

Protect indigenous people to save forests

Speakers call at Bapa seminar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a seminar yesterday called for protecting indigenous people to save forests of the country.

They said the indigenous people are the part of the forests and they know how to protect them.

The seminar titled 'Environmental degradation in forest: Socio-economic crisis of indigenous people' was organised by the Bangladesh Paribesh Andolon (Bapa) at WVA auditorium in the city.

Speaking as chair Bapa President Prof Muzaffer Ahmad said there is a debate over the name of Adibashi but there is no debate about it that those who live in forests also protect them.

"Those who consider forests as the raw materials of industrialisation do not protect them," he said.

The existence of Adibashi people is being threatened in the name of participatory forests, he added.

In a keynote paper, Prof Khandaker Mokadem Hossain of Dhaka University said the ethnic communities constitute, according to a government statistics, about 1.2 percent of the total population, but the actual number of indigenous people is considerably

higher than this.

He said a huge number of Bangalee settlers have been rehabilitated at Matiranga and Rangarh thanas in Khagrachari district, Lama thana in Bandarban district, and Madhupur Tracts of Tangail and Mymensingh districts.

As a consequence, the indigenous people have become marginalised and lost their traditional rights over land and trees, he said.

Prof Hossain said the government should implement ILO's Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention 169 to protect their human and land rights.

He said the land and tree

resources of indigenous people should be protected from the activities that are not sound environmentally.

Apart from the rehabilitation of Bangalee settlers and commercial plantation of tea, pineapple, orange, lemon and rubber trees, infrastructural development including construction of roads, bridges and highways, industrialisation and urbanisation process, and control of forest lands by military and para-military troops in Chittagong Hill Tracts are the main causes of deforestation.

Philip Gain, director of SHED, said the aggression of alien trees in forests is not acceptable.

There were 100 species of indigenous trees in Madhupur forest but in the name of participatory afforestation these trees have been replaced by acacia and eucalyptus, he said.

If the government does not take adequate steps it will be very difficult for indigenous people to survive, said Rabindranath Soren, a leader of the Adibashi community.

AZM Shamsul Huda, a retired forest conservator, said indigenous people do not make any harm to forests, and during his service he did not find them in selling trees by cutting them illegally.



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Rabindranath Soren speaks at a seminar on environmental degradation at WVA auditorium in the city yesterday. On his left are Prof Khandaker Mokadem Hossain, Prof Muzaffer Ahmad and Sharif Jamil.

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PHOTO: STAR

Eminent litterateurs praised Tahmima Anam for her Commonwealth award-winning novel 'A Golden Age' at a 'Meet the Author' programme in the city yesterday. Sahaib Prakash, the local publisher of the novel and its Bangla version titled 'Sonajhara Din', organised the function at Bengal Gallery where the author replied to questions from the readers about her book and her future novels. The function was attended by eminent litterateurs and cultural personalities and also by young writers. From left are Prof Hayat Mamud, Shaheen Anam, mother of Tahmima, Prof Zillur Rahman Siddiqui, author Tahmima, Prof Anisuzzaman, poet and litterateur Syed Shamsul Haq and Motifuddin Haque, proprietor of Sahaib Prakash.

953 killed in work-related accidents in 6 months: OSHE survey

UNB, Dhaka

Some 953 workers were killed and 1,637 others injured in work-related accidents across the country in the last six months, according to a survey report.

The Committee also demanded that the Cairn Energy, which gave fabricated information about Sangu gas field, be thrown out of the country.

report on the basis of reports published in 16 newspapers from January 1 to June 30 this year.

It said that 166 workers were killed and 240 others injured in workplace accidents such as falling from height, electrocution, explosion and fire, while 191 were killed and 1016 others injured in road accidents and 72 killed and 19 others injured in other incidents such as torture by employers, mugging and

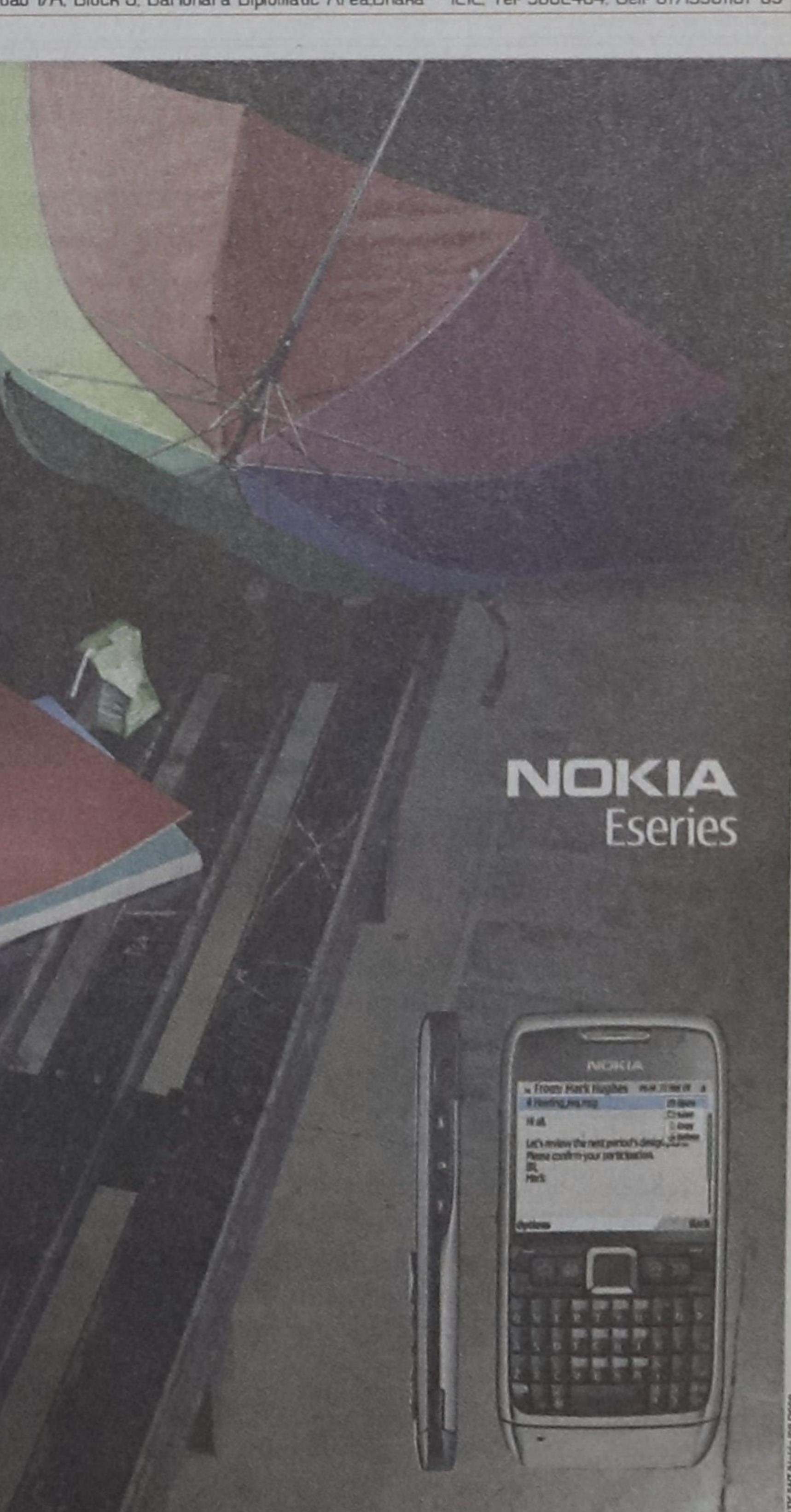
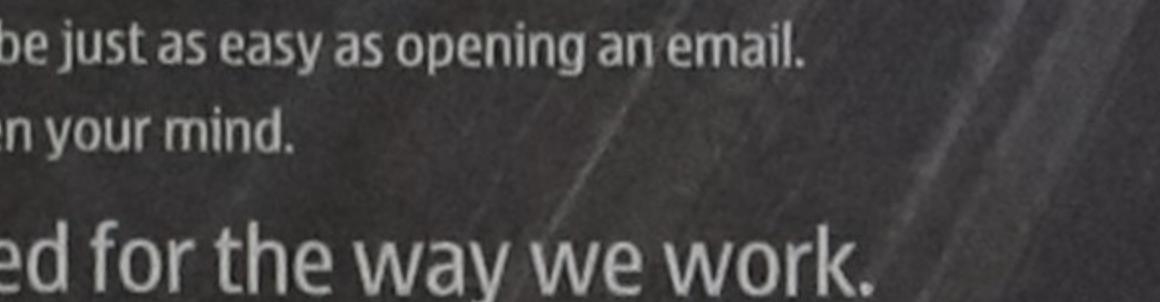
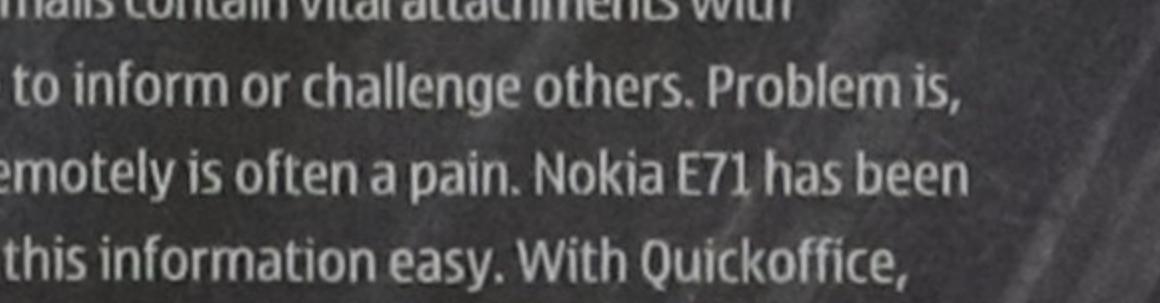
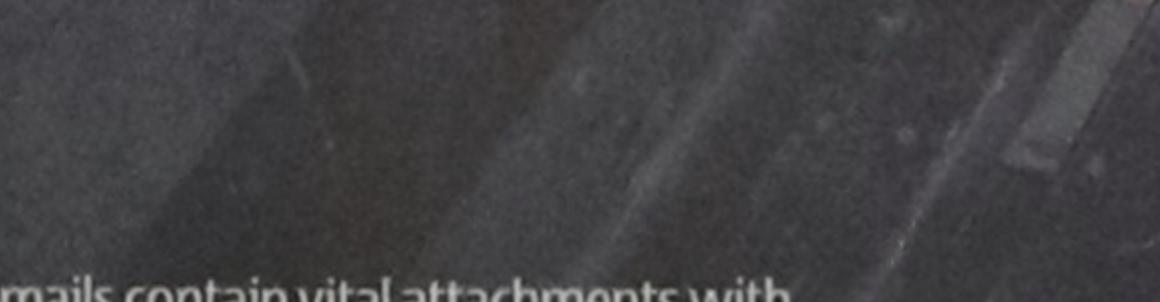
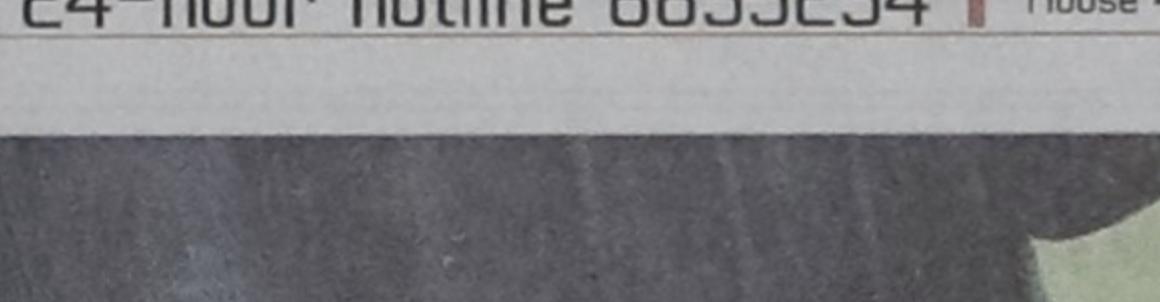
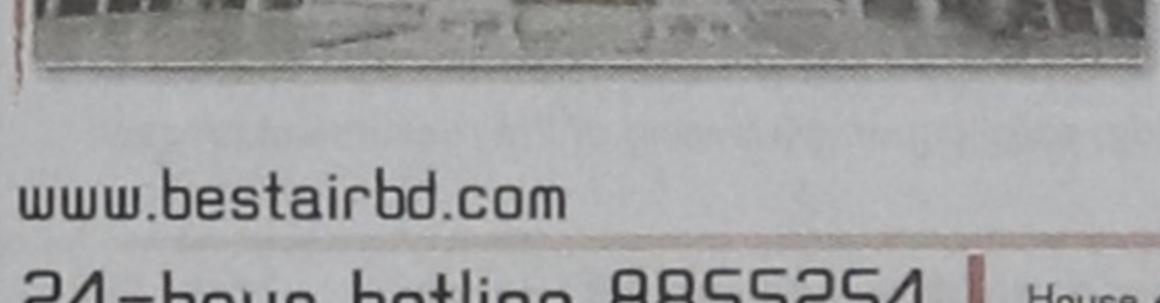
baton-charge or firing by police.

Some 214 workers were killed and 199 others injured in accidents during travelling to and from workplaces while 310 transport workers were killed and 163 others injured in road accidents and 72 killed and 19 others injured in other incidents such as lightning, attack by animals at workplaces.

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