

TANGENTS

BY IHTISHAM KABIR



Red-billed Tropicbird in Bay of Bengal.

PHOTO:
TAREK ONUOur First *Tropicbird*

Most birds either live on land or in waters close to land. Some birds, on the other hand, live in the open seas. They are known as pelagic birds. They can fly for many hours and can be found hundreds or even thousands of miles from the shore. Most of them spend their lives over water except when they breed. For example, certain Albatrosses have no need for land until they are old enough to lay eggs, perhaps six or seven years. Since we cannot observe them easily, much is unknown about pelagic birds.

On 1st January, 2014 at 1pm, a small team of birders - Tarek Onu, Shamim Ahmed and leader Enam Ul Haque - brought a new year's gift for the nation. Forty kilometres from our coast in the Bay of Bengal, while aboard the fishing trawler M.V. Labiba, they sighted a Red-billed Tropicbird. It was the first sighting of this rare pelagic bird in Bangladesh. Two other pelagic birds are also listed in Bangladesh: Parasitic Jaeger and Pomarine Skua. However, the Tropicbird was our first pelagic sighting out in the high seas.

Tropicbirds are only seen in oceans in the tropics. There are three species; the other two are Red-tailed and White-tailed Tropicbirds. In flight, they are easily recognized by their beautiful long tail which hangs behind like a streamer. Their breeding grounds are unknown. Not surprisingly, they live on fish and marine animals; surprisingly, most of the fish they eat are flying fish. They can be large, up to a meter in length and wingspan.

The Bangladeshi team left on its ten-day expedition on 26 December 2013 on board the commercial fishing trawler bound for the Bay of Bengal. When they were close to shore, they saw shorebirds such as gulls and terns. But birds became rare out in the open seas. For example, ten to twelve kilometres from shore, two Pallas's Gulls were sighted. Because pelagic birds could come and go in a flash, the team had to keep vigilant watch during daylight hours. The trawler with forty-five fishermen tossed and turned in the rolling sea while looking for fish, so it was tough going for the birdwatching team.

Their effort was rewarded on the sixth day of the trip. At about 1PM, the Tropicbird flew over the boat. The team was ready and photographed it. There was only one opportunity - the bird did not linger or return, but the identification was unmistakable.

Since this was the first such expedition searching for birds in our high seas, I asked Haque about the possibility of discovering other pelagic birds in Bangladesh. "We should make more frequent birding expeditions to the high seas - perhaps once or twice every year," he said. "They could reveal other treasures in our oceans."

The Tropicbird was hitherto unknown here and so there is no Bangla word for it. Recalling the Bangla word for tropic is "Bishubrekha", the team has chosen the Bangla name "Bishubia" for the Red-billed Tropicbird, our new pelagic treasure.

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A fine arts student works on a near-finished giant mask at Dhaka University yesterday. The art work will accompany the colourful Pahela Baishakh procession on Monday.

PHOTO:
ANISUR RAHMAN

Legal limits on hartal urged

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A citizens' forum yesterday demanded bringing hartal under a legal framework so that it does not turn violent, causing loss of lives, destruction of public properties, and a huge financial damage as seen recently.

Historically, hartal had always been a means to realise greater public rights, but in recent times all sort of criminal activities have been added to it, said the leaders of Gonotantrik Odhikar Shurokkha Parishad (Council to Protect Democratic Rights).

"We are not against hartal, but its effects go against people. So hartal should be put under certain rules and regulations," said Khushi Kabir, con-

venor of the council.

Addressing a discussion at the capital's Jatiya Press Club, she said recent trends showed that violence was meted out on the hartal eve, threatening public security.

In his keynote paper, the council coordinator Ananta Ahmed said over 200 people were killed and several thousand injured while 3,000 cars, and 400 buses, trucks were burnt during hartal in less than four months between November 2012 and March 19, 2013.

Citing the figures of the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industries

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HARTAL	
IMPACTS	DEMANDS
200 killed (NOV '12-MAR '13)	Leave exam day, holiday
3,400 vehicles burnt (NOV '12-MAR '13)	Commit to peaceful hartal
Tk 100,000cr lost (OCT '13-JAN '14)	Take responsibility of violence
4cr students affected	Maintain code of conduct

PM greets all on anthem record in Guinness

BSS, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has greeted all concerned, including the country's people, for placing its national anthem in the Guinness World Records.

The premier in a message said, "Nothing is impossible for the nation which earned independence in exchange of blood through war."

The Guinness authorities on Wednesday documented Bangladesh record in mobilising the highest number of people for singing simultaneously the national anthem coinciding with the Independence Day celebrations on March 26.

Obama congratulates Bangalees on Pahela Baishakh

UNB, Dhaka

US President Barack Obama has greeted the Bangalee community across the world marking Pahela Baishakh, the first day of Bangla New Year.

US Secretary of State John Kerry, on behalf of the president, said, "As you gather with family and friends to celebrate the New Year, know that the United States stands with you as a partner and friend. Shubho Nobo Borsho!"

Titas provides gas line to 500 firms illegally

UNB, Dhaka

Titas Gas has provided gas connections to about 500 companies over the last four years violating rules, ACC Deputy Director Ahsan Ali told the news agency.

Ahsan is currently conducting a probe into the graft allegations against Titas Gas officials.

The inquiry has also unearthed that some top officials of Titas Gas Transmission and Distribution Company Ltd were involved in the graft, he said. The officials had given gas connections to the private companies in exchange for bribes, he added.

"There are allegations that Titas Gas officials took Tk 2 crore bribe from each of the companies. Just think, how much money was illegally collected," Ahsan said. The ACC official said nearly 15 top officials

of subsidiary companies of the state-owned Petrobangla were quizzed during the probe.

"I have already questioned Titas Gas Managing Director M Nowshad Islam and Bapex Managing Director M Abdul Baki in connection with the graft allegations," he said.

On April 2 last year, the ACC also quizzed former MD of Titas Abdul Aziz, its former director (operations) Khalid Hasan and general managers Engr Mujibul Haque and Engr Fuad-ul-Islam.

On March 10, the Anti Corruption Commission (ACC) launched a probe into the graft allegations against Petrobangla Chairman M Hossain Monsur and 13 managing directors (MDs) of its subsidiaries.

The ACC sources said the 13 MDs swindled over Tk 200 crore while carrying out development works in the last four years.

BHUIPUR ATTACK

Charge sheet not available in 1yr

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg



FILE PHOTO

Though one year has passed since the Bhujpur attack in Chittagong killed three Awami League men and injured 200 people, police are yet to file any charge sheet.

Following the mayhem on April 11 last year, five cases were filed against more than 16,471 people, including 471 named, mostly Jamaat-Shibir activists.

The mayhem lasted for about four hours at Bhujpur in Fatikchhari upazila when Jamaat-Shibir men with several thousand villagers allegedly attacked a ruling party procession and law enforcers, hearing a rumour that the AI men killed a madrasa teacher and were heading to attack Kazirhat Mosque and a Hefazat-e-Islam-run madrasa there.

The attackers also torched around 150 vehicles, including 100 motorbikes. Police have so far arrested 188 accused, of whom 35 are out on bail, said court sources.

Chittagong's Superintendent of Police Hafiz Akhter said as it was a sensitive issue and the number of the accused was very high, the investigation was taking some time.

Fourteen of the arrested have given confessional statements, he said, adding that all the cases were in their last stages, and the final reports would come shortly.

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