

TANGENTS

BY IHTISHAM KABIR

Red Junglefowl

The chicken is the most ubiquitous bird in the world. There are over 23 billion chickens in the world, providing nutrition to humanity. How did it come to be? It was domesticated from a wild bird, the Red Junglefowl, over five thousand years ago.

The Red Junglefowl, known in Bangla as *Bon Morog*, was a part of my childhood. It was found in rural areas all over Bangladesh. For example, it was common in a bamboo grove and adjoining jungles behind our house in Sylhet. It was often hunted or caught in nets and, on occasion, graced our dinner table as an exotic addition.

The bird belongs to a family of birds that also includes pheasants, peacocks, grouses, partridges, quails, francolins. This family, Phasianidae, is spread all over the globe and comprises of 187 species. Many of these varieties once roamed the forests and fields of Bangladesh. Today we can still see some pheasants, quails and francolins. These include the Kalij Pheasant (*Mothura*), and Black Francolins (*Kalo Titir*). But they are rare and extremely wary of people.

The Red Junglefowl is relatively easier to find. I have encountered it many times, usually spotting it in border areas of the forest. For example, it can be reliably seen at the edges of rice paddies abutting the jungles of Rema Kalenga forest. Our tea gardens also host this bird. If you go to Sundarban, you are virtually guaranteed to see it when it comes out of the forest to the edge of water, picking for food on the grass.

Called *Gallus gallus* in Latin, the Red Junglefowl is divided into five subspecies (that is, races.) The one found in our subcontinent is called *Gallus gallus murghi*.

Foraging for food on the ground, the bird eats mainly grains, seeds, fruits, shoots of grass as well as insects. Like the domestic chicken, it rakes fallen leaves and



A Pair of Red Junglefowls.

PHOTO: IHTISHAM KABIR

grass looking for morsels of food. It builds its nest on the ground, covered by dense undergrowth. It likes bathing in the sand and will fly short distances to climb a tree, display for mating, or escape danger. The male's crowing is loud and distinct. It is heard early morning or late afternoon and resembles the call of a domestic rooster.

The male Red Junglefowl is longer than our domestic chicken. It is colourful, sporting orange-red and golden yellow feathers on its back. The long black tail is curled like a sickle. There is a red comb above its bill. The female is

brown and yellow, with a stockier body than the male. It lacks the tail feathers of the male and more closely resembles the domestic chicken.

Photographing the Red Junglefowl in a good pose is difficult because it constantly moves around on the ground. The best moment to catch it is when it spreads its wings. It reveals some fantastic colourful patterns then. Since it flies slowly, you can also try to photograph it in flight.

facebook.com/ikabirphotographs or follow ihtishamkabar on Instagram.

Jack Ma gives 3 lakh masks to Bangladesh

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Jack Ma, one of the richest persons in Asia and founder of Alibaba, yesterday sent 3 lakh masks to Bangladesh.

A special flight carrying the items landed at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport (HSIA) at 2:55pm from China, said SN Wahidur Rahman, deputy director of HSIA, told The Daily Star.

Yan Hualong, deputy chief of mission at the Chinese Embassy in Dhaka, among others, was present to hand over the masks to Bangladesh government officials.

On March 26, China donated medical supplies, including 10,000 testing kits, 10,000 PPE and 1,000 infrared thermometers to help Bangladesh fight the coronavirus outbreak.

The next day, Jack Ma donated 30,000 testing kits to Bangladesh. Jack Ma on March 21 announced that his firm, through the Alibaba Foundation, would donate emergency supplies to 10 Asian countries.

The firm will donate 1.8 million masks, 210,000 testing kits, 36,000 protective suits, ventilators and thermometers to Bangladesh, Cambodia, Laos, Maldives, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Sri Lanka.

In his twitter account, Jack Ma wrote: "Go Asia! We will donate emergency supplies (1.8M masks, 210K test kits, 36K protective suits, plus ventilators & thermometers) to Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Laos, Maldives, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan & Sri Lanka. Delivering fast is not easy, but we'll get it done!"

DNCC distributes food among 1,000 families in Mirpur slums, Tolarbagh

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC) yesterday distributed necessary food items among 1,000 poor families in the capital's Tolarbagh and its adjoining slums in Mirpur.

DNCC mayor-elect Atiul Islam and panel mayor Jamal Mostofa distributed the food packets that included 5kg rice, 2kg potatoes, 1kg lentil, 1kg onion and 1 litre soybean oil.

Atiul said they are distributing food among poor people in DNCC areas and all 54 wards will come under the distribution.

He said they are giving priority to Tolarbagh as the area was locked down by authorities due to coronavirus, and people were in fear of going there to distribute food.

He also said he has taken a personal initiative to distribute food among 25,000 poor people in DNCC areas.

"We will start the distribution from Tuesday, and initially we will distribute 4,000 packets. The rest will be distributed gradually," he added.

Mayor-in-charge Jamal Mostofa said they are providing 500 packets to each ward councillor, to distribute among underprivileged families of their respective wards.

"Women councillors from reserved seats will get 100 packets additionally,"

he said. Local administration have kept 672 families of 40 buildings under a "lockdown" in Tolarbagh, a day after an elderly resident of the area died from coronavirus infection on March 21.

Meanwhile, some residents of Bhasantek slum yesterday complained that their local councillor distributed food packets only among his own circle.

About the allegation, ward-15 councillor Saleque Mollah said he distributed the packets through lists which were provided by leaders of different slums, and he did not make any lists himself.

DISINFECTION DRIVE GOES ON
DNCC yesterday also sprayed 1.10 lakh litres of antiseptic through eight water bowers at different areas of DNCC, said an official.

The areas include Mirpur sections 10, 13, 14 and adjoining areas, Kafur, Ibrahimpur and adjoining areas, Technical crossing, Sony Cinema Hall, Rainkhola, Zoo Road, Commerce College and adjoining areas, Mohammadpur Town Hall, Rayerbazar, Madhubagh, Moghbazar, Khilgaon, College Gate, Tejgaon, Natunbazar, 100 feet Bhatara Road and adjoining areas.

Apart from these, DNCC also sprayed antiseptic through hand sprays at different lanes, he said.



DNCC mayor-elect Atiul Islam hands over a package of necessary food items to a resident of a slum in Mirpur yesterday.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

Police, public admin hand out assistance to families in need

STAR REPORT

Civil administration and police in different districts have started distributing assistance to poor and underprivileged people who are facing severe hardship during the countrywide shutdown.

They are distributing rice, other food items, cash, and various daily essentials, report our correspondents.

In Sylhet, the district administration has allocated two tonnes of rice and Tk 80,000 for underprivileged and poor people. "We understand that allocation is insufficient. But we have started the programme. We have already requested higher authorities concerned for a bigger allocation," said Md Nurun Nabi Mazumdar.

Contacted, Sylhet City Corporation (SCC) Mayor Ariful Haque Chowdhury said, "I along with many councillors of the city corporation have decided to help the poor people from our remuneration."

He also informed that SCC authorities are planning to waive taxes and other utility bills for the poor.

Meanwhile, Trading Corporation of Bangladesh (TCB) is selling sugar, lentil and soybean oil.

In Bagerhat, the district administration has allocated 100 tonnes of rice and Tk 10 lakh for poor people in the district and started distributing daily essentials from door to door.

The district's deputy commissioner (DC) inaugurated the initiative at Sugondhi village under Sadar upazila yesterday.

Under this programme, each poor family will get 10kg rice, 2kg potato, 1kg each of lentil, salt, onion, 1 litre oil and 1 piece of soap.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

3 of a family sustain burns in Bhasantek

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Three members of a family sustained burn injuries after a fire broke out at their tin-shed house in the capital's Bhasantek area on Saturday night.

The injured were identified as Jakir Hossain (45), his wife Rina Begum (40), and their son Riad (17).

They were taken to the burn unit of Dhaka Medical College and Hospital.

Jakir sustained 58 percent burns, Rani 32 percent and Riad 38 percent, according to doctors.

Lima Khanam, duty officer at the fire service, said on information, a firefighting unit went to the spot but locals doused the blaze before they reached.

Munshi Sabbir Ahmed, officer-in-charge of Bhasantek Police Station, said they primarily suspect that the fire originated from an electric short-circuit.

From cooks to crooks

Six held for committing robbery in guise of cooks

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

They were cooks by profession and had a reputation for cooking quite well.

But that wasn't their only identity. They were part of a robber gang who often raided homes to loot valuables. They used local weapons -- machete, cleaver and kitchen knife -- and if needed, crude bombs to disperse crowd.

The group members were careful too. They never disclosed details of their identities even to other members, so that law enforcers would not be able to trace them if one got arrested.

Police learned about the techniques of this "gang of cooks", following the arrest of its six members and a jewellery shop owner, who used to buy looted ornaments from them.

All the seven arrestees already gave confessional statement (under section 164) before a court. Officials of Turag Police Station of Dhaka Metropolitan Police arrested the gang on March 10 while investigating a robbery case filed with the police station on January 18.

According to case details, seven to eight masked men attacked the house of one Sazzadur Rahman and looted four-tola gold and money. They also blasted crude bombs while leaving the house to create panic, read the case details.

The arrestees are: Sohrab Hossain Kamal, a leader of the gang; Hannan Sardar; Fazole Sardar; Md Khairul; Masud alias Bhola Masud and Md Mamun.

Police first arrested Sohrab from Turag area and five others from Jatrabari, Bhatara, Agargaon, and Mohamamdpur in the capital, and Bhola, Sheikh Mofizul Islam, inspector (operation) of Turag

Police Station, told The Daily Star yesterday.

Mamun is the owner of "Ma Jewelry Shop" at Mohammadpur and he used to buy looted ornaments from the gang, said Mofizul, also the case's investigation officer.

Of the arrestees, Fazole, Hannan and Khairul gave confessional statements on March 11; Masud and Mamun on March 12 and Sohrab on March 15.

Interrogating the arrestees, police also traced another member -- Sohel Jamaddar -- who was arrested by Manikganj police on March 22 in another robbery case.

Later, Sohel was shown arrested in this case and gave confessional statement on March 24, said the inspector. From the confessional statements, police came to know that they were also involved with two other robberies at Pallabi and Turag on January 25.

The IO said the gang has been involved with robbery for last four years and used to target two residences per week.

"We have come to know that the gang has committed robbery in Jhenidah, Jashore, Madaripur, Dhaka, Mymensingh, Gazipur, and Manikganj. Several cases were filed against them," he added.

Police said the arrestees also knew several other robbery gangs across the country.

While conducting robbery or selecting an area, they first communicated with someone who knew the area well, said investigators.

"Then they used a local member to collect information. Afterwards, they took contract to cook food at an event in the area. The gang members completed recce of the targeted house while

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

Locked in a blaze

SHAHEEN MOLLAH and RAFIUL ISLAM

Every night before going to bed, Jannatul used to lock the room of the house they lived in.

For the fifth-grader, this had become a part of her daily routine, which she did diligently to prevent her mother, Kalpana, an epilepsy patient with other complexities, from going out in the dead of the night.

She probably had done the same on Saturday night when a fire originated from a mosquito coil around 3am and burnt to ashes their room along with two other rooms of the house in Baunia Badh area of Mirpur.

Inhabitants of the other rooms, which included a shop, could run to safety but Jannatul, her mother and younger brother Kawser (8) couldn't as their room was locked.

"When we broke open the door, we found their bodies next to it... Maybe they rushed to the door but could not open it on time," said Forhad Hossain, who lived next room. He along with others extinguished the fire.

Forhad said he could manage to get out before the fire spread. "Had the door not been locked, the family would have been able to go to safety," he lamented.

Visiting the spot yesterday, this newspaper saw 70-year-old Aleya Begum



SEE PAGE 4 COL 1



At least seven people cram on a rickshaw-van, travelling to Keraniganj through Buriganga bridge-2. Transportation in the city has been sparse during a citywide shutdown, making commutes especially difficult for working-class people. The photo was taken on Saturday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

TELEVISED LECTURES FOR STUDENTS
First day draws mixed reactions

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

After the first day of televised classroom lectures for secondary school students yesterday, guardians proposed that authorities address loud background music and unclear whiteboard. They also proposed the government should air these lectures through Bangladesh Television and if possible through some other private TV channels.

"We have started test transmission. We will continue it for about one week," Parliament Secretariat Broadcasting and Information Technology Wing Director General Ashok Kumar Debnath, who oversees Sangsad Television, told this newspaper.

Asked about the background music and unclear board issues, Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education (DSHE) director general Prof Syed Md Golam Faruk said they would address the issues.

DSHE named the televised lessons "My school at my home", that began at 9am with the national anthem. It also aired awareness videos regarding coronavirus at intervals of the classes.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

'Take steps in measles-hit areas of CHT now'

Rights bodies urge govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Bandarban

Authorities must look into the measles outbreak in Chattogram Hill Tracts and take steps to contain it, two organisations said yesterday.

A joint statement by Kapaeng Foundation and Bangladesh Indigenous Peoples Forum expressed concern over the outbreak in Rangamati's Baghaichari upazila and Bandarban's Lama upazila, where at least eight children have died and around 300 were infected by measles in the last one month, the statement said, claiming that measles cases were also reported in Ruma upazila of Bandarban.

It said while public-private initiatives in the fight against coronavirus is in everyone's focus, authorities must take note of this measles outbreak.

"We think that such an outbreak would not have occurred if the government had reached peoples' home with immunisation programmes and healthcare," the statement read. It put forward four points to contain the outbreak: uninterrupted and adequate medicare in the affected areas by forming a medical board; emergency humanitarian assistance in measles-infected areas; free care to affected patients; and proper investigation of the incident and adequate compensation to affected families.

The statement alleged that no vaccination was provided to children in the affected areas. Some patients' conditions were so critical that they were flown to Chattogram by helicopter by Bangladesh Army.

Contacted, Sanjeeb Drong, general secretary of Bangladesh Indigenous Peoples Forum said, "We really appreciate Bangladesh Army for taking critically affected children to Chattogram."

Meanwhile, 10-year-old Dhoneka Tripura died in Dighinala of Khagrachhari on Saturday of measles, said upazila health officer Dr Tonoy Tripura, adding that they found 20 more children infected in the area.