



While discarded cycle tyres might be trash to some, for these three kids from Sylhet's Shimulkandi, they are an exuberant plaything. Especially in winter, rural children delve into spirited tyre races, with sticks to steer the tyres in the right direction. This photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR

TANGENTS
BY IHTISHAM KABIR

A Rare Duck



Comb Duck, Rajshahi, Bangladesh.

PHOTO: IHTISHAM KABIR

"fogwich" was what I called that morning on the Padma river - a foggy mid-morning that was sandwiched by sunshine before and after. My friends and I had met our guide Nuru at the Bot-tola ghat on the river. Scrambling down the ghat's slope we had boarded his engine boat for our day-long cruise looking for birds.

Heading south on the river for an hour, the sunshine was replaced by fog rolling in from nowhere. After an hour it thinned and the sun eventually broke through. The dry season water was shallow and chars had emerged on all sides.

As we left the city behind us, birds began appearing. First, there were mundane ones: Black Kites and Cormorants. Then a Great Crested Grebe showed in the water, a white and brown creature with a long elegant neck topped by a puff of black feathers. Seeing us it decided to take flight. It took long running strides on the water for twenty feet, creating circular splashy waves with each step, flapping its wings mightily and eventually taking off.

Straight ahead, the river bifurcated around an elongated char, perhaps a mile across. From the distance, we could see a row of dots lining its edge. They were ducks. Binoculars revealed copper-coloured Ruddy Shelducks.

Then I saw two black-and-white dots in the middle of the row. They were facing away from us making identification difficult, but they looked different from other ducks here. Not only their colour, but also their large size, almost that of a goose, stood them apart.

Coming a little closer, we saw they were dark on top and white at bottom. When they turned their head we saw their most interesting feature: their white head and neck were speckled in a salt and pepper pattern. By then our boat's progress was impeded by shallow waters. The ducks were still far but we had seen enough.

They were African Comb Ducks, *Sarkidionis melanotos*. Also known as Knob-billed Ducks, they are found in Africa, Madagascar and some parts of Asia including the subcontinent. In Bangladesh they are very rare winter visitors. Some of the largest duck species in the world, they weigh up to three kilograms and possess a five-foot wingspan. Male ducks have a knob on their bill. But knob or not, they are unmistakable due to their spotted neck.

Late that afternoon, on our way back from other chars, we again encountered one of them on a sandbar, standing at water's edge. It tipped one foot into the water and pulled back into the

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You got to taste it to believe it

Buddu's Puri shop, a household name in Sutrapur

DIPAN NANDY

Even though the way to Buddu's Puri was shown by a flower seller sitting in front of Sutrapur's Govinda Mandir, it was difficult to locate the vaunted puri shop inside the labyrinthine Hemanta Das Lane.

After a few minutes' search, a narrow alley finally led up to the shop. It doesn't have a signboard, nor a formal name, but locals know that it is indeed the "Buddu's Puri" shop.

Md Babul has been a regular there for an astonishing 35 years.

"This is the best puri in the entire city. It's so good that I just can't like any other puri anymore," he told this correspondent.

Dilip, who was standing by Babul, cut him off to start singing his own praise for the puri. "They sell this egg-puri here. Let me tell you, when the yolk breaks and the warmth seeps into your mouth... well, it's just heavenly." They said the shop has been doing



At Buddu's Puri shop, the puri is never served cold, as the chefs don't fry the dough until customers place their orders. Its egg-puri is a major attraction for customers who love the idea of a runny yolk blossoming from within the delicious flat-bread.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

business there since the Pakistani era. It was established by Aftabuddin, a former biri trader, who was known to everyone as Buddu. Popular for his humour, Aftabuddin and his puri quickly won everyone over.

After he died in the 90's, his son Md Yousuf stepped up to take his place.

The shop sells three kinds of puri. There's the daal puri - which sells for Tk 5. Then there's the egg puri and Taki fish-puri, both of which go for Tk 20.

But after a rise of fish prices this year, this item is on halt for the moment.

Md Sujon has been working there as an artisan for a full decade. "We only use masur daal, and sprinkle a bit of mint leaves on top. I think this is what sets us apart," he said.

Sujon doesn't really know exactly how many puri they sell in a day. "We need around 30-40 kg of flour every day, and even more on weekends."

But why is this puri so popular? According to owner Md Yousuf, it's the ingredients. "From our first day, we've been using local masur daal. We've never used anything else, never compromised with the quality. This is why people love it, and this love propels us to try even harder."

"We have this rule here: we never keep our puri fried. We only do it after customers place their orders. We don't sell cold puri here," Md Yousuf said while working.

As this correspondent was talking to Md Yousuf, a crowd gathered at the store. One customer, Sutrapur-resident Dip, ordered 25 for his family. "This is our afternoon treat. It's a family tradition."

Md Jumman is a second-generation customer at the shop. He said, "My father used to come here too. Everyone

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Two killed in truck collision

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

Two people were killed after two trucks collided on Tangail-Jamalpur highway in Tangail's Dhanbari upazila yesterday morning.

The deceased are truck driver Sohel Miah (32) of the district's Sadar upazila, and vegetable-trader Sumon Miah (26) of Jamalpur's Sarishabari upazila.

"The accident occurred when a brick-laden truck collided with another truck carrying chillis at Hazrabari Koyapara area around 7:15am, leaving the driver and passenger of the chilli-carrying truck seriously injured," said Tarikul Islam, in-charge of Fire Service and Civil Defence in Dhanbari.

"They later succumbed to their injuries at the local upazila health complex," he said.

"Police seized both vehicles and handed over the bodies to the families," said Chan Miah, officer-in-charge of Dhanbari Police Station.

A recent police report reveals that 5,088 people in total were killed in 5,472 road crashes in 2021, which was 30 percent higher than 2020.

Road Safety Foundation, in another report, put the casualties at 6,284 in 5,371 crashes.



On a cold winter morning, when those who have the luxury crave for more time under the blanket, this eight-year-old girl was out and about with her calf, both clad in sufficiently warm clothes to face the chill. The photo was taken recently from Dhamrai.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

'Bomb-maker' arrested in Barishal

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barishal

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) claimed to have arrested a man with arms, bombs and bomb-making equipment in Barishal.

Rab-8 deputy director Zahangir Alam disclosed the information during a press conference held yesterday at Rab-8 headquarters.

He said Babul was detained from Barishal's launch ghat area early yesterday during a drive.

Babul, a resident of Bhola Sadar's South Dighaldi, has several cases filed against him - in connection to murder, robbery and torturing women - with Bhola Sadar and Daulatkhan police stations.

Rab seized a foreign pistol, two magazines, four rounds of ammunition, three bombs, 800 grammes of gunpowder and other bomb-making equipment from him.

Babul confessed to being a professional bomb-maker and dealer. Another arms-related case was filed against him with Barishal-1 Kotwali Police Station, after seizing the weapons, said the Rab official.

Azizul Karim, Kotwali Police Station OC, said Babul was shown arrested in the case.


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