

TANGENTS

BY IHTISHAM KABIR

Purbachol Encore

After three years I have returned to a birding spot in Purbachol that I once frequented. While the rest of this massive urban expansion east of Dhaka has developed fast in the last few years, this small area remains largely unscathed. Years ago I spent hours exploring here and learning much about our birds, observing their behaviour and finding several that were new to me.

I find the plot that was my starting point, the earth raised on one side and its *Bajna*, *Koroi* and *Boroi* trees still intact. On the branches of the *Koroi* I once saw a flock of Bronzed Drongos descend. Uncommon birds, they look like smaller, bluer versions of our common *Fingey*. After settling on the branch, they had sallied forth looking for food – butterflies, dragonflies, bees, moths – before returning to the perch. One had caught a moth – perhaps five inches across. As it was being devoured, the hapless moth's wings fluttered, fast beats that slowed down inexorably.

Across the road, a narrow path ran through a dense grove of wild trees. Today it is overgrown with grass and weeds, but one day five years ago something extraordinary happened as I walked along it. A cat came bounding from nowhere, and immediately something moved behind the leaves of a low branch to my left. A Long-tailed Nightjar, which was sleeping behind the leaves, jumped out to inspect the commotion. The strange-looking bird and I startled each other while I captured it in my camera.

To the south is a squatter homestead with several small cottages. A large Raintree anchors the central yard. Behind the northernmost cottage is a Jackfruit tree. On a crisp winter morning I had found a pair of Streak-throated Woodpeckers on this Jackfruit. That was the first and last time I saw these exquisite birds with streaks of yellow running on the front and a vibrant green back. The male had



Long-tailed Nightjar, Purbachol.

PHOTO: IHTISHAM KABIR

a red head; the female's was black. They played as they probed the tree trunk with their beak, searching for cavities holding morsels of worms or larvae.

A nearby bamboo grove yielded an elusive Yellow Bittern one monsoon day. Clinging to a bamboo swaying in the breeze, it looked decidedly uncomfortable and finally flew off to another bamboo grove a hundred meters away. Presently it returned. This back and forth continued for over half an hour for reasons I could not fathom.

A couple of *Taal* Palm trees next to the bamboo were home to a group of Baya Weavers busily building their homes dangling from the fronds, frantically flying in and out carrying threads of grass and leaves on their beaks. And *Munias* played on the tall grass, gorging themselves on grass seeds.

One afternoon a large, brown Oriental Honey Buzzard perched high atop the far bamboo grove, scanning the ground. My appearance interrupted its search for a bee or wasp hive to raid where it eats the larvae and honey if available. Winter brings smaller raptors called Shrikes. They perch on branches or fences in vegetable patches. Shrikes are also called Butcher Birds because they hang the carcass of their prey from thorns. Brown Shrikes were common, but I also saw a rare Grey-backed Shrike that refused to pose for me, flying away quickly.

It is good to be back where each footstep recalls my journey of discovering our birds. I hope the wheels of development spare this place a bit longer.

www.facebook.com/ikabirphotographs or follow "ihtishamkabir" on Instagram.

Maktab teacher scorches 7-yr-old with hot water

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

A seven-year-old child was scorched as a maktab (centre for elementary Arabic learning) teacher allegedly threw hot water from a flask at him.

The incident took place on Tuesday, but the family filed a case about it last night after the child's father came back from his workplace in another district.

The victim is Shahriar Nafis, son of Ekhlash Uddin of Hemu Majhpara village of Jaintiapur upazila in Sylhet and a second-grader of Hemu Government Primary School.

About the incident, the child's father said, "The teacher scorched his skin with hot flask water as punishment for talking with another student of the maktab."

The maktab teacher, Abdul Karim alias Rezaul Karim (27) is also a teacher of nearby Darul Ulum Hemu Madrasha.

After the incident, the child's mother took him to local pharmacy and treated him there, but did not file any complaint. The father came home on Wednesday and met with local Union Parishad member next day, who suggested him to file a case.

The victim's mother Safia Begum filed a case accusing teacher Rezaul Karim alias Abdul Karim, confirmed Jaintiapur Police Station officer-in-charge Mohsin Ali.

"Police in primary investigation is convinced that Karim is the culprit. We have already started looking for him," the OC told this newspaper last night.

REGISTRAR GIVEN CHARGE OF VC DU teachers slam decision for SAU

DU CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka University Teachers' Association yesterday protested the decision of giving Sher-e-Bangla Agriculture University (SAU) registrar the charge of vice-chancellor of the university.

In a statement signed by its acting president Prof Lutfor Rahman and general secretary Nizamul Haque Bhuiyan, it said an administrative officer have never given the charge of VC in independent Bangladesh.

"It is unimaginable that all posts at the top level of a public university will remain vacant for a long time," it added.

The teachers' body termed it an instance of acute negligence of authorities in management of higher studies.

They said they are deeply concerned by such an unrealistic decision, and such a move could lead to chaos in higher education.

The education ministry in a notice on September 20 directed registrar Sheikh Rezaul Karim to carry out routine works of VC, as his tenure expired on August 13.



At a time when towering buildings are squeezing open spaces from all sides, a kite flying in the boundless sky brings peace to the heart. And thankfully, children such as these two are always there to discover some space where bricks and cement have not taken over, and flying their kites towards the clouds. This photo was taken from the capital's Mohammadpur.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Nazrul Islam new envoy to Ethiopia

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has appointed Md Nazrul Islam, currently

serving as the director general of Multilateral Economic Affairs Wing at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as the new ambassador to Ethiopia. Ambassador-designate Islam is a career foreign service officer, belonging to the 15th batch of Bangladesh Civil Service (BCS) Foreign Affairs cadre, reports UNB.

In his diplomatic career, he served in different capacities at Bangladesh missions in Rome, Kolkata and Geneva, and had been engaged in many important multilateral negotiations for the government, said a press release from Ministry of Foreign Affairs last night.



ASHUTOSH SARKAR

Although the paper books of sensational August 21 grenade attack, Holey Artisan Bakery attack and Feni madrasa student Nusrat Jahan Rafi murder cases have already been prepared, the High Court is yet to start hearing on their death references and appeals for different reasons, delaying justice.

If a lower court sentences a person to death, its judgment is examined by the HC through hearing arguments for confirmation of the penalty. The case documents and judgment reach as death references to the HC from the lower court within seven days of the verdict.

Supreme Court Spokesman Md Saifur Rahman told The Daily Star on September 15 that the officials concerned of the HC are now comparing the paper books of the August 21 and Holey Artisan cases with their original documents. They are also examining whether state defence lawyers are needed to

AUG 21, HOLEY ARTISAN, NUSRAT MURDER

Three sensational cases await HC hearing for disposal

defend the fugitive convicts during the HC hearing, he said.

On completion of the process, relevant files will be placed before Chief Justice Syed Mahmud Hossain for his decision and then the CJ may send the cases to HC benches for hearing, he said.

The SC spokesman could not specifically say how much time will be needed to complete the procedures and when the hearing will begin.

Saifur could not tell the present status of Nusrat murder case.

Contacted, Deputy Attorney General Bashir Ahmed told this correspondent that the chief justice in February assigned an HC bench led by Justice Soumendhra Sarker to hold hearing and dispose of the death reference and appeals of the murder case.

But, the bench was later reconstituted, he said, adding that the CJ may now assign another HC bench.

THE 3 CASES

SC sources said the murder case, filed over the grenade attack in 2004, has 585 paper books containing around 10,500 pages in 13 volumes.

Twenty-two appeals were filed by convicts through lawyers while 12 appeals through jail authorities.

The case, filed separately under the Explosives Substances Act, has 495 paper books containing 10,000 pages in 11 volumes. The death references reached the HC on November 27, 2018. On January 13 last year, the HC accepted the appeals filed by the convicts.

A Dhaka court, on October 10, 2018, sentenced 19 people – including former state minister for home affairs Lutfozzaman Babar – to death, and 19 others – including BNP acting chairman Tarique Rahman – to life imprisonment in the two cases.

At least 24 people were killed and around 300 injured in the grisly attack on an AL rally on

Bangabandhu Avenue on August 21, 2004.

Meanwhile, a Dhaka court on November 27 sentenced seven militants to death for involvement in Holey Artisan Bakery attack case.

The July 1, 2016 terror attack left 22 people, including 17 foreigners, dead. Two police officers were also killed during a 12-hour standoff.

The case's paper book was submitted to the HC in August.

In Nusrat murder case, a Feni court on October 24 last year gave death sentence to all 16 accused, including madrasa principal Siraj Ud Doula and two expelled local AL leaders.

Nusrat (19) lost her battle for life on April 10 last year, four days after she was set afire.

The case documents reached the HC on October 29 last year, as a death reference. Later, convicts including Siraj filed appeals with the HC, seeking acquittal of the charges.

Ensure exemplary punishment for rapists: MJF

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rights organisation Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF) has expressed deep concern over the recent spate of rapes and sexual assaults in different parts of the country.

A Chakma woman was gang-raped in Khagrachhari early Thursday, while two teenage girls were gang-raped on Wednesday night in Jashore.

In a press statement issued yesterday, MJF demanded immediate investigation into the incidents and called for exemplary punishment for the perpetrators through legal process.

In Khagrachhari, criminals broke into the house of the woman and raped her, after tying up her mother and stepfather.

The perpetrators then beat the mother when she tried to save her daughter. They also looted cash and gold ornaments from the house, police said.

In Jashore, criminals were trying to traffic the two girls to India. On the way, they took the girls to a secluded place and raped them, according to police.

In the statement, MJF Executive Director Shaheen Anam said, "Women and girls are being sexually abused in different parts of the country. Marginalised women, women with disabilities and children are most at risk. Some have been killed after being sexually assaulted."

It is the responsibility of all of us to protect women and children from this peril, she also said.

SYLHET CATHOLIC DIOCESE

Land grabbers attack again within 72hrs

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Three days into an attempt to grab land belonging to Catholic diocese in Sylhet, miscreants attacked again on Thursday.

On Monday morning, they vandalised the property, adjacent to the bishop's residence and office, uprooted 50 newly-planted trees and demanded Tk 25 lakh.

The second attack, carried out at night, was foiled by the guards and staff of the bishop's office. Alauddin, a guard of the land meant for a school, said, "They attacked when power was out. We started shouting and others rushed to help. After they fled, we found sharp weapons there."

Contacted, Sub-inspector Ripton Purkayastha, the case's investigation officer, said, "We went to the spot and recovered the sharp weapons."

Following Monday's attack, Father Saroj Costa, in-charge of the bishop's office, filed a case with Shahporan Police Station, accusing 19 named and several unnamed.

Jyotirmoy Sarkar, additional deputy commissioner (media) of Sylhet Metropolitan Police, said, "Police already arrested two accused. We are looking into the matter with utmost importance."

Asked about the recent attack, he said he was unaware of it.



Encroachment has been a perennial problem along the banks of river Buriganga, and many a time the culprits returned to the spot a few months after eviction. Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA) recently evicted encroachers from this spot in South Keraniganj, and are now planting trees there in a bid to turn the riverside into a park, and also ensuring it is not taken over again. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

SAVAR SCHOOLGIRL MURDER

Mizan's parents arrested, placed on 2-day remand

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Savar

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) in a drive arrested parents of prime accused Mizanur Rahman of the murder case of Savar schoolgirl Nila Roy, on Thursday night.

Jamir Uddin, company commander of Rab-4 (CPC-2), said based on a tip-off, around 8:15pm, a Rab-4 team raided a house at Manikganj's Charigram village and arrested the two.

The arrestees -- Abdur Rahman (60) and Nazmunahar Shadika (50) -- are accused in the murder case filed by the victim's father, and they went into hiding after the murder, he added.

They were handed over to Savar Model Police Station, said Jamir, adding that they are looking for Mizan and others involved with the incident.

Contacted, Saiful Islam, inspector (investigation) of Savar Model Police Station, told The Daily Star that the arrestees were sent to a Dhaka court, and police sought seven-day remand. The court granted two days.

On Wednesday, police arrested Selim Palowan (28), an associate of Mizan, for his alleged involvement.

On Sunday around 7pm, when Nila, a 10th-grader of Aced School, was going to a hospital with her elder brother Alok, they were intercepted by Mizan, who threatened Alok and asked him to leave because he wanted to talk to Nila alone. Mizan then forced Nila into an abandoned house, where he stabbed and left her. Upon hearing her cries, locals rescued and rushed her to Enam Medical College Hospital, where doctors declared her dead.

Speaking to locals, The Daily Star came to know that Mizan was a member of "Shakil and Sakib" gang. Members of the gang are infamous for extorting people and businesses, and are often involved in stalking girls and peddling drugs, alleged locals of Savar's Dakkhin Para.

Savar residents yesterday formed a human chain at Muktirmore area, demanding immediate arrest of Mizan and his associates involved, and capital punishment for the culprits.