

TANGENTS

BY IHTISHAM KABIR



Agriculture: a good idea?

PHOTO: IHTISHAM KABIR

Hunter-Gatherer

I was walking on a hilly trail late one afternoon. Down the hill ran a narrow stream; a field was on the other side. At the far edge of the field was a large and dense patch of *lutki*, a wildflower common in those parts.

In the dim light, I saw a sudden flicker of movement from the *lutki* bush. I immediately squatted down on the trail and waited. Presently a grayish bird, smaller than a chicken, emerged from the thick bush. It was a rare slaty-breasted rail, a bird of the fields. It scampered to and fro on the field picking seeds and insects. After a few minutes it returned to the bush. I waited but it never reappeared.

I returned there on many subsequent days at the same time but never saw the bird again.

Then it occurred to me it might have moved away. Birds and wild animals move easily. They have no belongings, no houses, flats, furniture, books or cars. Not tied to anything, they can be here today and gone tomorrow.

At one time humans were like this too. Homo Sapiens was a hunter-gatherer for about 2.5 million years when his time was spent gathering plants and hunting animals that lived without human intervention. He was not tied down to one place and roamed freely. Then, about 10,000 years ago, something changed, and humans learned to farm and domesticate animals. This was the Agricultural Revolution.

In his bestselling book *Sapiens*, Yuval Noah Harari speaks eloquently about the hunter-gatherer and man's transition to farming. This transition, he argues, was not good for humans. Consequences included private land ownership and rise of a landed class, more mouths to feed due to a

population explosion, more disease and stress, and a less interesting life. "The average farmer worked harder than the average forager and got a worse diet in return," says Harari.

Michael Pollan, in his book *Botany of Desire*, goes one step further. It was as if humans were put to use by plants, he argues. How? Since the Agricultural Revolution, the grass family of plants has emerged a big winner in the struggle among the species for survival. It has propagated itself around the earth with the help of humans. Take wheat (which is a type of grass) as an example. Ten thousand years ago wheat was an insignificant wild grass growing in some parts of the Middle East. Now it has become one of the most widespread and successful living things on earth. Today wheat covers 2.25 million square kilometres of the earth's surface, almost ten times the size of Britain! A similar argument could be made for our favourite staple rice.

Recently a news item caught my eye. A research study has found that the Tsimane people of Bolivia, who are hunter-gatherers, have the healthiest hearts in the world. They have the lowest levels of clogged arteries among any population. Their lifestyle - which includes four to seven hours of exercise every day while hunting and gathering - and their diet which is low in unrefined sugar, is credited for this.

This finding appears to vindicate Harari's thoughts. There is a problem, of course - this lifestyle is not practical in today's world. However there is still an important lesson here: exercise is good, as is eating a sensible, low-sugar diet. Unfortunately I must confess that while I excel in the first, I fail badly in the second!

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Create consensus for Genocide Day

Urges DUAA discussion

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a discussion yesterday stressed the need for creating consensus among people at home and abroad to earn international recognition of the Genocide Day which will be observed today in the country.

Like the Liberation War, the incident of genocide is marked permanently in the history of Bangladesh and the young generation need to work for its due recognition of the day, they said.

Dhaka University Alumni Association (DUAA) held the discussion at DU Senate Building ahead of the Genocide Day, which is to be observed for the first time in the history of Bangladesh.

The National Parliament on March 11 unanimously adopted a resolution to observe March 25 as Genocide Day after Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal lawmaker Shirin Akter from Feni-1 placed a motion.

The government recently said it will write to the United States to request recognition of the day.

SEE PAGE 5 COL 1

Trump calls Bangladesh an important partner

Congratulates President Hamid, PM Hasina marking 47th Independence Day

BSS, Dhaka

US President Donald Trump has extended his "heartiest congratulations" to President Abdul Hamid and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on the occasion of the 47th Independence and National Day of Bangladesh.

In separate messages to the president and the prime minister yesterday, Trump said Bangladesh and the US were "important partners on democracy, development, trade and investment, and global and regional security, including counterterrorism."

"I am pleased to congratulate you and the people of Bangladesh as you commemorate Bangladesh's Independence Day on March 26 ... I am also honored to convey the best wishes

of the people of the United States," Trump said in his message to President Hamid.

The US president said the United States' friendship with Bangladesh had grown ever stronger and deeper over the past four decades.

Trump said he looks forward to advancing US-Bangladesh relationship to ensure continuing peace and prosperity for both countries.

In a separate message sent to Sheikh Hasina, the US president said he was honored to convey the well-wishes of the American people on the occasion. "I join you in celebrating your country's great heritage," he said.

He said the United States and Bangladesh shared common values, as well as a commitment to ensure a safer, more peaceful world.

3-day photo exhibition on Bangabandhu opens today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A three-day photo exhibition on Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman begins at Bangabandhu Memorial Museum, located on the former premises of Dhaka Central Jail, on the capital's Nazim Uddin Road today, marking Independence Day.

Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader yesterday inaugurated the event, which was organised by the jail authorities in association with Journey, a voluntary organisation.

The museum will remain open for the public from today to Monday.

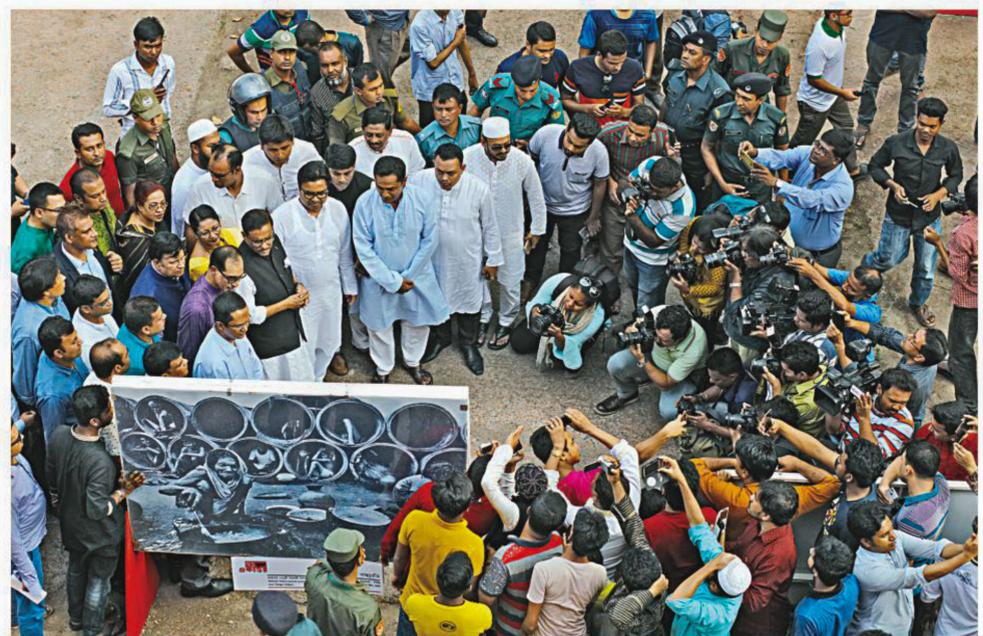
The photo exhibition titled "Bangabandhu Manei Swadhinata" will feature 171 pictures on the Father of the Nation.

The visitors will have to pay Tk 100 for entry for two hours.

Obaidul Quader said Bangabandhu spent around 13 years in the prison.

Four national leaders -- Syed Nazrul Islam, Tajuddin Ahmad, Capt M Mansur Ali and AHM Quamaruzzaman -- were brutally killed by some army officers inside the jail on November 3, 1975.

Marking Jail Killing Day on November 2 last year, the museum was opened for the public for the first time after the jail complex was shifted to Keraniganj.



Guests at the inaugural ceremony of a three-day photo exhibition, "Bangabandhu Manei Swadhinata", on the former Dhaka Central Jail site in the capital yesterday. The jail authorities and voluntary organisation Journey organised the event, marking Independence Day. The exhibition opens to public today.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Teesta deal not this time, but it'll happen soon: Quader

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Agreements will be signed with India upholding the national interests and sovereignty of the country, Awami League General Secretary Obaidul Quader said yesterday.

"Whether it is a military or civil deal, it will be done for the interests of Bangladesh. There will be no treaty beyond this," he told a programme of Krishak League at Mahanagar Natya Mancha in the capital.

Quader, also the road transport and bridges minister, said they wanted equality-based relations with India.

Asked what may happen to the Teesta water sharing deal during Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's India visit next month, he said this treaty would not be signed this time but the signing would happen a few days later.

"The person who signed the Ganges treaty will sign the Teesta

treaty," he said referring to Sheikh Hasina in this regard.

"The Teesta agreement is a matter of time. This treaty will be signed in time. All processes are about to be completed to this end," he mentioned.

Referring to the intra-party feud, which resulted in debacles in the recent bar association elections in Supreme Court and Dhaka judge's court, he said the party was affected

SEE PAGE 5 COL 1

BSF beats up Bangladeshis

1,000 with visas return home

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Benapole

Border Security Force of India beat up some Bangladeshi passport holders in no man's land on their way to India through Benapole Land Port on Thursday.

Around 1,000 Bangladeshis with passports and visas got back home following the action, said Fazlul Haque, sub-inspector of Benapole Immigration Police.

The Bangladeshis in a long queue were not allowed after 6:00pm as per the Indian authorities' restriction, he said.

The BSF became violent as Bangladeshis shouted to cross the no man's land, said Fazlul Haque.

The Bangladeshi passport holders, including Mainul Islam of Dhaka and Nirupama Roy of Khulna, said they had to wait for hours in the long queue to go to India, but to no avail.



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Models pose in custom-designed costumes created by the country's "first ever" costume shop Encore Creations. With expertise in creating a wide range of costumes including corporate attire, uniform and athletic jerseys, the shop organised an elaborate costume and bridal show at a local hotel yesterday evening on the occasion of its grand launching.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

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