

TANGENTS
BY IHTISHAM KABIR

Watching Winter Visitors

It is a common fallacy that most birds seen here in winter are migratory species. In fact, of the 700 bird species seen in Bangladesh, only about 260 are winter visitors. Flying from colder climates they often cover long distances and settle down in all manners of habitats to enjoy warmer days here. Many of these birds are unusual and attractive. They make winter the best season for birding here.

The visitors start arriving as early as late August. One of the first is the Brown Shrike which shows up from Siberia and northern China. It is also one of the last winter migrants to leave Bangladesh, staying here as late as April. Perching on top of branches and tall weeds, it dives down to the ground to catch insects.

Along with the Brown Shrike, the Taiga Flycatcher is another early arrival. This grey bird also perches in clear, visible spots, flicks its tail incessantly and chases insects, returning to the same spot. Both birds are easily seen in our meadows and edges of our woodlands, including the lakes and wooded parts of Dhaka.

It seems to me the largest proportion of winter birds show up in our wetlands. Into the waters of our haors and larger rivers descend many ducks, geese and other waterbirds. Tanguar and Hail Haors in Sylhet and the *chars* of the Padma in Rajshahi and the southern coast are good places to see these birds. Closer to Dhaka they can be seen at Jahangirnagar University. Ducks and geese eat plant material growing in the water. I find the Bar-headed and Greylag Geese, as well as the Common Pochard, Northern Pintail and Common Teal to be attractive.

Near the water a slew of shorebirds (or waders) such as sandpipers and plovers arrive in winter. They spend their time on the shores of haors, rivers and smaller water bodies. Using long, pointed beaks of various shapes,



Brown Shrike with catch.

PHOTO: IHTISHAM KABIR

waders probe the mud to catch worms and insects.

In our forests, several colourful flycatchers arrive in winter. Among them the easiest to see is probably the blue Verditer Flycatcher. Smaller brown birds, including warblers, also show up. In Sundarban, the prettiest bird of winter is undoubtedly the Black-capped Kingfisher with its blue and orange body and large red beak.

Winter brings many species of birds of prey. Among them is the Peregrine Falcon readily seen in the *chars* of Rajshahi. Our most common falcon to appear during winter, however, is the Common Kestrel, which I saw numerous times atop pylons in Purbachol.

Several eagles, including Booted Eagle and Steppe Eagle, can be seen in winter. On a lucky day you might see them circling over open meadows. Migratory Marsh Harriers hunt over large fields,

flying low. In the forests, the Black Baza shows up in winter, but it is rare.

Among other special birds of winter are the Indian Skimmer, seen in the coastal areas and the extremely rare Spoonbilled Sandpiper, seen in a few islands in the Bay. In November 2019, this author spotted a flock of Common Cranes in the *chars* of Rajshahi, rare winter visitors once thought extirpated from this land. The same region also yields several species of rare storks in winter.

While Bangladesh is blessed with birds year-round, the arrival of winter birds adds variety and excitement for those who love birds and nature. Most stay until March, so there is plenty of time for you to go out and enjoy them.

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1,000 to get free cataract operation in M'singh

OUR CORRESPONDENT, M'singh

Some 1,000 patients have been selected for free cataract operation at Dr Muqtadir Eye Hospital in Mymensingh.

Of them, 80 patients were already operated on by three doctors at a free eye camp at the healthcare facility in Bokainagor Nayapara village of Gouripur upazila yesterday, hospital sources said.

Prof AKMA Muqtadir, founder of the hospital, said out of the rest 920 patients, 80 each will be able to avail the service on every Friday.

Lawmaker Nazim Uddin Ahmed inaugurated the 43rd edition of the annual eye camp yesterday.

Under personal initiative of Prof Muqtadir, former head of ophthalmology of Dhaka Medical College Hospital, a total of 1.18 lakh people -- including the 1,000 -- have received the chance to get free surgeries since 1976, he said.

In cooperation with his wife Dr Mahmuda Khatun, Dr Muqtadir established the 100-bed hospital on five acres of land at his native village Bokainagor Nayapara in 2004 to provide affordable eye treatment to rural people.

After completing his MBBS degree from Mymensingh Medical College in 1975, Muqtadir started providing low-cost treatment for the poor.

In 1976, he started arranging free eye camps on Gouripur Pilot High School ground and the camp venue shifted to Dr Muqtadir Eye Hospital in 2004.

Talking to The Daily Star, day labourer Fazlu Mia (65), a patient from nearby Sahonati village, said the service is very helpful for them.

A 55-year-old farmer, Abul Kalam, who came from Ishwarganj upazila, echoed him.

Dr Muqtadir said he asked his family members to continue the free camp even after his death.

ROAD ACCIDENT
Siblings could never reach relative's burial

STAR REPORT

On their way to attend a relative's burial, siblings Anwara and Jaharul tragically died in a road accident in Nilphamari yesterday morning. They died after a night-coach collided head-on with the microbus carrying them, reports our Nilphamari correspondent.

The two siblings were killed and nine were injured in the accident that occurred on Jaldhaka-Kishoreganj road at Abiler Bazaar area in Kishoreganj upazila of the district. All the victims were passengers of the microbus.

The deceased were identified as Anwara Begum (57) and his brother Jaharul Islam (65). Both hailed from Nabanganj village of Jaldhaka upazila.

Police and eyewitnesses said that the victims were going to Mokamtola area of Shibganj upazila in Bogura to take part in Jaharul's son-in-law's burial. When their vehicle reached Abiler Bazaar, the night-coach

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Cumilla hospital limps on
Shortage of manpower, equipment hampers treatment

UNB, Cumilla

Cumilla Medical College Hospital is unable to provide necessary medical services to patients due to a lack of manpower and equipment, causing sufferings to low-income people who largely depend on this public hospital.

Residents of 17 upazilas of the district and that of Chandpur and Brahmanbaria come to the hospital to avail of basic medicare at a low cost.

During a recent visit to the hospital, the news agency found that two medical warmers out of three have been out of order for a long time while the authorities concerned are struggling to provide services with two phototherapy machines at its pediatric department.

There are four Neonatal Intensive Care Units (NICUs) at the hospital but all of those are non-functional.

Shahnaz Begum, in-charge of the pediatric department, said premature newborns, infants with low birth



PHOTO: COLLECTED

weights and babies with respiratory problems are admitted to the department.

But they often struggle to provide necessary services with insufficient equipment, she added.

Besides, the washrooms at the hospital are not cleaned properly due

to a lack of cleaners, posing health risk to patients and others. There is also a crisis of safe water, said patients and attendees, adding that they are often forced to drink water from the tap, which is dirty and smelly.

There is only one elevator available

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Man held with 992 bottles of phensedyl

UNB, Dhaka

Rab yesterday arrested a man with 992 bottles of phensedyl from the capital's Uttara. The arrestee is Md Sabbir (23).

On information, a team of Rab-3 raided the north side of Abdullahpur-Ashulia Highway near Sluicegate Bus Terminal around 8am and arrested him, said Commanding Officer Shafi Ullah Bulbul.

During preliminary interrogation, Sabbir reportedly revealed that he is a member of a drug dealing gang, Rab claimed.

11-year-old girl raped in Savar

UNB, Savar

An 11-year-old girl was reportedly raped by an unidentified youth in Ambagan area near Jahangirnagar University on Thursday, a day after her family had moved there from Kishoreganj.

Family members of the girl said the incident took place in the evening.

They said she was walking on the street when she was picked up by a young man, who took her to his house and raped her.

Family members got to know about the incident after she informed her parents about the matter. They took her to the university's medical centre right away, said her father.

The girl was shifted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital as her condition deteriorated.

Rokibul Hasan, sub-inspector of Ashulia Police Station, said they have visited the area and spoke to the family members. "We're trying to identify and arrest the perpetrator," he said.

RAILWAY'S EAST ZONE

21 killed in 22 train accidents last year



FILE PHOTO

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Brahmanbaria

A total of 22 accidents occurred in 2019 in around 500km area of the Dhaka-Chattogram-Sylhet section of Bangladesh Railway's East Zone.

Twelve passenger and 10 cargo trains met accidents -- leaving 21 people dead and over hundred injured along with huge damage of properties.

On December 28, a Dhaka-bound mail train from Noakhali was in an accident near Shashidal Railway Station under Brahmanpara upazila of Cumilla. Though none was killed or injured in the accident, train communication on Dhaka-Chattogram, Dhaka-Noakhali and Sylhet-Chattogram routes were snapped for seven hours.

On November 12, a head-on collision between two intercity trains -- Turna Nishitha and Udayan Express -- near Mondobagh

Railway Station in Kasba upazila of Brahmanbaria left 18 people dead. It was revealed in the probe report that the driver of Turna Nishitha ignored the signal.

Delwar Hossain, loco-shed in-charge at Akhaura Railway Junction, said Kushiara Express derailed in Akhaura Junction Yard on September 24 and Jalalabad Express on September 4. A local passenger train derailed at Bhairab Bazar Railway Junction on October 10. The same train also derailed on October 1.

Sources said a cargo train derailed in Gochihata area of Kishoreganj on August 27 and another in Harashpur of Brahmanbaria on October 8. Passenger train Kushiara derailed at Montola Station on June 14. Locomotive of a cargo train derailed in Ashuganj of Brahmanbaria on July 13.

Intercity train Upaban was in an accident in Boromchal area of

Kulaura on June 24, leaving six dead and many injured. Isha Kha derailed in Kishoreganj on June 26. Surma Mail derailed in Montola area on June 11 and Kushiara in Rashidpur area on June 2.

A cargo train derailed in Bhairab Bazar area on May 30, and another in Talshahar area of Brahmanbaria on May 20. On May 16, Jalalabad Express -- going from Sylhet to Chattogram -- derailed in Fenchuganj upazila's Mallikpur.

The engine of a cargo train derailed in Akhaura Junction Yard on April 12. On March 28, a container train -- going from Sylhet to Chattogram -- derailed in Kulaura under Moulvibazar.

The engine of a cargo train derailed in Kishoreganj's Manikhali area on February 13 and another in Ashuganj area of Brahmanbaria on February 2. A cargo train derailed in Ashuganj area on January 13.

Fazilatun Nasa Bappy laid to rest

BSS, Dhaka

Former lawmaker of Awami League from reserved seat, Advocate Fazilatun Nasa Bappy, was laid to eternal rest at the Mirpur Martyred Intellectuals' Graveyard on Thursday evening.

She breathed her last around 8am on Thursday at the intensive care unit (ICU) of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU) Hospital at the age of 49.

On December 27, she was admitted to the hospital due to pneumonia and respiratory ailments. Later, she was shifted to the ICU as her condition deteriorated.

Her first namaz-e-janaza was held at Japan Garden City and a second janaza was held at 3pm at the South Plaza of Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban.

On behalf of the president, his military secretary placed wreaths on

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Journalists protest attack on fellows

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

Journalists in Tangail demonstrated in Bhuapur upazila yesterday, protesting an incident at Govindasi area where four local journalists were attacked by gamblers.

At 11am, reporters from various print and electronic media brought out a procession from Bhuapur Press Club. The procession moved through different streets in the municipal town.

Later, they formed a human chain at Thana Intersection area for an hour. Speakers at the human chain strongly condemned the attack and demanded immediate arrest of the attackers.

They also gave a 48-hour ultimatum to the administration for arresting the culprits, including main culprit Fazal Mondol,

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