

TANGENTS

BY IHTISHAM KABIR



Pond heron in breeding plumage.

PHOTO: IHTISHAM KABIR

Changing Colours

After the instinct for survival, the most powerful force in nature is propagation of the species. Living beings are, by and large, programmed to breed and create offspring. They expend considerable energy and ingenuity on this task. Birds are no exception to this rule.

The feathers of many bird species change when they are ready to mate. Usually the colours become brighter and change hue. Sometimes additional luxuriant feathers grow. For some species this change happens in males and females, but in many species only the male changes. This new appearance of feathers is called breeding plumage.

A simple yet striking example I have seen is the *babui* (baya weaver.) Normally males and females look nearly identical – an unremarkable tan colour. But at breeding time, the male grows a bright yellow crown over its head. It is unmistakable and can be seen from far away. That crown clearly sends a message.

Another commonly seen bird with breeding plumage is the *kani boga* (Indian pond heron.) Its normal dark-brown head changes to a yellowish-buff colour and its light-brown back takes on a maroon hue. It grows white neck plumes, looking very graceful. This happens to males and females.

The *bok* (egret) also changes plumage during breeding season. Long graceful feathers appear in its breast, base of upper neck and back. The head of the *go-bok* (cattle egret) turns orange during breeding.

What really happens? Birds displaying breeding plumage actually shed their feathers before the breeding season starts and grow a new set of feathers of breeding colours. Then the

breeding and mating takes place. After breeding, some species – including the male *bon morog* (red jungle fowl) and several types of ducks – shed the breeding plumage and grow unusually drab looking feathers. This is called eclipse plumage.

There are so many ways that feather colours change that it can be confusing. The notion of changing plumage is generalised in a method called the Humphrey-Parkes system. According to this nomenclature, the plumage covering the bird most of the year is called the *basic plumage*. When the feathers change, they are called the *alternate plumage*.

For the birder, breeding plumage can often create confusion. Fortunately most of our common birds such as *finger* (drongo), *doel* (oriental magpie robin), *machranga* (kingfishers), *bulbuls*, *choroi* (sparrow) and *myna* (common myna) do not change plumage during breeding season. However, most ducks and waterbirds exhibit breeding plumage.

Of course breeding plumage is only one of the methods that birds employ to find mates. Some birds such as the red-crowned cranes of Hokkaido, Japan, perform an elaborate mating dance. Others such as ospreys “show off” by hovering in the air with food or nesting material. The Bengal bushlark shoots straight up into the air, singing a loud song, and then drops to the ground like a stone. The harrier throws food to the female. The *babui*, as we saw last week, builds a strong home.

It is all for one overarching purpose: so the parent can find the best possible partner for creating offspring and propagating the species.

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TRIAL OF MILITANTS Law minister asks DCs to report if prosecution doesn't assist

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Law Minister Anisul Huq yesterday asked the deputy commissioners (DCs) to inform the monitoring cell of the law ministry if the prosecution does not properly assist the courts in the trial of the militants.

The government will take necessary steps if the district administrations inform the cell that prosecutions do not properly assist the judiciary in dealing with the cases related to militancy, he said.

The minister said this while talking to the reporters after attending a four-day annual meeting of the DCs at Bangladesh Secretariat in the capital.

He said he urged the DCs to implement the 19-point directive issued by the prime minister for the country's development.

Contacted, Anisul told The Daily Star that his ministry earlier formed a monitoring cell, which is now being led by its Joint Secretary Habibur Rahman, to supervise the important cases, particularly the ones related to militancy, for their fair and quick disposal.

The law ministry will provide legal assistance through the cell to all districts administrations and prosecutions to stamp out militancy in the country, he added.

Earlier, Anisul said the government planned to introduce a permanent attorney service to appoint prosecutors through examinations under judicial service commission, and a law is needed to be formulated for introducing the attorney service.



PHOTO: ANURUP KANTI DAS
The building constructed by Chittagong City Corporation in Tigerpass Batali Hill area was supposed to be a home for poor families living at risk of landslides in the hillside slums, but the authorities are now overturning their decision, reasoning that the pledge made by the administration of ex-mayor M Manjur Alam was not pragmatic.

CCC denies hill dwellers promised home

SHAHADAT HOSSAIN, City

Mohammad Alamgir, a slum dweller in the port city, has been dreaming of living in an apartment with modern amenities since 2013, and it was very Chittagong City Corporation (CCC) that shone the light of hope for the slum people like Alamgir.

Former CCC mayor M Manjur Alam took a commendable project of the construction of a seven-storey building in the city's Tigerpass Batali Hill area with the aim of rehabilitating some 161 impoverished families living at risk of landslides in the hillside slums.

In 2013, about 33 families of slum dwellers including that of Alamgir were also evicted from there so as to implement the project.

The evicted households were assured that they would be rehabilitated at the building once its construction was completed and that they would be the owners of the apartments

provided to them after they paid the construction costs in instalments.

Vegetables vendor Alamgir has been living with his family in a nearby slum since then, hoping to see his dream come true.

But their most cherished dream is now turning into nightmare with the city corporation authorities starting to backtrack from their earlier decision.

Apprehension is mounting among the slum people whether or not they would be given the flats since they are not getting any response from CCC concerning the issue, they claimed.

“We hear from the people that the CCC authorities will not give us the apartments. We are undergoing hardship and want CCC to allot the flats to us pursuant to its commitments,” said Alamgir.

“We were supposed to pay Tk 6.10 lakh for each apartment in a monthly instalment of Tk 2,500,” he claimed.

Some other evicted slum dwellers

namely Ramjan Ali, Minu Begum and Md Ebadul Huq echoed him, expressing their concerns over the matter.

“Initially, Tk 10,000 was taken from each of the 33 families in the name of giving them the apartments,” said Ramjan Ali, president of Matrichhaya, an organisation comprising the evicted families.

Contacted, the former mayor, too, confirmed that the money was taken for their rehabilitation.

“We sent several letters to CCC, informing that we are leading a very inhuman life and in need of the apartments. But we are yet to get any response from CCC in this connection,” Ramjan added.

Urging the authorities to hand over the flats to them, he further said it had been possible to evict the slum dwellers without any difficulties, as CCC managed to convince them that they would be rehabilitated at the building

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PHOTO: PMO INDIA
Bangladesh Home Minister Azaduzzaman Khan Kamal calls on Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi in New Delhi on Thursday to discuss bilateral issues, including the current situation in Bangladesh. The meeting came hours ahead of the India-Bangladesh home ministerial meeting later that evening where the two sides discussed ways to further step up security and anti-terror cooperation.

'AL leader' beats up headmaster

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

A primary school headmaster was assaulted allegedly by an Awami League leader on Thursday over formation of the management committee of the institution in Gouripur upazila of Mymensingh.

Following the attack, Md Johirul Islam Akanda, 45, headmaster of Hasonpur Government Primary School, was taken to the upazila health complex and was released from there yesterday.

Md Haider Rashid Milon, president of Sidhla union ward no-2 unit of AL, also confined Johirul to the latter's office for an hour, alleged Johirul.

Johirul came under the attack as he refused to recommend that the authorities concerned make Milon's brother Md Khokon-or-

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Freethinking weapon against militancy

Publication ceremony of Prof Serajul Islam Chy's book "Nationalism, communalism, and freedom of people: 1905-47" told

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Eminent educationist Prof Serajul Islam Chowdhury said the sterility created by lack of freethinking and cultural exercise is the perfect ground for growing militancy.

“If the cultural activities are not open, the animals of the darkness will be powerful. They will lead and take others into more darkness,” he said at a publication ceremony of his book “Nationalism, communalism and freedom of people: 1905-47”.

Sanghati Prokashan organised the discussion at the capital's Bangla Academy yesterday.

The ceremony, also meant to pay tribute to the author on his 80th birth anniversary on June 23, brought together noted academics and journalists.

There is a serious lack of cultural exchanges among the boys and girls, debate or knowledge building exercises, he said, adding, “Thus, sterility has been created.”

“The exercise of knowledge, its power is urgently needed to change the history,” said the professor, author of some 80 books.

Serajul Islam suggested establishing an archive on the struggles of the freedom of the land beginning from 1957, saying it will be a resource for people. Dhaka University can take such an initiative, he said.

Economics Prof Dr Anu Muhammad of Jahangirnagar University said lack of space and opportunities for the youths to flourish are limited. There is a tendency in the society where youths go after money, become self-centered and are not sensitive to the political

or social affairs, he said, adding, “Cruelty develops where there is no sensitivity.”

Speakers observed that the book by Prof Serajul dealt with the historical events during 1905 and 1947 and their analyses from peoples' perspectives can guide all to determine the ways of rooting out militancy and communalism.

Language veteran Ahmad Rafique said there were elements of communalism in the nationalist movements in the Indian sub-continent, while the colonial British rulers too instilled the seeds of communalism. “We could not break the trend,” he said, adding that is why there are bloodsheds in the name of religion.

Dhaka University Prof Syed Manzoorul Islam said historically, the Muslims in this land were far from a knowledge-based society. Even today the exercise of knowledge is very limited, he said, adding, “There is not enough space for the youths to pose questions.”

Dhaka University Prof Nasim Akhtar Hossain said the nationalistic movements were against the colonial powers, but the leadership of this continent was in the hand of the elites, who used communalism as a weapon to go to power.

Recalling his experience as a student of Dhaka University, The Daily Star Editor and Publisher Mahfuz Anam said Prof Serajul Islam was one of the few teachers students saw as their icon.

For advises on cultural or educational programme, they used to approach him, he said.

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PROF REZAUL KILLING

RMP puts bounty on two fugitives

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Rajshahi Metropolitan Police (RMP) yesterday offered bounty for the capture of two fugitive accused in the case filed for the murder of Rajshahi University Professor AFM Rezaul Karim Siddiquee.

In advertisements in the daily Ittefaq and Janakantha, RMP announced that Tk 1 lakh each will be awarded to those for the information leading to arrests of Mohammad Nazrul alias Hasan and Shariful Islam.

The names of the informers will be kept hidden, it said.

Nazrul, son of Abdullah Mia alias Munnah, hails from Sonarhar village of Debiganj upazila in Panchagarh while Shariful Islam, son of Abdul Hakim of Sreepur village in Bagmara upazila, is a third year student of the English department of RU.

Inspector Rezaul Sadik of the Detective Branch of RMP, also investigating officer of the murder case, told The Daily Star that both of the accused were suicide squad members for militants.

Prof Rezaul was murdered in an attack in Shalbagan area of Rajshahi city on April 23 while he was waiting for university transport at Battola intersection. Police say the attack bears the hallmark of the previous blogger killings.

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