

# UPAZILA POLLS Only children and spouses categorised as relatives: Quader

STAFF CORRESPONDENT



When Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina said relatives of party lawmakers and ministers should stay out of the upazila polls, by relatives she meant their children and spouses, Awami League General Secretary Obaidul Quader said yesterday.

"About my statements on upazila polls, many thought I was speaking on my own. But yesterday [Thursday], the leader herself spoke about it. She categorised wife and children as relatives," said Quader at a press conference at the AL president's political office in Dhanmondi.

"No interference or influence will be allowed [in the upazila polls]. The administration cannot be influenced. She [prime minister] has made it clear," said Quader.

Many of the candidates who are either children or spouses of ministers and lawmakers have already started withdrawing from the polls, said Quader. "There is still time for others to do the same," he said.

About his brother's candidature, he said neither the party nor he supports it. Therefore, it cannot be stated for sure that his brother will not withdraw eventually, he said.

Pointing towards BNP, he said, "Those who wanted to keep us under pressure are now under pressure themselves as Arab spring has also gone beyond Atlantic."

# RAINFALL IN SYLHET Major rivers seeing rise in water level

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Water level in the rivers Surma and Kushiya is rising due to water from upstream and continuous rainfall in Sylhet, causing the forecast of a temporary flood situation in the district's low-lying areas.

At 9:00am yesterday, Surma was already flowing 13 centimetres above the danger level at Kanaighat point in Sylhet district, while at Sylhet city point, the river was flowing 11 centimetres below the danger level -- 122cm higher than Thursday.

The Flood Forecast and Warning Centre of Bangladesh Water Development Board published the development in their Friday morning bulletin.

The water levels of the Kushiya, Puratan Surma, Jhalukhali, Jadukata, Patnai, and Mahasingh rivers in Sunamganj district are also rising quickly.

On Thursday, 53 millimetres of rainfall were recorded in Jalflong area of Sylhet's Gowainghat.

# Another park getting encroached?



PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

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Iqbal demanded that the park's operations be ensured with representatives of all ages and classes, and that the park be free and open to all, alongside the immediate removal of illegal structures from the park.

Speaking at the event, Prof Mohammed Zakiul Islam, professor at Architecture department of Buet and also one of the designers of the park, said the space has now been divided into two parts, delaying the original design.

"When we designed the park, the two parts were merged. We talked to

experts, locals, and many other stakeholders to design the park, intending to make it natural," he said.

"Each park in our area is like a fan or AC. If we do not keep it as it is, we have to face the consequences," he said, demanding that the park be brought back to its

earlier design.

Yesterday, while visiting the park, this correspondent found a restricted ground adjacent to it that was previously part of the park.

When one enters the park, they will see a structure that is used as Gulshan Youth Club's

office, which was not in the design. Meanwhile, an artificial football turf is being built as an open space in the park, while the remaining small part was kept as a park for children, which is also now surrounded by nets.

The Daily Star called and texted Dr Wahiduzzaman Tamal, general secretary of Gulshan Youth Club, for his comments, but his phone was found switched off.

This correspondent also visited the club office but did not find anyone there.

Contacted, Ajmal, an administrative officer of the club, declined to comment on the issue.



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# Urgent steps Water woes worsen

FROM PAGE 3

highlighted the significance of language preservation for small ethnic groups. He also acknowledged the government's efforts through the Mother Language Institute to safeguard these languages and suggested that further modifications might be needed to enhance these preservation efforts.

"Our national language is Bangla, which serves as a common language. However, there are different mother tongues among people from many different communities, including the small ethnic groups," he said.

"When I learnt that only two women in Bangladesh could speak Kharia language and no one else could, I came here. The government should take initiative so that this language can be preserved. The books that I have seen here are a result of the initiatives taken by the government, but more has to be done in order to preserve Kharia language," he said.

Attorney General AM Amin Uddin and Moulvibazar Deputy Commissioner Urmi Binte Salam were also present.

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"This year too, two or three of us distributed water among the locals. Later, the district Red Crescent Society and the Public Health Engineering department's office extended support with 100 jars of water [five litres each]," Banting added.

Amal Kanti Das, general secretary of Red Crescent Society's Bandarban unit, said their initiative will continue till monsoon.

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Anupam De, executive engineer of the Public Health Engineering department in Bandarban, said, "Aimed at mitigating the water crisis in Bandarban, two projects funded by Asian Development Bank are ongoing in Sadar and Lama upazilas. Also, two more projects have been proposed to the CHT affairs ministry for approval. If the projects are approved and implemented, the crisis will reduce significantly."

# Rab rescues victim

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He had sent seven consignments of illegal items to his Indian buyer between 2015 and 2017, he added.

The victim's brother-in-law Mustafa Hawladar used to collect statues and coins and in return, he used to get Tk 30,000 per month.

In 2017, Khokon tasked Mustafa with collecting Tk 95 lakh worth of touchstone idols and metal

coins, but Mustafa provided fake idols and coins and grabbed the money, which irked Khokon, said the Rab officer.

"Since then, Khokon has been trying to nab Mustafa, who has been on the run. Upon receiving information that Mustafa's brother-in-law Anwar is in Tushara area, Khokon and his associates kidnapped him on Wednesday," he added.

# Illegal brick kilns

FROM PAGE 5

Hossain, assistant director of Bangladesh Water Development Board in Pabna, said the entire shoal area has been occupied by brick fields, harming the flow of water.

"No step has yet been taken to stop the illegal operation of brick kilns," said Abdul Hamid Khan, secretary of Bangladesh Poribesh Andolon's Pabna

unit.

Subir Kumar Das, Ishwardi upazila nirbahi officer, said they could not stop the illegal brick kilns from operating despite conducting several drives, as the owners have political support.

"We are seeking support from higher authorities and political leaders to stop this menace," the UNO added.

# Those BNP leaders taking part in UZ polls are 'misguided'

Says Rizvi, warns of action

UNB, Dhaka

BNP Senior Joint Secretary General Ruhul Kabir Rizvi yesterday criticised their party leaders for participating in the upcoming Upazila Parishad polls against the party's decisions.



"These misguided individuals may choose to participate in the elections. The party is taking measures against them," he said.

Speaking at a press conference at BNP's Nayapalton office, Rizvi warned that the opposition leaders seeking to participate in the election under Awami League are living in fools' paradise. Rizvi said people will not accept the local body polls like the January 7 national election.

Rizvi urged opposition leaders and workers to boycott the "so-called" upazila elections. He told BNP leaders and supporters not to be swayed by the AL's attempts to spread fear or confusion.

Rizvi said their party is expelling those leaders who are joining the upazila polls going against its decision. "Those who are going against the party decision at this moment are not the party's people... organisational action is being taken against them."

# RAPE OF STUDENT Fugitive death row convict held in Dhaka

UNB, Natore

Rab early yesterday arrested a fugitive convict who was sentenced to death in a case filed over the rape of a college student in Natore in 2012.

Tipped off, a team of Natore Rab with the help of Rab-1 conducted a drive and arrested Sabbir alias Abu Sayed in Dhaka airport area.

According to the prosecution, Sabbir was in a relationship with a college student in Natore's Baraigram.

On October 19, 2012, Sabbir and his friends raped her. Later, Baraigram police registered a case following a complaint lodged by the girl. Police pressed charges against 11 people. On April 5 last year, a Natore tribunal sentenced six people, including Sabbir, to death and four to life imprisonment. A few accused, including Sabbir, have remained absconding since then.

# Bodi accused

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According to local sources, Nurul Alam is known to be Bodi's opponent in the local political scene. Bodi is rallying in favour of Zafar Alam in the upazila polls.

His name is on the home ministry's list as a sponsor of drug trade, alongside at least 26 members of his family.

Contacted, OC Osman Gani of Teknaf Police Station said they are looking into the incident.

However, in the GD, Nurul alleged that Bodi and others launched an attack on him and threatened him with his life. He did not mention the shooting incident.

Bodi could not be reached despite repeated attempts. Contacted, Zafar Alam denied his involvement.

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