congratulated Russia's 114th motorised rifle brigade on taking Hirnyk, which had a pre-war population of over 10,000 and lies about 12 km (7.5 miles) from Selydove.



UAE Ambassador to Bangladesh Abdulla Ali Abdulla Khaseif AlHmoudi called on Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus at the state Guest House Jamuna in Dhaka yesterday.

PHOTO: PID

Why 38th BCS results should not be reevaluated without quota, HC asks

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday issued a rule asking the authorities concerned to explain why the results of the 38th BCS exams shouldn't be republished after a merit-based re-evaluation of candidates, disregarding the quota system.

The HC bench of Justice Md Akram Hossain Chowdhury and Justice KM Rasheduzzaman Raja issued the rule following a writ petition filed by 120 aggrieved candidates of the 38th BCS exams who allegedly suffered discrimination due to the quota system.

In the petition, they prayed to the HC to order the authorities to re-evaluate the cadre and non-cadre final results of the 38th BCS exams.

The petitioners' lawyer, Salahuddin Dolon, told The Daily Star that the recruitment circulars for the 38th and 40th BCS exams were issued on June 20, 2017 and September 11, 2018.

On October 4, 2018, the government abolished the quota system for entry into Class I and II government jobs due to the quota reform movement.

The final results of the 38th BCS and 40th BCS were released after the notification was issued for the cancellation of the quota system.

While the circulars for the 38th and 40th BCS were released prior to the quota system's abolition, the 40th BCS adopted a merit-based recruitment process, and the 38th BCS continued to use the quota system, preventing many talented individuals from securing positions.

Don't rush into serious decisions

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empowerment is secured, no one will be able to deprive them of their freedom.

He also said the BNP believes the interim government must succeed as its failure would be a setback for the pro-democratic and pro-Bangladesh forces.

He urged the members of different religious communities not to be misled by any conspiracy or rumour spread by the Awami League's associates.

Greeting the members of the Hindu community, Tarique said, "We have just one message: whether you are a believer, non-believer, skeptic, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, Christian, or from an indigenous community, this Bangladesh is for all of us. It's not about being a so-called minority or majority; our only identity is that we are all Bangladeshis."

"As citizens of Bangladesh, your rights are just as important as mine. The interests of Bangladesh must come first for all of us. In governance and administration, we will prioritise meritocracy. The principle of the BNP is that everyone in this country will enjoy equal rights," he said.

Narrating the injustices and oppression faced by Hindus and different other communities over the 15 years of the AL rule, the BNP leader said the pro-Bangladesh forces are now united to create a state and society where people of all religions and backgrounds will safely celebrate their religious programmes in the future.

"Our message to everyone is clear: religion is for individuals, and everyone has the right to security. So, I humbly urge you not to respond to any provocations from the fugitive dictator and their associates. Please do not listen to any rumours or gossip," he said.

Tarique said that the defeated forces created communal tensions over the last 15 years to serve their own interests.

Bangladesh Hindu Buddhist Christian Kalyan Front organised the event at the Dhaka Ladies Club in the city's Eskaton to greet the members of the Hindu community and exchange views with them on the occasion of the Durga Puja, which was celebrated on October 9-12.

BNP standing committee members Khandaker Mosharruf Hossain, Mirza Abbas, Abdul Moyeen Khan, Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury, and AZM Zahid Hossain, and Gonolorum General Secretary Subrata Chowdhury, among others, addressed the programme, with BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir in the chair.

Canada, UK, EU

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dealers in 2023.

"The human rights violations taking place across Myanmar, including airstrikes on civilian infrastructure, by the Myanmar military is unacceptable and the impact on innocent civilians is intolerable," junior UK Foreign Minister Catherine West said.

"That is why today the UK is announcing fresh sanctions targeting the suppliers of equipment and aviation fuel to the Myanmar military. Alongside the EU and Canada, we are today further constraining the military's access to funds, equipment and resources."

West added the UK remained "steadfast in our support for the Myanmar people and their aspirations for a peaceful and democratic future".

Justice Zubayer leads EC search committee

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A judge of the High Court Division nominated by the chief justice, the comptroller and auditor general, the chairman of Bangladesh Public Service Commission, two other eminent personalities, including a woman, nominated by the president are to be members of the committee. The search committee can seek names from the political parties and professional bodies.

Yesterday's move comes amid calls from election experts and organisations like Shushashoner Jonno Nagorik for reforms to the law. Shushashoner Jonno Nagorik

"The search committee should have been formed after amending the law," he said.

Meanwhile, at least two members of the commission to reform the election system said formation of the search committee took them by surprise.

In 2012, 2017, and 2022, the then presidents formed search committees and then held dialogues with political parties over the formation of the ECs.

After those committees made recommendations, the presidents appointed the election commissioners.

The Kazi Habibur Awal led Election Commission, formed in 2022, was widely criticised after it held the

found that ballot stuffing took place the night before election day at multiple centres in 33 of the 50 surveyed constituencies.

The Kazi Rakibuddin Ahmad led commission held a one-sided national election in January 2014, in which 153 lawmakers out of 300 were elected unopposed.

The AL-led alliance won all three elections.

The EC has been vacant for 53 days, the longest ever.

In 2007, following the resignation of then CEC Justice MA Aziz and six commissioners, the ECs remained

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separate writ petitions through their lawyers.

One sought rules to ban all political activities of AL and 10 other parties, and to debar them from all future elections.

It also sought a rule to declare the parties "terrorist organisations for the indiscriminate killings of citizens, destroying democratic institutions, and unconstitutionally taking state power".

The other petition sought a rule to cancel the results of the three national elections held in 2014, 2018 and 2024 under the AL government.

These polls were held without lawful authority and had no legal acceptance, it said.

The petition also sought a rule asking why the MPs elected from these 11 parties in the three elections would not face sedition charges, along with HC directives to cancel the benefits the lawmakers received from the government, including plots and duty-free vehicles.

This newspaper could not reach Sarjis and Hasnat for comments.

Hasibul Islam told The Daily Star, "The petitions were withdrawn but legal actions will be taken in the future after the petitions are edited."

"Political parties that sided with the Awami League during the students' movement will be prevented from political activities."

Two other top leaders of the movement, preferring anonymity, mentioned two reasons behind the withdrawal of the petitions.

They said one of the reasons was that the petitions were filed without

consultation with other leaders of the movement and the other was that some of the political parties against whom the petitions were filed had actually sided with the students during the movement.

Apart from the AL, the other parties are Jatiya Party (Ershad); Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD); Bikalpadhara Bangladesh; Tarikat Federation; the Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB); Liberal Democratic Party (LDP); Jatiya Party (Manju); Ganatantri Dal; Marxist-Leninist (Barua); and the Socialist Party of Bangladesh.

When naming JSD in the petition, they put down the address of the ASM Abdur Rab-led JSD office, while the "Marxist-Leninist (Barua)" had no office address and no such registered political party has this name.

The petitions also did not mention the office address of the Socialist Party of Bangladesh. Bangladesher Samajtantrik Dal (BASAD) uses the "Socialist Party of Bangladesh" as their name in English.

Of the parties, LDP, CPB, BASAD and Rab-led JSD had waged movements against the AL government for long and sided with the students during the quota reform movement, and thus their inclusions in the petitions outraged many.

"Hasnat and Sarjis filed the writ petitions without final discussions with us. We held a meeting after the petitions were filed, and in the face of criticism, a decision was taken to withdraw them," one of the leaders told The Daily Star yesterday.



From left: Justice Zubayer Rahman Chowdhury, Justice AKM Asaduzzaman, Prof Zinnatunnesa Tahmida Begum, Prof CR Abrar, Md Nurul Islam, and Prof Mobasser Monem.

Secretary Badiul Alam Majumdar, also the head of the government-formed commission to reform the electoral system, yesterday told this newspaper that the commission was ready to hand over its proposals on the law to constitute the EC.

BNP acting chairman Tarique Rahman yesterday said his party always attached the highest importance to ensuring people's voting rights.

"Through voting rights, citizens of the country can claim their ownership to the state," he said.

Jamaat spokesperson Matiur Rahman said his party deemed the existing law "faulty".

election shunned by the major opposition parties early this year.

The AL fielded dummy independent candidates, many of whom were AL leaders, to make the polls appear participatory.

The KM Nurul Huda-led commission held the December 2018 election with opposition parties alleging ballot-box stuffing the night before election day.

In January 2019, the Jatiya Oikya Front alleged that between 30 and 60 percent of the votes were cast the night before.

The same month, Transparency International Bangladesh in a study

vacant for a week.

Aziz resigned a day before the highly controversial January 22 election. Then Justice Mahfuzur Rahman took over as the acting CEC. All five members resigned on January 31.

ATM Shamsul Huda was appointed as the new CEC on February 5.

After the Kazi Rakibuddin-led EC's tenure ended on February 9, 2017, the next commission led by KM Nurul Huda took the office on February 15.

The led by Habibur was formed 12 days after that commission completed its tenure in 2022.

Historic chance for genuine democracy

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Second, at a broader level, Bangladesh has an important opportunity to confront longstanding human rights violations, rebuild an open, diverse and tolerant civic space, and reform key state institutions.

Third, human rights should underpin the democratic process.

A human rights approach calls for a level playing field that enables all political parties to participate freely.

Citizens must be able to participate in democratic governance and have a real say in decision-making.

Free and fair elections require an environment where freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly are respected.

Fourth, this is an opportunity for inclusive, sustainable development policies that benefit everyone, Turk said.

He also offered the students all-out support in their initiatives to rebuild the nation.

"My Office is ready to play its part, starting with the Fact-Finding Mission already underway."

"Inequality, cycles of revenge and retribution, marginalisation, corruption, and gross human rights violations must be consigned to the past. There must be no repetition, no going back. The present and future belong to equality, to justice."

Earlier, after meeting Turk at a city hotel, Social Welfare Adviser Sharmeen S Murshid said the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights will establish an office in Dhaka soon.

"It is a very important decision. The interim government agreed on the establishment of the UN Human Rights office in Dhaka. Its presence

here will strengthen our position on human rights," she said.

The establishment of the human rights office will enable direct investigation into areas of human rights violations, Sharmeen added.

The adviser also said political governments did not properly investigate rights violations in the past. And when civil society groups probed rights violations and had the facts out, they came under pressure.

She said the UN delegation also asked the challenges the interim government faces and how it looks at the situation now.

"We all said where our challenges are and where the UN Human Rights office can stand by us."

Advisers Syeda Rizwana Hasan, Adilur Rahman, Farida Akter and Nahid Islam were also present.

After a meeting with Law Adviser Asif Nazrul at the Secretariat, Turk said the UN Human Rights Office wanted Bangladesh to revoke the death sentence.

In reply, Nazrul said the interim government saw no scope to do it now. "The Penal Code has provisions for the death sentence. There is no scope for amending it all of a sudden," he told reporters after the meeting.

Turk told the media that he asked for Bangladesh's human rights situation to be strengthened to uphold the rights.

The UN Fact-Finding Mission was giving due importance to human rights violations during the July-August mass uprising, he said and added the UN Headquarters was overseeing the entire matter.

A UN Fact-Finding Mission has been working since mid-September

to probe the human rights violations between July 1 and August 15.

More than 1,695 murder cases, including at least 75 against high profile politicians and businesspersons linked to the Awami League, were filed after the fall of the regime.

Many of the cases were also filed under the International Crimes Tribunal (ICT) Act which has provisions for the death sentence.

Turk wanted to know more about the ICT Act, said Nazrul. The UN rights boss asked for the draft of the amendments to the ICT Act, which the government will provide.

Those accused in the cases under the ICT Act will be provided with all legal rights to defend themselves, the adviser said.

The adviser said the government may take forensic or technical support from the UN for justice. "There will be no injustice as was the case in the past."

Asked if the Awami League would be able to contest in the next election, Nazrul said, "It is for the people to decide whether this party should have political rights or not."

After the meeting with Turk, Home Adviser Lt Gen (ret) Jahangir Alam Chowdhury told the media that the UN rights boss asked for the interim government's cooperation to promote human rights issues.

He said the interim government would work as per the recommendations of the UN Fact-Finding Mission report.

Turk also stressed the protection of the victims and witnesses and Jahangir said the government would ensure it.

We will urge govt

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oppose [removal of the president], but we need to discuss the process and the constitutional basis."

Student movement leaders Hasnat Abdullah and Arif Sohel, Jatiya Nagorik Committee spokesperson Samantha Sharmin, and LDA representatives Mujahidul Islam Selim, Moshrefa Mishu, Razekuzzaman Ratan, and several others attended the meeting.

They also discussed the demand for declaring the last three national elections illegal, said Nagorik Committee

member Ariful Islam Adeb.

"We proposed that all political parties except the Awami League and its allies come together to form an all-party council," he said.

Communist Party of Bangladesh General Secretary Ruhin Hossain Prince said, "If the interim government faces any crisis, it should consult political parties."

He said that no formal decisions were made during the nearly two-hour meeting.

New voter list

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seven to eight months for registration, 15 days for the draft list and another 15 days for feedback and objections from voters.

For the process to kick off, the EC needs to be formed, and for that, a search committee needs to be formed.

According to Article 119 of the constitution, the EC is responsible for preparing, supervising, directing and controlling voter lists for presidential and parliamentary elections.

The cabinet division serves as the secretariat for the search committee involved in commission appointments, according to the Chief Election Commissioner and Election Commissioners Appointment Act, 2022.

The need for a fully operational EC has already been communicated to President Mohammed Shahabuddin, and in response, the Chief Advisor's office has requested the president to initiate the necessary appointments.

Yesterday, Asif Nazrul, the law affairs adviser, announced that a search committee for the EC has already been formed.

"I can tell you one thing – the process for our government to gear up for the election has begun. You could say that the journey towards the

election has started," he told reporters after meeting with Volker Turk, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights.

Once the EC is constituted, the priority will be on updating the voter list to eliminate fake entries allegedly added by the previous government, Nazrul added.

Currently, Bangladesh has over 121.8 million registered voters, of which approximately 62.1 million are male, 59.7 million female and 932 third gender.

The interim government intends to engage in a transparent electoral process and hence wants to compile a new voter list. The Daily Star has learnt from people involved with the proceedings.

Although routine annual updates are conducted as per the Voter List Act 2009, the government is considering an exception to the norm, aligning with public demand.

The Voter List Act 2009 mandates an annual update from January 2 to March 2 and yet allows the EC discretion for special revisions.

Subsequently, the EC is legally required to finalise the updated voter list by March 2 next year.

A budget of Tk 138 crore was allocated for the 2022 voter list update.