



HERE COMES THE SUN... marking the end of a year and the beginning of yet another one. For many, the last sunrise of 2021 symbolises rays of hope for the new year. Smiles are expected to return to faces, despite the many ups and downs, troubles and turmoil that 2022 brings. This photo was taken from Tangail's Modhupur area.

PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ

Jute workers take to street for arrears

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Hundreds of jute mill workers, along with leaders and activists of various organisations, staged a two-hour sit-in programme yesterday with a six-point demand.

The programme was organised by Khalishpur, Daulatpur Jute Mill Joint Factory Committee.

Their demands include reopening of all state-run jute mills, including the 25 state-owned closed mills and payment of arrears as per the wage commission 2015 of the closed Khalishpur, Daulatpur Jute Mill, KFD and RR of Chattogram and National Jute Mill of Sirajganj.

The workers brought out a procession from People's Circle in Khalishpur Industrial area around 10:30am and walked through BIDC road. Police intercepted the procession as they were on their way to Notunrasta intersection. Workers then arranged for a sit-in programme, blocking BIDC road until 12:30pm.

The speakers claimed the main reason behind the 25 closed jute mills facing losses was rampant corruption and looting by corrupt government officials of Bangladesh Jute Mills Corporation and jute and finance ministry consultants.



PHOTO: STAR

Leaders representing the workers also criticised the government for not paying arrears to thousands of workers, now unemployed, due to the closure. They demanded immediate payment of their dues and inclusion of workers of all private jute mills under the wage commission.

Ruhul Amin, coordinator of Sramik Krishak Chhatra-Janata Oikya Parishad; SM Rashid, member secretary of Joint Citizens' Council for Jute Mill Protection; Munir Chowdhury Sohel, coordinator of Gana Sanghati Andolan Khulna; and Al-Amin Sheikh, convener of Student Federation Khulna, were present.

Hamstrung by doctor shortage

SAVAR HEALTH COMPLEX



PHOTO: STAR

AKLAKUR RAHMAN AKASH, Savar

Savar Upazila Health Complex has been suffering from capacity issues for quite a long time now. From lack of beds, doctors and every other required facility, the state-sponsored health service is far from fulfilling the needs of the people.

According to hospital sources, only 26 doctors are currently serving thousands of patients on average every day, from the emergency, outdoor, and indoor sections.

Often, patients are deprived of the expected service and even harassed, leading them to turn towards more expensive private hospitals.

A total of 1,81,966 patients have received treatment from the hospital's indoor, outdoor, and emergency sections from January to September 2021. Around 3,807 patients received treatment from the indoor section, 11,451 from emergency and 1,66,708 from the outdoor section, shows hospital data.

The 26 doctors also need to take care of other administrative duties in turns. Moreover, senior doctors have to tackle other surgery sites with hospital staff and nurses. This implies that only seven to eight doctors are present at any given

time at the outdoor section to attend to the huge crowd of patients every day.

Korimon Begum, who was waiting before a doctor's room, told this correspondent that she came to consult a doctor for her three-year-old child. She believes that the quality of treatment at a government hospital is much better than in private ones.

However, she said it is tough to get a doctor's appointment, but the treatment cost is only Tk 5 and medicines are being provided for free.

This correspondent also found that the beds, bed sheets and pillows at the indoor section are not cleaned properly.

"We are constantly trying our best to serve the patients. But the reality is that we are not capable of delivering all kinds of services due to lack of facilities," said Savar's upazila health and family planning officer Dr Sayemul Huda.

The hospital building and other structures are in bad condition as well. The hospital authority has sent multiple letters to the health ministry and department concerned in this regard, he said.

Dr Abu Hussain Md Moinul Ahsan, civil surgeon of Dhaka, said they sent a proposal to higher authorities for development of the health complex.

Mechanised farming gets a boost

BRRI develops highly effective rice harvesting machine

MAHBUBUR RAHMAN KHAN

Scientists at Bangladesh Rice Research Institute (BRRI) have successfully manufactured a highly suitable and affordable combine rice harvester.

In the third week of November, BRRI ran the operation of the prototype.

Yesterday, Agriculture Minister Muhammad Abdur Razzaque saw activities of the machine at BRRI office in Gazipur. "This is a remarkable achievement. It's rice harvesting capacity is comparatively high, suitable for use in small pieces of land of the country," he said.

The cost of various combine harvesters in South Asian countries, including Myanmar, is Tk 25-30 lakh but this will cost Tk 12-13 lakh. The harvest loss is also low, said the minister, reports UNB.

"If we can produce the machine locally and use it, then there will be a revolution in agricultural mechanisation in



Bangladesh," he said. It will play a unique role in increasing agriculture products and making them more profitable.

"The machine is appropriate for our small pieces of land and soil condition," said AKM Saiful Islam, principal scientific officer of BRRI. Its engine has about 87 horsepower. And so, the machine can collect paddy in 3-4 bighas of land per hour. Fuel consumption is about 3.5-4 litres per hour. Moreover, harvesting loss is less than one percent.



At least five people were killed and 15 injured when a bus plunged into a roadside ditch beside Bonpara-Hatikumrul highway in Sirajganj yesterday morning. The accident took place in Goja Bridge area when the driver of the Dhaka-bound National Travels bus lost control over the steering and plunged the vehicle into the ditch, 20 feet down from the bridge.

TANGENTS

BY IHTISHAM KABIR

The Enigmatic Thick-knee



(Left) Greater Thick-knee, Sunamganj, Bangladesh and (right) Bush Stone-curlews, Darwin, Australia.

PHOTO: IHTISHAM KABIR

Whenever I hear "Thick-knee" I think of Majeda Haq, birder, conservationist and friend who left this world too soon in 2019.

In 2016 I had just started exploring the world of birds. I was trying to find a way to visit Tanguar haor, but it was hard to get to and harder still to find a place to stay. Late that winter, Majeda invited me to join her and her husband Enam Ul Haque, the eminent birder and founder of Bangladesh Bird Club, on a trip to Tanguar. I readily agreed.

The trip was pivotal in my birding life. I saw many new birds in an insanely beautiful setting, got to know Enam Bhai and other birders and spent three nights on a comfortable launch that took us from Sunamganj to the Haor via the Surma river.

On our way back, we were on a narrow tributary when one of the birders on deck started shouting "Thick-knee! Thick-knee! Thick-knee!" while pointing to a white spot far on the green riverbank. I had never heard of this bird and didn't understand what the commotion was about. But Majeda sprang into action. She asked the captain to turn the boat around (we had already passed the bird at this point) and got a dinghy ready for us. We rowed the dinghy to about a hundred feet behind the bird. Then we disembarked behind Majeda and crouched along the riverbank towards the bird.

Coming closer, I saw a bird unlike any other. Its eyes were extraordinary: large, bulging, and banded by several bars. Its beaks looked formidably stout. I was able to get some photographs before it flew off.

The bird was a Great Thick-knee, a rare bird of Bangladesh.

Thick-knees, also known as Stone-curlews, belong to the bird family Burhinidae, comprising nine species. They are found in Asia, Europe, Australia, Africa and South America. The name "Thick-knee" comes from their wobbly knees. Their choice of barren, stony places for domicile, and the resemblance of their calls to the Curlew's, gives them their alternate name. Mostly terrestrial birds, they take short flights when necessary. Their tough beaks enable them to eat any number of items: from insects to small mammals to marine creatures such as mollusks. They are active at twilight and night and their large eyes help them see in the dark.

Since that day in Sunamganj I have seen Thick-knees on several occasions, but never the Great Thick-knee. On the chars of the Padma in Rajshahi lives the Indian Thick-knee, a smaller bird found among the short, stubby bushes growing in the chars. It had the distinctive bulging eyes like its larger cousin.

In Australia, I saw Thick-knees (known there as Bush Stone-curlews) in remote parts of city parks. In Darwin, two Thick-knees appeared more accustomed to humans and therefore less shy. Their long legs and wobbly knees lent them an awkward look. As they watched me approach they looked a little confused and went behind a rock. When I stopped at a safe distance, they reappeared, standing close to each other while facing me.

But no matter how many times I see them, Thick-knees remain enigmatic and mysterious birds to me.

For the author's bird photos, updated daily, please follow "ihtishamkabar" on Instagram.

5 killed, 15 hurt as bus falls from bridge

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

At least five people were killed and 15 injured when a bus plunged into a roadside ditch beside Bonpara-Hatikumrul highway in Sirajganj yesterday morning.

The deceased are police inspector Sotindronath (55), Sofura Begum (60), Sohagur Rahman (32), Md Salauddin (40), and Dilara Begum (42).

All of them were passengers of the bus, said OC Md Lutfor Rahman of Hatikumrul Highway Police Station. The accident took place around 10:00am in Goja Bridge area when the driver of the Dhaka-bound bus lost control over the steering and plunged the vehicle into the ditch, 20 feet down from the bridge, he said.

PHOTO: COLLECTED