

## TANGENTS

BY IHTISHAM KABIR



Fishing with smooth-coated otters.

PHOTO:  
DR. M. M. FEEROZ

## Fishing With Otters

It was an intriguing story: the practice of fishermen in some parts of Bangladesh using trained otters to catch fish. But I had no firsthand information on it. Then I met Dr. M. M. Feeroz, a professor of zoology at Jahangirnagar University. Feeroz has authored several books on wildlife in Bangladesh. Recently, he told me, he was in Norail studying otter-fishing.

There are three species of otters in Bangladesh. One of these, the smooth-coated otter (Lutra Perspicillata), is used for fishing. It turns out that the otters do not actually catch the fish – rather, they chase the fish into a net. The technique has been in use here for at least two hundred years.

Feeroz explained the fishing boat's setup to me. Other than the boatman, four fishermen are involved. Two fishermen suspend a framed rectangular fishing net from the side of the boat and hold it in place. The otters, trained for fishing, are tied to separate ropes which are attached to two sticks. Two men, one at each edge of the boat, hold these sticks and control the otters. Once the net is suspended underwater, these fishermen excite the otters by saying "dhor-dhor-dhor-dhor" and pulling on the sticks. The otters start driving fish to the net from different directions. After some time, the fishermen haul the net into the boat. This procedure is repeated several times.

A third, juvenile otter is also part of these trips: as fishing commences, it is released in front of the net. Within five or six months, it is trained and ready for fishing.

Feeroz explained the advantage of

this fishing technique. "During high tide, many fish in the mangroves spend time around the submerged pneumatophores (pointed mangrove roots), out of reach of fishermen's nets. The otters can swim in there and drive them into the net," he said.

What kind of fish do they catch and how much? "They catch several kinds of fish, including *Faishya*. The nightly catch varies between four and twelve kilograms of fish," he said. While fishing inside Sundarban, the fishermen catch shrimp. The price of shrimp is higher, so the catch, while weighing less, is more lucrative.

Where can one find this type of fishing? These fishermen ply the rivers in and around Sundarban. Dr. Feeroz points out that even a decade ago, this type of fishing could be found in all five districts adjoining Sundarban, but now it exists only in Norail and Khulna districts. About 300 fishermen in twelve villages depend on this technique for their livelihood. During monsoon, they fish in the Chitra and adjacent rivers; pre-monsoon and winter sees them working inside Sundarban.

The otters are bred and raised in captivity by the fishermen. Feeroz and his colleagues Sajeda Begum and Md. Kamrul Hasan recorded 176 otters belonging to 46 otter groups in the two districts.

Otter-fishing helps us conserve our smooth-coated otters. However, Feeroz warns, over the years these fishermen have faced increasing financial and social stress and their numbers are dwindling.

www.facebook.com/tangents.ikabir

## Ten more Hindu idols desecrated now in Narsingdi

*Punishment demanded for Jhalakathi UNO for allegedly aiding attempted grab of Hindu widow's land, Moulvibazar unit Bangladesh Mahila Parishad urges public unity to resist anti-Hindu pogrom*

### STAR REPORT

Ten Hindu idols in a Narsingdi temple were desecrated by some 10-12 unidentified miscreants yesterday.

Meanwhile, speakers at a human chain demanded that the Rajapur upazila nirbahi officer (UNO) in Jhalakathi be punished for allegedly aiding two local brothers in an attempt to grab a 55-year-old Hindu widow's land by labelling it as vested property.

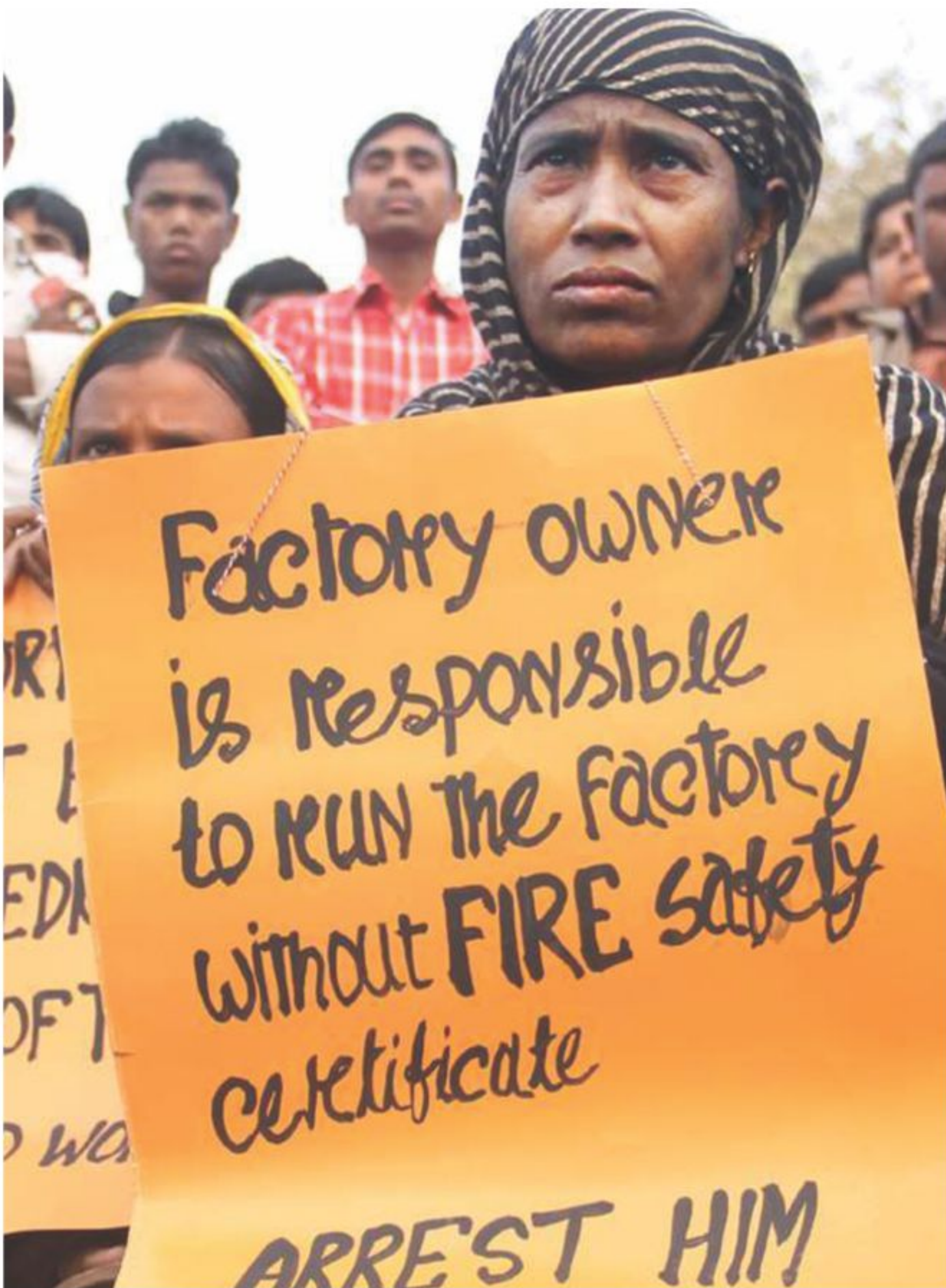
In another incident, Bangladesh Mahila Parishad's Moulvibazar unit urged all to

come together to resist anti-Hindu pogrom and other communal violence as the government had failed to protect the Hindus from attacks following the January 5 parliamentary elections.

Our Narsingdi correspondent reports, some 10-12 unidentified miscreants desecrated 10 idols of Hindu deities including Laxmi, Saraswati, Kartikeya and Ganesha in a Jinardi union temple of Narsingdi's Palash upazila around 2:00am yesterday.

Hearing noises, the locals came out and

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3



One of the family member of the 112 victims of the November 24, 2012 Tazreen Fashions fire demonstrates before Bangladesh National Museum in the capital yesterday demanding proper compensation for the deceased and injured of the fire and the April 24, 2013 Rana Plaza collapse that left, as per official figures, 1,135 persons dead and many more injured.

PHOTO: STAR

## NEWSIN brief

### Mugger shot by police in capital

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police shot and injured an alleged mugger at Mirpur section-12 while he and his cohorts were preparing to mug people in the area early yesterday.

Jaber, 25, is undergoing treatment at National Institute of Traumatology and Orthopaedic Rehabilitation while the other muggers managed to flee. Police recovered two crude bombs and two machetes from Jaber. Sensing the presence of police, the muggers hurled three crude bombs at them and police in self-defence fired on them, said Pallabi police.

### Ctg airport customs detain

### Bangladeshi with gold bars

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Customs officials in Chittagong city's Shah Amanat International Airport last night detained a Bangladeshi man found with 24 undeclared gold bars, weighing around 2.8 kilogrammes and worth about Tk 1.2 crore, hidden inside his cellphone battery compartment, wallet and shoes. Selimuddin, 33, arriving from Dubai on a flydubai flight, was being interrogated by the customs during filing of this report around 11:00pm.

### Man shot dead in Korail slum

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Unidentified miscreants shot dead a man Banani police say used to provide illegal electricity and water connections to Korail Bosti (Korail slum) before TNT Colony High School, adjoining the slum, in the capital around 8:30pm yesterday. Police suspect Dulal Sardar, 35, was killed over a feud centring his illegal business.

### Girl's body recovered in capital

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police recovered the body of an unidentified girl, aged around three, from a ditch in the capital's Trimohoni in Khilgaon last evening.

Khilgaon police said the girl was wearing a black sweater and a pair of pants. The body was sent to the Dhaka Medical College morgue for an autopsy.

### A4B to distribute blankets among the poor tomorrow

CITY DESK

To mark Australia Day tomorrow, the Australia Awards Alumni Association Bangladesh (A4B) will distribute blankets and warm clothes collected from its members among the underprivileged in the capital.

The Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade has matched in financial donations the contributions collected by the alumni which will be used to purchase blankets to support the association's initiative.

### Abul president, Deepak gen secy of Defence Journalist Association

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Defence Journalist Association was formed at a meeting at a hotel in the capital yesterday, says a press release.

Abul Khayer, special correspondent of The Daily Ittefaq, was made the president while Deepak Acharjee, special correspondent of The Independent, the general secretary of its nine-member executive committee.

Kazi Hafiz, special correspondent of the Daily Kaler Kantha, was made the vice-president, Firoz Manna, senior reporter of The Daily Janakantha, the joint secretary; and Hassan Jahid Tusher, senior reporter of The Daily Star, the organising secretary.

### BNP has no choice but to join upazila polls

Says Amir Hossain Amu

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Welcoming the BNP's decision to participate in upazila parishad elections under the Sheikh Hasina-led administration, Industries Minister Amir Hossain Amu yesterday said the party had no other option.

BNP cannot continue its politics without joining the polls, he told a two-day conference of the Institute of Diploma Engineers, Bangladesh in its auditorium in the capital.

Amu, also a ruling Awami League leader, said BNP, which had boycotted the January 5

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6

### Eight 'Hizb-ut Tahrir' men' held in capital

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police detained eight alleged members of banned Islamist outfit Hizb-ut Tahrir at Bottola in the capital's Khilkhet yesterday morning.

Khilkhet Police Station Officer-in-Charge Nazrul Islam said they held them in a mess.

Around 1,000 leaflets, four jihadi books, 25 magazines and eight banners of the group were seized from their possessions, he said.

## Akbar Ali Khan for fresh JS election

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Terming the recently concluded parliamentary polls legal only under the constitution, Akbar Ali Khan, former adviser to a caretaker government, yesterday said a fresh election should be held immediately to resolve the ongoing political crisis.

He said the January 5 election has no moral basis needed to fulfil the purposes of holding a free, fair and transparent election.

Akbar called upon the ruling-Awami League and BNP to hold talks for reaching a consensus on holding a fresh election as soon as possible.

He was addressing a mock parliamentary

debate jointly organised by ATN Bangla and Debate for Democracy in the capital's Bashundhara City Complex.

Referring to the 153 lawmakers who were elected uncontested and the very low turnout of voters in the remaining 147 constituencies, Akbar termed the 10th parliamentary election a "rare" incident in the democratic ruling system of the world.

Indeed, the majority of seats out of the 147 constituencies have been distributed among the participatory four or five political parties, he observed and said democracy cannot be strengthened this way.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

## BNP lambasts Hasina for calling Khaleda 'chief of Jamaat'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The BNP yesterday lambasted Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina for her remark that BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia has become the Jamaat-e-Islami's chief, and said the comment crossed the line of political decency.

"The BNP has ties with Jamaat only for election purposes. Both the parties have their own identities and ideologies. There is a big difference between the two parties' ideologies and both the parties have separate working plans," claimed BNP's International Affairs Secretary Assaduzzaman Ripon, on behalf of the party, at a press briefing at the party's Nayapaltn headquarters in the capital.

Hasina on Thursday at a rally in

SEE PAGE 4 COL 8



Metlife Alico CCO Akhlaqur Rahman, second from right, exchanging a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with champs21.com CEO Russell T Ahmed, second from left, at a signing ceremony in Dhaka recently. Metlife Alico Assistant Manager (Communication) Munirul Islam, far right, and Financial Controller Asifur Rahman, third from right, and champs21.com Assistant Manager (Business Development) M Ashraf Ullah, far left, were also present on the occasion. Metlife Alico will be awarding the Spelling Bee champion its Education Policy worth Tk 5 lakh. It will also award the first and second runners up policies worth Tk 3 lakh and Tk 2 lakh respectively.

PHOTO: COURTESY

Powered by Citycell

Details on inner page

Helpline: 121, 011 99 121 121 | www.citycell.com | www.facebook.com/citycell