

TANGENTS

BY IHTISHAM KABIR



Jaguar marking territory, Pantanal, Brazil.

PHOTO: IHTISHAM KABIR

Territorial Behaviour

During my trip to Brazil last year, I travelled on a boat that traversed the massive Paraguay river - in the wetland called Pantanal - looking for Jaguars. In the course of three days we found several engaged in different activities. One cat's behaviour, in particular, stood out. The nimble, elegant creature was strolling along the river bank among tall grass and bushes. Reaching a particular spot, it stopped, pointed its tail upward and urinated. It repeated this several times within the space of about twenty feet. Then it rubbed its head and neck against the bushes in the same area. This was repeated, too.

I learned later that it was marking its territory. In the world of animals and birds, members of some species attempt to exclude others from their home range, the area of their normal daily activities, also known as their territory.

They defend their territory for a variety of reasons. The most obvious is control over food, but these animals and birds also like to keep rivals away from their mate and predators away from their nest.

How do they announce their territory to others? Many animals including Lions, Leopards and Jaguars use smell - in the form of urine or faeces or rubbing their body against plants - to leave a scent marking their territory. Birds often use songs and loud calls as a "keep out" signal.

At some time we have all observed territorial behaviour in birds and animals, perhaps without realizing it. For example, the sight of crows or drongos chasing away kites from the neighbourhood of their nest is common in our sky. The Common Kingfisher, our pretty and widely seen bird, marks its territory by making a loud staccato call. While it is perched on a branch or stick near the water

and looking for fish, it reacts strongly to other kingfishers that show up, shooting them away noisily.

Territorial creatures, accomplish the vast majority of defensive work without physically fighting the intruder. For birds, for example, the first line of defense is sound. If that fails, they will display by adopting aggressive postures, and if that fails, they will give chase. A skirmish is the last resort because of the energy wasted and the risk of bodily harm.

The size of territories varies tremendously. The territory marked by the Jaguar I observed was perhaps a few hundred square yards. The Golden Eagle's territory, in the sparsely resource steppes, can be as much as 35 square miles. On the other hand, smaller birds such as flycatchers can claim territories as small as a few square yards. In winter, when Taiga Flycatchers come here in droves, I have noticed one individual working off a strip of 15x2 yards. I wrote earlier about my experience with a Pied Bushchat (a flycatcher) in Purbachol which harassed me because I had repeatedly violated its hunting territory - a few feet around the pole of the fence of a vegetable patch.

Lions have spectacular territoriality. A male lion, along with its pride (that may include six female lions) may occupy the same home range for generations. Both females and males work to keep other lions out of their territory.

Only a small fraction of animal and bird species exhibit territoriality. Many creatures live together in flocks or herds, cooperating as needed. But displays of territoriality give us fascinating insights into animal and bird behaviour.

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Wrong signal or flawed repair work?

Two probe bodies submit reports on Sirajganj train derailment

AHMED HUMAYUN KABIR TOPU, Pabna

A week after the rail accident in Sirajganj's Ullapara upazila on November 14, the district administration and railway (west zone) in their probe reports have identified separate reasons behind the incident.

According to the district administration's probe committee, faulty signal caused the incident while railway committee mentioned flawed repair work as the reason.

They submitted the probe reports on Thursday.

The rail link that connects all the northern and southern districts with Dhaka was interrupted as Rangpur Express, a Rangpur-bound passenger train, derailed near Ullapara Railway Station, resulting in a 30-hour halt of train connection between Dhaka and Ishwardi.

Nine compartments of the train, including its engine and power car, were derailed and three of those caught fire. At least eight people were injured and rushed to the upazila health complex.

Five probe committees were formed in this regard. After getting all the reports, the rail ministry will take steps, said Dr Faruk Ahmed, deputy commissioner (DC) of Sirajganj.

'FAULTY SIGNAL'

The district administration in its probe, headed by Additional

Deputy Commissioner Firoz Mahamud, said the signal was not working properly hence the train got on the wrong track.

"After visiting the spot, we saw that the train did not have clearance to get on the line it was supposed to. The committee said disparity in the line and the signal was the reason behind the accident," said DC Faruk.

The committee also gave two recommendations -- to upgrade the system and monitor it properly.

"The system is in operation since 2003. It has to be upgraded

and monitored to avoid further accidents," the DC said.

'FLAWED REPAIR WORK'

However, Railway west zone's inquiry committee, headed by Abdullah Al Mamun, Paksey divisional transportation officer (DTO), in its report said there was no fault in the signal, rather the fault was in the repairing work done on the track.

"The repairing work on the line was neither completed nor done properly," said DTO Mamun. "As a result, the 'low joint' did not hold

when the train went over it at high speed. There was no fault in signal, especially for the main line," he added.

The purpose of the joints are to hold the two ends of the rail in place and act as a bridge between rail ends. A joint is made up of two bars or more commonly called angled bars.

"The workers who repaired the line recently did not inform the station master about it. He was unaware of the situation and the

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FILE PHOTO

Social media to come under purview of law

Says info minister at Ctg roundtable

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

The government is working towards bringing social media under the purview of law, said Information Minister Dr Hasan Mahmud at a roundtable yesterday.

It's a matter of concern that false information and propaganda are sometimes being spread through social media, he said, adding, which is why the government is considering it.

BITV Chattogram centre, Chattogram TV Journalists' Association and Chattogram TV Camera Journalists' Association organised the event at the circuit house in port city, marking World Television Day 2019.

The minister also said Bangladesh Television (BTV), Chattogram will start 12-hour telecast every day from next month. The programmes from the centre will be televised throughout the country within a few months, he added.

Mahmud said the government will work with broadcast journalists and workers to ensure legal protection of their jobs and other facilities. He also warned against use of television for any personal gain.

Mayor AJM Nasir Uddin urged broadcast journalists to telecast news imbued with the spirit of patriotism. Journalists should maintain objectivity in publishing and telecasting news, he said. Divisional Commissioner Abdul Mannan, BITV Deputy Director General (news) Anup Kumar Khastagir and TV Journalists' Association President Nasir Uddin Tota spoke at the event, chaired by BITV Chattogram GM Nitai Kumar Bhattacharjee.

An onion substitute ready for the market!

Agri Research Institute develops local variety of chive

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gazipur

It ranks as one of China's favorite spices. It tastes like onion and garlic and shares similar nutritional values.

With onion prices taking every kitchen market in the country by storm, the good news is that the chive, a northern Chinese spice popular across the world, is now ready for the Bangladeshi market -- thanks to the efforts by scientists at Bangladesh Agricultural Research Institute (BARI).

Around 2017, a team of BARI scientists, led by senior scientific officer Dr Md Nur Alam Chowdhury, developed BARI Chive-1, a local, high-yield variant of the breed.

"Chive can become a substitute of onion and garlic in times of need. It's used as a spice for soup, salad, and Chinese dishes across the world," Dr Alam said.

According to 2017 data of Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, annual onion production stands at 17.35 lakh tonnes, while the demand is 22 lakh tonnes. The

shortage has to be imported. However, Dr Alam said the success of the BARI Chive can help offset this deficit.

"Its cultivation has started in several areas, including Bogura," the official added.

So far, it is being grown in hilly regions of Sylhet and Chattogram. Scientists at BARI are hoping that its cultivation spreads across all major onion farming regions, especially Faridpur, Pabna, Meherpur, Kushtia, Magura, Bagura, and Lalmonirhat. It can be grown in private gardens too.

Chive can be harvested four to five times a year. One of its key features is that it can be farmed throughout the year.

On its nutritional value, Dr Alam said it helps with digestion, and may be useful in preventing diseases. It is high in vitamin C, vitamin B-1, vitamin B-2, Niacin, Carotene, and minerals. He said crop collection starts within 65-70 days of planting. Each hectare yields up to 10-12 tonnes. Its leaves, stalk, and flower are all used as spice.



In hopes of a clean Savar

Students sweep streets every Friday to raise awareness

AKIAKUR RAHMAN AKASH, Savar

Around 75 boys and girls -- many in green t-shirts, others wearing karate Gi -- gathered at Bangabandhu Chattar in Savar's Muktimor area, that too on a Friday morning. For the average Joe, yesterday was just another regular Friday. No classes, no work, a day for people to ignore their problems and relax. Not for them.

Why were these youngsters sacrificing their peaceful sleep, that too on a holiday? To clean up Savar.

These young people, mostly students, are members of the voluntary organisation BD Clean's Savar unit, and they are on a mission to make their surroundings spotless.

They started off by organising a rally to inform citizens about how to get a pollution free Savar, and requested residents not to litter.

But they were not all talk and



Volunteers pick up garbage at Muktimor area yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

no action. Setting a commendable example, these youngsters cleaned up 800-metre stretch of a road from

Muktimor to Thana Ghat area, starting at 9:15am and finishing at 12:15pm.

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AL govt autocratic like Ershad, Ayub: BNP

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Terming the government fascist, BNP yesterday said the same autocratic rule prevailed during Ershad and Ayub Khan regimes.

"We are trying to unite people to create a mass upsurge to restore democracy and release our party Chairperson Khaleda Zia from jail," said Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir, secretary general of the party.

He was addressing a discussion of Swachhasebak Dal at Supreme Court Auditorium, marking birthday of BNP acting chairman Tarique Rahman.

Fakhru said a fascist government cannot stay in power forever. Better days will come again, he added.

He urged party leaders and activists to get united overcoming all sorts of division and mistakes, to oust the Awami League government from power.

The BNP leader said Khaleda Zia is in jail not because she is guilty but because she wanted to restore democracy.

In similar type of cases, ministers and lawmakers are granted bail but Khaleda was denied, alleged Fakhru.

The countrymen want change, the BNP senior leader said.

He also criticised the government for its failure to check prices of daily essentials. People's woes have gone beyond limits due to skyrocketing prices of various products, he added.

Three killed in road accidents

STAR REPORT

A union parishad (UP) secretary was killed after a covered van hit his motorbike at Haldiapukuri village in Boda upazila of Panchagarh on Thursday night.

The deceased is Asir Uddin (55), secretary of Marea union parishad.

Quoting locals, Md Ratul Islam, sergeant of Boda Highway Police Station, said the accident occurred while Asir was returning home. He died on the spot.

Locals stopped the van and detained its driver. He was then handed over to police.

They also blocked the road for an hour, protesting the accident.

Meanwhile in Chattogram, two people were killed in separate accidents in two upazilas yesterday.

The deceased are rickshaw-van puller Md Kalam (35), and Md Ismail (21).

Police said Kalam was run over by a speeding bus in Barabkunda area of Sitakunda, and Ismail was also run over by a bus in Chunti area of Lohagara.

No fees for poor, teachers, freedom fighters... poets!

Dr Aditya's unique take on treatment

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

If you visit Dr Ganapati Aditya's chamber in Mymensingh, you will see a notice hanging outside that says he will provide free treatment to his teachers, freedom fighters and their family members, impoverished people, and poets.

Although unusual, locals consider this a generous gesture from the doctor, who is an associate professor of cardiology at Mymensingh Medical College Hospital. The 55-year-old physician has been rendering treatment from his chamber in his home, "Suniti House", in the district's Phulpur town since 1989. He completed his MBBS from Rangpur Medical College in 1987.

"I am proud to be a doctor as I have the opportunity to help people with free treatment," a smiling Dr Aditya told this correspondent recently.

On providing free treatment to freedom fighters and their family members, the doctor said, "They are the valiant sons of the soil who fought bravely to liberate our country."

"Literary activists are involved with creative work, and poetry is an ancient form of literature to which I have great devotion since boyhood. I only demand a volume of their work, but it is not mandatory for free treatment," said Aditya, a Tagore enthusiast.

Beggars and poor people are also given free treatment, said Aditya, adding, "I see around 40 patients daily and provide free treatment to fifty percent of visitors in a day."

"I always tell my patients that prevention is better than cure when it comes to heart diseases," the doctor said.

Md Azizul Islam, headmaster of a

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AL expels reserved seat MP Bubly

UNB, Narsingdi

Tamanna Nusrat Bubly, a member of parliament from reserved seat-24, who had made headlines for cheating in a degree test, was expelled yesterday by Awami League.

District Awami League President and MP from Sadar-1 Md Nurul Islam Hiru confirmed the matter to the news agency.

In October, Bangladesh Open University expelled Bubly for using proxy. Bubly got admitted to the university's BA course.

According to reports, she had sent others to eight exams as proxy candidates while she was in Dhaka. One of them got caught.



Every morning, people bathe, wash clothes and utensils on the bank of Buriganga. Many impoverished locals and labourers use the river's murky and polluted water as they have no other alternative. The photo was taken from Babubazar area in the capital yesterday.

PHOTO: PALASH KHA