

T A N G E N T S

BY IHTISHAM KABIR



Mr. Anwar Releasing Pigeons.

PHOTO: IHTISHAM KABIR

A Passion for Pigeons

I am standing on a rooftop in Mirpur on a crisp morning in late January. The sky is a clear, pale blue and the sunshine is warm enough to balance the cold. It is a perfect winter day.

I also happen to be surrounded by three hundred and sixty pigeons.

That's because this is the house of Mr. Bhubon, a dedicated pigeon enthusiast. Mr. Anwar my connection to the world of pigeons has brought me here. I am waiting for the pigeons' daily exercise flight.

As the cage doors are opened, the pigeons zoom out. Within minutes they are flying in circular formations overhead, glittering like diamonds in the sunshine. These are Grivas pigeons, but Bhubon also has a smaller flock of fancy Homer pigeons.

The Homer is much faster than the Grivas.

This rooftop is pigeon paradise. Meticulously designed wrought-iron cages house the birds. Buckets of seed-mix feed them. The cages have built-in waste removal systems. Parents raise their young in separate breeding cages. Sick pigeons rest and recover in a separate cage. There is even a hospice cage for pigeons too old to fly.

Until a few years ago, racing pigeons in Bangladesh meant the traditional Grivas pigeons.

When "racing" them, competitors travel to a spot approximately 25-50km from home. Each person then releases the same number of pigeons (eg, fifty). The winner is the one who has most pigeons returning home by sunset.

Homers are a recent introduction. They fly longer and faster, reaching altitudes where tailwind pushes them.

The record-holder, I am told, flew from St. Martin's to Dhaka in two hours and forty minutes. Homers always come home, so the winner is determined by speed.

The pigeon racers live mostly in Mirpur or old Dhaka. While Homers and Grivas are both raced, Homer owners have clubs for organising races and activities. Each Homer wears a band with a serial number and registration from the club. Owners often practice selective breeding techniques to improve the performance of their pigeons over generations.

This hobby nay, passion - demands countless hours. If the sublime pleasure I feel watching the birds in flight is any indication, the rewards can be ample. But families of enthusiasts often suffer. I hear several stories of irate wives, who, tired of their husband's neglect of family, have thrown out pigeons and cages.

"Look!" Anwar's anxious cry jolts me. High above, a falcon is cutting swiftly across the flock. Luckily it does not attack. Later, Bhubon wants his pigeons back in the cage, but the birds disagree. It takes another hour to coax them in. I can see how this hobby consumes time.

Want to take up pigeon racing? You will need your own rooftop. After building a cage there, you can go to the racing pigeon market in Kapitan Bazar or Mirpur-1 and buy your pigeons. Then you can start training them.

Don't forget, you will also need a very patient and understanding spouse!

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JU BIRD FAIR HELD 'Protect birds from extinction'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Hundreds of bird lovers thronged the Jahangirnagar University (JU) campus yesterday to attend a daylong bird fair.

With a view to create awareness among people about birds and nature conservation, the zoology department of JU organised the fair in association with Wildlife Rescue Centre and Bangladesh Bird Club.

JU Vice-Chancellor Sharif Enamul Kabir inaugurated the fair in the morning.

A number of telescopes and binoculars were installed at different points on the campus to facilitate bird-watching. Children participated in a drawing competition where they drew pictures of different species of birds.

Talking to The Daily Star, Manirul H Khan, an associate professor of the zoology department, said, "The fair has created awareness among the people and JU campus has become a much protected area for birds."

"The government should create a network of protected

areas for conservation of wildlife. Though there are some protected areas in the country, those are not maintained properly," he added.

Young bird lovers from across the country enjoyed bird-watching through telescopes and binoculars, and gathered information on birds from four stalls at the fair compound set up by the students of the zoology department.

"The number of birds in Bangladesh is decreasing day by day. We need to do something immediately to preserve them," said the JUVC.

Debate competition, photography exhibition, quiz and painting competition on birds were also held on the sidelines. Stalls displaying photographs, posters, journals on birds were also set up on the path leading to the university auditorium.

The zoology department of JU has been organising the fair since 2001.

Prof Md Mafizul Kabir, convenor of the fair organising committee, and wild life specialist Enamul Haque, among others, were present.

Birth anniversary

METRO DESK

Today is the 87th birth anniversary of Father Marino Rigon, a freedom fighter and social worker, says a press release.

He was also an Italian translator of Bengali literature. He was born in Venice in 1925.

DHAKA TODAY

Roundtable

Telecom Reporters Forum will hold a roundtable. Venue: Sonargaon Hotel, Time: 10:00am.

Human chain

Bangabandhu Sangskritik Jote will form a human chain. Venue: In front of National Press Club, Time: 11:00am.

Meeting

Bangladesh-Kashmir Brotherhood Council will arrange a meeting. Venue: DRU, Time: 3:00pm.

Roundtable

Sundarban Supporters National Coordination Committee will organise a roundtable. Venue: National Press Club, Time: 2:45pm.

Discussion

Anti-tobacco Media Alliance will hold a discussion. Venue: Sundarban Hotel, Time: 3:00pm.

EASTERN HIMALAYAN RIVERS

Ecosystems at risk: Study

UNB, Dhaka

The freshwater ecosystems and the species are at risk in the Eastern Himalayan rivers, including Ganges and Brahmaputra, due to the development of water resources and construction of dams on these rivers.

According to the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), the development of water resources is rapidly expanding in the Eastern Himalayan region and there is a serious lack of information to guide conservation and development planning. This is putting freshwater ecosystems and the species at risk, along with the livelihoods and economies of local communities which they support.

A recent study showed that 31.3 percent of the 1,073 freshwater species of fishes, molluscs, dragonflies and damselflies currently known in the Eastern Himalayan region are assessed as data deficient, emphasising the

need for extensive new research.

IUCN and Zoo Outreach Organization (ZOO) jointly carried out the study for identifying the IUCN "Red List of Threatened Species."

The study revealed that of those species, 7.2 percent are classed as threatened and a further 5.4 percent considered to be near threatened.

The lower parts of the Ganges and Brahmaputra rivers have been heavily impacted by pollution, the clearing and degradation of forests (leading to sedimentation and changes in flow regimes) and the development of dams.

The impacts are significant upon some species like populations of the fishes, Putitor Mahseer and Tor putitora, found in the Ganges, Brahmaputra and other river basins, which have declined across its range and are predicted to further decline by up to 80 percent by next 100 years, the study said.



Artistes perform in a street theatre at Chittagong Shilpkala Academy yesterday organised by The Daily Star celebrating its 20th anniversary.

PHOTO: STAR

STAR-BANGLALION-DRISHTY CONTEST Brainstorming begins

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Speakers at the inaugural session of a brainstorming contest here yesterday stressed frequent arrangement of such competitions to graduate the country to a better position. They told the inaugural session of "The Daily Star-Banglalion-Drishty business case-solving competition 2011".

Drishty Chittagong in association with Chittagong Stock Exchange and East Delta University organised the 2nd brainstorming contest in the port city yesterday.

Ex-governor of Lions' Club Nader Khan was the chief guest at the session chaired by Drishty Chittagong president Masud Bokul.

Drishty Chittagong general secretary Saif Chowdhury and joint secretary Adnan Mannan also spoke at the event held at Regional Public Administration Training Centre.

The Daily Star Chittagong bureau in-charge AKM Raisul Haq Bahar, Roshangir Bacchu of Bank Asia, Ameer Ali Chowdhury of Lion, and Jahedul Karim of Banglalion were the special guests.

The organiser also held a workshop for the participants where experts gave lectures. Nine teams from different schools and 25 teams from universities are taking part.

The schools are Cider International School, Presidency International School, Sunshine Grammar School, Ideal School, Silver Bells Girls High School, BAWA School, Agrabad Balika Biddyaloy, and Collegiate School.

Also participating are Chittagong University, Premier University, East Delta University, Independent University, USTC, IIUC, Southern University, CUET, Asian Women University.

CRP Sponsored Walk held

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Centre for the Rehabilitation of the Paralysed (CRP) staged its annual Sponsored Walk at the Gulshan Tank Park yesterday morning, says a press release.

Founder and Coordinator of CRP Valerie A Taylor inaugurated the programme.

Since 2004, CRP has been organising the walk to raise funds as well as increasing mass-participation and public awareness for the development of the people with disabilities.

About 300 people including CRP patients, staff, foreign volunteers and students, teachers, and officials of different educational institutions joined the programme "Walking for an Inclusive Society."

The programme consisted of seven laps around the lake and the participants walked around five kilometres.

23 supplementary books to reach students soon

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government on Thursday issued a gazette notification on 23 supplementary textbooks on 11 subjects for secondary students of the current academic session after fixing prices.

No book but these approved ones can be sold in the market or be taught in the classrooms; action would be taken if any deviation is found, says the gazette.

The district education office, upazila education office, and other offices concerned will strictly monitor the sale of these books.

Students from class VI to IX read English Grammar and Composition, Bangla Byakaron (Bangla grammar), and Rapid Reader as supplementary books alongside the textbooks.

Recently National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) has approved 27 supplementary books examined and scrutinised by an expert committee.

The gazette notification was issued on 23 out of the 27 books, as the printers of four books did not submit approval fee.

"All educational institutions will have to teach these books in their classrooms, as questions on these subjects would be from the books," said the NCTB Chairman Prof Mostafa Kamal Uddin.

The NCTB chief also said, "We have issued gazette notification on the books and all the schools will get the gazette notification by next Sunday."

Every year, NCTB approves the supplementary books written by different authors available in the market and fix their prices after analysing those.

STUDENTS-VILLAGERS CLASH

30 hurt at Rokeya University

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangpur

At least 30 injured in a series of clashes between the students of Begum Rokeya University and locals of Lalbagh, Modern and sheikh Para villages in Rangpur yesterday.

The clash erupted over a cricket match at the new campus of Begum Rokeya University.

Eyewitnesses said a student of the university beat one Apple, a local of Lalbagh Modern point. After that Apple and his associates attacked the student and his friends.

Police said when the students of the university made counter attack, the locals of three adjoining villages became united and made fresh attack on the students entering into the campus.

NEWS IN brief

Hindu community demands arrest of burglars

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leaders of the Hindu community have demanded immediate arrest and trial of the culprits involved in burglary incidents at temples including Dhakeshwari Temple.

A protest rally jointly arranged by Bangladesh Puja Ujjapan Parishad and Mahanagar Sarbojanin Puja Committee at the city's Muktagon on Thursday, they alleged that an organised gang was involved in the burglaries and they did the crimes in a planned way to tarnish the image of the government.

Advocate Subbrata Chowdhury chaired the rally.

Training for diplomatic correspondents ends

METRO DESK

A two-day residential training for diplomatic correspondents on diplomatic issues and foreign affairs concluded in Savar on Thursday.

The training was organised by Management and Resources Development Initiative (MRDI) in partnership with Diplomatic Correspondents Association, Bangladesh (DCAB), with support from the British High Commission, Dhaka, says a press release.

Twenty diplomatic correspondents from print and electronic media took part in the training. Farid Hossain, Bureau Chief, AP led the training sessions as course facilitator along with ambassadors, academics and researchers.

British Deputy High Commissioner Nick Low, President of DCAB Raheen Ezaj, MRDI Executive Director Hasibur Rahman also spoke at the concluding session.

Consuls' forum launching Feb 6

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Forum of Consuls in Bangladesh (FCB) is going to be launched officially at a city hotel on February 6.

President Md Zillur Rahman is expected to present the launching programme as the chief guest at the Sonargaon Hotel, said chairman of FCB AKM Shahidul Islam at a press conference at National Press Club yesterday.

He said FCB is a representative body of honorary consuls and consul generals in Bangladesh. It was established in 2007 under chairmanship of Salauddin Kasem Khan, honorary consul general of Turkey in Chittagong, said Shahidul, honorary consul of Malaysia in Chittagong. But it could not officially launch due to unavoidable circumstances, he said.

At present FCB has 33 honorary consuls and consul generals. FCB is affiliated with world federation of consuls.

'Establish Qazi Faruque's legal control over Proshika'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Eminent citizens in a statement on Thursday appealed to the prime minister to direct authorities concerned for establishing 'legal control' of Proshika's former chairman Qazi Faruque Ahmed on the organisation as per the Supreme Court verdict.

National Prof Kabir Chowdhury and 38 dignitaries signed the statement.

IUB holds Science Olympiad

METRO DESK

The School of Engineering and Computer Science (SECS) of Independent University Bangladesh (IUB) has organised a daylong Inter-college Math & Science Olympiad on its permanent campus at Bashundhara R/A in the city yesterday.

Some 136 students from 13 colleges participated in this competition. Chairman of IUB Trust Saifur Rahman attended the programme as the chief guest.

Prof M Omar Rahman, vice chancellor (in charge) of IUB; Prof Mohammed Anwer, director of SECS and chairman of the Olympiad organising committee also spoke.

WEATHER TODAY