

# TANGENTS

BY IHTISHAM KABIR



Thomson's Gazelle.

PHOTO: IHTISHAM KABIR

## Masai Mara

Masai Mara National Reserve of Kenya is one of the few places in the world where one can see a large variety of mammals – including Lions, Cheetahs, Elephants, Zebras and Giraffes – in their natural habitat. For anyone who loves nature and wildlife, it is a compelling attraction.

It is late afternoon when we reach the park after a long drive from Nairobi. But even before entering the park's gates, we get a taste of what awaits us. Cutting through Masai villages to bypass the dilapidated main road, we see scattered Zebras and Wildebeests on fields on both sides of the road. After entering the park, the gravel road stretches out ahead of us with long stretches of grassland backed by distant hills on both sides.

The Wildebeest is by far the most common animal here. It grazes in herds large and small. Also known as the Gnu, it is a distinctive horse-like antelope. The frenzy of thousands of Wildebeests crossing the Mara river that divides Serengeti in Tanzania from Masai Mara in Kenya has become a wildlife icon. They cross the river in search of better pastures. Seen up close, their most remarkable feature is the horn followed by the beard.

Zebras are also commonplace here. Their bold stripes look like evolution gone awry because, instead of camouflaging to help evade predators, these stripes make them stand out in their surroundings. I also notice these handsome creatures are prone to extreme skittishness.

They remind me of the scientist Jared Diamond who writes that large, powerful civilizations have depended on domesticated animals (for example, the Aryans and their horses) for spreading their reach. Diamond speculates that lacking horses, the zebra was probably the

best candidate for domestication in the African continent. However, its skittishness made domestication impossible. Having no domesticated animals to support them, Africa-based civilizations never spread far.

Back on Mara, there are several types of deer including Thomson's Gazelles, dainty creatures with a bar of black and white on its side. The Spotted Deer of Sundarban are prettier and larger, but when a herd of these gazelles moves, their patterns – along hundreds of short bushy tails flicking unanimously – are mesmerizing.

Other members of deer family here include Elands, Dik Diks, Topis, Impalas and Reedbucks.

For those of us used to lush green forests in Bangladesh, the park appears bald and dry with few rivers, streams or ponds. Plant life is mostly shrubs that occupy patches of the grassland. Thorn trees dot the land and occasionally a black or yellow acacia stands tall. Indeed, the word Mara means "dotted land" in Swahili, a reference to the scattered thorn trees. Near rivers and waterways there is more vegetation.

We visit the Mara River several times during our stay, but Wildebeest crossings elude us. Instead, we are treated to sights of hippopotamus swimming in the shallow waters. They are the most dangerous animals in the park, more so in land than in water. The hippo also has a hilarious style of defecating. It rapidly swings its behind to and fro as its faeces sputter out in a spray of globules flying over great distances. That is an evolutionary adaptation I cannot explain.

Next week: Predators of Masai Mara.

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### ROHINGYA REPATRIATION

## BNP claims 'diplomatic failure', AL blames refugees' unwillingness

STAR REPORT

BNP yesterday alleged that the government has diplomatically failed to initiate the repatriation of Rohingyas to their homeland in Myanmar, reports UNB.

However, Awami League has dismissed BNP's allegation, stating that the repatriation process could not be initiated because of the Rohingyas' "unwillingness".

"A group of Rohingyas was supposed to return [to Myanmar], but they were unwilling to go. It's not a diplomatic failure," AL General Secretary and Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader said, while responding to a question during a discussion in the capital.

The country Rohingyas will return to is their homeland, Quader said, adding that they have to consider issues like the environment there, their children, citizenship, security and so on.

It is normal to have such concerns under the circumstances, he added.

"Diplomacy is a continuous process," Quader said, adding that the government's efforts regarding Rohingya repatriation are ongoing.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina had demonstrated her generosity when she opened the border for 11 lakh foreigners. There was no country which did not appreciate this magnanimity, Quader also said.

International pressure is mounting on Myanmar while its success depends on the country's sincerity and willingness, he added.

His comments came following BNP Senior Joint Secretary General Ruhul Kabir Rizvi's claim that the government "couldn't do anything" to start the repatriation of Rohingyas.

"It's been a long time since they [Rohingyas] came here, but you [government] still couldn't send any of

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## Identify those who conspired the murder of Bangabandhu

JS Speaker demands

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Jatiya Sangsad Speaker Dr Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury has demanded immediate formation of a commission in order to identify the people who were behind the conspiracy of killing Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and responsible for rehabilitating the killers.

"Remaining uncompromising to the question of freedom of the people and ensuring their rights, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman had struggled unto his death," she said.

The JS speaker placed the demand and made the comment while speaking as chief guest at a meeting organised in Dhaka, marking the 44th death anniversary of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and observing National Mourning Day.

Peshajibi Somonnoy Parishad (a council for professionals) arranged the discussion at the Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA) auditorium on Tuesday.

Peshajibi Somonnoy Parishad President AFM Mesbahuddin presided over the programme, where Attorney General Mahbubey Alam, former DU VC Prof AAMS Arefin Siddique, Swadhinata Chikitsak Parishad President Prof Dr Iqbal Arslan, SCBA President AM Aminuddin, Barrister Sheikh Fazole Noor MP anjournalist leaders Monjurul Ahsan Bulbul and Omar Faruk, also spoke.



### PHOTO OF THE DAY

PRABIR DAS



QUITE THE POSER... This dog definitely does not seem to mind being photographed; as a matter of fact, he looks to be quite used to it, striking a pose as a phone camera is pointed at him. The photo was taken yesterday on Jatiya Press Club premises.

## Reinstate 12,436 sacked RMG workers immediately

Garment leaders, workers demand at protest rally

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A section of garment workers, who were sacked during a recent labour movement, demanded immediate reinstatement to their jobs and withdrawal of the cases against them.

They placed the demands at a protest rally organised by National Garment Workers Federation, a trade union, in front of Jatiya Press Club in the capital yesterday.

The federation claimed that a total of 12,436 workers of 104 garment factories in Dhaka and nearby districts were sacked during the labour movement – from December 2018 to February 2019 – which was

held centring wage increment.

Following the movement, about 38 cases were filed against 7,458 workers, who are facing police harassment often, it added.

Amirul Haque Amin, president of the federation, said the workers were sacked irrationally and the cases are based on false allegations.

"We demand immediate reinstatement of the workers. We also demand withdrawal of the false cases and stopping police harassment," he added.

Amirul urged the government and the authorities concerned, particularly Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA),

to take necessary steps in this regard.

He also said one of the workers was killed during the movement but his family is yet to receive proper compensation from the authorities.

The federation's general secretary Arifa Akter, central leaders Safia Parvin and Aleya Begum, as well as leaders from other trade unions also spoke on the occasion.

More than one hundred garment workers and trade union leaders took part in the protest rally carrying banners and placards containing their demands.

After the rally, they brought out a procession which paraded several nearby roads.



### 2 Rab imposters held

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Two Rab impersonators were arrested while they were extorting a person in Chattogram city on Thursday night.

The arrestees are Ershad Rahman, 30; and Maruf Hossain, 30; said Rab-7 media officer Mashkur Rahman.

Lt Col Mehedi Hasan of Rab-7 said the two, in the guise of Rab officials, used to take money from people in the name of "solving their problems".

Rab officials received a written complaint from one Md Younus earlier this month that the duo disappeared after taking Tk 8 lakh from him, he said.

When the alleged frauds contacted Younus on Thursday night, demanding Tk 1 more lakh, he informed the Rab office. Rab then conducted a drive at Younus' house in Chheragi Pahar area around 8pm which led to the arrest, said the Rab official.

They were handed over to Kotwali police and a case was filed in this regard.

## Six killed, four injured in road accidents

STAR REPORT

Six people were killed and four injured in road accidents in three districts yesterday, according to reports from a news agency and our correspondents.

Two people were killed in separate incidents in Dhaka yesterday, reports UNB.

In Rampura, Abdul Quader, 60, from the city's Merul Badda, was injured critically in a motorbike accident, Rampura Police Station Sub-Inspector Md Sohel quoted his family as saying.

He was declared dead at Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

In Jatrabari, Moshtaque, 58, from Chandpur, died after a truck hit

him while he was crossing a road in front of Jatrabari Matuail hospital, said Bachchu Mia, in-charge of the DMCH Police Outpost.

Our Tangail correspondent reports, two people were killed and four injured as a microbus carrying them hit a truck parked on Dhaka-Tangail highway in Dubail area of Delduar upazila.

The deceased were identified as Abdul Kader, a member of Chandva Union Parishad in Pabna; and Abdur Razzak, one of his relatives.

Police said the accident took place when the driver of the Dhaka-bound microbus from Pabna lost his control over the steering.

Locals rushed the injured to

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### Ivy Rahman's 15th death anniversary

BSS, Dhaka

The 15th death anniversary of Ivy Rahman, former president of Bangladesh Mahila Awami League and wife of late President M Zillur Rahman, will be observed today in a befitting manner.

Ivy was grievously injured during a grenade attack on an AL rally on Bangabandhu Avenue in the capital on August 21, 2004, and succumbed to her injuries on August 24.

Marking the day, political and socio-cultural organisations have chalked out elaborate programmes across the country.



## Gender discrimination begins at school level: speakers

24th anniversary of Yasmin murder observed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a protest rally yesterday alleged that the existing state mechanism has been responsible for recurrence of rape in the country.

They said children develop chauvinistic and discriminatory mentality towards women in school because curriculum and textbooks incorporate content reflecting male-domination in society.

Nari Sanghati, a women's organisation, arranged the rally in front of the National Museum in the capital, marking the 24th anniversary of the rape and killing of Yasmin Akhter from Dinajpur.

The 14-year-old was picked up in a police van with assurance that she would be dropped home in Dinajpur's Dashmilee area on August 24, 1995. She was on her way to Dinajpur from Dhaka.

A day later, her body was found by the side of a road, bruised and battered.

Rape incidents are frequent in the

country because of a culture of impunity, said Taslima Akhter, Nari Sanghati's acting president and a photographer.

Taslima said the state was to blame for recurrence of rape because it decides what will be a man's attitude towards a woman in society.

If an anti-rape environment is to be created, protests should start from the grassroots level, she added.

Speaking at the programme, Golam Mustafa, president of Bangladesh Chhatra Federation, said the way children learn about gender from textbooks is instrumental in creating negative mentality towards women.

Such mentality will not change if the curriculum is not changed, Mostafa further said.

Abul Hasan Rubel, a central committee member of Gano Samhati Andolon, said besides social movement, political movement is also required to overcome the prevailing situation.