

TANGENTS

BY IHTISHAM KABIR



Indomalayan Pencil-tailed Tree-mouse.

PHOTO: HASSAN AL-RAZI CHAYAN

A New Mouse

At about 8pm on the night of 8th September this year, Hassan Al-Razi Chayan and Abdul Rahim, accompanied by Forest Guard Mozaffer, were walking on a trail of Adampur Forest in Moulvi Bazar. They were searching for nocturnal animals using several headlamps. At one point, Rahim spotted something on a tree, about ten feet from the ground. He called out and all three men gathered under the tree. They photographed the animal. Although it looked like a mouse, its tail was unusual. They could not identify it.

Thinking of capturing it as a specimen, they shook the tree and the animal fell to the ground. While it was stunned for a few seconds, the explorers could have caught it. However, it was so cute that they decided to leave it alone.

Next day, Chayan posted photographs of the animal in FaceBook, tagging the eminent zoologists Dr. Reza Khan and Dr. Monirul Islam. Shortly he received a reply from Monirul, who said it was a Indomalayan Pencil-tailed Tree-mouse. These animals have bodies 81-105mm long, while their tail is 105-130mm long. He further confirmed that this was the first recorded sighting of this rodent in Bangladesh.

Chayan is a freelance researcher working on the primates of Bangladesh. After receiving his Bachelors and Masters in Zoology from Jagannath University, he has been working to better understand the Bengal Slow Loris. It is one of nine primates of Bangladesh but beyond knowing its distribution – it is found mostly in the forests of Sylhet and Chittagong region – we know very

little about it. He obtains his project funding from two universities abroad, and, similar to the Spoonbilled Sandpiper Project, it is an independent project not tied to any institution.

Regular readers of this column may remember Abdul Rahim as the professional eco-guide who accompanies me whenever I wander in Kalenga and Satchori forests in search of birds. If you ever go to these places, you might want to seek him out.

So what really is a tree-mouse? Chayan explained to me the differences between mice and tree-mice. Mice have five claws in each foot; tree-mice have five claws in their rear feet but four claws and a thumb in their front feet. This is an adaptation for climbing. Another difference is that the mouse's tail starts thick and grows thinner away from its body. The tree-mouse's tail is the opposite, growing slightly thicker away from its body.

How does this discovery fit into our biodiversity picture? Before this, we counted 127 mammals seen in Bangladesh. Of these, twenty-seven are rodents, which are further subdivided into ten squirrels, fifteen rats and mice and two porcupines. Now we can count one more.

In the meantime, I find myself wondering what other secrets remain hidden in our forests.

As is customary for a first record, Chayan plans to publish an account of his finding in a scientific journal. He also plans to continue his work on the Bengal Slow Loris. Longer term, he wants to earn a doctorate and become a Zoology professor and scientist.

facebook.com/ikabirphotographs or follow ihtishamkabir on Instagram.

'Certain quarters want to put unelected persons in power'

Liberation War Affairs Minister says

A CORRESPONDENT, Sherpur

Liberation War Affairs Minister AKM Mozammel Haque yesterday said those who want to overthrow the elected government and put unelected persons in power are the enemy of the state.

"A vested quarter is conspiring to rehabilitate anti-liberation BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami. The people have to be aware of them," he said.

The minister was speaking as chief guest at a meeting held on the occasion of inaugurating a new Muktiyoddha Complex in Eshibpur area of Sherpur.

Mozammel Haque urged people, including freedom fighters, to unitedly cast their votes for "nouka" (boat) -- the election symbol of Awami League -- and continue the momentum of ongoing development.

He also said that freedom fighters will get five festival allowances every year from now on.

Agriculture Minister Matia Chowdhury, who spoke as special guest, said, "The freedom fighter quota in public service will remain in effect."

Five more lives lost in road crashes

STAR REPORT

At least five people were killed and 13 others injured in road accidents in three districts yesterday.

In Rangpur, two people were killed and 11 others injured as a bus collided with another one and flipped on its side, reports our Dinaipur correspondent.

Pedestrian Dulal Chandra Roy, 45, of Rangpur city, got crushed under the bus, "MK Paribahan", as it flipped. The other deceased, Hasina Begum, 55, of Mithapukur upazila, was a passenger of "Doa Paribahan". The injured were hospitalised.

The accident took place in city's Central Bus Terminal area around 12:30pm when "MK Paribahan" was getting on the Dinaipur-Rangpur highway at high speed from Rangpur-Badarganj feeder road, said OC Moktarul Alam of Rangpur Sadar Police Station quoting locals. The other vehicle hit the bus causing it to flip.

He said brake failure could be the reason

why the bus was entering the highway at such speed. Drivers and helpers of the buses fled the scene.

On September 2, eight people were killed and 19 others injured when two buses collided in CO Bazar area of the city.

In Chittagong's Hathazari upazila, two people were killed as a CNG-run auto-rickshaw collided head-on with a microbus, reports our staff correspondent.

The deceased are Nurul Huda, 45, and his nephew Abu Tayab, 15, of Fatikchhari.

Nurul, driver of the auto-rickshaw, and Tayab were returning home after fuelling at a filling station, said police. The accident took place in Buri Pukur Par area around 12:30am. Police seized the microbus but its driver fled.

Meanwhile in Faridpur, Sajib Sheikh, 17, son of Khokon Sheikh of Sadar upazila, was killed and his two pillars were injured as a truck hit their motorbike on Sadarpur-Chandrapara road, reports our correspondent.

RMG workers

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the same issue and held separate rallies in front of the Jatiya Press Club at the same time.

Julhas Babu, general secretary of Bangladesh Garments Sramik Sanghati, said revenue-earning through exporting goods has increased 25 percent in the last five years, raising questions how the owners of the government are claiming that they are not capable to meet the demand of Tk 16,000.

He warned the government and garment owners that they will otherwise be liable for any untoward situation.

Socialist Party of Bangladesh, Ganosamhati Andolon, Garments Sramik Karmachari Oikya Parishad (G-SKOP), Garments Sramik Front and Bangladesh Sanjukta Garments Sramik Federation, among other organisations, also rejected the minimum wage set by the government.

Meanwhile, addressing a discussion of Garments Shramik Samannay Parishad (GSSP) in the city, Shipping Minister Shahjahan Khan said if owners of RMG factories look after workers' interests and wellbeing, tensions in the sector will be reduced while production will be increased significantly.

The minister, also the convener of GSSP, said the owners have to ensure that workers are getting wages and festival bonuses on time.

"Many factories are well capable of paying higher salaries to workers," he said, adding if the workers get additional money they will work happily.

Responding to a query, the minister said defying the announced wage structure would only create scope to agitate the workers, but not help resolve the problems.

At the discussion, worker leaders demanded to reconsider the wage structure and fix it at Tk 16,000, and urged the government to monitor the sector so that owners cannot deprive workers.



Candidates and guardians at the main gate of Arts Building after the "Ga" unit (business studies faculty) admission test at Dhaka University yesterday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Bangladesh seeks more access to American market

US expresses concerns over labour reform

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh and the United States Trade and Investment Cooperation Forum Agreement (TICFA) Council held its fourth meeting to promote expanded bilateral trade and investment in goods and services.

During the meeting held in Washington DC on Thursday, Bangladesh asked the US for expanding market access for Bangladeshi goods to the American market, and increasing duty-free market facilities in light of WTO's Bali Ministerial decisions.

The US and Bangladesh exchanged views on mutual interest covered under the TICFA signed in November 2013, which provides a mechanism for both governments to discuss trade and investment issues and areas of cooperation.

Commerce Secretary of Bangladesh Shubhashish Bose and Assistant US Trade Representative for South and

Central Asian Affairs Mark Linscott co-chaired the meeting.

At the meeting, Bangladesh side sought US cooperation for implementation of the Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA).

Bangladesh also requested the US to facilitate access of Bangladeshi nurses and midwives, and easy access to other service sectors in the USA, according to a press release of Bangladesh embassy in Washington DC.

"The discussions focused on market access for US cotton, enabling a digital economy, transparency in government procurement, and labour reforms in Bangladesh," said Office of the US Trade Representatives (USTR).

It said both governments pledged their commitment to deepen their engagement and grow their trade and economic ties.

"The United States particularly noted its concerns on overall labour reform and expressed its hope for ongoing

collaboration with the private sector on workers' safety," according to USTR press statement.

Bangladesh was suspended from the Generalised System of Preferences (GSP) programme in 2013, over concerns on workers' rights and safety.

According to the USTR, Bangladesh and the US had \$7.2 billion (two-way) goods trade during 2017.

The Bangladesh embassy press release also said Bangladesh side sought more US investment in Bangladesh, highlighting various steps of the government in creating favorable investment climate.

Furthermore, it said Bangladesh sought cooperation from the USA trade preferences for Bangladeshi goods, fixing fair prices of Bangladeshi goods, technology transfer, trade-related capacity building, digital economy and sustainable graduation of Bangladesh as a developing country.

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Working children learning at an education centre of Ucep Bangladesh, a non-government organisation founded by Lindsay Allan Cheyne, inset.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

A life dedicated to working children in Bangladesh

Students recall Ucep founder Cheyne on his death anniversary

HELEMUL ALAM

He could have lived his life like others in his own country, New Zealand, but Lindsay Allan Cheyne thought differently and decided to dedicate his life for the welfare of the children of Bangladesh.

His endeavours made him a true friend of Bangladesh. He proved that friendship knows no nationality, race or background.

Today, the non-government organisation founded by Cheyne, Ucep (Underprivileged Children's Educational Programmes) Bangladesh, is one of the best education and technical training providers -- serving about 50,000 working children and youth annually who either did not enroll in school or dropped out before completing their primary education.

Cheyne came to Bangladesh on a British relief mission after a tornado devastated the country in 1970, said Tahsinah Ahmed, chief executive officer

(CEO) of Ucep Bangladesh.

In 1971, the Liberation War broke out. The plight of the affected children had a significant impact on him and he decided to do something to help.

Cheyne decided to quit his job and stay in Bangladesh. He developed the project "Ucep" in 1972 aiming to provide basic education and training of working children but could not find donors for the project. But he was determined, so he initiated the project with his own savings, involving 60 working children, Tahsinah added.

He reached out to Dhaka University's social welfare department, who permitted Cheyne to use the corridor and three of its classrooms in the evening.

In the 1970s, Cheyne lost his family -- wife and two sons -- in an accident. It is believed that the grief and emotional void motivated him to work for the distressed children.

Cheyne reached out to various donors

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REMEMBRANCE

With great love and respect, we remember today our beloved father and founder Chairman, Mr. S. S. F. Ahmed, FCA. He left us on September 15, 2001 for his eternal abode.

May Allah Grant him Blessings and Eternal Peace, and ease our hearts from the pain of his absence.

A Milad Mehfil will be held on this occasion at his village home of Maizbhandar Darbar Sharif on 15th September, 2018 after Asr prayers. Family, friends and colleagues are cordially invited to attend.

Family and Colleagues

