

UZ on way back

NEW UPAZILA OUTLOOK

- An MP will be the advisor to the upazila parishad in his constituency.
- Provision for making an MP's role in upazila should be specified by law.
- An MP should have an office equipped with two staff and logistics outside the upazila complex.
- Each MP will get an annual development budget of Tk one crore for projects in communications, education, health and agriculture sectors.

REZAUL KARIM

The cabinet committee on the upazila parishad yesterday agreed on reintroduction of the local body to decentralise the administration.

All members of the committee headed by LGRD and Cooperatives Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, except Communications Minister Nazmul Huda, strongly advocated the upazila concept and approved recommendations to remove possible conflicts between MPs and upazila chairmen.

In 1991, Huda played a vital role in abolishing the upazila system introduced by the military regime of HM Ershad.

This time round, Huda vehemently opposed the concept, arguing that the system would create a conflict of interest between MPs and upazila chairmen.

Even in an instant reaction yesterday, Huda repeated his cautions, saying the upazila parishad will split up political parties and ultimately mar democracy. He told reporters that he alone issued a note of dissent on the decision.

The cabinet committee underscored an early election to the upazila parishad to implement one of the important election pledges by the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP).

"The committee has approved the recommendations and we have

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A truckload of unlicensed rickshaws is being taken to a police station in the city yesterday. Police launched a clampdown on unlicensed rickshaws that poured back onto the city roads taking advantage of the ban on two-stroke three-wheelers.

PHOTO: STAR

India to dig for oil, gas in the Sundarbans

AFP, New Delhi

India's state-owned Oil and Natural Gas Commission (ONGC) announced yesterday plans to drill for petroleum products in the Indian part of the vast Sundarbans.

"ONGC will begin drilling next month in a 400-square kilometre area in the Sundarbans and in the East Midnapore district after a survey indicated the presence of oil and natural gas in the areas," company chairman Subir Raha said.

State-owned ONGC, which has privileged access to India's inland and offshore oilfields, has been consistently the country's most profitable company, with last year's profits soaring beyond 61 billion rupees (1.29 billion dollars).

Raha, speaking to reporters in Kolkata, capital of West Bengal state, said he met Chief Minister Buddhadev Bhattacharjee for permission to survey another 11,000 square kilometres for oil, the Press Trust of India said.

The survey to be made at a cost of four billion rupees is expected to be completed by 2004, the news agency quoted the company chief as saying.

Raha, however, did not specify whether next month's oil dig would be in the vicinity of protected forests of the Sundarbans, the world's only habitat of the endangered Royal Bengal Tigers.

But the operation is likely to come up against massive resistance from wildlife protection groups, observers said.

The Sundarbans cover 10,000 square kilometres of mangrove forests cradled by the Brahmaputra, Ganges and Malancha rivers and 40 per cent of the territory is within India while the rest is part of Bangladesh.

The neighbouring nations in 1974 established three wildlife sanctuaries as part of a British-led campaign started in 1885 to protect its unique ecology.

Besides being the home to the flagship species, the endangered Royal Bengal Tigers, the Sundarbans -- often called the "den" -- also holds the world's largest surviving tiger population.

The mangroves, besides boasting some 400 striped cats, also is home for up to 80,000 antelopes, around 20,000 wild boars and estuarine crocodiles, otters, dolphins and turtles.

Huda spills the beans

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Communications Minister Nazmul Huda yesterday said the BNP had included reintroduction of Upazila system in its last election manifesto as a polls strategy.

"It was merely an election strategy because our political opponent was trying to gain from this issue", he said.

Huda, who gave a 'note of decent' at yesterday's Cabinet Committee meeting on Upazila system, was talking to newsmen after the meeting.

Huda played a key role in abolition of Upazila system when BNP came to power in 1991. Since then he has been opposing its reintroduction. Upazila system was introduced during the autocratic rule of HM Ershad.

He laughed away a question whether there were more issues in BNP's election manifesto as strategies.

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Charge-sheet against millionaire meter-reader

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Charges of passport forgery and overseas trips using fake identity have been pressed against meter-reader of the Titas Gas Transmission and Distribution Company Limited Mahbubur Rahman.

According to sources, the Dhaka Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court documented the charges under the Passport Act on Tuesday after the airport police submitted its report upon investigations.

Some pro-government lawyers

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DU reopens on Oct 3

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Classes and other academic activities at Dhaka University resume on October 3 after 67 days of unscheduled closure since July 28.

Then DU Syndicate took the decision after reviewing the latest campus situation at a meeting yesterday.

The meeting also decided that residential halls of the university would reopen on September 29 at 10 am for the convenience of resident students.

Acting Vice Chancellor (VC) Prof AFM Yusuf Haider chaired the meeting attended by 11 of the 18 syndicate members.

The DU academic council would meet shortly after reopening of the

university and announce a fresh schedule of the postponed examinations. The council comprises chairmen of departments and directors of institutes of the DU.

Meeting sources said that the authorities are considering holding of the postponed examinations within a month and with minimum gaps between examinations to ease session jam.

The meeting also decided 'in principle' to review the 'proctorial rules' of the university as demanded by the agitating students under the banner of 'DU Students Against Atrocities'.

The syndicate members suggested reducing in phases the number of law enforcers deployed on the campus. They expressed

satisfaction on the latest campus situation and sought cooperation from all concerned in ensuring a congenial academic atmosphere at the university.

Home Secretary Omar Faruq, also a syndicate member, pointed out at the meeting that cases against students of the Shamsunnahar Hall had already been withdrawn and withdrawal of other cases was in process, meeting sources said.

Meanwhile, the acting VC told the BBC yesterday that reopening of the university could be deferred again if the campus situation deteriorated.

The DU was closed on July 28 for an indefinite period in the face of a students agitation on the campus

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Kaif powers Indian win

INTERNET, London

Andy Flower hit a battling 145 - the highest score ever by a Zimbabwean - but it was not enough to prevent a 14-run loss to India in the ICC Champions Trophy.

Chasing 289 for victory after a century from Mohammad Kaif, Flower kept Zimbabwe in the hunt for much of their reply.

But the loss of three wickets in the last six overs slowed their momentum.

Opening bowler Zaheer Khan dismissed Sean Ervine with the final delivery to finish with figures of four for 45.

Earlier, Mohammad Kaif hit an unbeaten 111 as India recovered from early difficulty to reach 288 for six.

Four wickets for Zimbabwe opening bowler Doug Hondo had left India struggling at 87 for five in the 14th over.

But the sixth-wicket pair of Kaif and Rahul Dravid added 117 in the next 24 overs.

And, when Dravid was run out for 71 off a needless single, Kaif was helped in a late innings burst by tailender Anil Kumble.

Kaif survived stumping and run-out chances to reach three figures from 107 balls, including a six off spinner Grant Flower and ended 111 not out.

Hondo had three catches taken at first slip, including Sachin Tendulkar for 11 to knife into the upper order.

Virender Sehwag smashed 48 from 36 deliveries but top-edged a

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PHOTO: AFP

Man of the match Mohammad Kaif of India sends the ball racing to the ropes on his way to an unbeaten 111 against Zimbabwe in yesterday's ICC Champions Trophy encounter at the Premadasa Stadium in Colombo.

Grameen