

TANGENTS

BY IHTISHAM KABIR



Arctic Tern, Iceland.

PHOTO: IHTISHAM KABIR

Finding Home

In order to write one of the earliest Tangents columns, back in 2010, I visited a pigeon aficionado in Mirpur. The rooftop of his house housed several hundred pigeons in an elaborate system of cages. Talking with him, I learned how pigeons race. The owners drive the competing pigeons to a place far away and release them. The pigeons find their way home and the first one to arrive wins.

Humans have known the pigeon's capability for homing, but *how* does it do it? The mechanism is not fully understood, but it uses a combination of hints and guides including the earth's magnetic field and local landmarks.

Pigeons are not the only creatures with homing ability. Many birds migrate with changing seasons and return to the same place every year. For example, in *The Homing Instinct*, his book on animal migration, Bernd Heinrich discusses two sandhill cranes that spend most of the year in Texas but return to the same location in Alaska every summer in order to breed and raise families.

The homing skills of the albatross are even more remarkable. It spends most of its life on the wing, flying over oceans, but when time comes to raise a family it returns to its birth spot. This may require travelling over 1500 kilometers, but it knows how to return to that exact spot where it finds a mate and breeds.

Another example is the arctic tern, the champion of migrating birds. Every year it spends the summer months in northern latitudes and the winter months near the south pole. By flying as much as 44,000 miles every year, it avoids winter's cold altogether. Arctic terns group together in colonies and a bird often returns to the same colony year after year.

Animals besides birds can also find

their home from far away. Whales, for example, routinely swim 8000 or more kilometres every year, returning home to give birth. Some species of sea turtles mate and lay eggs on the beach. After the eggs hatch, the offspring enter the ocean and spend several years in the water, travelling thousands of kilometres. After ten or more years, when they are mature, they return to their birthplace to mate.

How do these birds and animals find their way home? This is one of the great mysteries of life and numerous experiments have been performed to find the answer. For example, European scientists found that magnets interfere with the homing ability of robins, confirming the role of the earth's magnetic field. The location and angle of the sun also guides some birds. Many birds migrate by night using star maps; some become fatally confused when the territory below them acquires bright lighting. Siberian rubythroats, migrating from Siberia to South Asia, were found to become disoriented - fatally - while flying over brightly lit-up cities in China.

But the homing mechanism is not completely understood. All we can say is that many birds and animals that leave their home and travel long distances in search of food can find their way back.

How about humans? Home provides us with a dwelling, a safe haven, and a place to raise our offspring. But could we, for example, navigate our way to our home without the help of maps or roads? What if we were blindfolded and left alone in the forest? Our cognitive and reasoning abilities are strong, but I daresay our inborn homing instincts fall short of many other creatures.

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Accidents haunt Dhaka-Barisal river route

SUSHANTO GHOSH and M JAHIRUL ISLAM
JEWEL, Barisal

Recent accidents on Dhaka-Barisal river route have made the passengers, vessel owners as well as masters a bit nervous, fearing that the rush of Eid holidaymakers might increase the possibility of such incidents.

The route from Barisal to Dhaka has become risky nowadays as newly created islands and sediment flowing with water have made the river narrow in Charbaria point of Barisal Sadar. On the other hand, the number as well as rampant movement of oil tankers and cargo vessels has also increased on the route, said launch masters.

Meanwhile, a launch owner, seeking anonymity, told The Daily Star that some of the masters managed their certificates from the authorities concerned despite lacking required qualifications and skills to drive vessels. Therefore, they fail to manage to cope with the heavy current at the point, he said.

On June 13 night, MV Tashrif-1 rammed

into an oil tanker at Charbaria point on its way to Dhaka, leaving 12 people injured, said the naval police of Barisal.

According to some passengers, the search light of Tashrif-1 was not working properly that night, but still it continued sailing, which resulted in the accident.

On April 23, waterbus MV Green Line collided head-on with a stone-laden cargo vessel at the point; as a result the cargo vessel sank in the river.

The submerged cargo vessel has not been salvaged yet, said Md Ruhul Amin, master driver of launch Sundarban-10.

This is also creating difficulties for normal vessel movement at the point because it is already risky for having heavy currents and a 40 degree arch, he said.

SPECIAL SERVICE

Special services for Eid-ul-Fitr were launched on June 22 for thousands of holidaymakers of the southern districts. Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA) has taken various

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No work for 53 days

300 Savar RMG workers laid off

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Savar

Over 300 workers of Surma Garments Ltd in Aichanadda area of Savar have been laid off for 53 days, which will be in effect from July 1, alleged workers.

The workers claimed that the authorities paid their salary and bonus yesterday but also served them a lay-off slip saying that due to a lack of adequate work they were laid off.

The possible joining date will be August 23 as per the slip, they said. The slip also mentioned that the workers were laid off under the Bangladesh Labour Act, 2006, which has a provision for laying off workers if there were not enough work at the factory.

But the workers alleged that the authorities wanted to terminate their employment permanently. The factory has more than 1,500 workers, they added.

"The authorities did not provide any specific notice regarding how many workers were laid off," said Raihan Hossen, a laid-off sewing machine operator at the factory. The authorities gave individual notices to the workers, he alleged.

Ramjan Ali, another worker, said after getting the lay-off slip they wanted to know the reason behind it but the (factory authorities) did not make any comment. Many of the workers claimed that the number of the laid-off employees would be more than 300. They said they will protest the decision after Eid.

This newspaper tried to contact Mohammad Ali, general manager of the factory, numerous times but his mobile phone was found switched off.

Rafikul Islam Sujon, president of Bangladesh Garments and Shilpa Sramik Federation, also protested the incident.



People crowd a street in the capital's Gulistan area to complete their last-minute shopping ahead of Eid. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Shoppers finishing their rounds

AGENCIES

Mumu Feroze was on a mission.

The student of Eden College was moving swiftly from store to store looking for jewellery of her choice yesterday.

Finally she found a pair of earrings that she liked at a store in the capital's Mouchak Market. "Now I need some bangles to go with my dress," said a jubilant Mumu.

"I have already bought my Eid dress as the tailors usually don't take orders after the 15th Ramadan."

Showing a set of bangles, she said, "These will add a finishing touch to my shopping."

Also, "Without henna, Eid shopping is incomplete," said a smiling Mumu.

Though many are leaving the capital for village homes to celebrate Eid with their loved ones, like Mumu, many are busy with their last-minute shopping, reports UNB.

Visiting various shopping malls and footpath shops yesterday, it was seen that the shops were bustling with shoppers, reports BSS.

The female shoppers were buying dresses, bangles, earrings and other items, while male

shoppers looked for tupi (prayer caps), tasbeeh (prayer beads) and other products.

"Though a huge number of people left the capital, the last-minute shopping has also increased," said a shop-owner at Bashundhara City Shopping Mall.

Tailoring shops were equally crowded with people taking deliveries of their dresses.

Women were seen thronging shops at Baily Road. Several henna stalls in front of the shopping malls attracted young women who were surrounding the booths to decorate their palms with the intricate patterns of henna, reports UNB.

"Sales have been showing an upward trend for the last couple of days. Panjabis and salwars are in high demand," said a manager of a clothing outlet there.

At the same time, salons were also seeing a huge rush of customers.

"Usually after the office hours, it gets tough to roam around the markets and find desired items. As the office is closed for Eid, I'm doing the shopping now," said Mehedi Hasan yesterday.

The private job holder was looking for a shirt

and panjabi.

Many people also like to shop on Chand Raat (the night before Eid) with their friends and families.

Eid is an occasion that brings people closer, said Naznin Sultana, a businessperson. "Every year we go out for shopping on Chand Raat. It also works as refreshment after the month-long fasting," she said.

10,000 LAW ENFORCERS TO FAN OUT DHAKA Meanwhile, BSS reports: Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) said they have taken area-wise security measures deploying additional forces. Over 10,000 law enforcers will guard the capital during the Eid vacation.

"Criminals will get no scope to evade justice after committing any crime," said DMP Commissioner Asaduzzaman Miah. Also, most of the shopping malls were brought under closed-circuit television (CCTV) cameras, he said.

RAB spokesperson Commander Mufti Mahmud Khan said, "Like the previous years, we have taken all-out preparations to ensure optimum security for...the Eid celebration."



Although travelling on the train roof is risky, the home goers are all smiles as they are going to celebrate Eid with their near and dear ones. The photo of the Jamalpur-bound train was taken from the capital's Airport Railway Station yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Foreigner robbed in port city

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Hassan Mohammad Shawkat Ali, deputy commissioner of Detective Branch (North-South), said, "We conducted the drive based on intelligence and arrested the criminal. During primary interrogation, the arrestee admitted that two persons took part in the snatching. We are trying to arrest the other snatcher."

Speaking with journalists Dana said, "I was walking home; someone grabbed my bag from a CNG. But I immediately told the police and they were very helpful. They helped recover my items. I feel very secure and people are very willing to help. Bad things can

happen in any country, but people have been incredibly kind to me here. So I don't feel unsafe at all."

In reply to journalists' queries, Nagor Pandit said the owner of the CNG auto-rickshaw "managed" the journalist ID card for him to evade police harassment as the vehicle was not registered.

Meanwhile, detectives in two separate drives arrested five other muggers from Agrabad Access Road and Radio Office areas under Double Mooring yesterday.

The five are professional snatchers and accused in several cases, said Anwar Hossain, additional deputy commissioner of DB at CMP.

Juvenile found dead in Jessore correction centre

UNB, Jessore

An inmate allegedly hanged himself in Jessore Juvenile Correction Centre yesterday.

Gobinda Soren, 15, son of Sushil Soren of Tantihat area, hailed from Tanore upazila in Rajshahi.

M Masud Billah, probationary officer at the centre, said Gobinda talked to his mother over the phone on Thursday, and his mother assured him of taking steps to get him released three months later.

Gobinda might have committed suicide out of frustration, he added.



Prime Minister and Bangladesh Awami League President Sheikh Hasina places floral wreaths at the portrait of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in front of Bangabandhu Memorial Museum in the capital on the occasion of the party's 68th founding anniversary yesterday.

PHOTO: PMO