

TANGENTS

BY IHTISHAM KABIR



Sunbittern, the Pantanal, Brazil.

PHOTO: IHTISHAM KABIR

SUNBITTERN

We got up before sunrise and boarded a jeep. It was open on all sides and had two rows of raised rear seats to afford everyone a good view. These jeeps are the standard way to explore the Pantanal in Brazil, the world's largest wetland (it is 25% larger than the area of Bangladesh.) While it is justifiably famous for its Jaguars, the Pantanal also hosts numerous other wild animals and a dazzling array of birds.

And so, when we left our lodge - six tourists and a guide - to look for birds and animals, we were truly excited. We drove down a gravel road as the sun started showing signs of life. This was the dry season and water had receded just like our *haors*. So the submerged area had shrunk to occasional swamps and ponds on either side of the road. The terrain was mostly savannah punctuated by scattered trees.

Almost immediately we saw several birds including a Curassow, like a large black chicken with a curly black crest and a bright yellow band around its beak. Further along, seeing large movement on a shallow pond to our left, we stopped and waited silently. A large Brazilian Racoona emerged from behind a tree, stared intently at us for a few seconds, and returned to its fishing.

The light steadily improved as we progressed. Seeing movement up ahead our jeep slowed down. When I got a clear look, I was elated, because, even though I had long admired it in photographs, this bird was totally unexpected. With an elongated body,

a puffy plume of brown feathers on its back, and a small head with a pointed beak, it began to walk away from us on its slender long legs. Then it spread its wings and all six of us caught our breath. A magnificent pattern unfolded, not unlike a butterfly's: on a checkered brown background, red and yellow patches bloomed at the edges of the wings like the rising sun.

Indeed, the Sunbittern is an extraordinarily beautiful bird, the only member of the Eurypygidae bird family. It is found in Guatemala and Northern Brazil. Like Egrets, Herons, Storks and Bitterns, Sunbitterns like being close to water and live on fish, amphibians such as frogs, crustaceans such as crabs, and insects. They use their long necks and spear-like bills to hunt.

Sunbitterns walk more than they fly and their flight is slow. They make shallow, cup-shaped nests of stick and mud on branches 10-20 feet above the ground. They lay 2-3 eggs at a time and incubate the eggs for 28 days until hatching. The bird is not endangered and rated as "Least Concern" by IUCN.

What about those spectacular wings? It turns out that when a chick hatches, mother and father take turns feeding and nurturing it. Chicks are easy targets for predators. If a predator approaches, the parent opens its wings to display the bright pattern. This frightens away the predator.

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Bangladesh stands by Mauritius

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

In a move of solidarity, the Bangladesh government has sent assistance to Mauritius to help them fight the environmental hazard caused by the shipwreck of fuel tanker MV Wakashio that took place in July.

Bangladesh High Commissioner to Mauritius Rezina Ahmed handed over the assistance materials to Kavydass Ramano, Minister of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change of Mauritius. This is the first time Bangladesh has sent assistance to Mauritius.

The consignment includes 1,000 PPEs, 1000 piece head caps, 1000 piece shoe covers, 1000 piece surgical face masks and food products (Biscuits and Cakes) worth 850 kg.

The incidence occurred as Japanese Nagasaki Shipping Company's bulk carrier MV Wakashio ran aground due to bad weather and constant pounding over the reef of Point d'Esny, off the coast of Mauritius.

The vessel was carrying nearly 3894 metric tons (MT) of low-sulphur fuel oil, diesel (207 MT) and lubricant oil (90 MT) from China to Brazil.

The oil pollution incident from the grounded bulk carrier is threatening ecological catastrophe around the Indian Ocean island of Mauritius, endangering corals, fish and other marine life already under threat from climate change.

Mauritius has declared a "State of Environmental Emergency" and solicited cooperation from friendly countries. As such, many countries have extended assistance to the country to overcome the crisis.

Rohingya crisis needs a political solution

Ambassador Rabab Fatima tells discussion

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The Rohingya crisis requires a political solution, which lies in the return of the Rohingyas to Myanmar by addressing the root causes, said Bangladesh's Permanent Representative to the UN Ambassador Rabab Fatima has said.

"Rohingya repatriation will largely depend on creating right conditions [in Rakhine state] and holding the wrongdoers accountable" she said while speaking at a discussion on the Rohingya crisis held virtually yesterday.

The discussion, titled "Rohingya Crisis in its Fourth Year: Challenges in Securing a Sustainable Solution" was organised jointly by the permanent missions of Bangladesh, Canada, Saudi Arabia and Turkey.

UN member States, civil society and diaspora community leaders, Independent Investigative Mechanism on Myanmar (IIMM) Head Nicholas Koumjian, Canada's Permanent Representative to UN Ambassador Bob Rae, Gambia's Legal Advisor Pramila Patten and Legal Counsel of Gambia at the ICJ Payam Akhavan and

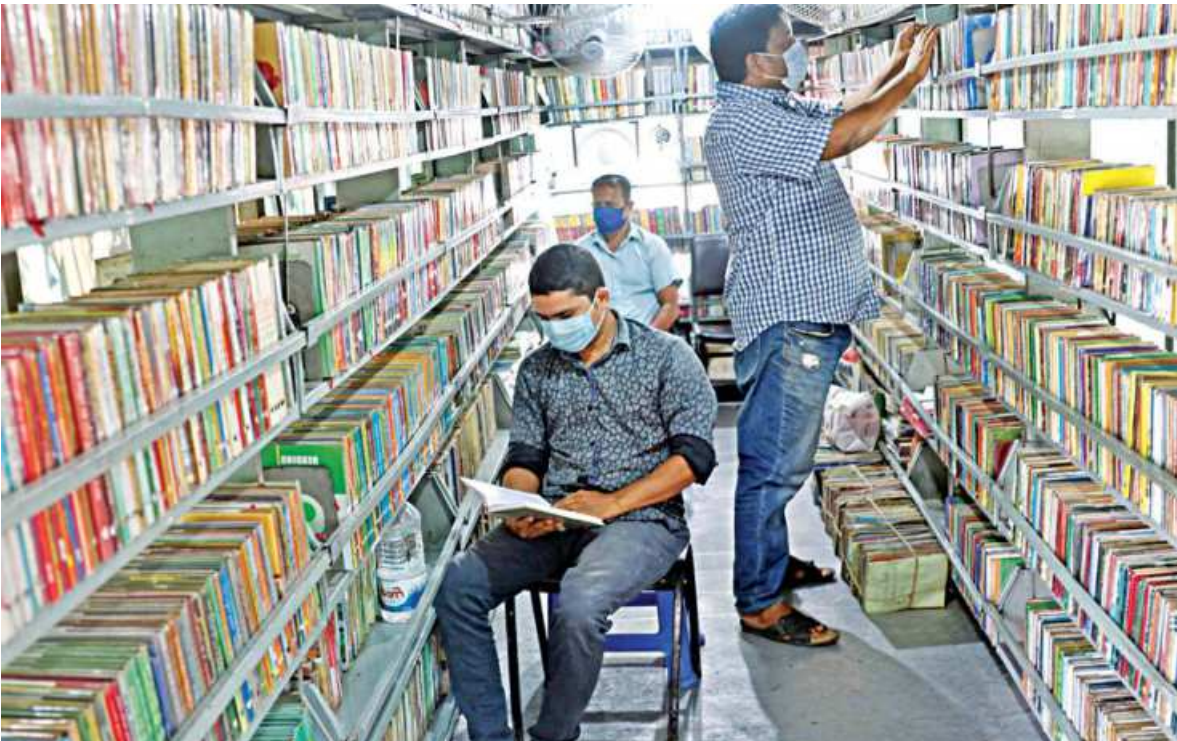
permanent representatives and delegates from Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Sweden, United Kingdom, EU, USA, Netherlands and Indonesia spoke at the event.

In her remarks, Rabab Fatima said Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina showed tremendous courage and compassion when she decided to open the borders and provide the persecuted Rohingyas with shelter and protection in 2017.

Three years on, she highlighted the current stalemate with the repatriation of the Rohingyas due to Myanmar's failure to create conducive environment in Rakhine and expressed concern at the deteriorating situation in the Rakhine State.

Fatima urged the international community to step up their efforts in securing a permanent political solution to the longstanding humanitarian crisis.

In his keynote, IIMM Head Nicholas Koumjian described his efforts to reach out to all stakeholders including Myanmar authorities for collection of information and evidence of human rights violations committed in Myanmar since 2011.



One of the more overlooked problems of the coronavirus-induced shutdown has been people's boredom. Bound to stay home, many have been looking for ways to spend their time well. Especially for avid readers, the feel of physical copies of books in their hands has been dearly missed. To abate this problem, Bishwo Shahitto Kendro has mobilised their "Bhrammoman Library" (mobile libraries), so that bookworms can get the opportunity to stay in touch with their reading habits. The photos was taken on Thursday from Dhaka University area.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS



Attorney General in ICU

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Attorney General Mahbubey Alam, who has tested positive for Covid-19, was taken to Intensive Care Unit (ICU) at Combined Military Hospital (CMH) early yesterday after his health condition suddenly deteriorated.

Law Minister Anisul Huq told The Daily Star that doctors are trying their best for his recovery.

Contacted, Binota Mahbub, wife of the attorney general, told this correspondent that his health condition was good for last five days and he could take food and talk over cell phone.

His condition deteriorated suddenly in the morning, she said.

She requested all to pray for the swift recovery of the top law officer of the state.

Advocate Mahbubey Alam has been admitted to CMH in Dhaka for treatment after he tested positive for Covid-19 on September 4.

Ice crunch puts hilsa traders in a tight spot

SUSHANTA GHOSH

Thanks to strict monitoring against jatka netting and government programmes to conserve hilsa, production of the fish has seen a steady increase in Barishal, and this year has been no different.

Since the start of the season, a record number of hilsa are being netted, and large sized hilsas are flooding the local markets.

But processing this huge amount of fish is becoming worrisome for fishers and traders as there is no system or facilities, such as cold storage, to preserve the fish in the region.

The fish are being preserved by keeping them in ice or sprinkling ice chips on them constantly. With heaps of fish being netted, now there's a crisis of ice as well, with supply from Khulna proving inadequate.

Traders fear that not only quality of the fish are being affected, but this prized bounty could go to waste for lack of preservation. Due to the demand for ice, price of ice blocks have also skyrocketed, they said.

As a result, they have to make the hard choice to sell the fish at a lower price and count loss, or risk their catch go to waste.

Hashem Majhi, a fisherman from Charfassion of Bhola, said they used to go to the sea with 20 blocks of ice per trawler, but now they could afford around 10-15 as the price is almost three times higher.

"Often times, we cannot apply ice chips on all the fish while returning, which affects the quality of the fish," he said. "What's the point of netting so many fish, if we cannot store or preserve them properly?"

In the fishing ports of Barishal, Barguna and Patuakhali, ice is sold at Tk 120 per block in regular time. It has now risen to

around Tk 350 a block.

Hachan Sardar of Sumon Enterprise at Barisal Port Road Wholesale Hilsa Market said the market needs at least 7,000-8,000 cans of ice every day. "But not even half of it is produced here. We have to bring ice from Khulna at a higher price," he said.

Faruk Sikder, a member of the Barisal Ice Factory Owners' Association, said only eight ice factories are in production in Barishal.

"A maximum of 4,000-5,000 blocks of ice are produced here. It's not possible for us to meet the demand for lack of manpower and adequate electricity supply," he added.

Other centres for hilsa such as Mahipur-Alipur, Kalapara, Kuakata of Patuakhali district, Patharghata in Barguna are also facing similar crisis.

Twenty-five ice mills in Mahipur and 16 in Patharghata are not able to produce enough ice due to lack of uninterrupted electricity, said mill owners.

Maruf Khandaker, general secretary of the Patharghata Matsya Arotard Samity, said if the ice crisis is not resolved, this time no one in the hilsa sector will see any profit.

Most importantly, they need cold storage facilities to preserve the fish, said Nirab Hossain Tutul, president of the Barishal Matsya Arotard Samity.

"Though 1,000-2,000 maunds of hilsa are being netted every day at normal time and 3,000-4,000 maunds at peak time, 1 to 2 percent of the fish rot due to the crisis."

Admitting the problem, Bimol Chandra Das, district fisheries officer (hilsa), Barishal, they will look into the issue. "This is a serious crisis and I think local businessmen should come forward to come up with a solution," he added.



Ice has been in short supply in Barishal's Port Road Bazar.

PHOTO: TITU DAS

Teen cousins found dead in Rangpur

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinaipur

Police recovered bodies of two teenage cousins at their home in Rangpur city yesterday afternoon.

The deceased were identified as Somaia Akter Meem (16) and Zannatun Mawa (14). They are daughters of Moksedul Islam and Mominul Islam, respectively.

Both were ninth graders at a local madrasa.

There was nobody at home during the incident. Locals informed police after they noticed Meem's body hanging from the ceiling fan.

Abdur Rashid, Officer-in-Charge of Kotwali Police Station under Rangpur Metropolitan Police, said they found the body of Zannatun on the floor.

Police found blood on the noses of the deceased. There were also bruise marks around both their necks.

The bodies were sent to Rangpur Medical College Hospital for autopsy.

A process was going on to file a case with Kotwali Police Station, said the OC.

Amnesty demands reinstatement of sacked DU teacher

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rights organisation Amnesty International yesterday demanded reinstatement of Dhaka University Prof Morshed Hasan Khan, who was terminated on September 9 on charges of distorting the country's history and defaming Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

Morshed was a teacher of marketing department and a leader of BNP-backed teachers' panel.

Amnesty also demanded his and his family's safety and security as he has received multiple death threats from unidentified people, and is being denied access to his campus residence, where his wife -- a cancer patient -- resides.

"Professor Morshed got terminated merely for exercising his right to freedom of expression, which was to publish an opinion editorial in a national newspaper," claimed Amnesty International.

"It is alarming that an academic is facing life imprisonment only for exercising his right to freedom of expression," it added.

Amnesty sent a letter to President Abdul Hamid, with a demand of dropping all charges against the professor and to respect, protect, and fulfill the right to freedom of expression.

Barbershops adapt to the 'new normal'



M H HAIDER, Star Lifestyle

The Covid-19 outbreak has affected all spheres of life, but those which involve close contact services pose an added challenge.

Haircut is one of the more obvious example, and barbershops have heavily paid the consequences, having had to shutter down for several months.

Since their reopening and after the lifting of the "general holiday", barbershops -- from upscale brands to the local favourites -- are striving to adapt to the new normal, with health standards being the key priority.

A number of establishments have their barbers wear Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), beyond just masks and gloves, and body temperatures of customers checked before entry.

Some businesses, like The Barber's Lounge in Gulshan, has limited the number of guests in their establishment at a time.

"We have five seats for haircuts. But to maintain physical distancing, we now allow only three seats to be occupied at any given point in time, ensuring that there is adequate gap between customers," Safayat Rana, owner of The Barber's Lounge said, adding that only a maximum of two customers can be present at a time in the waiting area.

Many barbershops in the mid-range to premium spectrum, are heavily pushing for appointments as opposed to walk-ins.

To visit Truefitt & Hill, an international brand deemed the "world's oldest barbershop", one would require filling out a risk assessment form and setting up an appointment.

Mahira Husain Khan, CEO of Truefitt & Hill Bangladesh, said the detailed form inquires whether one has recently visited a Covid-19 patient, whether the person has shown any symptoms etc.

Khan emphasises on maintaining very high health standards throughout. "We're using disposable aprons and towels. We block a station for about 30 minutes to clean it thoroughly before using it again," she said.

Trying to scoop some optimism out of the

uncertainty, Rana from The Barber's Lounge said, "Nobody knows when the pandemic will end. But it is teaching us new ways of doing things. Sterilisation has always been a priority, but of course now it has an even bigger focus. Hopefully, when it will all be over, we will still continue with some of the improved practices."

But what about the numerous tiny barbershops, which are so much a fabric of the neighbourhood, having loyal customers they serve and know intimately?

Winner Saloon is one such barbershop, and Suresh, its owner and a barber himself, says it was a nightmare during the "lockdown" when his business temporarily came to a halt.

"It became a matter of survival. I was called in by a few customers to provide haircut at their homes, but that's all," he said. "My staff left Dhaka for their hometowns."

He informed that after reopening, business has been slow: "My co-workers returned and measures like wearing masks and rigorous cleaning are in place, but nowadays we hardly get even 10 customers a day."

Abdur Rahim, a worker in another such tiny barbershop in the capital said, "Many barbers like I generally work on commission and tips. There is no fixed salary. So, you can imagine the hardship we are facing!"

As for customers, perceptions and approaches hugely vary. Abedul Islam, a senior manager in a local conglomerate, said he rushed to a salon immediately after movement restrictions ended: "For work and corporate meetings, I need to have my hair properly trimmed, and that's something I would not trust an amateur family member with."

But many are unconvinced. "Why risk it? I have long hair now, but I sport it stylishly and I love it," Shahidur, a college student from Dhanmondi said.

Meanwhile, his older brother Hafizur, who has to attend office, says he went for haircut twice in recent months, but availed fewer services than usual: "Normally, after haircut I would indulge in a massage or facial. But now, I only stick to haircut."

PHOTO COURTESY: TRUEFIT & HILL BANGLADESH