

TANGENTS

BY IHTISHAM KABIR



Jerdon's Baza, Chandpore Tea Estate, Habiganj.

PHOTO: IHTISHAM KABIR

BIRDS of PREY

Birds of prey capture our imagination for many possible reasons. It could be their display of power and agility. It could be their spare, elegant beauty. It could be our ancient memory from hunter-gatherer ancestors. Seeing a bird of prey – also known as a raptor - whether it is sitting or flying or attacking can be an exciting moment.

And there is a wealth of raptors to see in Bangladesh: approximately thirty-five species, not counting owls and vultures (which swells their rank to fifty-ish species.) Some of them arrive for the winter while others live here year-round.

Except for Brahminy and Black Kites (*cheels*), raptors are shy. So where does one find them?

Some are found in open spaces, circling the sky while scanning the fields for prey. Close to Dhaka, I have seen them over the grasslands of Purbachol. The Common Kestrel, a small falcon, can be easily seen there in winter, a reddish bird perched atop electric poles. Larger raptors circle high overhead. While most are *cheels*, I have seen Booted and Steppe Eagles, Japanese Buzzards and Oriental Honey-Buzzards among them, discernible from photographs or with binoculars. The Black-winged Kite breeds in Purbachol. A magnificent black-and-white hunter, it sometimes hovers at one spot while looking for prey.

Going farther from Dhaka, our *haors* and *chars* host several raptors. Harriers fly slow and low over *haor* grass to find their meal. Over the *haor* waters you can see powerful hunters of fish: Pallas's and Grey-headed Fish Eagles and Ospreys. Baikka Beel and the surrounding Hail Haor in Molvi Bazar is a good place to find these raptors, either in the sky or sitting on the ground at the edge of fishponds.

Birders visit *chars* of the Padma river in Rajshahi for waterfowl and shore birds but these places are also rich in raptors. I have seen numerous Peregrine Falcons there, including the rare Shahin subspecies. In the skies above the Padma, eagles and harriers can be seen. While birding there, it is easy to miss a raptor fly past overhead because, sitting on our boat, our eyes are on the water and sand searching for birds.

Our forests hold another set of raptors but they are harder to find. The Shikra, a cousin of the Sparrowhawk, is our common forest raptor. It is present in virtually every forest, but most easily seen in Sundarban. Its smaller relative, Besra, is harder to spot. Perhaps the most intriguing forest raptors are the two bazas, easily recognized by the erect black crests over their head. I have seen Jerdon's Bazar in Sylhet's tea gardens and Bandarban. Rare Black Bazar, with striking black and white wing patterns, are winter migrants. I have seen them over the skies of Satchori National Park in Habiganj, which also hosts several other forest raptors including the Crested Goshawk.

Any discussion of our raptors would be incomplete without the Crested Serpent Eagle, a large brown bird found at the edge of forests and in villages. It can sit still for hours atop a tree, its powerful eyes scanning up to half a mile, looking for a snake. Its legs are covered in tough skin to protect against snakebites.

Raptors are harder to find than other kinds of birds, but the patience and hard work in finding them is amply rewarded by the excitement they bring.

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Ensure vaccines for migrant workers

Bangladesh urges global community

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh has urged the global community to ensure availability of affordable vaccines, medicines, and equipment for migrants in vulnerable situations, as the coronavirus pandemic continues to rattle public health and economies across the globe.

"We must integrate the health of migrants and their families in the global discourse of Universal Health Coverage," said newly-elected vice president of UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS Rabab Fatima.

She said this while addressing as co-chair a high-level virtual event titled "Advancing Migrant's Access to Healthcare in the Time of Covid-19" held on Thursday.

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), International Organization for Migration (IOM), permanent missions of Portugal, Morocco and the Friends of Migration Group jointly organised the event.

In some countries, undocumented migrants have little access to healthcare. Many migrants have also lost their jobs during the pandemic, or their earnings have dwindled, Ambassador Fatima said.

Highlighting the dire consequences facing millions of migrants due to the pandemic, she said Bangladesh has co-led a joint statement on the impact of Covid-19 on migrants in June 2020, which was eventually supported by 103 member states.

Rabab Fatima also called for incorporating the health needs of migrants in national and local health care policies and plans.

Tactical belts for cops

Police to introduce those for officials to carry essentials

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

Bangladesh Police will be introducing tactical belts for officials involved in operational duty and patrols, as part of its efforts to better equip the force and make the policing system more efficient.

Once introduced, police officials will no longer need to carry objects like guns, batons, handcuffs and wireless handsets in their hands, said officials of Police Headquarters (PHQ).

"We have almost completed necessary processes to distribute the tactical belts. We plan to distribute them on December 16," Tawfique Mahbub Chowdhury, deputy inspector general (logistics) of PHQ, told The Daily Star.

Made of nylon and polyester, a belt will have six chambers where a small water bottle, wireless set, POS machine for traffic fines, torch, collapsible baton and handcuffs can be kept. A small thigh belt will be attached with the tactical belt to hold the gun, said officials of PHQ's equipment section.

The officials hinted at some more changes to come in the force. For example, every member, ranking from constable to sub-inspector, who will take part in operations or patrols, will only use pistols instead of large firearms.

The provision of using large firearms by operation forces or patrol teams will be abolished, they said.

The belts will initially be provided to operation and patrol teams of Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) and Chattogram Metropolitan Police (CMP). Later, they will be distributed among all other police unit members across the country in phases, said sources.

A high-official of PHQ, requesting anonymity, said they have already prepared around 10,000

belts, out of which, around 7,000 will be given to DMP and 3,000 to CMP.

Shafiqul Islam, commissioner of DMP, said the belts will make the force members more efficient and speed up their working capacity.

Inspector General of Police (IGP) Benazir Ahmed has taken the initiative so officers do not need to carry objects in their hands during time of operation.

HANDS FREE FOR DUTY

Another high-official of PHQ, requesting anonymity, said there will even be a headphone attached to the wireless handset, so they can hear every update, and a mic on their shirt's collar to send messages.

During operations, they will be able to swiftly take their gun out from the thigh holster, and use their left hand to take the handcuffs out from the belt, said the official.

As police officials remain on the street round the clock, they will now be able to carry water bottles using the belts.

Beside officials involved in foot, mobile and police station patrols -- the belts will also be provided to officials involved with traffic control, said PHQ officials.

Police officials in developed countries also use such belts, said another high-official of PHQ.

"We are planning to provide digital sticks to officers involved in traffic duty along with the belt. The sticks will light up, showing the 'stop sign'..." he said.

In future, a body-worn camera system will be integrated with the belts, and high-officials will be able to connect with the operation team directly and see live updates through the cameras, said an official, requesting anonymity.



This young man was spotted zigzagging through the busy road of Banglamotor in his roller skates yesterday. With no helmet, elbow pads or knee pads, roller-skating through the dangerous traffic scene of Dhaka is an extremely risky feat, and it got riskier when he tried to quickly flee our photographer's lens by skating on the wrong side of the road.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

DIGITAL SOLUTIONS IN ENERGY SECTOR

AFD to provide loan of 100m euros

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The French Development Agency (AFD) will provide a loan of 100 million euros to Bangladesh for reinforcing its role as an active participant in the search for and use of advanced digital solutions in power and energy sector in the country.

This support comes via AFD's concessional sovereign loan and will go towards financing the project titled "Construction and Augmentation of Substation and Installation of the Capacitor Bank in Power System under DPDC".

A credit facility agreement from AFD worth 100 million euros was signed between Fatima Yasmin, secretary of the Economic Relations Division, and Benoit Chassatte, AFD country director for Bangladesh, and French Ambassador to Bangladesh Jean-Marine Schuhs, said French embassy in a statement yesterday.

In addition, a Grant Facility Agreement for a delegated grant from the EU Alternative Investment Fund worth 12 million euros will be signed in the beginning of next year.

AFD's loan aims to equip existing infrastructure with new, innovative and reliable technologies in order to ensure services are prepared for the future.

4 killed in road crashes

STAR REPORT

Four people were killed and seven injured in road accidents in the capital and Panchagarh in last two days.

In Dhaka, two motorcyclists were killed after being hit by a truck at Khilkhet yesterday, reports BSS.

Amir Hossain Riyaj (19), a student of Dhaka Residential College; and Ajmin Khan Lami (26), his relative, were declared dead at Dhaka Medical College Hospital, said DMCH police.

The victims lived with their families in South Badda. Lami used to work for a motorcycle ride sharing service.

Our Thakurgaon correspondent adds, two people were killed and seven injured in road accidents in Panchagarh on Thursday.

In Tentulia upazila, a truck hit a bicycle near a bazar, killing the bicyclist, Abdul Khalek (65), said Tentulia Police Station Officer-in-Charge Jahirul Islam.

In another incident, Shova Akhter (5), daughter of Sapijul Islam from Darjeepara in Tentulia, died as a microbus hit her while she was crossing a road at Tentulia Bazar.

Meanwhile, a bus and a truck collided at Maidandighi in Boda upazila, injuring seven people including the trucker and his helper, said police.

50km for 50 years

Sylhet youths walk across mass graves in commemoration of '71

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

As the Liberation War marks its 50th year, the number of people who lived through those are being increasingly outnumbered by those born later. In such a time, it is important to establish practises that remind later generations of the spirit of the war.

An initiative by cycling collective Cycle Travelers of Sylhet aims to do just that. For three years, they have been walking across the city's mass graves in commemoration of the war.

What's more, every year, they walk as many kilometres as the corresponding anniversary of the war. For example, when they set out to walk yesterday, they walked 50 kilometres as it's the 50th year from 1971.

Kazi Sahi, coordinator of the walk, said, "We used to travel to many places on our cycles, but in 2018, we decided to start visiting mass graves around December. Though we are cyclists, we decided to walk and dedicate one day to the memory of the Liberation War."

In 2018, their 48 kilometre walk followed the path to mass graves at Khadimnagar and Chiknagul. For 2019, they walked to more mass graves at Sylhet Weather Station, Lalmatia and Balaganj upazila's Adityapur.

Starting at 6am from the city's Rikabibazar area, yesterday's walk followed a route that included Liberation War mass graves at Tarapur's Star Tea Garden, Malnichhara Tea Garden,

Tilagarh and Lalmatia.

Finally, the walk concluded at the Martyred Intellectuals' Graveyard at Chowhatta area in the city.

Walking such a long distance is no easy task, but the group is considerate of this limitation and allow anyone to join however they want, and for as long as they want. Along with those who walked, yesterday's event also had several others who didn't complete the walk but only joined for shorter sections, and even some who rode on bicycles to accompany the walkers.

While these walks prove to be a rejuvenating experience, there's one particular thing that cause the walkers grief. "On our visits, we always see that the mass graves are not maintained well enough, and sometimes they don't even have the minimum security required for such historically significant destinations," Kazi Sahi told this correspondent.

The walks have inspired the organisers to embark on similar endeavours. For example, earlier on March 17 this year, Kazi Sahi walked 100 kilometres from Tungipara of Gopalganj to Dhanmondi 32, in commemoration of the birth centenary of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

Among others, yesterday's was attended by cyclists Nurul Islam, Morshedul Islam, Abdullah Al Muhsin, Toufique Islam, Sajib Hridoy Ahmed, Moheb Bin Emdad, Partho Dey, and Tomistra Tithi.



Covering 50km across Sylhet, youths paid tribute to four mass graves around the district yesterday. This photo was taken from Tilagarh, where one such mass grave lies.

PHOTO: DWOHA CHOWDHURY

Vandalism of Bangabandhu's sculpture protested

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

Artistes in Mymensingh organised an art camp, protesting the vandalism of Bangabandhu's sculpture at Mymensingh Town Hall premises yesterday afternoon.

The artistes, under the banner of Bibhagio Charushilpi Parishad, organised the art camp with the slogan "Shilper Chhuay Durhok Ashuvo Andhakar".

President and secretary of the parishad Mohammad Rajon and Goutam Kumar Devnath, and parishad artistes Monjurul Alam Rumi, Joyanta Mondol, Polash Sheikh, Biswajit Apu, Mannan Mirza and Monira Akter took part in the camp.

Artiste Nobonita Chowdhury, poets Suranjit Baroi and Shamim Ashraf, and Nongur Media President Hasnat Zaman Sabuj were also present, among others.

After the camp, the artistes also formed a human chain at the same location.

Addressing the programme, the artistes said religious bigots in the name of religion are threatening to demolish sculptures in the country, including those of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

It is a direct threat to the country's independence. The incident took place in December, the month when Bangladesh was liberated in 1971, they said.

The anti-sculpture protestors should be dealt with an iron fist for the sake of the country's independence, a peaceful society and all-out development, they added.

Demanding exemplary punishment of those involved in such heinous crime, they said it is high time for everyone to be united with the spirit of the Liberation War and stand firm to protect the country's values.

14-yr-old house help dies falling from roof

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A 14-year-old house help died after falling from the rooftop of a building in Dhaka's Uttara area yesterday morning.

The deceased had been working at a doctor's house in Uttara's Sector 1, said Sub-inspector Mohammad Shafiqul Islam of Airport Police Station.

Around 1am, she tried to flee the five-storey building by climbing down the rooftop. Suddenly, she slipped and fell on the ground. She died on the spot, the SI said.

The police official said they were trying to know the reason behind her attempt to flee.

The body was sent to Dhaka Medical College Hospital morgue for autopsy.