

# TANGENTS

BY IHTISHAM KABIR



Mongoose in the Haor.

PHOTO: IHTISHAM KABIR

## Twilight in the Haor

Haors are shallow depressions in the land. They can spread over many square miles. During monsoon haors fill with water which empties out at winter. Hail Haor near Moulvi Bazar is one such place. Its fishponds, lakes, rice paddies and wide-open fields are home to numerous birds during winter.

I love visiting the Haor, but I always leave before nightfall as it becomes dark and lonely and my sense of security prevails. On this day, however, my microbus got stuck in deep mud on the dirt road. It was late afternoon, and in the time it took to free the microbus, I saw twilight in the Haor.

The sun had been hot all day but as it travelled westward over the far end of Baikka Beel, a large lake at the western end of the Haor, its hard rays lost their edge. The colour of the sky changed rapidly from blue to pink to red.

The few, hardy people who live in the Haor were walking home after the day's work. Many had laboured all day in rice fields harvesting new crop and planting seeds for the next round. Some had work tools slung over their shoulder and exhaustion in every footstep. Others rowed their boats home from fish-related work - fishing or tending to fishponds. Shepherd boys rounded up herds of water buffaloes and walked them home.

A family of mongoose emerged from a roadside bush thirty feet ahead. It lingered in the afternoon sun, each member looking around confused, as if trying to decide which way to head. Finally three of them returned to the bush while the fourth decided to go it alone down the road. Of course it took off in a big hurry when it saw me.

Over a large fishpond partially

covered by water hyacinth, a swarm of bee-eaters was feasting on flying insects. They seemed frantic in their search for the last meal of the day. They hunted until their food was exhausted - or it was too dark to see - before heading back to their roost.

Other birds returning home reminded me of Kazi Nazrul's song *shajher pakhira firilo kulay* about the longing a girl feels as she watches birds, but not her lover, returning home at dusk. Indeed, all the birds were in a rush to get home. Groups of 20-30 pied starlings (*pakra shalik*) zipped by in a shifting, undulating formation. Even laggards like egrets and herons tried to fly fast, staying in V-shaped formations of up to fifty birds. Occasionally a single large bird - grey heron, osprey or kite - flew alone while looking for a last meal. Pairs of fast-moving doves appeared overhead for a brief second or two before disappearing.

For the night all these birds have to worry about safety from nocturnal predators. Some, such as egrets, sleep while standing in the water so that even the slightest wave or disturbance wakes them. Others hide themselves well, for example, in holes in trees.

A static layer of thin mist had spread above the water bodies of the Haor. As winter progressed, this mist would become thick fog, bane of the bird photographer. For now, though, it floated harmlessly in the distance, lending a soft look to the waterscape.

Several days after that evening, what stays with me is the soft silence and a land that - for a short instant - seemed frozen in time.

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## PM to commission marine survey vessel

BSS, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is expected to commission a state of the art survey vessel today as Bangladesh is set to launch next month an extensive study on marine aquaculture in extended territorial waters.

"We have procured the ultra modern research vessel, RV Meen Sandhani, from Malaysia at a cost of Tk 65.50 crore... we await its commissioning tomorrow (today) at the Chittagong Port," National Project Director of Bangladesh Marine Fisheries Anwarul Islam told the news agency.

He said the vessel was expected to launch an extensive campaign to explore marine aquaculture in extended territorial waters after the settlement of the country's maritime boundary with neighbouring India and Myanmar in international forums.

Deputy National Project Director Atiur Rahman said UN Food and Agriculture Organization and the Malaysian government would provide technical support to carry out the survey in the Bay of Bengal to particularly take stock of marine fisheries.

"The eventual aim of the survey is to develop a short and long term plan for its balanced extraction under a pragmatic policy," he said.

The vessel arrived on June 9 and the premier is scheduled to inaugurate it through a video conference from her official residence Gono Bhaban.

According to official descriptions, Meem Sandhani is 37.8 metres in length, 9.2 metres in width and has a 3.3 metre draft and accommodation facilities for 28 researchers and crew.

Atiur said the vessel was equipped with sophisticated gears to gather underwater biological information including stock of various species of marine life inhabiting the upper and bottom levels of the sea.

## 2 kids die as wall collapses on them in Rangpur

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

Two cousins preparing to celebrate one of their birthdays died as a boundary wall partially collapsed on them in Rangpur City Corporation area yesterday.

Police sent the bodies of Ayat, 4, son of Bappy Hossain, and Arnab, 7, son of Ruhul Amin, residents of Alamnagar area, to Rangpur Medical College Hospital morgue for autopsies.

Locals said Ayat and Arnab were returning home in a rickshaw from a market when a boundary wall near Bihari colony at Alamnagar collapsed on them. The boys went to the market with Bappy for Ayat's birthday shopping.

## NEWS IN brief

### Man found dead in Mymensingh

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

A man was found dead in his house in Borohissya area of Muktagacha upazila in Mymensingh yesterday.

The deceased Roodip Saha, 35, came to his ancestral home in Borohissya four days ago from Jamalpur. He used to live in Jamalpur while his mother and brother live in Tangail, said police quoting his uncle Uttam Kumar Saha.

Yesterday, a malodour was coming from Roodip's home and neighbours informed police who later recovered Roodip's hanging body breaking open the door, said police. The body was sent it to Mymensingh Medical College Hospital.

### 200 migratory birds rescued

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The forest department rescued over 200 migratory birds from Gouripur upazila of Mymensingh yesterday.

Tipped off, a team of the forest department rescued the birds being offered for sale at a market in Shyambazar area, said Wildlife Inspector of forest department Ashim Kumar, who led the drive.

However, the sellers managed to escape, added the inspector. Later, the birds were set free.

### Tk 2.23cr smuggled goods seized

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Benapole

Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) seized a huge quantity of smuggled Indian goods, worth Tk 2.23 crore, from Natunhat area of Benapole early yesterday.

On information, a team of BGB members raided the area and seized the goods, said Lt Col Jahangir Hossain, commanding officer of 26-BGB.

However, none could be arrested as the smugglers fled the scene sensing the presence of the BGB men. A case was filed.

### Death anniversary

CITY DESK

Today is the 22nd death anniversary of ATM Walie Ashraf, a freedom fighter and former lawmaker.

A milad and doa mahfil will be held at his residence at Mayakanan in Dhaka. Food will be distributed among orphans. Relatives, friends and well-wishers are requested to attend the programme. Ashraf was the founder editor of the first Bengali weekly 'Janomot' published from the UK. He also worked for the BBC as a journalist.

### C'nawabganj students awarded

CITY DESK

Idris Ahmed Memorial Institute, Dadonchak in Shibganj of Chapainawabganj awarded and accorded a reception to its 25 meritorious students who got scholarships in 2005 and 24 others who passed Primary School Certificate (PSC) examinations on its premises on Thursday, says a press release.

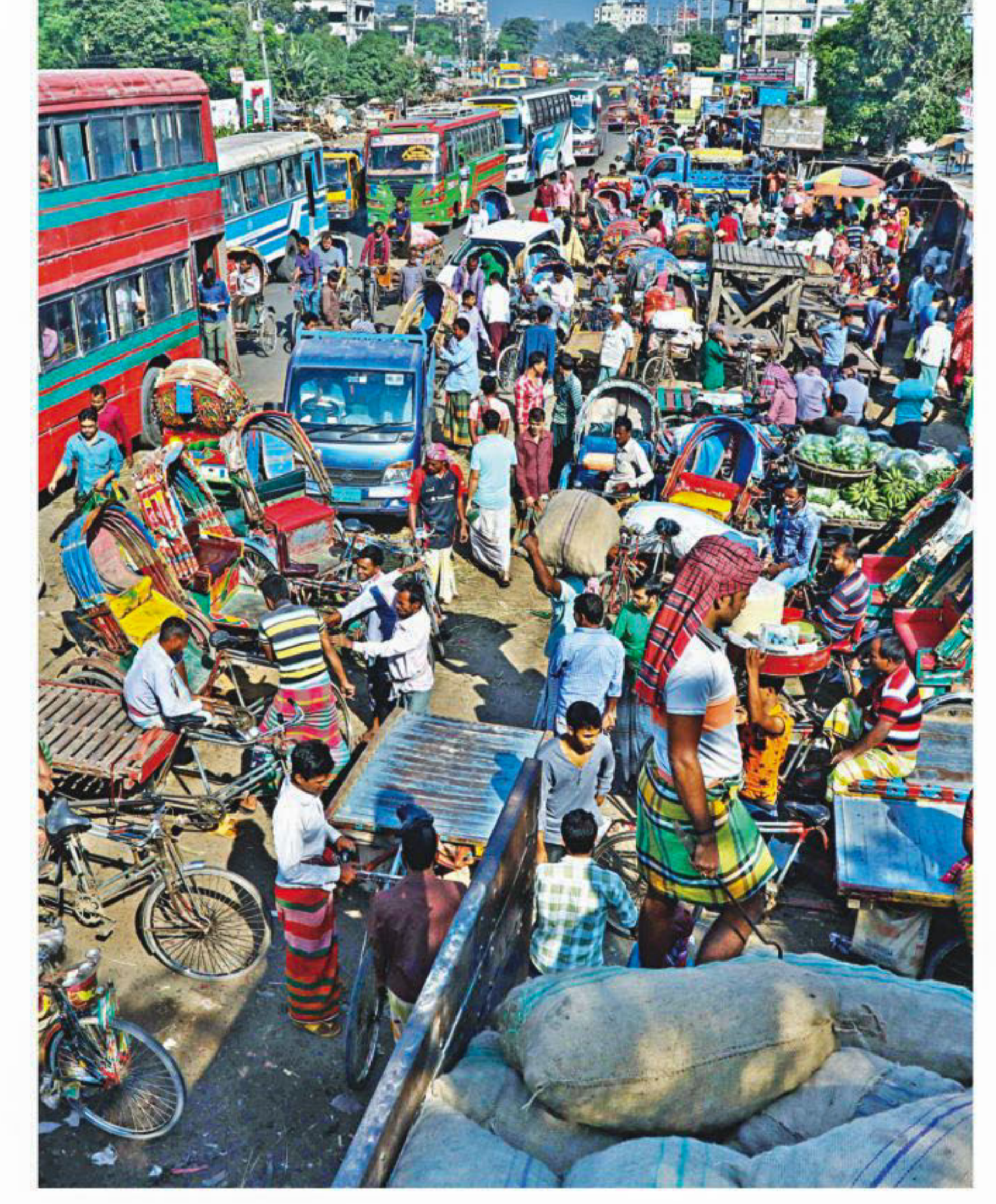
Abu Ahmad Nazmul Kabir, vice president of the advisory council of the institute, chaired the programme where Prof Mazharul Islam Toru of Nababganj Government College was chief guest while Jatiya Sahitya Parishad, Chapainawabganj President Mohit Kumar Da the special guest.

### Death anniversary

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Tomorrow is the seventh death anniversary of Shafiul Alam Khan, a retired employee of Karnaphuli Paper Mills Ltd in Chittagong.

He died at a Dhaka hospital on November 20, 2009. Milad mahfil and Qurankhwani will be held tomorrow at his Boalkhali residence in Chittagong and at his elder son Advocate Khurshid Alam Khan's chamber (Khurshid and Associates), 204, Bijoynagar in Dhaka.



Taking over a considerable portion of the road, vendors load sacks of goods onto their rickshaw-vans at the Genda bazar bus stand in Savar, impeding vehicular movement on the Dhaka-Aricha highway. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

## Accident claimed for family honour

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elder brother Khondoker Shahidul Islam at their houses, while Limon, Mainul's brother-in-law Shahin Alam Mithu, three house maids including Amena, Limon's friend Foysal Sarker Diko, and Mainul's pet pump manager Torikul Islam had been taken into police custody. All were released on Thursday noon.

Police learnt of the death at 1:45pm on that day when two local Awami League leaders went to the RMP headquarters lobbying for burial of the body without autopsy.

Police learnt Mainul was bullet-hit when he was taken to hospital at 2:10pm. Police

visited the scene at 3:00pm. At the time of occurrence, his wife Rehana, her youngest daughter Lima, brother Mithu, and three domestic helps were at the house, and his son Limon and eldest daughter Liza were not.

Police found Mainul's pistol hidden behind a flower tub at the staircase room of the house. Mithu told police that the pistol was beneath Mainul's chair and he (Mithu) hid it following Rehana's instruction.

Limon heard about the pistol from Mithu at the hospital and asked Diko to hide it. Diko, witnessing police presence, showed it to police.

Amena said she, ordered by Rehana, wiped off blood

from the scene with water and hid a blood-stained sandal of Mainul near the boundary wall.

Rehana also hid presence of her daughter Lima at the house at the time of occurrence. She told police that she avoided involving her unmarried daughter into police affairs and did all other things to save the family's reputation.

**MAINUL PLANNED TO VISIT DHAKA**

Mainul had planned to go to Dhaka with his son Limon Wednesday noon for treatment. On Tuesday night, Mainul called Torikul Islam, a staff of Mainul's petrol pump, for seeing him on Wednesday morning with Tk 50,000.

Torikul saw Mainul at the pump at 11:00am Wednesday and gave him the money. Half an hour later, Torikul went out with Limon on a business affair. Police found the money with Mainul at the hospital and gave it to Limon.

Forensic doctor Enamul Haque, who performed Mainul's autopsy, said a bullet entered his head two inches above his left ear, and it went out 1.5 inches above the right ear. Police later confirmed Mainul was a left-handed man.

Mainul is a cousin of film star Riaz. The actor went to Rajshahi and talked to police when the family was being interrogated.

## NBR plans crackdown on tax dodgers

UNB, Dhaka

The National Board of Revenue (NBR) decided to launch a crackdown on those who are evading taxes when importing goods showing false statements.

NBR Chairman M Nojibur Rahman gave the directive at a meeting with the NBR's VAT and Customs wings in its conference room, which was recently held to discuss the development and review the revenue collection.

According to NBR sources, the revenue collection growth during the July-September period was 15.74 percent. But, the import of the expensive items marked a fall as most of those were imported through "false declarations."

"The meeting also agreed that the coordination of the treasury chalang (receipt forms) of import and 'Khalas' (unloading) are not being maintained at the desired level," an NBR senior official told the news agency.

Nojibur asked the commissioners concerned to take necessary steps to take the invoices of chalang, description of the packing list, its quantity and prices. He also asked the officials concerned to take a crash programme to contain the import of items through false declarations.

The NBR directed the customs stations to re-examine the records of the items imported through the respective stations in the last two or three years.



A procession brought out by the National Committee to Protect Oil, Gas, Mineral Resources, Power and Ports at Pallabi in the capital's Mirpur yesterday protesting the coal-based power plant in Rampal, near the Sundarbans.

PHOTO: STAR

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