

TANGENTS

BY IHTISHAM KABIR



The ever mysterious Masked Finfoot.

PHOTO: IHTISHAM KABIR

Our Avian Bounty

THE masked finfoot is one of the rarest and most mysterious birds in the world. Found in the Bangladesh Sundarban, it has lobed – not webbed – feet that enable it to swim like a duck, but also nimbly climb trees and run on land. For me, it is a star of among bird species of Bangladesh.

And how many species is that? With recent first-time sightings, over 700 species of birds are seen in Bangladesh, an astonishingly high number when you consider our small area. For example, Spain has 562 and Turkey has 482 species. One reason for this richness is that Bangladesh falls under two bird flyways, highways in the sky that birds use for migration. These are the Central Asian Flyway and the East-Asia/Australasia Flyway. Another reason is that, despite overpopulation, our land is relatively rich in bird food such as vegetation, insects, fish, etc.

Ornithologists have many ways of grouping birds, but for me, our birds fall into three broad, overlapping categories. There are birds of the forests, birds of the fields and birds of water and shore.

Birds of the forest are usually the most colourful. If you spend some time watching them in one of our protected forests, such as Satchori National Forest, you will be charmed by their colours: the red and yellow crown on a yellow-nape woodpecker, the blue of a veriditer flycatcher, the red and green of a vernal hanging parrot, the green and orange of our pigeons, the brilliant crimson of a minivet... the list goes on. Forest birds,

however, are difficult to photograph because they are often fully or partially behind leaves and branches.

Birds of the field, which must camouflage well in the open, cannot compete with forest birds for colour. Relatively drab, they are easier to photograph because, out in the open, their entire form is visible. In winter, for example, birds which hunt, such as shrikes or bee-eaters are seen in many fields or village groves, where they perch on a tall spot. Other common birds of the field include munias, grassbirds, starlings, prinias, pipits and stonechats.

Among our water birds are a large variety of ducks, storks, smaller water birds, grebes, as well as shorebirds which hang around the mud. In winter, our duck variety grows significantly as migrant birds arrive. But some ducks, such as the lesser whistling duck and the cotton pygmy goose, stay here year-round. Among smaller water birds, the little grebe, various water hens as well as the spectacular purple swamphen are found year-round in Bangladesh.

So there you have it: a bounty of birds that enriches the biodiversity of Bangladesh. Far too often, we fall into the trap of thinking that our natural heritage is depleted. While this may be true for larger mammals, our avian population is something to be proud of. Once we are aware of this blessed bounty, we can take the right steps to preserve it.

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Cultural Affairs Minister Asaduzzaman Noor, Bishwo Shahitto Kendro Founder Prof Abdullah Abu Sayeed, Bangla Academy Director General Shamsuzzaman Khan and Prof Serajul Islam Choudhury light candles at the launching ceremony of "Dhaka Batighar" yesterday. The superstore for books was set up on a space about 5,000 square feet on the 7th floor of the Bishwo Shahitto Kendro Building in Banglamotor. It has over 1 lakh books of more than 10,000 writers on over one hundred topics.

Book superstore 'Dhaka Batighar' starts journey

Noor says special book fairs will be held in 16 dists

UNB, Dhaka

Cultural Affairs Minister Asaduzzaman Noor yesterday said the government has taken steps to arrange special book fairs in 16 districts of the country with the participation of 70-80 publishers from Dhaka.

He came up with the disclosure while addressing as the chief guest the launching ceremony of "Dhaka Batighar", a superstore for books, at Banglamotor in the capital.

The minister said the government was making efforts to turn book fairs into a place of get-together of booklovers rather than a so-called public gathering.

He also said the cultural affairs ministry was working with the British Council to make people attracted to libraries. "Librar-

ies will be turned into one-stop centres with all necessary facilities as in developed countries," he added.

Professors Emeritus Dr Anisuzzaman and Prof Serajul Islam Choudhury and Director General of Bangla Academy Shamsuzzaman Khan were present as special guests at the programme presided over by Bishwo Shahitto Kendro founder Prof Abdullah Abu Sayeed.

"Dhaka Batighar" was set up on a space about 5,000 square feet on the 7th floor of the Bishwo Shahitto Kendro Building in Banglamotor.

Designed in the Mughal architectural style, especially like Lalbagh Fort, the superstore has over 1 lakh books of more than 10,000 writers on over one hundred topics.

Super Chef is back

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rupchanda-The Daily Star Super Chef returns for the fifth season with a promise of being more exciting and intriguing.

The country's biggest culinary competition, jointly organised by Bangladesh Edible Oil Limited (BEOL) and The Daily Star, will commence through a regional competition in Chittagong on January 9.

Selection process will be held in six more regions -- Dhaka north and south, Bogra, Khulna, Sylhet and Barisal, Faisal Mahmud, marketing manager of BEOL, told a press conference at The Daily Star Centre yesterday.

Registration begins today and will continue till January 8; regional competitions will be held on January 9-25. The competition will begin airing on ntv from February 17.

In 2017, the culinary competition saw 4,000 registrations, and 30 episodes were held in 17 different

places. This time, the number of episodes will be 24. Alongside celebrities from the cooking arena, well-known media personalities will appear as guests throughout the competition, Faisal said.

"Based on viewers' suggestions, we will add some additional challenge of cooking regional items this time," he added.

He also said in the last two seasons some regional participants were given "waiting cards". They later got an opportunity to compete in another round in Dhaka to get a chance to be in the final round. "This time, there will be no waiting cards," he said.

Actor Tariq Anam Khan and culinary expert Nafiz Islam Lipi are the two confirmed judges while the name of the third judge will be announced later.

In the grooming session, the selected contestants will be given training in cooking and acting. Then, 20 contestants will be selected for the

final round.

The prize money for the Super Chef champion is Tk 10 lakh. The first runner-up will get Tk 5 lakh and the second Tk 3 lakh. The fourth to 10th place-holders will also get attractive prizes.

Best Electronics will provide electronics equipment for the show while the grocery partner is chain shop Agora.

In his speech, Mahfuz Anam, editor and publisher of The Daily Star, highlighted the importance of Bangladeshi food and its omnipresence in the culture. He hoped that the culinary competition will help people regain their healthy and nutritious food habits.

"It is like rediscovering something fundamentally necessary..." he said.

Mostafa Kamal Syed, chief of programme, ntv, and Didar Mohammad Dabirul Islam, head of finance and accounts, BEOL, also spoke.



The fifth season of Rupchanda-The Daily Star Super Chef was launched yesterday at a press conference in the capital's The Daily Star Centre. The country's biggest culinary competition, jointly organised by Bangladesh Edible Oil Limited (BEOL) and The Daily Star, will commence on January 9. Faisal Mahmud, marketing manager of BEOL, Mahfuz Anam, editor and publisher of the newspaper, Mostafa Kamal Syed, chief of programme at ntv, and Didar Mohammad Dabirul Islam, head of finance and accounts of BEOL, were present at the press conference.

Bumpy ride for SI

The cop closed over journo's motorbike theft

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

On the night of December 20, Maruf Ahmed, Sylhet correspondent of ntv, went to a restaurant in Mirbakshtula area. He parked his motorbike beside Manikpir road.

Once he got out of the restaurant after finishing his dinner, he could not find his bike -- a Bajaj Discover ST model. Maruf filed a case with Kotwali Police Station the same night.

Maruf eventually bought a new motorbike. On Thursday night, he took it to a workshop to do some additional work.

But he did not expect what happened next. A man came to the workshop to repair a motorbike. It looked familiar to Maruf's. Suddenly, he realised it was his bike -- the one that got stolen.

Maruf reacted quickly and informed the investigation officer of his case. The officer rushed to the workshop, arrested the man and seized the bike.

But a bigger shock was awaiting them all. The man with the bike turned out to be a

sub-inspector of Sylhet police.

Following the incident, the sub-inspector, Samiran Singha, was closed the same night, said Gousul Hossain, officer-in-charge of Kotwali Police Station. Samiran is the resident officer of the office of deputy police commissioner (South) of Sylhet Metropolitan Police, he said.

Gleaning information from Samiran, police also arrested Shah Jahan, 25, an informant from Golapganj upazila, who allegedly gave the motorbike to the SI after borrowing Tk 20,000 from him, said the OC.

According to police sources, Shah Jahan has been arrested before for being involved in a "motorbike stealing syndicate".

Police are also trying to trace one Nasir of Barlekha upazila in Moulvibazar, said the OC.

"Shah Jahan said it was Nasir, an active member of the syndicate, who stole and gave him the bike in the first place. He later gave the bike to Samiran in exchange for money," he added. Police also interrogated

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Two public examinations'

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Junior School Certificate (JSC) and Junior Dakhil Certificate (JDC) examinations for eighth graders at a press conference at 2:00pm at his secretariat office.

The examinees can get their results from their respective schools. Besides, primary students can get their results on the websites of Directorate of Primary Education (DPE): www.dpe.gov.bd. JSC and JDC students can get their results on www.educationboardresults.gov.bd. Student can also get their results via short messaging service (SMS).

Over 30 lakh fifth graders attended the primary terminal exams. The exams ended on November 26. On the other hand, 24, 68,820 eighth graders from 28,628 institutions appeared in the JSC and JDC tests.

International conference

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leading industrial, clinical and academic experts, and would play a good role to achieve SDGs.

Agriculture Minister Matia Chowdhury was the chief guest at the conference.

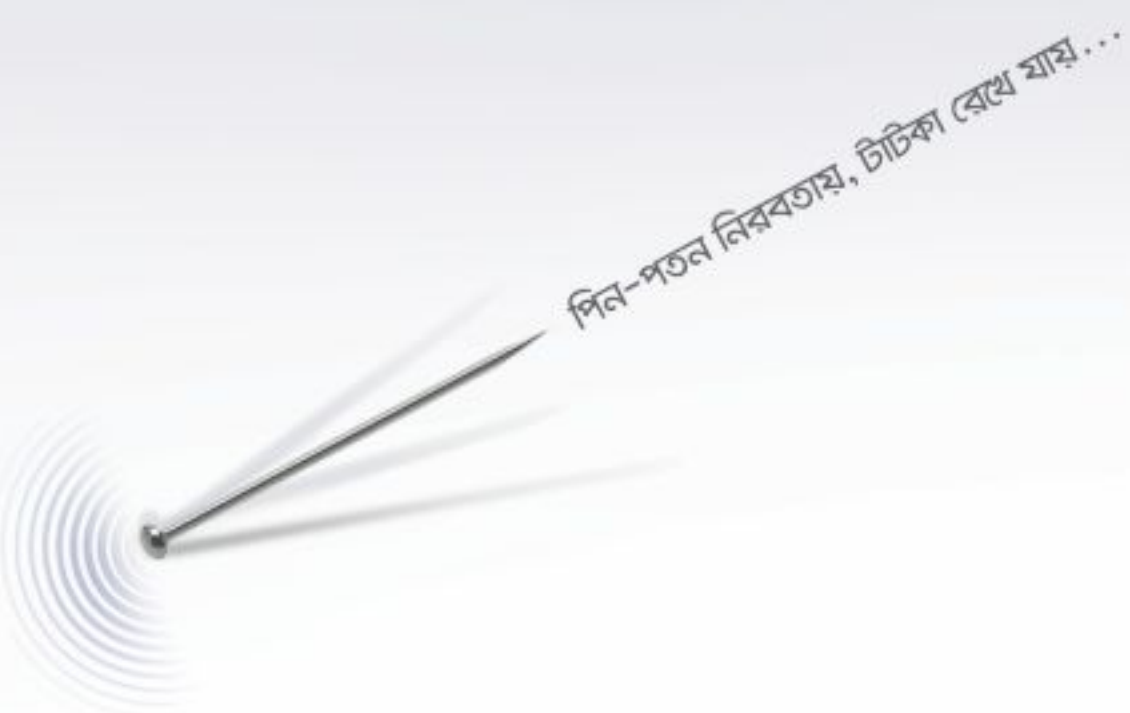
On the first day, seven scientific sessions were held where at least 400 participants from different sectors were present.

Researchers and teachers from renowned universities presented research papers, which contained recommendations for developing application of biotechnology in health, medical and ICT sectors.

On the last day today, Ahmed Shamsul Islam, former botany professor of DU, will be given lifetime achievement award for his contribution in the field of biotechnology.

The first GNOBB conference was held on 2007.

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