

TANGENTS

BY IHTISHAM KABIR

Nuthatch

In my eyes the Velvet-fronted Nuthatch is one of the prettiest birds of Bangladesh.

The nuthatch group of birds (genus Sitta) can be found in North America, Europe and Asia, with sparse presence in Africa. They are passerine birds, that is - they can perch on trees. There are twenty four species of nuthatches in the world. The name comes from their fondness for hazelnut trees in Europe.

Nuthatches are omnivorous. They eat mostly insects, larvae and spiders as well as vegetable matter, nuts and seeds.

Nuthatches climb trees in a distinctive fashion. They can climb vertically up tree trunks like many other birds such as woodpeckers. However, they have the rare ability to run down tree trunks headfirst. I have also seen them proceed sideways while hanging upside down from a branch.

While climbing they pause and search for prey using their bills to search under the bark and inside cavities. They also grab food from the surface of trunks, branches and twigs. They are able to turn their necks in unexpected angles to help with this search.

Nuthatches do not migrate; they live within a well-defined home territory “owned” by a small group. They nest in cavities in trees or rocks, using a variety of techniques and material. To discourage unwelcome guests, some of them rub noxious insects around the nest hole as a repellent.

The Velvet-fronted Nuthatch (Sitta frontalis) is one of two nuthatches seen in Bangladesh. It is about four inches long and weighs less than an ounce. Its global range is South, East and South East Asia. In Bangladesh, it is seen in the forests of Dhaka, Khulna and Sylhet division.

Our second nuthatch is the Chestnut-bellied Nuthatch which is far less common.

Until recently, most of the nuthatches I photographed were abroad. In Hokkaido, Japan, I found the grey-and-white Eurasian Nuthatch looking for food by poking into the snow covered tree



PHOTO: IHTISHAM KABIR

Velvet-fronted Nuthatch, Sundarban.

trunks and turning its head into impossible angles. The one Velvet-fronted Nuthatch I photographed in Satchori, Bangladesh, had moved too swiftly for a decent picture.

Then, last month, during a trip to Sundarban, our group saw an entire flock of Velvet-fronted Nuthatches as we walked in a grove of Keora trees near Kotka visitor center one afternoon.

At first we spotted one and thought it was alone; to my delight we discovered many more as we walked across the grove. They did not appear shy and I could approach them to within

five or six feet.

I watched them as they moved quickly up and down the trees, describing spirals around the trunks, pulling out cobwebs and soft moss from the trunk or branch before zeroing in on a tiny morsel of protein. A short flight to the next tree followed.

In the late afternoon light, the colours of their purple-blue back, yellow eyes and red bills played off each other. I will remember this colourful afternoon for a very long time.

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DHAKA CITY

POLLS 2020

Victory will be ours: Atiquel

MATHEWS CHIRAN

Awami League mayor candidate for Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC) Atiquel Islam spent a busy day yesterday, meeting party members and preparing for the election.

As part of the preparation, Atiquel went to the residence of the present chief coordinator of AL camp for Dhaka north, Tofail Ahmed, in Banani around 11am.

Talking to journalists, Tofail said AL will cooperate with the Election Commission so that a free and fair election can be held today.

Atiquel informed journalists that they were assigning polling agents at the voting centers and all necessary arrangements will be completed by the end of the day.

From there, he went to Banani Jame Masjid for Juma prayers and visited the graves of his parents and former DNCC mayor Annisul Huq in Banani.

While talking to journalists near the mosque, he said he was confident of a win. He also agreed with Prime Minister's ICT Affairs Adviser Sajeeb Wazed Joy, who recently predicted on social media through a survey that Awami League will win the two Dhaka city election today by a huge margin.

"We have been campaigning since January 10. We received huge responses from people from all strata of life. The result (of the survey) matched with the observations we had during campaigns," he said.

They've made their intent clear: Tabith

ABDULLAH AL NAYEEM

BNP mayor candidate for Dhaka North City Corporation Tabith Awal yesterday said the ruling Awami League activists have made their stance clear that they are going to occupy the polling centres to manipulate votes.

"They [AL] openly announced to guard and occupy the centres [the night before the election day]. They have made their intentions clear," Tabith said, while talking to journalists at BNP chairperson's office in Gulshan.

Asked what they are going to do in this regard, he said, "Our main target is to protect the country's democracy and people's voting rights."

"That's why we, at any cost, will try to encourage and help voters go to the polling centres and cast their votes," he added.

The BNP candidate also said voters hold the supreme power, so they should practice their rights by taking part in the election.

"I believe if voters can cast their votes tomorrow [today], they will make me and my party the winner," he said.

Tabith went to the Gulshan office in the afternoon to update BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir about his preparations for the city polls.

Speaking on the occasion, Fakhrul said, "The government's intention is not letting the voters go to the polling centres [on the polls day]. To do so, they have taken various vicious measures."

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A day of reflection for Taposh

HELEMUL ALAM

For Awami League mayoral nominee Sheikh Fazle Noor Taposh, yesterday was a day of prayers and reflection as he went to the Banani graveyard in the afternoon to offer special prayers for his parents' departed souls.

His parents -- Sheikh Fazlul Huq Moni and Arzoo Moni -- were assassinated along with Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and most of his family members on August 15, 1975.

Yesterday, Taposh, a former lawmaker from Dhaka-10, did not conduct any campaign for the elections to the Dhaka South City Corporation.

According to the electoral code of conduct, no candidate is allowed to do any sort of campaigning 32 hours before the election, scheduled to be held today.

Earlier in the day, Taposh went to the Faridabad Madrasa mosque at Gendaria for Juma prayers.

He sought blessings for all and also hoped that he would be able to come back to the mosque again for prayers.

Though journalists were waiting outside for his comments, he did not talk to them and went to the Banani graveyard to visit his parents' grave.

Afterwards, he went back home.

Around 5pm, the mayoral aspirant went to Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU) to see Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader. The general secretary of Awami League, was admitted

Will thwart any threat: Ishraque

SAYED MOHMUD ULLAH

BNP mayoral candidate for Dhaka South City Corporation Ishraque Hossain yesterday said that his party leaders and activists would remain active to thwart "the ruling quarter's threat to grab voting centres" in today's elections.

"The ruling party's [backed] activists are being gathered in Dhaka from different districts in order to grab polling centres; we would not accept such irregularity and our activists would guard centres tomorrow," Ishraque told reporters after holding a meeting with Brent Christensen, political counselor of the US embassy in Dhaka.

The candidate of BNP's election symbol "sheaf of paddy" said he had informed Christensen about the latest election situations including probable activities of the ruling party on polls day, recent arrests and attacks on his party leaders and activists.

"The meeting was pre-scheduled, as he [Christensen] wanted to know the latest update about the Dhaka north and south city corporation elections from all candidates including me," he added.

Ishraque, responding to a query, told reporters that, "Only the Almighty can say what will happen tomorrow [February 1]."

"But we can at least say the ruling party activists would try to establish their supremacy -- what we saw in previously held elections [under the government]," he added.

Referring to some recent surveys run by private TV

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Nine-year-old Mir Ragib Tajwar speaks to the crowd after winning U-18 category's special award, held by eight-year-old co-filmmaker and his cousin Mubasshira Ibnat, at the closing ceremony of the 13th International Children's Film Festival at Shawkat Osman Hall of the Central Public Library yesterday.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

Ex-MP Wazi Uddin passes away

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

Wazi Uddin Khan, former lawmaker and president of Bangladesh Road Transport Workers' Federation, passed away at his Pabna town residence yesterday, aged 85.

He left behind his wife, two daughters and a host of relatives and well-wishers to mourn his death.

Before the Liberation War, Wazi Uddin started his political career quitting government job at collectorate office. He was one of the key organisers of the war.

Former president of the district Awami League, the politician was elected MP from Pabna-3 constituency in 1996.

Wazi Uddin had been renowned as a leader of the workers' association since independence.

Firoz Khan, president of Pabna district unit of Motor Sramik Union, said, "Wazi Uddin Khan was always at the forefront of workers' rights movements."

His body will be taken to Pabna AL office around 11am today and later at district unit of Muktiyoddha Sangsad for a guard of honour. His namaz-e-janaza will be held at Pabna Police Lines around 2pm, AL sources said.

Local leaders of the party and its wing organisations expressed shock at the death.



Tomorrow's filmmakers join hands today

Curtains on Int'l Children's Film Festival

HASSAN MUNHAMANNA

Eight-year-old Mubasshira Ibnat had a blast at the 13th International Children's Film Festival Bangladesh (ICFFB) this week. As a delegate, she attended all seven days of the festival, which started last Friday and ended yesterday. Every day, she came to the main venue at Shahbagh's Shawkat Osman Hall all the way from Mirpur-2. This is no problem for her though -- she'd rather not be anywhere else.

She didn't come to the festival alone. Her merry band of three included herself, her father Md Zillur Rashid Khan, and her nine-year-old cousin Mir Ragib Tajwar, whose travels were even more gruelling as he came from Uttara.

Mubasshira and Ragib weren't just there to enjoy the films. They're filmmakers who made a stop-motion short film titled "Boon is Missing", with a runtime of three minutes and 12 seconds. They even got an award for it! While this reporter was talking to them, festival advisor Shajib Jaman came along and gave them their special award certificate. "Wow, we just got a free certificate," Mubasshira exclaimed.

The cousins started coming to the festival since its 11th edition, serving as auditorium volunteers. In 2019, they saw a film and decided to make one themselves.

The energy of Mubasshira and Ragib's resonated through the festival. Besides the 52 delegates, around 20-25 of the volunteers have made films in the past, and almost everyone has an interesting origin story.

This year, the festival screened 179 films from 39 countries across five venues: at Public Library's Shawkat Osman Hall, Sofia Kamal Auditorium of National Museum, Alliance Francaise Dhaka, Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy and Goethe-Institut.

A total of 150 volunteers worked behind the scenes, of whom around

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Road crashes kill nine

STAR REPORT

Nine people died in separate road accidents across the country over the last two days, report our correspondent and two news agencies.

In Jhenidah, three motorcyclists were killed in a road crash at Jagusha village under Moheshpur upazila, reports our Jhenidah correspondent.

The deceased were identified as Sabbir Hossain (18), Razu Ahmed (20), and Nazrul Hossain (45).

Officer-in-Charge of Moheshpur Police Station Morshed Hossain said the accident occurred as the victims were going to a marriage ceremony. When they reached Jagusha village, a sand-laden tractor collided head-on with them, leaving all three critically injured.

Locals immediately rushed them to a local health complex. However, they all succumbed to their injuries during treatment. Their bodies will be sent to Jhenidah Sadar Hospital for autopsy, police said.

In Chattogram alone, four people, including a man and his son, were killed in separate road accidents on Thursday, reports UNB.

The deceased are: Mujibul Haque (39), his son Md Hasan (13), Javed Hossain (28), and Shahidullah Sarkar (50).

Mujibul and his son Hasan were killed after a car rammed their motorcycle in Boro Darogar Haat area of Mirersarai on Thursday evening, said Sohel Sarkar, SI of Joralganj Highway Police Outpost.

Their bodies were sent to a morgue, he added.

Meanwhile, motorcyclist Shahidullah was killed after being hit by a truck at Pahartoli in the city in the afternoon.

Critically injured, he was taken to Chattogram Medical College Hospital (CMCH), where he was pronounced dead by doctors, CMCH Police Outpost

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PHOTO OF THE DAY

PALASH KHAN



A young boy dexterously moves from branch to branch while clenching a bag full of jujubes he collected from the tree. He is on a mission to pick the fruits, putting them in the bag while his friends eagerly await beneath. This photo was taken yesterday near Kalabagan field in the capital.