

Indian foreign secy to visit Bangladesh

As part of Saarc tour
DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Indian Foreign Secretary S Jaishankar will soon begin visiting Saarc countries, including Bangladesh, to strengthen ties with the member countries.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi yesterday disclosed India's initiative to send its foreign secretary on a "Saarc Yatra".

"Would be sending our new Foreign Secretary on a Saarc Yatra soon to further strengthen our ties," Modi said in a tweet.

Asked when Jaishankar will begin his visit to the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (Saarc) countries, Syed Akbaruddin, spokesperson, Ministry of External Affairs, did not give a specific date but said, "Not in the next two weeks."

He was speaking at a press briefing in New Delhi yesterday.

Akbaruddin emphasised that the Indian foreign secretary's visit, on the instruction of the prime minister, will mainly focus on the Saarc agenda as outlined by Modi at the Saarc summit in Kathmandu in November last.

This includes, a dedicated Saarc satellite and simplified medical visas, he said.



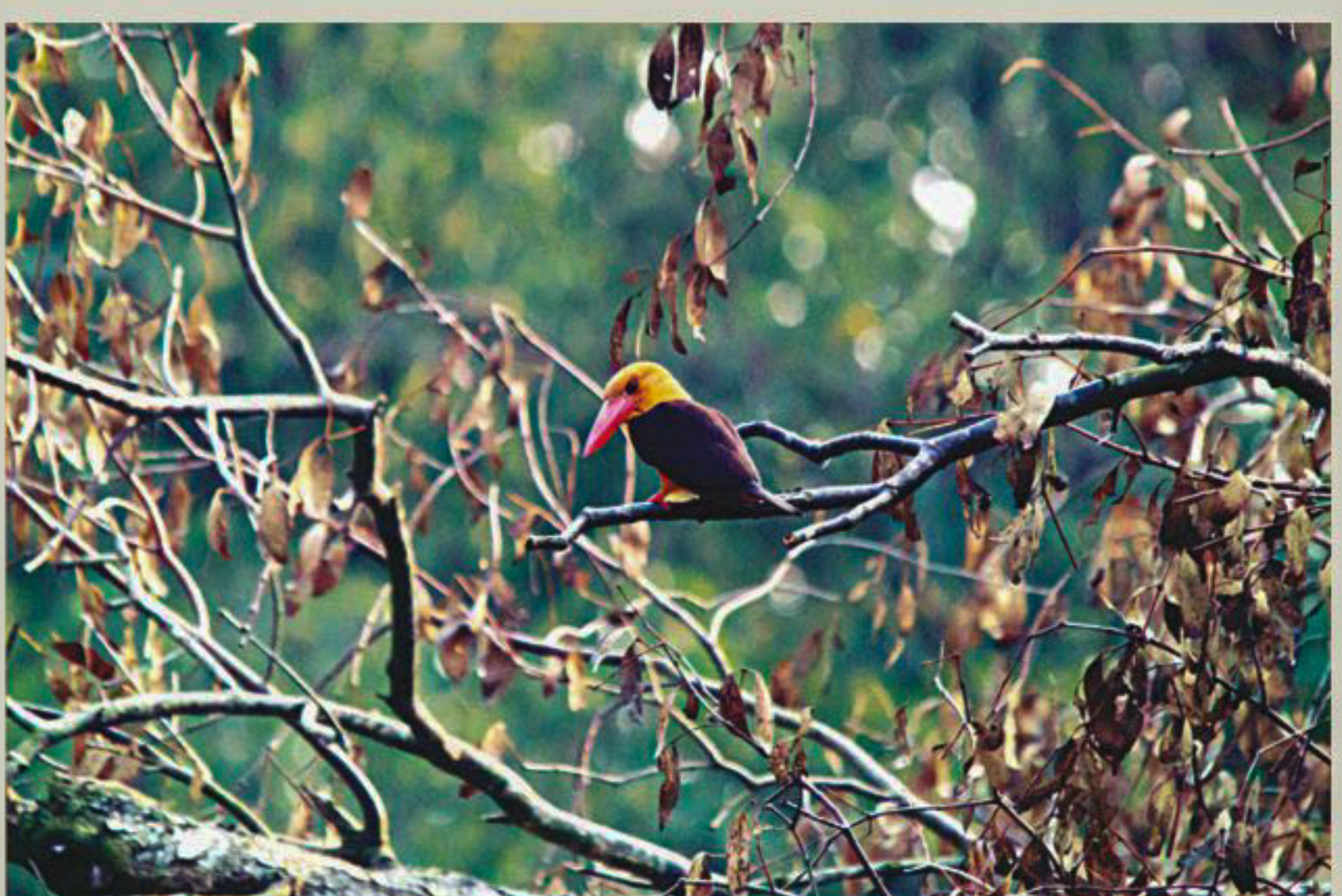
(Clockwise from top left) Visitors crowd the Amar Ekushey Granthamela-2015 in the capital with yesterday being Pahela Falgun or the first of spring and a weekend. Many such as these two young women were donning flowers signifying the change in the season. This child too embraces the festive mood. Dr Enam Ul Haque, Rafiqul Islam, Mohiuddin Ahmed, Dr Paul Thompson, Prof Emeritus Serajul Islam Choudhury and Dr Anwarul Islam at the launching of Dr Enam's book "Feathered Splendours: Birds of Bangladesh" at the University Press Limited (UPL) stall on the fair's Suhrawardy Udyan portion. Though all dressed up for the occasion, these visitors had to cover up their faces with masks due to the clouds of dust on the udyan portion.

PHOTO: STAR



TANGENTS

BY IHTISHAM KABIR



Brown-winged kingfisher in Sundarban.

PHOTO:
IHTISHAM KABIR

Our Kingfishers

Last week, when two friends from abroad visited Bangladesh, I took them for a walk around old Dhaka. Our tour started at Hossaini Dalan. From there we walked to Chawk Bazar, then to Bara Katara, followed by a detour to Star Mosque before returning to the starting point.

Birds were farthest from my mind on this walk. But as I stood at the veranda of Hossaini Dalan and looked across the large pond, I saw a flash of blue on the other side. Sure enough, it was a white-breasted kingfisher, perched on a small tree abutting the ghat steps. Every few seconds, it dived into the water and returned to its perch, though I could not see what it caught. We were pleasantly surprised to find this colourful bird amidst the concrete of old Dhaka.

But then most kingfishers are masters of survival. Eminent birder Enam Ul Haque told me he had seen the (smaller) common kingfisher at unexpected places – near drains for example, where they catch guppy fish. (Guppies were introduced in our drain system to help reduce mosquitoes.) Besides fish, kingfishers also eat insects, frogs, molluscs and crustaceans.

Bangladesh has about a dozen species of kingfishers. The most common among these are the white-throated, collared, black-capped, pied, common and stork-billed kingfishers. All are year-round residents of Bangladesh except the black-capped kingfisher which is a winter visitor. Sundarban hosts nine of our kingfishers including the brown-winged variety which is absent in the rest of Bangladesh.

It was during a trip to Sundarban three years ago that I learned about the world of kingfishers. We were based out of a launch which had anchored in a river deep inside the forest. Early in the morning, our group boarded a small rowboat that took us into the smaller canals that criss-cross the forest. We saw an alert but patient brown-winged kingfisher on a branch overhanging the water. As we approached, it flew away from us and landed on another branch, repeating this pattern several times. Although it was wary of us, it did not want to leave the area and asserted itself at every opportunity.

This might have been the territorial behaviour exhibited by kingfishers. They will stake out their area for hunting and guard it jealously.

The most astonishing features of the kingfisher, however, are the eyes. We all know that due to refraction of light, objects underwater appear slightly displaced from their actual position. Since kingfishers have to dive for fish, their eyes have evolved to deal with this problem. Each kingfisher eye has two foveas inside it. One is for "normal" vision in the air. The other is able to correct for refraction underwater. Their eyes switch to the auxiliary fovea when they dive, allowing them to accurately aim for fish underwater.

Indeed, this colourful bird – so common in our land – lives a colourful life!

www.facebook.com/tangents.ikabir.
My photo exhibition "Colours of Life" runs until Feb 21 at Home N Decor, Pragati Sharani, 11am-8pm daily (closed Wed.)

Spring brings spark to book fair

UPL launches 'Feathered Splendours: Birds of Bangladesh' by Enam Ul Haque; dust annoys visitors at Suhrawardy Udyan

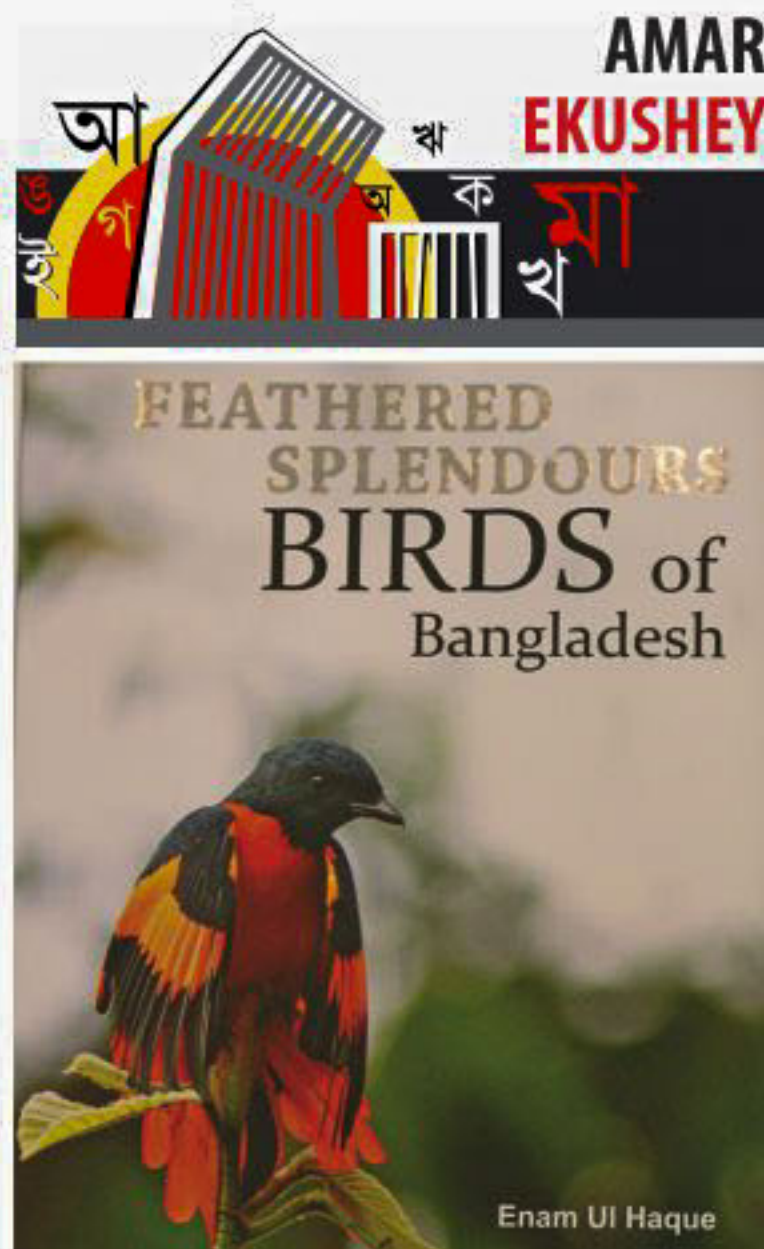
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The arrival of spring on a weekend after a whole week of the 20-party alliance-enforced hartal flooded the grounds of the Amar Ekushey Granthamela-2015 with a sea of people, dressed in yellow.

Though the morning hours of the day did not see that many visitors, the fall of dusk saw the crowd increase in intensity to such an extent that a tail-back extended as far as Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU).

Dr Enam Ul Haque, whose book "Feathered Splendours Birds of Bangladesh" was launched at the University Press Limited (UPL) stall on the Suhrawardy Udyan portion of the fair, had to walk all the way from BSMMU.

About the book, Haque said, "This book is for those who do not know about birds. It belongs to the coffee table genre."



He said the 228-page book contains about 450 pictures out of the over 650

species of birds of Bangladesh.

Prof Emeritus Serajul Islam Choudhury was present at the launching ceremony. He said apart from the lively pictures, the book shows how more than 100 of the birds depicted in the pictures are endangered.

He said the current capitalistic philosophy which is the basis of current development is destroying birds' habitats and food. "We need to be aware of this," he said.

Prof Anwarul Islam of zoology, Dhaka University, introduced the book saying, "Enam Ul Haque is creating conservators of birds." He thanked UPL for patronising the project.

Paul Thompson, a bird expert, also talked about Haque's contribution to developing people's awareness and interest about conservation of wildlife, wetlands and forests.

UPL proprietor and publisher Mohiuddin Ahmed was also present at

BSF tortures Satkhira cattle herder

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

A cattle herder was allegedly tortured by members of Indian Border Security Force (BSF) at Lakhmidari frontier in Satkhira district yesterday.

Injured Sheikh Jakir Hossain, 30, son of Sheikh Nasir Hossain of sadar upazila, is being treated at Satkhira Sadar Hospital. Resident medical officer Maruf Hasan said his condition was critical.

Jakir's employer, a cattle trader, sent him to the bordering Indian territory to bring some cattle on Thursday afternoon.

BSF men captured him in Ghogadanga area of Bashirhat on his way back. They stamped on him with boots and beat him up with rifle butts, said Rubiya Khatun quoting his nephew Jakir.

The BSF troops left him at no man's land at Lakhmidari bordering area

Pickpockets innovate

CITY DESK

On the morning of February 11, Sumaiya Zaman was rushing towards her office. She generally travels by bus from Dhanmondi to Shahbagh every morning around 10:00am.

The bus dropped her at the Shahbagh intersection, right in front of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University. She had kept her purse inside a sling bag. While crossing the intersection, one of the busiest in the capital, she suddenly found herself surrounded by a group of five young women.

The women were all lean, aged about 23 to 25 years and covered in burqas. Three were holding babies. She thought they were normal pedestrians. However, while crossing the road, they surrounded her, pushing her deliberately all the way across.

Sumaiya turned to one in an agitated voice, "Go ahead." It had no impact on them; they seemed to be

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Showcase Canada 2015 (Trade and Education Fair)

Date: 14-15 February 2015

Day 01: 10:30 am to 8:00 pm
Day 02: 10:00 am to 8:00 pm

Venue: Ball Room, Pan Pacific Sonargaon Hotel, Dhaka.

You are cordially invited to visit the fair

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