

TANGENTS

BY IHTISHAM KABIR



Black-headed munia at Arakul .

PHOTO: IHTISHAM KABIR.

Back to Arakul

Friday evening I received a call from the birder Omar Shahadat. He had seen some interesting birds in Arakul, including families of *dahuks* and *kalems*, as well as songbirds. Did I want to come over the next day for a look? This time of year is slow season for birding in Bangladesh. But Arakul had never disappointed me. And so it was the next morning that Shahadat, his friend Taher, and I crossed the Postogola Bridge into south Keraniganj and took a left turn. After a few minutes we came to the end of the road. Meadows stretched on all sides and it was only walking trails from here.

Readers of this column might remember Arakul. It was the setting of two stories: one on the Siberian rubythroat, a pretty and rare migrant bird; the other about the first sighting in Bangladesh (by Shahadat) of the blue-capped rock thrush. The area has open fields dotted by villages and homesteads, with streams and lakes fed by the Buriganga.

As we started walking, we were immediately rewarded with a pair of collared doves foraging on the grass about twenty feet away. With a distinctive black ring around its neck, this dove is not as pretty as our spotted dove, but in my experience rarer and harder to photograph. The pair flew quickly, but not before I got a usable photograph. We continued on the trail flanked by clumps of tall grass on both sides. It was hot and muggy but mercifully cloudy. Within a short time we saw white-throated kingfishers,

paddyfield pipits and several munias, which had probably nested inside the grass columns. Presently we came to a large pond covered with water hyacinth. From across the water came a loud click-click call: a *kalem* (purple swamphen) took flight. As expected, its flight was short and clumsy and it landed a short distance away.

Back on the trail, we found a paddyfield pipit looking for seeds and insects in the grass. It was quite friendly but did not stand still for a second, constantly moving in its search. I kept on losing it from my viewfinder because it was so well camouflaged. With patience, however, I managed a good photograph. Some time later I saw another pipit. When I bent down for a photograph it scurried away. I searched but it had simply melted into the background, vanishing like magic.

Although I had seen several munias, none had stood still long enough to be photographed. When we went off the trail and entered a field, Shahadat pointed out a group of black-headed munias playing in the grass. They are one of four species seen in Bangladesh. One of them sat on a stalk of grass and posed for me. Soon it was time to call it a day. On our way back to the car, we saw long-tailed shrikes and zittin cisticolas on tall grass; palm swifts, swallows and yellow bitterns in flight; and a small tortoise climbing a pole in a pond. Thus ended a morning of discovery in Arakul.

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FLOODED LALMONIRHAT, GAIBANDHA Land erosion worsens

CITY DESK

The flood water started receding from Lalmonirhat and Gaibandha but erosions by the rivers Dharla and Jamuna, which were triggered by flood, took serious turns rendering around 40,000 families homeless in one week.

In addition, around 15,000 famers have incurred losses of Tk 10 crore with their fishes being washed away from water bodies in five upazilas of Lalmonirhat.

S Dilip Roy from Lalmonirhat reports, many of the farmers cultivated fishes taking loan from banks or NGOs.

Nafir Uddin, 62, president of Landless Fisherman Samity in Dighaltari village of Aditmari upazila, said all of the fishes have gone away from "Dalai Lama Beel", the largest water body in the district.

Around 110 landless farmers make their living by farming fishes in this state water body, he said, adding, "They incurred loss of about Tk 40 lakh."

Rezaul Islam, 48, of Kashiram in Sadar upazila, said he and four others cultivated fishes in an eight-acre pond after taking loan from a local NGO, but all the fishes were washed away by flood. "... Now we are facing interest charges."

He had hoped he would earn at least Tk 3 lakh from fish farming in two ponds on five acres of land, but his expectation was not fulfilled with all the fishes being washed away, said Pradip Kumar Das, 33, of Uttar Saptana village in the upazila. "I invested two lakh taka for fish farming, and I took loan of one lakh taka from a local NGO," he said.

"About 200 fishes of different species were in my three-acre pond," said Hazrat Ali, 55, of Kakina in Kaliganj upazila. "But I found not a single one today."

Admitting the facts, District Fishery Officer Latifur Rahman said this time flood caused huge losses due to a lack of preparations as it hit late. Generally flood hits in mid-July, but this year it occurred in mid-August, he added.

He has sent a letter to the director general of the department seeking fund for the farmers so that they can overcome the loss of Tk 10 crore.

Around 80 percent of 35,000 families in 95 villages in the district returned to their houses as the flood water started receding from Monday.

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Yet another child tortured

9yr old boy tied up with chain, beaten in Patuakhali; this time own cousin complicit in brutality

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

Yet another child has been tortured and this time it is by his own family member. Nine-year-old Md Rakib was tied up with an iron chain and beaten in Baufal upazila of Patuakhali yesterday.

Police rescued Rakib, son of Abdul Khaleque Rari of Taterkathi village and a class IV student, from a shop in the upazila. They also arrested two people -- Khoka Mia, 55, a shop owner and Md Jewel, 20, Rakib's cousin -- in this connection.

AZM Masuduzzaman, officer-in-charge of Baufal Police Station, said Rakib stole Tk 1,100 from his father on Tuesday and ran away from home.

Jewel found Rakib near a rickshaw stand in the upazila around 8:00am yesterday. He and Khoka Mia caught Rakib and then tied him at Khoka's shop. At one point, Khoka beat up Rakib with his shoes, said locals.

Talking to the correspondent, Rakib said, "Khoka Mia beat me up with shoes but I don't know why."

Quoting Jewel, police said Abdul Khaleque, Rakib's father, told him to find Rakib and catch him and that is why he tied up the nine-year-old boy.

Jewel further claimed that they only slapped Rakib and did not beat him up with shoes. Khoka made no comments.

Talking to The Daily Star, Abdul Khaleque Rari, said, "I asked Jewel to catch my son if he found him. I did not tell him to beat my son up."



Baufal police officials try to break the iron chain tied around nine-year-old Md Rakib in Patuakhali yesterday. PHOTO: STAR

The father filed a case against Jewel and Khoka Mia in this regard with Baufal Police Station.

"We will take necessary steps against Jewel and Khoka after a proper investigation into the incident," AZM Masuduzzaman, OC of the police station.



The Communist Party of Bangladesh, and Bangladesher Samajtantrik Dal rally in front of Jatiya Press Club in the capital yesterday demanding that the government decrease the prices of electricity and gas. Retail customers will have to spend on an average 2.93 percent more on power and Tk 200 more on gas from next month. PHOTO: STAR

UN insists on protocols against disappearances

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Two United Nations expert groups on enforced disappearances yesterday called on states to establish and activate protocols for the immediate search of disappeared persons across the world.

Marking International Day of the Victims of Enforced Disappearances, which is observed on August 30 (tomorrow), the Committee on Enforced Disappearances, and the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances urged governments to activate all means of search in a systematic way.

Over the last year, the committee has been working on 246 recent cases of enforced disappearances perpetrated all over the world, according to a UN press

release received from Geneva.

The expert groups called upon governments to take action immediately after a disappearance case is reported and to guarantee full protection from all forms of reprisals of those who report cases, the authors of the urgent actions requests, the witnesses, the relatives of the disappeared persons, their defence counsels, and all persons taking part in the related investigations.

Victim families also have been encouraged to make use of the tool provided by the urgent action procedures of the expert teams.

The lack of resources and insufficient awareness of existing international mechanisms are among the reasons why many cases of enforced disappearances are never reported to the United Nations.

Girl 'kills herself' on wedding day defying forced marriage

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bogra

A girl allegedly committed suicide on what was supposed to be her wedding day yesterday, as her parents set up an arranged marriage for her against her will in Shajahanpur upazila in Bogra.

The deceased was Istiwar Khatun Mira, 17, daughter of Mohosin Pramanik of Shoilodhuki village in the upazila.

Quoting family, police said Mira was to marry one Jewel Mia of Bogra town, but she was in a relationship with Monju Mia, son of a day labourer. She committed suicide as her parents did not accept her relationship with Monju and wanted to marry her off to Jewel.

Talking to The Daily Star, Hasena Begum, Mira's aunt, said they did not accept the relationship because they wanted better for Mira than to for her to be married to be a day labourer's son.

She said they found Mira's body hanging from the ceiling of her bedroom yesterday morning. Abdul Mannan, officer-in-charge of Shajahanpur Police Station, said an unnatural death case was filed in this connection.

The body was sent to Shaheed Ziaur Rahman Medical College Hospital for an autopsy, said the OC, adding that they would further investigate into the matter.

Patient dies due to 'lack of care'

Owner, staff of Jhenidah hospital on the run
OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jhenidah

A patient died due to "lack of post-surgery care" at Ayesha Hospital in Shoilakupa upazila of Jhenidah yesterday.

The owner and all the staff of the private hospital have been on the run since the incident, said police.

Hitlar Hossain, 18, underwent an appendix surgery by doctors hired from Kaliganj upazila, said the family. The patient was not given any medicine after the surgery, said Hitlar's father Rafikul Islam, adding that no doctor visited him. A case was filed against the hospital owner and two doctors in this connection.

NILADRI MURDER CASE

Held ABT suspects' involvement evident

Claim detectives

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Detectives yesterday claimed that they had evidence suggesting that the two alleged members of Ansarullah Bangla Team, arrested on Thursday, were involved in the murder of blogger Niladri Chattopadhyay Niloy.

The arrestees -- Kausar Hossain Khan and Kamal Hossain Sardar -- were produced before a Dhaka court and in the forwarding letter, Inspector Shaikh Mahbubur Rahman, also the investigation officer of the case, said they have found evidence of the duo's involvement in the murder. Metropolitan Magistrate Imdadul Haque granted

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Road crashes kill four in capital

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Four people were killed in separate road accidents in the capital yesterday, said police at DMCH camp.

In Shanir Akhra, motorcyclist Krishna Chakrabarty, 38, was killed after being hit by a bus in the afternoon.

In Mirpur, a truck hit college student Nabil Khan, 18, while he was on his way home in the evening. He

was declared dead at Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH).

Meanwhile, garment worker Mohammad Masud, 26, died after a bus knocked him down while he was crossing the road in Nabisco area.

Yet another incident, day labourer Zahur Ali Matubbar was killed after being hit by an unknown vehicle in Old Dhaka's Patuatuli.

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