

TANGENTS

BY IHTISHAM KABIR



Diademed sifaka, Mantadia National Park, Madagascar.

PHOTO: IHTISHAM KABIR

Amazing Madagascar

I am walking on a trail in a dense forest. Surrounding me are tall trees which have been here for eons and which cannot be found elsewhere on this planet. At a curve, I hear muffling sounds coming from my left and stop for a look. On a clearing on the ground I come upon an extraordinary sight: two completely wild juvenile diademed sifakas - a type of lemur - are gently tumbling with each other. They stop for a moment when they notice my presence, then resume. Their play continues for a few minutes until one's ears perk up and they both leap into the trunks of two adjacent trees with an effortless jump. Perhaps they heard a fossa - the only carnivore on this island, one that eats lemurs - but soon they relax and return to the ground to continue. Having never been so close to wild animals - I was four feet away - I am cautious but the gentle demeanour of the lemurs wins my heart.

I am in Mantadia National Park, a primary forest in Madagascar. The fourth largest island in the world, Madagascar broke off from the Asia-Africa-Europe landmass approximately 165 million years ago. Since then, flora and fauna here have evolved in their own way: 80% of the species found in Madagascar are endemic - they cannot be found elsewhere. Endemics include 110 species of birds and 100+ species of lemurs. There are numerous other life-forms: for example, over 300 species of frogs have been catalogued in the island.

Most birders come to Madagascar with a checklist of birds, moving on as soon as the next one has been spotted. Fortunately my companions are more patient and willing to linger. Down south in the spiny forest - a crowd of

thorny trees mostly without leaves - we stare at a subdesert mesite, which sits still on a bare tree. This bird, found only in this small corner of Madagascar, thinks it is hiding but in fact it is in plain sight. We fight with the sharp thorns of cactus and other plants to find a clear view of the bird. Nearby, sitting on top of a tall cactus, a Madagascar baza waits patiently for prey it can swoop down on.

In terms of development, Madagascar appears to be where Bangladesh was thirty years ago. With few exceptions, roads are rudimentary and there is little evidence of industrialization. However, the people are another story, friendly without exception. Language is a problem because English is a distant third after Malagasy and French.

In the capital Antananarivo we arrive at Lake Tsarasaotra for more birdwatching. A Ramsar site in the middle of the city, it teems with waterfowl. I see several new species including squacco herons, black herons (which make an umbrella with their wings to cast off reflections as the search for prey in the water), and red-billed teals. The star of the lake is the Madagascar pond heron with a blue beak and red feet. Males ruff up their feathers and rock back and forth on their feet while trying to attract a mate.

Its wild places dwindling rapidly, Madagascar still offers untold treasures for nature lovers. In our twelve days here, having covered two major natural habitats of this island, we are astounded by the diversity of life here. Madagascar is difficult to get to, but once there, you just might find paradise on earth.

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Condolences pour in for Annisul

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Tributes and condolences continue to pour in for Dhaka North City Corporation Mayor Annisul Huq, who breathed his last at a London hospital on Thursday.

Immediately after his demise, people from all walks of life started expressing shocks at the death of one popular television personality and business icon.

President Abdul Hamid and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina expressed deep shock at the death of DNCC mayor, reports BSS.

In a condolence message, the president said, "The nation has lost an eminent businessman and a successful industrialist...His death is really an irreparable loss for the country."

He prayed for eternal peace of the departed soul and conveyed deep sympathy to the bereaved family.

In her condolence message, the prime minister recalled the contributions of Annisul Huq to the development of the city.

She said Annisul took many epoch-making steps for the welfare of the people. "He will be ever remembered..."

The nation has lost a dedicated and popular public representative, she said. She also prayed for eternal peace of the departed soul and conveyed deep sympathy to the bereaved family.

Expressing deep shock at the death, Speaker Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury in a message also recalled the contributions of the mayor.

In his condolence message, Nobel laureate Prof Muhammad Yunus said Annisul was truly a people person. He was unique -- hard working, dedicated and energetic. There was much left for him to contribute.

Dhaka South City Corporation Mayor Sayeed Khokon could not stop his tears while talking to journalists at his Banani residence yesterday.

"We shared a close bond and used to talk frankly about the development of the city."



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Graffiti demanding Ducsu polls defaced

DU CORRESPONDENT

The graffiti demanding election to Dhaka University Central Students' Union (Ducsu) were found defaced yesterday.

A group of DU students, expressing solidarity with fellow student Walid Ashraf's movement, wrote the graffiti on Thursday on the walls of Teacher-Student Centre (TSC), the Memory Eternal and several roads leading to the senate building and residences of vice chancellor and pro-vice chancellor of the university.

Walid, a master's student of Institute of Social Welfare and Research, began a hunger strike on Saturday on the Memory Eternal premises demanding Ducsu polls before December 16.

Sand and burnt engine oil appeared to have been used to smear the wall writings stating "Ducsu Dey" (hold Ducsu election).

The campaigners, however, said they would rewrite the graffiti on the same walls.

Meanwhile, Progotishil Chhatra Jote, an alliance of left-leaning student organisations, yesterday staged a symbolic protest with pieces of black cloth tied around their mouths at Raju Memorial Sculpture on the campus, demanding Ducsu polls immediately.

Speakers at the programme said the university senate remains incomplete without representation from students.

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One might get the impression that the colourful umbrellas are of a fairground. But in reality, these are business accessories set up by street vendors who have taken over this portion of an important thoroughfare in the capital's Jatrabari area. They, with political blessings, have been doing business encroaching on this road after the Mayor Hanif Flyover was built overhead. The photo was taken yesterday. PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

Transport owner 'shot by DNCC councillor'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A councillor of Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC) allegedly shot and injured a bus owner over a trivial matter in the capital's Darussalam area early yesterday.

Mohammad Shamim, brother of the victim, alleged that his brother Mohammad Shahjahan sustained bullet injuries around 12:30am when Abu Taher, councillor of Ward-10, fired three shots from a pistol.

Taher was intoxicated at the time of the incident, Shamim also claimed.

Shahjahan was transferred to Trauma Centre after receiving treatment at Pongu Hospital (National Institute of Traumatology and Orthopaedic Rehabilitation).

Shamim filed a case with Darussalam Police Station accusing the councillor.

Police claimed that the councillor was on the run. When contacted, Taher however said he was staying at home and he was not involved in the incident.

Giving an account of the incident, Shamim told The Daily Star that the councillor arrived in Baidyartec area with a pistol around 12:15am when his brother was collecting

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NASIRNAGAR ATTACK 'Mastermind' freed on bail

UNB, Brahmanbaria

The suspected mastermind of the attacks on the Hindu community in Nasirnagar upazila in Brahmanbaria was released on bail on Thursday afternoon after serving five months and 10 days in jail.

Dewan Atiqur Rahan Anki, the suspended chairman of Haripur Union Parishad, was released from the district jail following a High Court order, said Mahbubur Rahman, inspector of District Judge's Court Police.

The inspector said the

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Smart NID card distribution begins in 27 districts

UNB, Dhaka

The Election Commission yesterday started distribution of smart national identity (NID) cards in 27 districts.

Chief Election Commissioner KM Nurul Huda opened the distribution process through a videoconference from the capital's Nirbachan Bhaban.

The deputy commissioners and district election officers from eight districts -- Gopalganj, Bogra, Patuakhali, Cox's Bazar, Noakhali, Pabna, Gaibandha and Netrakona -- joined the videoconference.

Last month, the EC decided to complete the machine readable card distribution across the country by December 2018.

The EC earlier started the distribution of smart NID card in the areas of the country's 11 city corporations after launching the distribution process in October 2016.

The 27 districts are Kurigram, Lalmonirhat, Panchagarh, Gaibandha, Nilphamari, Dinajpur, Thakurgaon, Bogra, Joypurhat, Pabna, Meherpur, Bagerhat, Narail, Pirojpur, Patuakhali, Jhalakathi, Barguna, Gopalganj, Shariatpur, Netrakona, Habiganj, Sunamganj, Noakhali, Bandarban, Khagrachhari, Cox's Bazar and Rangamati.

UP member hacked to death

UNB, Shariatpur

A member of Nagerpara Union Parishad in Gosairhat upazila was hacked to death on Thursday over previous enmity.

The deceased -- Nazrul Munsif, 45 -- was a member of Ward No-5 of the UP.

Quoting locals, police said Nazrul had been at loggerheads with Delwar Sareng, Masum Choudhury and Mohsin Sardar, residents of the area. On Thursday evening, Nazrul, along with his relative Tazem Mridha and friend Ratan Peda, was returning home from Gosairhat by a

battery-run auto-rickshaw.

When they reached Munsibazar, a group of 10/12 miscreants, including Delwar, Masum and Mohsin, halted the three-wheeler and attacked Nazrul and two others around 7:00pm, said Gosairhat Police Station Officer-in-Charge Mehedi Masud.

The miscreants hacked Nazrul, Tazem and Ratan, the OC added. Later, they were taken to Damudya Upazila Health Complex when doctors declared Nazrul dead.

The injured were transferred to Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

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TONIGHT

RISE HIGH BANGLADESH

SEASON 2
Venue: **Rajdarshan-Hall 3**
International Convention City Bashundhara - ICCB
Purbachal Express Highway, Dhaka

TOP 3 FINALISTS

Team Green Bees
University of Rajshahi

Team Third Dimension
Bangladesh University of Professionals (BUP)

Team Sept of Baelor
University of Dhaka

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