

TANGENTS

BY IHTISHAM KABIR



Those mighty jaws!

PHOTO: IHTISHAM KABIR

Crocodile Encounter

Imagine a crocodile in a river that spots a dead buffalo floating on the water. Seeing a free meal it swims closer. The buffalo is a big animal, however, so where to start? The crocodile decides to eat the leg first.

What do we do when we want to eat the leg of, say, a whole roast chicken? We twist it off from the chicken's body before we can eat it.

And so it is with the crocodile - he has to twist off the leg before he can eat it. But he has no hands, only a mouth full of sharp teeth and a strong jaw. So how does he separate the buffalo's leg?

Here is how. He grabs the leg tightly with his sharp teeth. Then he rolls over, swiftly and violently, in the water, twisting off the buffalo's leg from its body. The leg comes off and he can now eat it.

It is a display of raw, primeval animal power. Leg inside its big mouth, he repeatedly opens and swings it shut with his powerful jaws, crushing the tissue and bones. After a few bites, the leg is dispatched to the crocodile's stomach.

Spellbound, tourists in a boat in the South Alligator River in northern Australia's Kakadu National Park watch this drama, myself among them.

These boat rides are a highlight of a visit to this park. They offer an opportunity to see crocodiles in the wild like no other place in the world, because the river is full of them. Just before departure the captain instructs us emphatically: in case the boat capsizes, do NOT leave it under any circumstance.

The boat departs just as the sun rises. The soft orange light illuminates

the river and its banks. There are fields on both sides - with many types of grass - that are dry now but inundated in the wet season, much like our Haors. Occasionally we spot a familiar site from home: a Water Buffalo. There is, however, a crucial difference. The buffaloes in Bangladesh are harmless. Australia's buffaloes, which were brought here over a century ago, have gone feral and are dangerous. They attack people.

But the main attraction is the crocodile. These are Estuarine Crocodiles, the same species one sees in Sundarban. In my travels through Australia, I was amazed at their preponderance. One has to be extremely cautious around any water body and many beaches. Even isolated ponds are not safe because crocodiles may have arrived during flooding.

Back on the boat, no one seems to know why the carcass of the young buffalo is floating in the river, but the crocodiles don't care. While there are several waiting in the wings, it is only the largest crocodile, positioned close to the legs, that eats. When a smaller one comes near the head, it garners a nasty snarl from the big guy and retreats hastily, joining the others waiting for their turn.

The crocodile works on the leg. The crunching sound crushing bones makes us wince. Finishing its first leg, it starts working on another.

Finally it rests, sated. The show is over and our boat moves forward to more bucolic and peaceful scenes.

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When children become guardians of plants

Buying saplings with tiffin money catching on across the country

ANWAR ALL, Rajshahi

While climate crisis remains a burning issue, not all is doom and gloom. There is hope in the form of children who have not been corrupted by mindless greed, who understand the simple logic that fewer trees mean accelerated and irreversible climate disaster.

An eco-movement that involves saving tiffin money to buy saplings is catching on among students in Rajshahi.

After receiving their saplings, the students plant those at their own yards and are responsible for looking after them.

Starting in Rajshahi four years ago, the movement has now reached different corners of the country -- generating much enthusiasm among students of primary, secondary schools and madrasas.

The concept behind it was to engage children to have a better idea of the environment around them, save it from the impact of deforestation, and slow down the process of global warming through

tree plantation.

With a target of planting 10 lakh trees this year, at least 1.05 lakh saplings were distributed among students of schools in Rajshahi's Charghat and Bagha upazilas on September 16.

Including them, students of 750 schools across the country have planted at least 3.65 lakh trees over the last four years.

The idea of this eco-movement came from Jubaeer Al Mahmud, a young journalist. Talking to The Daily Star, Jubaeer, who hails from Bagha upazila, described how he came up with the concept.

It all began with his reading initiative in 2010.

He created a group of 100 interested friends and started saving money for buying books annually. The books were distributed to 41 schools of four upazilas in Rajshahi and Natore, and the group built libraries at 18 schools where there were none.

In 2015, Jubaeer became concerned when he learnt of the revelation made at the World Climate Conference in Paris that

Bangladesh would be one of the

worst victims of global warming. "I started trying to think of a solution that's within my ability," he said.

"I learnt the trees produce oxygen and keep the world cool. I figured, planting a huge number of trees at a time is doable," Jubaeer said.

He thought he could do that by bringing some changes in his book-reading movement.

He travelled to the 41 schools in Rajshahi and Natore, inspired the teachers, and asked the students to save a day's tiffin money in a box -- which he named "Pollution Fighters' Box". School teachers and guardians also donated some money in it.

That year, he helped students plant some 17,000 trees in a day.

"The primary success made me ecstatic," Jubaeer said.

Witnessing his endeavours on social media, school students in other parts of the country started getting involved in 2016. That year, students of 85 schools in Kushtia, Chattogram and Thakurgaon joined the green movement and

planted 28,000 trees.

Jubaeer started working at private television channel News24 in Dhaka as a journalist, but his movement continued.

In 2017, he sought cooperation of the UNOs and managed to have some 1.45 lakh trees planted by students from 600 schools in four upazilas of Pabna, Natore and Rajshahi.

Next year, school students of Dighalia upazila of Khulna participated and 70,000 trees were planted.

This year, he planned plantation of 10 lakh trees. The September 16 plantation of 1.05 lakh trees was part of achieving that target.

"When we distribute the saplings, the events turn into festivals for students," Shahin Reza, UNO of Bagha, said, emphasising the need for expanding the movement across the country.

Kalidaskhali High School was the first to accept Jubaeer's proposal in 2015, said the school's headmaster Rabindranath Pramanik.

"Since then, every year, we

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Jubaeer (in blue shirt) with students of Bagha Model School.

PHOTO: STAR

'CORRUPTION AT BSMRSTU' Students continue protests for VC's resignation

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Students of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Science and Technology University (BSMRSTU) in Gopalganj continued their protest for the third consecutive day on the campus yesterday, demanding resignation of the vice chancellor for his alleged involvement in corruption and irregularities.

The protesters went for "fast unto death" on Thursday night to press home their demand in front of the university's administrative building.

Murad, a first-year English department student fell sick during the hunger strike and was hospitalised, said Shums Jabin, one of the protesters.

The agitating students also burnt the effigy of BSMRSTU VC Prof Khondokar Nasiruddin in the afternoon and shouted the slogan "step down VC".

Several of the university teachers also expressed their solidarity with the students. They also demanded inquiry into the alleged corruption by the VC.

The protesters brought 20 allegations against him -- including sexual harassment, nepotism in recruiting teachers and other employees, and corruption in development projects like Shaheed Minar and Bangabandhu's mural.

However, VC Prof Nasiruddin in a text message on Thursday night

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A beacon of honesty

Journalist Raisul Huq Bahar fondly recalled

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cg

Raisul Huq Bahar consciously avoided all opportunities of making a fortune through corruption, which was rampant around him. He was truly an honest person, speakers said.

They said this at a memorial programme, observing the first death anniversary of the veteran journalist and freedom fighter on Thursday night.

The programme was organised by Fulki School at their auditorium in Nandankanan area of the port city.

Dr Mahfuzur Rahman, chairman of Bangladesh Mukti Sangram O Muktijuddho Gobeshona Kendra, said, "Many of us consider ourselves uncorrupt. But the reality is we do not have many chances to commit corruption. Bahar, on the other hand, was truly righteous because he had so many opportunities to delve into corruption but did not."

He always dreamt of a country free from corruption and pollution and led his life working for the future generation, said Mahfuzur.

Veteran journalist Abul Momen said Bahar had the ability to draw people near him with his calm and gentle attitude.

"He was an authentic person devoid of hypocrisy. He was a workaholic and always thought about working for the people around him," he said.

Sheela Momen, principal of Fulki, said Bahar never took credit for being a freedom fighter. "He did not accept favours just because he contributed in liberating the country," she added.

Raisul Huq Bahar was the Chattogram bureau chief of The Daily Star from 2010 to 2015, and also worked for several local dailies. Fulki was his last workplace. He died of cardiac arrest on September 18, 2018.

ARRESTED BY PLAINCLOTHES POLICE

Sylhet journo secures bail

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Journalist Maynul Haq Bulbul, who was arrested by plainclothes police from a hospital in Mirboxtula area on Thursday night, has secured bail after appearing before a Sylhet court.

Bulbul, senior correspondent of NTV and also former president of Electronic Media Journalists Association (EMJA) in Sylhet, was arrested by Kanaighat police over a case filed against him.

Advocate Debabrata Chowdhury Liton said that Sylhet's Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Abu Ubaid granted his bail plea after a hearing yesterday afternoon.

Liaquat Shah Faridi, a senior journalist, said, "We went to Sylhet Women's Hospital to see a patient and while we were talking at the corridor of the hospital at around 10:30pm, a group of five/six armed men in plainclothes asked his name and then forcibly picked him up. When I asked for their identity, they did not answer and left

with Bulbul."

For around an hour, the whereabouts of Bulbul was unknown and later police confirmed the arrest.

Md Shamsuddoha, officer-in-charge of Kanaighat Police Station, said, "A case was filed with Sylhet Judicial Magistrate's Court on September 16 for embezzling money. The court ordered to record it as a regular case and find the accused following legal procedure."

One Raihan Ahmed filed the case, Shamsuddoha said.

"After getting the order from the court, we assigned the case to an investigative officer, traced him and with the help of local police station, we arrested him," the OC said.

In a press release, jointly signed by EMJA's president Bappa Ghosh Chowdhury and general secretary Manjur Ahmed said police did not follow legal procedure while arresting Bulbul.

They demanded proper investigation of the method of arresting a journalist.



Flowers in full bloom at the two-day Orchid Show (September 20-21), organised by Bangladesh Orchid Society. The event is being held at house CEN (C)-2, road 95, Gulshan 2 in Dhaka.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

Three found dead in Rajshahi river

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Three unidentified bodies were found in Boral river of Rajshahi's Charghat upazila yesterday.

Locals found the decomposed bodies floating in the water near a sluice gate around 8am and informed police.

On information, fire service went to the spot and recovered the bodies, said Samit Kumar Kundu, officer-in-charge (OC) of Charghat Police Station.

He said their identities could not be ascertained yet.

All police stations in Rajshahi and neighbouring districts have been asked to provide lists of missing persons to Charghat Police Station in an attempt to identify the bodies, the OC said.

Bangladesh made strides in cutting child, maternal mortality: WHO

More women, children survive today than ever before, says UN report

UNB, Dhaka

Bangladesh is among the countries that showed "substantial progress" in reducing child or maternal mortality, according to the World Health Organization (WHO).

More women and their children are surviving today than ever before, according to new child and maternal mortality estimates released by United Nations groups led by Unicef and WHO.

Despite progress, a pregnant woman or a newborn dies somewhere in the world every 11 seconds.

Since 2000, child deaths have reduced by nearly half and maternal deaths by over one-third, mostly due to improved access to affordable, quality health services, according to a media release issued from New York yesterday.

The world has made substantial progress in reducing child and maternal mortality. Since 1990, there has been a 56 percent reduction in deaths of children under 15,

from 14.2 million deaths to 6.2 million in 2018.

Bangladesh, Belarus, Cambodia, Kazakhstan, Malawi, Morocco, Mongolia, Rwanda, Timor-Leste and Zambia are some of the countries that have shown substantial progress in reducing child or maternal mortality, according to WHO.

This success has been possible due to political will to improve access to quality healthcare by investing in the health workforce, introducing free care for pregnant women and children, and supporting family planning, WHO says.

Many of these countries focus on primary healthcare and universal health coverage.

"In countries that provide everyone with safe, affordable, high-quality health services, women and babies survive and thrive," said Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, director general of WHO. "This is the power of

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