

Rabindra Univ introduces 15-day paternity leave for staff

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

Rabindra University in Sirajganj's Shahjapur has introduced 15-day paternity leave for its employees, allowing new fathers to stay home when their baby is born.

It is the first public university in Bangladesh to introduce paternity leave, said Vice-Chancellor Professor Shah Azam.

The decision was made at the university's 24th syndicate meeting on September 26, said a university press release issued yesterday.

"Besides the mother, it is of equal importance that a father stays there when a child is welcomed into the world," he said.

The syndicate meeting approved 15 days of paternal leave for teachers and employees.

Employees have welcomed this move, with senior teacher Rifat-Ur-Rahman saying, "This is an exemplary step."

However, it is worth noting that the Bangladesh government has not officially sanctioned paternity leave yet, said Md Alamgir Hossain, senior information officer at the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs.

Among others, Rabindra University Treasurer Firoz Ahmed, Chairman of the Economics Department Sharmin Sultana, Dhaka University Professor Abu Md Delwar Hossain, and Joint Secretary of the Ministry of Education Johurul Islam were present in the syndicate meeting.



PHOTO: REUTERS

Israeli border police officers detain a Palestinian protester, during the Jewish holiday of Sukkot, in Jerusalem's Old City yesterday.

Won't tolerate arson, terrorism before polls: PM

BSS, London

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has reiterated that no mercy will be shown to those who will carry out arson, terrorism, and atrocities ahead of the general election.

"There will be no scope for mercy if arson or similar incidents or attacks take place before the election in the name of a movement," she told a reception accorded to her at the Methodist Central Hall in Westminster, London.

Hasina said the BNP-Jamaat alliance had carried out mayhem across the country by burning people to death, destroying public and private properties by hurling petrol bombs at buses, trains, and launches in 2013 and 2014 in the name of a movement.

Many people, including women, suffered critical burns in the arson attacks and they are leading life in inhuman conditions, she added.

"We have no objection to your [BNP's]

movement. You had earlier killed 29 police personnel. If any such attempt is made on the lives of the people, no mercy will be shown," she said.

Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen and AL Publicity and Publication Affairs Secretary Abdus Sobhan Golap were present.

UK AL President Sultan Sharif presided over the function, moderated by its General Secretary Syed Sajedur Rahman Faruk.



'DEMOCRACY MUST PREVAIL'

Reiterating her commitment to hold a free and fair general election, Hasina has said democracy must continue in Bangladesh at any cost.

The PM said this when a delegation of the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Bangladesh paid a courtesy call on her at the Taj Hotel in London yesterday.

Rushanara Ali MP, chair of the APPG on Bangladesh and on Rohingyas, and also the shadow minister for investment and small business, led the delegation to the meeting.

1 killed, 3 hurt in road crash

UNB, Chandpur

A man was killed and three others injured in a collision between a bus and an auto-rickshaw in Chandpur's Kachua upazila yesterday.

The deceased is Omar Faruk, 35, general secretary of Kachua upazila unit Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal.

The injured are Abu Taher, 60, his wife Jabin Khan, 50, of Ragdol village, and Nabin Hossain, 30, of Kalakopa village of the same upazila. All victims were passengers of the auto-rickshaw.

Police and locals said a Dhaka-bound bus of "Al Arafah Paribahan" collided with the auto-rickshaw on Kachua-Gouripur road in Ghagra Bazar Natunpara Jame Masjid area, leaving the four critically injured.

Price of 12kg LPG cylinder hiked by Tk 79

UNB, Dhaka

The price of Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) has increased to Tk 113.61 per kg for the month of October, up by Tk 6.6 per kg from Tk 107.01 in September.

The new prices came into effect yesterday at 6:00pm, according to the Bangladesh Energy Regulatory Commission (BERC).

BERC announced the new price, saying retail consumers will now have to buy a 12kg LPG cylinder at Tk 1,363 including VAT instead of the previous price of Tk 1,284 -- a hike of Tk 79.

Prices of other sizes of LPG cylinders -- from 5.5kg to 45kg -- will go up accordingly, Md Nurul Amin, the chairman of BERC, said at a press briefing at the BERC office in Dhaka.

As per the BERC decision, the price of "autogas" (LPG used for motor vehicles) also increased by Tk 3.67 per litre to Tk 62.54 per litre (including VAT) from Tk 58.87 per litre.

The price of LPG marketed by state-owned LP Gas Company will remain the same as it is locally produced with a market share of less than five percent.

ARSA leader's personal secretary arrested

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) in Cox's Bazar claimed to have arrested the personal secretary of Ataulah Abu Ammar Jununi, the chief of the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA).

Mohammad Ershad Noman Chowdhury, 27, was arrested from the Kutupalang area in Ukhiya upazila early yesterday, said Lt Col Sazzad Hossain, commanding officer of Rab-15 in Cox's Bazar.

Noman was directly involved in the murder of a high-ranking national intelligence official, the Rab official told the reporters at a press briefing held around noon.

Noman also served as the chief coordinator of funds sent to ARSA from the Middle East and around the world through Hundi.

Noman came into contact with Ataulah through his US expatriate father, Sabbir Ahmed, and gradually became a key figure in the militant outfit, said the Rab official.

"The ARSA chief appointed him as his personal secretary and bodyguard after he served the organisation for a long time," he added.

He will be handed over to Ukhiya Police Station following legal procedures, said the Rab official.

2-month-old's body recovered in ditch

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Munshiganj

The body of a two-month-old infant was recovered yesterday four days after he went missing in Munshiganj.

The deceased was identified as Azan. Locals found his body in a ditch and informed police, said his uncle Mokter.

Munshiganj Sadar Police Station Officer-in-Charge Md Aminul Islam said, "A case was filed on September 28 when he went missing from his grandfather Mohon Mia's house at Gopalnagar."

Their neighbour was detained for interrogation today, the OC said.

Police recovered the body and sent it to Munshiganj General Hospital for autopsy.

Two men arrested over murder

UNB, Narayanganj

Two people were arrested in connection with the murder of a 35-year-old man in Narayanganj's Rugganj upazila on Sunday.

The arrestees are Arman, 35, and Setul, 29, residents of Chhatirchar village in Kishoreganj's Nikli upazila.

A team of Rapid Action Battalion-II conducted a drive in the Ashrafabad Road area of Madbar Bazar under Kamrangirchar Police Station in Dhaka on Sunday and arrested them, Rab said in a press release yesterday.

The arrestees were handed over to Rugganj police, according to the release.

According to the primary investigation, on the night of September 19, the two accused took Sumon, a mason, behind a factory and stabbed him indiscriminately, leaving him dead on the spot.

A case was filed against unidentified people at Rugganj Police Station following a complaint lodged by the victim's mother Nargis Begum.

An ominous sign: 34 quakes in 2 months

FROM PAGE 1

one is pending. Around 6:45pm yesterday, an earthquake of 5.2 magnitude hit India's Assam and was felt in Bangladesh.

The epicentre was around 24km south of Goalpara and over 100km west of Guwahati at a depth of 10km, according to the USGS.

Experts said the epicentre is close to the epicentre of the 1897 earthquake of 8.7 magnitude.

A joint research by Buet and the history department of Dhaka University found that the epicentre of the 1897 earthquake was 250km away from Dhaka but still 10 buildings, including Ahsan Manjil, were damaged.

Experts said there are a number of faults in Bangladesh. The Dauki fault is very active and dangerous. A 62,500 sqkm subduction zone (where two of the planet's tectonic plates collide and one dives beneath the other) between Chattogram and Sylhet is very active, they said.

"The amount of energy stored in the subduction zone is so much

that it could potentially trigger to a major earthquake in Bangladesh. The mild earthquakes are warning us," Syed Humayun Akhter, a former DU professor of geology, told The Daily Star yesterday.

He said, "... a major earthquake in Bangladesh is certain but we don't know the time."

Experts said unplanned urbanisation in Dhaka city and too many buildings built violating the national building code risk turning the capital into a pile of rubble in the event of a major earthquake.

"There is no time left to make people aware. It is time to fix the faulty buildings to save lives. Rajuk needs to take a leading role," Ansary said.

Humayun, however, said the government should put emphasis on making people aware and identifying safe places so that people can take shelter in the event of an earthquake.

He stressed the need for holding regular earthquake drills and developing mobile apps to make people aware.

"But unfortunately, we found

that our government's focus is post-earthquake recovery," he said.

Anisur Rahman Miah, chairman of Rajdhani Unnayan Karttripakkha (Rajuk), said under two projects 1,200 engineers were trained on building structures and inspecting buildings.

"Obviously these are not enough. We are working with two professional bodies to appoint a third party to check the old buildings in Dhaka and figure out how to retrofit those," he said, adding that after the earthquake in Turkey, they have expedited all activities keeping in mind a possible earthquake in Dhaka.

According to a survey conducted by Rajuk, some 865,000 buildings may collapse in the capital in the event of an earthquake of 6.9 magnitude originating from the Madhupur fault in Tangail.

Some 2.10 lakh people may perish and another 2.29 lakh may be injured if it happens during daytime.

The survey was conducted on 1,528 sqkm area of Dhaka city between 2018 and 2022 as part of the Urban Resilience Project.

the railway," he told this newspaper on Sunday.

Meanwhile, he added, no project official is ever held responsible for the time and cost overruns.

Hadiuzzaman further said the BR also does not have the capacity to implement such a big number of projects, while the number of contractors involved in railway projects is very limited, adversely affecting the implementation.

Replying to a question, he said the delays in implementation reduce the financial and economic viability of the projects and deprive people of the services they are meant to get.

"The culture of project revision [in the middle of implementation] must end..."

Contacted, Mohammed Mofizur Rahman, additional director general (infrastructure) of the BR, admitted there may have been flaws in some of the feasibility studies, resulting in delayed implementation.

He added that in many cases, they have to change or increase the work scope after beginning implementation activities on the field, following demands of locals representatives.

Moving utilities, acquiring lands and a lack of manpower are other major reasons behind project revisions and delays, he told The Daily Star yesterday.

He, however, refuted the allegations of BR's lack of capacity to implement such a big number of projects.

Little-known Islamist parties

FROM PAGE 1

Bangladesh Janodal and National Awami Party (NAP Bhashani).

The announcement will be made from a rally on October 21 at the south gate of Baitul Mukarram national Mosque, where the Islamist alliance plans to gather over 3 lakh people, said the sources.

Supreme Party Chairman Syed Saifuddin Ahmed Maizbhandari said they are making preparations to contest in all 300 constituencies.

"People are annoyed at the two major political parties. People have become hostage of the politics of these two parties. So, we are trying to come out as a third Islamic force," he told The Daily Star.

Bangladesh Islami Oikkya Jote Chairman Misbahur Rahman Chowdhury echoed his view, and said his party too will make an announcement about joining the polls unilaterally.

Asked about the possibility of partnering with the AL, Misbahur said it would depend on the emerging political scenario.

At the moment, 44 political parties, 14 of them Islamist parties, are registered with the Election Commission, a mandatory condition for contesting in any election.

The participation of some of these Islamist parties in the election will help the ruling party to portray the polls as participatory in the absence of opposition BNP and other major Islamist parties, insiders say.

Also, their participation will likely ensure higher voter turnout, another sign of a participatory election, they add.

However, if BNP finally decides to contest the polls at the eleventh hour, these Islamist parties may join the electoral alliance led by the ruling AL, which is trying to forge a bigger electoral alliance with Islamist parties that have quite an impressive vote bank, according to the sources.

But the AL may not keep the Islamists parties under its fold directly as the partners of the 14-party alliance, also AL led. A number of

partners in the alliance think that the ruling party's move to woo Islamist parties is a deviation from the principles behind the formation of the 14-party alliance.

Democratic values and secularism were the core ideals when the 14-party alliance was formed during the BNP-Jamaat rule in 2005.

On the other hand, AL ally Bangladesh Tariqat Federation, led by Syed Nazibul Bashar Maizbhandari, is frustrated with the AL's soft stance on Bangladesh Supreme Party. Tariqat Federation thinks that some Chattogram-based top AL leaders are patronising Supreme Party, also based in Chattogram, for establishing dominance in local politics.

Sources say if the AL forged an electoral alliance with Supreme Party, Tariqat Federation may even boycott the election or contest unilaterally.

Contacted, 14-party Coordinator Amir Hossain Anu said Islamist parties that have already expressed their willingness to join the 14-party combine can form a separate alliance and it might be included in the AL-led grand alliance.

He, however, said no Islamist party will be included in the 14-party alliance.

Meanwhile, some Islamist parties and Hefajat-e Islam, the Qawmi madrasa-based non-political organisation, are planning to put pressure on the government to realise their demands, including withdrawing the cases against its leaders and release of its top leaders before the election.

Islami Andolon Bangladesh already announced a two-day programme for October 7 and 15 and will accelerate its movement to realise its demand to form an election-time all-party government and hold election under that administration. Hefajat-e Islam "will do whatever it takes" to realise its demand.

"We will continue our all-out movement to realise our demand to have our top leaders released and the cases against them withdrawn," Azizul Hoque Islamabadi, joint secretary of Hefajat, told The Daily Star.

Poet assaulted

FROM PAGE 12

accused. "We are investigating to find out the reason as to why poet Radhapada was attacked."

Nageshwari upazila cultural activist Kumar Bishwajit Barman said Radhapada Roy is a spiritual rural poet; he is known as "Charon Kobi" in the area.

"Radhapada was attacked to suppress his literary work. If the police do not arrest the attackers and bring them to book, we will demonstrate," he said.

Bhitarband Union Parishad Chairman Shafiqul Islam Shafi said the poet had an argument with Rofiqul's elder brother Kadu Mia around seven months ago. Over that incident, Rofiqul attacked the poet under the instruction of his elder brother Kodu.

Shakib boost

FROM PAGE 1

top half of their batting within 114 runs during an aggressive chase.

Bangladesh will feel good about the batting form of opener Tanzid Hasan Tamim, who followed up his 84 against Sri Lanka in the first warm-up with a 44-ball 45. Mehedi Hasan Miraz's form with the bat will be another big boost, with the all-rounder scoring his second consecutive half-century during an innings-high of 74.

The pace bowlers also fared decently, with Mustafizur Rahman's two wickets at the top the brightest spot in the bowling innings.

What will be of further relief is the fact that Shakib will be fit to start the game against Afghanistan, having sat out the two practice matches through an ankle injury, which he suffered recently during a training session.

Shanto informed that Shakib was fully fit and available for the opening match during the toss yesterday.

"Shakib [Al Hasan] is 100 percent fine and ready for the first match," Shanto said during the toss at the Barsapara Cricket Stadium in Guwahati.

Bangladesh had beaten Sri Lanka by seven wickets in their first practice match at the same venue on September 29.