

TANGENTS

BY IHTISHAM KABIR



Steller's Sea Eagle (center) flanked by two White-tailed Eagles.

PHOTO: IHTISHAM KABIR

The Eagles of Hokkaido

For birders, a trip to Hokkaido during winter revolves around the Red-crowned Crane. However, there are several other spectacular birds that one can see in Hokkaido in winter.

Among them are two eagles, Steller's Sea Eagle and the White-tailed Eagle. During a recent trip to this northernmost island of Japan, I had the opportunity to observe both.

Steller's Sea Eagle is one of the world's largest birds of prey. It can weigh up to ten kilograms which is half a kilogram heavier than the famed Harpy Eagle of South America.

Growing to a meter in length, its wing span can reach over two meters. Compared to its length, it has a relatively short, diamond-shaped white tail. Mostly dark brown, this eagle has splashes of white on its body, notably a long patch on each shoulder.

Its most remarkable feature is its large and bulb-shaped orange beak. One would not want to be on its receiving end. The bird catches fish from the sea and hunts smaller birds including all manners of water fowl and gulls.

Steller's Sea Eagles live most of the year in northeastern Asia, particularly Kamchatka Peninsula, where they breed. They migrate to northern Japan during the winter and feed off the fish of surrounding waters.

The White-tailed Eagle, on the other hand, makes Hokkaido its year-round home. It, too, is a large eagle with a weight of up to seven kilograms, length of slightly less than a meter, and wing-span similar to that of the Steller's Sea Eagle. The adults are dirty grey in colour with a pronounced white band seen on its tail while in flight, much like our Pallas's Fish Eagles. The younger eagles

are coloured more rust and brown. For both these eagles, females are larger and heavier than males. This difference allows males and females to target different sets of prey, thus reducing the area they must cover to feed themselves.

My first sighting of these eagles was at the fishermen's town Furen near the frozen Lake Furen on the northeastern corner of Hokkaido. The town borders the Pacific Ocean where the fishermen catch fish. White-tailed Eagles were perched on top of large, leafless trees, with an occasional Steller's Sea Eagle in the mix.

Later, near the town of Nemuro, I saw both types of eagles on a snow field where they dived for fish put out for them. About two dozen eagles were already on the snow. Some had claimed their piece of fish and spread their wings like an umbrella around it to ward off other birds - a behaviour known as mantling. More eagles flew in and landed among them. A band of crows surrounded them looking for a morsel or two and when one got too close it was chased away. When a fight broke out, it was usually between eagles of the same species. The fish was soon gone and so were the eagles, except for a couple of lonely looking sea eagles which sat despondent in the snow.

That same afternoon, we saw the nest of a White-tailed Eagle on a tall tree on the mountainside. Like other eagle nests I have seen, it was a jumble of branches and twigs. The female White-tailed Eagle lays between one and three eggs per year and parents take turns incubating them for forty days before they hatch.

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Bangladesh, Myanmar border talk begins today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A five-day high-level conference between Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) and Myanmar Police Force (MPF) will begin at Nay Pyi Taw in Myanmar today.

The conference will end on April 10, said a BGB press release signed by its Public Relations Officer Mohsin Reza yesterday.

Preventing inflow of narcotics, particularly yaba; curbing terrorism; end to firing at borders; illegal crossing; repatriation of Bangladesh and Myanmar nationals are some of the agendas that will dominate the meeting.

Besides, issues of border patrolling - jointly by Bangladesh and Myanmar forces -

and regional-level flag meetings will also get priority.

BGB Director General Major General Md Shafeenul Islam will lead the 11-member Bangladesh team while the 17-member Myanmar team will be headed by Police Brigadier General Myo Than, chief of police general staff of Myanmar, the BGB press release adds.

The Bangladesh delegation will comprise high officials of the Prime Minister's Office and home and foreign ministries. Marking the conference, BGB DG would pay a courtesy call on Myanmar home minister and chief of Myanmar police.



A flock of seagulls welcomes travellers on Meghna river. The river is crucial to a number of life forms, including seagulls. The photo was taken on Thursday.

Tolerance absent in political culture

Says Fakhrul

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir yesterday said one-party ruling system is prevailing in Bangladesh in the guise of democracy.

Politics has gone in the hand of one party; that is why people have lost interest in politics, he said.

In addition to that, people have become indifferent to elections after the last national polls, the BNP senior leaders said.

Fakhrul came up with the remarks while talking to journalists at his hometown residence in Thakurgaon.

"We are an ill-fated nation. We liberated the country in 1971 with the dream of building a healthy political culture," he said.

"What is healthy politics? The major factor is tolerance," he added.

The BNP secretary general continued: "There might be difference of opinions. My opinion may differ to others' but there should be tolerance."

"Respect should be shown to different opinions," he added.

Unfortunately, tolerance, which is the key component of a sound political culture, is completely absent in Bangladesh, Fakhrul observed.



RAJSHAHI AIRPORT

Chaos over security check

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Security personnel at Shah Makhudum Airport "forced" a top official of the Detective Branch of Rajshahi Metropolitan Police (RMP) to go through a second security check on Wednesday.

Enraged by the incident, a constable of RMP's Special Branch, posted at the airport, assaulted a security guard.

Constable Jalal was later transferred over the incident.

Around 4pm on the day, Abdullah Al Mamun, deputy commissioner of RMP's Detective Branch, went to the airport to catch a Dhaka-bound flight. He went through preliminary scrutiny, collected his boarding pass and got on the plane, without going through another check.

Noticing that, security personnel stopped the flight.

Mamun then returned to the lobby and completed the scrutiny.

"Earlier, when I started walking towards the plane, a security person approached me. I gave him my identity and asked whether I need to go through any more scrutiny," Mamun told The Daily Star yesterday.

"He stayed mum. I thought I didn't need

any," he added.

Mamun said most security personnel knew him as he often inspected the airport's security measures and remained there for protocol duty. They used to allow him to pass without any inspection.

"After I boarded the plane, I heard there was a commotion at the airport. I got off and went there. I saw a police member arguing with a security guard, and at one stage he [policeman] started a fight," he added.

Mamun said he then went through scrutiny and reprimanded the police member for his behaviour.

Without elaborating, Setafur Rahman, airport manager, said an altercation ensued between the two, which was later settled.

Masud Rana, the security guard, claimed that he requested the police official to go through security scanning, but he (the official) did not.

Iftekhayer Alam, an assistant commissioner of Special Branch, said Constable Jalal was transferred for his actions.

He claimed that the airport authorities have begun the second security check just a few days ago, and Mamun was unaware of it.



THE MILLION TAKA EGGS: In order to meet the heavy demand for people's favourite breakfast item, eggs are brought in from Tangail to Chattogram city's Pahartoli market in trucks. Each truck contains around 1.5 lakh eggs, worth about Tk 11 lakh. Each egg costs Tk 8-9 in the retail market. The photos were taken on Wednesday.



PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

RU Prof Shaiful murder verdict on April 15

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Rajshahi speedy trial tribunal has set April 15 for announcing the verdict of Prof AKM Shaiful Islam murder case. Prof Shaiful was a sociology teacher at Rajshahi University.

Judge Anup Kumar scheduled the verdict after holding argument in the case on Thursday. Entajul Haque, public prosecutor of the tribunal, said yesterday.

Unidentified assailants stabbed Prof Shaiful, 48, to death on November 15, 2014 when he was returning home in Rajshahi city's Chhodopai area. Shaiful was known as a progressive teacher and a Lalong songs enthusiast.

Hours after the killing, Ansar Al Islam Bangladesh-2 claimed responsibility for the murder on social media and police arrested three militants over the claim. The victim's son Soumin Shahid Javin also suspected radicals behind the murder.

RU registrar filed the murder case the following day, accusing unknown persons.

On November 30, 2015, Inspector Rezaus Sadik of police's Detective Branch submitted the charge sheet and ruled out any militant outfit's involvement in the murder.

He accused Anwar Hossain Ujjal, a former convenor of Rajshahi district unit of Jatiyatabadi Jubo Dal, and ten others for the murder. Other accused are: Nasrin Akter Reshma, an assistant section officer of RU; her husband and Jubo Dal activist Abdus Samad Pintu; former Katakhal municipal unit Jubo Dal organising secretary Ariful Islam Manik; Sirajul Islam Kalu; Mohammad Sabuj; Al Mamun; Mohammad Arif; Mohammad Sagor; Zinnat Ali; and Ibrahim Khalil alias "Tokai Babu".

According to the charge sheet, Sabuj, Sagor, Arif, Zinnat and Ibrahim hacked Prof Shaiful to death upon receiving instructions from Ujjal and Manik.

The charges were based only on the confessional statement of the accused Nasrin Akter Reshma who claimed Prof Shaiful was killed because "he misbehaved with her", said public prosecutor Entajul Haque. He said none among the 34 prosecution witnesses named the accused persons.

Diplomats' day out in Sreemangal

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Foreign diplomats stationed in Dhaka are travelling to Sreemangal in Moulvibazar district for a recreational trip, hosted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen is leading the 57-member diplomatic delegation, including 35 ambassadors and high commissioners and heads of seven UN organisations. The delegation reached Sreemangal around 2pm yesterday.

Most of the diplomats, some with their family members, travelled to Sreemangal by four buses from Dhaka and will return today after visiting various places of attraction.



PHOTO: COURTESY

10 N'ganj high-rises at fire risk

Identifies fire dept

OUR CORRESPONDENT, N'ganj

Fire service officials yesterday identified 10 high-rises as risky in Narayanganj.

The officials also hung signboards outside the buildings, terming those risky.

"Around 100 high-rises in the city have only one staircase instead of two, no fire extinguishers and insufficient water supply. Some lack sufficient air circulation system. We are hanging signboards outside those buildings," said Abdullah Al Arefin, deputy director of Fire Service and Civil Defence in Narayanganj.

The drive will continue today as well, he said.

Owners of the risky buildings have been asked to take fire safety measures immediately. Otherwise, legal actions will be taken against them, he added.

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