

TANGENTS

BY IHTISHAM KABIR



Bee-eater and butterfly

PHOTO:
IHTISHAM KABIR

Bee-Eaters

It was a sunny day in early winter with a crystalline blue sky. The brown butterfly sailed blissfully high up in the air, unprepared for death. When it sensed the danger signs, it shook and fluttered (to come out of its reverie?) and flew faster on a zig-zag course. Too late. The two green birds with long pointed beaks were flying towards it perhaps five times faster. As they came close, one bird shoved the other away and effortlessly picked up the butterfly with its beak.

Then the bird returned to its perch high on a copper-pod tree, butterfly squirming in its beak. Without opening its mouth, it shaved off the butterfly's wings which floated to the ground. Within a few seconds, it had consumed the butterfly's body.

I had just witnessed a hunting technique called hawking or sallying, used by smaller birds. The bird in question was a bee-eater.

It is more common to see bee-eaters catch a flying bee, its staple food. Returning to its perch with the bee, the bird repeatedly hits it on the branch to remove its sting or venom before eating it. When it catches smaller insects it eats them almost instantaneously. Bee-eaters always catch flying insects – ignoring the same insects if they are sitting somewhere – and often sit on an exposed perch scanning the sky for possible quarry.

Bee-eaters are social birds. I once saw perhaps a dozen of them bathing in a pond. I was standing on the edge of the pond when a loud commotion caught my attention. A swarm of

birds had flown into a nearby *amlaki* tree and loud chattering ensued. Within a minute they started diving into the water, first a solitary bird, then two or three at a time, shooting straight up from the water after each dive. It was like an elaborately choreographed dance that lasted less than thirty seconds. When it was over I shook my head wondering whether I was dreaming.

On another occasion I saw some bee-eaters on a sandy field. Unfortunately I could not get close, but it looked like they were rolling in the sand. I read later they like to sand-bathe.

The bee-eater is a small bird, perhaps six to seven inches long. Its plumage combines rich green, blue, yellow and orange; its eyes are red. The central tail feather is often thin and elongated. Its body is sleek and streamlined, ready for action.

Most species of bee-eaters can be found in Asia and Africa, with a few varieties in Europe, Australia and New Guinea. Bangladesh has four varieties of the bird. In Bangla it is called *sui chora*. I have seen green bee-eaters and chestnut-headed bee-eaters (with red heads), but not the blue-tailed or the blue-bearded ones.

Other than its colour, its remarkable feature is its beak: curved, pointed and sharp.

The bee-eater is not shy of humans. If you see one perched on a branch, watch it with patience and you might catch an exciting show.

www.facebook.com/tangents.ikabir

Dr Kamal demands 'formalin free politics'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Noted jurist Dr Kamal Hossain and eminent journalist ABM Musa at a discussion yesterday demanded "formalin free politics".

Holding political parties liable for "formalin-laced politics", Kamal Hossain called upon people to take part in the movement to get rid of it. "We want formalin free BNP and Awami League," said Musa.

The discussion, "Upcoming National Election and Thoughts of Professionals", was organised by South Asian Lawyers' Forum (SALF) in the capital's Jatiya Press Club.

Unscrupulous traders spray fish, fruits and vegetables with formalin and other chemicals that are normally used for preservation of tissues and also in textile and leather industries.

Pointing out the Hall-Mark and share

market scams and Padma bridge construction fiasco during the present government's term, Kamal Hossain called upon the finance minister to disclose the names of the actual perpetrators.

"Disclose information on these corruptions as it is a demand of the country's people," he said, questioning the government on why it did not want to admit its guilt and seek pardon over the issues.

SALF placed a six-point demand, including annulment of 12 (j) of Representation of the People Order, 1972.

It states that a person shall be disqualified for election as or for being, a member, if he - not being an independent candidate, has not been a member of a registered political party for three years.

Nagorik Oikya Convener Mahmudur Rahman Manna and Prof Pias Karim of Brac University also spoke at the programme, presided over by SALF President Sheikh Salahuddin Ahmed.



The stump of one of the five over-30-year-old timber trees, situated in Patuakhali district town and owned by Public Works Department, cut down by some ruling Awami League leaders on Thursday.

PHOTO: STAR

NEWS IN *brief*

Tiger kills fisherman in Khulna

A CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Forest guards recovered the decomposed body of a fisherman, who was killed in a tiger attack, from the Sunderbans under Baniakhali Forest Station in Koyra upazila of Khulna district yesterday morning.

The deceased was Nazrul Islam, 38, son of Khaisab Gazi at Bhandarpur in the upazila.

Koyra Police Station Officer-in-Charge Mir Khairul Kabir said Nazrul, along with some fishermen, went to the forest in Baniakhali area on Thursday afternoon for catching fish and crab.

Later, he was attacked by a tiger and was taken to the deep forest while he fishing from Barapota canal at around 6:00pm.

2 held at airport for murder links

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Immigration police arrested two people from the capital's Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport on Thursday night and early yesterday in two murder cases of Brahmanbaria.

Babul Mia alias Billal was arrested on Thursday. Billal, a Bangladeshi expatriate in Dubai, allegedly killed his father over a land dispute in Bancharampur on November 20, police said.

Moloy Mia was held in connection with the killing of his uncle over a land dispute in Sarail

Five injured in clash in capital

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least five people were injured in a clash between two groups of youths during a 'Tajia' procession, an annual religious procession held by Shia Muslims, on Najimuddin road in the capital last night.

The injured are Rashed, Rasel, Apan, Faisal, and Shohag of old Dhaka. They have taken treatment at Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

Rasel, who was a pedestrian, said the clash erupted from the procession around 8:30pm, and he was injured as a piece of glass hit him.

Another victim Apan said someone might have stabbed him from behind at the procession.

Stalker jailed in Pabna

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

A mobile court sentenced a college student to a four-month imprisonment and fined him Tk 5,000 on Thursday night for stalking a schoolgirl in Sujanagar upazila of Pabna.

The convict Isha Rahman, 20, a student of Govt Shahid Bulbul College was sent to jail yesterday morning.

Sujanagar police said Isha stalked the girl of Talimnagar Shah Mahtab High School in the upazila on Thursday afternoon, while she was returning home from the school.

Later, locals and police caught Isha red-handed and produced him before the mobile court.



Roundtable

The Daily Star and SEID Bangladesh will hold a roundtable on "Promoting Rights of Persons with Autism, Intellectual Disability and Multiple Disabilities"; Venue: The Daily Star Centre; Time: 10:30am.

Discussion

Odhikar will organise a discussion on the violation of human rights in the Bangladesh-India border; Venue: Spectra Convention Centre; Time: 9:30am.

Discussion

Bangladesh Nari Mukti Sangsad will hold a discussion demanding a speedy trial of war criminals; Venue: Dhaka

Reporters Unity; Time: 3:00pm.

Human chain

Communist Party of Bangladesh will form a human chain demanding a stop to the use of poisonous chemicals in food; Venue: before Jatiya Press Club; Time: 4:00pm.

Dialogue

Centre for Policy Dialogue will organise the inaugural session of a policy dialogue on "Value Chains for Inclusive Development: Lessons and Policies for South Asia"; Venue: Brac Centre Inn; Time: 9:00am.

Discussion

Shilpito will organise a discussion marking the birth anniversary of late

Street children tell stories of hope

SUSHMITA S PREETHA

Nafis was only 13 when he left his home for Dhaka in search of work. New to the city, with no family or friends to turn to, he got heavily involved in drugs and alcohol, while he worked in a hotel at very low wages.

It was then he came across Brother Lucio Beninati, founder and coordinator of Pothoshishu Sheba Shongothon, an organisation of volunteers working for street children. Lucio Bhai, as he is lovingly called by the children, helped Nafis wean off his addiction and gave him a vision.

"After a while, I told him that I wanted to learn some technical skills, and he enrolled me in Notre Dame Technical School," said Nafis, who is now 17, and leads a stable and sheltered life.

Nafis and three other children, rehabilitated by the organisation, shared their life experiences with a curious audience at Pothoshishu's fifth anniversary celebration on Mohammadpur Residential Model College premises in the capital yesterday.

Pothoshishu, founded in 2007, works to realise the rights of working children. Its 383 volunteers operate in 11 places across Dhaka, creating access of these vulnerable children to healthcare, education, entertainment and shelter.

Brother Lucio, during his welcome speech, thanked the institution's well-wishers for their generosity. "If we could be more generous, there would be no street children in this country, and no need for organisations like ours," he said.

After the speech, four representatives from four religions lit candles onstage to highlight that all major religions in the world value serving others.

Rezaul Karim Khokhon, a veteran volunteer, gave a brief outline of the organisation's values and activities. "Our aim is to rescue the children from a life of darkness, frustration, addiction and superstition," he explained.

Sultana Kamal, executive director of Ain o Shalish Kendro, lauded the indomitable spirit of working children who not only sustain themselves but also support their families.

She also thanked Pothoshishu for what she said reviving volunteerism in the country.

Campaigns weakening environmental criminals

Says Bela chief

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chief Executive of Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association (Bela) Syeda Rizwana Hasan yesterday said the growing notion of protecting the environment has started to weaken the criminals who pose a threat to it.

"For our movement against land grabbing, now we can at least rest assured that no new plots on the Gulshan Lake will be allocated to grabbers," she told a reception organised at Dhaka Club by Sylhet Ratna Foundation on her winning Ramon Magsaysay Award 2012.

Rizwana Hasan received the award for

her courage and leadership in a campaign of judicial activism in Bangladesh that affirms people's right to a good environment.

She said, "Through our legal fights and relentless campaigning we have been able to make it clear to people that there are legal solutions to our everyday problems."

Social Welfare Minister Enamul Huq Mostofa Shaheed, former election commissioner M Sohel Hossain, former adviser to a caretaker government Rasheda K Chowdhury, and National Human Rights Commission Chairman Dr Mizanur Rahman, among others, congratulated Rizwana at the reception.



Pioneering female photographer Sayeda Khanam receives "Counter Foto Award" at the inauguration of the Photography Department of Counter Foto- A Center for Communication in the capital's Shewrapara yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

AL men fell govt trees

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

Some ruling Awami League leaders on Thursday illegally cut down five timber trees at the Public Works Department (PWD) land in the town without taking any permission from it.

The five were among over a hundred trees, which are lining two banks of a four-acre pond, owned by the PWD. The trees are more than 30 years old.

AKM Kamruzzaman, executive engineer of the PWD, said they had stopped the tree felling and would keep the chopped down trees under their custody.

Visiting the spot Thursday, this correspondent found Md Shahjahan Bhuiyan, organising secretary of AL sadar upazila, cutting down the trees by labourers.

When approached, he asked the correspondent to contact Kazi Alamgir, organising secretary of the district unit AL.

Alamgir told The Daily Star they were cutting the trees to "help a poor woman, who used to nurse the trees, marry off her daughter".

Alamgir also requested him not to report the incident.



Slight fall in night temperature

UNB, Dhaka

Weather is likely to remain dry with temporary partly cloudy sky over the country in 24 hours till 6:00pm today.

Light fog may occur over the river basins of the country during late night till morning, Met Office said.

Day and night temperature may remain nearly unchanged over the country.

The sun sets in the capital today at 5:11pm and rises tomorrow at 6:20am.

Country's highest temperature 29.5 degrees Celsius was recorded yesterday at Cox's Bazar and lowest 12.2 degrees at Srimangal.

Highest and lowest temperature and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:

	Temperature in Celsius		Humidity in percentage	
	Max:	Min:	Morning	Evening
Dhaka	28.1	16.7	49	54
Chittagong	27.6	16.8	65	57
Rajshahi	27.7	13.6	76	73
Rangpur	28.4	12.6	74	74
Khulna	29.0	16.6	72	86
Barisal	28.4	14.5	85	80