

TANGENTS

BY IHTISHAM KABIR



Chestnut Munia, Keraniganj

PHOTO: IHTISHAM KABIR

OUR MUNIAS

I was disappointed when I saw my first munia some years ago.

That's because I had believed a story I had read as a child. Our Creator had created all the birds and was colouring them by splashing paint on them. Except the munias; they were away playing. When they finally showed up only drops of different colours remained. So He splashed these drops on the munias, making them beautifully multi-coloured.

But the Chestnut Munia I saw was brown with a black head. Some others around it were reddish brown with a scaly pattern on the breast. Some had a white patch on the breast. None was spectacularly colourful like the munias in the story.

It did not take long for my disappointment to turn to joy, however. The playful nature of the birds was on full display. On the grassy field, they flitted from stalk to grass stalk, cleaning out the tiny seeds with their thick bills, sharing them, kissing each other on the beak, and playing an avian merry-go-round competing for desirable perches. It was impossible not to love them.

We have six species of munias in Bangladesh: Chestnut, Tricoloured, Scaly-breasted, Indian Silverbill, White-rumped and Red Munia.

Of these the first four are easiest to see. They can be found in open grasslands all year round, playing and feeding on grass seeds, sometimes in large flocks flying like shimmering ripples through the fields. The White-rumped Munia, harder to find, is seen in forests of Sylhet and Chittagong; I have also seen it in shorn paddyfields in those areas.

The Red Munia (also known as

the Red Avadavat or the Strawberry Finch) is the hardest to spot. It is rare here and seen in grasslands in autumn. An extraordinarily pretty red bird with spots of white, it is the bird that my childhood story must have referred to. When it is spotted in one or two places around Dhaka, word gets around quickly and flocks of bird photographers show up.

In spring, munias in the fields build nests among thickets of tall grass. Sometimes they re-use old nests of Baya Weavers. Come monsoon, the chicks have started to fly and need constant feeding. They clamour with open beaks wherever their mother goes. The mother cleans out seeds from grass stalks with her beak and patiently feeds her babies taking turns.

There are around 31 species of munias spread over the Old World, all belonging to the Estrildidae family of birds – a family that includes some of the prettiest small birds including the Gouldian Finch. The Chestnut Munia readily seen in our grasslands was the national bird of the Philippines until 1995 when President Ramos decided that as a national symbol it was too small and docile. He changed the national bird to Philippines Eagle.

If you are unable to get outside the city to open fields, various munias can be found in the city parks. I have occasionally seen Indian Silverbill Munias on the rooftop garden of our high-rise in Dhaka. The friendly demeanour and playful antics of these birds make them a delight for lovers of nature.

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

Autobiography of Bangabandhu translated to Korean

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The autobiography of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman -- "The Unfinished Memoirs" -- has been translated into Korean language as part of celebrating his birth centenary.

Lee Dong-heon has translated the book and Korean publisher "Moraeal LLC" will make this publication available both in the local book stores in Korea and online platforms, said Bangladesh Embassy in Korea that initiated the translation.

The book was launched at a ceremony in Seoul on Thursday. In a video message, Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen said Bangabandhu's political vision as well as his unremitting support for humanism and world peace are reflected in his autobiography.

Sul Hoon, member of Korea's National Assembly; Lee Sangryol, director-general of the Asian and Pacific Affairs Bureau, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Korea, were present on the occasion.

Ambassador Abida Islam awarded a crest to Dong-heon, acknowledging his contribution in translating the book. She also acknowledged Sheuli Fateha, lecturer, Korean Language Program, Institute of Modern Languages at Dhaka University, who validated the translation work.

Nazrul Islam Khan, curator of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Memorial Museum, also sent a video message on the occasion.

RAPE, MURDER OF O-LEVEL STUDENT IN DHAKA

No progress in probe in six months

SHARIFUL ISLAM

Investigation into the rape and murder of an O-level student in Dhaka's Kalabagan is yet to be completed even over six months after the incident that sparked a huge public outcry.

The investigators said they have not got the victim's post-mortem and DNA reports, two crucial elements of the case, as of now. They could not say for sure how long it will take to complete the probe.

Present Investigation Officer (IO) of the case and PBI Inspector Khaled Saifullah appealed to a Dhaka court on Sunday seeking a remand for lone accused Fardin Iftakhar Dihan for interrogation.

The court did not grant the remand as the accused has already made confessional statement. It, however, asked the IO to interrogate the accused at the jail gate. "We will interrogate the accused shortly as per the court directive in a suitable time," the IO told The Daily Star.

He also said they have already

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soon as possible.

"After receiving the post-mortem and other forensic reports we have some procedures to complete..." he said.

Father of the victim recently told The Daily Star that though six months have elapsed since the incident, they are happy as the charge of investigation was given to PBI.

"We always wanted an extensive investigation. We strongly believe that at least three people were involved in the incident and hope PBI will find out all the culprits since they have specialisation in case investigation," said the father, who is a businessman in Old Dhaka.

Kalabagan police investigated the case for around five months, but failed to complete the probe.

The father alleged that the police investigation was mainly focused on Dihan.

After the rape and murder, father of the 17-year-old victim filed the case with Kalabagan Police Station on January 7 against Dihan (18) under the

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

Cattle smuggling on amid concerns of Delta variant

UNB, Kurigram

Residents of Kurigram district's border areas are worried about the highly contagious Delta variant of Covid-19, as smuggling of Indian cattle has reportedly increased ahead of Eid-ul-Azha.

Cattle smuggling has become rampant through the district's porous frontier, alleged locals. They said smugglers bring in cattle at night, using both land and river routes.

In local haats (markets), Indian cattle are available, and traders from different districts through there, as demand has spiked because of the upcoming Eid.

Abdul Hakim, a villager of Sadar upazila's Jatrapur union, said the haats get set up on Saturday and Tuesday, and Indian cattle are sold.

Mozammel Haque, a resident of Nageshwari upazila's Narayanpur union, said there is a fear that coronavirus, especially the Delta variant, may spread because of this illegal movement across the border.

However, Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) claimed that their members are on high-alert to prevent the spread of Covid-19 along bordering areas.

Meanwhile, the local administration and police also have strengthened monitoring to tackle any illegal trading of cattle.

On condition of anonymity, a local resident said, "It's beyond my imagination why the government is not taking

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

Hilsa netting in sea continues despite ban

Barishal fish going to other regions due to low demand

SUSHANTA GHOSH, Barishal

Many fishers in Barishal are netting hilsa despite the ongoing ban on sea-fishing.

They are catching the fish, particularly during the night to hide from the drives by authorities concerned.

The Department of Fisheries enforced the 65-day ban on netting hilsa till July 23, to protect the mother fish till spawning.

However, local traders said the fish were being netted and sent from the southern region, including Mahipur, Kuakata and Bhola.

Asked, fishers said they have no other option but to net the fish in order to survive amid the pandemic and lockdown. They also said the government food support they receive is not enough.

Each of the around 3.63 lakh fishers is supposed to get 40kg rice per month in compensation.

Meanwhile, as the lockdown has brought down the demand for fish in Barishal, hilsa caught from rivers and seas are being sent to different markets of the country, including those of Dhaka.

They are going to markets in Dhaka,



Maunds of hilsa being loaded onto trucks, to be transported to markets across the country. This photo was taken on Thursday from Barishal Port Road. PHOTO: TITU DAS

Rajshahi and Khulna, as the number of local buyers has decreased due to the lockdown.

After visiting Barishal Port Road wholesale fish market, it was found that about 300 maunds of hilsa were being loaded in three trucks going to markets in Dhaka, Rajshahi and Khulna.

Shaheen, owner of the Khulna-bound truck, said most of the fish came from sea-going fishing boats.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

CAGED, DROWNED

Man fined Tk 2,000 for killing Asian palm civet

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

He along with his friends not only caged and drowned an Asian palm civet to death, but also recorded and shared the incident on Facebook.

As the reason, the man claimed that the civet preyed on 20 of his pigeons.

The incident took place at Doulatpur village in Boroutan union of Karnaphuli upazila in Chattogram on Thursday.

After the incident became known, a mobile court yesterday fined one Sayed Mursalin Tk 2,000 for killing the animal.

Sukanta Saha, assistant commissioner (land) of Karnaphuli upazila, fined him after a team of forest department detained him from his home at Doulatpur village.

Due to his ignorance of the law, he killed the animal as it preyed on his pigeons, he said. "We fined and released him as he expressed regret for his deed," he added.

The official said the youth could also claim compensation for the damage afflicted by the wildlife as per wildlife conservation act.

The Asian palm civet is considered a species of Least Concern on the IUCN Red List and it occupies a broad range of area stretching across much of Southern Asia. Yet declining habitats have forced the animal to venture out of its home range and look for available food sources.

LOCKDOWN OUTSIDE DHAKA

Authorities strict on 2nd day too

STAR REPORT

The second day of the countrywide lockdown was in full-swing yesterday, as government agencies concerned were strict in enforcement.

Many were fined for violating the lockdown, while most thoroughfares in different districts were almost empty.

Army, Border Guard Bangladesh and Ansar members along with law enforcement agencies were seen patrolling streets amid incessant rain in many areas.

In Chattogram, six teams of army and six of BGB, along with police and 12 mobile courts, were deployed at different points.

Shopping malls and most shops were shut, but many small shops by the road were open. Rickshaws dominated the roads, while some motorbikes were also seen.

Those who went out had to face questions

from police and other law enforcers.

In Cumilla, authorities filed 296 cases over violations and fined people a total of Tk 3,17,950 in the city and 17 upazilas.

In Khulna, mobile courts fined 38 people Tk 18,650 for going out without valid reason. Many who went out for emergency had to travel on rickshaws and auto-rickshaws. Some had to walk for a long time due to scarcity of rickshaws.

In Barishal, the city's major streets were almost empty all day, while most shops were closed. Even kitchen markets could not draw much crowd. Vehicles carrying goods and ambulances were seen on roads. Authorities fined 11 people around Tk 11,000.

In Rajshahi, the city streets were also quite empty, though public presence was noticed in kitchen markets. People came out travelling on motorbikes, bicycles, rickshaws and in private cars, while many were seen

walking. Many also locked into altercation with law enforcers who intercepted them. Mobile courts fined some 16 people Tk 12,900.

In Rangpur, the city's busiest streets were almost deserted, but public presence was noticed in alleys. Few bakery shops were found open at various places.

In Munshiganj, very few people were seen on streets. A total of 30 mobile courts were deployed, and they fined people around Tk 15,000. One of the major ferry routes of the country, Shimulia-Banglabazar, saw hardly any passengers. Only goods-carrying vehicles and ambulances were seen boarding ferries, said police.

In Tangail, a total of 800 members of police, Ansar, BGB and army, along with 29 mobile courts, were deployed. Check-posts were set up in 113 places.



On the second day of the lockdown, the streets around the major cities remained mostly empty, only sparsely populated by some vehicles and pedestrians here and there. Even amidst this, some lower-income people felt compelled to get out -- risking rain, health and penalty in the hands of law enforcers, army and BGB, who were out in droves. Many said they've been having a hard time ever since the first lockdown last year, and can't help but come out in search of work, even if customers are few and far between. These photos were taken from Sylhet, Khulna, Dhaka, and Dhaka-Aricha highway.

PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR, HABIBUR RAHMAN, PRABIR DAS AND PALASH KHAN



NEWS

IN brief

Man found dead in Savar

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Savar

A man was found dead in Ashulia's Bhadail area of Savar early yesterday.

Joyal Abedin (60), from Rangpur, was a battery-run auto-rickshaw driver, said police.

Hasib Mia, sub-inspector of Ashulia Police Station, said they recovered the body around 3am from a rented room of one Rubel (25), a neighbour.

The SI said, "We are trying to detain Rubel who is on the run." Police suspect that he was strangled to death, as there were injury marks on his neck.

Hungary to give full scholarships to 130 Bangladeshi students

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh and Hungary have signed a MoU that secured Hungarian Governments' full scholarships under the Stipendium Hungaricum Programme for a yearly intake of 130 Bangladeshi students at undergraduate, graduate and post-graduate levels for the next three years.

Bangladesh Ambassador to Austria, Hungary, Slovenia and Slovenia Muhammad Abdul Muhith and Hungarian State Secretary Dr Orsolya Pacsay-Tomassich signed the MoU at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Hungary in Budapest on June 30, according to a statement yesterday.

Man held with gold worth Tk 1.6cr at Dhaka airport

UNB, Dhaka

A passenger was detained by customs officials at Dhaka airport early yesterday for allegedly attempting to smuggle in two gold bars worth Tk 1.6 crore.

The detainee is Jashim Mia, a resident of Narsingdi district. A team from Dhaka Customs House intercepted Jashim at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport upon his arrival from Jeddah around 2:45am.

"The two gold bars weighing about 1.6kg were recovered from a flower pot he was carrying," said Deputy Commissioner of the Dhaka Customs House (preventive team) Mohammad Abdus Sadek.

The gold bars worth Tk 1.6 crore were submitted to the national reserve, while the passenger was handed over to the police. "A criminal case has been filed against the accused at the local police station."

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