

TANGENTS

BY IHTISHAM KABIR

MINIVET

It is impossible to adequately describe the exhilaration upon spotting a Scarlet Minivet inside the forest. High up in the canopy, where you have to squint to discern between branches and leaves, a flash of bright red darts from leaf to leaf and branch to branch like a mirage. You squint harder, shaking your head, thinking you are imagining things. As if reading your mind it sits still for a second to convince you it is real. Then it takes off. You think it is gone but wait... freezing mid-flight it hovers to check under a leaf where it finds a juicy larva. And then it flies away for good, leaving you asking yourself, "What did I just see?"

The first time I saw a minivet was in Sundarban many years ago, a bright orange bird restlessly flitting without a moment's pause, high up on a Keora tree. I later learned that this small bird which I immediately loved was a Small Minivet.

Minivets are the colourful stars of our forests. There are six species of minivets found in Bangladesh: Scarlet, Small, Rosy, Ashy, Long-tailed and Swinhoe's Minivet.

The most spectacular among these is the Scarlet Minivet. The male is bright red with a black head and neck and a distinctive blue-black pattern running along its back. The female is bright yellow with a grey pattern on its back and a grey bar running across its eye.

The Small Minivet is easier to find than a Scarlet Minivet. It is orange underneath and almost completely dark on top, so it is not quite as spectacular as its scarlet cousin. Rosy Minivet males are a delicate shade of pink with grey upperparts; females are yellow instead of pink. Ashy and Swinhoe's Minivets are grey (and white) birds devoid of colour.

The Long-tailed Minivet is



Scarlet Minivet, Bangladesh.

PHOTO: IHTISHAM KABIR

almost identical to the Scarlet Minivet except for a longer tail. It is rare in Bangladesh.

All the minivets I have seen have been in our forests: Sundarban, Satchori, and Rema-Kalenga. While they are delightful, they are also difficult to photograph. This is because of their constant motion. Searching for small insects, larvae and caterpillars, they move between leaves, branches and trees, shooting up and diving down effortlessly. Thus it is difficult to focus the lens on them. Further, even when focus is attained, the pose is usually awkward, because the bird is constantly turning its head in unusual angles while searching for food.

Sometimes minivets sweep

through the forest in a mixed flock hunting party. I have seen Small, Ashy and Rosy Minivets hunting together. They comb through each tree before moving onto the next. If photographing them, you are better off betting on one bird and following it for a few minutes instead of moving from bird to bird.

Minivets belong to the family of cuckooshrikes. Worldwide there are fifteen species of minivets, all having the same profile: small, slender, erect, with strong beaks and long tails. They are found in forests of South, South-east and East Asia.

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Dengue cases cross 1,000 mark in country

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

With at least 63 people with dengue fever being admitted to hospitals in the country during 24 hours till 8am yesterday, the number of dengue cases has passed the 1,000 mark this year.

Till yesterday, a total of 1058 patients have been diagnosed with dengue this year, according to the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

Of the total infected, only 36 are from outside Dhaka.

Around half of the total infected, 686 were diagnosed during the running month till yesterday morning, which indicates the fast-rising trend of the disease.

At least 272 were infected in June and 43 were infected in May.

Though most of the patients who were hospitalised have so far been released, 318 of them are still undergoing treatment at hospitals in Dhaka, and one outside the capital, the DGHS data showed.

The DGHS reported 1,193 dengue cases and three confirmed dengue-related deaths in 2020.

According to official figures, 101,354 dengue cases and 179 deaths were recorded in Bangladesh in 2019.

Dengue fever was first reported in Bangladesh in 2000 when it claimed 93 lives.

In the following three years, the fatalities almost fell to zero.

However, the mosquito-borne viral infection struck again in 2018, killing 26, and infecting 10,148 people.

SURGE OF COVID PATIENTS

Dinajpur's lone dedicated hospital full to the brim

KONGRON KARMAKER

With the number of Covid-19 patients increasing every day, M Abdur Rahim Medical College and Hospital in Dinajpur is overflowing. As of yesterday, around 200 people occupied the hospital's 130-bed Covid unit.

As the only specialised public treatment institution for patients of four northern districts, this is affecting more than just people of Dinajpur.

According to officials, there are 16 ICU (Intensive Care Unit) beds and 11 HDU (High Dependency Unit) beds at the hospital, all of which are occupied at present.

The hospital also has a central oxygen supply with a capacity of 10,000-litre.

Dr Abdur Kuddus, civil surgeon of Dinajpur, said at least 300 Covid patients are being treated across different hospitals in the district.

Among them, 213 patients are admitted to Abdur Rahim Hospital, 42 to Dinajpur General Hospital, and 45 to upazila health complexes in the district.

As the Abdur Rahim Hospital is a government-run specialised hospital, critical patients from nearby districts, including Panchagarh, Thakurgaon, and

Nilphamari, go there for treatment too.

During multiple visits to the hospital over the week, the hospital authorities were seen struggling to deal with the surge of patients.

"Covid patients from all over the region come here; it gets difficult for us to serve them with our limited capacity," said a staffer.

While patients and their attendants are suffering immensely due to this shortage of capacity, many also complained of mismanagement to go with it.

Dinajpur town resident Mohammad Joy said he brought his father to the hospital after he started experiencing breathing difficulties.

"My father got a bed after trying for two days. We got his RT-PCR test report after another day," he said.

It is worth mentioning here that no Covid-related tests take place in the hospital.

Besides, patients have to suffer more as the only CT-Scan machine of the hospital is out of service, Joy said.

Md Rafiqul Islam, attendant of a patient from Thakurgaon, alleged that hospital staffers often misbehave with them.

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A Covid patient in critical condition is being taken to M Abdur Rahim Medical College Hospital. But with 200 patients already admitted to its 130-bed unit, the hospital can't keep up with the patient inflow for much longer.

PHOTO: STAR

Nine killed in road accidents

STAR REPORT

At least nine people have died in road accidents across the country yesterday, according to reports from our correspondents.

In Narsingdi, six people, including a child, were killed and at least four others injured in a collision between a covered van and a human haulier in Narsingdi's Sadar upazila yesterday afternoon.

Five of the deceased were identified as Jharna Begum (30), her son Al Amin (10), Hafizul Islam (46), Chand Mia (55) and human haulier driver Aman Mia (23).

The identity of another victim could not be known.

Quoting witnesses, Yusuf Mia, in-charge of Panchdona Police Outpost, said the accident took place on Panchdona-Ghorashal-Tongi regional highway at Bhatpara Takshal intersection around 2:30pm, killing Chand Mia and Al Amin instantly.

Jharna succumbed to her injuries on the way to Narsingdi Sadar Hospital and the other three died while undergoing treatment there, the police official said.

The injured victims were being treated at the hospital. Police seized the covered van.

In Dhaka, two workers of a restaurant died after a truck ran them over in Dhaka's Gulistan early yesterday.

The deceased are Jakir Hossain (30) and Md Shakil (15). The accident took place around 1am when they went to dump restaurant waste at a nearby bin.

While they were returning, the speeding truck hit them, said Paltan Police Station Sub-inspector Kazi Ashraf Haque. Police seized the truck and detained its driver.

In Dinajpur, a shopkeeper died as a speeding truck crashed into his roadside shop after the driver lost his control at Tajhat (Ansari Mor) in Rangpur city early yesterday.

Shah Alam (50) died on the spot.

The truck driver and his helper fled the scene, leaving the vehicle. Angry locals set the truck on fire, which was doused by firefighters.

No regard for health guidelines

Markets, malls abuzz with Eid shoppers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Even amid the pandemic, Dhaka residents thronged shopping centres and markets yesterday for Eid shopping.

It was the second day of the eight-day easing of lockdown restrictions.

As it was a weekend, the day saw less traffic and public movement on city streets, with the exception of market areas, which were inundated with people from all walks of life.

However, public and vehicular movement increased in the evening, as many came out for shopping, leading to congestion and slow movement on Manik Mia Avenue, Satmasjid Road, and at Elephant Road and Mohammadpur.

Visiting different areas of the city, this correspondent found Dhaka's major shopping malls and markets -- including New Market, Chadni Chawk, Gausia Market, Noor Mansion, Chandrima Super Market -- and Elephant Road, crowded with shoppers from 10:30am.

There wasn't nearly enough space for maintaining social distancing inside shops. Many sellers and customers were also seen running around without masks or wearing them under the chin.

Clothing stores at New Market and Gausia saw heavy crowds, while many also came to buy crockery,



The shops in front of Chadni Chowk market were seen buzzing with people yesterday, but social distancing was hardly a matter of concern for shoppers and sellers.

PHOTO: MUNTAKIM SAAD

kitchenware, and home décor items. During lunch hour, street food vendors in the area were busy serving all customers.

In Gausia and Noor Mansion markets, jewellery and accessory shops attracted the most customers. The thin alleys surrounding the markets were also packed with people.

Rozina Islam came to Noor Mansion from Mohammadpur. With her five-year-old son in tow, she said she was planning to buy dresses for her family. "Eid only comes twice a year. Everyone is obviously expecting gifts."

Shahriar Hossain, an apparel seller in Gausia, said, "The market has been closed for many days. We would be in deep trouble, if we could not open shops ahead of Eid."

Compared to regular Eid shopping seasons, Bashundhara City Mall and Jamuna Future Park saw relatively fewer shoppers. Sellers said they were still not getting enough customers.

The capital's kitchen markets also saw crowds, as people came to buy cooking essentials ahead of Eid. There were also crowds at fish, meat, and masala shops in Mohammadpur Town Hall Bazar and Karwan Bazar.

Dilapidated for 10 years

Unrepaired Sonadanga-Mujgunni highway in Khulna making life difficult for residents

DIPANKAR ROY, Khulna

About 5.5 kilometres of Sonadanga-Mujgunni highway, one of the busiest roads in Khulna city, is increasingly becoming almost unusable for vehicular movement, as it has remained unrepaired for the last 10 years.

The part of the road that runs through Sonadanga bus stand to Notunrasta intersection boasts numerous small and big ditches, around 120. The situation has become so bad that even pedestrians dare not walk on it. In monsoon, it becomes filthy with mud, and in dry season, it is too dusty for commute.

Residents of the area alleged that rather than taking solid measures, Khulna City Corporation (KCC) sometimes piles bricks into the holes, while locals also throw bricks and sand into them. But all these temporary measures don't bring lasting convenience.

According to KCC, the last renovation of the road took place way back in 2012.



PHOTO: STAR

About a 5.5km stretch of the road can be found in this condition, marred by large and small potholes everywhere. That it's one of the most important roads for Khulna city, hosting many important destinations, only makes matters worse for commuters. This photo was taken from Mujgunni area of Sonadanga-Notunrasta highway recently.

The worst condition of the road, to the point that buses and trucks avoid it, is from Boyra Bazar to Notunrasta intersection. But it is a massive headache for ambulances

that are often forced to navigate the path to carry patients to Khulna Medical College Hospital (KMCH) and Abu Naser Specialised Hospital, both of which are beside the road.

After talking to locals, it was learned that along with KMCH and several private hospitals, Indian Visa Center, and many more important offices are situated beside the road. Apart from this, most people from the western part of the city, including Khalishpur and Daulatpur, use the road to enter the city.

Visiting the part between Notunrasta and Sonadanga bus terminal recently, this correspondent saw that all the vehicles were forced to move slowly and cautiously, zigzagging along the potholes. In many places, the bricks to fill up the holes have broken up, which is making driving even more difficult.

Some KCC workers were seen trying to cover up the holes in front of KMCH with more rubbish and bricks. Very few rickshaws were seen on the road.

Habibur Rahman, a resident of Bastahara area of the city, told The Daily Star that the road is worse than farming fields for vehicular movement.

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CRB AREA IN CTG

Protest against hospital project on green space continues

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Different sociocultural and political organisations continued protesting the initiative to build a hospital and medical college at Chattogram Railway Building (CRB) area, saying that the project would badly impact the surrounding environment.

Udbigno Nagorikbrindo, Chattogram, a citizens' platform, formed a human chain in the area yesterday afternoon. Speakers demanded that railway authorities shift the project to another area to save the century-old trees.

Chhatra Federation at a human chain said the city needs hospitals, but they should not be built by compromising the environment.

NEWS

IN brief

Sheikh Hasina's imprisonment day observed

DHAKA, Bss

The imprisonment day of Awami League President and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina was observed in the country in a befitting manner yesterday.

Hasina was arrested from her Sudha Sadan residence in Dhanmondi on July 16, 2007 during the military-backed caretaker government, which assumed power in the political changeover of 1/11 in 2007. AL and its associate bodies held various programmes, including discussions and milad and doa mahfils, maintaining health guidelines.

Hasina was released from the special sub-jail on the premises of the JS building on June 11 in 2008.

CID team to visit N'ganj factory fire site today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A team of Criminal Investigation Department (CID), led by Additional Deputy Inspector General Imam Hossain, will visit the Hashem food factory site in Narayanganj today.

Earlier, CID was directed to investigate the Narayanganj Hashem Food and Beverage Factory fire case, which killed 51 people, in an order issued by Police Headquarters on Thursday.

Inspector Nazim Uddin, in-charge of Bhulta police outpost under Rupganj Police Station, filed the case, alleging negligence and naming six people, including factory owner Abul Hashem, and accusing several others for the fire. Six people including Abul Hashem were sent to jail after a four-day remand.

'Release those arrested over assault on SI in Shalla'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

People at a human chain yesterday demanded release of all arrestees in a case filed over assault of a police officer, as according to them, the accused were framed.

Among the accused is Arindam Chowdhury Apu, a Jubo League leader. Shalla residents organised the event at Sylhet Central Shaheed Minar. Speakers claimed the arrest was part of a communal conflict, as Arindam had shared an audio recording of former Hefajat leader Mamunul Haque on Facebook in April.

According to the case, on information that a group had gathered at a school, SI Shah Ali went there, and the group, led by Arindam, assaulted him.

200 illegal shops dismantled

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barishal

Barishal City Corporation demolished at least 200 illegal shops in Rupatoli bus stand area yesterday.

BCC public relations officer Swapan Kumar Das said the shops built on the BCC premises were dismantled between 10am and 1pm.

The affected shop owners said they were evicted without any notice, a claim denied by BCC.

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