

# TANGENTS

BY IHTISHAM KABIR

## House Sparrow



House Sparrows, Hail Haor, Bangladesh.

PHOTO: IHTISHAM KABIR

While we may not give them a second look, sparrows have distinguished lineage. They lend their name, Passer, to the order Passerines, which comprises more than half of the world's bird species. Another name for Passerine is songbird.

There are twenty five species of sparrows in the world. Of these, two are found in Bangladesh: House Sparrow and Eurasian Tree Sparrow.

Most species of sparrows remain localized and shy of humans. However, the House Sparrow is extraordinary. By coming close to humans while retaining its wild nature, it has spread all over the globe.

It is about 6 inches long, coloured brown and black. Male and female House Sparrows look different. The most prominent distinction is that the male has a black "bib" on its chin.

Over time, the House Sparrow has adapted well to humans. Its natural food is seeds of grass and weeds. But its feeding depends on the activities of humans. And so it

eats our leftover food and crumbs and scavenges for food in garbage containers. When eating food that it has difficulty digesting, it swallows small pieces of stone or other hard material. These "grits" stay in the bird's intestines for a long time and help grind up food. Eventually the "grits" are passed with the stool.

To cleanse itself, the House Sparrow, like many other birds, prefers sand baths over water baths. I have seen this in sandy paths in villages as well as construction sites where sand is kept. It will dig a hole in the sand to dip itself, shaking vigorously and flapping its wings. A social bird, it often bathes in groups, taking turns dipping into the sand.

Another adaptation helping the House Sparrow thrive is its nesting and breeding habits. It builds nests in hollow areas of buildings such as roof overhangs and crevices. During courtship males engage in agitated twittering and strut around the female. It is prolific in reproduction, laying up to seven clutches of four or five eggs every year. However, the high birth rate

is offset by a high mortality rate: young birds, as they leave their nest, fall prey to cats and bigger birds.

The House Sparrow has come along with humans for thousands of years. In general the association is favourable: in Greek mythology it is a symbol of love and in Chinese culture it is considered auspicious. I imagine at least some of this is due to its abundant fertility, which also resulted its eggs being eaten as an aphrodisiac during the Middle Ages.

The bird has a large and versatile population. It can easily spread in a new place and drive away native species. Over the world, it is found in all continents except Antarctica. Among the estimated 50 billion bird population of the world, House Sparrow is one of only four species that cross a billion. The others are Barn Swallow, Ring-necked Gull and European Starling.

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## Speak up for Palestine

Ambassador Rabab Fatima urges int'l community

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to the UN Ambassador Rabab Fatima yesterday urged the international community to take urgent and decisive actions to resolve the longstanding crisis in Palestine.

She was speaking at the "Joint Debate on the Situation in the Middle East and the Question of Palestine", convened by the president of the UN General Assembly. Ambassador Fatima informed the assembly that Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, in a letter to Palestine president, denounced the abhorrent acts of violence against innocent civilians of Palestine.

She reaffirmed Bangladesh's commitment in realising the rights of the people of Palestine for an independent homeland, based on the pre-1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital.

She asked for an immediate halt to the Israeli aggression and deplored repetition of such senseless cycles of violence and atrocities by the occupying Israeli forces.

Ambassador Fatima highlighted some priorities towards a comprehensive, just and lasting solution to the Palestinian crisis and peace in the region.

They include genuine efforts of the international community to address root causes of the crisis and fulfilment of the charter responsibilities by the security council and general assembly to turn around the culture of inaction and enforce compliance of all international human rights and humanitarian laws, and relevant UN resolutions.

She called for engaging with all relevant actors to ensure early implementation of the Road Map, Arab Peace Initiative and the efforts of the diplomatic quartet. She said humanitarian needs of Palestinian people must be met urgently and underscored the importance of ensuring accountability of the occupying Israeli forces.

More than 100 UN member states participated in the daylong joint debate, addressed by the UN secretary general and president of the General Assembly. All speakers called for an urgent resolution to the Palestinian crisis.

## JS budget session to be cut short due to Covid

RASHIDUL HASAN

The daily order of business of this year's budget session will be carried out with minimum lawmakers in the House to maintain social distancing and avoid risk of Covid-19 infection, and the duration of the session will be brief.

"Maintaining all health guidelines, the budget session will continue for around two weeks," Zafar Ahmed Khan, senior secretary of the parliament secretariat, told The Daily Star.

"Due to the ongoing second wave of Covid-19, the budget session would be as short as possible to avoid risk of infection," he said.

"No other business except for budgetary and other important activities will be done during the upcoming session," the senior secretary added.

The 11th Jatiya Sangsad will go into budget session at 5pm on June 2, while Finance Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal is scheduled to place the budget for 2021-22 fiscal the following day.

This will be the 13th session of this parliament.

Usually the budget session continues for 30-35 working days, and discussions of the general budget take 55-60 hours.

The last budget session of current 11th parliament was prorogued after only nine working days due to the pandemic, which was the shortest budget session in recent history of Jatiya Sangsad.

Only MPs, staffers and officials of the parliament secretariat who will be tested negative for Covid-19 will be allowed to attend the session, sources at the parliament secretariat said.

The question-answer session for the prime minister and other ministers in the budget session will be tabled, added Zafar Ahmed Khan.

The parliament has taken various health safety measures during the budget session.

Apart from budget-related officials and employees of the parliament secretariat, others will

be discouraged to come to the parliament, sources said.

Senior members of the parliament will be advised not to take part in the session, considering their age.

The parliament will conduct tasks every day with 80-90 lawmakers, so that they can sit maintaining distance in compliance with the health guidelines, sources said.

As per the rules of parliament procedure, the presence of 60 out of 350 members of parliament is mandatory for ensuring a quorum to start the sitting of a parliamentary session.

➤ Session to continue for 2 weeks

➤ Question-answer to be tabled

➤ Journos not allowed to cover in person

Presence of respective ministers and MPs would be ensured on days when the session will have business related to them.

The constitution has an obligation to pass the budget before June 30.

The rules of procedure also instruct the members of parliament to discuss the proposed budget.

Sources at the parliament secretariat said media will be requested to cover the budget session through live telecast on Sangsad Television instead of coming to parliament.

No pass will be issued to journalists to cover the budget session this time due to the Covid-19 situation.

However, one reporter from each media outlet will be able to collect budgetary documents.

## Three killed in road accidents

STAR REPORT

Three people were killed and four others injured in road accidents in two districts yesterday, according to reports from our correspondents.

In Brahmanbaria, two people were killed and three others injured in a head-on collision between a microbus and a pickup van on Dhaka-Sylhet highway in Bijoynagar upazila.

The accident took place at Alinagar in Budhanti union of the upazila around 9am.

ASI Abdul Hamid of Islampur Police Outpost said of the two deceased, one was identified as Roni Khandaker (18) of Habiganj. Roni was helper of the pickup van driver. Identity of the driver could not be known, the ASI said.

ASI Hamid said a Sylhet-bound microbus collided head-on with a Dhaka-bound pickup van coming from the opposite direction. Two passengers of the pickup died instantly. The injured were sent to Madhabpur Upazila Health Complex in Habiganj.

In Rajshahi, a truck helper was killed and the driver injured after a truck overloaded with paddy sacks hit a tree after veering off Rajshahi-Chapainawabganj highway.

The driver, Md Faisal, was admitted to Rajshahi Medical College Hospital after he was rescued two hours later, he said.

The accident occurred at Kosba around 5:45am while the truck was transporting paddy from Jashore to a Chapainawabganj rice mills.

## Pangolin rescued, released in Lawachhara

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

A pangolin was rescued in Lawachhara forest in Kamalganj upazila of Moulvibazar on Thursday evening after seven days of treatment.

Green activists and the Forest Department rescued the endangered mammal from Kulaura on May 13.

"It was being treated at Lawachhara Rescue Centre," said Sohel Shyam, coordinator of Stand for Our Endangered Wildlife.

Acting on a tip-off that some people were trying to sell the pangolin, the organisation with the help of Forest Department and Moulvibazar Sadar range officer rescued it, said Divisional Forest Officer Rezaul Karim Chowdhury.



After an exhausting day under the sweltering heat, this rickshaw-puller stopped at Chattogram city's CRB area to savour the ultimate summer treat -- borof er gola. Vendors around Chattogram city prepare the lolly by pouring brightly coloured, flavoured syrups over moulded, crushed ice. Adults and children alike gobble up the sweet treat as a refresher amid heatwaves.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

## 'Isolation leaves them deprived'

Speakers suggest integrating tea workers into mainstream; International Tea Day observed

STAR REPORT

"There is poverty in every sector, but tea workers suffer the most as they're geographically confined due to several reasons. They must be integrated into the mainstream," said Prof Wahiduddin Mahmud, an eminent economist, yesterday.

He was speaking as chief guest at a discussion titled "Protection of Tea Workers: Challenges and Accountability of Actors."

The virtual discussion marking International Tea Day was organised by Society for Environment and Human Development (SEHD) in partnership with Bangladesh Cha Sramik Union. It was supported by Canada Fund for Local Initiative.

Prof Wahiduddin said, "Workers of other sectors are part of the common society. But the isolation of tea workers leaves them particularly deprived."

"The tea industry is mostly private and relies on productivity and profit, which must be increased at all times. During negotiation of wages and other terms, these business owners should be transparent," he said.

He urged Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics to prepare a statistical report on the industry that will assist policies.



A worker collects tea leaves at a garden in Habiganj. PHOTO: STAR

Philip Gain, director of SEHD, presented the keynote paper while Dr Hossain Zillur Rahman, executive chairman of Power and Participation Research Centre (PPRC), chaired and facilitated the dialogue.

In the keynote paper, Gain mentioned tea workers are being deprived by the labour law, while women workers are suffering the most.

They have substandard quality of living and there is a lack of health and education facility, he said. He also mentioned in the paper that the tea workers have no right to land and are not able to get the benefits of the government's social safety services.

Gain also stated that the wage of tea workers in cash is Tk 120 per day along with ration and other facilities. Workers say the value of these facilities and ration is Tk 200. So their total wage comes to Tk 320, he said.

But Bangladesh Tea Association estimated that to be Tk 378.91 in a report to Wage Board in 2019, he said.

KM Abdus Salam, secretary of the Ministry of Labour and Employment; M Shah Alam, chairman of Bangladesh Tea Association (BTA); Khushi Kabir, coordinator of Nijera Kori, and Prof Farid Uddin Ahmed, VC of Shahjalal University of Science and Technology, were present as guests of honour.

Leaders of Cha Sramik Union and Trade Union Centre also participated as discussants. Tahsin Chowdhury, convener of labour and welfare sub-committee of BTA, also participated.

Prof Tanzimuddin Khan of Dhaka University and member of SEHD gave the vote of thanks.

## ফ্লু ভ্যাকসিন নেয়ার সময় এখনই

ফ্লু একটি মারাত্মক ছোঁয়াচে রোগ যা ইনফ্লুয়েঞ্জা ভাইরাস এর কারণে হয়ে থাকে। যারা দীর্ঘমেয়াদী জটিল রোগে আক্রান্ত, তাদের এই সময়ে ফ্লু সংক্রমণের ঝুঁকি বেশি থাকে। যেমন-

Asthma & COPD

Heart disease

Diabetes

Chronic Kidney disease

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ভ্যাকসিন প্রয়োগের জন্য যোগাযোগ করুন  
হিটেল্টা ০১৭১৪-০৯৪১৪৮ (সকাল ১০.০০-সন্ধ্যা ৭.০০)

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ঔষধ ক্রয়ের সময় মেয়াদ উত্তীর্ণের তারিখ দেখে নিন, মেয়াদ উত্তীর্ণ ঔষধ ক্রয়, বিক্রয় ও ব্যবহার থেকে বিরত থাকুন।  
শুধুমাত্র রেজিস্টার্ড চিকিৎসকের ব্যবস্থাপত্র মোতাবেক এন্টিবায়োটিক সেবন করুন।