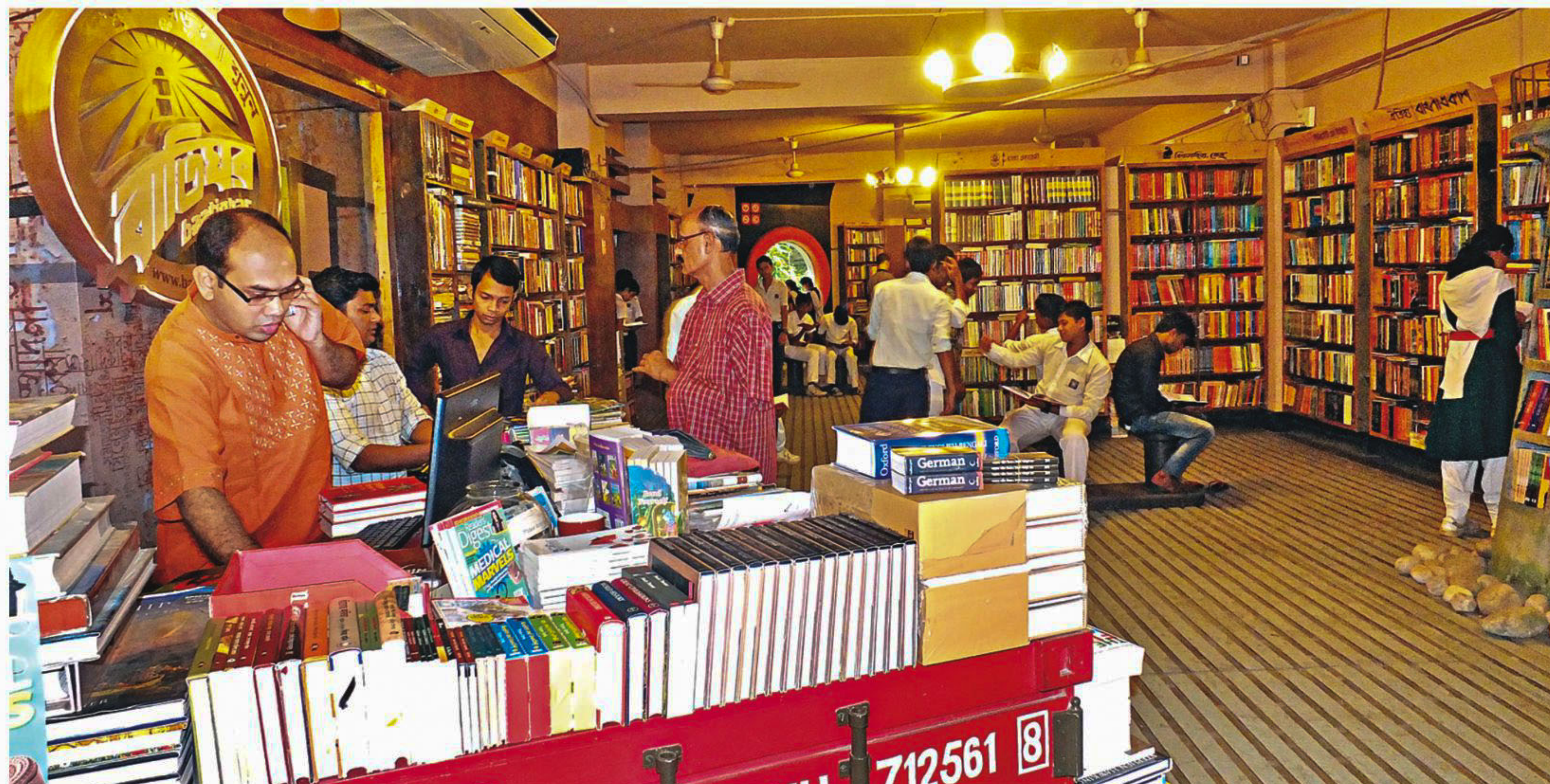


STAR PEOPLE



# THE BEAUTIFUL WORLD OF DIPANKAR

FAYEKA ZABEEN SIDDIQUA  
PHOTO: PRABIR DAS



Dipankar Das

If you constantly strive to give your best effort, you will be able to bring your dream to life. This is the mantra of Dipankar Das, the owner of Baatighar, one of the most beloved bookstores of the country.

Dipankar's dream was a simple but powerful one - to start a reading 'riot' throughout Chittagong, his hometown, by establishing a bookstore where readers are free to browse through the rows and rows of books, while exploring different sections of knowledge.

Today, after four years of its establishment, Baatighar, in the heart of Chittagong city, has become a home for thousands of book lovers. Not only in Chittagong, Baatighar's extensive book collection along with its maritime ambience, make it a popular destination for anyone visiting Chittagong.

A former employee of Biswa Sahitya Kendra, Dipankar Das, a Chittagongian ventured into this initiative solely for his passion for books. "I do not belong to a business background, neither do I have an affluent family patronising me. Starting a bookstore, without any prior knowledge in business, was surely a challenge. But my passion for reading and the dream to build a bookstore where people could browse around, sit, read and buy all the books they ever wanted, has driven me to start this venture," says Dipankar.

Born in a village called Dhalghat, Patia

in Chittagong, Das was introduced to the Mustafizur Rahman Public Library in Patia during his college days. He would spend hours at an end here, absorbed in the magic of books. Along with his friends, he developed a readers' association for like-minded literature buffs. In 1997, when Biswa Sahitya Kendra opened its branch in Patia, he became one of its organisers. After two years of arduous service in Patia, eminent educationist Professor Abdullah Abu Sayeed bestowed upon him another responsibility - to be an active member of the organisation's new project, Biswa Sahitya Kendra Mobile Library. During his tenure there, he was blessed with the opportunity of mingling with different publishers and readers.

2001 can be marked as a significant year in Dipankar's life. 'Sayeed Sir', his mentor, requested him to take charge of a mobile library in Chittagong. He returned to Chittagong and discovered with utter surprise that in Dhaka he could enlist two thousand members over a year, whereas in Chittagong, he could recruit the same amount of members in only three months.

"I knew Chittagong had a large number of readers, but did not have a proper bookstore," he says. "I started thinking of a place which would be culturally vibrant and at the same time, would be able to meet the universal standards of a bookstore." With the meagre savings he had and loans from his book lover friends

and family, along with his incorrigible optimism, he sailed his ship in 2005.

He launched his long awaited bookstore Baatighar in an area of around a hundred square feet only. No matter how shabby looking and tiny it was, Baatighar added a fresh intellectual dimension in Momin Road, Chittagong, by offering an unusually rich collection of books. Within a few days, Baatighar was able to lure a huge number of readers from all walks of society. But he couldn't be happy yet; his goal was to give readers more space to think and more freedom to choose. Once again, with his savings and with the help of a bank loan, he decided to expand his store.

And now here it is: a whole new Baatighar on the ground floor of Chittagong Press Club.

Beside its huge collection, readers acclaim Baatighar for being so spacious and commodious. The shop has a maritime theme, decked with decorative knick knacks resembling ships and ports. Instead of conventional windows, Baatighar has portholes. The place is a

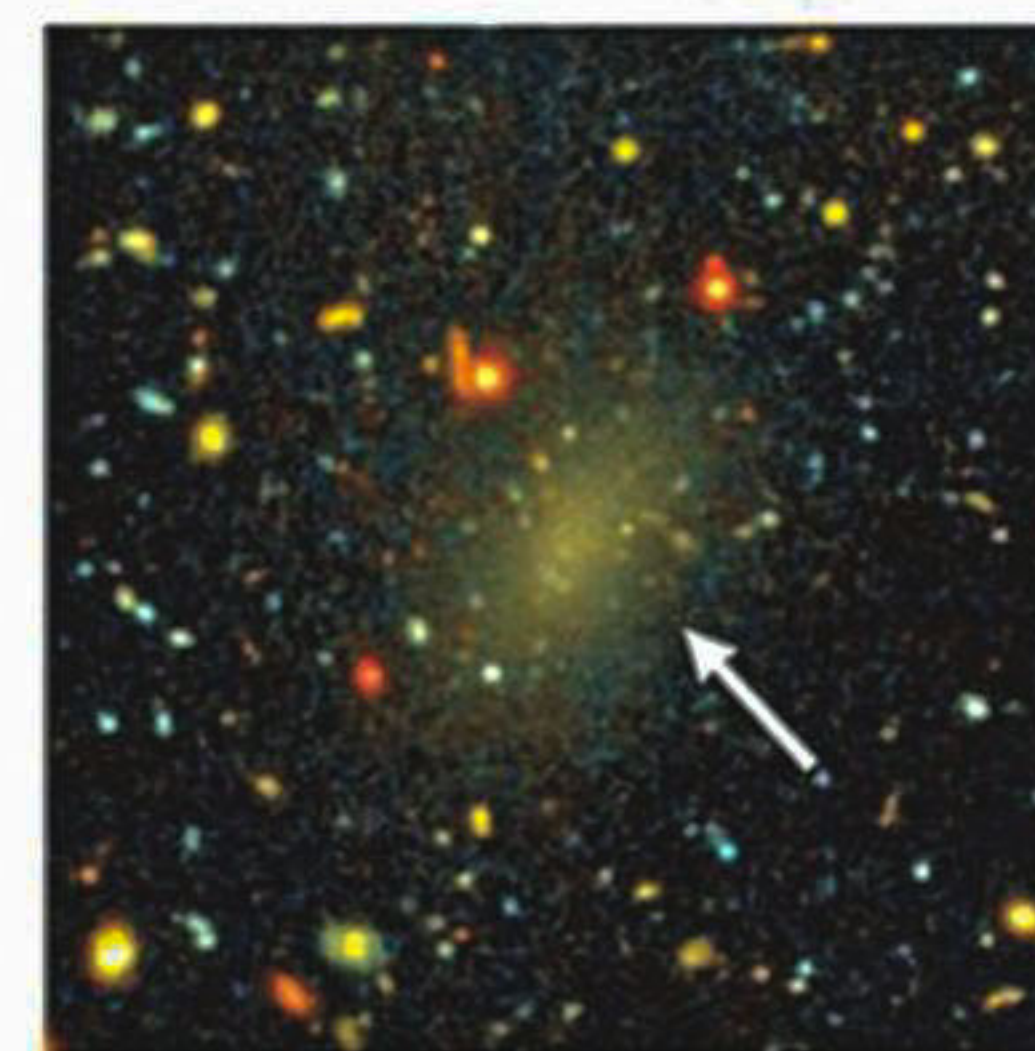
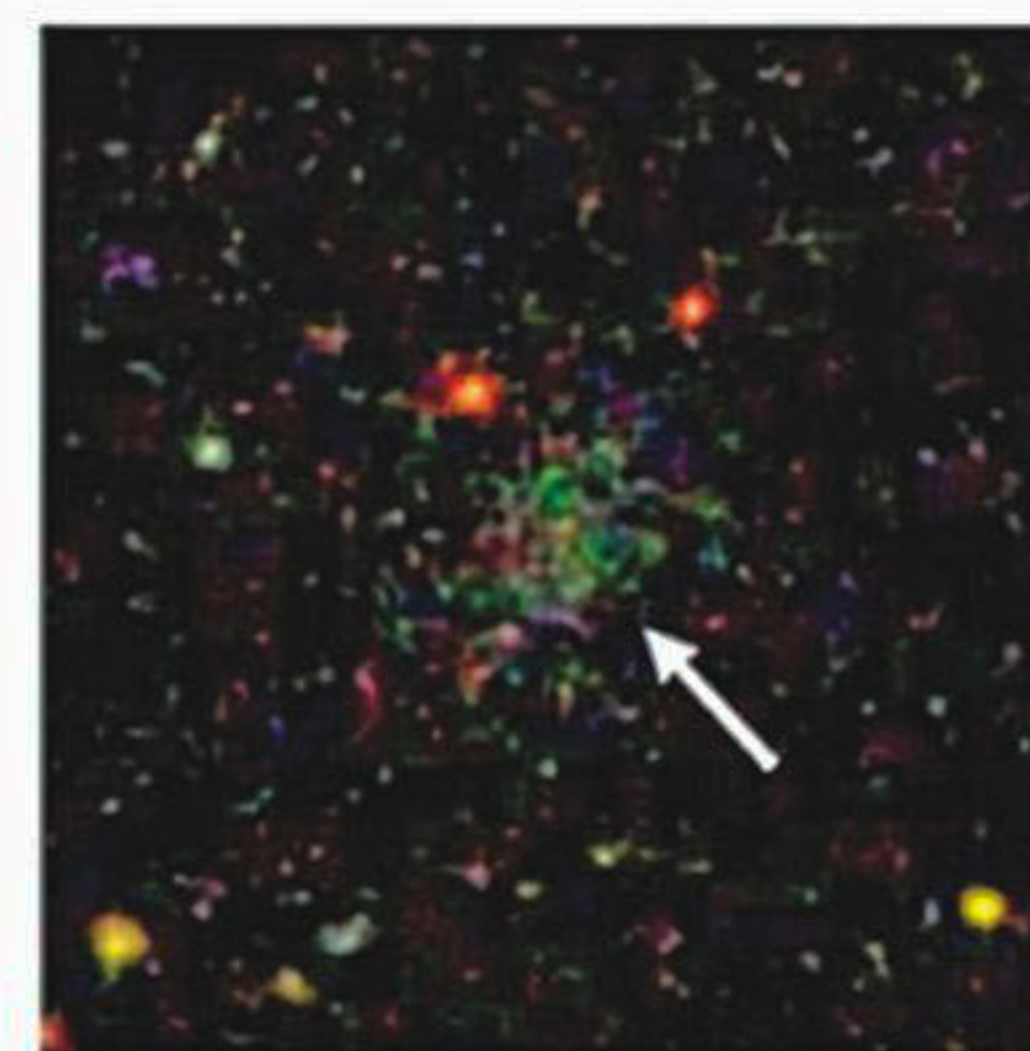
veritable adventure land with hanging ropes, a wooden wheel, a shelf shaped like a lighthouse surrounded by rocks, warm fresnel lights (the oblique lights used in a lighthouse) and a cargo container used as a counter table. Dipankar aims to develop a bridge between the readers and Baatighar. Hence he maintains a directory of the regular readers and patrons, and offers them regular updates on what's new in the shop. Patrons can also place the orders of any book that they want, and Baatighar tries to import them directly from the publishers.

The way a lighthouse guides traveller, the way the beacon symbolises hope by spreading its beam, Dipankar wants his Baatighar to be an icon in a similar vein. And for bookworms in Dhaka, here is the good news. Baatighar is going to launch a branch in Dhaka within the next six months.

With that, let's hope that Dipankar's vision of developing a nationwide reader's society through Baatighar comes true. ■

QUIRKY SCIENCE

## A DARK MILKY WAY



Using the world's most powerful telescopes, an international team of astronomers has found a massive galaxy that consists almost entirely of dark matter.

The galaxy, Dragonfly 44, is located in the nearby Coma constellation and had been overlooked until last year because of its unusual composition: It is a diffuse "blob" about the size of the Milky Way, but with far fewer stars. "Very soon after its discovery, we realised this galaxy had to be more than meets the eye. It has so few stars that it would quickly be ripped apart unless something was holding it together," said Yale University astronomer Pieter van Dokkum, lead author of a paper in the *Astrophysical Journal Letters*.

Van Dokkum's team was able to get a good look at Dragonfly 44 thanks to the W.M. Keck Observatory and the Gemini

North telescope, both in Hawaii. Astronomers used observations from Keck, taken over six nights, to measure the velocities of stars in the galaxy. They used the 8-metre Gemini North telescope to reveal a halo of spherical clusters of stars around the galaxy's core, similar to the halo that surrounds our Milky Way galaxy.

Star velocities are an indication of the galaxy's mass, the researchers noted. The faster the stars move, the more mass its galaxy will have. "Amazingly, the stars move at velocities that are far greater than expected for such a dim galaxy. It means that Dragonfly 44 has a huge amount of unseen mass," said co-author Roberto Abraham of the University of Toronto.

Scientists initially spotted Dragonfly 44 with the Dragonfly Telephoto Array, a telescope invented and built by van Dokkum and Abraham.

## GROWTH OF THE FOOT PRINT

A James Cook University scientist says a new map of the ecological footprint of humankind shows 97 per cent of the most species-rich places on Earth have been seriously altered.

JCU's Professor Bill Laurance has taken part in a study to map the ecological effect of people on the planet. He said the news isn't great. "The most species-rich parts of the planet - especially including the tropical rainforests - have been hit hardest. In total, around 97 percent of Earth's biologically richest real estate has been seriously altered by humans," he said.

The scientists found environmental pressures are widespread, with only a few very remote areas escaping

damage. "Humans are the most voracious consumers planet Earth has ever seen. With our land-use, hunting and other exploitative activities, we are now directly impacting three-quarters of the Earth's land surface," said Professor Laurance.

Researchers combined data garnered from unprecedented advances in remote sensing with information collected via surveys on the ground. They compared data from the first survey in 1993 to the last available information set from 2009.

Professor Laurance said that 71 percent of global ecoregions saw a marked increase in their human footprints. But he said the news was not all bad.

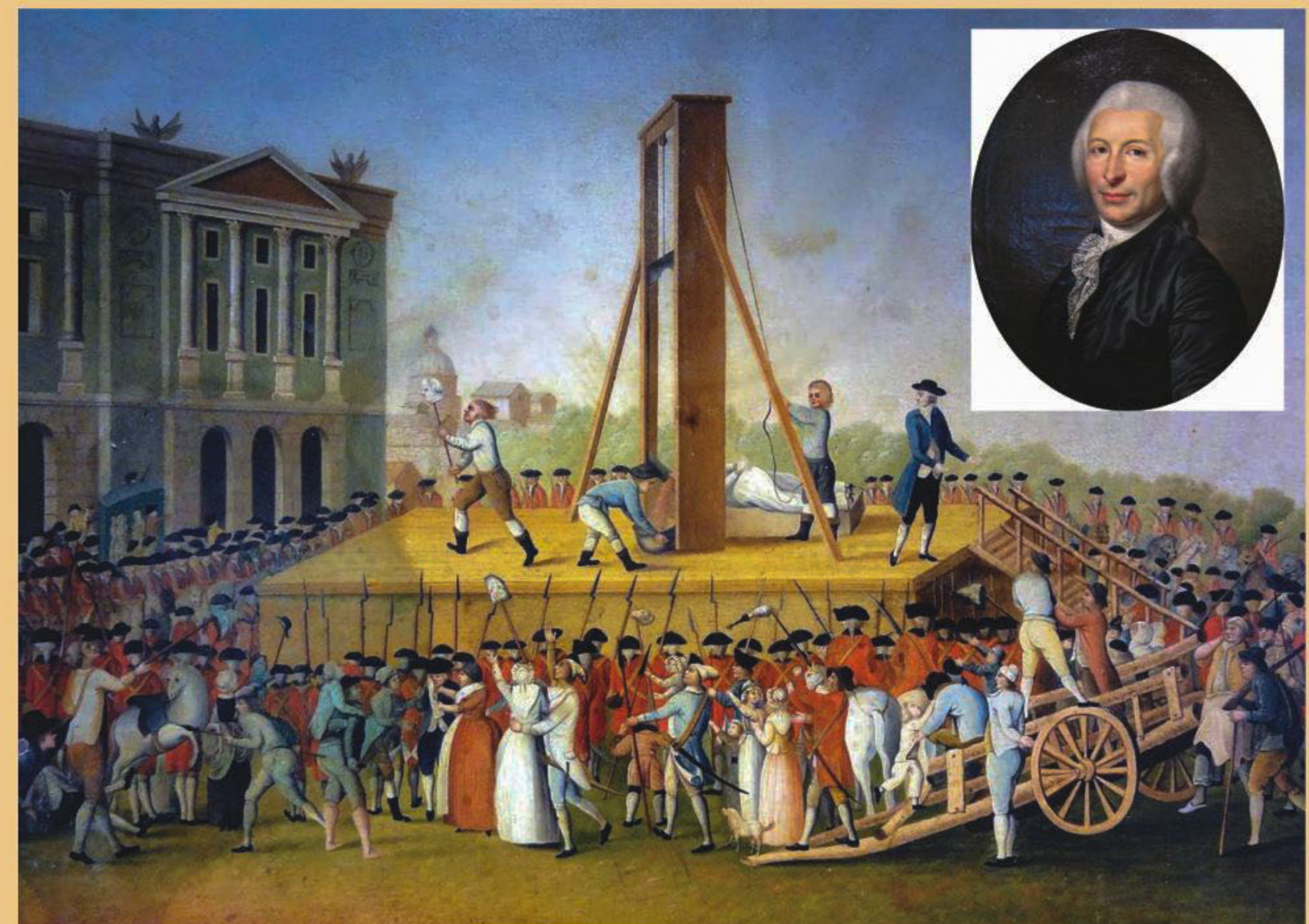


SOURCE: SCIENCEDAILY.COM

STRANGE HISTORY

## THE KILLING MACHINE

MD SHAHNAWAZ KHAN CHANDAN



Guillotine is one of the most renowned devices of execution, which became a symbol of judicial execution in France. For its widespread use in the French revolution, when thousands of French aristocrats lost their lives under the sharp blade of Guillotine, this device became a worldwide phenomenon. However, this deadly killing machine was named after a doctor who did not even invent it, rather he was a strong advocate for banning death penalty. Joseph-Ignace Guillotine (1738-1814) was a French doctor who used to write essays to ban capital punishment in France. In one of his essays in 1789, Guillotine suggested a device to make execution as painless as possible, if death penalty cannot be avoided at any cost. The then French government liked the idea and the first prototype of the painless execution device was designed by another scientist called Antoine Louis. The beheading machine consisted of a pulley system and a pedestal. In the pedestal the condemned man's head used to be kept. By operating the pulley, a sharp 4 kg blade used to fall on the neck to chop off the head within the fractions of a second. Mysteriously, this deadly device was named after Joseph Guillotine instead of its actual designer Antoine Louis. After the French revolution, beheading of condemned people by guillotine became a popular source of public entertainment. For example, King Louise XVI and Queen Marry Antoinette were beheaded publicly by Guillotine. After the death of Joseph Guillotine, his family was so embarrassed by his connection with this beheading machine that they asked the French government to change the name of this device. However, the then French government refused the plea, and the family members changed their family name instead. Guillotine continued to be used in France until 1982 when death penalty was abolished by law. The last victim of Guillotine was a woman named Hamida Djandoubi, who was executed in 1977.