

TANGENTS

BY IHTISHAM KABIR



Singing grassbird. PHOTO: IHTISHAM KABIR

Springtime in the Haor

The other day I visited Hail Haor in Moulvi Bazar. Haors are a geological feature of northern Bangladesh. These shallow, saucer-shaped areas submerge underwater in monsoon and dry up in winter. For example, waters of Hail Haor cover 13000 hectares in monsoon but only 3000 hectares in winter.

In addition to being home to many species of flora and fauna, Hail Haor's wetlands attract numerous birds, both migratory and resident. People of the Haor raise cattle and livestock and grow rice. Fishing is also important. In the few weeks of winter, grass and weeds grow rapidly and cover the newly emerged fields, creating grazing grounds for herds of water buffaloes. Their milk finds its way to the local *mishti* producers.

On this day, after the short but sweet winter, the spring day is longer and warmer. At the Haor, I immediately notice the frenetic activity, both man-made and natural. Water has receded from many parts which were submerged through the winter. Paddyfields are enveloped in the velvet green of rice. *Bhat* (cloveredendrum inerme) flowers have bloomed in profusion, spreading a faint sweet scent in the air.

Many fisheries have drained out the water and are cleaning their ponds before refilling them. The insects and worms in the drying mud attract birds which peck at the soft soil, picking out earthworms or other morsels. These are the smaller birds: plovers, wagtails, ruffs.

The larger birds, particularly kites, fish eagles, and the solitary osprey wait

patiently near water bodies, looking for fish to hunt. I see a massive Pallas's fish eagle - from the distance it looks like a small cow - as it waits on the bank of a fishery pond. Nearby a juvenile brahminy kite perches atop a banana plant, eating a fish.

Along the edge of the water *dhol kolmi* (ipomea fistulosa) bushes grow up to six feet tall. Their stalks break easily as I walk through the bush. At the edge of one such bush I see a striated grassbird. It is sitting at the very top, singing a loud, long and complicated song. Occasionally it shoots up in the air while singing and then slowly falls back to the ground, wings outstretched. This is the male bird's display while searching for a mate.

Another plant, called lippia, grows here in abundance. Crushing its leaves I smell an intense lemony fragrance. Lippia's essential oil has medicinal and cosmetic value. At one end of the Haor in Baikka Beel, a grove of *koros* (pongamia pinnata) trees wears a luxurious growth of silky new leaves.

A flock of *babui* (baya weaver) birds numbering in the hundreds emerges from another *dhol kolmi* bush and flies like an undulating wave to a paddy field. A mongoose scurries along the edge of the bush, looking for snakes.

The breeze, when it comes, refreshes and rejuvenates me under the warm sun. I have come to Hail Haor almost every year for the past eleven years. Every time it gives me a new surprise. This year, it springs life at me.

www.facebook.com/tangents.ikabir

Gas cylinder blast kills 1, hurts 20

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

A woman was killed and 20 other people were injured as a gas cylinder exploded at Salimabad Darbar Sharif in Barguna's Amtali upazila yesterday.

The dead, Nurunnahar Begum, 60, was the wife of Sona Mia of Dalachora village.

Quoting locals, police said a three-day 69th annual Urs (religious gathering) began at Salimabad Darbar Sharif on Thursday. Marking the religious programme, a fair was organised on the Darbar premises and several hundreds of people, including children and women, came to visit it yesterday.

A crowd gathered in front of a gas cylinder to fill their balloons with gas. Around 5:00pm, the cylinder blasted with a bang, killing Nurunnahar on the spot and wounding several others.

Locals took the injured to Amtali Upazila Health Complex first. Later, four of them were shifted to Barisal Sher-e-Bangla Medical College Hospital in a critical condition, while three others to Patuakhali General Hospital.

Police were investigating to find the reasons behind the blast, said Pulok Chandra Roy, officer-in-charge of Amtali Police Station.

Post offices to be turned into e-centres

UNB, Dhaka

The government has taken a series of programmes, aiming to revamp the activities of post offices across the country along with providing more services.

According to an official document, a total of 8,500 post offices will be turned into e-centres by June, 2017.

This project, considered to be an important milestone in achieving the "Vision-2021", aims at bridging digital divide between the rural and urban people by giving them facilities to have access to modern ICT based technologies.

The government has also planned to expand the electronic money order service to the remote areas of the country.

This service was commercially launched on a limited scale (in 104 post offices) on May 1, 2010. Because of overwhelming demand, this service has now been expanded to 1,150 post offices, including all district head post offices and upazila post offices.

The regular paper based money order service seemed to be a time consuming, expensive and inefficient approach of remitting money to any part of the country. There was a demand for quick transfer of money to locations where the beneficiaries can collect and use it instantly.

Later, Bangladesh Post Office launched a new money order service named Electronic Money Transfer Service (EMTS), commonly known as Mobile Money Order Service.

The official document said that the government decided to bring the grassroots people under the banking service through the Postal Cash Card.

Postal Cash Card is now in operation in 31 post offices of Dhaka and Comilla. This

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Trishfoot Khal no longer looks like it is a 30-foot canal, as the name implies, with unabated dumping of garbage and mushrooming unauthorised structures narrowing it down, preventing proper drainage of water during showers in adjoining areas in Hazaribagh and leading to waterlogging. The photo was taken on Thursday. PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Creative method in exams ineffective

Discussion of Lekhak Shibir told in capital

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Crises have pervaded the country, badly affecting education, health, and cultural sectors, administration, and even people's thought process, a discussion was told yesterday.

Frequent murders, disappearances, looting of money, the rise of militancy, repression of the capitalist forces, and falling education standards—all these show that anarchy is prevailing in the country, the speakers said.

They said there was no alternative to revolutionary politics and a cultural movement to get rid of the anarchy.

The discussion was held at the inaugural session of the 14th National Council of Bangladesh Lekhak Shibir, a literary and cultural organisation, at the capital's Bangla Academy. The two-day council will elect new leadership. In his welcome address, author Badruddin Umar said murders and disappearances were taking place everywhere in the country, but there had been no proper investigation.

"A good society turns a bad person into a good human being, but the reverse is happening in our society," he said.

Umar, former president of Lekhak Shibir, said the education system had gradually been destroyed, as it made students dependent on notes and guides.

The education minister considers pass rates as the parameter of education standards without emphasising on what the

students are learning, he said. The practice of reading books, besides textbooks, is completely absent now, he added.

Umar said the situation stemmed from the political crisis.

Noted critic Khalequzzaman Elias said hundreds of people were making dangerous trips to countries like Malaysia and Indonesia, thinking there was no rule of law in the country.

"Due to the unhealthy capitalist competition, they think that they would have a good life in foreign lands."

Khalequzzaman viewed that the people who were sending their hard-earned money from abroad were the most patriotic, while the capitalist class and the wealthy were the enemies. He urged the writers of Lekhak Shibir to write more satirical books, essays and poems. Economics professor Anu Muhammad said the government had set an example of how successfully all institutions could be destroyed and how absolutism could be established.

The former general secretary of Lekhak Shibir said students of the public universities found it difficult to speak freely now.

Former Dhaka University professor Abul Kashem Fazlul Haque criticised the creative methods in secondary education.

"In my view, it is completely an anti-education system," he said. Now education means tests, he added.

President of Lekhak Shibir Prof Shantanu Kaiser, litterateur Shawkat Ali, and writer Nur Mohammad also spoke.

Atiur made scapegoat

Says NHRC chief Mizanur

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

National Human Rights Commission Chairman Mizanur Rahman yesterday said former Bangladesh Bank governor, Atiur Rahman, who resigned recently following a cyber heist which netted around \$101 million of the central bank, has been made a "scapegoat".

The person at the top must take responsibility and there is no scope to avert responsibilities, he said without elaborating, adding that none have been punished so far over Tk 4,000 crore being embezzled and a bank going bankrupt.

The stepping down of an honest person will not solve the problem, he told a human chain organised by Khelaghar in front of the capital's Jatiya Press Club protesting "child killings throughout the country". "It is strange and ridiculous too that when a governor left, another one was recruited instantly...But search committees are formed to appoint deputy governors. But there is no search committee to find the chief," Mizanur said. "The nation wants to know the reason behind forming search committees," he added.



Participants at a publication ceremony of five poetry books in the Savar University College seminar room yesterday, organised by Poet Jasimuddin Parishad. PHOTO: COLLECTED

Publication event of 5 books held

CITY DESK

A joint publication ceremony of five poetry books was held in Savar University College seminar room yesterday.

Panchakabir Premkabbya has been written by Shamsunnahar, Lovely Bashar, Anjuman Ara Shilpi, Atiqul Islam and Shams Shamim while Kobitar Kache Jabo by Hafiz Rahman, Oporanher Alochaya by Dipok Roy, Rehearsal by Nurul Amin and Bhangbo Ochoलयatan by Abdul mannan Akhond.

Moinuddin Kajal, poet and additional secretary of the public administration ministry, Dr Gauranga Mohanta, poet and additional secretary of the education ministry and Shamim Reza, assistant professor of Bangla at Jagangirnagar University, among others, spoke at the programme with Poet Syed Monowar Hossain Rahi in the chair.

Poet Jasimuddin Parishad organised the event.

Missing Jamaat leader arrested

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jhenidah

A Jamaat-e-Islami leader of Jhenidah, who had been missing for 16 days, was arrested early yesterday over a recent murder.

Police said Nur Mohammad, 62, had been in hiding, but family claimed that he was abducted by police.

The Jamaat's naye-e-ameer of Jhenidah district disappeared on March 2 from Jhenidah. Police arrested him in Satkhira's Assasuni upazila.

Officer-in-Charge of Jhenidah Sadar Police Station Hasan Hafizur Rahman claimed that Nur confessed to planning destructive activities, and his information led to the seizure of 15 hand bombs, 40kg of explosives, and a lot of jihadist literature.

A case was filed against him for possessing explosives.

He was also shown arrested as one of the unknown accused in a case for the murder of a homeopathy doctor in Jhenidah's suburb on January 7.

Iftekhharul Alam Mozahid, son of the Jamaat leader, said police cooked up a story to arrest him.

Ctg girl found dead in bed with no injury

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A six-year-old girl was found dead mysteriously in her bed yesterday in Tiger Pass area in Chittagong, where she used to live with her mother in a railway colony slum.

Dead Mahima Akher Ripa was daughter of Md Mamun and Afroza Begum of Gaibandha.

Quoting her mother, Masum Rana, sub-inspector of Khulsi police, said the girl went to sleep after taking supper on Thursday night. She was found dead when her mother went to wake her up in the morning, as usual.

No injury marks on her body were found in the initial inquest, the SI added.

An UD case was filed in this connection.


Ready to Dine with
The Super Chefs?


Watch Rupchanda-The Daily Star Super Chef 2016, and win a chance to meet The Super Chefs up-close!

Q. How many contestants in total will go to the Super Chef kitchen and what will be their first challenge?

A. 18; 3 recipes of Siddika Kabir
B. 24; 3 recipes of Shaheda Yesmin
C. 19; 3 recipes of Chef Tareq

Send your answer by 9pm, March 26, 2016 in the following format:
Write **SC-space>A/B/C/D** & send to **6969**





Kazi Golam Mahboob
(1927-2006)

An activist of the 1952 Language Movement

In loving memory of our grandfather;

Nana, it is difficult to imagine that it has been 10 years since you left us. The ever continuing legacy that you've left remains a pillar in our lives and the love that we have for you remains as strong as ever. Your children strive to embody the lessons you have taught them; to be ethical and moral individuals.

Nanu longs for your presence and your unshakeable love as you served as a rock of stability and protection in her life. Nana, it is difficult to put into words the lasting impact you've had upon us. There is not a day we are not reminded of your humor, wit, charm and most importantly, your generous heart. Peace be upon you and may you reunite in the future.