

Bapa concerned over felling of trees at Sitakunda

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Paribesh Andolon (Bapa) yesterday demanded immediate actions against the culprits behind the wholesale felling of trees at Sitakunda's coastal forest and compensation for the destruction caused, a press release said.

The Bapa leaders also demanded proper investigation into environmental, human and economic disasters in the forests and called on the people to come forward to protect the environment and forests of the country.

In a written statement, they expressed grave concern over the failure of the authorities to take a timely action against the wrongdoers and blame game of the forest department and the police while filing cases against innocent people.

"Plans to cause such a ludicrous environmental disaster did not happen in a day. It was a result of extensive planning," reads the statement signed by Zakir Hossain, joint general secretary of Bapa.

They expressed their profound shock on how such an incident escaped the eyes of the intelligence and how hundreds of local people involved in the tree felling escaped before the law enforcers' arrival.

"Forests across the country are our precious assets and we will not compromise with anyone regarding our asset," reads the statement where Bapa leaders called on the government to ensure proper investigation and legal actions against the wrongdoers.

About 5,000 trees were razed in over half a kilometre of the forest belt at Sonachhari coast under Sitakunda upazila in Chittagong on Sunday night.

Reportedly, the wholesale felling of the trees was carried out with instructions from some local influential people who would like to set up three to four ship breaking yards at the clear cut section of the forest.



Country boats remain idle at Jinjira ghat at Keraniganj on the outskirts of the city as the people are still in holiday hangover after the Eid-ul-Azha. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: SHAWKAT JAMIL

Road accidents kill 14, injure 54

METRO DESK

At least 14 people were killed and 54 others injured in separate road accidents in Tangail, Madaripur, Jhenidah, Comilla and Joypurhat in last two days. Our correspondent from Tangail adds: Six people were killed and 14 others injured in separate road accidents in Tangail yesterday.

A Bogra-bound passenger bus from Dhaka hit a passenger-laden tempo on Bangabandhu bridge approach road at Elenga in Kalihati upazila at around 6:00pm, leaving one tempo passenger dead on the spot and 11 tempo passengers injured.

Three of the injured succumbed to their injuries on the way to the hospital, police said. Eight others were admitted

to Tangail General Hospital.

Three of the dead were identified as Adhir, 45, of Myotha village in Basail upazila, Ali Akbar, 28, of Babla village in Kalihati upazila and Hazrat Ali, 27. Identity of the other could not be known immediately.

Police and witnesses said an accident occurred on Dhaka-Tangail highway when a Bogra-bound microbus from Dhaka collided head-on with a truck coming from the opposite direction in Birpushia area, leaving microbus driver and a passenger dead on the spot and three other microbus passengers injured.

The dead were identified as Shahidul Islam, 30, driver of the microbus, and Sumon Sarafat, 32.

The injured were rushed to Tangail General Hospital. A correspondent from Madaripur reports: Four people were killed and five others injured in separate road accidents at Madaripur on Tuesday and yesterday.

Three people were killed and five others were seriously injured in a road accident on Faridpur-Barisal highway at Pantapara in Kalkini upazila yesterday.

The injured were rushed to Kalkini Health Complex and Madaripur Sadar Hospital.

The accident occurred as driver of a vegetable-laden Barisal-bound truck lost his control over the steering and hit a roadside tree at around 3:30am.

Truck driver Bosto, 40, vegetable vendor

Nuruzza, 20 and Sukur Ali, 27 died on the spot.

Rafiqul, 20, Ujjal, 24, Razzak, 26, Humayun, 32 and an unidentified person aged about 30 were seriously injured.

Meanwhile, a girl identified as Ayesha Khatun, 10, was run over by a microbus on Dhaka-Khulna highway near Pachchor Petrol pump in Shibchar on Tuesday evening.

Ayesha, a daughter of Ibrahim Chokder of Petrol Pump area, died on the spot.

Our correspondent from Jhenidah says: An Awami League leader was run over by a speeding truck at Barobazar under Kaliganj upazila in Jhenidah on Tuesday night.

The deceased was identi-

fied as Mizanur Rahman, 45, son of late Rafi Mia of Barobazar town.

Witnesses and police said the accident occurred when Mizan was crossing the road after collecting tax from a cattle market of Barobazar town. The speedy Kaliganj-bound truck from Jessore ran over him, leaving him dead on the spot.

Mizan was also a candidate for vice chairman in the last Kaliganj upazila election.

UNB from Comilla adds: Two people, including a woman, were killed and 15 others

injured in a triangular collision of a bus, a microbus and a jeep on Dhaka-Chittagong highway in the afternoon.

Police said the accident occurred in Chandina upazila headquarters at about 4:00pm, killing the unidentified woman passenger and the jeep driver on the spot.

Five of the injured were rushed to the upazila health complex in critical condition.

In Joypurhat, a bus plunged into a roadside ditch on Joypurhat-Bogra highway in Sadar upazila yesterday, killing a passenger on the spot and injuring 20 others.

Witnesses said the accident occurred near the Palli Bidyut Samity Complex in the afternoon as one of the tyres of the bus deflated.

Fifteen of the injured were admitted to the Sadar Hospital where condition of eight was stated to be critical.

Programmes to observe Int'l Day for Persons with Disabilities

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

International Day for the Persons with Disabilities will be observed across the country today with the theme 'Making the MDGs inclusive: Empowerment of persons with disabilities (PWDs) and their communities around the world'.

A discussion, organised by Social Welfare Ministry, Jatiya Protibandhi Unnayan Foundation (JPUF), Department of Social Service and National Forum of Organisations Working with the Disabled (NFOWD), will be held at Rabindra Sarobar in the city's Dhanmondi area to mark the day.

NFOWD said this at a press conference at the National Press Club yesterday ahead of the day, which is being widely observed throughout the world since 1992.

A series of month-long programmes have been chalked out to mark the day with due dignity.

The two most significant parts of this year's theme is the empowerment of the persons with disabilities and their inclusion in the development activities.

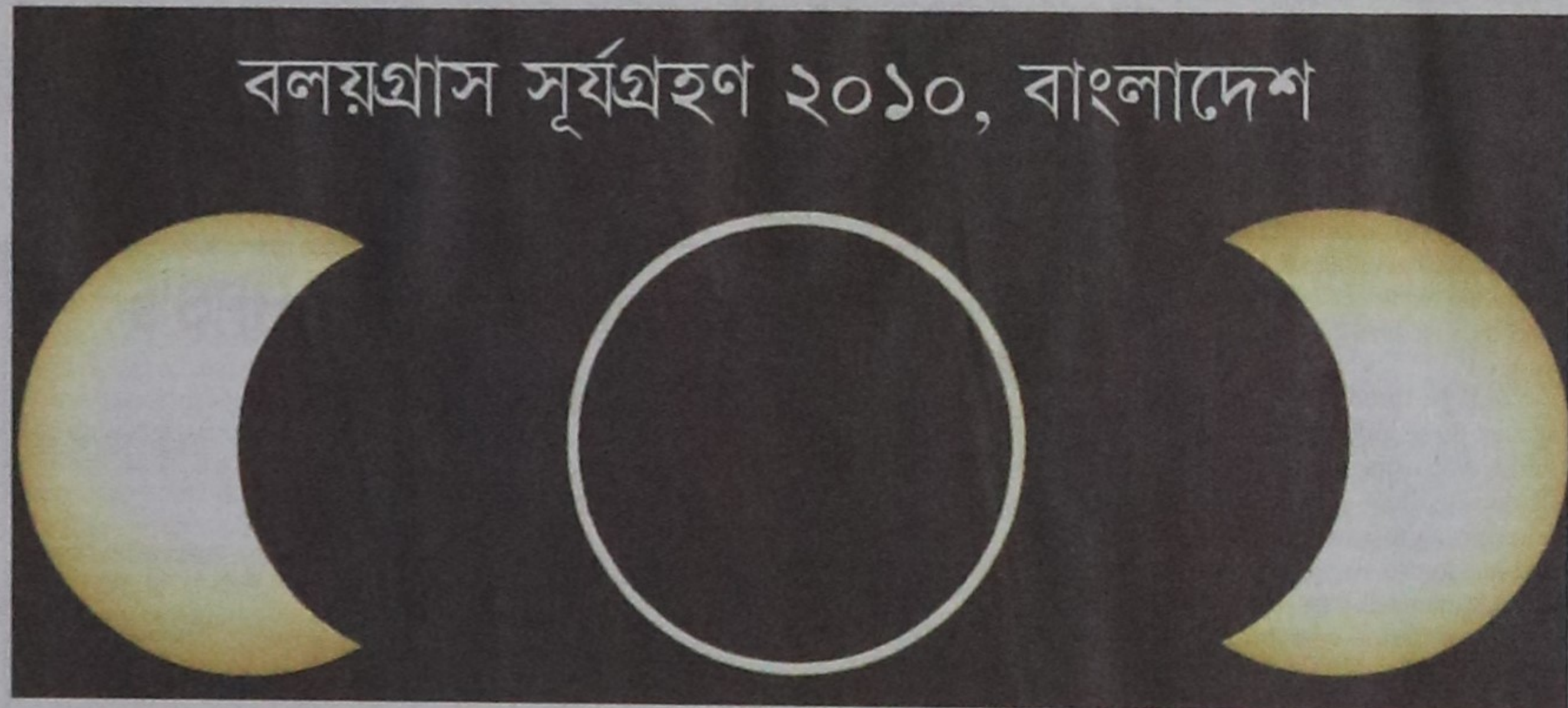
Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were set earlier excluding the PWD issue, which later gave birth to many controversies and finally leading the inclusion of the issue in the MDGs in 2005.

The first two goals of the MDGs - poverty eradication and primary education - are utterly relevant to the rights of PWDs and the goals cannot be obtained wholly without their inclusion.

Quamrunnesa Khanam, social welfare secretary, will attend the programme as special guest while Syed Modasser Ali, health and family welfare adviser to the prime minister, will be present as the chief guest.

Besides, different programmes will be held to protect the rights of autistic children on December 6, discussion on the expansion of sign language on December 7 and view exchange meeting on formulating up-to-date law preserving the rights of the PWDs.

Zowaherul Islam Mamun, secretary general of NFOWD, presented a keynote paper at the programme with Khandakar Zahurul Alam, president of NFOWD, in the chair.



Annular solar eclipse will be visible from the region stretching from Cox's Bazar district headquarters to St Martin's Island on January 15, 2010.

PHOTO: STAR

COCO-4 LAUNCH CAPSIZE

Resignation of shipping minister, BIWTA boss demanded

Setting up of four naval courts recommended

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a press conference yesterday demanded resignation of the shipping minister, chairman of BIWTA and director general of the Department of Shipping (DOS) for neglecting their respective duties before and after Coco-4 launch capsized on Friday near Nazirpur launch terminal in Bhola.

The DOS officials gave fitness certificate to the launch although it was designed defectively, the BIWTA officials did not deploy sufficient number of police and magistrates to monitor whether any launch carries extra passengers and the minister did not reach the spot instantly and stayed there only 10 minutes during the rescue operation, they alleged.

The speakers said all of them overlooked their duties.

So, they should quit their respective posts after claiming all the responsibilities for the incident.

The placed the demand at the press conference on 'Cause of launch accident at Nazirpur in Bhola and its prevention' jointly organised by Nirapod Naupath Bastabayan Jote and Coast Trust at the National Press Club in the city.

Rezaul Karim Chowdhury, deputy director of Coast Trust, alleged that a syndicate has sprouted centring launch business owing by political leaders. They obtain fitness certificates for launches by pursuing BITWA officials despite faulty designs.

Later, those faulty designed launches capsize or drown in water claiming lives of people, he added.

Rezaul recommended that the government privatise the

certification and monitoring system to contain corruption in this sector.

"Salvage vessels MV Hamza and MV Rustam are trying together to rescue the sunken launch. But the two vessels have the operational capacity to pull only 110 tons while the weight of the capsized launch is more than 500 tons. So, the rescue salvage vessels will have to face tremendous difficulties," he added.

He criticised the government for not purchasing a crane, although the process to buy a crane started in 2005.

Reading out a written statement, Atiqul Islam Chowdhury, national coordinator of Nirapod Naupath Bastabayan Jote, placed a set of recommendations to ensure safe waterway journey across the country.

The recommendations include stern action against

the authorities if any launch carries excessive passengers, identification of vulnerable launches and giving deadline for relinquishing them, establishment of four naval courts in Chandpur, Barisal, Patuakhali and Khulna, amendment to Inland Shipping Ordinance 1976, introduction of loan system for making new launches, arrangement of life insurance for passengers and ensuring life jackets for passengers during travelling.

After the press conference, survivors Zakir Hossain, Sohag and Akhi described the tragic scenario of the accident and recollected how they saved their lives.

Sanak Kumar Bhoomik, deputy director of Coast Trust, Md Sahabuddin, chief of rescue team of Coast Trust also spoke.

Solar eclipse to be seen from Cox's Bazar Jan 15

A CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

The annular solar eclipse will be visible from Cox's Bazar district headquarters to St Martin's Island on January 15, 2010.

No one should look at the sun directly during the eight-minute-long eclipse, said members of Onusondhitsu Chakra Biggyan Club at a press conference at Cox's Bazar Press Club yesterday.

Shahjahan Mridha Benu, president of the organisation's astronomy branch, in a written statement at the press conference said there was a total solar eclipse in 2009.

No other total solar eclipse would be visible in Bangladesh before the year 2114, he added.

However, partial solar eclipse is not so rare and a total of 37 partial eclipses would be visible in Bangladesh during the current century, he also said.

Akhter's death condoled

DU CORRESPONDENT

Different socio-political organisations yesterday expressed profound shock at the death of noted journalist Akhter Ahmed Khan.

Leaders of the organisations in separate messages prayed for the salvation of the departed soul and expressed their sympathy to the bereaved family members.

Akhter, press minister of Bangladesh embassy in the USA, passed away after suffering a massive cardiac arrest in Washington DC on Monday.

Acting president of Awami League and Deputy Leader of the House Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury in a message expressed her deep shock at his death.

She said the journalist community has lost a great friend of them through Akhter's death, adding that he had never compromised with any kind of injustice.

Bangabandhu Jubo Parishad, Dhaka Union of Journalists and Jatiya Gonotantrik League in separate messages condoled the death.

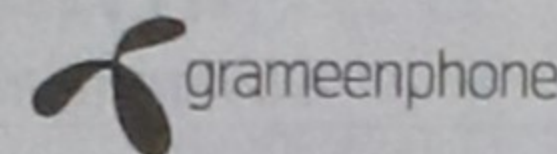
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This is to inform all concerned that from 6 December 2009, ongoing recharge bonus offer* of Tk. 100 for inactive connections will no longer be available. But subscribers, who have already recharged their prepaid connections which were unused for more than 30 days or will recharge it for the first time by 5 December, can avail free talktime of first recharge. Accordingly, if they recharge their connection for the second time by 31 December '09, they can enjoy free talktime within 72 hours of recharge from 7 January, 2010 onwards.

Other conditions of the offer will remain unchanged.

* Offer valid for prepaid connections (Smile, djuice, Business Solutions) which were unused for more than 30 days till 18 November '09

> Conditions apply



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