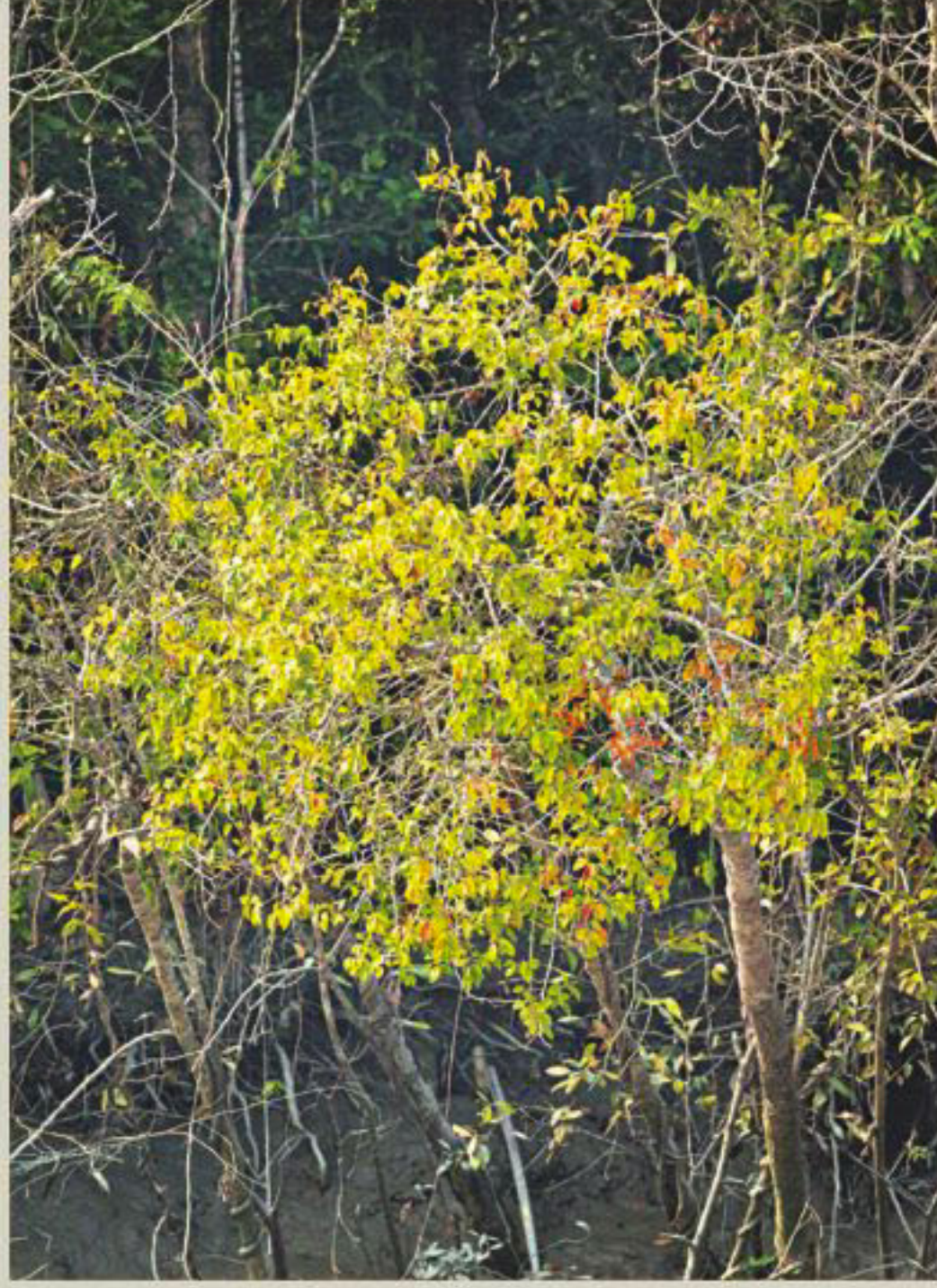


TANGENTS

BY IHTISHAM KABIR

Why Visit Bangladesh?

While domestic tourism has increased in recent years, the number of foreign tourists visiting Bangladesh continues to be much lower than neighbouring countries. Back in 2009, I asked Mikey Leung, author of the *Bradt Guide to Bangladesh*, about what makes a foreign tourist decide to visit Bangladesh. He said the vast majority of tourists he had met came here for two reasons: they already had a family member or close friend working here, for example in a foreign organization or embassy, or they were passing through Bangladesh on the way to a neighbouring country and making a "stopover" holiday.



Leaves of Gewa tree, Sundarban.

PHOTO: IHTISHAM KABIR.

In other words, back then, few tourists decided to come to Bangladesh purely for the sake of seeing Bangladesh.

Recently the question resurfaced in my mind when I went to Sundarban aboard the *M.V. Bhela* on an activity-filled trip offered by Bengal Tours. In our group were several foreign tourists. I asked them why they had chosen to visit Bangladesh.

Marie and Brad, teachers from England and Ireland respectively, said they liked to visit unusual countries. They had originally targeted Myanmar for their holiday, but upon research realized that it would take longer than the six days they had to explore that country. So they decided to visit Bangladesh instead.

Mathias from Germany, travelling with his girlfriend, said they like to take an annual vacation to a non-touristy country. They found people in off-the-beaten-track countries were more approachable and friendly and one could get to know them better. Thus Bangladesh came up as a choice.

Ingrid from Sweden has travelled to India for several decades. Recently she decided to travel to the countries neighbouring India. After visiting Nepal

and Bhutan, she decided to come here. She also mentioned that in her country, travel agents do not offer Bangladesh as a touring option, but they offer tours to Myanmar, Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam, and so on. Thus all but the most adventurous tourists were left out.

Jerry from Ireland has been backpacking around Bangladesh for two weeks. He was drawn here because of the non-touristy reputation. He discussed some budget details leading me to believe that it is possible for a backpacking tourist to get by here on less than BDT1000 per day for room and food.

What were some positive comments about Bangladesh? Everyone ranked the warmth and friendliness of our people

very high. Several people mentioned the food as being superior to neighbouring countries – especially after the meals on board. And of course Sundarban stole everyone's heart.

The most common problem foreigners faced was travelling by public transportation. They are here for a limited time and it takes too long to go from one town to another. For example, although the Sundarban tour was really three days long, it takes five days starting from and returning to Dhaka.

I went to Sundarban after four years and found it to be as enchanting as ever. The tour company had planned a busy schedule, making the most of the daylight hours, and enabling us to see a variety of wildlife and birds. Despite unexpected foggy spells, all activities proceeded as planned, with many wildlife sightings. Even without a tiger sighting, Sundarban in my opinion is the best place to visit in Bangladesh.

The columnist is the author/photographer of the book *Sundarban: A Photographic Journey*. Past columns are archived at facebook.com/tangents.ikabir.



President Abdul Hamid, Rokia Afzal Rahman and Mahfuz Anam pose with copies of the book titled 'Genocide They Wrote', published by Daily Star Books at the Osmani Memorial Auditorium in the capital yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

'Husband' kills pregnant woman

UNB, Sylhet

A pregnant woman was stabbed to death allegedly by her husband at Dighli village in Sylhet's Bishwanath upazila yesterday.

The deceased was Halima Begum Helena, 22, wife of CNG-run auto-rickshaw driver Nazrul Islam Zulfikar, a resident of the village.

Quoting family members, Masudur Rahman, officer-in-charge (investigation) of Bishwanath Police Station, said Halima's husband called her in their house when she was washing clothes in a pond around 8:00am. When Halima entered a room of the house, Zulfikar locked the door from inside.

Later, Zulfikar's mother heard the screams of Halima and knocked on the door.

Hearing no response, she informed the locals who entered the room by cutting the tin roof and found Zulfikar sitting beside Halima's body.

Police recovered the body and arrested Zulfikar in this connection. "During primary investigation, Zulfikar confessed that he stabbed Halima," the OC added.

Man 'killed by wife' in Mymensingh

UNB, Mymensingh

A man was stabbed to death allegedly by his wife following a family feud at Bagajan village in Mymensingh's Bhaluka upazila yesterday.

Mamunur Rashid, officer-in-charge of Bhaluka Model Police Station, said Billal Hossain, 27, son of Halim Uddin, locked in an altercation with his wife Murshida Begum over family affairs.

At one stage, Murshida hit Billal with a sharp weapon, leaving him critically injured.

Hearing screams, locals rushed in and found Billal in a pool of blood.

Later, he died on way to Mymensingh Medical College Hospital.

Police arrested Murshida in this connection.

Woman survives 2014 style fatal mugging

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A woman was left disoriented falling off a rickshaw when muggers jerked her handbag, containing Tk 5,000 and her cellphone, away from her grip near the Shahjahanpur graveyard in the capital yesterday around 6:15am.

Momtaz Begum's husband Abdus Salam Kazi told The Daily Star that they were headed towards the Gulistan bus terminal when a sedan slowed down with three youths inside, one of whom snatched the handbag.

"She became unconscious as her head hit the tarmac in a terrible way," he said, adding that Momtaz was having difficulty recognising people. She was treated at Dhaka Medical College Hospital and released.

In a similar incident in 2014, a six-year-old's mother, Ayesha Akter Ripa, died after being pulled off a rickshaw and dragged from Sobhanbagh mosque to Rapa Plaza on Mirpur road early in the morning.

Some muggers inside a running microbus had grabbed and kept holding on to her handbag, the straps of which were fastened around her hand.

No question about war martyrs

Says Dr Kamal UNB, Dhaka

Voicing resentment at the recent controversy over the number of 1971 Liberation War martyrs, Dr Kamal Hossain yesterday said it only exposed "unhealthy politics".

The Gano Forum president said this when journalists drew his attention to BNP chief Khaleda Zia's recent remarks on the number of martyrs at the party office in the capital.

Addressing a discussion, Khaleda said, "There're controversies over how many were martyred in the Liberation War. There're also many books and documents on the controversies." The official number of the 1971 Liberation War martyrs is 30 lakh.

Khaleda's remarks triggered widespread criticisms, prompting filing of a sedition case against her. "There's no scope of controversy over what we have earned on December 16 and what is written in our constitution...no political party has any right to do politics, violating the constitution," said Dr Kamal.

Govt to boost outsourcing training

BSS, Dhaka

The government has taken initiatives to become an international role model in outsourcing training to increase earnings from online outsourcing marketplaces and consolidating its position in freelancing job markets.

As part of the initiative, the World Bank financed Leveraging ICT for Growth, Employment and Governance (LIGT) Project of Bangladesh Computer Council (BCC) is going to launch a six-month extensive training within the next three months to provide training to 10,000 youngsters on online outsourcing, who are expected to earn at least US \$200 per month during the training period, said Zunaid Ahmed Palak, state minister for information and communication technology (ICT).

Steps have been taken to develop a standard manual and courses by a team of local and foreign experts for the training, keeping provision to participate in the bids offered by the online marketplaces and delivering the desired services, he added.

"We want to develop as an international role model for online outsourcing training to create dexterous manpower for the freelancing job market...this model will be an effective tool to create self-employment," said Palak.

Quoting US based research and management AT Kearney's report about Bangladesh's success in freelance outsourcing, Palak said Bangladesh has already consolidated its position as over 2.5 lakh freelancers are actively involved. "Earlier, Dhaka's position in Odesk, a global freelancing platform, was 3rd among the global outsourcing cities...we want to secure the top position in freelance job market," he stressed.

S Asian art extravaganza kicks off in capital

Third edition of four day Dhaka Art Summit now open for all at Shilpakala Academy

ZAHANGIR ALOM

Dhaka takes its turn to become a hub of art, as the third edition of Dhaka Art Summit (DAS) set off yesterday, in the month of our glorious Language Movement of 1952. For our sublime sacrifice, Unesco declared February 21 as International Mother Language Day in 1999. This year a sculpture based on the Language Movement by Mrinal Haque is now on a month-long display in front of the UN Headquarters in New York, USA.

February 21 reconstructed our cultural identity, conscience, and led us to many glorious movements including our Liberation War. Our pioneer artists, singers, and cultural activists played significant roles from all fronts to our war of independence, and now they are representing Bangladesh with their artistic creations both nationally and internationally. DAS is an ambitious platform of South Asian Art, which is receiving active support from several ministries.

Produced by Samdani Art Foundation (SAF), the four day



Finance Minister AMA Muhith speaks as chief guest at Dhaka Art Summit.

summit is open daily from 10:00am to 9:00pm till February 8. It is free for all. The summit has been organised by Samdani Art Foundation in association with Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy (BSA), Bangladesh Tourism Board, and over 50 international partners. Golden Harvest is the title sponsor

of the event. Art connoisseur and Finance Minister AMA Muhith inaugurated the two-yearly Dhaka Art Summit as chief guest, while Civil Aviation and Tourism Minister Rashed Khan Menon and Cultural Affairs Minister Asaduzzaman Noor attended the

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Boy 'tortured to death' over land dispute

Body found hanging from tree in Sherpur; court orders police to record case

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sherpur

A Sherpur court on Thursday asked the sadar police station's officer-in-charge (OC) to turn an unnatural death (UD) case into one of murder centring the death of a 12-year-old boy whose body was found hanging from a jackfruit tree.

Chief Magistrate Md Saifur Rahman passed the order following a case the victim's father

filed with the court that day alleging that a neighbouring family tortured the boy to death after detaining and falsely accusing him of stealing betel nuts.

The accused are Umed Ali, 65; his sons Md Mati Miyan, 45, and Md Sheikh Miah, 37; Mati's wife Morsheda, 40, son Mamun Mian,



Noor-e-Alam

26, and daughter Maleka Khatun, 20; Shiekh's wife Nasrin Begum, 28, and eight to nine unidentified persons.

In the case statement, Gopon Mian said he and the family in Munshirchar Purbopara village had a feud over land ownership, the theft allegation was pre-planned and the family had

hung the body to pass it off as a suicide.

Noor-e-Alam was detained on the evening of January 31, tortured and confined inside Mati's house, but when the class V student's parents came searching for him, the family claimed they had only slapped around and released him that day, it said.

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Visitors enjoying an artwork at Dhaka Art Summit 2016, which started at the capital's Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Supporters block Ghatail road protesting attack on UP chairman's house

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

Protesting an attack on the house of a local union chairman, supporters yesterday blocked the busy Tangail-Mymensingh road for one and a half hours in Ghatail upazila of Tangail, disrupting movement of hundreds of vehicles.

The protesters, numbering a few hundred, also demonstrated in front of Ghatail Police Station, as police "denied recording a case" over the attack.

The house of Jamuria Union Parishad (UP) Chairman Shahidul Islam Khan Hesting was vandalised by rivals on Wednesday night.

His wife yesterday led the blockade and withdrew the protest only after police assured them of taking necessary steps.

On Wednesday evening, police detectives submitted a charge sheet against 14 people, including Awami League's Tangail-3 (Ghatail) lawmaker Amanur Rahman Khan Rana and his three brothers, over the murder of the district AL leader Faruk Ahmed.

The filing of charges led to a tension between the supporters of the lawmaker and his rival Shahidul Islam Lebu, convener of Ghatail upazila AL, on the same night.

While the lawmaker Rana's supporters vandalised billboards of two local AL leaders in Ghatail Bus Stand area, the group of Lebu attacked the house of Rana's supporter Hesting, the chairman, and vandalised it.

To prevent clashes, the local administration imposed Section 144 in the upazila headquarters till 12:00am Friday.

Faruk Ahmed, member of the district AL, was murdered in January 2013.

The local lawmaker Rana and his three brothers were allegedly involved in it, and all four have been in hiding for more than one year.