

# TANGENTS

BY IHTISHAM KABIR



Lions at Maasai Mara.

PHOTO: IHTISHAM KABIR

## Lion

The first time I saw a wild lioness was in Kenya’s Maasai Mara last year. It was fast asleep on a large slab of granite and least bothered by several tourist vehicles that stopped to watch. I was disappointed. I had hoped to catch its eyes on camera and this one’s eyes remained firmly shut. Later, I found out the reason. Lions sleep up to twenty hours a day. They hunt at night, or very early in the morning. With the abundance of game in the park, she was napping after a full meal.

During the trip I saw several more lions. One had climbed a tree and was relaxing there. Three of its paws and its tail dangled from the H-shaped branch formation. The fourth paw on the branch maintained its balance, as did the rather large belly that dangled from its frame. Early morning one day, far away, I saw a group of lions around a large red object, probably a wildebeest they had killed. Later that day, I saw a lion pair mating. After the act the lion roared and the lioness covered low in the ground. Another lioness behind a bush was quite alert and scanning for prey. Several others slept, not bothered by flies that covered their face.

Lions are members of the cat family, Felidae, a family that also includes tigers, leopards, jaguars and our house cat. Male lions have a magnificent mane giving them a royal look, hence the name King of the Jungle. The male can be up to twelve feet long and weigh up to 500 pounds; females are smaller. A group of lions is called a pride. It includes a male lion, a harem of several lionesses, and cubs. When they grow older, male cubs are seen as a threat by the leader and forced to leave the pride. Younger males form their own groups and work towards displacing leaders in other prides. Lions are apex

predators of the jungle, feeding on large mammals such as antelopes, buffaloes, giraffes and zebras. In *Cry of the Kalahari*, authors Mark and Delia wrote about lions. The authors lived in Southern Africa’s Kalahari Desert for seven years and became close to lions, leopards, and brown hyenas. In the book they describe the social behaviour of lions in great detail.

Take, for example, communication. By following a pride of lions, they discovered ways in which lions communicated with each other.

Two methods of their communication are obvious. They roar to locate each other after they spread out for a hunt, to warn other prides to stay away, and to send mating signals. And they use smell (by urinating, for example) to mark territory and inform other lions about their whereabouts.

But the authors also discover how lions used body language to communicate while watching three lionesses lazing near a river. A lone antelope was crossing the river. The older lioness spotted the antelope but the other two did not. So the older lioness cocked her ears forward, lifted her head and twitched the tip of her tail, as if to say, “Hey, over there!” The younger lionesses got the hint, spotted the antelope and pounced on it within seconds.

The lions I saw at Masai Mara presented a disarming and relaxed appearance. But that can also be said of many dangers of the world. They look harmless but pounce on the unsuspecting when the moment is right. And so I will keep my distance from lions.

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## ‘Form laws to punish vandals’

*Nirmul Committee demands, after vandalism of Bagha Jatin’s sculpture in Kushtia*

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Ekattorer Ghatak Dalal Nirmul Committee yesterday expressed serious concern over vandalism of revolutionary Jatindranath Mukherjee’s sculpture in Kushtia. Popularly known as Bagha Jatin, Jatindranath was a freedom fighter who rebelled against British rule in India.

In a statement, the committee’s president Shahriar Kabir and general secretary Kazi Mukul demanded new laws to punish individuals and organisations involved in these kinds of activities.

On Thursday night, miscreants vandalised the sculpture at Kaya village of Kumarkhali upazila. In the first week of this month, miscreants smashed an under-construction sculpture of Bangabandhu at a key intersection in Kushtia town.

The committee believes that the latest incident is a continuation of threatening moves to destroy sculptures by Hefazat and Khelafat leaders, the statement said.

They also demanded immediate arrest and trial of those responsible for the vandalism and instigators.

“Article 24 of the constitution puts responsibility on the state to protect historically and culturally significant monuments of Bangladesh, including sculptures, from distortion, destruction or removal, but the government failed in this regard,” it added.

## Govt moves to set up metro rail in port city

*Pre-feasibility study to be launched soon*

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

The government will launch a study to find possible routes for mass transit network (MTN), which may include one or more metro rail lines and dedicated bus service lines, in Chattogram metropolitan area.

Dhaka Transport Coordination Authority (DTCA) has recently submitted a project proposal for carrying out the pre-feasibility study, at a cost of around Tk 21 crore. The internal evaluation committee held a meeting on the proposal on December 15, with Nazrul Islam, secretary of Road Transport and Highways Division, in chair.

The meeting asked DTCA to complete the study within June 2021, six months earlier than what DTCA had proposed, sources said. Once the study is completed, feasibility study, detail design and other necessary work would be done before approving any construction project, they said.

The development came more than a year after Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader said that a feasibility study for a metro rail project in Chattogram city will begin soon.

The government is implementing a time-bound working plan for building a 128.74km network, consisting of six lines in Dhaka and its adjacent areas, within 2030. Physical work of Mass Rapid Transit-6 (MRT-6), the first metro rail in Dhaka, has witnessed 53 percent progress till November.

The Tk 22,000 crore project is being implemented between Uttara Third Phase and Motijheel, and authorities are expected to open the metro rail in December next year.

Talking to reporters on October 15 last year, Quader said, “The prime minister has asked me

to start feasibility study for metro rail project in Chattogram city.” He asked the ministry secretary and all officials concerned to begin feasibility study immediately.

“We have submitted the proposal following the ministry’s instruction,” said Khandakar Rakibur Rahman, executive director of DTCA.

He said metro rail projects in Dhaka are being implemented following the revised Strategic Transport Plan (STP) for Dhaka metropolitan area. But there is no such plan for Chattogram city.

“The study is for preparing a transport masterplan for port city,” he said. “It would also be carried out for building metro rail there.”

A DTCA official, however, said while they want to prepare a comprehensive transport masterplan, doing so will take a long time. Therefore, the ministry currently has them focused on MTN, he told The Daily Star, wishing not to be named.

He said the MTN may include one or more metro lines and BRT lines. “Under the study, consultants would carry out traffic surveys to determine daily traffic and find suitable routes.”

Chattogram city is the second largest city of the country, and traffic jams are common there.

Citing national census of 2011, Chattogram City Corporation, on its website, said some 7.3 million people live in Chattogram metropolitan area, while 6 million live in CCC, which covers 155.4 square kilometres. When AJM Nasir Uddin was its mayor, CCC held a meeting around one-and-a-half years ago with experts on metro rail issues. But experts said it would be difficult to implement metro rail there due to “unplanned construction” of three flyovers and an elevated expressway.



A woman collects dry leaves that will later be used to kindle fire for cooking. Winter can be harsh, and these leaves provide much-needed warmth during the season. The photo was taken at Barishal’s Agailjhara upazila yesterday.

PHOTO: TTU DAS

## Local fruits for better health

M’singh univ students start 400km awareness walk

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

Marking the Victory Day, a group of university students in Mymensingh has started a 400km walk to promote production of local fruits.

Under the banner of “Falad Bangladesh”, a voluntary organisation, eight students of Jatiya Kabi Kazi Nazrul Islam University in Trishal began the walk, named “Brikha Padojatra” on December 16 as part of a social movement, said organisers.

Goutam Kumar Debnath, Mymensingh divisional coordinator of the organisation, said the 400km walk -- the longest of its kind so far -- started from the university campus and will end in Khagrachhari on December 31. In this time, the entourage will travel across 24 upazilas in seven districts.

University Vice-Chancellor Prof AHM Mustafizur Rahman inaugurated the programme.

Since beginning its journey in 2013,

“Falad Bangladesh” has so far planted 2.75 lakh saplings of local fruit trees in 46 districts, said Dravid Saikat, chief coordinator of the organisation and assistant professor of the university’s Department of Fine Arts.

Some 95 percent of the planted saplings have survived, said Saikat, who is also leading the eight-student team. “We have a target of planting five crores of fruit saplings by 2030,” he said.

However, he warned against the indiscriminate and unplanned planting of saplings. “We discourage people to plant exotic varieties of trees as we have observed that they can have a negative effect on our biodiversity and ecology,” said the teacher.

The organisers said the walk will aim to inspire people and local authorities to produce local fruits. They will also plant fruit saplings with help of local volunteers.

Till writing of this report at 6pm yesterday, the students’ team reached Kishoreganj, said Saikat.

## 4 of a family die in Pabna road crash

7 killed in other districts

STAR REPORT

Eleven people, including four of a family, were killed in road accidents across the country over the last two days, report our correspondents and a news agency.

In Pabna, four of a family were killed and two others injured in a road mishap at Rangalia Tiktikipara in Bhangura upazila yesterday, reports our Pabna correspondent.

The deceased were identified as siblings Emon Hossain (16) and Imran Hossain (14), sons of Rashid Pramanik, their cousin Summa Khatun (13), and their aunt Nupur Begum (28).

Officer-in-Charge of Bhangura Police Station Anwar Hossain said a speeding truck hit a three-wheeler carrying them on their way to attend a programme at Haatgram, the OC said.

Police seized the truck but its driver managed to flee, said the police officer.

In Habiganj, two people were killed when a pickup collided with a battery-run easy bike and CNG-driven auto-rickshaw in Shaistaganj upazila yesterday.

The accident took place in Garur Bazar area of the upazila around 11am.

One of deceased was identified as Dr Diponkar, medical officer of Habiganj 250-bed District Sadar Hospital, reports our Moulvibazar correspondent.

In Patuakhali, Sobahan Mollah (68) was killed in a road accident at Doctor Bari bus stand on Patuakhali-Kuakata highway yesterday.

Sobahan from Ghatkhali village in Barguna’s Amtali upazila died after a Kuakata-bound bus from Dhaka hit him on the highway, killing him on the spot, said law enforcers.

In Brahmanbaria, a rickshaw-puller was killed after being hit by a sand-laden tractor on Cumilla-Sylhet highway yesterday.

The deceased was identified as Milon Mia (40) of Akhitra village in Sarail upazila.

Khatihata Highway Police Station Officer-in-Charge Mahbubur Rahman said Milon was killed after a tractor coming from the opposite direction hit him. He died on the spot.

In Kishoreganj, at least three people were killed and three others injured as a truck collided head-on with a CNG-run auto-rickshaw at Kalikaprased in Bhairab on Thursday, reports UNB.

Bhairab Police Station OC Md Mamunur Rahman said the accident occurred as a truck plunged into a roadside ditch after hitting a CNG-run auto-rickshaw in the afternoon.

Police seized the truck, but the driver managed to flee, said the OC.

## Pro-BNP teachers not contesting in Duta polls

Election to DU teachers’ association Dec 30

ASHIK ABDULLAH APU

Election to the executive committee of Dhaka University Teachers’ Association (Duta) will be held on December 30, with the pro-BNP “white panel” not contesting.

Although some of the pro-BNP teachers had collected nomination forms, they declared at a press conference yesterday that they will not be contesting in the elections.

The white panel teachers wrote to the president-general secretary of the organisation and election director on December 9, urging them to postpone the election citing the Covid-19 pandemic and some other reasons.

The Awami League backed “blue panel” teachers, however, decided to take part in the polls and are now discussing among themselves on formation of their panel.

“To combat the second wave of coronavirus pandemic, government has stressed on maintaining social distance. The risk of contamination will increase due to the gathering on the polls day. Besides, our normal academic activities has remained suspended since March. Under these circumstances, holding the polls will create negative impression about us in students’ and people’s minds,” reads a statement of white panel.

“Also, the tenure of other statutory bodies like senate, syndicate, finance committee has been expired but the authorities did not take make any arrangement for those due to the Covid-19 situation. We do not think arranging Duta polls is logical where there is a great risk of spike in contamination,” added the statement, signed by panel convener Prof ABM Obaidul Islam.

Several pro-BNP teachers also told this correspondent that the white panel will not take part in the polls if it is held on December 30.

On the other hand, pro-AL (blue panel) teachers validated their demand by saying that holding the polls is mandatory as per the constitution.

They also proposed to hold faculty-based or online-based polls considering the Covid-19 situation.

Prof Abdus Samad, convener of blue panel, said, “We will ensure and maintain

proper hygiene. If there were 10 polling booths in previous years, we will arrange 50 this year. Besides, we will avoid person-to-person election campaigning and do it online.”

“The constitution mandates to hold this election every year and Duta is the platform through which Dhaka University teachers can raise voice on any national issue,” he added.

Sources in the teachers’ body said the executive body of Duta held a meeting on December 6 on whether the polls should be held. A faction of pro-AL blue panel teachers opined that the tenure of incumbent committee be extended.

But another faction -- vying for the top posts -- demanded holding the polls saying that the charter mandates so.

Later the teachers’ body sought opinion from all executive members on the decision of holding election.

Prof Md Zakir Hossain Bhuiyan of marketing department will be conducting the election.

According to the election manifesto, voting will take place between 10am to 2:30pm at the university teachers’ club.

Earlier, white panel convener Prof ABM Obaidul Islam said, “We may collect some nomination forms. Even if we do, we will hold a meeting to decide whether we will contest the polls.”

Selection of nomination papers, withdrawal of candidacy and final list of candidates will be completed by December 20.

Talking to The Daily Star, Prof Zakir Bhuiyan said the executive body of the incumbent committee -- which will be in charge till December 31 -- took the decision of holding election and entrusted him with the duty of conducting the polls.

“Only they [executive body] have the jurisdiction to cancel or postpone the polls. I was only given the responsibilities of conducting the election,” he added.

Duta general secretary Prof Md Nizamul Hoque Bhuiyan said, “The decision was taken unanimously at the executive meeting and we will hold it following health and hygiene guidelines.”

## Thakurgaon sugar mill begins operations

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

Thakurgaon Sugar Mill, the largest sugar mill in the northern part of the country, started its production from yesterday afternoon.

Lawmaker of Thakurgaon-1 and also presidium member of Awami League Ramesh Chandra Sen inaugurated the operation as chief guest at a programme on the mill premises.

Sugarcane crushing this season has started amid a different atmosphere as the sugarcane produced under Panchagarh and Setabganj mills are being brought to Thakurgaon for crushing. This follows Bangladesh Sugar and Food Industries Corporation’s decision to shut the two mills this season due to losses.

Managing Director of Thakurgaon Sugar Mills Md Shakhawat Hossain told The Daily Star that the mill will run for four to four-and-half months of the current season.

The production target has been fixed at 9,639 tonnes of sugar by crushing one lakh 53 thousand of canes, with the expected recovery rate from canes set at 6.3 percent, the official said. Of the canes, 60,000 tonnes will come from Thakurgaon zone, 48,000 tonnes from Panchagarh zone, while 45,000 tonnes will come from Setabganj zone.

Among others, Deputy Commissioner of Thakurgaon Dr KM Kamruzzaman Selim spoke at the programme.

## Hearing on acquisition of Cumilla Town Hall today

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cumilla

The Ministry of Cultural Affairs will hold a mass hearing on Cumilla Town Hall premises today over acquisition of Birchandra Ganapathagar and Nagar Milonayton (the town hall) as a heritage property.

Helal Uddin Ahmed, general secretary of Town Hall executive committee, said it will start at 11:30am.

AKM Bahauddin Bahar MP, an adviser of the Town Hall, will be present there.

Activists and residents have been protesting for a few months as a group is trying to demolish the historic Town Hall to construct a market there.