In the footsteps of the poet

Celebration of Tagore's Sylhet visit's 100th anniversary wraps up

Dignitaries at the event marking 100th anniversary of poet Rabindranath Tagore's visit to Sylhet on November 5, 1919. Celebration of the Nobel laureate's three-day visit ended yesterday. The photo was taken from Sylhet District Stadium.

PHOTO: **STAR**

DWOHA CHOWDHURY, *Sylhet*

The 100th anniversary of Nobel laureate poet Rabindranath Tagore's visit to Sylhet ended with festivities as people from all walks of life celebrated the occasion.

On November 5, 1919, Tagore arrived in Sylhet, stayed for three days and attended many programmes.

Marking the poet's stay, several programmes were held by different organisations at the places Tagore visited and a formal committee was formed to organise the "Sylhet-e Rabindranath: Shatabarshe Smaran Utshab" from November 5 to 8.

The celebrations ended with a grand programme at Sylhet District Stadium yesterday where seasoned performers of Bangladesh and India sang and recited works of Tagore and danced to his music.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina also joined the closing session via video conference and delivered a speech marking the occasion.

At the closing session, Foreign Minister Dr AK Abdul Momen was present as chief guest while Cultural Affairs Minister KM Khalid attended as special guest.

Thousands enjoyed performances of renowned Bangladeshi artiste Rezwana Choudhury Bannya, and Padma Shri Purna Das Baul and Medha Bandopadhyay from India.

THE BEGINNING

The four-day celebration was inaugurated by former finance minister Abul Maal Abdul Muhith with unveiling a mural of Tagore in Chandni Ghat area in the city on November 5. A cultural programme was organised afterwards.

Sylhet City Corporation brought out a procession from Nagar Bhaban in the morning which walked through many roads of the city. Srihatta Brahma Samaj also celebrated the day with a flowery tribute at Chandni Ghat, followed by a procession.

At the discussion session of the programme, Dr Usharanjan Bhattacharya of Gauhati University (Assam, India) presented the keynote speech. Professor Golam Mustafa of Chittagong University also spoke at the discussion.

TAGORE AT SINGHA RESIDENCE

During his visit, Tagore attended a family programme at the "Singha Bari".

The patriarch, Gobindanarayan Singha, was the secretary of Brahma Samaj in Sylhet.

Marking his visit, the family and well-wishers organised several programmes on the premises of the house in Chowhatta area of the city on Wednesday.

The programmes included discussion, musical performances, art camp and more.

Planning Minister MA Mannan was present as chief guest at the programmes.

THE POET'S FOOTSTEPS IN MACHIMPUR

During his visit in Sylhet, Tagore was introduced to Manipuri art and cultural, especially Manipuri dance. On the second day of his visit, he appreciated the traditional performances in Machimpur's Manipuri Para.

Marking the visit, the Manipuri community organised programmes at Machimpur on Wednesday which included discussion, Manipuri dance performances and staging of Tagore's musical drama.

Tagore researcher Mihir Kanti Choudhury presented a keynote speech at the discussion.

The Manipuri community also declared November 6 as "International Manipuri Dance Day".

SPEECH AT MC COLLEGE

Tagore's time in Sylhet also included a visit to the century old Murari Chand College where he delivered a speech titled "Akankhya".

Commemorating the event, a seminar on "Rabindranath Tagore and South Asia" was organised at the college auditorium where Professor Begum Akhter Kamal of Dhaka University's Bangla department presented the keynote speech.

Seven Tagore researchers presented their articles at the Bangla session of the seminar while another five researchers presented their articles at the English session.

INT'L SEMINAR

The formal committee of "Sylhet-e Rabindranath: Shatabarshe Smaran Utshab" organised an international seminar on "Rabindranath and Bangladesh" at the seminar hall of Sylhet Women's College.

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3 jailed over madrasa student's death

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Faridpur*

Three people were sent to jail in connection with the death of a madrasa student, as the victim's father filed a murder case against them in Madaripur yesterday.

The accused are: Yusuf Ali Mollah (25), Elias Mollah (30) and Abul Bashar (27), said police.

The victim, Asif Matabbar (11), son of Anwar Matabbar of Sreenodi in the upazila, was a residential student of class-II in Gachbaria Jamia Karimia Madrasa.

Yusuf, Abul Bashar and Elias are teachers at the madrasa.

Saugatul Alam, officer-in-charge (OC) of Sadar Police Station, said, "Anwar Matabbar filed a murder case against the three men on Thursday's night. Police arrested Yusuf and Elias from Mostofapur area early yesterday. Abul Bashar was handed over to police by

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3 hurt as police vehicle ploughs thru' footpath

UNB, *Dhaka*

Three people were injured in a road accident near Chandrima Udyan at Sher-e-Bangla Nagar yesterday, after the vehicle they were in hit a lamp post.

The injured were identified as Masud Pervez, inspector (investigation) of Rampura Police Station, driver Mohsin and ansar member Akidul Islam.

Jane Alam Munshi, officer-in-charge of Sher-e-Bangla Nagar Police Station, said the police vehicle ploughed through a footpath in the area while giving room to a motorbike coming from the opposite direction around 10am.

The three were taken to Rajarbagh Central Police Hospital, he added.

Injured Inspector Masud Pervez, said, "The vehicle carrying them hit a lamp post as a motorbike appeared in front of their vehicle while it was making a U-turn."

TANGENTS

BY IHTISHAM KABIR

Common Cranes, Rajshahi.

PHOTO: **IHTISHAM KABIR**

Our Cranes

Cranes are special birds, sometimes called "the birds of heaven." Because of their large size, grace and beauty, cranes are well-loved. Many cultures hold them in high esteem.

There are fifteen species of cranes in the world, inhabiting all continents except South America and Antarctica. I have seen Red-crowned Cranes in Japan, Grey-crowned Cranes in Africa, Sandhill Cranes in Florida and Brolgas in Australia. Each had its own distinction. The most beautiful was undoubtedly the African crane with its head full of stiff golden feathers. But perhaps the most memorable were the Japanese cranes, large white birds with a spot of red on the head that played in the winter snow in the northern island of Hokkaido.

Whenever I saw cranes, however, I felt a disappointment. That's because cranes are rarely seen in Bangladesh. During my childhood I had heard of *Sarosh* birds which were apparently found in parts of Bangladesh. However, it has been a very long time since anyone reported seeing cranes on Bangladeshi ground.

However, that changed this week, turning my disappointment into joy.

Earlier this week I went to Rajshahi looking for birds in the *chars* of the Padma. These sandbars attract many types of birds because they are large, empty sites where birds can find food in the mud. I had seen Peregrine Falcons, Black Storks and other rare and unusual birds here earlier.

Arriving in Rajshahi in the early afternoon, I was dismayed to find it covered with fog. Nuru, my boatman and guide, steered the boat to several *chars*, but we found little of significance.

The next day had clearer weather. I met Nuru in the *ghat* in early morning, and soon we were off. Within ten minutes we saw a Peregrine Falcon on a *char*. It flew off as soon as it saw our boat.

Sometime later, Nuru saw movement far into the *char* on our left. Through binoculars we saw large birds. At first we thought they might be storks, but their profile was more horizontal and round and less angular than that of storks. They were, in fact, Common Cranes!

We approached them from the edge of the *char*, crouching and crawling along a slope so as not to be seen. We came close enough to photograph them but stopped before they detected us because we did not want to disturb these precious creatures. They lingered for about ten minutes, foraging in the sand. A pair of them made gestures of affection towards each other. One of them sauntered outside the group and came even closer to us. It returned to the group without seeing us.

Then they walked towards the edge of the *char* where a channel of water separated it from the next *char*. After lingering a bit more, they formed a line and took to flight, one after another.

Our crane-spotting was preceded just a few days earlier by a team of bird photographers on the Padma who saw (and photographed) a Common Crane within a large flock of Painted Storks as it flew over the *chars*. However, finding this flock of cranes on the ground was beyond my expectations and made for a memorable day of birding.

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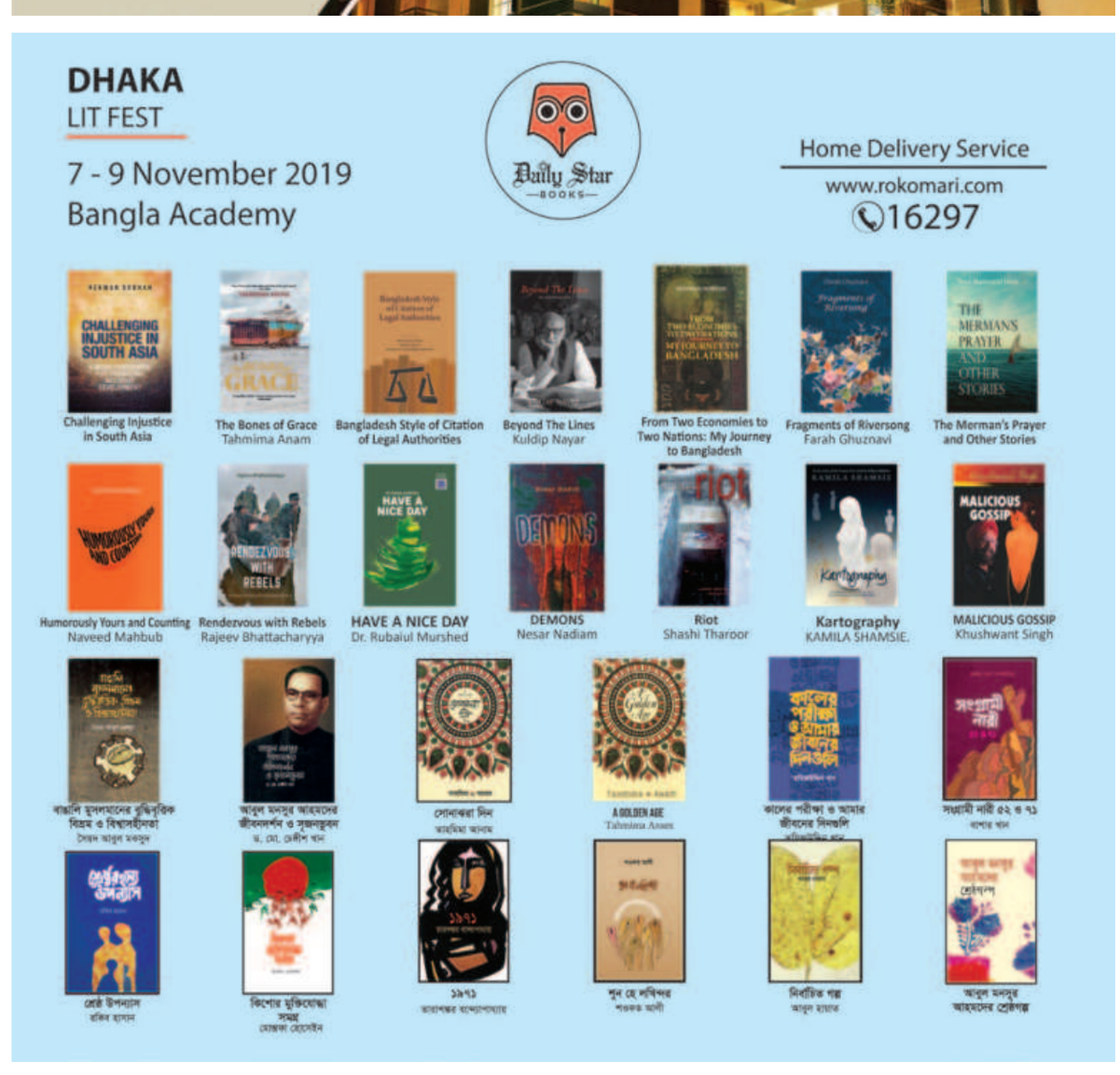
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