

TANGENTS

BY IHTISHAM KABIR

What's in a (Scientific) Name?

In 1758, the Swedish scientist Carl Linnaeus introduced a naming system for living organisms. It was standardized by scientists worldwide, giving us scientific names for species. The Linnaean system arose from the need to uniquely identify each species and categorize or classify living beings into groups. The common name of a bird may change from country to country, but its Linnaean name remains the same. Thus, a Black-necked Stork in Bangladesh is a Jabiru in Australia but a Jabiru in Brazil is an entirely different bird. There is no confusion over their Linnaean names, however. The Black-necked Stork is *Ephippiorhynchus asiatica* whereas the (Brazilian) Jabiru is *Jabiru mycteria* – and that holds true everywhere.

The Linnaean name is in two parts: the genus and the species. A genus groups together one or more similar species. For example, there are twenty-five species of sparrows, all of the genus *Passer*. Our ubiquitous House Sparrow is *Passer domesticus*, whereas the Eurasian Tree Sparrow, encountered less, is *Passer montanus*.

My interest in scientific names grew after reading the *Encyclopedia of Flora and Fauna of Bangladesh, Volume 26: Birds*, edited by Enam Ul Haque et. al. After a detailed description of each past or present bird of Bangladesh, the encyclopedia, like icing on cake, adds the meaning of its Linnaean name. I learned our national bird *Doel* is *Copsychus saularis*, meaning “a blackbird of the sun.”

Many species are named after the scientist who first described it. For example, the great ornithologist Thomas Jerdon is immortalized by *Aviceda jerdoni*, or Jerdon's Baza, magnificent raptor of our forests. Yet others honour a scientist posthumously: the Himalayan Forest Thrush discovered in 2016 was called *Zoothera salimali*. Living scientists are also honoured. In 2019 Hasan Al-Razi et. al. discovered a new frog in Lawacherra and named it *Reorchestes rezakhani* after our pioneering scientist Dr. Reza Khan.

Some species are named for their home region. Thus, we have



Rostratula benghalensis or Greater Painted Snipe, Bangladesh.

PHOTO: IHTISHAM KABIR

the species name “bengalensis” indicating a species found in Bengal. A well-known example is *Ficus bengalensis*, the Linnaean name of our banyan or *botgachh*. Literally, it means “a fig tree of Bengal”, since *Ficus* is the name of a large (800) group of trees related to figs.

Which of our 700-odd bird species were named after Bengal? In Bangladesh today we can find several such birds. They are *Rostratula benghalensis* (Greater Painted Snipe), *Centopus bengalensis* (Lesser Coucal), *Gyps bengalensis* (White-rumped Vulture), *Dinopium bengalense* (Black-rumped Flameback Woodpecker), *Ploceus bengalensis* (Black-breasted Weaver), *Coracias bengalensis* (Indian Roller), and *Sterna bengalensis* (Lesser-crested Tern.) Sadly the *Houbaropsis bengalensis* (Bengal Florican) – a type of bustard – has been extirpated from Bangladesh but found in small numbers in India and Cambodia. And the *Graminicola bengalensis* (Rufous-

rumped Grassbird) was last recorded here two decades ago.

Two birds from outside Bengal are mistakenly named for Bengal: *Bubo bengalensis* (Indian eagle-owl) of Assam, and *Uraeginthus bengalus*, Red-cheeked Cordon-bleu, of Africa.

Places inside Bangladesh have also given rise to Linnaean names. For example, *Cuscuta chittagongensis* is a plant and *Pangshura sylhetensis* is a turtle found in Chattogram and Sylhet, Bangladesh.

The discoverer of a new species can be creative in naming it. Thus, *Scaptia beyoncea*, the Beyonce horse fly discovered in 1989, was named so apparently because of the “fabulous patch of gold hair on its butt.” And in 2005, three newly discovered species of slime beetles were named after George Bush, Donald Rumsfeld and Dick Cheney.

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‘This oppressive law must be abolished’

Protests rage on against DSA; speakers demand judicial probe into Mushtaq's death, release of students

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

People from different walks of life including teachers, political leaders and activists yesterday demanded judicial probe into the death of writer Mushtaq Ahmed in custody and abolition of the Digital Security Act.

They also demanded that those members of the law enforcement agencies accused of torturing Mushtaq and cartoonist Ahmed Kishore, be tried under law.

At a rally in Shahbagh, protesters under the banner of Pragatisheel Chhatra Jote demanded release of student leaders and a worker leader who were detained recently following protests over Mushtaq's death.

“These seven students are actually representing a generation and introducing Bangladesh in a new way. Previously, people in power formed Rab and enacted the ICT Act. Now it is Digital Security Act. This law is there to take away freedom of speech, but not everyone's -- it only

targets those who are critical of the government,” said Dhaka University International Relations Professor Tanzimuddin Khan.

They can oppress the political opposition but cannot stop creative people like Mushtaq and Kishore who speak for the people, he said, adding that those who are in power want to gag people's voice, he said.

“We live in a country where we see Haji Salim's son being cleared of charges in an arms case. We see a member of parliament -- MP Papul -- indicted as human trafficker. We see bank looters like PK Halder remain scot-free... This has become a mafia state,” said Tanzimuddin.

“We saw Kishore got out in bail and read the horrific description of torture on him and Mushtaq,” he said.

Terming DSA an “oppressive law”, speakers said reforming the existing and old laws can protect women and children in cyberspace and prevent

financial corruption. There is no need to have digital security laws for this. This black law, which violates human rights and oppresses free speech, must be repealed, they said.

Dr Harunur Rashid, coordinator of Doctors for People's Health, writer and researcher Maha Mirza and Ovinu Kibria Islam of Jashore University of Science and Technology, among others, spoke at the event.

At a separate rally in Shahbagh organised by Bangladesh Sramik Adhikar Parishad and led by former Ducus VP Nurul Haq Nur, protesters demanded abolition of DSA and release of all arrestees under it.

At another rally in front of Jatiya Press Club, Communist Party of Bangladesh demanded the same.

CPB president Mujahidul Islam Selim said the Awami League government does not tolerate criticism from the opposition and it's using the DSA to squash their voices.



PHOTO: PALASH KHAN, PRABIR DAS

People from all walks of life joined Pragatisheel Chhatra Jote's rally at Shahbagh, demanding justice for Mushtaq Ahmed, abolition of the DSA and release of all those detained under the law. Inset, Communist Party of Bangladesh made the same demands at a rally in front of Jatiya Press Club yesterday.



Law ministry to give opinion tomorrow

Says Anisul Huq on extension of Khaleda's sentence suspension

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Law Minister Anisul Huq yesterday said the ministry will give its opinion tomorrow on the application that sought a further extension of suspension of BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia's jail sentence.

“The law ministry will give its opinion on Sunday,” he told The Daily Star. The minister, however, did not elaborate further on the issue.

On March 4, Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan told reporters at the secretariat that “Khaleda Zia's brother Shamim Iskandar filed the appeal on March 2 seeking extension on the stay of his sister's sentence where he also urged to waive her punishment.”

The application has been sent to the law ministry, and it will be sent back to the home ministry after getting opinion from the law ministry before it is forwarded to the prime minister, he said.

The government on September 15 last year extended for six months its earlier order that suspended the jail sentence of Khaleda Zia and released her from jail. The home ministry issued a gazette notification in this regard on September 15.

The notification said Khaleda will receive treatment at her home and she cannot go abroad during this period.

Khaleda was freed from jail on March 25 last year after the government had suspended her jail sentence for six months. She walked out of jail at a time when the world has been hit by Covid-19 pandemic. She reportedly did not visit any hospital for treatment. However, doctors visited her at home regularly and gave treatment.

2 officials for 11 districts

Ctg explosives dept reeling from manpower crisis

FM MIZANUR RAHAMAN, Ctg

Department of Explosives in Chattogram division has been reeling from manpower crisis for a long time. At present, only two officials and seven office staffers are running administrative work of 11 districts under the division.

Though it is an important department, set up in 1973 under the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources, there is no sub-office in the 11 districts. As a result, officials from the Chattogram divisional office often have to go there for administrative work, said sources.

The department includes one explosives inspector, one assistant explosives inspector, one technical assistant, one upper division assistant, one office assistant/computer operator and one office assistant working at the Chattogram office in Agrabad.

According to officials, this department is the administrative authority for importing, storing and monitoring commercial explosives, and flammable and unfired pressure vessels.

Apart from that, the department gives approval for setting up gas pipelines, cylinders or plants; and monitoring gas cylinder plants, CNG-refuelling stations and filling stations.

It also provides licences to explosives importers and carriers as well as gives permission to dismantle scrap vessels after field visits.

The officials also investigate incidents involving explosives and file reports after monitoring and field visits. According to the office, there were eight incidents of explosions in Chattogram in 2019, which were probed by the department.

“From the Chattogram office, we are dealing with official work of 11 districts. At times, we even have to work on weekends to handle the workload,” Explosives Inspector Md Tofazzal Hossain told The Daily Star recently.

“We have digitised some issues, so that people don't have to travel from other districts. But we still have to go for field visits and other official purposes,” he added.

According to office sources, the assistant explosives inspector joined the Chattogram office a few years back. Before that, Tofazzal had to deal with the issues by himself. “The workload has increased manifold over the last 20 years but our manpower did not,” he added.

According to the department's annual report, a proposal for creating 1,115 posts countrywide and reshuffling existing official organogram is now on the table to address the manpower crisis.

Contacted, Md Anisur Rahman, senior secretary of Energy and Mineral Resources Division, told The Daily Star that they are facing a manpower shortage in all the departments. “We are trying to solve the issue. We will hire more manpower countrywide soon.”

He also mentioned the proposal to create 1,115 posts and said they are discussing it with authorities concerned.

The department's head office is in Dhaka, and it has five branch offices in Chattogram, Khulna, Rajshahi, Sylhet and Barishal. An inspector heads each branch office.

Apart from that, the department has a testing laboratory in the capital's Segunbagicha, which provides testing facilities for explosives and different materials coming under purview of acts and rules administered by the department.

বিমানমূল্যবিত্ত বাহমানিত বাহীম

মোস্তাফা-হাকিম থ্রুসের স্টীল ইউনিটের সর্ববৃহৎ প্রতিষ্ঠান এইচ.এম. স্টীল এন্ড ইন্ডাস্ট্রি লিমিটেড এর আনুষ্ঠানিক উৎপাদন কার্যক্রমের শুভ উদ্বোধন হতে যাচ্ছে।

উদ্বোধনী অনুষ্ঠানে পঞ্চপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকারের মাননীয় ভূমি মন্ত্রী জনাব আলহাজ্ব সাইফুজ্জামান চৌধুরী জাবেদ, এম.পি মহোদয় প্রধান অতিথি হিসেবে উপস্থিত থাকবেন।

এছাড়াও অনুষ্ঠানে চট্টগ্রাম-৪ নং সীতাকুণ্ড আসনের মাননীয় সংসদ সদস্য আলহাজ্ব দিদারুল আলম, এম.পি.

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ইউনাইটেড কমার্শিয়াল ব্যাংকের মাননীয় ব্যবস্থাপনা পরিচালক জনাব মোহাম্মদ শওকত জামিল বিশেষ অতিথি হিসেবে উপস্থিত থাকবেন।

সভাপতিত্ব করবেন এইচ. এম স্টীল এন্ড ইন্ডাস্ট্রি লিমিটেডের সম্মানিত চেয়ারম্যান জনাব আলহাজ্ব মোহাম্মদ মনজুর আলম, সাবেক মেয়র, চট্টগ্রাম সিটি কর্পোরেশন।

শুভ উদ্বোধন

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