

Cancel seismic survey at Lawachhara

Bapa, PBA demand

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Paribesh Andolon (Bapa) yesterday demanded immediate cancellation of the three dimensional (3D) seismic survey conducted by Chevron at the Lawachhara National Forest and its adjacent areas to save the country's lone rain forest and its bio-diversity.

The Bapa leaders also demanded proper investigation into environmental, human and economic disasters that have already been occurred in the forest and ensure compensation for the affected people.

The demands came at a press conference organised by Bapa at Dhaka Reporters' Unity (DRU) auditorium in the city.

Bapa President Prof Muzaffer Ahmad said, "Energy security is necessary for the country, but we don't want it at the cost of human security and wildlife."

"When Africa and South America are taking special programmes to preserve rain forests, our country is pushing its rain forests towards the verge of destruction," he said in a statement.

Quoting locals and members of Khasia Palli, Prof Muzaffer said cracks have developed in 30 houses of Doluchhara village including in the wall of a concrete mosque at Noagaon due to heavy vibration caused by the explosion.

Besides, the animals were so frightened that they came out of

the forest, he added.

Prof Muzaffer said the importance of Lawachhara in the context of eco balance and biodiversity is immense and the forest is a home to 167 species of plants, four species of amphibians, six species of reptiles, 246 species of birds and 20 species of mammals, 17 species of worms and insects including other rare species.

"We should also consider the probability of an earthquake caused by artificial vibration in the fragile soil of Sylhet," he added.

Prof Muzaffer said the survey should be conducted with environment-friendly methods, and the methods adopted by Chevron are not at all environment-

friendly.

"We will definitely use natural resources, but we will not destroy other resources while exploring natural resources," he added.

He said according to chief conservator of wildlife, conducting of 3D seismic survey in a reserve forest is a violation of forest and wildlife preservation act.

Moreover, environment and biodiversity of the forest is under threat due to Chevron's survey, he added.

Bapa leaders also demanded a halt to movement of vehicles on the roads inside the forest and shifting of the railway tracks from the forest.

Bapa General Secretary Dr Abdul Matin, member-secretary Iqbal Habib and Sharif Jamil also spoke at the conference.

Meanwhile, Paribesh Bachao Andolon (PBA) has urged the government to take effective steps to stop the three-dimensional seismic survey of Chevron at Lawachhara National Forest.

In a statement yesterday, PBA demanded exemplary punishment to people responsible for the explosion.

"It is learnt that Chevron is going to restart the survey work inside the forest and it will compensate the damages occurred by the survey. But it is possible to ascertain the value of the forest, wild animal and bio-diversity?" questioned the PBA leaders.

"Many forests and human habitations in many countries of the world were destroyed due to autocratic survey of the oil companies. Magurichhara and Tengritala are the examples in Bangladesh," they added.

"Lawachhara is our precious asset and we will not compromise with anyone regarding our asset," reads the statement signed by Abu Naser Khan, convener of PBA.



Bapa President Prof Muzaffer Ahmad speaks at a press conference organised by Bapa at Dhaka Reporters' Unity (DRU) auditorium in the city yesterday. On his right are Bapa member-secretary Iqbal Habib and Sharif Jamil and on his left is General Secretary Dr Abdul Matin.

Judgement in graft cases against Ershad, Aman today

COURT CORRESPONDENT

The judgement in a 17-year-old corruption case against Jatiya Party Chairman HM Ershad, detained former chairman of Bangladesh Shilpa Bank AKM Mosharraf Hossain and four others, and of an extortion case against detained former BNP lawmaker Amanullah Aman and 11 others will be delivered today.

The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) meanwhile has pressed charges against Rajib Siraj, son of former jute and textiles minister Shajahan Siraj, for concealing information in his wealth statement.

ERSHAD CASE
Judge Golam Mortuza Majumder of the Special Court for Dhaka Division is scheduled to deliver the verdicts at 11:00am, court sources said.

In the case against Ershad, AKM Mosharraf Hossain, former chairman of Bangladesh Shilpa Bank and Ershad have been accused of abuse of power. They directed the authorities concerned to sanction Tk 35 lakh loan in favour of M/s Three Star Poultry Farm Ltd on September 4, 1979.

AMAN CASE
Judge Mohammad Altaf Hussain of the Sixth Additional District and Sessions Judge's Court, Dhaka will give the verdict of the case filed against former state minister for labour and employment Aman and others at 11:30am.

The others accused in the case are SM Firoz, Abdul Hamid, Mojibur Rahman, Mostan, Shaikat, Amir, Abdul Latif, Hossain, Zillur Rahman, Abul Kalam and Raja.

RAJIB CASE
ACC Assistant Director SS Sahidur Rahman, also the IO of the case, submitted the charge sheet against Rajib to the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court, Dhaka showing 17 people as prosecution witnesses.

The IO prayed for issuance of an arrest warrant against Rajib and the order to attach his properties as he has been absconding since the case was filed.

Khairul Huda, an ACC assistant director, filed the case against Rajib with Gulshan Police Station in which he complained that the accused amassed assets worth Tk 8.79 crore beyond known sources of income.

Naziur's son Andaliv new BJP president

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Andaliv Rahman, son of Naziur Rahman Manzur, has been made chairman of Bangladesh Jatiya Party (BJP).

Andaliv was made BJP chairman at a party presidium meeting held on April 26 at Baridhara in the city.

Tayebar Rahman, one of the presidium members of BJP, presided over the meeting.

Bangla-Pak ties to strengthen

Hopes president

UNB, Dhaka

President Iajuddin Ahmed yesterday hoped that the existing bilateral relations between Bangladesh and Pakistan would strengthen further in the days to come.

The president made this remark when visiting Pakistan Air Chief Marshal Tanvir Mahmood Ahmed made a courtesy call on him at Bangabhaban.

Iajuddin hoped that "the existing bilateral cooperation, especially training-exchange programme, would be further enhanced through the Air Chief's visit".

He emphasised boosting educa-

tional exchange programme.

The Pakistan air chief praised the achievements of Bangladesh in different sectors, particularly in micro-credit, women empowerment and human resource development programme through allocating highest budget in educational sector.

Marshal Tanvir also expressed his satisfaction at the existing friendly relations between the two countries and hoped that it would further strengthen.

Pakistan High Commissioner Alamgir Babar and Pakistan Deputy Air Chief Air Vice-Marshal Wasimuddin, Military Secretary to the President Major General Mohd

Aminul Karim, Secretary to President's Office Md Sirajul Islam and President's Press Secretary Abdul Awal Howlader were present.

Marshal Tanvir also called on Defence Secretary Kamrul Hasan at the Defence Ministry and visited Military Institute of Science and Technology (MIST) and Defence Services Command and Staff College (DSCSC).

Joint Secretary (W&D) of the Defence Ministry Brig Gen Shah M Sultan Uddin Iqbal, Bir Protik and Joint Secretary (General) M Ebadot Ali were present on the occasion.

Later, Tanvir went to Mirpur Cantonment.



Publication ceremony of a book titled 'Drug and Drug Addiction' at the Birdem hospital auditorium in the city yesterday. (From left) Psychiatrist Prof Anwar Syed Haque, Dr Arup Ratan Chowdhury, Law Adviser AF Hassan Arif and Prof AK Azad Khan hold copies of the book at the ceremony.

'Include harmful effects of drugs in school curriculum'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Law Adviser AF Hassan Arif yesterday said harmful effects of drugs should be included in school curriculum to raise awareness among the youths about the menace of drug addiction.

"I will suggest the education adviser to include a chapter on the harms of drug addiction in secondary education curriculum," he added.

The law adviser was speaking at the publication ceremony of a book titled 'Drug and Drug Addiction' written by Dr Arup Ratan Chowdhury at the Birdem hospital auditorium in the city.

Hasan said initiative should also be taken so that the multinational cigarette companies provide com-

penation to smokers.

"We should work to make the multinational cigarette companies compensate the smokers like some other countries," he added.

The adviser said public awareness is the main tool to control drug addiction.

Due to decrease in extra-curricular activities among the youths, drug addiction has increased, he opined.

"We should take to the streets to stop drug addiction," said the author of the book.

He said the main causes of drug addiction are curiosity, group pressure, mental hazards, disturbed home environment and availability of drugs.

"Drug addiction starts from smoking. So it should be con-

trolled first and family should play a big role in raising awareness among their children about it," he added.

Health and Family Welfare Secretary AKM Zafarullah Khan, psychiatrist Prof Anwar Syed Haque and artist Ilias Kanchan also spoke at the function presided over by President of Diabetic Association of Bangladesh Prof AK Azad Khan.

British HC closed tomorrow

UNB, Dhaka

British High Commission in Dhaka and its office in Sylhet will remain closed to the public tomorrow for May Day.



Artists of Nritya Shilpi Sangstha take out a colourful procession in the city yesterday on the occasion of the World Dance Day.

EPR CASE AGAINST HASINA

Hearing on govt appeal concludes

UNB, Dhaka

Prolonged hearings on government appeal against the High Court judgment invalidating trial of former prime minister Sheikh Hasina under emergency rules in an extortion case concluded yesterday in the Supreme Court.

After closing the hearings by both sides after eight working days, with breaks, a seven-member full hierarchy of the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court, headed by Chief Justice M Ruhul Amin, passed an order signaling its decision to delay the delivery of judgment.

On February 6, the High Court, upon a writ petition filed by the detained ex-PM and Awami League president, had declared illegal the government sanction placing the extortion case against her for trial under the stringent Emergency Power Rules (EPR) and quashed the entire trial proceedings.

On February 26, the Appellate Division upon an application granted the government leave to appeal against the HC rulings, and fixed March 16 for appeal hearing. Besides, the apex court also stayed the operation of the HC judgment and stalled the trial of the extortion case against Hasina until the appeal is resolved.

Businessman Azam J Chowdhury filed the case at a time when there has been a purge under way in the interim period against former ruling politicians.

Additional Attorney General Salah Uddin Ahmed stood for the government while Barrister Rafique-ul Huq and Ajmalul Hossain, QC, appeared for Hasina.

CA's support to FF, physically challenged artist

UNB, Dhaka

Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed donated Tk 1.5 lakh from the CA's discretionary fund for treatment of a freedom fighter and a boy and encouraging an artist to go on with his artworks.

He gave Tk 75,000 for treatment of blood cancer of Md Majharul Islam, 9, son of M Faruq Ahmed of Matlab, Chandpur, Tk 50,000 for treatment of blood cancer of freedom fighter and naval commando Sahabuddin Bhuiyan of Madaripur and Tk 25,000 to M Kamal.

Uddin Talukdar, a physically challenged artist, to encourage his paintwork.

Experts deactivate grenades in Ctg

CU Correspondent

The hand grenades that were found at a village under Boalkhali upazila in Chittagong on Monday were deactivated yesterday.

Officer-in-Charge (OC) of Boalkhali Police Station Aminul Islam Sarker said the grenades were too old and might be of the time of country's Liberation War.

Explosive specialist of Bangladesh Army and Rapid Action Battalion examined the grenades in the morning and decided to deactivate by exploding them, he said.

Later, the grenades were deactivated on a field of Gomdandi area under the upazila, sources said.

Mentionable, some workers engaged in digging a canal at Shekhpara village under the Boalkhali upazila found 10 hand grenades and 422 rounds of bullet kept at an earthen pot under the ground on Monday afternoon.

SIDR STRIKE

11pc of injured fall victim to permanent disability

Speakers tell roundtable

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Eleven percent of the people that sustained injuries during Sidr strike fell victim to permanent disability, said a study conducted by the Centre for Injury Prevention and Research, Bangladesh (CIPRB) yesterday.

The results of the study were disseminated at a roundtable at Spectra Convention Centre in the city.

Speakers at the roundtable called for ensuring injury care preparedness during disasters, including injury risk reduction, skill development of injuries and transportation and rehabilitation of the injured patients.

Moderated by AKM Fazlur Rahman, executive director, CIPRB, the meeting was addressed by Prof Hosne Ara Tahmin of Directorate General of Health Services, Ministry

of Health and Family Welfare, Ian Stanford Rector, chief technical adviser and team leader, Disaster Management Programme (CDMP), BMM Mozharul Huq, adviser, humanitarian response team, UNDP, Dr M Mostafa Zaman of World Health Organisation, and Abdul Matin Mondol, former director, hydrography, BIWTA.

Injury is an enormous health problem in Bangladesh and it kills 70,000 people every year. It is also the main cause behind deaths during any disaster like Sidr and the mechanism of injury is mainly drowning and trauma, speakers said at the roundtable.

Though the country achieved remarkably in disaster preparedness, different studies revealed that the consequences of injuries in disasters like higher death toll, health, economic and enormous social burdens could be

reduced through a better emergency preparedness, the speakers added.

Prof Hosne Ara Tahmin said concerted effort is an imperative to face the challenge of both pre and post-natural disaster management and to mitigate sufferings of the affected people.

She added, "We have to create an environment so that doctors can stay while discharging their duties at the upazila level."

Dr M Mostafa Zaman said weather forecast system can be improved adding that rapid response systems after the natural disasters should improve.

AKM Fazlur Rahman said injury is often considered as an accidental occurrence, which is not preventable. However, the application of basic epidemiological principles has demonstrated that injuries are predictable and preventable.



Special Assistant of the Chief Adviser Raja Debashish Roy addresses a seminar at Barc conference hall in the city yesterday. On his left are BNF Chairman Dr MA Hakim and Debtec Executive Director Dr Ferdousee.

'Promote research on CHT medicinal plants'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a seminar yesterday urged the caretaker government to promote research on medicinal plants of Chittagong Hill Tract as these plants can be used in making medicine and nation can save around Tk 100 crore per year.

They also said that income of the CHT local people would be increased by 20 percent if medicinal plants are grown in the region and get proper market access.

Debtec-Development of Biotechnology and Environmental Conservation Centre and Bangladesh Neem Foundation (BNF) jointly organised the seminar titled 'Medicinal Plants of Chittagong Hill Tracts: Problems and Prospect' at Barc Centre in the city.

Special Assistant of the Chief Adviser Raja Debashish Roy attended the seminar as the chief guest.

"Globally, the demand of medicine plants is now increasing and around 85 billion dollar is needed to meet the global need. We can be more benefited from the medicinal plants if government takes proper measures especially setting up research firm and conduct research in the CHT areas," Raja Debashish said.

He also said vast numbers of medicinal plants are being destroyed due to lack of awareness.

M Serajul Islam, secretary of the president, said government would assist those people who try to grow medicinal plants.

Among others, Debtec Executive Director Dr Ferdousee and BNF Chairman Dr MA Hakim spoke in the seminar.

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