

TANGENTS

BY IHTISHAM KABIR



Silverbill munias on dhol kolmi. PHOTO: IHTISHAM KABIR

MAKING A Bird-Friendly Place

Last Saturday I was talking with two friends who are building a vacation home community on a tract of land near Dhaka. Being avid nature lovers, they have planted a variety of trees and are working to make their place as eco-friendly as possible.

At one point our conversation turned to birds. "What should we plant and how should we landscape to maximize birds at our place?" they asked.

I could have advised them on how to find birds, but this query needed expert help so we turned to our pre-eminent birder Enam Ul Haque.

"The first thing is to decide what birds you want to attract. For example, crows and shaliks (starling) often feed off waste and are probably undesirable," Enam said. "To attract the more desirable birds you will need to plant the proper trees and wait for them to grow."

Birds will come when there is food and where there are not too many people, he said. So it is important to set aside some land where trees can be planted and can be left alone without human presence. There may be a path through it, but it should not be busy with people, Enam elaborated. A mix of plants is best for attracting a variety of birds.

Enam pointed out that wild shrubs attract many birds, especially smaller ones. Since they are not sold in nurseries, one can uproot some from the roadside or fields and bring them for replanting. These include akond (crown flower), bhat (harlequin glorybower), dhutura (wild trumpet), dhol kolmi (pink morning glory) and other wild plants.

Trees with large flowers attract a variety of birds. These include shimul (silk cotton), polash (flame of forest), madar (coral flower) and mohua (honey tree). Trees such as botol-brush (bottlebrush) and kolke-phul (yellow oleander) are magnets for

flowerpeckers, sunbirds, leafbirds, white-eye, etc.

Tall grass attracts birds such as munias, prinias, cisticolas and warblers. A flock of munias looks beautiful playing and feeding in tall grass. Varieties of tall grass include kash (wild sugarcane), kaishha (lesser bulrush), hogla (bulrush), etc. They may be brought from the fields. Enam mentioned another way of growing grass: a mosaic of well-known grains like dhan, kaun and bhuro can be grown by throwing a handful of seeds, purchased from a pet bird store, in a grassy field in monsoon.

Next we discussed ponds, lakes and puddles for attracting birds. By the waterside, Enam suggested planting trees in tiers. The front tier, closest to water, can be populated with wild plants of low height. The next tier can be medium trees and large full-size trees can round out the back tier. It goes without saying that native, bird-friendly trees should be used. Trees such as hijol, borun and koroch are beautiful and thrive in or near water.

On the water, different birds have different agendas. Wild ducks would be wonderful but ducks are extremely sensitive to human presence. Therefore they prefer undisturbed water bodies. Other water birds are more tolerant of human presence. To make a home for them one can grow a variety of aqueous plants such as shapla (water lily), poddo (lotus), kochuripana (water hyacinth) and chandmala (snowflake) where waterhens, jacanas, little grebes and moorhens can feed and nest.

If you have land in rural or semi-rural areas (including Purbachol and Bashundhara) please consider these pointers. Although Bangladesh is rich in birdlife, habitat destruction looms as the greatest threat to our birds. So every little step to make one's land friendlier to birds will help.

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Bishwa Sahitya Kendra awards 6,000 readers

DU CORRESPONDENT

Bishwa Sahitya Kendra (BSK) has awarded around 6,000 students for winning in its book reading programme this year, through a prize giving festival in the capital.

The two-day ceremony started yesterday at Suhrawardy Udyan.

Around 40,000 students of 100 educational institutions in Dhaka city took part in the reading programme last year.

Speaking at the ceremony, Prof Abdullah Abu Yaeed, founder and president of BSK, said, "We have been conducting the book reading programme for 39 years with the motto 'Alokito Manush Chai' (We want enlightened human beings)".

Around two lakh students throughout the country participate in the programme every year, he said.

Eminent writer Ali Imam said the book reading revolution should reach every nook and corner of the villages.

Books teach how to distinguish between the right and the wrong, he said.

Grameen Phone sponsored the prize giving ceremony. BSK (meaning World-Literature Centre), founded in 1978, works to promote reading habits, enlightenment and progressive ideas among students and general public

BSMMU recruits 200 nurses amid 'irregularities'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The authorities of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU) have finalised the recruitment of 200 senior staff nurses amid allegations of anomalies in the process.

The list of the nurses finally selected was published on the BSMMU website on January 25.

However, BSMMU Pro-Vice Chancellor ASM Zakaria said as per recruitment rules, the university syndicate had to approve the recruitment before finalisation.

"The syndicate meets tomorrow [January 28]. How and why have the authorities rushed to finalise the recruitment?" he asked.

The recruitment board was also not formed as per rules, Prof Zakaria told this correspondent over the phone yesterday.

Allegations run rife that 76 of the appli-

cants of Tangail district got more than 80 marks in the written test. Of them, 23 were from Ghatail, the home upazila of VC Prof Kamrul Hassan Khan.

There has been tension prevailing at BSMMU since January 19 as the VC reportedly assaulted Pro-VC [Academic] Prof Zakaria over "corruption regarding nurses' recruitment".

The VC, however, denied the allegation of assault.

On January 24, Health Minister Mohammad Nasim asked the BSMMU authorities to follow "alternative rules" in recruiting the nurses since there were allegations of corruption.

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday, the VC said there was no rule that the syndicate had to approve the recruitment of nurses.

"The syndicate needs to be reported after

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Jubilant students raise the books they received as part of winning a reading programme organised by Bishwa Sahitya Kendra. The two-day prize giving festival started yesterday at the capital's Suhrawardy Udyan.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Missing Santal man found dead in Naogaon

Family alleges he was murdered

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

A Santal man was found dead on a field in Chakbibi village of Badalgachhi upazila in Naogaon yesterday after he had gone missing the day before.

The family claimed that Bimal Pahan, 55, son of late Kunjur Pahan of Mamudpur village in Badalgachhi, was murdered.

Jalal Uddin, officer-in-charge of Badalgachhi Police Station, however, said they did not find any injury mark on the body.

Bimal did not return after he had gone out of his home on Thursday afternoon, his family said.

They searched for him at every possible place till Thursday late night. Later on, the villagers first noticed the body lying on the spot.

Police sent the body to Naogaon General Hospital for autopsy.

Woman arrested with stolen newborn

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Detectives yesterday arrested a woman with a stolen newborn baby boy in her Tikapara Bashar road house of Rajshahi city.

Shahin Aktar Suvra, 35, stole the baby from a healthcare centre in the city's Nawardapara area nine days ago in the guise of an NGO worker, police quoted her confession as saying.

Detectives said they identified Suvra by watching CCTV footages.

Suvra, wife of a government doctor and a mother of a five-year-old daughter, had a great expectation of a son, said Al Amin Hosain, an assistant commissioner of Rajshahi Metropolitan Police.

She had miscarriages in the last few years, he said, adding that Suvra stole the baby hours after he was born at the Urban Primary Health Care Centre on January 19.

Police also handed the baby over to his mother Mukti Khatun, wife of day labourer Nasir Uddin in the city's Char Shyampur.

Suvra came to know from a



Arrested Suvra with the stolen baby.

PHOTO: STAR

health worker of the healthcare centre, who was arrested earlier, that one Mukti was expected to give birth to a baby boy. On the day of delivery, Suvra and the worker took Mukti to the healthcare centre after offering her to bear the treatment cost, he said.

Suvra identified herself as NGO health worker, which created an opportunity to steal the baby, said the police official.

8 Bangladeshi firms get SAFA award

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Eight Bangladeshi firms and 23 others in South Asia yesterday got "SAFA Best Presented Annual Report Awards 2015" for maintaining transparency and accountability to their organisations' annual reports.

South Asian Federation of Accountants (SAFA), a forum of professional accountancy bodies of Saarc, gave 46 awards under 13 categories.

Bangladesh got 10 awards, Sri Lanka 27, Pakistan 7 and India 2 while 41 firms in the region won certificates of merit from SAFA.

The Bangladeshi winners are Prime Bank Ltd, IDLC Finance Ltd, United Commercial Bank Ltd, LankaBangla Finance Limited, Infrastructure Development Company Ltd, Uddipon, Brac, and Sajida Foundation.

Finance Minister Abul Maal Abdul Muhith handed over the awards as chief guest at a ceremony organised by the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Bangladesh (ICAB) at a Dhaka hotel.

Bangladesh Bank Governor Fazle Kabir, SAFA President ASM Nayem, ICAB President Adeb Hossain Khan, International Federation of Accountants CEO Fayezul Choudhury, and International Accounting Standards Board Chairman Hans Hoogervorst spoke on the occasion.



Monkeys being offered bananas by an official of the Sylhet Forest Division in the city recently. The primates continue to intrude into people's homes for food. Due to unplanned urbanisation monkeys lost their habitat and the food crisis began, as per the environmentalists.

PHOTO: STAR

Sylhet monkeys' quest for food continues

MINTU DESHWARA, back from Ambarikhana, Sylhet

Monkeys from a shrine in Ambarikhana area of Sylhet city continue to intrude into nearby houses in their quest for food.

Annoyed by "monkey menace" residents have organised different programmes demanding the primates are sent to reserved forests.

The newspaper also published a report on the issue titled "Save the Sylhet monkeys" on January 21.

On Wednesday, the divisional forest officer along with others visited the area to assess the situation.

Since locals use trees and plants as firewood, the number of trees have declined significantly in recent years. Also, the primates rely on fruits, which have become scarce near the forests, according to Bangladesh Paribesh Andolon, Sylhet chapter.

The monkeys lost their habitat due to unplanned urbanisation and the food crisis began, it added.

Locals said they did not want to have the monkeys culled. They want the Sylhet City Corporation to take necessary steps to save them from the nuisance.

They said Chashni Pir was an aide to Hazrat Shah Jalal (RA) and had pet monkeys, which eventually multiplied and the shrine became famous.

"We have visited the spot and will send a proposal to the higher authorities soon for saving the monkeys," said RFM Monirul Islam, divisional forest officer of the Sylhet Forest Division.

He said they have no government allocation for feeding the monkeys. "It's not in their nature to disturb people, monkeys bother people only when people bother them," he claimed.



Workers passing a busy time preparing stalls for Amar Ekushey Grantha Mela (book fair) at Suhrawardy Udyan yesterday. The month-long book fair begins on the capital's Bangla Academy premises and on a part of Suhrawardy Udyan from February 1.

PHOTO: STAR