

TANGENTS

BY IHTISHAM KABIR

Peregrine Falcon



PHOTO: IHTISHAM KABIR

Peregrine Falcon, Rajshahi.

I had been out since early morning cruising the Padma river and was returning to Rajshahi town. After turning a bend, I noticed an airborne black silhouette against the white sand of a *char* to my left. It flew fast, sleek and low, headed in the same direction as I, but going faster. With my binoculars, I recognized a Peregrine Falcon as it sped ahead of my boat. About three hundred feet up ahead on my left, its flight changed abruptly: it became purposeful in a real, palpable way. Picking up speed it shot straight up in the air before veering right, dead ahead of my boat. It was then that I saw the flock of smaller birds, probably plovers, flying about a hundred feet below it. High above them the bird paused for an instant before diving down to attack.

Before it could strike, however, a second Peregrine Falcon appeared from nowhere and buzzed the hunter, allowing the plovers to escape. For the next few seconds, the two falcons fought in the sky over the Padma river. Eventually they both flew away but their aerial show left me breathless.

Famous for being the fastest creatures on earth – they can reach speeds of two hundred miles per hour during their dive (called a stoop) – Peregrine Falcons are birds of legend. Their athleticism, eagerness to hunt, and ease of taming all contribute to their stature. And so they are regarded as the noblest and most spectacular among birds of prey. They can live in all manners of habitats and have been tamed for hunting for over 3000 years. The earliest hunters to use them were nomads of central Asia.

Peregrine Falcons are about two feet long with the females typically 30% larger than males. They usually mate for life and females lay a clutch of 3-4 eggs. Their favourite prey is smaller birds, particularly pigeons and doves.

Although I saw it abroad, spotting a Peregrine Falcon in Bangladesh eluded me for years until I managed to photograph one as it flew over Purbachol some years ago. Later, once I started birding in Rajshahi I saw them regularly. They were always shy and flew off before I could get close enough for a good photograph.

Peregrine Falcons are one of seven falcon species seen in Bangladesh. One key to their survival is their successful adaptation to humans. For example, they build nests atop buildings as well as electrical towers and hunt pet pigeons (for which irate pigeon owners sometime shoot them.)

All over the world, there are 19 subspecies (race) of Peregrine Falcon. The one we usually see in winter in Bangladesh is the nominate subspecies, Falco Peregrinus Peregrinus. One lucky day, after crawling and crouching some distance in a *char*, I was able to photograph the subspecies Peregrinator, known as the Shaheen Falcon, distinguished by reddish underparts. It is a resident bird but rarely seen and mine was one of only ten recorded in recent years in Bangladesh.

I can still recall vividly the sheer life-force that radiated from that falcon racing for its attack over the Padma. The thrill was breathtaking. Perhaps that is why the Peregrine Falcon has captured the human imagination for centuries.

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Nation pays homage to Birshreshtha Jahangir today

OUR CORRESPONDENT, C'ganj

The nation will pay homage to Birshreshtha Captain Mohiuddin Jahangir, one of the seven greatest heroes of the Liberation War, today to mark his 48th death anniversary.

Bangladesh Muktiyoddha Sangsad's Chapainawabganj district unit, local administration and different socio-cultural and political organisations will pay tribute to the martyr.

On December 10, 1971, Captain Jahangir along with 50 freedom fighters crossed the Mohananda river for an operation against Pakistan Army.

On December 13, Jahangir, along with his men took position near Rehaichar Moholla in Chapainawabganj. The next day, he went ahead of the defence line and charged grenades into a trench of the Pakistan occupation army. He was hit by a bullet from the opposing force and died on the spot.

Jahangir was laid to rest near the grave of another valiant freedom fighter, Major Najmul Haque, on the premises of Sona Masjid.

On June 11, 1971, Jahangir fled his post in Karakoram to join the Liberation War in Bangladesh. He sneaked into India through Sialkot border and joined the

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PRESERVING MEMORIES OF '71

Mass killing ground restored in Barishal

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barishal

During the tumultuous months of the Liberation War, the Pakistan occupation army had turned the then Water and Power Development Authority (Wapda) compound in Barishal into a mini cantonment, which included torture cells and bunkers. Situated near the river Kirtankhola, the Wapda compound was used as a hub for the army.

The compound had witnessed gruesome acts of torture, killing and rape. It was turned into a mass killing ground, the largest in Bangladesh's southern region.

However, the war-time memories in this area were on the verge of being lost, as the compound was abandoned after the country was liberated. In 2017, Barishal City Corporation (BCC) undertook a Tk 3.31 crore project to preserve the Wapda compound, restoring the memories of 1971 and making it accessible to newer generations so that they can learn about the country's history.

The compound includes two torture cells and two bunkers, while a memorial monument, open stage and walkway were added during the restoration work, said Abul Bashar, executive engineer of BCC.

The restored area will be open to public by the end of December, according to BCC sources. More sculptures and memorabilia will be added gradually, and the place has been made easily accessible for everyone, including people with disabilities.

Liberation War Museum and Barishal Sangskritik Sangathan Samannay Parishad supported the project.

Kutub Uddin Ahamed, commander of district Muktiyoddha Sangsad, said Pakistan occupation army captured

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Work continues to restore the mass killing ground on Wapda compound in Barishal. The city corporation took the initiative, and it will be opened to public by the end of this month.

PHOTO: TITU DAS



Intrigued, two boys watch their elder sister make a clay stove. Soon after drying it, she will pour some imaginary rice, add make-believe potatoes and boil those as part of their early morning fun, while their mother cooks breakfast for them. This photo was taken from Band Road in Barishal city yesterday.

PHOTO: TITU DAS

SHER-E-BANGLA MEDICAL COLLEGE HOSPITAL

ICU completely out of order

SUSHANTA GHOSH, Barishal

Maruf Hossain Nayan, a physician at Hemayet Uddin Ahmed Diabetic and General Hospital, was suffering from asthma and getting treatment at Sher-e-Bangla Medical College Hospital's (SBMCH) ICU. Then, at one point on Tuesday, staffers found the last functioning ventilator of the unit not working anymore.

Leaving no other option, Nayan was referred to Dhaka the same day, but sadly, he passed away right before being put into the ambulance, said the on-duty doctors.

This incident raises the question, why was there only one ventilator serving the patients? A recent visit to the hospital's ICU revealed that most of the essential equipment there gradually went out of order from last year. All ventilators except one broke down three months ago.

As of December 12, out of 16 beds of the unit, only four were occupied by patients. Ten of those beds are supposed to be equipped with ventilators. The unfortunate part is patients who cannot get better treatment elsewhere are forced to remain there, possibly risking their lives.

Shambhu Nath Shil, relative of a patient who was admitted there, said, "Two days ago, I admitted my mother-in-law to the hospital and she was getting treatment at the ICU."

"But she passed away," he said. "I was not financially able to send her to Dhaka for better treatment."

Dr Najmul Ahsan, the only doctor supervising the ICU, said the equipment required to run the emergency ward either broke down or is not available to begin with.

"For such a unit, at least eight to ten physicians, 16-20 nurses, 16 ventilators and other equipment like dialysis, X-ray and ABG machines are required. Since we don't have these, we can only admit two to three patients at a time and have to refer patients with serious complexities to Dhaka for better treatment," he said.

Shahnaz Parvin, supervisor of nursing at SBMCH, said the ICU opened on July 23, 2017, and from the very beginning only one physician looked after the unit. "We informed the hospital authorities about our issues and requirements several times but we didn't see any result," she said.

Activists of different organisations have raised their voice on the matter, demanding immediate action to resolve the severe healthcare issue.

Ranjit Dutta, secretary of Consumer Association Bangladesh's Barishal unit, said, "We want SBMCH's ICU to be functional and appropriately equipped as soon as possible."

"We want rapid action to make the ICU functional, because for emergencies we constantly have to go to Dhaka for better treatment. This financially burdens patients and wastes their precious time for treatment," said Anowar Zahid, a health rights activist.

Bangladesher Samajtantrik Dal yesterday formed a human chain in front of the city's Ashwini Kumar

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Road through reserve forest destroyed

Authorities took the initiative to stop tree felling and stealing

MOSTAFA YOUSUF

An earthen road illegally built by miscreants in a reserve forest in Hathazari Range was destroyed by a upazila administration along with the forest department, who feared it would facilitate the stealing of forest resources from the rich reserve forest of Chattogram.

The road was built in Mondakini forest under north division of Chattogram Circle in the beginning of December.

Ruhul Amin, upazila nirbahi officer of Hathazari upazila told The Daily Star that the road was two kilometres long and 12 feet in width, built in such a way that it would remain hidden if someone looked from outside the forest.

The perpetrators cut a hill and used its soil to make the road, he added.

"The road was built in an attempt to steal trees from deep inside the reserve forest, which has huge market value. As forest department sought our help, we assisted in destroying the road by engaging around 70 day labourers," he said.

Contacted, Bakteyar Nur Siddiqui, divisional forest officer of Chattogram Forest Circle (north) told this paper that they were able to destroy the road before miscreants could do any more harm.

"We suspect the muddy road was built to steal forest resources. As our foresters were vigilant, we with help from upazila administration destroyed the road," he said.

Forest department sources said miscreants are constantly trying to steal trees to supply to brick kilns, as winter is the peak season for manufacturing bricks.

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Youths should prepare for tech revolution

Speakers say at science congress

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The country's young generation should develop themselves to fulfil needs of the 21st century, amidst tremendous scientific developments in the world, speakers at a congress said yesterday.

They said the 4th industrial revolution is around the corner, and it will bring disruptive technologies that will completely change the way people live.

They were speaking at the inauguration ceremony of the three-day 4th Young Scientist Congress at the capital's National Museum of Science and Technology Bhaban.

With the theme "Young scientists for achieving sustainable development goals (SDGs)", Bangladesh Academy of Sciences (BAS) has organised the congress.

Speaking there, Science and Technology Affairs Minister Yeafesh Osman

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PHOTO OF THE DAY

RAJIB RAIHAN



To generate awareness on several social issues such as harassment and sexual abuse, Kotwali Police Station in Chattogram has commissioned colourful graffiti on its walls. The photo was taken recently.