

TANGENTS

BY IHTISHAM KABIR



The Surma begins.

PHOTO: IHTISHAM KABIR

Three Rivers

It all started with a photograph of the Kushiara river I saw on Facebook. The photographer, Farida Nasreen, told me that it was taken where the river enters Bangladesh.

I became curious and asked someone who has travelled far and wide through Bangladesh. My uncle Shafi Chacha instantly recognised the place - he had been there. It was the junction of three rivers near Zakiganj in Sylhet.

The river Barak starts out near Tipaimukh in the mountains of Manipur and flows south through Mizoram and Assam. At the Bangladesh-India border, it bifurcates into the Surma and the Kushiara. Kushiara flows south and then east, hugging the border. Surma makes a U-turn and heads north-west.

So early one morning I found myself on the road to Zakiganj from Sylhet. Taking a sharp left after crossing the new Surma Bridge, the road headed east taking me through Golapganj, then Biani Bazar. After some time, the mountains of Assam loomed on the left.

Two hours from Sylhet, at Barathakur, we took a small detour from the road and arrived at "teen-gang" (three rivers.) What a sight! The Barak flowed down forcefully - wide, deep and fast - from India. After splitting, the right branch continued southward. The left branch made a U-turn. Kushiara and Surma had begun their magnificent, life-giving journey.

It was a vision of primeval force - the big river hurtling down, then making this abrupt, ferocious U-turn. The water was turbulent and muddy.

The area receives much rain due to the proximity of the mountains and rainclouds had been gathering all the horizon. As I started walking along the banks

of the Kushiara, it started raining. I took shelter in a tiny bamboo grove. The rain, though heavy, was short.

I decided to proceed further south towards Zakiganj town and stopped near a village market straddling two villages: Pallakandi and Rahimpur. The river flowed along both these border villages. At Pallakandi I walked to its bank. It was much broader here. This being a border river, there was little river traffic. Occasional small fishing boats plied the river, crossing to the halfway point and turning back.

The third drenching of the day started and I took refuge in a village home. Talking with the owner, I learned there are big fishes in the river - *rui* and *katala* - but the largest is *baghmachh*. Sometimes the fishermen dive for fish. *Baghmachh* hides under rocks at the riverbed. To catch it, the divers dive in with a fishing line, find the fish, insert a hook into its tail, and return to their fishing boat. They play the fish until it exhausts itself. Recently they had caught a 28-kg *baghmachh* using this tactic.

After the rain, I walked through the village. The homes had backyard gardens, emerald green, with banana, shupari, aamra and other trees. The village cemetery was on the riverbank, tombs sheltered by large trees.

It was time to return. Walking up to the car, I saw a vendor selling bananas from a tall cluster (*kadi*.) I bought four for three taka each.

In the car I realized my mistake. I should have bought the whole *kadi*, for they were the sweetest bananas I ever had.

www.facebook.com/tangents.ikabir

CONSERVATION OF NATURE

DoE, environment courts must expand work: Greens

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Environment Lawyers' Association (BELA) yesterday laid emphasis on the expansion of the activities of the Department of Environment (DoE) and environment courts in all districts to protect the environment from all sorts of hazards.

"The activities of the DoE are not being conducted properly in the country, as it lacks adequate number of offices and staff in all districts," said Sayeed Ahmed Kabir, a lawyer of BELA while presenting a paper on "Bangladesh Environment Courts: Outcomes and Challenges" at an open discussion in the capital's Forest Department auditorium.

The programme was jointly organised by Bela, Bangladesh Poribesh Andolon (Bapa), Transparency International Bangladesh, BARSIC, Peace, Unnayan Dhara Trust, Eco-

Though all districts must have environment courts as per law, only three are seen active

Society, United Peoples Trust, Hunger Free World, Bangladesh Paus, and Dhaka Wasa. The DoE gave assistance to organise the programme on the

occasion of World Environment Day. Asked about the current status of the environment courts, Bela's Kabir said the Environment Court Act 2010 stated that all districts must have environment courts but the activities of the district courts were not visible. "Only three courts at divisional headquarters in Dhaka, Chittagong and Sylhet are now active," he told The Daily Star.

The act aims to expedite the trial of the environment-related offences and provides for setting up of environment courts at every district headquarters with expanded jurisdiction to take stern action against polluters.

Sayed said the law spoke about punishment for emission of harmful

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With the slogan "Let's Rebuild Our Nation" emblazoned on their T-shirts, cyclists bring out a procession on Manik Mia Avenue in the capital yesterday. Volunteers for Bangladesh, the volunteer wing of JAAGO Foundation, organised the programme marking World Environment Day.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Goons attack Northern University

15 students injured; police detain 26

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Miscreants allegedly hired by a real estate company attacked Northern University's Karwanbazar campus in the capital yesterday, injuring at least 15 students.

Four were wounded critically. They were shifted to Green Life Hospital after treatment in Dhaka

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Mahbubul Alam's death condoled

President, PM, BNP chief, Editor's Council issue messages

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The president, prime minister, political leaders and professional bodies yesterday expressed condolences over the death of Mahbubul Alam, a former caretaker government adviser and ex-editor of the English daily, The Independent.

The veteran journalist, who had been suffering old-age complications, breathed his last at 9:25am yesterday, after three days of life support, at the capital's Birdem hospital. He was 78.

In a message, President Abdul Hamid recalled Alam's colourful career and his contributions to the development of

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Two abducted from Rangamati bus

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangamati

Unknown criminals abducted two persons, including a government employee, from Keching forest area in Sadar upazila of Rangamati yesterday afternoon.

The two are Joni Chakma, an MLSS of Baghaichhari Upazila Fisheries Office; and Gayna Chakma, a fish trader.

Around four people halted a passenger bus "Shanti Paribahan" when it reached the area from Baghaichhari, said Imtiaz Ahmad, officer-in-charge of Kotwali Police Station, quoting locals.

Stalking victim kills herself

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

Unable to bear the harassment by a stalker, a 16-year-old girl allegedly committed suicide at Paschim Saradubi village in the district's Hatibandha upazila on Thursday night.

The girl, Lata Akhter Nishi, daughter of Sirajul Islam, took her life hanging from the ceiling in her bedroom around 11:30pm.

Quoting locals, police said Lata was being stalked by her neighbour Rabiul Islam, son of Jamir Uddin, for the last three months. Lata and her family complained to Rabiul's family about the matter, but they didn't take any step to stop Rabiul from stalking Lata.

Instead, Rabiul's family was misbehaving with Lata for the last few days because of her complaint against Rabiul,

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Cafeteria equipment of Northern University vandalised by miscreants allegedly hired by Estate Developer Bangladesh, the firm which is constructing the building for the university, at the capital's Karwan Bazar yesterday. The company is trying to sell some floors violating the contract agreement, and it launched the attack for being resisted, said the university authorities.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Rana Plaza victims want compensation

Crude bomb goes off near their human chain in Savar

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Savar

The victims of Rana Plaza formed a human chain at the collapse site in Savar, on the outskirts of the capital, yesterday morning to press home their six-point demand, including compensation for them according to the ILO convention.

Meanwhile, half-an-hour after the programme started an unidentified boy, aged around 13, exploded a crude bomb around 200 yards away from the programme venue and, later, fled the scene, said a witness.

Mostafa Kamal, officer-in-charge of Savar Model Police Station, said the reason behind the explosion could not be ascertained immediately.

However, the participants continued their human chain and placed the demands, including workplace security at all the readymade garment factories, a stop to termination of RMG workers and full implementation of the newly introduced wage board.

Under the banner of "Rana Plaza Garment Workers Trade Union Kendra", the speakers alleged that neither the government nor the BGMEA was taking heed of their compensation.

The kendra President Emdadul Islam, who presided over the programme, said the victims were yet to get adequate compensation even after one year into the collapse.

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THE AGA KHAN SCHOOL
Princess Zahra Aga Khan joins Silver Jubilee

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Princess Zahra Aga Khan visited The Aga Khan School in Dhaka yesterday on the occasion of the school's 25th anniversary.

Students, teachers as well as officials of the Aga Khan Development Network and the Ismaili Council attended the ceremony celebrating the school's Silver Jubilee.

Princess Zahra spoke with students, teachers and leaders of the school about the importance of education.

Later in the day, she met leaders of the Aga Khan Development Network at Ismaili Jamatkhana and Centre.

Princess Zahra, eldest child of Aga Khan IV, is the head of Social Welfare Department of the Aga Khan Development Network. She is also a member of the Board of Trustees of Aga Khan University.

The Aga Khan School, established in 1988, is part of an international network of 240 schools of the Aga Khan Education Services (AKES) present in South Asia, Central Asia and East Africa.

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