

As expat sign-ups hit 200,000, when can voters in Bangladesh register for postal ballots?

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Online Desk : Postal voting registration for eligible voters within Bangladesh will open on the day the Election Commission (EC) announces the schedule for the 13th national election, according to officials. The schedule is expected next week, following the EC's courtesy meeting with President Mohammed Shahabuddin on Dec 10. Both the parliamentary election and a national referendum are due to be held on the same day in the second half of February next year. Postal voting, which is being introduced at scale for the first time, has already drawn strong interest from Bangladeshi expatriates. Nearly 200,000 overseas voters have registered through the government's "Postal Vote BD" mobile app since its launch on Nov 18.

Salim Ahmad Khan, team leader of the Out of Country Voting System and Implementation project, said three categories of voters inside Bangladesh will be allowed to register via the app — voters assigned to election duty, government employees who will be outside their constituencies on polling day, and voters in legal custody. They will be able to register from the day the schedule is announced until Dec 25, said Salim. Voters have been advised to check the EC website for further guidance.

OVERSEAS REGISTRATION DEADLINE EXTENDED

The EC has also extended the deadline for expatriate registration to Dec 25 following appeals from political parties and overseas communities. Originally set to close on Dec 18, the deadline was pushed back to allow more time for sign-ups. As of 1pm on Saturday, 195,000 expatriates had completed registration. Of them, 175,000 are men, while more than 19,000 are women.

Saudi Arabia accounts for the largest share, with more than 38,000 registrants. The United States follows with over 19,000, while Singapore, Malaysia, the United Kingdom and the United Arab Emirates each have more than 10,000 registered voters.