

TANGENTS

BY IHTISHAM KABIR



Black-hooded oriole and shimul flower.

PHOTO: IHTISHAM KABIR

SHIMUL

After a short and mild winter, spring is in the air. Nowhere is it more evident than in the flowers that are blooming. Among wildflowers, you can see *bhat* (hill glory bower) and *akond* (crown flower) blooming in the fields. In larger trees, my favourites are *mandhaar* (coral flower), *polash* (parrot tree), *kanchon* (bauhinia) and the beautiful *shimul* (silk cottonwood).

In the countryside, *shimul* is a treat for the eyes. That's because the deciduous tree has shed its leaves during winter, and the bold red flowers that have appeared ahead of new leaves envelope its crown and visible without obstruction. The tree stands out against other trees and is easily spotted from country roads. The flowers are large (about 6" across) and have soft, thick petals, five per flower, with an oily sheen. While red is the common colour, I have also seen trees of yellow and white *shimul* flowers.

The *shimul* is a straight, tall tree that can grow up to 20 meters tall. Its trunk is covered by thorns. The leaves grow in a pattern resembling the fingers of an outstretched palm. Its few branches spread in a circle around the trunk. A robust and resilient tree, it can grow in many types of tropical environments and soils. Its seed pods ripen in the summer and, if left unpicked, burst yielding fluffy cotton and tiny black seeds. The tree's sap, as well as roots of juvenile trees, have medicinal uses.

The wood of the *shimul* is soft, whitish and lightweight, reminiscent of balsa wood that is often used by children to carve into toys. In fact, the *shimul* (bombax ceiba) shares the same genus as the balsa tree (bombaria pyramidale).

But for me the *shimul* tree also has another draw. Its flowers attract birds.

There are several ways that birds benefit from the *shimul* flower. They contain nectar that birds like to drink. Some birds also eat the petals. Finally the insects that come to the flowers are also eaten by many birds.

Indeed, it is a joy to stand under a blooming *shimul* tree and watch the birds. I spent one morning doing just that in Purbachol as a variety of birds made their way through the tree. First came the *kath shaliks* (chestnut-tailed starlings) with their inquisitive eyes and blue-yellow beaks. They hopped from branch to branch, systematically scouring the flowers for food. Also present were *jhuti shaliks* and *bhat shaliks* - jungle myna and common myna - which were much larger than the starling but less thorough in their search. They looked in only a few large flower clusters, flying rather than hopping between branches. The *bulbulis* (red-vented bulbul) made short forays in and out of the tree, but did not appear to score well.

The highlight came when a *holud pakhi* (black-hooded oriole) flew over in search of food. This is one of our most beautiful birds with a bright yellow body, pink beak, black head, and a beautiful whistle for a song. It inserted its head completely inside each flower while searching for eating. Defying gravity, effortlessly jumped up or down branches after it finished with a flower. It also aggressively buzzed away any bird that appeared as competition. Its yellow colour added a startling contrast to the red flowers.

While winter's migrant birds disappear until the next season, flowers such as *shimul* give us an opportunity to observe and appreciate our beautiful year-round birds.

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Kendriya Khelaghara Asar, a children's organisation, brings out a celebratory procession in front of Bangladesh Shishu Academy yesterday marking its national convention. Established on May 2, 1952, Khelaghara is the oldest organisation showcasing children's talents. Since 1971, its mission has been to give children a platform to flourish their talents in the spirit of the Liberation War. PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

JS may accept March 25

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Taking floor in an unscheduled discussion in the House on February 15, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina said, "I think we'll

have to take initiatives in this regard. We can adopt a proposal in Parliament to make 25th March the mass killing day. We can also provide information and other proofs to different international organisations so that 25th March could become (International)

Mass Killing Day."

Commerce Minister Tofail Ahmed had initiated the discussion referring to the misleading information of a book titled "Creation of Bangla desh: Myths Exploded" by Junaid Ahmed published from Karachi in Pakistan.

Road crashes kill five, injure 24

FROM PAGE 3
police microbus rammed his motorcycle in Balutupia area yesterday.

The deceased was Abu Taher of Shahpur village.

The deceased was Jakaria,

16, of Chilapara village.

In Feni, 20 people were injured as a picnic bus collided head-on with a truck in Dganbhuiya upazila yesterday. The injured were hospitalised.

Habiganj tea workers protest setting up SEZ

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

With a call to save their ancestral land, around 5,000 tea workers, along with civil society members organised a programme titled, "Praner Parab" yesterday at Chandpur tea garden in Chunarughat upazila of Habiganj to protest setting up of a special economic zone there by the government.

The daylong event was organised by "Cha Jonogoshti Bhumi Odhikar Committee" and "Cha Jonogoshti Bhumi Odhikar Chatro Jubo Andalan".

Besides, tea workers of Chandpur, Begum Khan and Jualbhanga tea gardens also observed a two-hour work stoppage, said Bhutto Karmakar, a worker of Begum Khan tea garden.

The government has decided to develop SEZs across the country under its Economic Zones Development Project. One of the SEZs will be in Chandpur area.

The decision to set up an economic zone on the arable land in Habiganj would threaten the livelihoods of thousands of tea workers, warned rights activists.



A section of the protesters.

PHOTO: STAR

With a slogan, "Amar Mati, Amar Ma, Kera Nite Debo Na" (my land, my mother, will not let anyone snatch it), the event hosted a variety of programmes like sports competitions, kite flying, music, dance and theatre performances, where artistes Uzzal Chakrabarty, Arup Das and Kafil Ahmed performed.

Musical and theatre groups including Sorbopran Sangskritik Shokti, Somogit, Nogornat, Sohobia, Madol, Chitkar, Prachonat, Bottola, Tirondaj and Pothik Theatre, also took part.

Later, a photography exhibition was held on the struggles of the tea workers.

Mohon Rabidas, a rights activist, Sunil Biswas, president of Protik Theatre, and Nipen Paul, member secretary of Chandpur Bhumi Rakha Committee, were also present.

Hefajat again threatens Shapla Chattar siege

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Hefajat-e-Islam Bangladesh leaders yesterday at a rally in Chittagong demanded removal of a sculpture of what they claimed to be a Greek idol installed in front of the country's apex court and withdrawal of the cases against their leaders.

They also threatened to lay siege to Shapla Chattar if the cases are not withdrawn and the statue is not removed, said its Chittagong city unit publicity secretary ANM Ahmad Ullah.

"We will go for a tougher movement if our demands are not met," he said.

Hundreds of Hefajat activists joined the rally in front of the north gate of Anderkilla Shahe Jame Mosque after the Juma prayers, where its central joint secretary general Mainuddin Ruhil and central finance secretary Hazi Moazzam Huq also spoke.

START



RUNNING FOR A CAUSE... Participants run at the 2nd Dhaka Women's Marathon organised with the theme "Safer Dhaka for Women". A total of 110 runners from different walks of life -- celebrities from the media and sports, foreigners, ambassadors from different countries, professionals, homemakers and students -- joined the 10-km-long marathon on the road along the Begunbari-Hatirjheel lake. Dhaka University Vice Chancellor Prof AAMS Arefin Siddique inaugurated the event while Information Minister Hasanul Haq Inu handed over prizes to top five runners, reports UNB.



Language hero, journo Zainul laid to rest

BSS, Dhaka

Zainul Abedin, a senior journalist and one of the 1952 Language Movement veterans, was buried at the Martyred Intellectuals' Graveyard yesterday.

The 81-year-old, who died at Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University on Thursday night, was laid to rest around 3:30pm following his second namaj-e-janaza at Baitul Mukarram National Mosque after the Juma prayers. Earlier, his first namaj-e-janaza was held at Jatiya Press Club at 9:00am.

Senior journalists including Jatiya Press Club President Muhammad Shafiqur Rahman, former president Khondoker Monirul Alam, senior vice president Saiful Alam, president of a faction of BFUJ Monjurul Ahsan Bulbul and secretary general Omar Faruque; president of a faction of DUJ Saban Mahmud and general secretary Sohel Haider Chowdhury, among others, participated in the janaza.

Diplomatic Correspondents Association, Bangladesh (DCAB) also expressed deep shock at Zainul's demise in a condolence message, signed by DCAB President Rezaul Karim Lotus and General Secretary Pantho Rahman.

Bangabandhu was first to realise Pakistan won't exist

Hasina tells March 7 discussion

BSS, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was the first among many Bangalee politicians who realised that the state of Pakistan was not born to exist.

"Pakistan was an artificial state of two far-flung nations founded on the basis of religion but having no similarity in their languages, cultures and behaviours. Artificially the two nations of about 1,200-mile distance were connected. And, soon after creation of Pakistan, the rulers...attacked the language of the majority people, which led Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman to realise that Pakistan was not born to exist," she said.

The premier was speaking at a seminar organised by Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Memorial Trust marking Historic March 7 at the capital's Krishibid Institution.

Sheikh Hasina, also the chairperson of

the Trust, presided over the seminar.

"Each and every step of Bangabandhu from taking part in the Jukta Front election to the general election in 1970 was part of his thought-out plan to liberate the nation from the clutch of subjugation."

Sheikh Hasina said the historic speech of Bangabandhu remained banned for long since 1975. But the keenness and aptitude of the new generation to know about the speech is very encouraging.

She said the historic speech will guide the new generation.

Mohammad Arafat, chairperson of Suchinta Foundation, and Dr Zinat Huda, professor of sociology at Dhaka University, were present as discussants.

Dr Moshiur Rahman, professor of sociology at DU, presented the keynote on "Bangabandhu Bhashon: Rastro O Somaj Kathamo Poribortaner Dik Dorshan" (Bangabandhu's speech on March 7: A philosophy of Changing the State and Social Structure).

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'Abandoned' luxury car seized in capital

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) confiscated an "abandoned" luxury vehicle with false documents and no legal ownership from the garage of a house in the capital's Jatrabari on Thursday night.

On information, a team led by Assistant Superintendent of Police Aminul Islam recovered the BMW car.

Rab suspected that the car was bought illegally dodging tax and being used for criminal activities, said a press release.

The caretaker of the house at Golapbagh said one Abul Hossain, an acquaintance of the house owner, left the car in the garage over a month ago.

Abul admitted to Rab that the car belongs to one Ziaul Haque of Chittagong who owes him some money.

So he kept the car in his possession. However, Abul could not provide any contact number of Ziaul.

প্রিভেন্ট

ফ্যামিলি ভ্যাকসিন সেন্টার

প্রিভেন্ট একটি বিশ্বান্তের আধুনিক ভ্যাকসিন সেন্টার -

- প্রশিক্ষণ প্রাপ্ত ডাক্তার ও নার্স দ্বারা ভ্যাকসিন প্রয়োগ করা হয়।
- সব বয়সের ব্যক্তিদের ভ্যাকসিন দেওয়া হয়।
- নির্ধারিত তাপমাত্রায় (২-৮ ° সে.) ভ্যাকসিন সংরক্ষণ করা হয়।

এখানে হেপটাইটিস বি, টাইফোড, ফ্লু, মেমিজাইটিস, মিজেলস-ক্রবেলা, জলাত্ত্বক, টিটেনাস সহ অন্যান্য সকল ভ্যাকসিন দেওয়া হয়।

এছাড়া ভ্যাকসিন সংক্রান্ত যে কোন তথ্যের জন্য

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০১৭১৮-০৯৮১৮৮ (শনি-বৃহস্পতি সকল ভ্যাকসিন দেওয়া হয়।

*সরকারি ট্রান্সিট নিম্নলিখিত

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