

TANGENTS
BY IHTISHAM KABIR

Birds and Animals by Night

The first time I tried birding at night was several years ago in Rajshahi. My friend Niaz and I had spent a day cruising the Padma searching its *chars* for birds. In the evening we met with members of the Rajshahi Bird Club. They told us about a rare Indian Scops Owl that had been found in a nearby mango orchard. Would we like to see it? Yes, of course, we said. With bright torch lights, they spread out into the orchard. After an hour of searching the trees, someone found the owl. It was the first and only time I saw this memorable creature and we all photographed it.

Why look for birds and animals at night time? Many creatures are nocturnal. Their activity begins when the sun goes down. Birds such as Owls and Nightjars, and forest creatures such as the Slow Loris and various wild cats come out at night. To see them you must do the same.

However, until that fateful evening in Rajshahi I had been reluctant to engage in night birding. The reason is simple: photographing at night is terrible. There is never enough light, and the quality of the artificial light of the torches is dismal. But now, after several night outings, I am convinced that the thrill of seeing a new creature outweighs problems I may have photographing it.

In a sense, exploring the outdoors at night opens up a new world for us.

For example, at twilight one day I was out walking in Baridhara Lake Park when I noticed a Brown Hawk-owl perched on a branch. I had seen this owl several times before, usually in the afternoon, and only fleetingly as it flew past me. But now things were different. Hundreds of termites were flying around a nearby street light. Using the branch as its base, it repeatedly



Arboreal Porcupine, Pantanal, Brazil.

PHOTO: IHTISHAM KABIR

flew out to catch a termite, return to base, and gobble it up.

I immediately ran home and got my camera and large torch light, ending with several interesting photographs.

In Brazil's Pantanal, I saw several birds and animals during a night outing. We drove on a jeep through the wilderness and used a very bright searchlight to scan the fields and trees. We found a Tapir, a Giant Anteater and a Crab-eating Fox. The Tapir is the size of a large cow and can be dangerous if approached while the Giant Anteater has a long tail that looks like an unfurled flag. The biggest surprise for me, though, was an Arboreal Porcupine that lived high up in the trees. If not for the night

outing, I would never have known such a creature existed.

In Australia's rainforest I saw a Tree Kangaroo in the night. It was walking on a branch, with its joey safely ensconced inside the pouch, its tiny feet showing through the pouch entrance.

If you want to go on night outings, you will need one or more high-powered torch lights. Never go alone because of safety reasons and never use a camera flash on birds or animals as it can cause permanent damage to their eyes. Local trees and wooded areas would be a good place to start.

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

Woman found murdered at Rangpur hotel

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinaipur

A woman was found murdered at a hotel in Rangpur city yesterday, a day after she boarded there with another person who has reportedly fled the place.

According to hotel records, the woman was identified as Arjina Begum (30) from Farakkabad village of Dinajpur's Biral upazila.

Saiful Islam, her husband as the records state, fled the scene yesterday morning. Police detained two persons, including Mohammad Ali, the hotel manager, to be interrogated.

Police said the two boarded Basundhara Rest House, a residential hotel at Station Road area on Thursday night, identifying themselves as a couple, and stayed there for the night.

On Friday morning, Saiful went out of the hotel, taking the room key and telling the hotel manager to fetch breakfast. Since he left, he did not return.

As the woman was not opening the door and Saiful was not returning, staffers tried to inquire about the matter and later informed police.

Police got into the room after breaking the door and found Arjina dead on the bed.

They sent the body to Rangpur Medical College Hospital for autopsy.

Abdur Rashid, officer-in-charge of Kotwali police station, said the woman was strangled to death, and police are looking for Saiful.

Experts of CID and PBI also visited the hotel.

A floating hospital impacting lives

Jibontari brings healthcare to riverside communities in Barishal

SUSHANTA GHOSH, Barishal

At Babuganj upazila's Mirganj river, a three-storey ship was spotted anchored at the dock during a recent visit by this correspondent. What seemed like a passenger vessel at first glance turned out to be a floating medical facility that treats some 90-150 patients a day.

The "Impact Jibontari" is a forty-foot long ship that functions as a hospital, specialising in eye treatment, along with ear-nose-and-throat services.

"The number of patients is high in Barishal region, and many of them are not affluent enough to afford healthcare," said Md Alauddin, administrator of Impact Jibontari Hospital (IJH).

This is especially true for remote areas around rivers, he continued. "Our goal is to provide affordable medical services to the people in these areas."

But many also come to the hospital from far and wide to avail medical services at a comparatively low cost.

"I came here from Barishal city as I have severe ear pain," said Aroti Majumder (65).

Sanjoy (27) said he came to the hospital with his club foot troubles from Patuakhali's Mirganj upazila.

"Most patients come here with retinal issues, and some with nose, ear and throat, and club foot issues," said Dr Mahatab Hossain of the hospital. "Besides some

eye operations including cataract surgery, children with orthopaedic birth defects are operated here at a cheap cost."

"For outdoor, medical services are provided for Tk 50. Besides, cataract surgeries are done at Tk 3,000," Dr Mahatab added.

Apart from weekends and holidays, four doctors attend to patients every day.

"Even if someone is unable to pay, we still provide services. We do not approach our service commercially," said Alauddin.

According to IJH, Impact Foundation was established in 1993 in Bangladesh. The IJH was established later in 1999.

Its facilities include 10 beds and two operation theatres, and a speedboat to transport patients. So far, the organisation has provided services to about five lakh patients and at least one lakh patients have undergone surgery.

"But we cannot go to places that are too remote, or have low-hanging bridges," the administrator told The Daily Star. Praising the initiative, Dr Monowar Hossain, civil surgeon of Barishal, said, "Many from rural areas can avail the hospital's services at a minimal cost."

He said in delivering much-needed medical care to remote communities at minimal patient cost, the floating hospital is indeed having an impact, improving many lives.



PHOTO: STAR

Stepping up for menstrual health amid pandemic

JINAT JAHAN KHAN, TOGGLE

The pandemic's effects on middle and lower income people's finances come with a lot of invisible struggles. For example, it has become a severe impediment for underprivileged girls and women's menstrual health. As their expendable money has come down, they struggled to afford sanitary napkins and other feminine hygiene products.

However, a few voluntary organisations have stepped up to the cause, helping alleviate menstrual hygiene issues during the crisis.

TRIKONOMITI

One such organisation is Trikonomiti, an initiative of Youth Hub, a global platform for youths that works with underprivileged women's menstrual hygiene.

The project was initiated right at the dawn of coronavirus, when quarantine and shutdown restrictions were suddenly introduced in the country, making it hard for low-income women to take care of their menstrual health.

As of this month, volunteers of the organisation have distributed more than 3,000 sanitary pads at different locations of the country, including Ishwarganj, Singra, Mymensingh, Saidpur, Narayanganj, Sirajganj and Dinajpur.

Volunteers also go door to door to counsel rural women on menstrual hygiene.

Pavel Sarwar, co-founder of Youth Hub, said, "Like all other volunteering projects, Trikonomiti needs funds to continue their activities. This help comes from donations. However, most people still consider sanitary napkins a luxury good and don't have



Volunteers of Project Shurokkha hand over sanitary napkins to rural women to ensure no one fell behind on their menstrual hygiene practices, even in times of crisis.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

awareness about the importance of menstrual hygiene. Thus, they are more likely to donate on food than on sanitary napkins."

The organisation has a plan to continue this project even after the pandemic as essential hygiene products are a priority for women.

PROJECT SHUROKKHA

The Arise Help for Child Foundation's "Project Shurokkha" has multiple activities to deal with menstrual hygiene mismanagement.

The initiative was launched in the slums of Patuakhali in May 2020, and later expanded to low-income areas in Dinajpur and in the Assasuni region of Satkhira. Under this campaign, they also provide zinc and iron tablets along with sanitary napkins. Around 500 families have received this aid so far.

They also undertook an awareness campaign in Assasuni. The numbers of sanitary napkins distributed in the slums of Patuakhali, Dinajpur and Assasuni Upazila are 50, 50 and 400 respectively. Medical students accompanied the distribution teams to provide detailed guidance on why and when to use the iron and zinc tablets.

The organisation also established communication with Satkhira Medical College to mitigate or stabilise any health-related issues in the flood-affected regions of Satkhira.

Shahnaz Raihan Summy, chief executive officer of Project Banolota (of which Project Shurokkha is the first campaign) said, "There's a stigma surrounding menstrual hygiene-related essentials. Most of the time, discussions

on menstrual hygiene management is seen as a luxury to the women we talk to."

MHAPbd

Menstrual Hygiene Awareness Program in Bangladesh (MHAPbd), a social service inspired by India's "Happy to Bleed" movement has started its journey back in 2015 to help underprivileged women understand the importance of menstrual hygiene management.

Amid the pandemic, they have provided emergency hotline numbers where women can call and order for sanitary napkins. The service is free for underprivileged women, but those who are financially solvent need to pay for napkins which is eventually ploughed back to help continue the initiative.

Collaborating with a number of different organisations, MHAPbd has distributed sanitary napkins to at least 80 sex workers in Dhaka, 100 indigenous women in Bandarban and 400 women in flood-affected areas during the crisis. The organisation is also working with female tea workers to improve their health and hygiene conditions.

So far, they have reached out to over 10,000 underprivileged women to provide cotton made sanitary napkins over the last 5 years.

Farhana Haque Flora, a volunteer of MHAPbd, said, "From the very beginning, we've been distributing cotton pads, which are healthier for both women and the environment. This is because most of the sanitary napkins that are available in the market are highly absorbent, which are harmful to health and are often too expensive to afford."

Robber suspect lynched in N'ganj

OUR CORRESPONDENT, N'ganj

An angry mob beat a suspected robber to death in Narayanganj yesterday.

Identity of the deceased, aged about 35, could not be known immediately, said Sub-Inspector Palash Kanti Ray of Araihaajar Police Station.

A group of alleged robbers attacked one Arman Hosen, a garment worker, while he was returning home by a motorcycle from Roopganj after night duty, said the SI.

Arman's relatives and neighbours started looking for him around 6am and found him tied to a tree in a mango orchard at Elamdi in Araihaajar.

They saw two people trying to start his bike, the police officer quoted witnesses as saying.

The relatives and neighbours started beating one of them after they managed to catch him, said the SI.

Police recovered the body and sent it to Narayanganj General Hospital morgue for autopsy.

Arman was later admitted to the local upazila health complex, said the police officer.

They are investigating the incident, said the SI, adding that filing of a case over the death was underway.

Arman said when he reached Elamdi, around six people caught him. At one stage, he heard announcement through megaphone that robbers stormed into the area.

Two die after drinking spirit from lab

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Two workers died after drinking poisonous spirit from the lab of Khulna Government Girls' College.

The deceased are Parvez Biswas (29) and Rafiqul Biswas (40). Their colleague Shamim (32) was undergoing treatment at Khulna Medical College Hospital in critical state.

The duo died on Thursday night while undergoing treatment at KMCH. They were contracted to paint the lab room of Khulna Government Girls' College.

Kazi Mostaq Ahmed, OC of Khalishpur Police Station, told The Daily Star that after stealing it from college lab on Thursday three drank chemicals thinking it was alcohol. When they fell sick, relatives sent them to KMCH.

TM Zakir Hossain, principal of Khulna Girls' College, said he was looking into the matter.

'No justice for Santals in 4yrs'

Speakers say on anniversary of violence in Gaibandha

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Leaders of indigenous communities in Rajshahi yesterday expressed concern over getting justice to Santal families who endured killings of their dear ones and witnessed eviction through arson in Shahebganj Bagda farm in Gaibandha's Gobindaganj upazila four years ago.

Speaking in a human chain and rally held at the city's Shaheb Bazar area yesterday, they said names of the main accused for the violence that drew countrywide outcry in November 2016 were dropped from the charges.

Organised by Jatiya Adivasi Parishad (JAP), speakers were addressing the demonstration to commemorate the fourth anniversary of the incident. They said similar programmes were held in five other districts -- Natore, Naogaon, Pabna, Dinajpur, Gaibandha and Rangpur.

On November 6, 2016, police and local goons attacked ethnic Santal families in a bid to evict them from Rangpur Sugar Mill land.

However, community leaders said the sugar mill was established on 1,842.30 acres of Santals' ancestral land.

The mill authority, they said, lost its right on the land when it ceased from its goal to produce sugar and instead, it continued leasing out the land illegally to local goons for financial benefits.

Not even the police members who were seen in video footage setting fire to houses were brought to book, they said. The evicted families were never rehabilitated so far, nor they were returned of their ancestral land, they said.



Officials of Wildlife Crime Control Unit and Rab released the rescued birds at Dhaka University's Curzon Hall premises yesterday.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

710 wild birds rescued, traders jailed in Savar

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Savar

Officials of Wildlife Crime Control unit of forest department and Rapid Action Battalion rescued 710 wild birds of different species from Savar yesterday.

In a mobile court drive, the team rescued the birds and sentenced four people to one-year's imprisonment each for keeping and selling the birds.

The convicted are Usman Goni (35), Rafiqul (70), Chand Mia (28) and Rahmat (78), confirmed Ashim Mallick, inspector of Wildlife Crime Control Unit.

Ashim, who led the drive, said it was conducted at Ittkhola area under Savar around 10am. The court rescued 220 munias, 90 parrots, and 400 doves.

Later, the rescued birds were brought to Dhaka and released in the clear air of Dhaka University's Curzon Hall area.