

Birds sing

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electrodes to the vocal muscles of ten zebra finches, according to reports in New Scientist.

They found that the muscles exhibited spontaneous twitching while the bird's slept, which matched the movements of their singing during the day.

The patterns of the muscle movements varied, suggesting the birds were practising different versions of the same song.

By playing songs to the finches while they were asleep, experts found that they could cause this nocturnal process.

They used both recordings of birdsong and digitally created versions of the tunes, although the latter were less successful.

Writing in a paper, published on the pre-print archive bioRxiv, its authors said: "In this work, we found that nocturnal playbacks of the bird's own song, or synthetic versions of that song, evoke vS activity patterns strikingly similar to those recorded during song execution."

"During sleep spontaneous activity patterns resembling the execution pattern can be detected in vS, but not in the respiratory gesture, explaining the lack of phonation (sound)."

The only thing stopping the muscle movements producing an audible song was a lack of air, the research team says.

"If you blew air against the syringe [voice organ] while the bird was sleeping, you would probably hear some of these notes," Richard Hahnloser at the University of Zurich, Switzerland, who was not involved in the study, told New Scientist.

BCL men beat

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The BCL was observing a dawn-to-dusk hartal in the town yesterday, protesting an attack on a fellow activist by some unidentified people and the subsequent clash with police on Monday, said Prokash Chakma, general secretary of Rangamati BCL.

At least 35 people, including seven policemen, were injured in that clash between police and the BCL activists, said Satyajit Barua, officer-in-charge of Rangamati Police Station.

The clash broke out when police tried to disperse the BCL men who blocked the road in Banorupa and Happy Mor. They also vandalised several vehicles, including a magistrate's car, the OC added.

At one point, they attacked Satrong Chakma, staff reporter of daily Samakal and district correspondent of Ekushey TV, when he was taking photos of their protest, said the victim and witnesses.

He is taking treatment at Rangamati General Hospital with head injuries, hospital sources said.

Contacted, the district BCL general secretary admitted both the attacks. "I personally visited the three in the hospital and offered my apology for this unexpected incident," he said.

All the three journalists confirmed his visit. The BCL expelled Muhammad Hanif, organising secretary of its Rangamati municipal unit, over yesterday's attack, said Prokash, general secretary of the district BCL.

How convicts

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the period they are disqualified under the election law.

The bench said the "pure question of law" was that following the conviction, a politician is barred from electoral politics, and being an office bearer of a party, he can contest polls through agents.

"So, is it that what you cannot do individually, you can do collectively through some of your agents?" the bench said.

The top court said there was no problem if convicted people open a school and do some philanthropic activities, but the issue was whether such persons can contest polls through others by forming a political party. The bench said it was a "huge blow to the purity of the electoral process".

Additional Solicitor General Pinky Anand, appearing for the Centre, said she would be filing the response to the petition and sought two weeks time, which was allowed.

The petition was filed by lawyer and BJP leader Ashwini K Upadhyay.

The top court on December 1 last year had sought responses from the Indian government and the Election Commission on the petition and agreed to examine the constitutional validity of the law which deals with the power of the EC to register a political party.

The petition named several top political leaders who have been convicted or have charges framed against them and are holding top political posts and "wielding political power".

Tiger

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The survey report will be published in January next year, he added.

According to the Tiger Census 2015, the tiger population declined to only 106 in the Bangladesh part, while it was 440 in 2004.

Hold Myanmar military

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UN Security Council action is likely to face resistance from council veto powers Russia and China, who both said yesterday the situation in Rakhine state was stable and under control.

"Using labels and attempts to use contradictory and subjective reports of the media ... to find out who's guilty and condemn them only move us farther away from a solution," Russia's Deputy UN Ambassador Dmitry Polyanskiy warned.

Nearly 690,000 Rohingya have fled Rakhine state and crossed into southern Bangladesh since last August following a military crackdown that the United Nations has said may amount to genocide.

"Conditions are not yet conducive to the voluntary repatriation of Rohingya refugees," UN refugee chief Filippo Grandi told the Security Council.

CALLS FOR JOURNALISTS RELEASE
Myanmar has denied that ethnic cleansing has taken place.

Myanmar told the UN Security Council not to visit during February because it was "not the right time," Kuwait's UN Ambassador Mansour Ayyad Al-Otaibi said this month. However, Myanmar UN Ambassador Hau Do Suan said some other diplomats had been able to travel to Rakhine.

The Reuters special report, published last week, lays out events leading up to the killing of 10 Rohingya men from Inn Din village in Rakhine state who were buried in a mass grave after being hacked to death or shot by Buddhist neighbours and soldiers.

Myanmar's Hau Do Suan said an inquiry by the Myanmar military, known as the Tatmadaw, had found that 10 Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army militants had been arrested in Inn Din and executed and buried a day later.

"Actions are being taken against 16 individuals, including army and police officers and some villagers who had acted in violation of standard operating procedures and the rules of engagement. This action of the Tatmadaw is positive step forward in taking responsibility and deserves encouragement," he said.

With reference to Reuters journalists arrested for reporting on the Rohingya, Hau Do Suan said Myanmar recognises freedom of the press and the journalists were not arrested in December for reporting a

story, but were accused of "illegally possessing confidential government documents".

"Every citizen is bound by the existing law of the land. It is important that the actions of the journalists must also be within the bound of the law," he said.

Britain, France, the United States, the Netherlands and Kazakhstan all called for the release of the Reuters journalists during the Security Council meeting yesterday.

Two ethnic groups sign up to Myanmar's flagging peace process

AFP, Naypyidaw

Two armed ethnic groups signed a ceasefire in Myanmar yesterday in a move which the government hopes will revive a flagging peace process dogged by continuing fighting and widespread distrust of the army.

The New Mon State Party (NMSP) and Lahu Democratic Union (LDU) inked the National Ceasefire Agreement in the capital Naypyidaw, joining eight other militias who had signed before Aung San Suu Kyi took office.

Global attention has focused on the plight of some 700,000 Rohingya Muslims forced out of western Myanmar into Bangladesh by a violent military campaign.

But the crisis in Rakhine state is just one of some two dozen conflicts festering around the country's borderlands, where ethnic rebels have for decades fought the state for more autonomy.

Suu Kyi, whose official title is State Counsellor, made peace her top priority when her civilian administration took office in 2016 to end five decades of military domination.

But there has been little to show for the effort, with swathes of drug-producing ethnic areas still riven by unrest that has displaced tens of thousands.

However Suu Kyi welcomed the national ceasefire agreement at yesterday's colourful signing ceremony attended by government officials, the army chief and ethnic representatives in traditional clothes. It was the key to unlocking national unity, she said.

Bangladesh

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Teletalk on February 19, taking Bangladesh into the fourth generation data service era.

The telecom regulator had targeted to collect Tk 11,000 crore (\$1,340 million) from the spectrum auction and technology neutrality.

The regulator put up a total of 46.4 MHz spectrum in different three bands for auction but less than 30 percent was purchased by the operators.

"We are not happy," said Shahjahan Mahmood, chairman of the BTRC.

TIM Nurul Kabir, secretary general of the Association of Mobile Telecom Operators of Bangladesh, who attended the spectrum auction held at Dhaka Club yesterday as an observer, said the government could have earned more were the floor price lower.

"We failed in 3G because of the higher spectrum price," he added.

STORY ON B1

BNP stages

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been sent to an abandoned jail which is completely violation of human rights. "It is a crime against humanity and the responsible would be tried."

BNP standing committee member Khandaker Mosharrif Hossain said the government has been hatching conspiracy to keep Khaleda and BNP out of next election.

"We want to reiterate that the next election will not take place without Khaleda Zia. Khaleda Zia's popularity has increased after she was sent to jail."

A good number of BNP leaders and activists gathered in front of the party HQ and started their programmes around 11:00am in presence of senior leaders. They chanted slogans demanding the immediate release of Khaleda.

Police cordoned off the protesters to fend off any trouble. The programme ended without violence.

The BNP held the programme in front of its party headquarters as police did not give any written permission to use the premises of the Institute of Diploma Engineers, Bangladesh.

SC clears

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by the bank authorities after they had qualified through exams held under the 2014 circular, but they were not appointed.

They prayed to the HC to order the bank authorities to recruit them under the 2016 circulars.

After the final hearing, the HC on July 27 last year rejected the petitions as the recruitment process was held under the 2014 circular, and around eight lakh candidates applied for the posts based on the 2016 circulars, Mehedi Hasan Chowdhury, a lawyer for Sonali Bank, told The Daily Star.

The petitioners later filed five separate leave-to-appeal petitions with the SC challenging the HC verdict.

Following the petitions, the SC chamber judge directed the Sonali Bank to maintain status quo on the recruitment under the 2016 circulars.

Yesterday, the full bench of the Appellate Division vacated the order of status quo, meaning that the bank can resume the recruitment process under the 2016 circulars, he added.

Sheikh Fazle Noor Taposh appeared for Sonali Bank, while Abdul Matin Khasru, Quamrul Haque Siddique, Rafiqur Rahman and AM Aminuddin argued for the petitioners.

Jessore's silk

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sadar upazila. "I planted 1,000 mulberry trees along the roadside to feed the silkworms. Their cocoons sell for around Tk 300 per kilogram, which gives me around Tk 1 lakh through the four harvest seasons per year."

At around Tk 10,000 annually, his farming costs are minimal. Mulberry trees are easily grown on unused land and the caterpillar eggs are supplied by the Board for free. "Sericulture is lucrative, no doubt," Modasser says.

Once collected, the eggs take around 30 days to hatch. A further 25 days is required for the caterpillars to complete their growth cycle and begin to spin silk.

Nurul Haque from Jugi Huda village in Jhenidah's Moheshpur upazila has been farming silk for 32 years. "I have 400 mulberry trees along the Moheshpur to Fatepur Road. It costs nothing to maintain them. Silk earns me around Tk 60,000 per annum."

Sericulture was first introduced to the region in 1985, when the Board purchased 72 bighas of land in Halidhani village at a cost of Tk 50 lakh, to establish the first mulberry plantation as a source for silkworm eggs and quality silk thread. The Board also directly purchases the thread produced by the region's silk farmers.

"The number of farmers pursuing sericulture is increasing day by day," says the deputy director of the regional silk extension department in Jhenidah, Md Mahubul-Haque. "They can earn a healthy profit for little expenditure, from any unused patch of land. We provide the training."

Nothing seems

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He caught the students with the images of the MCQ set on their devices but allowed them to take the exam to verify the questions found with them.

On information, Chittagong Board officials rushed to the centre and expelled the students after the exams as the questions the students got matched with that distributed at the exam halls, said Morad.

Quizzed, the students told board officials that they joined a Facebook group in exchange for money and collected the MCQs, said Prof Shawkat Alam, secretary of the board.

"We have expelled 24 students. Of them, nine have been detained. Legal action will be taken against them who had the devices and notebooks with answers," he said, adding 32 other students were not found complicit.

A case will be filed in this connection and action will be taken against the teacher who was on the bus, he added.

In the capital, the Rapid Action Battalion detained an undergraduate student in Argaoon area early yesterday. He allegedly took money from people through mobile banking in exchange for SSC questions, according to a Rab press release.

This is the largest ever reported spate of SSC question paper leak that has drawn fierce criticisms and prompted a Jatiya Party lawmaker to demand in parliament the immediate resignation of Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid.

Yesterday, talking to reporters at the secretariat, Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal said, "The masterminds behind the leaking of question papers will soon be arrested. The people who have been arrested are somehow involved in the process of the leak."

There have been widespread allega-

tions of leaking of question papers of all public exams like JSC, SSC and HSC, medical college and university admission tests, and state-owned banks' recruitment exams over the last several years. In most of the cases, leaked questions were circulated on Facebook pages.

The education ministry initially brushed those allegations aside. It, however, took some measures later on to stop the leak, but the menace continued. The Anti-Corruption Commission in a report recently pointed finger at officers of the education board, BG Press and other government officials for question paper leaks.

And now it appears the leakers of SSC exam questions have caught the government off guard and whatever it is doing to plug the leaks, is looking halfbaked.

'RESIGNATION NO SOLUTION'
Eminent educationist Prof Muhammad Zafar Iqbal, however, said the resignation of the education minister will not solve the problem.

"The resignation of education minister is not the solution," he told reporters after a programme marking the World Radio Day in Sylhet.

Prof Iqbal, who staged a sit-in protesting the leaks of HSC questions in 2014, also said there will be no meaning of education in the country if the question leak continues.

He said the administration earlier had not admitted that the question papers were leaked. Now they are admitting it but not taking any effective measures.

"It's time to act on the issue and the culprits behind it should be brought to justice," he said, adding that the government should not take steps like clamping down on the use of internet.

[Our Chittagong and Sylhet correspondents contributed to this report]

Maintain peace

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court verdict, and suggested avoiding the path of violence at any cost.

The party had earlier also briefed a group of diplomats on January 30.

Khaleda has been in jail since February 8 after a special court in Dhaka sentenced her to five years' imprisonment in the Zia Orphanage Trust corruption case.

In a written statement for the diplomats, the BNP said, "We have arranged this meeting because a number of your missions have sought to know the BNP's views on the verdict and its strategy to move forward."

During the last caretaker government's tenure in 2007-08, cases were filed against both Khaleda and Awami League President Sheikh Hasina but the cases against the AL chief were quashed after she became prime minister, it mentioned.

Five lawsuits were filed against Hasina on graft and extortion charges while four corruption cases were filed against Khaleda during that period, according to court documents.

The BNP said the judgment in the case against Khaleda didn't come as a surprise to it since the party knew that the case was "politically motivated and based on false and fabricated evidence".

"This was initiated with a sinister motive to ensure that Begum Zia would not be allowed to lead the BNP in the next election." This was aimed at "humiliating her and making her suffer mentally and physically", the party claimed.

It also said the ruling party sees Khaleda as the main obstacle to its attempts to establish one-party rule, and the case was nothing but a part of that strategy.

After the briefing, the diplomats asked the BNP leaders about the party's next legal step, whether it

would contest the next parliamentary election and also about the attack on the Bangladesh mission in London.

The BNP leaders told them that the party will contest the polls if it finds the environment congenial to holding a free and fair election, according to diplomatic sources.

The party has already announced a set of countrywide protest programmes, including demonstration, human chain, sit-in and hunger strike, demanding Khaleda's release.

Talking to this correspondent several BNP leaders said the peaceful programmes will help the party get people's sympathy and mount pressure on the government to release the former prime minister.

The party plans to hold a huge public rally in the capital this month, they added.

Seeking anonymity, a senior BNP leader said the party is thinking of submitting memorandums to deputy commissioners and upazila nirbahi officers across the country, conducting mass-signature campaigns, and distributing leaflets to mobilise public support for their demand for Khaleda's release.

The party may come up with fresh programmes today after consultation between its acting chairman Tarjue Rahman and party high-ups, added the senior leader.

Earlier on January 30, the party had briefed a group of foreign diplomats in Dhaka about the graft case against Khaleda and the country's overall political situation.

At that time, Fakhrul told reporters that it was a routine briefing.

He said the diplomats were informed that the government implicated the BNP chief in the graft case based on false documents, and that she was not involved in any such irregularities.

Fortify Rights for probe

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Rohingyas since October 2016.

The report found "mounting evidence" of genocide.

On November 24, 2017, UN special envoy on sexual violence Pramila Patten said the Myanmar army's widespread use of sexual violence against Rohingya women and girls was "a calculated tool of terror aimed at the extermination and removal of the Rohingya as a group."

UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad al-Hussein said members of the military as well as the civilian government in the country may be liable for genocide.

More recently, UN Special Rapporteur Yanghee Lee at a press conference on February 1 said the Rohingya situation in Myanmar "bears the hallmarks of genocide."

"If we can ever hope to prevent genocide, we have to be able to diagnose it when we see it. Enough is enough. It's time to stop tiptoeing around terminology and move towards holding perpetrators accountable," Mathew Smith said.

The Fortify Rights asked donor governments and humanitarian agencies not to support the repatriation of Rohingya refugees under the current circumstances when Rohingya families continue to arrive in Bangladesh, fleeing persecution and ongoing

human rights violations in Myanmar. The Myanmar authorities also continue to confine more than 120,000 Rohingyas to dozens of internment camps in eight townships of Rakhine State -- mostly survivors of violent attacks in 2012.

Myanmar also denies all Rohingyas in Rakhine equal access to citizenship, marriage, education and employment and systematically restricting their freedom of movement. The authorities also continue to deny their existence.

Since August 2017, Myanmar has denied lifesaving humanitarian aid to tens of thousands of Rohingyas in need.

Against such backdrop, the UNSC met in September and again in December 2017 to discuss the Rohingya crisis but failed each time to issue action-oriented resolutions.

The Fortify Rights demanded that the Security Council issue a global arms embargo on Myanmar and target sanctions against those responsible for atrocities.

"The inexcusable international response to this crisis borders on complicity," said Matthew Smith.

"The Myanmar authorities took their cues from international inaction and committed several rounds of mass atrocities. We can't let this continue."