

TANGENTS

BY IHTISHAM KABIR

Paradise Flycatcher

Taking in a sharp breath and forgetting to exhale is a common reaction when watching a flying male Asian Paradise Flycatcher. That's because, like an apparition straight out of the Arabian Nights, two long tail streamers several times the length of the bird glide behind it making waves in the sky. I've seen many beautiful birds around the world and this bird ranks high among them.

The Asian Paradise Flycatcher lives year round in Bangladesh. An uncommon bird here, it is found in forests and village groves. The female is rufous (reddish brown.) The male can occur in two colours (morphs): white or rufous. Both males and females have black heads, grey-blue oversized hooked bills and a blue ring around their eyes. The tail of the male bird has two streamers several times the size of the body.

Years ago I saw the white Asian Paradise Flycatcher at a pond deep inside Satchori National Park. It perched on a plant on the bank and made swift short flights to catch prey. Like all flycatchers, it went after insects on the wing: butterflies, bees, wasps, beetles and dragonflies. It also took several quick dips in the water – too fast for my camera – and then flew away with the long white tail trailing behind it like a mirage.

Recently I went to Narayanganj with friends to see a nesting pair of Asian Paradise Flycatchers. This time the male was a rufous morph. They had built their nest, the size and shape of a small cup, at the junction of two thin branches, impossibly difficult to see in the foliage. Both parents incubated, the mother more than the father. The father was out and about more, flying around looking for food to bring home. Occasionally it brought a bee or another insect and fed its mate while she incubated. When the eggs hatch, both parents will bring food to the nestlings.

When not incubating, the birds moved rapidly, hopping over short distances within a tree looking for prey before taking a longer flight to another tree. The father guarded his territory well. It buzzed a squirrel



Asian Paradise Flycatcher, Narayanganj, Bangladesh.

PHOTO: IHTISHAM KABIR

that was scouting out the nest. It also attacked a Rufous Treepeep that came too close. However, it had no quarrel with nearby starlings and drongos. The pair stayed within a radius of perhaps two hundred feet from the nest.

Paradise flycatchers comprise sixteen different bird species spread around Asia and Africa. They belong to the monarch group of flycatchers. Their genus name, Terpsiphone, means "sweet voice of paradise."

Beside the Asian Paradise Flycatcher I also saw the Malagasy

Paradise Flycatcher in Madagascar. It looked similar to the rufous coloured bird I saw in Narayanganj with two exceptions: its tail streamer was white, and it was shorter than our bird's. I saw several pairs in different forests of the island incubating eggs in tiny cups that looked the same as the one I saw in Narayanganj. They were just as fidgety but less wary than our birds.

facebook.com/ikabirphotographs or follow "ihtishamkabir" on Instagram.

MIDDLEMEN IN LABOUR MIGRATION

Govt to bring them under legal framework

Says formally recognising informal service providers will help check fraudulence, ensure accountability

JAMIL MAHMUD

The government is going to make informal grassroots service providers in labour migration accountable by formally recognising them under the relevant law with the aim to end fraudulence in the sector.

The expatriates' welfare and overseas employment ministry is amending the Overseas Employment and Migrant Act-2013 and has already formulated a draft of the proposed law, setting up a definition of such service providers widely known as "sub-agents" or "middlemen".

Migrant rights groups and sector insiders welcomed the move. However, they said the government needs to find a viable option to hold informal service providers accountable.

Once the proposed Overseas Employment and Migrant (Amendment) Act-2021 is passed, the middlemen will formally be identified as "sub-agents" or "representatives" working under licensed recruiting agents, irrespective of being paid by the agents.

"...for all migration-related activities of the appointed sub-agent or representative, both related recruiting agent and sub-agent will be responsible collectively and separately," reads a sub-clause of the proposed law.

The ministry recently uploaded a draft copy of the proposed law on its website and sought stakeholders' opinion. "We are considering modernising the 2013 Act," said Shahidul Alam, additional secretary of expatriates' welfare ministry.

In Bangladesh, most recruiting agents are based in Dhaka whereas workers are based in rural areas. Hence middlemen are needed to link the two parties, explained an official of the ministry, seeking anonymity.

"On the other hand, when a worker is deceived or lured or additional money is taken from them, they can seldom tell the name of the person responsible. As a result, it becomes difficult to bring the culprit to book," said the ministry official.

The main goal here is to make these culprits accountable, he said.

Despite the lack of legal recognition, informal service providers or middlemen are an integral part of the labour migration cycle.

They provide at least a dozen types of services to migrant workers – from assisting in passport processing to accompanying workers to the airport, according to studies by various migrant rights groups.

This is due to a major gap that exists in the government's pre-departure services to migrants, said a joint report of IOM and ILO.

As per the proposed law, the persons appointed as sub-agent or representative have to be registered with recruiting agents' association,

64 districts, so only 20 sub-agents for a recruiting agency might not be adequate, she added. "This may lead to the creation of 'sub-agents' of the sub-agents," said Prof Tasneem.

She said they have already suggested a system under which Baira, the apex trade body of recruiting agents, will register sub-agents across the country.

The registration process will follow criteria set by the Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training, she recommended.

According to the joint report of IOM and ILO, migrants depend on informal agents more than authorised recruiters and state institutions because of their proximity with the



CURRENT PROCESS

Unregulated middlemen connect potential workers to recruiting agencies, and many workers fall victim to fraud in the process.

PROPOSED SYSTEM

Middlemen will be registered as "sub-agents" with recruiting agents' association, and the government will have a list of all those registered.

and the association will keep a list of all registered sub-agents or representatives, an updated copy of which has to be submitted to the government each year.

The proposed law says a recruiting agent will be able to appoint a maximum of 20 sub-agents. But the government will decide on a number by issuing directives from time to time. Each sub-agent can only register under one recruiting agent at a time.

Prof Tasneem Siddiqui, founding chair of Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit (RMMRU), said, "Following a longstanding demand of migrant rights groups, the prime minister in 2019 directed to register the sub-agents or middlemen." "However, the government's registration plan is not viable."

There are thousands of villages in

former and lack of awareness.

Informal intermediaries and migrants' social networks now procure more than 50 percent of visas and other migration services, including passport and smart card collection, online registration and medical checkups, said the 2018 report by IOM and ILO.

A World Bank report published in March last year says Bangladeshi labour workers spent on average Tk 2.78 lakh, or more than \$3,000, for migration. The highest government-fixed migration cost is Tk 1.66 lakh for jobs in Russia, followed by Tk 1.65 lakh for Saudi Arabia.

An RMMRU survey of 5,407 households in the high migration-prone district Tangail in 2017 found 19 percent people could not make it for overseas jobs despite paying Tk 1.95 lakh each on average.

School staffer arrested for assaulting head teacher

OUR CORRESPONDENT, M'singh

Police yesterday arrested an office assistant of a school for allegedly assaulting the head teacher on Thursday.

The arrestee – Rakib Khan (30) – works at Baroihati Govt Primary School in Gafargaon, Mymensingh. The head teacher, Nilufa Khanam, filed a case with Pagla Police Station, accusing Rakib.

Quoting the case, OC Rasheduzzaman said although the school is closed, teachers prepare students' assignments there.

On Thursday, when Nilufa asked Rakib to clean the rooms, he altercation with her and, at one stage, hit her on the head with an iron rod. When other teachers rushed in, Rakib fled.

Gafargaon UNO Md Tajul Islam said Rakib has been terminated from his contractual job.

UN honours eight fallen Bangladeshi peacekeepers

UNB, Dhaka

The United Nations has awarded eight fallen peacekeepers from Bangladesh posthumously with the "Dag Hammarskjöld Medal".

UN Secretary-General António Guterres said their service and sacrifices will never be forgotten, according to a press release from the UN Information Centre in Dhaka.

A total of 129 peacekeepers from 44 nations, who lost their lives while rendering duties in different peacekeeping missions in 2020 were honoured, at a virtual ceremony on the occasion of International Day of the UN Peacekeepers yesterday. The medals were awarded by the UN secretary-general in presence of the respective permanent representatives of 44 countries at the programme.

Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to the UN, Ambassador Rabab Fatima, received the medals on behalf of Bangladesh.

Among the 129, eight were Bangladeshi peacekeepers, highest from any single country this year.

The fallen Bangladeshi peacekeepers are Abdul Md Halim who served with MINUSMA, LCpl Md Abdulla Al Mamun and Sgt Mohammad Ibrahim, who served with United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic; Sgt Md Mobarak Hussain, LCpl Md Saiful Islam, Md Saiful Imam Bhuiyan and Sgt Md Ziaur Rahman who were deployed with the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo; and Washerman Nurul Amin of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan.

Six killed in road crashes

STAR REPORT

Six people were killed and 11 injured in road accidents during the last two days, according to reports from our correspondents and a news agency.

In Mymensingh, two passengers of an auto-rickshaw were killed and its driver was injured as it collided head-on with a microbus in Nandail upazila yesterday. The deceased are Shahabuddin (45) and Khaleque (70).

UNB from Gaibandha reports, one person was killed and five were injured in a head-on collision between a bus and auto-rickshaw on Gaibandha-Saghata Road yesterday. The deceased, Dulal Chandra, was from Rannather Bitha.

In Bhola, three auto-rickshaw passengers – Sohag (35), Aziz (30) and Siraj (25) – were killed and five injured as a bus hit two three-wheelers in Charfashion upazila on Thursday.



A worker barely balances himself on two thin rods, welding a safety shed on the fifth level of an under-construction building to prevent any debris from falling on passers-by. But there is no safety equipment, or even a helmet for the worker himself as he risks his life at the site. This photo was taken from Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue in Dhaka recently.

Looking out for avian friends

Youths set up bird nests at author Upendrakishore's birthplace

OUR CORRESPONDENT, M'singh

A group of youths have started setting up nests for birds at Masua village in Kishoreganj's Katiadi upazila. This initiative is the first of its kind in the district.

The youths under the forum "Manobik Masua" began their humanitarian work last Eid by distributing essentials among 40 families in need, said Afjal Hossain, a member of the forum. "We created this forum so people could come together irrespective of political, religious identities." Masua is just five kilometres away from Katiadi upazila headquarters.

The youth forum has primarily set up 40 nests at the historic houses of then Masua zamindars. Legendary children's author Upendrakishore Ray Chowdhury was born to the zamindar family of Masua, and the historic houses are the ancestral homes of Sukumar Ray and Satyajit Ray.

"We will set up 200 more nests in the next two months," said Afjal.

"Birds of many species used to live in this area. But indiscriminate felling of trees and spread of human habitat and infrastructure has greatly harmed the biodiversity of this beautiful village," said forum member



A youth sets up a clay pot on a tree where birds can build nests with ease.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

Delwar Hossain Roman, an MBA student. Every nest costs Tk 200, and the 40 members of the forum bear the cost, said Probal Kumar Bhowmik, another member.

This initiative was inaugurated on Friday by Masua High School Principal Taposh Kumar Roy and Masua Eidgah Imam Maulana Abu Jafor Saleh.

The administration and green activists of the area affirmed their support for the initiative. They said this step by the forum will help young people realise their duty to the society and environment.

PALLABI TRADER MURDER Two accused confess

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Two more accused confessed to a magistrate yesterday that they were directly involved in the killing of trader Shahinuddin in the city's Pallabi area on May 16.

The accused are Mohammad Sharif and Iqbal Noor. Earlier, four accused including Sumon Bepari gave their confessional statements.

Metropolitan Magistrate Nivana Khair Jesi recorded the statements of Sharif and Noor. The magistrate later sent them to Dhaka Central Jail in Keraniganj.

They told the magistrate that they took part in the killing under the leadership of Bepari as per direction of former lawmaker from Laxmipur MA Awal. On May 16, miscreants stabbed Shahinuddin to death at Mirpur-12 over a land dispute with former lawmaker Awal. Police so far arrested 11 people including Awal in connection with the murder.



A rickshaw-van driver is on his way to deliver a mountain of empty plastic containers, neatly stacked and fastened with rope on the three-wheeler. The stack is so high that the driver can't be even seen from the back. While such seemingly precarious arrangements is the norm for transporting materials on rickshaw-vans, sometimes they may be too risky for the roads. This photo was taken on Thursday from the capital's Palashi intersection.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN