

TANGENTS

BY IHTISHAM KABIR



Pallas's Fish Eagle, Hail Haor, Bangladesh.

PHOTO: IHTISHAM KABIR

Pallas's Fish Eagle

One day, I was looking for birds in Hail Haor, a low-lying wetland near Moulvi Bazar where monsoon rain accumulates in large saucer-shaped depressions creating *beels* and fishponds. Leaving my normal route I diverted into a gravel road westward from the main road running through the Haor. Soon I came upon a series of remote fishponds. My microbus complained about the terrain but I kept going. At the far edge of one such pond, I saw a large brown creature sitting on the bank. Approaching closer, I saw that it was a Pallas's Fish Eagle.

The first thing you notice about this eagle is its size. It is our largest eagle, and one of the largest eagles anywhere, almost double the size of the familiar *Shonkho Cheel*, Brahminy Kite. A winter migrant, it arrives here in September and breeds through the winter months. Come April and May, it disappears into the north to the high plains of Central Asia and the Himalayas.

From the top, its body grows progressively darker: a white head, beige neck, and a body that is dark brown from above and a lighter brown from below. Its huge beak is curved and sharp. When in flight, you can see a wide white band arcing across its fanned out tail. Juveniles are brown overall and lack this band. An adult bird's wingspan can reach an extraordinary two meters. Pallas's Fish Eagles belong to a group of large eagles – the same genus as Bald Eagles and Steller's Sea Eagles.

As expected, Pallas's Fish Eagles eat mostly fish. They also take birds small and large, from Little Grebes to Bar-headed Geese. If food is scarce they

will eat frogs, snakes, lizards and even eat off carrion.

Once I had an unnerving experience with one of them. Alone in the middle of the Haor at mid-day, I spotted a Pallas's Fish Eagle perched on a pole in the centre of a fishpond. It was looking for fish with great concentration. I took some pictures. My shutter clicked loudly, shattering the Haor's silence and disturbing the bird. On such occasions, birds of prey, being shy, fly away quickly. Not this one! Annoyed by the interruption it flew over and made several circles over my head, progressively descending closer. Only when it was uncomfortably close did it decide to fly away.

In addition to Hail Haor, I have seen Pallas's Fish Eagles in Tanguar Haor, where, in the village of Golabari, there is a nest where they return every year. It is a big and messy affair on top of a tall tree, assembled roughly from large twigs and branches. Other places they can be seen include the northern edges of Sundarban.

Outside Bangladesh, the bird is also seen in India and countries of Central Asia. With a global population of less than 2,500 it is listed Endangered in the IUCN Red List.

Pallas's Fish Eagle is a fairly localized bird and not so easy to find. Your best bet would be to spend good amounts of time in the Haors in winter. Keep your eyes on the sky and scan trees that line the fishponds. You will increase your chances by steering away from the beaten path.

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'Will do my best to ink Teesta treaty'

Says Modi at meeting with JP delegation

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Visiting Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi yesterday said he will do his best to ink the treaty with Bangladesh on water sharing of Teesta and other common rivers with India.

Modi came up with the assurance while meeting with a four-member delegation of Jatiya Party at a hotel in the capital.

Opposition leader Raushan Ershad, deputy leader of the opposition and JP chairman GM

Quader, JP secretary general Ziauddin Ahmed Bablu and JP co-chairman Ruhul Amin Hawlader were present at the 25-minute meeting that started around 1pm.

The JP delegation raised the longstanding issue of resolving the water-sharing of Teesta and other 54 common rivers with India, and urged Modi to take effective measures to resolve the issue.

"I have already made commitment on inking treaty on water sharing of Teesta river. Discussions at technical level is going on in this regard. We also want

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'Their valour will continue to inspire'

Modi pays tribute to Liberation War martyrs

STAR REPORT

"May every visitor to this revered ground honour the sacred memory of the millions who were slain but not silenced," wrote Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi in the Visitors' Book, in a touching tribute at the National Martyrs' Memorial in Savar yesterday.

Writing in the Visitors' Book after planting a sapling of Arjuna tree at the memorial complex as a mark of respect for the martyrs of Bangladesh, he also said, "Their valour will continue to inspire future generations to fight injustice and defend the cause of righteousness."

"On behalf of the people of India, I pray that the eternal flame at Savar remains a lasting reminder of the noble victory of truth and courage over deceit and oppression," Modi wrote in English with a fountain pen before signing off in Hindi.

This was the Indian PM's first official engagement soon after reaching Dhaka by a special plane, reports our New Delhi correspondent.

He also paid homage to the national heroes by placing a wreath at the memorial.

Earlier, the Indian prime minister reached the National Memorial boarding a helicopter around 11:45am, reports BSS.

On his arrival, Liberation War Affairs Minister AKM Mozammel Haque, State Minister for Housing



Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi plants an Arjuna sapling at the grounds of the National Martyrs' Memorial in Savar yesterday. PHOTO: PID

and Public Works Sharif Ahmed and General Officer Commanding of 9 Infantry Division of Bangladesh Army Major General Shaheul Haque and high civil and military officials welcomed the Indian leader.

A smartly turned-out contingent drawn from Bangladesh Army, Navy and Air Force gave him a guard of honour while the bugles played the last post.

Modi left the National Memorial for the capital around 12:10pm.

He is on a two-day visit to attend celebration of 50 years of Bangladesh's liberation, India-Bangladesh diplomatic relationship and birth centenary of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

A special aircraft of the Air India carrying the Indian premier along

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Liberation War Museum and Ovijaatri organised a march titled "Strength from Mourning: Indomitable March" towards National Memorial in Savar from the capital's Central Shaheed Minar yesterday, on the occasion of golden jubilee of the country's independence, Mujib Borsho and silver jubilee of the museum. Starting at 6am, the participants reached the memorial around 6:35pm. This photo was taken from Shaheed Minar area.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS



Chaos ensued at Baitul Mukarram National Mosque yesterday, as protesters, who are against Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Bangladesh, clashed with Chhatra League activists right after Juma prayers. Law enforcers fired rubber bullets and charged batons to bring the situation under control. At least 60 people, including two photojournalists -- Amran Hossain (bottom right) and Prabir Das -- of The Daily Star, were injured in the clash, which continued for hours.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN AND PRABIR DAS



It's indispensable for justice's sake

Speakers call for raising voices for global recognition of genocide committed in 1971

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladeshis across the globe need to raise their voices to earn global recognition of genocide committed by Pakistan occupation forces and their collaborators during Bangladesh's Liberation War in 1971, speakers said at a webinar on Thursday.

As creating platforms for the cause by the next generation of Bangladeshi diaspora is essential, it is also imperative to conduct scientific researches and collect evidences for the recognition, they said.

Bangladesh High Commission in London with support from Dhaka University's Centre for Genocide Studies (CGS) organised the webinar on "1971 Bangladesh Genocide and International Recognition: 50 Years of Bangladesh Genocide".

Addressing the webinar, former chairman of National Human Rights Commission Prof Mizanur Rahman said recognition of Bangladesh's genocide committed in 1971 is "indispensable for justice's sake".

He said one reason behind the genocide has not been recognised even in 50 years is that Bangladesh did not follow the instruction of the International Commission of Jurists to set up an international tribunal.

The international crimes tribunal which has been established in the country is a domestic one, he added.

Presenting a keynote paper on the topic, eminent political scientist Prof Rounaq Jahan said to earn international recognition of Bangladesh's genocide, the countrymen need to work on various fronts.

She said Bangladesh missions abroad as well as academics and institutions need to be engaged in creating global opinion for the recognition.

Also, Bangladeshi communities in different countries can act the way they acted to create opinion in support of Bangladesh's independence during the Liberation War in 1971, she added.

She stressed for building memorials in each upazila across the country commemorating the genocidal atrocities.

To earn international recognition of Bangladesh's genocide, countrymen need to work on various fronts. Bangladesh missions abroad as well as academics and institutions need to be engaged in creating global opinion for the recognition.

PROF ROUNAQ JAHAN

Stressing the need for scientific research, CGS Director and international relations expert Prof Imtiaz Ahmed said without scientific evidences international communities will not be convinced to support the recognition of Bangladesh's genocide.

It is important to have testimonies of women victims for international recognition of genocide, said Prof Joann Digeorgio-Lutz, author of the book "Women and Genocide: Gendered Experiences of Violence, Survival, and Resistance".

Bangladesh High Commissioner to the United Kingdom and Ireland Saida Muna Tasneem moderated the webinar.

Prof Yasmin Saikia of Arizona State University; Nuzhat Chowdhury, daughter of martyred intellectual Dr Alim Chowdhury; Prof Sachi Dastidar of State University of New York College at Old Westbury; and Bangladeshi community leader in the UK Sultan M Sharif, among others, spoke during the webinar.