

TANGENTS

BY IHTISHAM KABIR



Red-vented Bulbul.

PHOTO:
IHTISHAM KABIR

Bulbul

Monsoon is close to end. With most migrant birds gone, the bird-watcher's fancy turns to our year-round local birds. Among them, which better to watch than the Bulbul? With its distinctive crested head, acrobatic flight and playful antics, this bird can keep you entertained for a long time. Although its call – a harsh quick-quick-quick – is loud rather than sweet, its personality never fails to engage us.

Bulbul is actually a family of birds (Pycnonotidae) with 138 species, spreading out over Africa, through the Middle-East, across South and South-East Asia, reaching east to Indonesia and north to Japan. Some forest variants are called Greenbul and Brownbul. Bultuls live in a variety of environments though globally their favourite habitat is the rain forest. Here of course they are at ease in urban environments.

Interestingly, the word "Bulbul" is derived from the Farsi meaning "Nightingale." In Arabic and Farsi languages, "Bulbul" indeed refers to the Nightingale, but in English, Bulbul is the bird under discussion, distinct from the Nightingale. (I suspect that our many songs referring to the melodious songs of the Bulbul are about the Nightingale whose call sounds sweeter.)

Bangladesh hosts nine species of Bulbul. The most common Bulbul is the Red-vented variety (Pycnonotus cafer, Bangla Bulbul) recognized easily by the crest on its head and the red vent underneath the tail. There are two subspecies of Red-vented Bulbul: *Bengalensis* and *Humayuni*. The former is the common black bird we see everywhere. The latter is much lighter in colour and occurs in Chittagong

Division.

The Red-vented Bulbul fascinates me with its eating habits. It forages energetically, sometimes hopping on the ground, sometimes exploring bushes and flowers, sometimes searching tree canopies, never staying still for more than a moment. It feeds on insects, nectar and fruits. Occasionally it joins other birds in hunting-and-feeding parties.

I have observed another delightful habit of this friendly bird. It seems to enjoy perching at the end of a thin branch. If the branch swings under its weight, so much the better!

The Red-whiskered Bulbul is somewhat less common and avoids urban areas. It is also less friendly. Recognized by its distinctive red spot behind the eye, I have seen it mostly in countryside and forests. Its Bangla name is *Sipahi Bulbul*.

The most unusual Bulbul I have seen is the Black-crested Bulbul. Its entire body is yellow, but the neck and head are black. It appears to be wearing a black mask down to its neck. Its white eyes stand out from the dark face, and a neat, tight black crest completes its unusual appearance. It is supposedly common in our forests and villages, but I have only seen it once.

Our other Bultuls are the Black-headed, Flavescent, White-throated, Olive and Ashy species of Bulbul. Our ninth species, Black Bulbul, is a vagrant, meaning it was sighted here after arriving accidentally, probably due to a storm.

So the next time you spot that crested black bird in your garden, your time spent watching it will probably be time well-spent.

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A gangway collapsed into water with the pontoon after a truck loaded with iron rods mounted it in Kalapara upazila of Patuakhali early yesterday, suspending road communications with tourism town Kuakata. Roads and Highways officials said the ferry services could not be restored until tomorrow. The accident occurred at a time when people are visiting Kuakata beach in droves.

PHOTO:
ARIFUR RAHMAN

FORCED DISAPPEARANCES

No option of legal remedy

Hong Kong-based group writes to UN about Bangladesh

UNB, Dhaka

Reiterating that the victims of forced disappearances here have no option of legal remedy, Hong Kong-based Asian Legal Resource Centre (ALRC) has made written submissions to the UN Human Rights Council on the prevalence of the incidents in Bangladesh.

The prevailing condition of repression and impunity contributes to the further weakening of criminal justice institutions, said the independent regional NGO, which is holding general consultative status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations. It is a sister organisation of the Asian Human Rights Commission.

The group urged the UN council to hold Bangladesh accountable for its failure to provide remedies to victims and families of victims of forced disappearance. "Basic institutions on criminal justice need reform so that the rule of law can make its entry into the jurisdiction of Bangladesh," it said.

The families of victims are denied access to the complaint mechanism whenever allegations are brought against the agents of the state; police refuse to register such complaints, said ALRC.

The few families that are not dissuaded are forced to modify their complaints by removing the names of the law enforcement agents from the list of the alleged perpetrators, it said. The complaints are registered only when the

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Dr Kamal calls for national unity

UNB, Dhaka

GonoForum President Dr Kamal Hossain yesterday called for a national unity to establish effective democracy in the country.

"If we can forge a national unity, a bright future is awaiting us... so today I would like to call for a national unity among the like-minded civil society members and political parties," he said.

He made the call at a discussion at the Institution of Engineers, Bangladesh in the capital marking GonoForum's 21st founding anniversary.

Dr AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury, former president; Mujahidul Islam Selim, president of the Communist Party of Bangladesh; Dr Akbar Ali Khan, former adviser to a caretaker government; Mahmudur Rahman Manna, convener of Nagorik Oikya; and ASM Abdur Rob,

president of Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal, spoke at the discussion with Dr Kamal in the chair.

Observing that no shred of democracy now exists in the country as the current government came to power without public mandate through the "voter-less" January-5 election, the speakers said.

Criticising the January-5 parliamentary elections, Kamal said nothing other than democracy could anyway be accepted in the country.

Badruddoza Chowdhury, also president of Bikolpodhara Bangladesh, said if the current regime continued for more four-five years, democracy would be buried completely. "If we can't restore democracy, we'll be held responsible in history."

Akbar Ali said it had been proved that the caretaker government system was still needed as fair election was not possible under a party government.

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A LIFE TURNED UPSIDE DOWN

"Once I was one of the two earning members of my family. The days were good. But now I am the sorrow of my family because I've been maimed." This is how Nilufa Banu described the turn of events in her life after the Rana Plaza disaster. She was a seamstress at a garment factory in the nine-storey building in Savar, outside the capital, which collapsed on April 24 last year, killing 1,136 people and maiming hundreds. Nilufa is now living at Rajashon in Savar with her husband Shahidul Islam, a teashop owner, and son Rifat Patwary, 8. She joined a human chain at the Rana Plaza site yesterday, demanding quick release of the compensation fund.

PHOTO: RASHAD AHMAD



Winning students show the V sign at the Chittagong divisional round of English in Schools, a joint endeavour of The Daily Star and Robi, in the port city yesterday. Also present are, from left, Dr Salehuddin Ahmed, managing editor at The Daily Star, Prof Anwarul Azim Arif, vice chancellor of Chittagong University, and Sohel Ahmed, manager at Robi, Chittagong region.

PHOTO:
STAR

Man dies in trawler capsizal

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Chandpur

A man drowned while nine others were hospitalised as an engine-run salt-laden trawler hit a shoal and sank in the Meghna river at Gazipur point of Haimchar upazila in Chandpur yesterday.

The deceased was Ershad, 50, a resident of Mirsarai upazila in Chittagong.

Fishermen and locals rescued the victims, undergoing treatment at Haimchar Health Complex, after the Narayanganj-bound trawler from Kutubdia sank around

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STAR-ROBI ENGLISH IN SCHOOLS

Silver Bells School wins Ctg divisional round

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Silver Bells Girls' High School won the Chittagong divisional round of English in Schools, a joint endeavour of The Daily Star and Robi, held at Khawja Ajmeri KG and High School in the port city yesterday.

Khastagir Government Girls' High School was the runner-up, while Chittagong Government High School took the third position.

A total of 500 students (from class VI to X) of 25 high schools of Chittagong metropolitan area took part in the English competition featuring tests on general grammar, sentence structure, word composition, comprehension and listening.



Arif, vice chancellor of Chittagong University, addressed the programme as the chief guest, while Aziz Uddin, deputy director of Secondary and Higher Secondary Education Board, Chittagong Division was the special guest.

Dr Salehuddin Ahmed, managing editor

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The three winning schools received trophies, certificates and books worth Tk 10,000 each at an award-giving ceremony. The winning students also received medals.

This was the fourth divisional round to be held after Rajshahi, Khulna and Sylhet.



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