

TANGENTS

BY IHTISHAM KABIR



Yellow-wattled Lapwing with Chicks.

PHOTO: IHTISHAM KABIR

Bringing Up Baby

Stories of baby birds can be fascinating.

The Australian Brushturkey is a bird found mostly on the ground. It is black and the size of a large chicken, with red wattles hanging down its cheeks. It prefers to stay on the ground, flying only if it has to. I found this bird bland, but that was before I heard how it brings up babies. Before laying eggs, the father collects organic, compostable material to make a mound several feet in size. The mother then lays eggs inside the mound and leaves. The father keeps adjusting the mound contents so that the heat generated by the organic decay stays within 33-35 degrees Celsius. This works like incubation. When the eggs hatch, the chicks are ready to fly from day one.

Then there is the story of the Cuckoo family, including the Koel, or *Kokil*. The Cuckoo lays one egg amongst the eggs of the Crow in the Crow's nest. The Crow, unaware of the plot, incubates all eggs in its nest with great care. The Cuckoo egg hatches first and the chick sometimes pushes out the Crow's eggs off the nest. It also calls in a manner similar to a Crow. The Crow continues nurturing the baby Cuckoo until it is grown enough to fly off. This is an uncommon phenomenon called "brood parasitism."

Stories like the above are extraordinary, but the breeding cycle of ordinary birds is no less interesting and challenging. They build a nest, find a tree cavity, or revisit last year's nest to lay their eggs. When the chicks

hatch, the parents must nurture them by feeding them and protecting them from predators. At some point the chicks start flapping their wings; soon they are making short flights. But not all chicks can learn to feed themselves at the same time they fly. Birds of prey, for example, must learn to hunt while flying. So even after they learn to fly their parents must keep feeding them until they can hunt for themselves.

It is not easy to observe baby birds while they are growing up. But such moments are rewarding.

Some years ago I ran into a mother Yellow-wattled Lapwing with her brood. The chicks walked the fields with her and learned to forage in the ground for worms and vegetable matter. However, they could not fly and were vulnerable to predators from above. Whenever there was a hint of a moving shadow from above they immediately dived under the wings of the mother.

In weeks the colour of their plumage changed from salt-and-pepper to reddish brown. They strayed farther and farther from the mother. One day I saw one of them flapping its wings. The first flight came soon. In no time they were showing off their flying skills like kids with the first bicycle or teenagers with the first car.

For most birds bringing up baby is best done discreetly away from prying eyes. But if you do happen to find a full nest, you will find joy in observing life unfold for these young ones.

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39th span of Padma bridge installed

A CORRESPONDENT, Munshiganj

The 39th span of the Padma bridge was installed yesterday, making 5.85km stretch of the main structure visible.

Only two more spans are needed to complete the 6.15-kilometre long bridge, said officials concerned.

The "2D" span was installed over the pillars 10 and 11 at Munshiganj's Mawa end within six days of installation of the 38th span, said Dewan Abdul Kader, executive engineer and project manager (main bridge).

A specialised floating crane took the span to the designated poles from Mawa's Kumarbhog Construction Yard at around 9am. The procedure was completed at 12:22pm with no glitches amid favourable weather, the engineer added.

With this, a total of four spans were installed in November as per target.

Officials said they have the target to install the rest two spans by December 16, the Victory Day.

The construction of Padma bridge started in 2014 and the first span was installed on September 2017.

The main bridge, which is being constructed with concrete and steel, will be two-storied. China Major Bridge Engineering Company (CMBEC) is constructing the bridge, while another Chinese company Sinohydro Corporation is working for Padma river training.

Left out in the cold

Around 34 families become homeless as fire rips through slum in Narayanganj

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Narayanganj

Thirty-four families are now passing their days in severe hardship, having to live under the open sky as their homes at a slum in Narayanganj were gutted in a fire on Thursday night.

The slum is at Moslem Nagar Notun Bazar under Narayanganj Sadar Upazila.

There were 40 rooms there owned by a local named Giasuddin. Thirty-four of these were completely gutted in the fire that broke out at around 10:45pm on Thursday. Fire service doused the blaze at around 12:15am.

Many of the slum-dwellers had television set, refrigerator, cash and other valuables in their rooms. But everything has been burnt, they said.

"I along with my family members was having dinner. Suddenly, we heard our neighbours' screams. So we hurriedly exited our room," recounts Fulhori Bibi, "That was the end. That was the last we saw of our home and our belongings."

"I had Tk 25,000 in cash, a TV and a fridge.



A child looks at a burnt book she picked out of the rubble. Her family was among the 34 households that lost all their belonging in the fire. PHOTO: STAR

I could not save anything," she told this correspondent yesterday.

A four-year-old Rashed was looking for books that were burnt. "The books belonged to my elder sister. All our books and clothes have been destroyed," he said.

"The fire spread so quickly that we could only save our lives. We could not take anything out of our room. Now I have no money to buy food," said Kalam Miah, a garments worker.

"Even my identity card for my workplace has been burnt. Security guards at the factory will not allow me to enter now," he added.

Contacted, Abdullah Al Arefin, deputy assistant director of Fire Service and Civil Defense in Narayanganj, said the fire originated from "agarbati" (incense sticks) at one room. Losses are roughly estimated to be around Tk 15 lakh.

Narayanganj Sadar's Upazila Nirbahi Officer Nahida Barik said they were preparing a list of the affected families, who will be provided government assistance.



This boy is ecstatic after catching a Shoal fish with his bare hands. Low-lying areas in Savar's Amin Bazar has been left with fish that failed to move on with the current as floodwater receded, and many including him are getting down and dirty in the mud to catch fish. This catch is not just a good source of protein for the boy, the sense of satisfaction from stealthily catching the wiggly fish is also unparalleled. This photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Bejoy N D'Cruze installed as the new Archbishop of Dhaka

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Bishop Bejoy N D'Cruze OMI was installed as the Archbishop of Dhaka yesterday, two months after the Vatican announced its appointment.

Cardinal Patrick D' Rozario, CSC, and Vatican's Apostolic Nuncio to Bangladesh Archbishop George Kocherry, other bishops, priests and Christians were present at the installation ceremony at Saint Mary's Cathedral Church in Dhaka. Archbishop D' Cruze, during the holy mass with limited presence, called for unity among people of all churches, religions, caste and creed.

He is now the president of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Bangladesh. He replaces Cardinal Patrick D Rozario, who retired as the Archbishop of Dhaka in September.

Archbishop D'Cruze was born on February 9, 1956, at Tuitail in Nawabganj, Dhaka and was ordained a priest on February 20, 1987. He was appointed the bishop of Sylhet on July 8, 2011.

Farmer stabbed to death over land dispute in Dinajpur

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

A farmer was allegedly stabbed to death over a land dispute in Dinajpur's Biral upazila yesterday afternoon.

The deceased is Abdul Kader (75) of Biral's Ballabpur village. Police, quoting witnesses, said Abdul was ripping paddy of land that his relatives claimed belonged to them. His nephew Naimul Islam (35) asked him to stop, but Abdul continued, said OC Sheikh Nasim Habib of Biral Police Station.

Later, they locked into an altercation, and Naimul stabbed him and fled.

A ray of hope for the little one

Born a triplet, sole surviving tiger cub being taken care of by Ctg zoo staff as mother refuses to nurse him

ARUN BIKASH DEY, Ctg

On November 14, one of Chattogram Zoo's tigresses gave birth to three cubs. Initially, this was met with great optimism for zoo staffers, but it soon turned sour as two of the cubs died after their mother refused to nurse them.

"We were happy to see that Joya, a tigress in the zoo, gave birth to three cubs for the first time," said Shahadat Hossain Shuvo, a veterinary surgeon and curator of Chattogram Zoo. "Two of them were male and the other was female."

"However, we were worried to see the mother turning her back to the cubs since the very first day," he said.

"Usually, a tigress starts taking

care of her cubs from their birth, nursing them and playing with them. But Joya was acting differently. She didn't even feed them," said the curator. "As a result, the female cub died on November 15."

Zoo authorities have been trying to keep the surviving cubs alive ever since, but they couldn't do much but watch another one die.

"We immediately took the other cubs out of Joya's cage and decided to isolate them to take care of them," he said. "But unfortunately, one of the cubs died on November 18."

"We have been feeding the third one bottled milk," he continued, "If the cub survives, it will be the first tiger in the country to have survived

by artificial care." The official said the cub's health condition is now stable. After birth, it weighed 1.3 kg.

The cub is a second-generation tiger born at the zoo. His grandparents were two Bengal tigers bought from South Africa on December, 2016 at a cost of Tk 30 lakh. The tiger was named Raj while the tigress was called Pori.

The couple gave birth to three cubs in 2018. Of those, a white cub did not survive. The surviving white tigress was named Shubhra while the orange one was named Joya.

The zoo now has six tigers, including the newborn cub and another Pori gave birth to on December 31, 2019.



Only one cub survived from the trio birthed by Joya, one of Chattogram Zoo's tigresses. As the mother refuses to nurse the baby, he's now being taken care of by zoo staffers. This photo was taken on Thursday.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

Prayer for peace

Kathin Chibar Dan observed in Rangamati

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangamati

Kathin Chibar Dan (robe offering), one of the biggest religious festivals of the Buddhist community in Rangamati, where new robes are gifted to monks, was observed yesterday with due solemnity.

On the occasion, the Kathin Chibar, a special kind of robe worn by monks, is spun within 24 hours and given to them. However, this year saw an exception to this tradition due to social distancing restrictions.

This year, the programme ended through seeking peace, prosperity and happiness for people of the CHT and all over the world.

Goutam Dewan, president of Upashak Upashika Karjonirbahi Parishad, gave a welcome speech to inaugurate the function. After this, the programme began with a religious song led by Ranjit Dewan, a prominent singer of CHT.

Among others, Brisho Ketu Chakma, chairman, Rangamati Hill Districts Council (RHDC); Moni Swapan Dewan, ex-state minister of CHT ministry; Nirupa Dewan, ex-member of National Human Right Commission, and local representatives of different sectors in the district were present at the programme.

At the event, speakers said all Buddhist devotees have to avoid greed, illusion, and envy in order to follow the path of Buddha.

In the evening, the Pradip Puja (candle lighting) was held at Rajban Bihar.

3 killed in road crashes

STAR REPORT

At least three people were killed and one was injured in road accidents in two districts during the last two days, report our correspondents.

In Cumilla, two youths were killed at Kalakachua area of Burichang upazila when a covered van hit their motorbike around 2:30pm yesterday.

Safayet Ahmed, officer-in-charge of Mainamati Crossing Highway Police Station, confirmed the incident to the Daily Star.

He said, "We rushed to the spot but relatives and friends took the bodies away before highway police reached. We seized the covered-van but could not detain its driver and helper."

The deceased were identified as Nazmul Haque Sajal (26) of the district's Sadar upazila, and Sariful Alam Sohag (27) of Burichang. Another person on the motorbike was injured.

According to locals, a speedy covered-van hit a motorcycle carrying three people from the back, killing two on the spot.

In Thakurgaon, a passenger of a three-wheeler was killed after a tractor hit the vehicle at Maheshpur village of Ranishankoil upazila on Thursday night.

The victim was identified as Abdul Majid (40) of Maharaja village in the upazila.

Ranishankoil Police Station Officer-in-Charge SM Jahid Iqbal said the accident occurred around 7pm, when a Ranishankoil-bound tractor hit the three-wheeler, killing Majid on the spot.

Police seized the vehicles but drivers and helpers managed to flee.