

TANGENTS

BY IHTISHAM KABIR



Platypus, Yungaburra, Australia.

PHOTO: IHTISHAM KABIR

PLATYPUS

It was late afternoon when we reached the nature reserve in Yungaburra, a small Australian town in north Queensland. Walking about fifty feet from the car, we descended a flight of granite stairs to reach a path running along a fast-moving, turbid stream – much like our *chharas* – about ten feet across. Over our head, a bridge over the stream cast a deep shadow all around us.

Several other people also stood nearby pointing cameras into the dark water. As my eyes adjusted to the dim light I saw a dark blob, about the size of a large *rui* fish, swimming on the murky surface. Sensing the presence of people it dived and did not emerge.

I waited patiently and another large blob came along, swimming rapidly. It stopped at the edge of the bridge and rested, half-immersed in water. Scratching itself with its feet, it turned over a few times in the water, changed directions, and rapidly swam out of the area. Its body shone with water and its eyes sat like small beads on an oversized head from which protruded an oversized bill.

That was it! I waited at other spots on the path and watched the water, but saw nothing more of interest.

What I had seen was a platypus (the name rhymes with “juice”). This amphibian creature – found only in Australia – possesses several fascinating characteristics.

Its most interesting feature? It is a mammal that lays eggs.

With a large ducklike bill, webbed feet, and a body covered with hair like a rat or mole, the platypus looks like it belongs with the fantastic creatures that Sukumar Ray conjures in *Abol Tabol*. In fact, the first scientists to examine a preserved body of the

platypus thought it was a fake, sewn together from parts of different animals. But the platypus is very real, and it is one of only five known mammals – collectively known as monotremes – that lay eggs.

The female platypus lays between one and three eggs. After they hatch, the mother nourishes the young with her milk. The female platypus does not have teats; rather it releases milk through pores on its skin. It gathers in grooves along the abdomen, from where the young platypus drinks it.

Another curious feature of the platypus is that the hind feet have a “spur”, like a sharp thorn, through which males can inject venom as a defense mechanism. It is thus the only known venomous mammal.

The platypus has a fat tail it uses for storing fat. While its size can vary, males are larger and can reach twenty inches in length and weigh up to five pounds.

Yet another distinction of the platypus is its hunting technique. A carnivore, it uses neither sight, nor sound, nor smell to hunt. Instead, when it dives, it closes its eyes, ears and nose, and physically detects the tiny electrical pulses of the muscular motion of its prey, including small fish and shrimp, which it catches with its bill.

While the platypus is not particularly rare or threatened, it is difficult to see, not just because it is shy, but also because it is active in darkness or twilight. I felt lucky to have seen and photographed one in its natural habitat.

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Oikyafront failed 'Storm of protest' approaching

Says Quader about its Sylhet rally

BSS, Dhaka

Newly-formed Jatiya Oikyafront could not create any stir among the people, said Awami League General Secretary Obaidul Quader yesterday.

“Veteran leaders joined the Oikyafront’s rally in Sylhet, but they could not create any stir among the people,” he told journalists after visiting the progress of the metro-rail project in Dhaka’s Diabari.

Awami League presidium member Advocate Sahara Khatun, local leaders and activists of the party and high officials of the project were present on the occasion.

Quader, also road transport and bridges minister, said those who cannot win in movement would not be able to win the election. Terming Oikyafront’s seven-point demand illogical, he said none of those will be met.

About bringing back reformist leaders in BNP, Quader said it has proved that BNP is politically bankrupt. Just the notion that reformists will strengthen its movement is ridiculous, he added.

Quader said BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir was a reformist himself, and it is natural that he would be sympathetic to them.

About the forthcoming general election, he said the polls-time government will perform its duty like in other parliamentary democratic countries. After announcement of the polls schedule, the government cannot take any major decision and will perform only the routine works, he added.

Quader said the Election Commission takes decisions

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Says Moudud if govt doesn't accept Oikyafront's demands

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP senior leader Moudud Ahmed yesterday warned the government of a “storm of protest” if it does not accept the seven-point charter of Jatiya Oikyafront.

“If our demands are not accepted before the polls schedule, there will be a storm of protest. That storm will pave way for a free and fair election,” he said.

The BNP standing committee member was speaking at a discussion organised by Jatiyatabadi Forum at Jatiya Press Club.

The major opposition alliance Jatiya Oikyafront, which includes BNP, is campaigning with a seven-point charter. It prioritises release of BNP chief Khaleda Zia and dissolution of parliament before the upcoming general election.

“There is no alternative to overthrowing an autocratic government. This unity will dispose of the government’s evil agenda,” Moudud said.

About “ghost cases”, he said such cases are being filed not only against grassroots level leaders but also top leaders.

He alleged that a new plan to arrest opposition men is being hatched as the ruling

party realised it would be defeated by a wide margin if a free and fair election is held.

Meanwhile, BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir yesterday alleged that the government is trying to return to power by keeping opposition parties out of the election race.

“They [government] want to retain power by holding a lopsided election like the 2014 one, keeping all the opposition parties out of the polls,” he told reporters after placing wreaths a party founder Ziaur Rahman’s grave with leaders and activists of Jatiyatabadi Jubo Dal, marking its 40th founding anniversary.

Fakhru warned that the people will not accept any unilateral polls, and they will make their movement for restoring democracy, voting and other rights a success through united efforts.

He alleged that the government is arresting not only BNP leaders and activists, but also those who speak in favour of democracy as part of its “evil” plan. “They’re filing false cases against pro-democratic people and sending them to jail.”

The BNP leader said the government is moving ahead with an objective to “restore” one-party rule in the country.



This is time for angling. As the dry season approaches and water level falls, the tranquility of the rivers makes it suitable for this fishing technique. Sitting in small boats, enthusiasts and fishermen alike anchor at a spot of the Turag river presumably having a high fishstock. The photo was taken recently in Boliarpur area of Savar.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

DU 'GHA' UNIT Fresh admission test Nov 16

Only those who passed the first one to sit for it

DU CORRESPONDENT

The re-test for admission into “Gha” unit of Dhaka University has been slated for November 16.

The university authorities published the date yesterday afternoon, on its official admission website www.admission.eis.du.ac.bd.

Authorities decided to hold the test afresh after a question leak scam, but did not scrap the entire test. Only those who passed the first time will have to sit for the re-test.

The exam will be held from 3:00pm to 4:00pm on DU campus.

Allegations of question paper leak surfaced midway through the test on October 12. The authorities brushed off the allegation, terming it a “digital forgery”, and not a leak.

On that day around 10:30am, journalists got the leaked questions and instantly informed an assistant proctor of the university about it,

asking him to take immediate steps.

The university authorities formed a three-member probe body after the exams, while a lawsuit was filed with Shahbagh Police Station. Evidence was found that question was indeed leaked.

Six people, including an admission seeker and his father, were arrested over the incident.

On October 16, the DU authorities published the results in which over 18,500 students passed. Officials admitted that the question paper was leaked via “digital forgery” before the exam.

On that day, the vice chancellor also said that there was no scope for retaking the test, saying they did not have any right to “play with the lives of thousands of students”.

Hundreds of students from the university protested it, including one who staged a hunger strike, demanding that the test be held again.

Children to materialise 'Sonar Bangla' of Bangabandhu: PM

AGENCIES

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday expressed hope that the country’s children will fulfil the dream of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and build a “Sonar Bangla”.

“Today’s children are the future of Bangladesh and they will build a ‘Sonar Bangla,’ as dreamt by Bangabandhu,” she said.

The premier was addressing a function at Gono Bhaban, marking distribution of prizes among winners of drawing and essay writing competitions, which had been organised on the occasion of Bangabandhu’s birthday, reports

UNB. Jati Janak Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Memorial Trust organised the competitions on 96th, 97th and 98th birthdays of the Father of the Nation.

The PM briefly described various programmes taken by the government to upgrade the country’s education system.

“Being well-educated, today’s children will run the country tomorrow,” she said.

Sheikh Hasina, also president of the memorial trust, said the government is working for people’s welfare and building a prosperous Bangladesh.

She said the government wants every child to pursue education and

that is why it is distributing free textbooks from pre-primary to secondary levels and providing stipends and scholarships to them.

The government has nationalised some 26,000 primary schools, following Bangabandhu’s footsteps, she said. “We’re establishing a college and school in every upazila.”

She said they have turned the Dhanmondi house into Bangabandhu Museum and formed a trust in Bangabandhu’s name.

“We’re giving stipends to 1,700 disadvantaged but meritorious children from the fund and providing assistance to the August 21 grenade attack victims.”

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Bring Taqi's murderers to book

Urge eminent citizens

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Expressing their frustration over the delay in trial process, eminent citizens yesterday demanded quick trial in the murder of Tanwir Muhammad Taqi, and exemplary punishment for his killers.

Pointing out recent killing incidents in Narayanganj, they also said if Taqi’s killers were punished, these incidents might not have recurred.

They made the remarks at a prize-giving ceremony of “National Taqi Drawing and Essay Competition 2018”, organised to mark 23rd birth anniversary of Taqi, at Poet Sufia Kamal Auditorium of Bangladesh National Museum.

Santrash Nirmul Taqi Mancha, an anti-terrorism platform, organised the competition.

Tanwir Mohammad Taqi, an A-level student and son of former president of Narayanganj Sangkritik Jote Rafiur Rabbi, was found dead on the banks of Shitalakkhya river on March 8, 2013, two days after he went missing.

National Professor Dr Anisuzzaman said, “We were once hopeful that justice would be served in Taqi murder case, but those hopes have turned into disappointment.”

“We again request the prime minister to take steps for initiating trial of Taqi murder case,” he said.

“The trial has not taken place because pressure is

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Models walk the ramp at the Army Stadium last evening, as part of 40th anniversary celebration of Aarong, a lifestyle and fashion retail chain. Alongside showcasing their sub-brands, traditional Nakshi Kantha and Jamdani saris were also on display. The three-day event ends today.

PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

Dhaka, Beijing to fight terror together

3 documents signed at minister-level meeting

UNB, Dhaka

Bangladesh and China have signed three cooperation documents, as the two countries seek to establish close cooperation and share intelligence on issues like terrorism, transnational crimes and cybercrimes.

“These three documents have been signed for deeper understanding,” Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan told reporters yesterday after a home-minister level meeting between the two countries at the secretariat.

Zhao Kezhi, Chinese minister and party committee secretary of the Ministry of Public Security, and his Bangladesh counterpart Asaduzzaman led their respective sides at the meeting.

The three documents signed at the two-hour meeting are: Plan of Action on Law Enforcement Training Cooperation, a cooperation document on establishment of Joint Working Group and a letter of exchange on

police equipment.

Asaduzzaman said issues related to counterterrorism, cybercrimes, militancy, transnational crimes, narcotics, fire service and visa were discussed at the meeting.

“They [Chinese side] agreed that terrorism is a common challenge in the world and we’ll work jointly to address it.”

The minister said there would be exchange of views and delegations between the two countries in addition to sharing of intelligence.

The two countries discussed security of huge Chinese investment in Bangladesh. China appreciated the Bangladesh government’s support in protecting its investment and providing safety for them, he added.

The meeting also discussed visa-on-arrival, especially for Bangladeshi tourists and businessmen.

The home minister said the Chinese side responded positively, and would make a

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