

TRIBUTE

DIDI – THE TORCH BEARER

KALYANI BANERJEE

It seems to me that I am the most improper sister of my Didi for writing some words as a tribute to her. Didi, Manju Banerjee, is the founder of Scholars Special School and Utoron Slum Children School at Mohammadpur in Dhaka. She was also a member of the Bangladesh Communist Party and Mahila Parishad. Didi's life story is one full of sacrifice. These lines from Thomas Gray seem to be appropriate:

“Full many a gem of purest ray serene
The darkest unfathomed caves of ocean
bear;
Full many a flower is born to blush
unseen
And waste its sweetness on the desert air.
So I have this little effort.”

Didi was born at Garuria, a village in Barisal district, in the year 1943. She was the eldest among the ten children of our father Sree Bijoy Krishna Banerjee and mother Anjali Banerjee. I don't know how much love and care she received as the eldest daughter; but I know about the heavy burden of such a large family that she had to carry. My parents had ten children altogether. And my mother became gradually very tired and frustrated. My didi had to take care of her younger siblings, sacrificing her study and her dreams early in her life. In this way Didi became our mentor and guide. Didi had no adolescence and youth, but only the burden of this family. She became a matured woman before her 'sweet sixteen' under the pressure of the responsibility. After a long, exhausting day, Didi used to study by the dim light of a lantern. By her talent and hard effort she completed her matriculation and higher secondary. But she had no opportunity to admit herself in an institute for higher studies. In the meantime my two elder brothers had grown up with precise consciousness and humanity. They came forward to assist Didi in all her works. But life has its own demands. Didi gave up all her desires with a smile on her face for the purposes of her younger brothers and sisters. Ever truthful Didi, never left her commitment for the family for a single moment. When both of my parents became unable to perform their duties for their children, Didi became ready for the biggest sacrifice of her life. She took the firm decision in her life to stay in her father's family forever as a spinster. Didi sacrificed her marriage, particularly for the sake of

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her four younger sisters. Didi being a conscious, cultured and politically aware person understood that without her guidance the four young sisters could not have any future. I must salute Didi here for setting this supreme example of sacrifice.

After the liberation war the family came to Dhaka, obviously life became tougher though in the meantime, my elder brothers became established. Now life changed in its own way. My mother became seriously ill. In the meantime, Didi completed her graduation. But I only know that very few people can be able to do so in the situation Didi had to face. What I have to emphasize that when I was in class five or six I started to notice that my luminous Didi became so grateful that whoever came to her touch became one of our family. Didi was like a touchstone. Day by day people beside our family accepted Didi as their guidance and mentor. In course of time we were all



Manju Banerjee

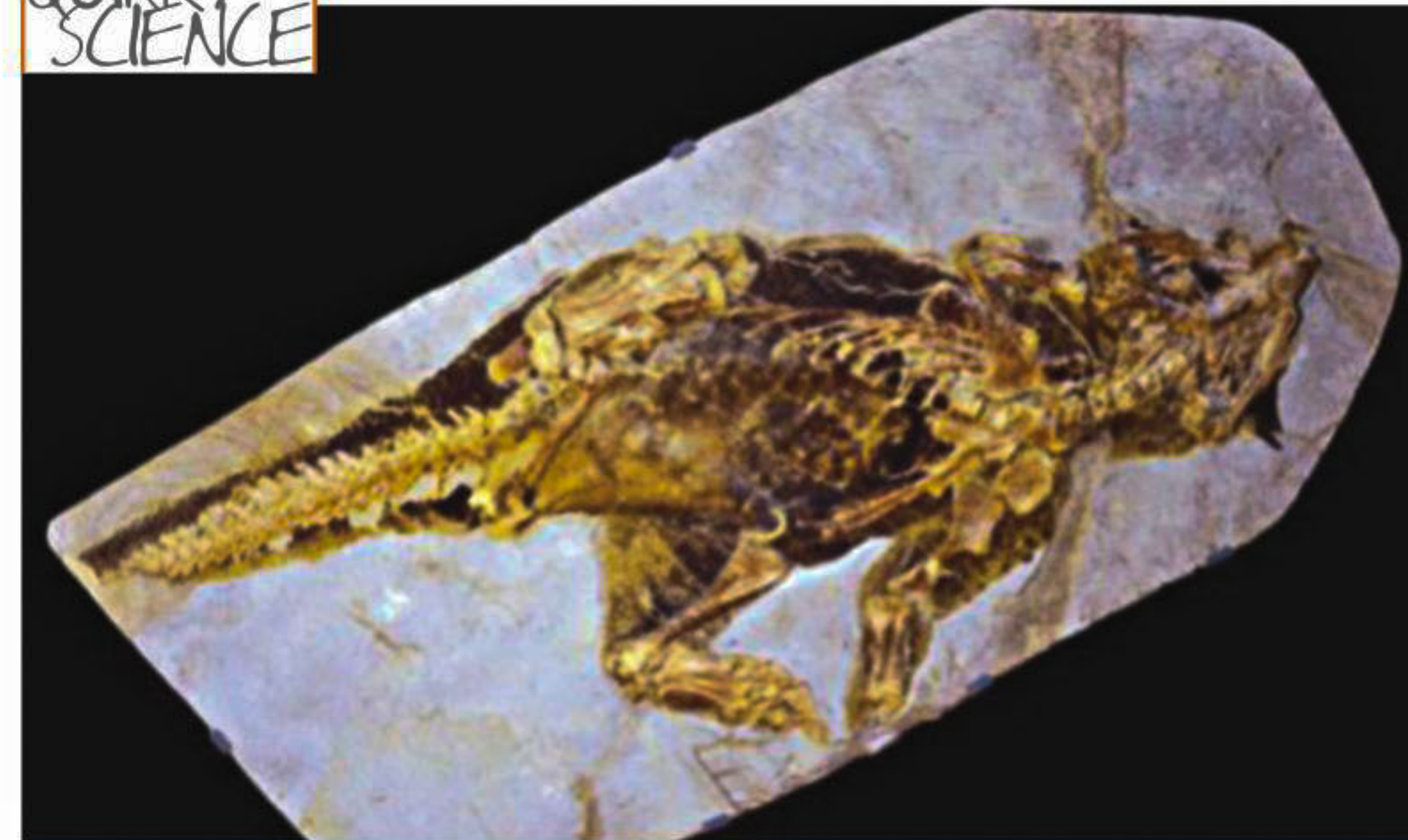
PHOTO: COURTESY

grown up. Now there were families with families. Didi, the most considerate person in my life, without whom I could ever had the position where I am now. Today we are all in some sort of established positions in our own paths, but the one who had faith on us throughout the life, was Didi. My Didi became the 'Didi' of an uncountable number of people. Each and every one of them shed tears out of loss and immense respect when they heard that Didi has left. The beginning of the ended started earlier this year, when the diagnosis confirmed that Didi has been

attacked by cancer. As the last hours neared, Didi being Didi, took the most significant decision of her life, to donate her body. On August 30, 2016, at around 9.30, Didi breathed for the last time. Thus, Didi, the benevolent soul and the most honorable person of my life set the best example of sacrifice. I would like to convey my deepest respect and gratitude towards Didi for being there whenever needed. Without Didi, I would have just spent my life as a nobody; Didi, I love you.

The writer is an associate professor, Govt. Kabi Nazrul College, Sadarhat, Dhaka.

QUIRKY SCIENCE



DINOSAUR COLOUR PATTERN

After reconstructing the colour patterns of a well-preserved dinosaur from China, researchers from the University of Bristol have found that the long-lost species Psittacosaurus (meaning "parrot lizard," a reference to its parrot-like beak) was light on its underside and darker on top. This colour pattern, known as countershading, is a common form of camouflage in modern animals. The study published today in Current Biology led the researchers to conclude that Psittacosaurus most likely lived in an environment with diffuse light, such as in a forest, and has produced the most life-like reconstruction of a dinosaur ever created. Dr Jakob Vinther from the

Schools of Earth Sciences and Biological Sciences, said: "The fossil, which is on public display at the Senckenberg Museum of Natural History in Germany, preserves clear countershading, which has been shown to function by counter-illuminating shadows on a body, thus making an animal appear optically flat to the eye of the beholder." Behavioural ecologist Professor Innes Cuthill from the School of Biological Sciences, added: "By reconstructing a life-size 3D model, we were able to not only see how the patterns of shading changed over the body, but also that it matched the sort of camouflage which would work best in a forested environment."

FIVE THINGS

A team of researchers has clarified the origin of the rings recently discovered around two minor planets known as centaurs, and their results suggest the existence of rings around other centaurs. These findings were published on August 29 in Astrophysical Journal Letters, and introduced in AAS Nova, a website for research highlights from the journals of the American Astronomical Society.

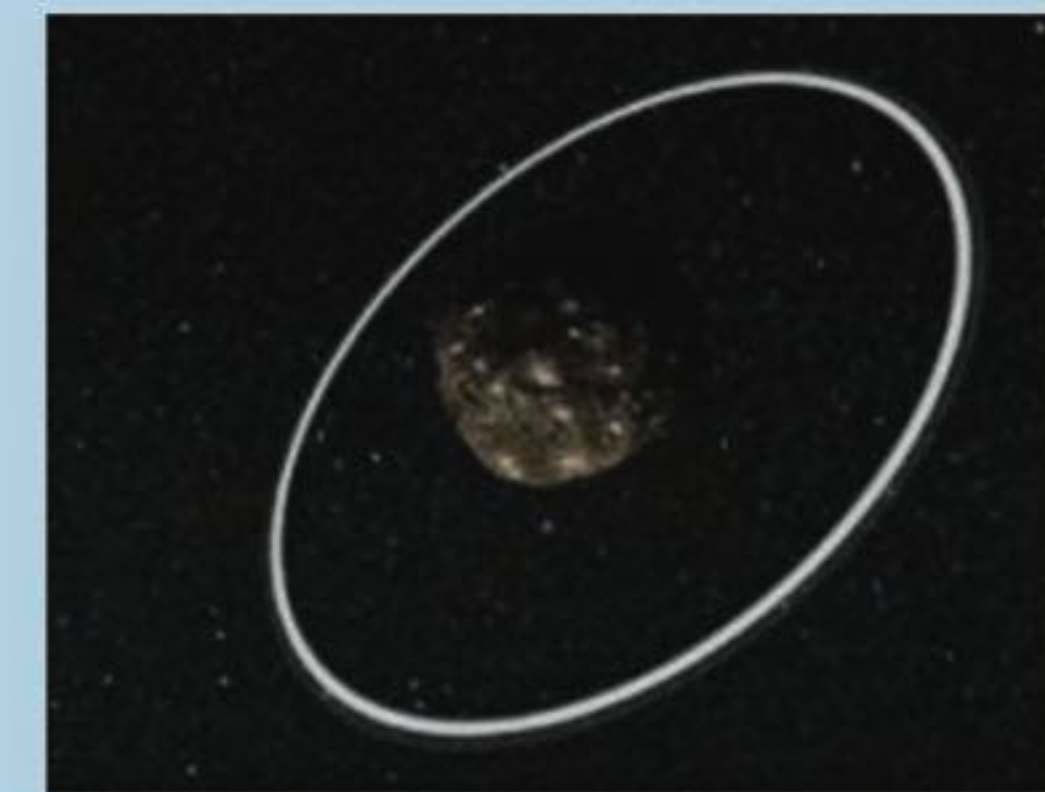
The lead author of the paper is HYODO Ryuki (Kobe University Department of Planetology, Graduate School of Science), and co-authors are Professor Sébastien Charnoz (Institute de Physique du Globe/Université Paris Diderot), Project Associate Professor GENDA Hidenori (Earth-Life Science Institute, Tokyo Institute of Technology), and Professor OHTSUKI Keiji (Kobe University Department of Planetology, Graduate School of Science).

Centaurs are minor planets that orbit between Jupiter and Neptune, their current or past orbits crossing those of

the giant planets. It is estimated that there are around 44,000 centaurs with diameters larger than one kilometer.

Until recently it was thought that the four giants such as Saturn and Jupiter were the only ringed celestial bodies within our solar system. However, in 2014 observations of stellar occultation (an event that occurs when light from a star is blocked from the observer by a celestial body) by multiple telescopes revealed that rings likely exist around the centaur Chariklo. Soon after this, scientists discovered that rings likely exist around another centaur, Chiron, but the origin of the rings around these minor planets remained a mystery.

ORIGIN OF MINOR PLANETS

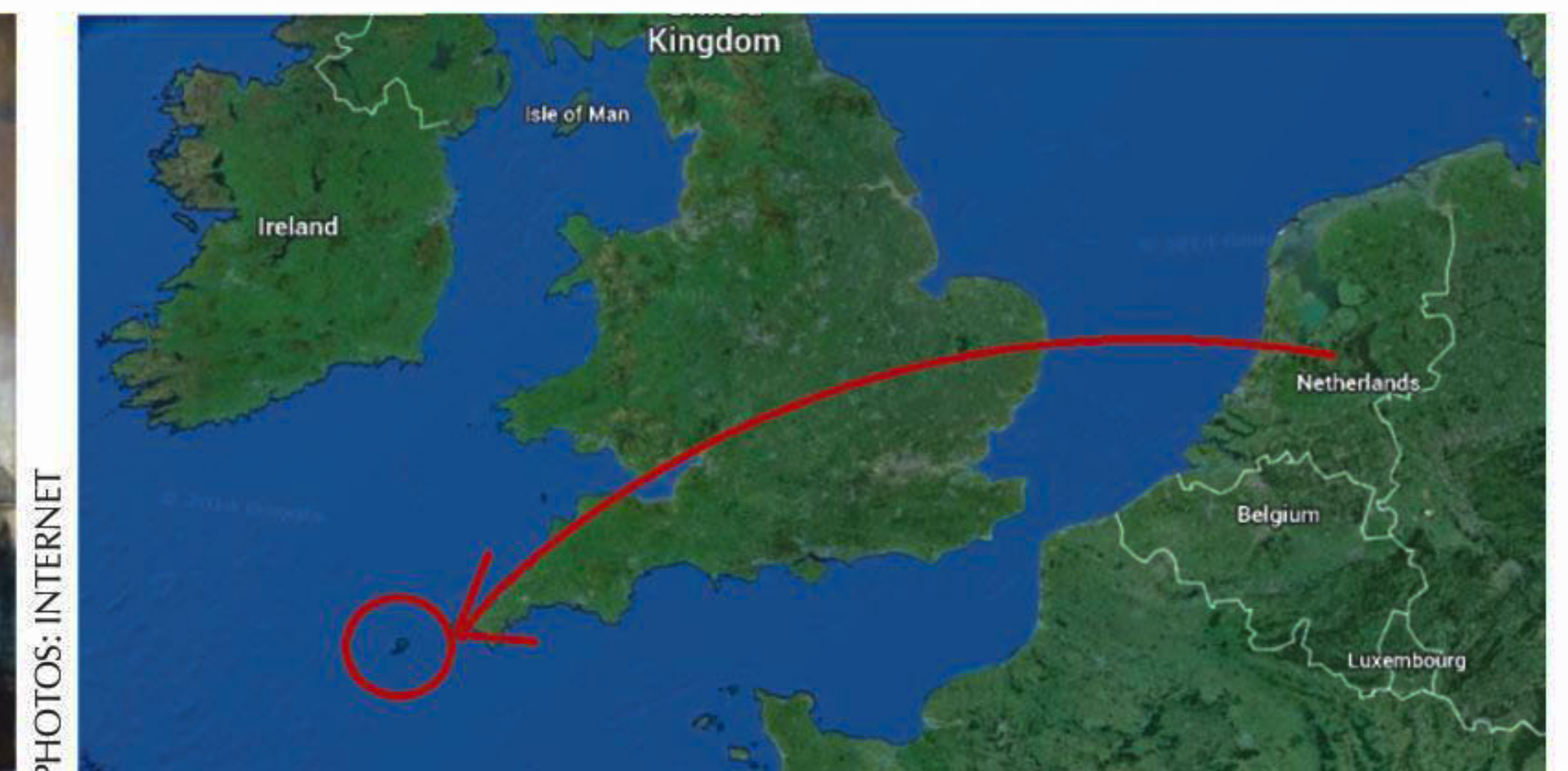


Source: Sciencedaily.com

STRANGE HISTORY

THREE HUNDRED AND THIRTY FIVE YEARS' WAR

MD SHAHNAWAZ KHAN CHANDAN



PHOTOS: INTERNET

One of the longest wars in the human history was actually a bloodless war where no single shot was fired from any of the warring sides. This theoretical state of war existed between Netherlands and Isles of Scilly for three hundred and thirty five years. Isles of Scilly are a small archipelago off the Cornish Peninsula of England. During Second English Civil War (1648-1649), when Britain was in turmoil due to infighting between the

Parliamentarians and the Royalists, Britain lost control of the islands. Taking advantage of the Civil war, the islands started to harbour pirate ships. The pirate ships used to launch menacing attacks on Dutch merchant vessels which was the lifeline of Dutch economy at that time. In 1651, the Netherlands declared war on the Islands and Dutch Navy despatched a fleet of 28 battleships against the Islands to capture the ports occupied by the pirates. However, before

any shot was fired, British government took control of the Isles and promised to resolve the pirate crisis. Dutch Navy recalled its fleet; nonetheless, the Netherlands technically remained at war with the Isles of Scilly. It has been claimed that due to obscurity of how a nation could declare war against a small part of another nation, Dutch politicians never took initiative to declare peace officially. In 1985, Roy Duncan, historian and Chairman of Isles of Scilly

wrote to the Dutch Embassy in London and revealed the myth that the Islands are still at war with Netherlands as no peace treaty was signed after the declaration of the war. Diplomats scrutinised the historical records and found the myth correct. In 1986, the then Dutch Ambassador visited the islands and signed a peace treaty. The peace was officially declared on April 17, 1986 three hundred and thirty five years after the war was declared. ■