

TANGENTS

BY IHTISHAM KABIR



Yellow bittern, Purbachol.

PHOTO: IHTISHAM KABIR

Bitterns of Bangladesh

Two and a half years ago on a cool winter morning I stood at the edge of a fish pond in Hail Haor, a wetland near Moulvi Bazar. The sun had burned off the fog, leaving a clear day. The pond was large with a dense mix of aquatic plants growing around its edges. These plants – including water lily, water hyacinth and lotus – created a bushy green cover several feet wide encircling the lake's water. I was watching some whistling ducks (*shorali*) on the water when I was startled by a loud rustling noise very close. A black bird, similar in shape to a pond heron (*kani boga*) but smaller, shot out of the plant cover in front of me. I was able to get one or two quick photographs before it dived back into the plants and disappeared. I waited in vain for it to emerge from hiding.

Later, I showed the photographs to eminent birder Enam Ul Haque who confirmed that it was a rare black bittern.

Bangladesh has four species of bitterns: black, cinnamon, yellow and (the extremely rare) Eurasian bittern. They belong to the bird family Ardeidae. The same family includes egrets and herons (the *bok* and its relatives) and bitterns wear the same general look including a long pointed beak and tall skinny legs. However, in my experience, bitterns are very shy and secretive.

After the black bittern it was a long while before I saw another bittern: two weeks ago to be precise. In a remote part of Purbachol, on a small plot of trees flanked on both sides by bamboo groves, I was, once again, looking at another bird when movement in a jackfruit tree caught my eye. Perched on a big branch was what looked like a

pond heron but smaller, and I immediately thought of bitterns. The bird was shy and as soon as it saw me it flew up to the top of an adjacent bamboo tree. There it clung to the thin trunk, swaying in the wind. I could clearly see the crest of feathers on its head and the streaks on the breast that characterize female yellow bitterns. High up, it furtively made its way through several bamboos. After allowing me some half-concealed poses, it flew off to land on another bamboo several hundred yards away.

I saw cinnamon bitterns in Purbachol several times, but always momentarily. I know where some of them live – among the water plants in lakes – but once they see me they dive into the bushes and stay out of sight. Some years ago I saw and photographed a cinnamon bittern in a Sylhet village, but since then every cinnamon bittern I have encountered flew before I could get a good photograph.

Bitterns get their food from water and mud. They hunt stealthily, particularly in marshy areas, looking for small fish, frogs and other small prey. One reason they are hard to spot is because they come out at dawn or dusk.

In flight, the cinnamon bittern looks reddish and the yellow bittern has a wide black band at wing's edge. This is how you tell them apart from the more common pond heron. To find bitterns is almost a stroke of luck. While you look for them in wetlands, fish ponds or rice paddies, stealth will be your best friend.

www.facebook.com/ikabirphotographs or follow ihtishamkabar on Instagram

Man kills sister-in-law, injures wife

He later 'commits suicide'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

A rickshaw-van puller hanged himself from a tree after killing his sister-in-law and injuring his wife near his in-laws' house in Barisal city's Puranpara area yesterday.

The body of six-year-old Sadia, who was hacked in the head and chest by Sajib Hossan, 24, was found floating in a pond while Sajib's wife Sumaiya Akter, 18, was found unconscious near it, said police.

Nurul Islam, officer-in-charge of Kawnia Police Station, said they recovered the body on information from locals.

The bodies were sent to Sher-e-Bangla Medical College Hospital morgue for autopsies, he said.

With injuries to the face and back, Sumaiya was undergoing treatment at the hospital.

Sajib and Sumaiya had a long standing family dispute, the OC quoted Parul Begum, mother of Sumaiya, as saying.

Sumaiya recently left her husband's home, went to her father's house and started working at a textile mill, said the police officer.

Sajib also went to his in-laws' house on Thursday night, said Nurul, adding that before taking dinner he went out of home with his wife and sister-in-law.

Hours later, Parul went out of home as they did not return and found the bodies, said the police officer.

Habibur Rahman, deputy commissioner (north) of Barisal Metropolitan Police, said they are investigating the incident.

Siddiquir's eyes examined at Chennai hospital

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Government Titumir

College student Siddiquir

Rahman, whose eyes

were damaged

in a "police action", was

primarily examined by a

doctor of Sankara Nethralaya

Hospital in Chennai, India

yesterday.

Dr Dhanshree Ratra has

gone through the case

summary prepared by

National Institute of

Ophthalmology (NIO), Dr

Zahidul Ahsan Menon, an

assistant professor at the

NIO, who is accompanying

Siddiquir, told The Daily

Star last night.

Dr Dhanshree checked

the B-scan report and slit

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VC PANEL SELECTION

DU senate sits today amid white panel members' boycott

DU CORRESPONDENT

The senate of Dhaka University sits today to nominate a three-member panel for appointment of the vice chancellor, amid a boycott by the pro-BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami white panel.

Convenor of the white panel Prof Akhter Hossain Khan announced the boycott through a press conference at DU Teachers' Club yesterday.

"We cannot take part in the special session of the senate on ethical grounds as around 50 posts of the 105-member senate remain vacant," he said. "It is totally unexpected."

A section of the pro-Awami League blue panel, which backs incumbent VC Prof Arefin Siddique, also wanted to halt the VC panel election earlier, citing the same reason – absence of 55 members of the senate.

The section led by Prof Maksud Kamal, president of Dhaka University Teachers' Association (Duta), also went to court, but the Supreme Court later cleared the way for holding the senate session to nominate a VC panel today.

As per the Dhaka University Order, 1973, the VC shall be appointed by the chancellor for a period of four years from a panel of three teachers. He shall be nominated by the university senate, and be eligible for a re-appointment for a second term.

However, in 2013, the question about the legality of the

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A bus moves amid a cloud of dust avoiding pipes, sand and other construction materials kept haphazardly on both sides on East Rampura Road in the capital. The disorderly construction of drainage on the road is causing traffic congestion and serious dust pollution in the area. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Road crashes claim 10 lives

CITY DESK

Ten people were killed and 12 others injured in road accidents in the country yesterday and Thursday.

In an accident, four unidentified people were killed and at least five others injured on Dhaka-Khulna Highway in Madhukhali upazila of Faridpur last night, reports UNB.

Police said a Dhaka-bound bus of 'Shyamoli Paribahan' from Khulna collided-head with a microbus at Kajirpara around 11:00pm.

The accident left three passengers of the microbus, including its driver, and a bus passenger, dead instantly.

In Gazipur, a fish trader was killed and five others were injured as their pick-up van overturned in Masterbari of Gazipur city yesterday.

The dead is Moazzen Hossain, 25, of Rahmatpur Beparypara in Sherpur. The injured were shifted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

In Tangail, a woman was killed while her husband and daughter were injured as a truck rammed their motorbike at Karatia Bypass on Dhaka-Tangail Highway in Tangailsadar yesterday.

The dead is Jakia Mahmud, 35, of Habla Tenguriapara village in Basail.

In Dinajpur, two policemen were killed

when a truck hit their motorbike from behind in Charmatha of Hakimpur upazila of Dinajpur on Thursday afternoon.

The dead are Abdul Hye Siddique, 35, assistant sub-inspector, and Ashraful Islam, 50, a constable of Hakimpur Police Station in Dinajpur.

Staff correspondent of Chittagong reports, Ayub Ali Sujan, 26, died after an unidentified vehicle ran him over in Saraipara of Pahartoli area in Chittagong city early yesterday.

In Halishahar, advocate Rafiqul Islam, 70, also died after a vehicle ran him over while he was on a morning walk in front of his house in K Block area.



Trump aide arrives tomorrow

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The Trump administration is sending a senior official of the White House to Dhaka on Sunday to discuss various issues of mutual interest with top government officials.

Lisa Curtis, deputy assistant to US President Donald Trump and senior director for South and Central Asia at the White House, will discuss development cooperation, trade and investment, terrorism and extremism and global issues among others.

This will be the first high-level visit from the White House since Trump's inauguration as president.

During her one-day visit, she will meet Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, Foreign Minister AH Mahmood Ali, Foreign Secretary Shahidul Haque and other stakeholders. She will depart Dhaka on Monday morning.

Asked about her brief visit to Bangladesh, officials at the US embassy and foreign ministry declined to make any specific comment. They said the US government supports Bangladesh's tough stance on terrorism.



Indian High Commissioner Harsh Vardhan Shringla inaugurates the fourth India Education Fair at the capital's The Daily Star Centre yesterday. A total of 40 Indian universities are taking part in the two-day fair. It will remain open from 10:00am to 6:00pm today. The event is organised by SAPE Events and Media Pvt Ltd, in association with the Indian High Commission.

PHOTO: STAR

Cross-border education to deepen ties

Indian envoy tells launch of India Education Fair at The Daily Star Centre

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Cross-border education between Bangladesh and India will help strengthen relations between the two neighbouring countries further, said Indian High Commissioner Harsh Vardhan Shringla yesterday.

Through education, people of the two countries will be able to develop a good communication and share knowledge and information, he said.

He made the remarks while inaugurating the "4th India Education Fair 2017" organised by SAPE Events and Media Pvt Ltd, in association with the Indian High Commission held at the capital's The Daily Star Centre.

A total of 40 Indian universities are taking part in the two-day fair. It will remain open from 10:00am to 6:00pm today. The fair is open to all.

Shringla said despite the terrorist attacks in Gulshan and Sholakia, his country decided to continue the fair as they had confidence in Bangladesh.

Sanjay Thapa, founder and managing director of SAPE, said top Indian universities are participating in the fair. Prospective students will get detailed information regarding their desired institutions.

Syed Nurul Anam, an HSC graduate, said he wanted to study in India as the universities there provide quality education at an affordable cost.

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