

TANGENTS

BY IHTISHAM KABIR



Crested Goshawk, Satchori, Bangladesh.

PHOTO: IHTISHAM KABIR

G is for Goshawk

I read a book about goshawks long before I saw one. A Northern Goshawk is the star of *H is for Hawk* by Helen MacDonald. It is the riveting true story of the author training her newly acquired goshawk, and how her relationship with this wild bird of prey enabled her to cope with severe depression and emotional crisis following her father's death. Reading the book I also learned about the exciting sport of falconry as well as the business of birds of prey. Once a sport of nobility – Emperor Shah Jahan, for example, counted seventy goshawks in his stable of raptors – falconry today is a largely unknown subject. The book offered a glimpse into this world: no wonder it was a bestseller. (It could have been called *G is for Goshawk* but then how many would understand the title and buy the book?)

Goshawks belong to the family Accipitridae, a group of about two hundred species of birds of prey, including hawks, kites, eagles, buzzards, some vultures, and of course goshawks. There are approximately thirty species of goshawks worldwide. These vary from small (30 cm.) to large (165 cm.) Females are larger than males.

Goshawks are well adapted for hunting, but their hunting style is different from the spectacular diving attacks employed by falcons. They are stealthier, sometimes flying beneath their prey, often manoeuvring through forests, sometimes on foot through heavy ground cover, to pounce when the prey makes a mistake. Attaining speeds of 30 miles per hour in a few seconds, they take birds in flight as well as smaller mammals such as rabbits. Their wings and legs are well adapted to weaving through closely

spaced trees.

In Bangladesh we can see Crested and Northern Goshawks. The former, living here year-round, is seen in the forests of Sylhet and Chittagong. The latter is a winter visitor and seen in Dhaka and Chittagong. Both are rare.

I saw the Crested Goshawk from the watchtower at Satchori National Park. It soared high above the forest, using thermals to minimize its wing beats. Like many goshawks, it had yellow-orange eyes with a piercing gaze. While flying in circles, it searched for prey below, coming very close to the tower.

Another time the air supremacy of this apex predator came under attack as I watched. It had flown too close to the nest of a Racket-tailed Drongo. The irate drongo shot up, two long tail feathers trailing behind, and flew straight at the goshawk which immediately turned around and started flying away. The drongo chased it for at least a quarter mile before leaving the raptor in peace.

Some years ago, while visiting a falconry in the mountains of Slovakia, I saw a Northern Goshawk and a Siberian Goshawk. Against a backdrop of snow covered terrain, the flights of these birds were sublime displays. In Kenya, I saw a Pale-chanting Goshawk perched on top of an acacia tree, looking for prey down in the savanna. Unlike other goshawks, it had black eyes.

One day I would like to see the White Goshawk of Australia, a genetic mutation of the Grey Goshawk. Why? It is the only pure white raptor in the world.

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'Why is Jhumon in jail while his attackers remain free?'

Eminent citizens at Shahbagh protest demand his immediate release

DU CORRESPONDENT

Eminent citizens yesterday demanded immediate release of Jhumon Das Apon, who has been in jail for over five months after being accused in a Digital Security Act case filed over criticising Hefajat-e-Islam leader Mamunul Haque on Facebook in March.

There is no logical explanation for why he was denied bail seven times, they pointed out, during a protest at the capital's Shahbagh.

They also reiterated the same question asked by Jhumon's wife two days ago -- "What was Jhumon's crime?"

The event -- "Shahbagh against oppression" -- was organised by a citizen's platform.

Rights activist Sultana Kamal, expressing solidarity over phone, said, "Those in power always speak about the spirit of the Liberation War. But those who attacked Jhumon Das and his community were not brought to justice; rather an innocent person like Jhumon was arrested and denied bail seven times."

His religious identity should not be an obstacle for getting justice in independent Bangladesh, which was built on secular values, she added.

"A High Court judge had said, in regards to the issue of denying bail to Pori Moni three times, that it should not be allowed in a civilised state. I want to echo his question, can something



- Jhumon was detained on Mar 16 for criticising Hefajat leader Mamunul in Facebook post
- The post allegedly led to mayhem in Noagaon village of Sunamganj's Shalla upazila on Mar 17, which saw about 90 Hindu houses vandalised and looted
- Jhumon was sent to jail on Mar 17
- On Mar 22, police filed a case against him and 20-30 unnamed persons under DSA
- Jhumon has been in jail ever since
- His bail has been refused 7 times so far

like this happen in a civilised state?"

Jhumon's post on Hefajat leader Mamunul Haque allegedly led to the mayhem in Noagaon village of Sunamganj's Shalla upazila on

March 17, which saw about 90 Hindu houses vandalised and looted.

His wife Sweetie Rani Das, who was present at the event yesterday along with her son, said, "I was also injured when they brutally attacked my husband. How long do I have to roam the streets to get justice?"

She also said, "He [Jhumon] is the only earner in my family. Though I am sick and helpless, I've come here to say that criminals who attacked, looted and vandalised our village are roaming around fearlessly."

Adding that she was going through a hard time with her baby boy, she sought the prime minister's attention in this regard.

Dhaka University's Prof Robaet Ferdous said, "When the constitution has a state religion, we can understand why citizens like Jhumon Das don't get justice."

Speakers at the event also urged the government to abolish the controversial Digital Security Act.

Among others, DU teacher Khairul Chowdhury, Jahangirnagar University teacher Sumana Gupta, Bangladesh Jubo Union leader Khan Asaduzzaman Masum, and one of the organisers of Gonojagaron Mancha Jibananda Jayanta spoke at the event.

Publisher Robin Ahsan conducted the programme.



At Tejgaon Industrial Area, a portion of the road near Re-Rolling Mills Bot Tola has been dug up to facilitate DNCC's sewage development works. But with no barricades or tapes in place, the spot carries enormous potential for accidents, which was only made worse by the last few days' rainfall. This photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Bapa condemns leasing out forestland in Cox's Bazar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Poribesh Andolon (Bapa) condemned the land ministry's decision to lease out 700 acres of protected forest area in Cox's Bazar to Bangladesh Civil Service Administration Academy.

Bapa urged authorities to cancel the lease in a statement sent to the media on Thursday. The statement was signed by Bapa President Sultana Kamal and General Secretary Sharif Jamil.

The land ministry in June granted the lease in Suknachari area of Cox's Bazar's Jhilwanja union, next to Marine Drive, prompting an outrage among greens, as 15 organisations based in Cox's Bazar decided to wage a tough movement to have the lease suspended.

Bangladesh Civil Service Administration Academy is planning on building a training institute on the land. The statement termed the decision a threat to biodiversity and forest ecology, as the leased area is home to endangered flora and fauna, including the Asian elephant.

The forest was declared "protected" in 1935 and has been under the Forest Department's supervision and care. It is home to 58 species of trees, endangered

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Life-saving equipment lying unused

Tk 1.5cr ICU ambulance at RMCH not been in operation for 2 yrs



ANWAR ALI, Rajshahi

At a time when intensive care unit (ICU) support is so much in need, a state-of-the-art ambulance worth Tk 1.5 crore has just been lying idle at Rajshahi Medical College Hospital (RMCH) for over two years.

Officials pointed to a lack of skilled staffers to operate the vehicle as an explanation.

The air-conditioned ambulance, which can provide mobile ICU support to patients, did not carry a single person since it arrived at RMCH.

According to hospital officials, the ambulance was sent to RMCH in May, 2019, after it was procured for Tk 1,50,44,855 by Director General of Drug Administration.

Operating the ambulance and its equipment requires a skilled team of doctors and nurses, and a policy on how to operate, RMCH Director Brig Gen Shamim Yazdani told The

Daily Star.

"We could not prepare the required team and policy, as we had to deal with the surge of Covid-19 patients," he said, adding that they could not fix allowances of doctors and nurses for this service or the ambulance fare in time.

During a recent visit to RMCH, this correspondent saw ambulance driver Ashraf Ali opening the garage, switching on the ICU ambulance, and powering up electronic equipment inside the vehicle.

The ambulance has some 40 kinds of life-saving apparatuses, including mobile ventilators, an ECG monitor, a defibrillator, suction unit, nebuliser, and an oxygen supply unit, hospital officials said.

This correspondent saw that all the apparatuses were wrapped in plastic, as they have never been used. Half an hour later, the ambulance driver powered everything down



PHOTO: STAR

and came out, closing the garage's shutters.

"I do it [turning the vehicle and equipment on] almost every day, so the machines don't rust," Ali said.

"None have so far asked for the ambulance," he said, adding that no fare was fixed yet for operating the vehicle. Normal ambulances of the hospital charge a patient Tk 5,600 for transporting them to Dhaka.

A cardiologist at RMCH said many deaths could have been avoided, if the ambulance was in use.

Seeking anonymity, he said, the ambulance can provide emergency services right after picking up patients, and thus, potentially save lives. "But such a useful vehicle is not being used because of the sheer negligence of authorities."

Ahmed Shafi Uddin, president of Sushasoner Jonno Nagarik (Sujan), Rajshahi chapter, said authorities should investigate the negligence.

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Student's death in hit-and-run sparks protests

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A student was killed after a car hit him in Dhaka's Mirpur ECB Chattar on Thursday night.

Shanto Hasan was a 10th-grader of Adamjee Cantonment Public School. The accident occurred around 9pm, sparking protests.

Some people were chasing the car, as the driver had an accident nearby. When Shanto tried to stop the vehicle, the driver tried to evade, and in doing so, hit him, said Md Asaduzzaman, deputy commissioner of Gulshan Division Police. He was declared dead at a hospital.

Cantonment Police Station Sub-inspector Shaheen Md Amanullah said they arrested car driver Shakil (26) from Uttara.

Locals and the victim's classmates rushed to the spot to protest the death, resulting in a gridlock in nearby areas. They also formed a human chain there yesterday morning.

They alleged that on-duty police had helped the driver flee. The protesters left after police had assured them of arresting the driver.

The DC said they would look into the allegation. Josna Begum, mother of Shanto, said her son -- who went out to play on Thursday afternoon -- was supposed to return at 8pm. "We want justice," she added.

Dengue infections keep rising

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least 248 dengue patients were hospitalised in the last 24 hours till 8am yesterday.

According to the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), among the 248 new cases, 34 are from outside the capital.

With the new cases, a total of 2,899 were diagnosed during the current month, out of the total 13,255 infected. Of the total patients, 1,284 are from outside Dhaka.

At least 7,698 were diagnosed in August, 2,286 patients in July, 272 in June, while 43 were infected in May, according to the DGHS.

Meanwhile, a total of 54 people have died of dengue infection in the country this year, all of whom died in July, August, and September.

Twelve people died in July, 34 have died in August, and eight have died in September so far.

Among the new cases, 25.4 percent patients were aged between 11 to 20, while 19 percent were aged under 10, according to DGHS data.

Among other age groups, 12.7 percent were aged between 41 and 50, 11.1 percent were between 31 and 40, and 3.2 percent were aged 51 and above.

Though most of the hospitalised patients have so far been released, 1,221 are still undergoing treatment at hospitals in Dhaka, and 180 outside the capital.

Meanwhile, experts have expressed fear that dengue may spread further if the authorities concerned do not take appropriate measures before reopening educational institutions. They suggested cleaning schools, colleges, and universities properly to destroy Aedes mosquito larvae and breeding spots, and applying adulticide and larvicide before reopening the institutions.

In light of this, Dhaka North City Corporation Mayor Md Atiqul Islam said at a programme yesterday that they have initiated a three-day cleaning drive at 443 educational institutes on September 8. He also said though Friday was the last day of cleaning work, they will continue it till September 11 at the campuses, where the second dose of the mass vaccination programme is also ongoing.



Death toll 54

8 died in Sept so far

34 in Aug, 12 in July

248 more hospitalised yesterday