

TANGENTS

BY IHTISHAM KABIR



Arctic Tern, Iceland

PHOTO: IHTISHAM KABIR

Tern, Tern, Tern

I became interested in Terns upon learning that the Arctic Tern flies roundtrip between the North and South Poles annually. The distance it covers in its average lifespan of 35 years is equivalent to flying to the moon and back three times. To see these birds I went to Iceland where they migrate and breed during the summer. On the golf course in Reykjavik, they mobbed me because I came too close to their nests. In Lake Myvatn, Iceland's premier birding spot, Arctic Terns made the most of twenty hours of summer sunshine by busily diving into the water for food and fattening themselves for the long journey south at summer's end.

Terns are birds of the Laridae family of birds that also includes Gulls and Skimmers. They are usually found near water: sea, coastlines, rivers and wetlands on all continents. There are forty species of Terns in the world. Most of them have a black head, light-grey upperparts, white underparts and a reddish bill. What they lack in colour they make up in grace and speed.

Bangladesh has nine species of Terns. Of these, probably the most common is the Whiskered Tern. A white bird with black head, it can be seen in most major rivers, large water bodies and along the coast. Our other common Tern is the larger River Tern, distinguished by its bright yellow-orange beak. If you travel by boat along any major river, you are likely to see it.

In Hail Haor on an autumn afternoon several years ago, I saw a festival of Whiskered Terns. A fishpond was half-drained. The shallow muddy water that remained held small fish and other marine animals, exposed to predators. A flock of Terns had shown up, diving into the water for fish. They were fast and

athletic. They emerged upside down from their dive with fish in beak. Sometimes two flew over one another, almost touching. They made it all look easy and seemed to immensely enjoy the act of flying.

In Brazil, I saw Little Terns, Yellow-billed Terns and Large-billed Terns on sandbars on the mighty Paraguay River. One memorable moment came when a Tern caught a fish from the water and shot up into the sky to feed another Tern in-flight. They also chased and squabbled with each other in the sky. In Cancun Mexico I saw Royal Terns diving into the waters of the Caribbean, their bright orange beaks contrasting with the aquamarine colours of the water. And in Australia, I saw several Terns gang against a Gull which had just caught a fish in Michaelmas Cay off Cairns, repeating a scene I had witnessed in Nijhum Dwip.

Perhaps the most intriguing Tern – and one I have not seen – is the Inca Tern. Unlike the whitish plumage of most Terns, this one is dark grey except for white feathers on the face resembling a long moustache. It is seen in South America.

Terns are special to me for another reason. The first bird I ever photographed was (unbeknownst to me at the time) a Whiskered Tern while on a boat on the Meghna. This was in 1986, when I did not care much for birding, but I still recall the aggressive bird. Its energy and grace caught my attention and I caught it on black and white film.

So the next time you are on a river, on the coast or in a wetland, keep an eye out for these sleek and graceful creatures.

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

Dhaka seeks greater global support for migrant workers

UNB, Dhaka

Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to the United Nations Ambassador Rabab Fatima has sought greater international support for migrant workers to cope up with the Covid-19 job market and beyond.

She said re-aligning public and private financing is needed for creating better jobs, especially for people in vulnerable situations.

Ambassador Fatima was chairing a panel discussion jointly organised by the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (UN-OHRLS) on Thursday.

The theme of the discussion was "Leaving no one behind and building back better from Covid-19: The Future of Work in LDCs", according to the Bangladesh mission yesterday.

She said for unlocking the untapped potentials of global value chains for enhancing trade and investment, capacity building in the LDCs is essential.

This could be done by taking advantage of the evolving digital economy, said the ambassador.

Nari Pragati Sangha demands action against MP Bablu

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rights organisation Bangladesh Nari Pragati Sangha (BNPS) has demanded appropriate steps against Bogura-7 MP Rezaul Karim Bablu for his speech at the parliament that feminists are to blame for the rise of rape incidents across the country. BNPS Executive Director Rokeya Kabir sent a letter to Speaker Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury in this regard yesterday.

The letter requests the Speaker to remove the speech of Rezaul Karim from the Parliament's minutes.

On November 17, MP Bablu said, "In the name of women's liberation, feminists are continuing to make women vulnerable to rape. This has increased the acceptability of rape so much among rapists that they are encouraged to commit the act."

He even advocated the implementation of the "tamarind theory (women are like tamarinds, men will salivate at the sight of them, and so they must remain covered)" of late Hefajat-e-Islam supreme Ahmad Shafi.

BNPS said, "We strongly protest such utterances as his speech was against the spirit of our constitution, Liberation War and equal rights of women and men."

The organisation demanded necessary action against the lawmaker and asked the Speaker to not let such incidents reoccur.

In the letter, BNPS also thanked the Parliament for passing the Women and Children Repression Prevention (Amendment) Bill, 2020, which added death penalty as the highest punishment for rape.

'Leader of battery-stealing gang' held

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police Bureau of Investigation (PBI) on Thursday claimed to have arrested the ringleader of a gang that steals batteries from auto-rickshaws in Savar.

The arrestee was identified as Ali Haider alias Nahid Hasan (27).

A PBI team arrested Nahid while investigating the murder of auto-rickshaw driver Sheikh Mintu (35), said Mohammad Khorshed Alam, superintendent (SP) of Dhaka district PBI, yesterday.

Mintu was allegedly killed by the gang members around 8:30pm on July 13, he said.

Rashidul Islam, inspector at PBI and investigating officer of the case, told this newspaper that during primary interrogation, Nahid admitted that he is the leader of a battery-stealing ring.

"They have been snatching batteries for some time and selling them in different parts of the country. There are some 10-11 other gang members, and we are conducting drives to catch them," Rashidul said.

Replying to a question, he said the gang was involved in petty crimes, but for the last two years, they started snatching batteries. Besides, they also mugged the drivers.

The criminals would sell the batteries for Tk 20,000-30,000, far lower than the actual price of Tk 40,000.



In response to the authority's strict stance on wearing masks and mobile courts active to fine violators, a section of citizens can now be seen with their faces covered while moving about. Earlier, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina warned everyone of the second wave of Covid-19, as infections may increase in the coming winter, according to experts. The photos were taken yesterday from the capital's Ramna area and Topkhana Road.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

One step towards a port city free of waterlogging

Univ buildings built on canal being demolished after 20yrs

ARUN BIKASH DEY, Ctg

The authorities of Premier University Chattogram have begun demolishing two structures of the educational institution that were built on a canal in the port city at Prabartak intersection around 20 years ago.

The university authorities began the process of demolition last month as per the order of Chattogram Development Authority (CDA).

Locals have long been demanding that the structures be demolished as they said they have to suffer every year during monsoon since rainwater cannot flow through the canal as the building stand in the way. This causes severe waterlogging.

CDA is also building a bridge over the canal in the intersection as part of a mega project for reducing waterlogging in the city. As part of the project, the canal would be dredged and widened.

According to CDA sources, Chattogram City Corporation (CCC) authorities built the structures occupying Hijra khal (canal) to establish a private university without taking permission from the CDA. CDA is the authority that gives permission for building structures in port city. A four-storey building was built at the intersection in 2000. A total of 13 shops on the ground floor were then rented out by CCC.

Afterwards, the Institute of Business Technology was established on the first, second and third floors. In 2002, it was transformed into a university -- Premier University Chattogram.

Two more six-storey buildings were built for the university in the area. One of the two buildings was built on the canal, according to CDA officials.

Altaf Hossain, a resident of the area, said waterlogging worsened after the structures were built.

"We have been demanding for a long time that the authorities (CDA) demolish those," he said. "I wonder how a public organisation like the city corporation could build something occupying a water body."

Many also questioned how CDA could allow such a move by the city corporation.

However, CDA officials said they did not give CCC the permission, rather they issued a number of notices to them to demolish the



An academic building of Premier University, which was built obstructing a canal in port city's Prabartak mor area, is being demolished to free up the canal. The photo was taken on Thursday.

structures since 2000.

"We do not give permission to anybody for building structures on canals," said Shahinul Islam Khan, chief town planner of CDA.

Asked why they did not go for eviction in the last 20 years, Shahinul said CCC is a public organisation and eviction drive cannot be conducted against them all of a sudden. "We have served notices to them several times in this regard," he said.

According to CCC sources, the structures were built during the tenure of former mayor late ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury. Later, during the tenure of former mayor M Monjur Alam, a decision was taken in the meeting of the university trustee board on May 19, 2014 to demolish those.

Asked why the structures were built on the canal, Monjur said, "Those were built during the tenure of Mohiuddin Chowdhury and as a ward councillor I was a member of the committee formed to establish a university in 2000."

"Back then, the civil society members asked the then mayor to establish a private university under the city corporation's authority in the city and so he took the steps," he added.

Monjur said the then mayor might have not realised the consequences. Moreover, there was a decision that the campus would be shifted immediately from the area.

Wishing anonymity, CCC officials told this correspondent that the university trustee board is responsible for the buildings and they should demolish it.

Contacted, Prof Dr Anupam Sen, vice chancellor of the university, said as CDA asked them to demolish the structures, they were doing so.

Asked why they did not demolish those sooner, he said CDA had not asked them to do so earlier.

CDA has been implementing the project to reduce waterlogging in the city and so they are widening and dredging Hijra khal. Bangladesh Army is implementing the project.

Contacted, Lt Col Md Shah Ali, project director, said, "We asked Premier University (Chattogram) to demolish the structures, leaving space of 6 metres for the canal and 1.5 metres more for working space," he said.

World Toilet Day observed

CITY DESK

Unilever's toilet cleaning brand Domex has observed World Toilet Day to generate awareness on improved and hygienic sanitation, says a press release. Domex, in partnership with WaterAid, Brac, 2030WRC, World Bank Group, BHUMIJO and Unilever, organised a webinar on November 19 to reach an audience of around 15 million virtually with Prothom Alo.

Partha Hefaz Shaikh, policy and advocacy director, WaterAid Bangladesh; Dr Liakath Ali, climate change and Urban Development Director, Brac; Farhana Rashid, CEO and co-founder, BHUMIJO; Sayef Tanzeem Qayyum, regional coordinator, 2030 WRG, Water GP, World Bank; and Tanzeen Ferdous, marketing director, Home Care, Unilever Bangladesh, took part in the webinar.

Fake medicine factory sealed off in Ctg

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

The Detective Branch of Chattogram Metropolitan Police sealed off a fake medicine factory and arrested a man in the port city's Chandgaon area early yesterday.

The arrestee, Md Hossen, is the owner of the factory.

Ali Hussain, deputy commissioner (north) of DB, said during the drive, the DB team also found raw materials used for manufacturing fake medicines.

Pomacentrus Bangladeshius

New species of fish found on the shores of St Martin's Island

MD ASADUZZAMAN

Researchers from Sher-e-Bangla Agricultural University have discovered a formerly unknown species of fish from St Martin's Island.

A team from the university's Aquatic Bioresource Research Lab discovered the new-to-science fish. Known as 'Pettoli' by local anglers, the fish has been named Pomacentrus Bangladeshius (Bengal demoiselle).

Project lead Prof Kazi Ahsan Habib said, "We have listed about 150 species of fish that inhabit the coral ecosystem of St Martin's Island. We used scuba diving to conduct underwater observation. During our research, we found this new species which lives in the shallow reef flats around rock and coral outcrops."

"The new species belongs to the Pomacentridae family, which are commonly called damselfish. It has a prominent notch present between its preorbital and suborbital, is olive to dark-brown in colour, and has a yellow iris with a narrow bronze eye ring."

The new species was discovered during an investigation on the current biodiversity status of fishes associated to the corals of St Martin's Island, which ran from 2018 to 2019.

Alongside Prof Habib, the team is comprised of three research assistants: Md Jayedul Islam, Najmun Nahar, and Amit Kumer Neogi. Prof Habib is currently serving as dean of Faculty of Fisheries, Aquaculture and Marine Science at Sher-e-Bangla Agricultural University. The research was conducted through a competitive research grant of National Agricultural Technology Program Phase-II project of Bangladesh Agricultural Research Council.

Researchers and academics around the country are seeing this as a positive development. Talking to The Daily Star, Prof Md Manzoarul Kibria of Chittagong University's zoology department said, "Adding a new name to the list of Bangladeshi fish is certainly a positive news. In the country's hilly and coastal regions, we have already discovered some new fish species. But when it comes to St Martin's Island, this is definitely a new phenomenon."

This is the second new species discovered from Bangladeshi waters by the team. The first one was discovered from the Sundarbans. This research was published in the international taxonomic journal "Zootaxa".

According to the Catalogue of Fish of California Academy of Science, 422 species of damselfish have been identified all across the world.



COURTESY OF THE RESEARCH TEAM