

TANGENTS

BY IHTISHAM KABIR



Green-crowned warbler.

PHOTO: IHTISHAM KABIR

Warblers

One afternoon, I went to see the eminent bird expert Enam Ul Haque. He was going to help me with birds I had photographed but could not identify. We went quickly over the larger birds and then we came to a series of small brown birds I had photographed in leaves and foliage. These were a group of birds known as warblers.

"The more one knows about birds, the slower one is to identify them," Enam remarked, carefully looking at the pattern on the wing of a bird. He meant that the novice birder, not aware of subtle differences between species, will quickly but incorrectly identify a bird. The more one learns about birds, the harder it becomes to identify them.

This maxim is particularly apt for warblers.

Warblers are a large group of birds, over 400, with some common traits. They are small, insectivorous birds with thin bills that spend their time in dense vegetation. Most are coloured in shades of brown, yellow, green or olive. They appear and disappear quickly as they flutter among leaves.

Warblers represent a challenge for the birder. Just watching them requires supreme patience. One can see a little part here, a little part there, but it is hard to see the entire bird. They are so fidgety that even if they appear as a whole, it will be only for an instant before they move on, thus making photographing them a frustrating experience.

Once you photograph the warbler, you would want to identify it. You look at its face, the patterns on its head, its beak shape, its wing, its tail, the colour of its legs. Then you pore

over a birder's field guide - with precise and detailed descriptions - and try to find the closest match.

For example, there are two similar looking warblers called green-crowned warbler and Whistler's warbler. Both have white rings around the eye but the green-crowned warbler's eye-ring is "cut" at the back. This differentiator helps identification. Other warblers often do not have such clear differentiators and require several photographs from different angles for clear identification.

For many years, ornithologists apparently used "warbler" as a basket of convenience for throwing in small birds that did not fit into other families. Only during the 1950's, and subsequently using DNA testing, did they start sorting them out properly. The process continues today, so it is not wonder that warblers confuse us.

There is also the business of "Old World Warblers" versus "New World Warblers." They are two completely different families in the old world and the new world, following a process known as parallel evolution.

Since I have spent -and wasted - much time trying to photograph warblers, these days I don't try to photograph every warbler I spot. Instead, I look at the vegetation it is hiding in. Is it thin enough that I have a chance of getting a clear photograph? For example, if I spot a warbler in a *sajna* tree with its small leaves and thin foliage, I try to photograph it. However if the warbler is in bamboo or dense foliage, I usually ignore it.

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24 robbers arrested in Ctg

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Members of Bangladesh Coast Guard arrested 24 robbers from a char in Swandip upazila of Chittagong on Thursday night.

The arrestees are members of "Alauddin" and "Bhutta Bahini" also known as "Bismillah group".

The law enforcers also seized eight cleavers, some 2,000 pieces of wooden sticks, 2,500 metres of current net and a generator from their possession.

Lieutenant Commander of Coast Guard Omar Faruk said a team of Coast Guard members conducted a drive at Tengar char around 8:00pm and arrested the robbers after chasing two boats for their suspicious movement.

During primary interrogation the arrestees admitted that they were members of the robbery gang, he added.

SAARC POSTPONEMENT, UPCOMING BIMSTEC New Delhi assures it's no substitution

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA, New Delhi

With the 19th Saarc summit in Islamabad being postponed and bilateral meetings of the Bimstec on the sidelines of the Brics summit coming up, New Delhi yesterday asserted that one regional grouping was not a substitute for another.

The decision to invite leaders of the seven nations of the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral, Technical and Economic Cooperation (Bimstec) was taken in April, said Secretary (External Relations) Amar Sinha of India's external affairs ministry.

His statement came following a question on how much focus India will be giving on Bimstec following postponement of the Saarc summit, scheduled to be held in November, after Afghanistan, Bhutan, Bangladesh, India and Sri Lanka pulled out.

The withdrawal came in September, the 18th of which saw an attack on an Indian army camp in Uri in Jammu and Kashmir on September 18 leaving 19 Indian troops dead. India blames Pakistan-based terror outfit Jaish-e-Mohammed for the attack.

Media reports stated that India was considering propping up Bimstec as a regional grouping in place of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (Saarc).

Amar was briefing the media on the 8th

summit of Brazil, India, China and South Africa (Brics) and the Bimstec gathering in Goa on October 15-16.

On the bilateral meetings, India's external affairs ministry Spokesperson Vikas Swarup said, "They are still in the making and since these events are subject to changes, I will brief you on this as and when they happen."

Diplomatic sources here told The Daily Star that Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina would reach Goa and hold a meeting with her Indian counterpart Narendra Modi on October 16 before returning to Dhaka the next day.

Amar said India was reviving the pre-1965 road and rail links with Bangladesh.

Secretary (East) Preeti Saran of India's external affairs ministry said there would be a retreat after the Brics summit where Modi would chair the Bimstec meetings.

She said the prime ministers of Bangladesh, Bhutan, Myanmar, Nepal, Thailand and India and the Sri Lankan president would participate.

Terrorism will be a "very important component" of the meetings because the entire region was a victim, she said. Amar said the leaders would call for cutting off financing for terror activities and plugging sources of arms.

Trade felicitation and investment will also come up as trade ministers are scheduled to

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

Dhaka girl dies after falling from building roof

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A schoolgirl died after falling from the rooftop of a seven-storey building in the capital's Gulshan area yesterday.

The deceased was Akhi Akter, 14, an eighth grader of an NGO-run school in Mohammadpur, said Sub-inspector Bachchu Mia, in-charge of Dhaka Medical College Hospital police camp.

Akhi went to her uncle Abdul Aziz's house. She fell from the rooftop around 4:30pm, he said, adding, she succumbed to her injuries at Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

He, however, could not give any details.

Sirajul Islam, officer-in-charge of Gulshan Police station, said, "She fell while playing with her cousin. Abdul Aziz is the building's caretaker."



Dumping of construction waste encroaching on the Buriganga river near the Loharpool bridge in the capital's Kamrangirchar continues unabated by influentials with complete disregard to the law while water hyacinths grow unchecked, impacting water flow, blocking sunlight from reaching aquatic plants and starving the water of oxygen. The photo was taken on Thursday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

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Pro-BNP body seeks referendum on Rampal

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Pro-BNP intellectuals yesterday urged the government to hold a referendum and debate and decide whether to implement the Rampal power plant project based on those.

Objections aimed to protect national interests and are not a means to criticise the government, they said, hoping that Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina would "rely on her conscience".

They were addressing a seminar Shatanagarik Jatiya Committee organised on the issue at a restaurant in the capital's Bijoynagar.

Former president AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury asked taking the allegations into consideration first and claimed India cancelled two similar projects over environmental damage concerns.

He questioned why the plant was not being set up on the Indian part of the Sundarbans and found "the hurry" in setting up the plant to be "fishy".

Krishak Sramik Janata League President Abdul Kader Siddique said it was possible to live without electricity and set up 30 plants but getting another forest like the Sundarbans was impossible.

Former Dhaka University vice chancellor Emajuddin Ahmed and Gonoshasthaya Kendra founder Zafullah Chowdhury also spoke.

Curbing cattle smuggling can stop border killing

BGB director general tells press

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

About ninety five percent of the killings on Bangladesh-India border occur due to cattle smuggling, said Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) Director General (DG) Maj Gen Aziz Ahmed yesterday.

"If we can stop the cattle smuggling, border killings and other trafficking can be prevented..." he said at a press briefing held at BGB headquarters in the capital.

Trafficking narcotics, arms and gold are also interrelated to cattle trafficking, he claimed at the briefing arranged on the outcomes of 43rd Border Conference between Bangladesh and India held in New Delhi from September 30 to October 5, where a 22-member team headed by the DG represented Bangladesh.



The DG said since the cows were being trafficked from India, BSF had the main role in stopping it. He said he urged his Indian counterpart to take effective measures in this regard.

"We do not want a single killing at the border, and the BSF [Indian Border Security Force] says it happens only in self defence. But we continuously protest such excuses. That is why they investigate each killing."

"Recently BSF has constructed fences within 150 yards of the zero line along the international border at some places including Karimganj, though they were not supposed to," he said, adding, "We have notified the Indian authorities and they said they will take necessary steps

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

Drug addict youth kills grandmother in Rangpur

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

An elderly woman was beaten to death allegedly by her drug addict grandson as she refused to give him Tk 100 to buy drugs in Pirganj upazila of Rangpur on Thursday night, said police.

Rashidul Islam, 23, of Karim Laxmipur village, beat up Ambia Khatun, 60, with sticks. Ambia died on the way to Pirganj upazila Health Complex.

Locals handed over Rashidul to police.

Police sent the body to Rangpur Medical college Hospital for an autopsy.

A murder case was filed.

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