

TANGENTS

BY IHTISHAM KABIR



Snail kite at Lake Toho.

PHOTO: IHTISHAM KABIR

Lake Toho

Standing on the pier, I spotted the large bird sitting on a tree on the shore. It looked like a bird of prey. But it was too far to see it in detail, so I turned my attention to places closer. A grey heron stood at the end of the pier, while a black grackle, similar to our drongo (*fingey*), flew back and forth searching for insects over the water. I turned to look at the faraway bird but it had moved. Moments later it landed on a pole in the water, perhaps twenty feet from me. It was a dark-brown snail kite, a predator and an endangered species.

Using the pole as a base, it hunted. It scanned the water, then flew out and dived, coming up with a round object, perhaps three inches in diameter, in its talons. The pole was too small for it to eat the large apple snail. It needed a spacious perch, so it sat on the fence and went to work on the snail, finishing it in two or three minutes. Leaving the empty shell behind, it returned to the hunt.

The snail kite was one of many birds I saw when I visited the shore of Lake Tohopekaliga (Toho for short) in Florida last July. The lake covers 32 square miles; its circumference is 42 miles. On its northern shore is the town of Kissimmee, half an hour south of Orlando.

Kissimmee has developed the lakefront as a recreational spot, including a mile-long walking trail along the lake and a boating marina. Sports fishermen launched their boats from this marina to go fishing in the lake. There was a park, a children's

playground and benches to sit on and watch the birds on the water.

Florida has 331 bird species, including many species we see in Bangladesh. As I walked along Lake Toho I saw several familiar birds. Egrets (*bok*) were abundant. However, pond herons (*kani boga*) that are ubiquitous here were missing. Instead, there were small, white snowy egrets. Some birds that I find shy here were friendlier, including small green herons. In the sky, several ospreys (*machmural*) flew scanning the water for fish. Ospreys arrive in our haors and Sundarban in winter. On the lake, common moorhens (*panimurgi*) swam while foraging for food. They can be found year-round in our wetlands.

The limpkin, a large brown bird with white streaks and a long beak that spends its time wading on the shore, was plentiful. In Lake Toho they were friendly, allowing me up close. We have no limpkins.

The anhingas were a pleasant surprise. They are closely related to our darter (*shap-pakhi*), which uses its sleek long neck and sharp beak to impale underwater fish. The Florida anhingas are the New World anhingas, a different species than ours. They were sunning themselves by spreading their wings. Surprisingly, their necks had a thick padding of feather and not as sleek as our darters.

I saw all this during two short visits in the low season. I can imagine how rich Lake Toho will be during peak birding season in April and May!

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SAFETY CONFERENCE DECLARATION

Focus on coordinated steps to cut road deaths

PANKAG KARMAKAR, back from Finland

The Safety 2016 World Conference has adopted a 13-point Tampere Declaration with a call for promoting stronger coordinated actions to reduce road traffic crashes, violence, drowning, suicide, and similar other mishaps globally.

International experts, road safety activists, and policymakers came up with the declaration at the closing session of the four-day "Safety 2016-the 12th World Conference on Injury Prevention and Safety Promotion" at Tampere city in Finland on Wednesday.

There needs to be coordination among civil society groups, safety rights bodies and community-based organisations for prevention of injuries and violence, they told the closing session, chaired by Pirjo Lillsunde, ministerial adviser of the Finnish

ministry of social affairs and health.

Around 1,200 delegates are participating in the conference, organised by the Finnish National Institute for Health and Welfare and co-sponsored by World Health Organization (WHO).

Around five million people die annually in the world due to different kinds of injury caused by road traffic crashes, violence, drowning, suicide, and similar other things.

Traffic crashes take the largest chunk of injury-related deaths claiming over 1.2 million lives annually across the world, said participants in the conference referring to data and studies of WHO.

Beyond deaths, tens of millions of people suffer injuries that lead to hospitalisation, emergency department visits, and treatment. Many are left with temporary or permanent disabili-

ties; violence and injuries (not only road crash, rather all other mishaps) are responsible for an estimated six percent of the total number of people living with disabilities globally.

The Tampere declaration emphasises that each country develop multi-sectoral national action plans to implement policy, programmes and legislation for injury and violence prevention and control, with clear targets and monitoring mechanism.

There should be units for injury and violence prevention within the health ministry, and other ministries. Governments should adapt, implement and monitor proven strategies at national and local levels to reduce risk factors and prevent injuries and violence, including but not limited to legislation, regulation, enforcement and environmental modification, and

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Hindu idol broken in Lalmonirhat temple

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

Unidentified miscreants broke the head of an idol of Lakshmi, the Hindu goddess of wealth and good fortune, after breaking the bamboo-made gate of a Durga temple in Kakina village of Kaliganj upazila in Lalmonirhat early yesterday.

Rajoni Kanto Mohanto, a devotee of the temple, said they had been arranging Durga Puja for the last 20 years, but did not face any such offense.

Kakina Union Parishad Chairman Shahidul Islam said, "I urged the Hindus not to be afraid of the incident."

Kaliganj police Officer-in-Charge Sazzad Hossain said police they were trying to identify the culprits.



A risky ride! Amid traffic, a rickshaw with passengers on the capital's Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue near the Farmgate area plies the busy street. Even though these non-motorised vehicles are prohibited on many roads, they continue to operate, especially during the weekends with hardly any obstruction from the law enforcers. Fatal and avoidable accidents can often take place on the roads because of these vehicles. The photo was taken yesterday afternoon.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Young scientists dream big

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A third grader was explaining to a guest how a mixture of baking soda and vinegar makes a miniature model volcano erupt, since the blend produces carbonic acid that decomposes into water and carbon dioxide.

So when these two chemicals come into contact they react and cause the eruption, he explained.

The kid, Zawad Ahmed of Aga Khan School, was participating in a science competition organised by Society for the Popularisation of Science (SPSB) and Bangladesh Freedom Foundation (BFF) yesterday at the University of Asia Pacific in the Capital.

Zawad was one of the junior participants out of 450 students from different schools and colleges across the country, who were divided into three categories -- primary, junior and senior.

Many visitors also wrote comments about his project on a diary he kept next to it. A small kid who thinks big -- read one of the comments.

"I want to be a scientist when I grow up," a beaming Zawad said while standing next to his proud parents.

Prof Jamilur Reza Choudhury, chairman of BFF, said, "When we realised science students are decreasing we felt the urge to do something. So we organised this

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'DEAD' BABY FOUND ALIVE She is responding, needs ICU support

A CORRESPONDENT, Faridpur

The newborn girl, who cried out at the graveyard when family members were preparing to bury her as doctor declared her dead on Thursday, has moved her hands and legs at an incubator in Dr Jahid Memorial Child Hospital.

Sobita Saha, a duty nurse of the hospital, yesterday said, "The baby is better now."

The girl has been named Galiba Haiate, said her grandfather Abdul Kalam Mia.

Dr Khondokar Md Abudulla His Sahad, a child specialist of Faridpur General Hospital, said the baby was premature and she needed to be in Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU), otherwise it would be hard for her to survive.

Therefore, the baby needs to be shifted to Dhaka soon, but she is not fit enough to be moved to Dhaka by road, he added.

Dr Jahid Memorial Child Hospital management committee formed a five-member probe body to investigate the whole matter which will start working today.

On the other hand, Dr Aurun Kumar Biswas, a civil surgeon of Faridpur, formed a team led by Dr Sahad for her treatment while a five-member team for investigation.

End waterlogging in Bhabadah

Demand dwellers at human chain in Dhaka

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Demanding immediate solution for waterlogging in Jessore's Bhabadah area, the affected people yesterday formed a human chain before the capital's Jatiya Press Club.

At the human chain, organised by the Dhaka-based Coordination Committee for Resolving the Waterlogging of Bhabadah, they also demanded that the government declares Bhabadah as an "affected area".

Over 10 lakh people of 200 villages in Bhabadah area, including Aboaynagar, Monirampur and Keshabpur upazilas of Jessore, and Khulna's Fultala and Dumuria, have been facing severe waterlogging since August, said the organisers.

"The residents cannot fulfil their basic needs due to the problem. They do not have enough dry places to cultivate their crops or

to sleep safely. Neither do they have toilets," said Uzzal Kumar Mallik, a resident of Monirampur.

"We sought help from the government and the authorities concerned several times but did not get enough support to solve the problem," said Shirajul Islam Bablu, a resident of Abhoynagar.

Madhusudan Mondal, convener of the committee, said the Muslims in the area could not celebrate Eid-ul-Azha while the Hindus will not be able to celebrate their upcoming Durga Puja.

The Bhabadah sluice gate needs to be opened and made fully functional, said Russel Parvez, a resident of Abhoynagar. Some other initiatives, including excavation of the Shrinadi and Horinadi rivers and re-excavation of Amdanga canal, are needed to be taken soon, he added.



Not only parks are being stolen from the city dwellers with constant dumping of waste and unabated encroachment, but also they are becoming storage spots. This remnant of a park in the capital's English Road has been turned to a dumping ground for metal pipes and other objects from the nearby metal shops, and a tea-stall, inset, has also mushroomed due to lack of intervention from authorities concerned.

PHOTOS: RASHED SHUMON



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