

TANGENTS

BY IHTISHAM KABIR



Bristled Grassbird at Tanguar Haor.

PHOTO: ENAM UL HAQUE

Rediscovered After 135 Years

The grassbird is a medium-sized, brown bird that lives among tall grass and reeds. The *Encyclopedia of Flora and Fauna of Bangladesh* lists three grassbirds. The Striated Grassbird is the most common – I have seen it numerous times in fields. The Bristled Grassbird – a bird that can be found only in the Indian Subcontinent – is considered a “former resident” of Bangladesh. That’s because the last time someone recorded seeing it here was 135 years ago. The third grassbird, Rufous-rumped Grassbird, is a “rare” resident of Bangladesh, and presumably can be found if you search hard enough.

It was with the hope of finding this Rufous-rumped Grassbird that eminent birder Enam Ul Haque, along with birder Onu Tareq, set out for Tanguar Haor last summer. They thought that this shy, skulking bird, which might be living among the reeds in the Haor, would show itself in April during the breeding season. In order to attract a mate, male grassbirds typically shoot out of their nests (in tall grass or reed) and make circles high overhead while singing loudly.

The very afternoon they reached their destination in the northern part of the Haor, Enam noticed a grassbird making circles overhead. It was neither the easily-identified Striated Grassbird, nor did it have the colours of the Rufous-rumped Grassbird. Enam was intrigued. Due to the arduous nature of the travel, the pair was carrying bare minimum gear. They had several mist nets used for catching birds (for ringing), but not the hardware to mount them. Improvising, they borrowed poles from local boatmen and set up several nets early the next

morning.

By eight A.M., they had caught the first bird. Five others were caught later. Since it was a hot day, they released the birds soon after taking some pictures to identify them. Indeed, they were grassbirds, but not the Rufous-rumped or Striated kind.

It was the strong bristles (like moustaches) growing under their eyes that gave them away. The pair had stumbled into the Bristled Grassbird, a species thought to have been extirpated from Bangladesh! The six Bristled Grassbirds – one female and five males – were ringed, photographed and released. They were the first of this species recorded in our country since being reported in *Stray Feathers*, a birding journal published by J. R. Cripps in the 1870s. Experts had, mistakenly, thought that the Bristled Grassbird had disappeared from Bangladesh.

However, the Bristled Grassbird is a “Globally Vulnerable” bird. Its number worldwide keeps dwindling because of reduction in its habitat: harvesting of grass and reeds and conversion of grasslands into agricultural land.

This discovery illustrates why Tanguar Haor is so special. Located in the north-western part of Sunamganj district, this wetland is recognized internationally – for its biodiversity – as a Ramsar site. While the Haor is normally leased out for fishing every year, recent efforts at co-management of the fishing resources through the fishermen from 88 neighbouring villages will undoubtedly improve conservation efforts there. Who knows what other mysteries it holds?

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VICTIMS OF FORCED DISAPPEARANCE

Their tears never dry

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Unlike death, forced disappearances do not give people a closure. The happenings always keep alive the hope and thus the anguish. The tears of the victims' families never dry.

This was how Anwar Hossain stated what his family had been going through since December last year when his younger brother Mohammad Hossain Chanchal went missing from the capital.

Making an impassioned appeal to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, he said, “Let me know whether my brother is dead or alive; if dead we will try to find a consolation.”

Chanchal's brother was among the family members of some such victims who yesterday gathered at the launching programme of a petition signed in protest of extra-judicial killings and enforced disappearances in the country.

Youth Movement for Democracy, a rights body, organised the programme at Brac Centre Inn in the capital.

Marufa Islam, elder sister of Sajedul Islam Sumon, a victim, gave an account of

their painful wait, echoed by Chanchal's brother.

Marufa's brother Sajedul, a BNP activist, is among eight youths picked up allegedly by the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) at different parts of the capital on the night of December 4 last year.

None has returned. Chanchal was a Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) activist who was picked up allegedly by the same force in the same month.

The family members present there said the victims were detained between November and December last year in the lead-up to the January 5 parliamentary elections.

Rehana Parvin, elder sister of Sutrapur JCD president Selim Reza Pintu who remained missing since December 11, made an appeal saying that if one had to sacrifice his life for doing politics, then there should be a law banning politics.

“Whenever we heard of a dead body found somewhere, we've rushed there over the last 10 months,” she said, asking, “Won't the government take my brother's responsibility?”

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DU 'KA' UNIT ADMISSION TEST

17 arrested over hi-tech cheating

DU CORRESPONDENT

The Dhaka University authorities yesterday detained 17 people on the charge of cheating and abetting in the process during the admission test under “Ka” unit, or the science faculty, through the use of mobile phones and high-tech gadgets.

Of them, 15 were admission seekers, who were caught with answers in their cell phones, calculators and watch, which are banned in exam halls. The authorities handed all the 17 over to different police stations, said Quamrul Ahsan, the university's chief security officer.

The two alleged abettors are Mohammad Abdur Rahim, a peon of Dhanmondi Ideal College, who helped two candidates take their mobile phones into the exam hall, and Imdad-ul Haque Khokon, a self-proclaimed banker, who came to the proctor's office apparently to rescue a detained student.

Two detained admission aspirants, Ruhul Amin Setu and Fuhad Hasan, said that in exchange for Tk 6,000, the peon helped them take their phones into the test centre where they used the devices to receive answers from outside through text messages.

DU acting proctor Prof Amzad Ali said invigilators

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Winners with guests at the award ceremony of the Chittagong divisional round of "Junior Climate Champions 2014" at Chittagong Collegiate School in the port city yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

ATTACK ON CU TEACHERS

11 Shibir activists sent to jail

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Different professionals yesterday demanded immediate punishment for those attacked some teachers of Chittagong University on Wednesday.

They raised the demands at a human chain formed by Peshajibi Samonnaya Parishad, Chittagong in front of Chittagong Press Club in the city.

The speakers also demanded that the authorities concerned ensure the security of CU teachers to and from the campus.

Prof Benu Kumar Dey, president of Chittagong University Teachers Association; Advocate Mejbah Uddin; cultural personality Ranajit Rakshit, among other, spoke on the occasion with Prof Sirajul Islam Chowdhury, president of the parishad, Chittagong in the chair.

Meanwhile, 11 Shibir men arrested over the attack were sent to jail after being produced before a Chittagong court

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HSBC-STAR JUNIOR CLIMATE CHAMPIONS IN CTG

40 kids get green cards

Staff Correspondent, Ctg

With an aim to sensitise the young minds to climate change and its impacts, the daylong divisional round of “Junior Climate Champions-2014”, a contest for school students, was held at Chittagong Collegiate School in the port city amid fanfare and festivity yesterday.

The school premises were teeming with hundreds of enthusiastic students from different educational institutions from across Chittagong division.

To help build a generation aware of climate change, HSBC and The Daily Star organised the competition, drawing 1,500 participants from 60 educational institutions yesterday.

Divided into two categories--junior (class VI to VIII) and senior (class IX to X)--the event featured four areas of contest which include quiz, poster designing and painting, extempore speech, and environment-related projects, all involving climate issues.

Of the participants, 40 students, 10 from

each area of contest, qualified and received green cards for taking part in the national round, to be held on October 31 in the capital.

Prof Anowarul Azim Arif, vice chancellor of Chittagong University, attended the award ceremony as chief guest and Department of Environment Director in Chittagong Zafar Alam as special guest.

Praising the initiative of HSBC and The Daily Star, the CU vice chancellor said the students must know how the environment was being destroyed every day.

To be a cosmopolitan, he urged the students to be aware of climate and come forward to save the environment with creative activities.

Zafar Alam hoped that this kind of initiatives would help the present generation fight the challenges of the future.

Manzoorul Kibria and Alak Paul, associate professors of CU; Jahed Ali Yubraj and Shaila Sharmin, teachers of fine arts at the university; and Abdullah Al Jubayer, manager of Corporate Sustainability of HSBC, were present on the occasion.



2 siblings killed in Bagerhat

Our Correspondent, Bagerhat

Two minor siblings have been strangled allegedly by their rivals over a land dispute at Pailatola village in Morelganj upazila of Bagerhat, said police.

With scratch marks on their throats and faces, the bodies of Mirazul Hawlader, 10, and Reyazul Hawlader, 8, sons of Babu Hawlader, were recovered from a shrimp enclosure near their house at the village.

Neighbour Bachchu Mridha, with whom Babu has a dispute over land,

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TAKING MONEY BY PROMISING JOBS

Four frauds jailed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A mobile court yesterday sentenced four people to one year imprisonment each for cheating people out of money through placing false job advertisements in different newspapers and job sites.

The court also fined them Tk 2 lakh each, in default, to spend three more months in prison, said a Rab press release. The court led by AHM Anwar Pasha, Rab's executive magistrate, detained the four who were operating under an organisation, Bitko, in a house at road no-6 in Nikunja in the capital.

The convicts are: Sajrul Islam Tarikul of Sirajganj, Amirul Islam of Jhenidah, Mohiuddin Roni of Bandarban and Rafiqul Islam of Pirojpur.

According to the release, the four would place advertisements for jobs in different newspapers to lure job seekers. The culprits would then promise them jobs in different organisations and demand Tk 2 to 3 thousand

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'Ex-AL MP's

men' attack Haji Selim's supporters

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Three supporters of independent lawmaker Haji Mohammad Selim were injured in an attack allegedly launched by the people loyal to former Awami League lawmaker Mostafa Jalal Mohiuddin in the capital's Azimpur yesterday.

The incident took place centring on a dispute over controlling a kitchen market on the footpath in Chhapra Mosque area around noon, said a police official seeking anonymity.

Critically injured Shabbuddin Shabu, 35, a TV cable service provider who is loyal to Haji Selim, has been admitted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

Two other injured persons, Rubel, 22, and Nasir, 25, were given primary aid, said police.

Haji Selim's personal secretary Arman Hossain told The Daily Star that many locals have complained to the lawmaker that they could not move on the footpath as the kitchen market occupied it.

Shabu and some other supporters of Selim removed the kitchen market around five days back as per the instruction of Selim to “clear the way”, but

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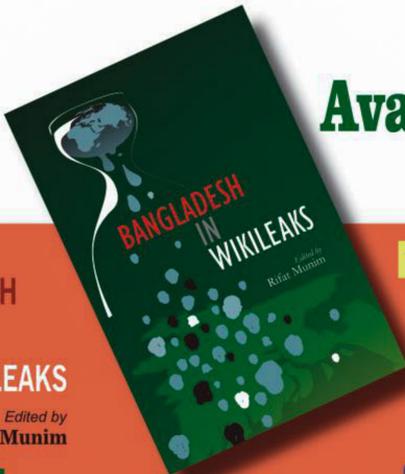
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