

TANGENTS

BY IHTISHAM KABIR

Back to Kalenga



A pond at Rema-Kalenga.

PHOTO: IHTISHAM KABIR.

Some places are so primeval that they inspire and awe us. Rema-Kalenga Wildlife Sanctuary, a 1796-hectare reserve forest in Habiganj, is one of those places. Established in 1996, this large protected forest is composed of two parts: Kalenga and Rema. To get to Kalenga from Dhaka you take the Sylhet highway and turn right at the Habiganj-Chunarughat roundabout. You go past Surma and Chaklapunji Tea Estates and Satchari Reserve Forest, eventually reaching a T junction. Here you turn right and travel another ten kilometres. The last four kilometres are unpaved and lead to the park entrance. The drive from Dhaka is 4.5 hours.

I went there two years ago, but only for a few hours. This time I wanted to stay overnight to experience the forest in the early morning. The cabin at the park entrance - with three rooms and solar power (the remote region is outside the power grid) - is functional and convenient. I stayed here for the night and owner Abdur Rahman served home-cooked meals.

I arrived in time for a delicious lunch. Then I met up with Rahim, a knowledgeable and friendly guide. We entered the forest through a grove of teak trees that were planted perhaps fifty to one

hundred years ago. Walking past the grove we entered a different, dramatic flora.

Indeed, a major attraction of the park is the original, old-growth forest. It is one of the few places in Bangladesh where one can see what once was. Native trees include *chopalish*, *chhatim*, *bot*, *jarul* and various flavours of *koroi*. But because they are very old - perhaps a hundred years or more - they somehow look different than their younger versions one sees elsewhere. They are bigger and taller, of course, but the trunks are gnarled and wrinkled and often wrapped by fat creepers and vines. A total of 638 different species of plant life have been identified in the forest.

There are twenty mammal species in the park including several primates. I saw capped langurs, Phayre's langurs and a variety of squirrels. It was also at Kalenga that a flying squirrel was identified and photographed for the first time in Bangladesh by Saniar R. Rahul. Barking deer, civet cats, slow loris and otters can be seen if you are patient.

Over 200 bird species have been counted in the forest, most of them songbirds. These were my main interest.

Today, however, the afternoon sky was dark and cloudy, keeping the birds out of sight. The first

half of our hike disappointed. In the distance, we saw a flock of green pompadour pigeons on top of a tall tree, too far to photograph. Later, my prayers were answered when the sun appeared, and with it, the birds. We saw bronzed and racket-tailed drongos, white-throated bulbuls, lined barbets and a rare blue-bearded bee-eater before darkness set in.

The next morning we started early after a filling breakfast of *kholajai pitha* and omelet. Near the forest offices, on a banyan tree, several birds were noisily eating fruits and insects. These included red-whiskered bulbul, scarlet-backed flowerpeckers, sunbirds and flycatchers. Further into the hike, we saw another fifteen or twenty species of birds, most of them new to me. Two stood out for their beauty: the brightly coloured yellow-nape woodpeckers, and a brilliant scarlet minivet. At one point there was a great commotion deep inside the forest and we knew a raptor had descended among the smaller songbirds.

Soon it was time to leave. It was with a heavy heart that I said goodbye to the forest, promising myself to return soon.

www.facebook.com/tangents.ikabir.

DB takes Feni madrasa teacher to Dhaka

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Detective Branch (DB) of Dhaka Metropolitan Police picked up a madrasa teacher in Feni's Fulgazi upazila Thursday, police said.

Though an officer of the Feni district police said he came to know that Mufti Zahidul Hasan Maruf, 24, was picked up in connection with the murder of publisher Faisal Arefin Dipan, detectives in Dhaka, however, said the man was taken to Dhaka to help detectives identify an accused.

Mahbub Alam, a deputy commissioner of DMP's DB, said he was neither arrested in Dipan's murder nor any other case. "He was taken to Dhaka to know about an accused of a case," he said, adding they would free him after getting information.

The DB officer, however, did not disclose anything about the case and the accused.

Mufti Habib Ullah, father of the detainee and resident of Uttar Tarakusa village of Fulgazi, said Maruf was an assistant teacher at Jamia Arabia Ahsanul Ulum Madrasa

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DIPAN MURDER

Protesters accuse law enforcers of failure

DU CORRESPONDENT

Different organisations yesterday slammed the law enforcers for failing to arrest the people who killed publisher Faisal Arefin Dipan and attacked three others last week.

Citing the past killings of bloggers, they also accused the government of being unable to give security to the lives of freethinkers.

Meanwhile, Prof Ajoy Roy, father of the slain writer-blogger Avijit Roy, expressed deep condolence for the family of Dipan, who used to publish the writings of Avijit.

Addressing a Gonojagoron Mancha rally at the capital's Shahbagh, the Dhaka University professor announced that he would carry on his battle to ensure justice for such victims.

At the rally, the Imran H Sarker-led Mancha yesterday gave the government 15 days to arrest Dipan's killers, and said the anti-war crime platform would launch tougher programmes if their demands were not met by November 20.

The Mancha will hold a mass rally at Shahbagh at 3:00pm on November 20.



I want trial for all killings, not only for those of bloggers. I will have the killers stand on the dock. My struggle will continue until I get the killers of Avijit and Dipan to the dock.

Prof Ajoy Roy

Imran, the Mancha spokesperson, blamed the government's insincerity for the killings of bloggers. "The government has totally failed to give security to the freethinkers of the country", he said.

He also alleged that the government was not sincere about thwarting militancy but rather they were paying more attention to suppress protests.

Khalequzzaman, general secretary of Bangladesher Samajtantrik Dal, said the government had failed to protect freethinkers, and their remarks were also encouraging the militant forces who assailed Prof Humayun Azad

some years ago.

Academics, politicians, bloggers, student leaders, cultural personalities and leaders and activists of the Ganojagoran Mancha attended the rally.

Meanwhile, Sammilito Sangskrotik Jote, an alliance of cultural groups, formed a human chain in front of Aziz Supermarket, raising the same demand.

Nasiruddin Yousuf, former president of

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Jongibad o Samprodaikota Protirodh Morcha brings out a torch procession from the Central Shaheed Minar in the capital yesterday protesting the recent murders of writers and publishers.

PHOTO: BANGLAR CHOKH

Two jailed for cheating in DU admission test

DU CORRESPONDENT

A mobile court jailed two admission seekers for a month each for cheating in Dhaka University's "Gha" unit admission test yesterday.

Abdus Salam was held at Sher-e-Bangla Nagar Government Boys' High School while Jubaidul Islam at Motijheel Government Girls' High School with answers in their cell phones' inboxes.

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Bangladesh must follow building codes strictly

Says Chinese expert about steps to cut possible quake damage

REZAUL KARIM, back from China

Bangladesh should maintain all safety measures and strictly follow the building codes in constructing buildings in both rural and urban areas to minimise possible damage and human casualties caused by any strong earthquake, according to a Chinese expert.

"Nobody can stop earthquakes from its natural happening. But we can try our best to minimise the damage and casualties," said Dr Jian Qiu, chief planner of the

Department of Housing and Urban-Rural Development in Sichuan Province of China.

Talking to visiting journalists from Bangladesh and Nepal in Chengdu, the Chinese expert said creating awareness among ordinary people and teaching them how to escape danger zones and where to go during earthquakes were also important to reduce possible casualties.

Describing the experience of the 2008 Sichuan earthquake, Jian Qiu said he knew

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WAR GRAVE COMMISSION Bangladesh chief gets Japanese honour

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Japanese Ambassador in Bangladesh Masato Watanabe yesterday presented a Certificate of Commendation to Abu Sayed, country director of the Commonwealth War Grave Commission in Bangladesh.

The Ambassador's Commendations are bestowed on those individuals or groups who have made outstanding contributions towards friendship and mutual understanding between Japan and foreign countries, said a press release.

In Chittagong and Comilla, there are war graves of Japanese soldiers in the fields of Commonwealth war graves. These graves are managed by the Commonwealth War Grave Commission, which is currently led by Sayed.

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Form nat'l govt for credible polls

B Chy tells memorial event on Kazi Zafar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Lambasting the government for the sorry state of the law and order situation, Bikolpodhara Bangladesh President AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury yesterday called upon the government to quit power and form a national government until a credible poll takes place.

"There is no stronger power than a united nation. They should come down to earth and talk to people as they conducted crimes," the former Bangladesh president said while presiding over a discussion paying tribute to former prime minister and chief of a faction of Jatiya Party, Kazi Zafar

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Obaidul Quader rules out talks with BNP

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader yesterday ruled out any possibility of a dialogue with BNP saying it does not have the qualification to sit with the Awami League government.

"Qualification is needed to sit for dialogue in the current world. Without qualification, no dialogue

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