

TANGENTS

BY IHTISHAM KABIR



Pied kingfisher hovering before diving.

PHOTO: IHTISHAM KABIR

Hovering Birds

Some years ago I was birding in the National Botanical Garden, Dhaka. The lush, beautiful Garden hosts many kinds of birds among its trees, bushes and grass. On that particular day I was watching the *dhaira* vines that grow quite tall wrapping themselves around larger trees. The bright orange *dhaira* flowers bloom profusely and draw smaller birds with their nectar.

A small dark bluish bird with a long beak - a purple sunbird - arrived and started flitting from flower to flower, inserting its beak to extract nectar. It perched - often precariously - as it drank the nectar, but there were some flowers its beak could not reach from perching position. So it rapidly flapped its wings to stay airborne, or *hovered*, while its beak reached into the flower.

I had seen photographs of hovering birds before: hummingbirds, which are found only in the Americas, are often pictured hovering. But this was the first time I saw one of our own birds doing this trick.

How does a bird hover? As you can guess, hovering needs a complex manoeuvre of wings. Hummingbirds and sunbirds have flexible shoulder joints that allow them to rapidly oscillate their wings to and fro in a particular pattern. This movement of the wings generates lift, a force that counters gravity and enables the bird to hover.

Since that day I have seen many other birds hovering. It takes birds a lot of energy to hover, so they do it for short periods to find food.

Pied kingfishers are well-known for

their hovering. I encountered pied kingfishers in Purbachol, hovering over water, sometimes for several seconds, while looking for fish. Once they find prey they dive to catch it.

Baya weavers hover during nest-building. They are thorough and meticulous engineers, testing the strength of the nest as construction proceeds. They inspect the nest from the inside by entering it and spreading their wings to push the walls outward. From the outside, they often hover while examining the nest and figuring out what part needs work.

Among birds of prey, several species are known for hovering. The black-winged kite, one of our three kites, catches prey from fields. If it suspects the presence of prey, it will hover over the area for a closer look. In some cases it will descend and hover again, stretching out its talons for the kill as it gets closer to the ground.

Kestrels, our commonest falcons, also hover while looking for prey. Sometimes kestrels will take advantage of wind direction and fly into the wind at the same speed as the wind is blowing, thus remaining stationary and hovering without spending extraneous energy.

But you don't have to go very far to find hovering birds. I have seen three of our common birds - house sparrows, black drongos and bulbuls - hover. One does need patience to watch this, though, as it is a fleeting movement.

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Faridpur woman 'kills son, herself'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Faridpur

A woman committed suicide after killing her minor son at her Barail village home of Madhukhali upazila in Faridpur yesterday, said police and locals.

The deceased are Farida Begum, 25, wife of Anis Sheikh, a farmer, and their two and half years' old son Rasul Sheikh.

Their bodies were found hanging from the ceiling, said police.

Locals said Anis was in a jute field during the incident around 8:00am.

Later, his elder brother Alamgir Sheikh, 30, came to their house and found the hanging bodies, they said.

Abdul Hanan Mollah, chairman of Gajna Union Parishad, said, "I heard that the mother committed suicide after killing her son."

Jarina Begum, a member of the Union Parishad, said, "Anis and Farida often quarreled over family feud."

The couple have another son, aged 5, at Farida's father's house in Rajbari, she added.

Madhukhali Police Station Office-in-Charge Ruhul Amin said Anis filed a case with the station accusing that his wife killed herself after killing his son.

The bodies were sent to Faridpur Medical College Hospital morgue for autopsies.

One shot, 10 hurt in AL factional clash

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

One person was shot and 10 others were injured as two factions of the ruling Awami League clashed over establishing supremacy at Borotoli Bazar in Gafargaon upazila of Mymensingh yesterday.

Nazim Uddin, 65, who was shot in the throat, was admitted to Mymensingh Medical College Hospital, said AKM Mahub Alam, officer-in-charge of Gafargaon Police Station.

The other injured were treated at local clinics, said police.

The two groups were preparing to bring out a procession at the Bazar, marking National Mourning Day, said Mahub Alam.

At that time, a group led by Masuduzzaman alias Dollar Masud, chairman of Char Algi Union Parishad, attacked the other group, backed by Dulal Uddin Akanda, former secretary of AL's Gafargaon upazila unit, said the OC.

The clash was triggered by the attack, he said.

The police official, however, could not say which group used a gun.

Nazim Uddin is loyal to Dulal Uddin, he said.

Masuduzzaman, also a member of AL's Gafargaon upazila convening committee, was detained in connection with the incident, he said, adding that he was being interrogated at the police station.

Masuduzzaman and Dulal were not available for comments.

No case was filed till filing of this report at 9:00pm yesterday.

UP chairman of Narail shot dead in Khulna

A CORRESPONDENT, Narail

A union parishad chairman of Narail was gunned down by some unknown assailants at his farmhouse in Dighalia upazila of Khulna early yesterday.

The deceased, Nahidul Hossain Mollah, 48, was the chairman of Hamidpur Union Parishad under Kalia upazila of Narail.

His wife Poli Khanam said Nahidul was sleeping at a room in their two-storey building at his farmhouse in Gazirhat area. Around 4:00am, she heard gunshots.

"I rushed to his room and found him lying in a pool of blood," she said.

He was taken to Khulna Medical College Hospital where the doctors declared him dead.

Shamsher Ali, officer-in-charge of Kalia Police Station, said miscreants might have shot him through the window.

Police have cordoned off the area following the incident.



Visitors look at books at a fundraiser book fair at Shahbagh in the capital yesterday. The organisers of the fair will distribute all the proceeds of the sale of books among the distressed in flood affected areas. Several concerned citizens under the banner of Momentum organised the event from 3:00pm till 9:00pm.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Two-day educational expo begins

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

An educational exhibition titled, "Innovative Teaching and Learning Expo 2017" began in Dhaka yesterday in a bid to share knowledge of the latest innovations in the country's education sector.

Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid inaugurated the two-day event, jointly organised by Daffodil Education Network and British Council Bangladesh, at Daffodil Tower in the city's Sobhanbag area.

Seminars, workshops and roundtable discussions will be held at the exhibition, where several local and international academics and education experts as well as students will display their latest innovations.

Besides, about 58 projects on innovative teaching were presented on the first day of the event.

Of them, two -- one submitted by Latifa Akter Sheuly, head teacher of Dania High School in Gopalganj; and another by Shah Alam Majumder, a curriculum expert of Bangladesh Technical Education Board -- were awarded.

Through the projects, the awardees showed that how visuals help students understand lecture, especially on science, and the importance of learning information and communication technology (ICT) along with course curriculum.

Speaking as chief guest at the inaugural ceremony, the education minister said innovative teaching and learning is a fundamental requirement of education in the modern age.

"Keeping education textbook-oriented, we will not attain our expected educational goals and won't be able to build our new

Two sisters, cousin drown in Kushtia

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

Two minor sisters and their cousin drowned in a pond at Charsadipur village in Kumarkhali upazila of Kushtia yesterday afternoon.

They are Salma Khatun, 5, and Laboni Khatun, 4, daughters of Saidul Islam; and Morium Akhter, 8, daughter of Safiqul Islam.

Robiul Islam, officer-in-charge of Kumarkhali Police Station, said the three accidentally fell into the pond while playing by its bank.

Formulate policy to halt unplanned construction

SUGGEST EXPERTS

UNB, Dhaka

The construction boom of housing projects in the country's suburban areas will lead to an acute shortage of arable land and water bodies if the government does not come up with a well thought-out policy to control the unplanned constructions, said experts.

Currently, Bangladesh is losing agricultural land at a rate of nearly 1 percent a year, according to a report of Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics.

Data from the Soil Resource Development Institute (SRDI) shows that over the course of 24 years before 2000, the country was losing arable land at an annual rate of 13,413 hectares. But since 2000, the rate has jumped to 68,690 hectares a year.

A survey, led by Abul Barakat, professor of economics at Dhaka University, found that some 2,096 bighas of farmland and water bodies were lost to non-agricultural

uses a day since 2003.

Prof Nazrul Islam, an eminent urban planner, told the news agency that real estate companies are constructing housing projects without the government's permission, for which the recovery of the land or the rivers will become difficult.

He suggested that the government come up with a policy that only high-level lands can be used to construct residential and commercial buildings, not just in Dhaka, but throughout the country.

It is important to have a law regarding the use of land, he said, adding, "The proposed 'City and Area Planning Act 2017' is a positive step by the government in this direction, but it is yet to be passed by parliament."

The draft law was proposed on behalf of the Local Government Engineering Department, but it only went through an

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SC VERDICT

Show respect to it, step down from power

BNP tells AL

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The BNP yesterday called upon the ruling Awami League to step down from power, showing respect to the observations of the 16th constitutional amendment verdict.

"The observations have described the current parliament as immature. Thus the government is illegitimate. I'm demanding dissolution of the current parliament and resignation of the government," said BNP Senior Joint Secretary General Ruhul Kabir Rizvi at a press conference at the party's Nayapaltan central office in Dhaka.

Rizvi alleged that the ruling quarter is putting pressure on the chief justice to scrap the verdict.

Referring to the media reports that the Bangladesh Bank and National Board of Revenue (NBR) have launched investigation into the chief justice's income and expenditure, Rizvi said, "It is nothing but a manifestation of revenge."

The government is treating the CJ as its political opponent and has unleashed the Bangladesh Bank and NBR against him, Rizvi alleged.

25 lakh households still live in extreme poverty

Says Brac annual report; poverty rate declines but challenge of extreme poverty remains

UNB, Dhaka

Some 25 lakh households in Bangladesh live in extreme poverty, according to a Brac report.

Though the country has reduced its poverty level to 27 percent, the challenge of extreme poverty still remains and women are disproportionately affected, the organisation said in its Annual Report 2016.

Pockets of extreme poverty are particularly prevalent in the hard-to-reach regions where often entire communities lack access to basic services and limited economic opportunities.

"We're working towards eliminating extreme poverty completely from Bangladesh by 2030 through a powerful combination of direct and complimentary efforts," Brac said in the report.

The report in its "eliminating extreme poverty" section said people living in extreme poverty are forced to make impossible choices every day about basic necessities such as food, medicine, housing and education.

"As much progress has been made globally to alleviate poverty in all its forms, we are now intent on eradicating it," reads the report.

Brac said they are taking a specially integrated approach in poverty pockets such as wetlands, riverine islands and indigenous populations.

"Pockets of extreme poverty exist all across Bangladesh, often in remote settings with limited infrastructure," it said.

Brac said 86,975 households graduated from extreme poverty in the country last year bringing the total number of households that have graduated from extreme poverty to 17.7 lakh.



Roads and Highways Department workers patch up potholes in the base of Gazipur-Joydevpur road near Kunia Targachh area yesterday. A long stretch of the road is now riddled with potholes after incessant monsoon rain washed away its upper layer. Such temporary fix will not withstand the pressure of heavy traffic unless the upper layer is restored soon.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN