

# TANGENTS

BY IHTISHAM KABIR



Camouflaged Bengal bush lark.

PHOTO: IHTISHAM KABIR

## Camouflage and Concealment

If one wants to be a birder or bird photographer, one must spot birds in the wild. While it is easy to spot moving birds, it is harder to find sitting ones. The difficulty increases when the bird does not stand out - on a bare branch, for example - but blends in with its surroundings.

One winter day in Purbachol I was looking for birds in a field covered with dry yellow grass. Among the grass were some weeds that grew waist-high. I saw the flicker of a tail in the weeds as a bird quickly dropped to the ground. I searched for it by scanning the ground in front and noticed a brief movement under the layers of grass. Then the movement stopped. I stared hard but discerned nothing and was beginning to think my eyes had tricked me. Then it moved again. Now I spotted it, a Bengal bush lark, with colours that matched the grass. It was only a few feet from me but very well-concealed.

For many birds and animals, colouration plays a large role in their quest for survival. It is useful in three ways. The first is concealment: colours can camouflage the creature so it avoids being seen by predators or by prey. The second is advertisement related to mating and breeding: colours attract the opposite sex. The third reason is disguise, for example, when a prey fools a predator by making it believe that the prey is something else (that the predator should avoid.)

Most people, at one time or another, had some encounter with concealed or camouflaged creatures: perhaps a grasshopper on grass, or a frog on the ground that suddenly comes to life when one comes close. For me the most frustrating experiences are camouflaged birds explode out of hiding when I get close, leaving no chance of a photograph. In particular, snipes in fields and bitterns in

wetlands are master of this.

So how does concealment actually work? When an animal blends into its background and becomes virtually invisible, we tend to think that concealment is a result of its colours matching the background. However, it is more involved and a mechanism called *countershading* often comes into play. The colours of the animal actually counteract the effects of light and shadows, creating a flat appearance for the animal. So the top parts of the animal, where the light falls, are darker whereas the bottom is lighter. Hence the light belly colour of many birds and animals.

Another type of concealment is called *disruptive colouration*. An example is the zebra whose bold pattern effectively breaks up its outline - particularly in a herd situation - to an attacking predator.

Some of the fundamental ideas of colouration and concealment were first articulated by Abbott Thayer, an American naturalist. Despite these contributions, Thayer got into trouble later in life when he argued that the pink colour of flamingos makes them invisible when flying into the sunrise or sunset, thus saving them from predators. While the colouration of animals is, like everything else in nature, a complex subject, Thayer tried to explain it with a grand theory that *all* colouration is for concealment.

Thayer's pronouncements irked (American president) Teddy Roosevelt - an avid naturalist and big game hunter - so much that he took time out from a presidential election to write a 100-page journal paper demolishing Thayer's theory. Animal camouflage and concealment remains a complex topic not easily explained by one theory.

facebook.com/tangents.ikabir

## 200 regular blood donors honoured

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Nilufar Yeasmin, a university student, needs to have a blood transfusion every month as she has been suffering from thalassaemia, a disease which destroys red blood cells, since she was two-and-a-half-year-old.

But she is recovering gradually because of some kind-hearted people who helped the 21-year-old by donating their blood several times.

More than 200 such donors were honoured by Quantum Foundation, a private organisation campaigning for voluntary blood donation, yesterday at the capital's Jatiya Press Club.

Each of the donors, who donated more than 10 and 25 times through the foundation, was given a certificate, crest, medal and special ID card.

Sharing her experience, Nilufar said, "I had to depend on blood donors for transfusion to control my disease. My sufferings would become unbearable if they did not donate."

"Thousands of thalassaemia patients like me are dependent on the donors. So please don't stop donating your blood to save our life," she said, addressing the donors across the country.

Samina Mustarin, a donor, said giving blood was not a difficult task as anyone could do it if they wanted to help people.

Speaking as a special guest, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University Vice Chancellor Prof Dr Kamrul Hasan Khan said blood donation was a noble work that saved lives.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

## Stolen child rescued after 17 days, 3 held

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Police rescued a three-year-old child, who was stolen from Chittagong city around 17 days ago, from a Sultanpur house in Raozan upazila of the district on Thursday night.

One Akash Rahman was also arrested earlier in the day, who confessed to stealing the male child of domestic help Halima Akter Rekha from her Faridpara residence in the city, said police.

Akash also admitted that he sold the child to an auto-rickshaw driver in Hathazari upazila, said Officer-in-Charge Saiful Alam Chowdhury of Chandgaon Police Station.

On information from Akash, police arrested the

SEE PAGE 4 COL 8

## BNP expects PM's initiative for talks

In reaction to Hasina's address

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP hoped that Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina would arrange talks with different political parties to hold the next general election in a credible and inclusive manner.

The party also expected that she would show the nation a new ray of hope by determining the direction of politics and next election through discussions with opposition parties.

"We want to participate in the next general election as we believe in representative government through a free, fair and impartial election," said Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir, party's secretary general.

He made the remarks during a press conference at BNP chairperson's Gulshan office in reaction to the premier's address to the nation.

In her speech, Hasina said all the political parties would participate in the election.

Fakhru said that to ensure the all parties' participation, the next election must be conducted by impartial, brave and competent election commissioners under a neutral administration, which would be formed to assist the Election Commission.

"A level-playing field must be ensured by stopping the ongoing process of eliminating opposition parties."

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6



An improvised motorised three-wheeler, locally known as Nasimon, carries construction workers to their destinations, using a major thoroughfare of the capital yesterday. Despite a ban, such risky vehicles are often sighted on the city streets, while low-income people prefer these for cheap travels. The photo was taken in Nayapaltan.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

## Families of nine victims yet to get bodies

ABU BAKAR SIDDIQUE AKAND, Gazipur

It has been around four months, but the wounds in the mind of the family members of the nine unidentified people, who lost their lives in a boiler explosion at Tampaco Foils Ltd factory in Tongi, are still fresh.

In hope and despair, they still wait to get the bodies as the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) is yet to complete the DNA test to identify the bodies.

"For how many days will I have to wait to get my husband's body? How long can a person hold back grief?" said Parvin Aktar, wife of missing worker Azim Uddin.

"Give me at least a bone of my husband's body. I will bury it and show my children their father's grave," said Sharmin Aktar Shilpi, wife of Anisur Rahman, a missing machine operator at Tampaco.

"We could not understand what to



TAMPACO FIRE

do. How long does it take to identify a body?" said a crying Rupali Begum, wife of another missing machine operator Masum Ahmed.

Thirty-nine people were killed and 40 others injured as the packaging factory in BSCIC industrial area of Tongi in Gazipur city collapsed following a big explosion and fire on September 10, three days ahead of Eid-ul-Azha.

## 14,000 to get jobs in Rajshahi Silicon City

Says Palak

BSS, Rajshahi

State Minister for Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Zunaid Ahmed Palak yesterday said more than 14,000 youths would be employed in "Bangabandhu Rajshahi Silicon City".

He revealed this while unveiling the foundation stone of a portion of infrastructure work like street light, land development and link road of "Bangabandhu Rajshahi Silicon City" project in Nabinagar area of Rajshahi as the chief guest.

ICT division has started implementing the hi-tech park project on 34 acres of land at a cost of Tk 281.91 crore for socio-economic development of the region.

## Cops will never bow down to militancy: IGP

UNB, Shariatpur

Inspector General of Police (IGP) AKM Shahidul Hoque yesterday categorically said police will never bow down to terrorists and militants.

"Militancy is being created in the name of religion...militants kill innocent people," he said while addressing a function organised by Lakarta Foundation at Lakarta village in Bhedarganj upazila of Shariatpur.

The IGP said if general people work with police in combating militancy, terrorism and drugs, all the problems will be eliminated from the society.

Noting that militants are brainwashing students into militancy, he underscored the need for the guardians to remain alert. "If you notice any unusual behaviour in your child, you should inform the matter to police immediately to prevent them from getting involved in militancy," he said.

Prof Dr Nurul Amin Bepari of Dhaka University, Deputy Commissioner Mahmudul Hossain Khan, local social worker Shamsur Rahman, district Awami League president Sabedur Rahman and Lakarta Foundation President Manzurul Haque Shikder were also present.

## Musical tribute to Sanjeeb Chy at DU

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

No ad, no sponsor...No ad, no sponsor needed for music!

Sina Hasan kept on reiterating in front of an audience at the base of Raju sculpture at Dhaka University after his band performed at a concert titled "Concert for Fighters".

"The young audience burst into applause."

"Music is not some advertisement or commercial, it's an art that helps to express ourselves and creates a universal culture of love and unity," he said.

The concert was held on Thursday by a group of cultural activists and university students commemorating journalist-singer-activist Sanjeeb Chowdhury.

It was free and without any sponsors, with

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4



Singer Arup Rahee sings at the 'Concert for Fighters' on Thursday.

PHOTO: COLLECTED



With the two ends of a cotton towel tightly holding more than a dozen ducks, a man walks to the market for making a sale of the birds. The man uses an indigenous way while his two hands can barely serve the purpose. The photo was taken in front of Dhaka Government Science College in the capital's Tejgaon yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN