

TANGENTS

BY IHTISHAM KABIR



Scaly-breasted munias.

PHOTO:
IHTISHAM KABIR

MUNIA

Whenever I see a munia I recall a fairy tale I read as a child. While creating the world, our Creator is colouring birds and animals to His liking. He goes through them all, painting them in His favourite colours. All the colours get used up. Just then a small bird pops out from its hiding spot: a munia, looking pitiful without colour. What to do? There are just a few drops of colour left, and He sprinkles them on the bird, endowing it with its spotted colours.

Indeed, it is almost impossible not to like munias. In many families, "munia" is often an affectionate form of addressing children (after "moina" and "tia", of course!)

In Bangladesh there are five species of munia out of a total of 39 worldwide species. (There is also a related bird, the red avadavat.) Munias are smaller than sparrows, ten centimetres long and weighing twelve grams. They are gregarious birds, staying in groups and often playing with each other.

In my experience, our most common munia is the scaly-breasted munia, which might be the one that inspired the fairy tale. Its backside is reddish brown, with a dark area around the face. Its breast has a red-and-black scale pattern on white background.

It is harder to find the white-rumped munia. I have seen it in the Moulvi Bazar area. It is a darker bird that often eats grains of rice from harvested paddyfields or rice drying areas. We also have black-headed and tricoloured munias which were once classified as the same species and only recently divided into two. They look

similar with a black head and dark reddish brown body, except for a white chest patch on the tricoloured one. The Indian silverbill is our fifth munia species, a beige coloured bird named for its shiny beak.

It is delightful to watch a flock of munias eating grass seeds. They land together in the grass and frolic away, jumping hither and thither, chirping busily with each other. Individuals then swing from stalks of grass by their feet. They lean towards an adjacent strand of seeds and slide their beak along it, eating all the seeds and leaving the strand clean. Sometimes two munias quarrel. One of them springs up a foot or two and hovers effortlessly before landing on a different spot where it resumes feasting.

Munias live year-round in our country. They breed during summer and monsoon. Hence, this time of year they are out showing off and looking for mates. Because of their appearance and sweet nature, munias are popular as pets worldwide. The black-headed munia was the national bird of the Philippines before being replaced by the Philippines eagle.

When the winter migrants are gone, munias are a joy to watch as they fly synchronously, undulating like a graceful wave. Rain brings fresh grass in fields that dried over winter. You can find munias in such fields as well as in wooded areas. I have seen them in the fields of Bashundhara, Purbachol and Keraniganj, as well as in parks such as the Botanical Garden and Baridhara Lakeside Park.

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AL, JSD trade gunfire, clash in Kushtia

Two JSD men bullet-hit among 10 injured

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

At least 10 persons were injured, two of them shot, as the activists of the ruling Awami League and Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal exchanged fire and clashed over establishing supremacy in Chandgram of Bheramara upazila in Kushtia yesterday.

Initially, a team from Bheramara Police Station failed to bring the situation under control, Kamrul Hassan, assistant superintendent of police (Bheramara circle), told The Daily Star.

Police, later, fired four rounds of bullets and dispersed both the groups, he said.

The clash ensued between the supporters of JSD activist Minhaj Uddin and AL activist Enamul Haq, the ASP added.

Enam is also a former member of Chandgram Union Parishad while Minhaj is a local influential person, said police and locals.

Both of the groups traded gunfire and used

various weapons during the clash, which continued for about an hour, said the ASP.

JSD activists Saiful Islam, 32, who was shot in the foot, while Afil Malitha, 44, in the thigh; and AL men Nazrul Islam, 25, and Sohag Hossain, 23, are undergoing treatment at Kushtia General Hospital.

The other injured took treatment at different hospitals and private clinics.

Neither Minhaj nor Enamul could be contacted despite repeated attempts as their cellphones were found switched-off.

Locals said there had been a long standing dispute between AL and JSD in the area since the last national election. At least eight clashes took place between them till now.

When contacted, Golam Mohsin, president of Kushtia district unit of JSD, and Akteruzzaman, president of Bheramara upazila unit of AL, blamed each other for the clashes.

Man 'kills wife for seeking Eid sari'

He, 3 family members arrested

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

All Laboni Akter, a housewife in Joypurhat, wanted was a sari for this Eid. Yesterday, when she requested her husband, Abdul Kalam Azad to buy her one, he became angry and started beating her.

At one point, Azad's mother and two sisters joined him in the beating and Laboni, 26, was beaten and strangled to death.

To hide the incident, they poured poison into Laboni's mouth and hanged her body from the ceiling fan to make it look like a suicide, said police.

Police recovered the body and sent it to Joypurhat Modern Hospital for an autopsy.

Laboni's elder brother filed a case.

After investigation, police found out that her husband, Azad, 35, a day labourer used to beat Laboni often, and he and his family members tried to hide the murder as a suicide, said Sazzad Hossain, officer-in-charge of Akkelpur upazila Police Station, adding that there were injury marks all over the victim's body.

Arrested Azad, his mother Hasna Hena, 60, sisters Lucky Akter 26, and Nazma Begum, 25, of Abdullahpur village were sent to jail yesterday afternoon, he said.

Govt moves to set up model pharmacies

UNB, Dhaka

The government has taken an initiative to set up "model pharmacies" across the country, to stop the sale of counterfeit, fake and substandard medicines.

Each divisional headquarters, district and upazila will get the pharmacies with technical assistance from Accredited Drug Seller project of the US-based Management Science for Health (MSH).

According to an official document obtained by the news agency, a process is underway to make a monogram for this "model pharmacy", divided in Level-1 and Level-2, considering its size, type and activities.

The Level-1 pharmacy will be conducted by Grade-A pharmacists while the Level-2 pharmacy will be run by Grade-B and C pharmacists.

There will be separate counselling sections to give people correct idea about the medicines and its usage apart from purchasing medicines.

The government has also started a project for online-based reporting on web portal and mobile application regarding the adverse effects of medicines, counterfeit medicines and excessive prices, with assistance of Access to Information (a2i) programme.

Technovista Limited taking assistance from a2i programme is developing the software, which will be available soon, enabling people to report on the adverse impacts of medicines, among others, according to the official document.



With Eid less than two weeks away, shoppers are busy looking for new garment in shops on the pavement in the city's Gulistan area yesterday.

PHOTO:
ANISUR RAHMAN

Six die in road crashes

CITY DESK

Six people, including a couple and two physicians, were killed and 33 others injured in road accidents in three districts yesterday.

In Narsingdi, three people, including two physicians, were killed and five others injured after a microbus carrying them collided head-on with a truck on Dhaka-Sylhet highway in Pahari area of Shibpur upazila.

The deceased were Kolimullah, 55, and Smritykona, 45, and microbus driver Monir Hossain, 35.

Among the injured Mostafizur Rahman, 32, is a cardiologist of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University, Tanbir, 40, works at the National Institute of Cardiovascular Disease and Bijon Kumar Saha, 35,

is a cardiologist of Bhairab Padma General Hospital.

They were admitted to the National Institute of Traumatology and Orthopaedic Rehabilitation Hospital.

In Mymensingh, three people including a couple were killed and three others injured when a CNG-run auto-rickshaw carrying them fell into a roadside ditch after a truck collided head-on with it on Mymensingh-Jamalpur road in Kuripara area of Muktagachha upazila. The deceased were Mamunur Rashid, 40, headmaster of Polashotli Government Primary School in Jamalpur, his wife Mukta Begum, 35, a teacher of the school and Khairul Islam Bachchu, 45, of Munshiganj.

In Chittagong city, 25 people were injured as a bus carrying workers of the factory of Hong Kong Denim Ltd collided head-on with a truck in Bandar area.

Caritas gets new executive director

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Caritas General Body, a charity, has appointed Francis

Atul Sarker as Executive Director of Caritas Bangladesh with effect from June 24 this year.

The appointment was made in its 94th annual general meeting on May 27 at its Dhaka office, said a press release.

Sarker has succeeded Benedict Alo D' Rozario, who went into retirement on June 23 after 29 years of service.

Before his new position, Sarker served Caritas as its assistant executive director (programmes).

Two held with arms in B'baria

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab-14) arrested two alleged muggers along with a pistol, magazine and three rounds of bullets from the Balurmath area of Brahmanbaria early yesterday.

They are Anisur Rahman Prokash, and Kawsar Miah.



With Eid-ul-Fitr approaching, this picture can be easily mistaken for a shot of the crowd at a buzzing shopping mall. But a closer look would reveal that it was all food stalls there catering to people arriving there since 1:00 in the morning yesterday to have sehri with friends and families, at Bashundhara International Convention Centre in the capital.

SEHRI FEST trending in Dhaka city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

In the wee hours, when most of Dhaka's residents were in bed, hundreds of food enthusiasts gathered at a Sehri fest at Bashundhara International Convention Center yesterday giving it a festive mood.

A cross-section of people, especially youths, thronged the venue where there were more than 30 food stalls of different kinds. They kept pouring in till 3:00am.

Cricket sensation Mustafizur Rahman arrived at the venue around 2:30am giving the food lovers a big surprise. The crowds gave a big hand for Fizz there. Fans took selfies with him.

Although there were light rains, it did not stop food enthusiasts -- the spacious hall was full to the brim after 1:00am. The number of guests reached well over four thousand on Friday, said organisers.

Youngsters surprised by the grandeur of the event were calling their friends and families to join them. Most of the guests took selfies and posted those on social media.

The two-night event, titled Coca Cola Sehri Nights, which concluded today, was an initiative of Foodiez, a website that features information and user reviews of eateries in Dhaka.

"Besides the opportunity of having so many of my favourite restaurants under one roof, this event gave me a chance to have a reunion of my college friends," said Nandita, a banker, who came from Shantinagar.

The menus feature a range of delicacies from burgers and hotdogs to kebab and tandoori chicken to popular Chittagong dishes like beef bhuna and dry fish of salt water.

"Due to heavy traffic, it is nearly impossible to eat out at a restaurant on the other side of the city without spending hours on the road," said Saif Al Din Abdullah, an automobile engineer, who came with his family of four from Dhanmondi. He, however, added that the price at most of the stalls was higher than the usual.

Syed Ashiqur Rahman, founder of Foodiez, said, "People in Dhaka don't get many choices of recreational activities other than eating out. I wanted to enhance that experience by creating a truly festive environment."

Although the event is a celebration of the month of Ramadan, it did not draw Muslim visitors only. "I have come to celebrate the event with my neighbours," said Dipty Adhikary, a school teacher from Old Dhaka.

Owners of various restaurants were seen serving customers and asking for their opinion on various delicacies.

"Nothing can compete with the feeling of satisfaction I get from serving food," said popular singer Shahidul Islam, who runs a family restaurant called Nawab Chatga, specialising in delicacies of Chittagong.

He added that the event gave him the opportunity to directly interact with many of his customers.

The number of visitors surpassed four thousand early yesterday, say organisers

PHOTO: PROBRIT DAS