

TANGENTS

BY IHTISHAM KABIR



Black-shouldered Kite, Purbachol, Dhaka.

PHOTO: IHTISHAM KABIR

Black-shouldered Kite

One morning I was looking for birds in the open spaces of Purbachol. The spot I chose yielded nothing, so at around 10:30 I left and started driving around. I stopped at a promising place: a paddyfield, swamps and scattered bamboo groves with little construction activity and no people. I checked the trees and bushes carefully but found only *Shaliks* and *Bulbuls*. Almost by accident I noticed the bird in the sky. The backlight had turned it into a faint silhouette against the bright late morning light. Wingtips rapidly fluttering, it was hovering above one spot like a helicopter. Seconds later it dived to the ground. Talons out, it closed in on a bush only to come up empty. It repeated the hovering-diving several times without luck before flying off to test its luck elsewhere.

The bird was a Black-shouldered Kite (*Kathua Cheel*), the smallest of three species of Kites found in Bangladesh. About three-quarters the size of a house crow, it is light grey with pointed wings and a large black patch on its shoulders. A black border runs around its eyes and extends to the back of the head, giving it a dramatic look. But its biggest highlight is the eyes: blood-red, standing out sharply if improbably against the monochromatic body.

I drove around looking for the bird and eventually found it (or possibly another of its species) perched on top of a bamboo in a small grove. It seemed in no hurry, periodically scanning the surrounding ground looking for food. The rest of the time it preened its feathers. Since feathers

are critical for flight, birds expend much effort in keeping them in prime shape. This Kite was no exception. It followed a methodical and meticulous process, starting with the primary flight feathers at the edge of each wing. Using its beak it cleaned out and aligned the filaments of each feather. Then it patiently went over other feathers on its body, twisting its head around to reach those in its back.

Black-winged Kites are year-round residents of Bangladesh. They build their nests on smaller trees - a loose and untidy collection of twigs, similar to other birds of prey. The female lays 3-6 eggs in a clutch and the male rears the chicks.

The other two kites of Bangladesh, Brahminy Kite and Black Kite, are much larger. But they are lazy when it comes to food, preferring scavenging over hunting. In flight, they conserve energy by using thermals to glide whenever possible. The Black-winged Kite, on the other hand, is every inch a hunter. It flies vigorously and catches field rats, mice, frogs, snakes, lizards, young birds as well as a variety of insects. Its hunting tools are the sharp talons at its feet. By hovering it can search and track prey before diving in with the talons for the kill. It is territorial and forcefully chases away any rival bird from the area it has claimed.

So now you know why my heart skips a beat every time I see a Black-winged Kite. It signals drama and excitement.

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Govt activities 'anti-democratic'

Alleges Dr Zafrullah

UNB, Dhaka

Gonoshasthaya Kendra founder Dr Zafrullah Chowdhury yesterday alleged that the current government has established "one-party" rule in the country by "snatching" people's democratic rights.

"All the activities of this government are anti-democratic. As per our constitution, I've the right to speak up and enjoy the freedom of association. But I'm not allowed to do that," he said.

Speaking at a sit-in programme, Zafrullah said, "There's no democracy now. Baksal has been established in the country with a different name. It can't go on."

Rajnoitik Daler Nibandhan Paddhati Batiler Dabi Parishad arranged the programme in front of Jatiya Press Club, demanding cancellation of all "black laws", including section 90 added to the RPO, and the reconstitution of the Election Commission. Dr Zafrullah said it is the government's wrong policy to gag people's voice and create obstacles to people's right to expression.

"Making death penalty as punishment for rape by amending the law is a wrong step. This provision of hanging couldn't bring change anywhere in the world," he observed.

Referring to media reports, the freedom fighter said the heinous crime like rape did not fall even after the introduction of death sentence as punishment for rapists.

"Rather it's increased. Now the situation is becoming so worse that children at schools and madrasas are increasingly getting raped," he said.

Mother hilsa exceeding egg-laying expectations

Says fisheries dept; despite ban, some anglers trying to net illegally

SUSHANTA GHOSH, Barishal

Egg-laying season has already arrived for the mother hilsa in Barishal region and to ensure their safety, the authorities concerned have taken necessary steps to prevent netting. According to the fisheries department, things are going smooth so far, with the mother fish laying more eggs than expected in rivers of the southern region.

Although exact figures are yet to arrive, officials said their expectations are being exceeded, with hilsa sanctuaries in spots around the Meghna river near Hatia, Bhola, and Mehendiganj seeing the best results.

Bimal Chandra Das, fisheries officer (hilsa) of Barishal, said after examining hilsa caught from the Kirtankhola last week, a huge number of eggs were found in the stomachs of almost all the mother fish.

"We think around 2-4 percent of the mothers have already laid their eggs. The numbers will pick up in time for the full moon," he said. They're hoping for around 55 to 60 percent of the hilsa to lay eggs this season because of favourable weather and

strict government monitoring.

The mother hilsa have started laying eggs in all the rivers of Barishal region, especially in Meghna, Tetulia, Maskata, Kalabadar, Bishkhali, Arial Kha and Kirtankhola.

However, despite the strict ban on fishing, officials said some miscreants are violating the guidelines and netting hilsa.

Anisur Rahman Talukder, deputy director of the fisheries department, said some of the fish illegally caught by anglers were confiscated and examined, and almost all of them were bearing eggs.

The fisheries department in the region said they are dedicatedly guarding the rivers. So far, fishing nets worth Tk 56.30 lakh have been confiscated and destroyed, 10.87 tonnes of illegally caught hilsa have been seized, and 61 anglers have been jailed by 43 mobile courts in 115 operations.

Hilsa researcher Dr Md Anisur Rahman, chief scientific officer of Bangladesh Fisheries Research Institute, Chandpur, said for favourable conditions, this year's total hatching may increase by up to 10 percent.



Dhaka North City Corporation has been working on this spot on Ring Road near Shyamoli for close to two months. In addition to the disruption it's causing to a busy road, the way this gaping hole is kept -- exposed, with rods sticking out -- may lead to some serious injuries, especially at the onset of the rainfall of the last couple of days. This photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON



Speakers at Meet the Press organised on the occasion of World Polio Day, to be observed today. Rotary Bangladesh National PolioPlus Committee arranged the event at Jatiya Press Club yesterday.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

'A win against polio is a win for global health'

Rotarians continue efforts to eliminate polio, say speakers; World Polio Day today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Polio was affecting more than 100 countries in the mid-1980s and over 3 lakh children were affected every year; but now on the eve of this year's World Polio Day, the scenario is totally different, said speakers at a press conference yesterday.

Rotary Bangladesh National PolioPlus Committee organised the press conference at Jatiya Press Club.

Rotary International will be observing this day with the theme "A win against polio is a win for global health" today.

They will stage rallies in different districts in the morning and a seminar in the evening at hotel Radisson.

The committee said about a hundred children in only two countries in the world are now affected with this disease, while Bangladesh was certified as a polio-free country since 2014.

PolioPlus committee chairman Ishtiaque A Zaman gave the credit to all Rotarians around the world and said it just shows that the Rotarians do not give up.

"Over thirty years ago, we spearheaded the movement to end polio, surprising the doubters by doubling our fundraising target, and ever since we've made amazing progress. Working with our dedicated partners, we have raised more than \$2 billion for the cause," said Ishtiaque Zaman

in the key-note speech.

He said, "We are not far away from eradicating polio from the world."

Rotarians have had to adapt to harsh new realities of a global pandemic and economic turmoil, he added.

The PolioPlus committee chairman further said they need to raise more awareness, start conversations, hold events, advocate to the government and make contributions to eradicate polio from the community.

Rotary Foundation Trustee Chair KR Ravindran was present at the event as the chief guest.

Mir Anisuzzaman, M Khairul Alam, and MA Wahab among other rotary leaders spoke at the press conference on Rotary's contributions in eradicating Polio from the world.

Polio or Poliomyelitis is a highly infectious disease that most commonly affects children under the age of 5. Most know it as poliovirus. The virus is spread person to person, typically through contaminated water. It can attack the nervous system, and in some instances, lead to paralysis. Although there is no cure, there is a safe and effective vaccine -- one which Rotary and its partners use to immunise over 2.5 billion children worldwide, according to Rotary.

2 die in Narayanganj factory explosion

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two workers died and four sustained burns in an explosion at a steel mill factory in Narayanganj early yesterday.

The deceased were identified as Fahim (25) and Mizanur Rahman (33).

The explosion took place around 3am in the furnace of Premier Rolling Steel Mill at Rugganj while the workers were working. The molten iron fell on them, leaving Mizan dead, said Mohammad Saji, brother of an injured.

The injured were rushed to Sheikh Hasina National Institute of Burn and Plastic Surgery in Dhaka. They were later taken to a private hospital by the factory staffers.

Afterwards, Fahim's relatives took him to the emergency unit of Dhaka Medical College Hospital where he died.

The four injured -- Abu Siddique (30), Razu (40), Shakil (20) and Rafique (45) -- were being treated at the private hospital in Dhaka. Of them, Rafique sustained 15 percent burns while the rest more than 90 percent, said Partha Sanker Paul, resident surgeon of the burn institute.

68 gold bars worth Tk 4.73cr found under Biman seats

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Customs Intelligence officials recovered 68 gold bars weighing nearly 8kg at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport yesterday morning.

The bars were hidden under four seats of a Biman Bangladesh flight that landed at the airport around 10:30am from Abu Dhabi, Muhammad Mubinal Kabir, director general of Customs Intelligence and Investigation Department, told The Daily Star.

The officials said on prior information they took position at airport's different points and recovered the gold bars. The value of the gold is around Tk 4.73 crore, he said, adding that none was arrested as the bars were left abandoned.

Nigerian national held for deceiving people

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Members of National Security Intelligence yesterday claimed to have arrested a Nigerian national who used to cheat people by identifying himself as representative of a beverage company in Bangladesh.

The arrestee was identified as Chukwuemeka Samuel. NSI arrested him from the capital's Khilkhet.

Samuel used to identify himself as Richard Philip and collected a hefty sum of money by duping people through calling them on their phones and asking them to claim online rewards. A case was filed in this regard.

Content creation tangled in demand and supply crisis

FAISAL BIN IQBAL, Shout

The pandemic has allowed a lot of young people the time and opportunity to explore the world of content creation. Some have launched YouTube channels, and some started vlogging, not to mention the spike in the number of hosting and participating in online meetings and webinars.

This, as a result, has given rise to the demand for different equipment used for content creation.

From camera gear to a variety of lights, electronic shops around the city are stacking up on all sorts of tools and equipment to cater to the needs of this growing community.

"The demand for cameras has remained unchanged," commented Ariful Islam Mamun, owner of an electronics shop at the capital's Bashundhara City Shopping Mall.

"The ongoing pandemic has had little-to-no impact on the demand for professional cameras. But we have noticed an increase in demand for microphones, LED and ring lights, mobile tripods, action cameras, and other accessories that are regarded as vlogging essentials," Mamun told this correspondent during a recent visit to the mall.

Despite the rise in demand, shop owners are being forced to sell some of these products at a much higher rate.

Although the prices of lighting and audio systems are being kept reasonable,

people are having to purchase cameras and lenses at a much higher price.

"There is a big imbalance between the supply and demand for cameras at the moment," said Mamun.

"Which is why we are having to sell these products at high prices," he added.

According to Mamun, each camera now costs around Tk 10,000 more than its usual price.

The price of camera lenses has inflated as well.

Such sudden and drastic changes in prices led Mamun to lose some of his more regular customers.

"Only a few, who absolutely cannot do without a camera now, are opting to buy at its current price," he said.

The rest either lose their interest, or look for cheaper alternatives.

It goes without saying that the current situation brought on by the pandemic has had a direct impact in this sector.

"Shipments are not arriving on time, which is one of the main causes for our losses," Rajib Sheikh, another salesperson at the shopping complex, told The Daily Star.

"Arrival of certain products are being delayed by two to three weeks. On top of that, supply is inadequate to meet growing demand, and hence, the price is also a bit steep," he said.

With international trade and shipping affected, only time will tell when the newest releases will be available in the local market, and at what cost.



A prospective buyer looks at a ring light at an electronics shop in the city's Bashundhara City Shopping Mall.

PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA