

TANGENTS

BY IHTISHAM KABIR



Spotted Hyena and Cub, Maasai Mara, Kenya.

PHOTO: IHTISHAM KABIR

Hyena

I saw my only wild hyena at Kenya's Maasai Mara park: a mother lying on the ground and her cub. The cub was plain dark brown. The mother was unmistakable with its spotted brown body and black face. More than anything, I recall being surprised at its large size, bigger than a dog or a jackal.

Hyenas are known as feliform (cat-like) mammals and belong to the family Hyaenidae. With only three species, the family of hyenas is one of the smallest among mammals.

The Spotted Hyena that I saw is the largest of the three hyena species. It can reach six feet and weigh up to 180 pounds. Striped Hyenas are smaller, at about 110 pounds. The smallest and shiest hyenas are Brown Hyenas weighing in at less than 100 pounds. Hyenas inhabit most of the Old World: Africa, Middle-east, India and parts of Europe.

Spotted Hyenas hunt in packs, going after wildebeest, zebras, and antelopes while racing at speeds up to 65 kilometres per hour. Striped Hyenas scavenge but can also take livestock such as sheep. Hyenas have strong jaws and eat virtually every part of their kill, including the bones that they crush. Their stomach contains concentrated hydrochloric acid that digests it all.

Over time, hyenas have come into frequent contact with humans. They have acquired notoriety as vermin for several reasons, including preying on livestock, stealing food and consuming waste. The portrayal of villainous hyenas in the movie *The Lion King* has added to their disrepute.

But after reading about the fascinating social life of Brown Hyenas in Mark and Delia Owens' *The Cry*

of the *Kalahari* my opinion of hyenas changed.

Starting in the mid-1970s the authors spent seven years in the middle of the Kalahari Desert. They went there to observe and study wildlife. Upon arrival with meagre funds, they searched desperately for a research topic to obtain a grant and finance their stay. One night they ran into nocturnal Brown Hyenas which are extremely rare and elusive. They gradually earned the trust of these endangered mammals and secured funding to research them.

But their work encountered a hurdle: they were unable to find Brown Hyena cubs. Eventually they tracked two cubs to an elaborate underground den, but these disappeared shortly. Then one day, almost accidentally, they discovered where all the cubs had gone. A large group of hyenas, including many cubs, was living in a clearing surrounded by a wall of tall grass. It was a communal den.

The authors observed three cubs of a hyena which had been killed by lions. Other female hyenas nursed these cubs. Furthermore, juvenile and adult hyenas of the den shared their food with younger cubs and helped them grow. In the ruthless environment of the desert, where food was scarce and water scarcer, one would have expected a bitter fight for every morsel of food. Instead, the hyenas acted with compassion and generosity.

Who would have guessed that these reviled animals could be so caring and noble?

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BCL activist dies from stab injuries

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A Chhatra League activist succumbed to his injuries yesterday morning after being stabbed by "rivals" in port city's Bakalia area.

Ashikur Rahman Rohit (22), a first-year student of MES College, was critically injured following stab injuries during an election campaign on January 8, said police sources.

Ashikur and the alleged killers were both supporters of Awami League supported Pashchim Bakalia ward councillor candidate Md Shahidul Alam.

OC Nezam Uddin of Bakalia Police Station said Ashikur was stabbed in Dewanbazar area over previous enmity.

"Ashikur and the killers both are supporters of Shahidul Alam and few days ago a brawl ensued between them over anti-drug posters in the area," said the OC. He said locals -- Mohiuddin, Babu and Sabu -- called Ashikur from Chawkbazar DC road area later stabbed him.

Ashikur was admitted to CMCH, where he died, said the OC. Shahidul could not be contacted for comments.

Police are trying to arrest the killers, the OC added. Ashikur's brother filed a case in this connection. The body was sent for autopsy.

As the news of his death spread, aggrieved BCL activists demonstrated at Chawkbazar Gulzar intersection, demanding punishment for the killers.

Meanwhile, AL organising secretary (Chattogram Division) Ahmad Hossain in a views-exchange meeting with party leaders yesterday warned that the party would take tough action not only against councillor candidates who are participating in the CCC polls defying party decision, but also against their "godfathers".

The event was held at the main election campaign office of AL nominated mayoral candidate Rezaul Karim Chowdhury on KC Dey Road. Former CCC mayor and general secretary of AL's Chattogram city unit AJM Nasir Uddin and Rezaul were also present at the meeting.

CHATTOGRAM CITY CORPORATION POLLS

An environment-friendly campaign

CCC councillor candidate decides to go poster-free

ARUN BIKASH DEY, Ctg

When mayoral and councillor candidates of Chattogram City Corporation (CCC) polls are decorating areas with posters and banners as part of their campaigns, Shaibal Das Suman stands as an exception.

Suman, the Awami League-backed candidate in Ward-21 (Jamal Khan area), announced in his verified Facebook page on January 8 that he would not hang posters or banners due to probable environmental hazards. He also declared that he will not campaign through loudspeakers to avoid sound pollution.

After visiting different areas of the ward -- including Cheragi Pahar Intersection, Hem Sen Lane, Askar Dighir Par, DC Hill, JM Sen By-lane and Momin Road -- on Wednesday, this correspondent found his announcement to be true.

The roads, lanes and by-lanes were decorated with posters and banners of mayoral and councillor candidates, but none were found mentioning Suman. Although campaigning through loudspeakers was ongoing, Suman's name was not heard.

Asked how he was campaigning, Suman, also former councillor of Ward-21, said he was doing so by going door-to-door and using digital platforms like Facebook and Twitter.

"In the past, I saw posters and banners were used for campaigning but were not removed properly after polls, posing environmental hazards," Suman told The Daily Star. "It made me concerned."

"I have observed that campaigning through loudspeakers made people suffer, especially babies, patients and students," he said. "It creates sound pollution most of the time."

By forgoing the conventional methods and using alternative means for campaigning, Suman is getting great response from voters, he said.

By not printing posters and banners nor using loudspeakers, Suman has saved money, and with that amount he decided to contribute to the treatment of 20 cancer patients who are going through financial difficulties.

"Some four to five patients have already contacted me after my announcement," he said. "I have sent their treatment documents to health professionals for verification." "I always want to be humanitarian regardless of whether I win or lose in the polls," Suman said.

"I believe people will love my efforts, and many more candidates in future polls elsewhere in the country would follow my steps to protect the environment."



The wall of colourful gamcha is a vibrant sight even on the most drab days in Dhaka. Commuters stop by beside SOS Children's Village on Mirpur Road to haggle for a crisp new gamcha. Price depends on size -- smallest costs Tk 60, while the larger ones can go up to Tk 250.

'Abducted' girl found dead in Mymensingh

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

Police yesterday recovered the body of a seven-year-old girl, who was allegedly abducted three days ago, from Tarakanda upazila of Mymensingh.

The girl was identified as Sanjida Akter, daughter of Shahjahan Akanda of Ram Chandrapur village of the upazila, said Shah Kamal Akanda, officer-in-charge of Detective Branch of police in Mymensingh.

Akanda said the second grader was abducted by unknown persons from in front of her house on Tuesday noon.

The alleged abductors left a note with a mobile number and asked them to contact.

The family tried to reach the abductors repeatedly but found their mobile phone switched off, he said.

The girl's father filed a general diary with Tarakanda Police Station on Wednesday.

Afterwards, abductors contacted the family and demanded Tk 20,000 for Sanjida's release, the family said.

But the family members failed to get in touch with them, the police official added.

Yesterday, locals found her body in a jungle near her house and informed police, OC Akanda said, adding that police recovered the body and sent it to Mymensingh Medical College Hospital morgue for autopsy.

None was arrested and no case was lodged in this connection yet.

The karate sisters

S DILIP ROY, Lalmonirhat

At a time when the public conscience is gripped by fears over women's security, three sisters from a remote village in Lalmonirhat decided to take up matters in their own hands.

In a bid to secure their safety, they've not only learned martial arts themselves, but are spreading the art of self-defense to others in their area -- a remarkable feat, considering their family's tight financial situation.

"Our family is poor, it's hard for us to even afford education. So we practise at home, every day, to develop our martial arts skills," said Jannati Khatun, the eldest of the three.

Jannati is an honours third-year student at Lalmonirhat Government College. It's located some 14km away from her family's homestead, which she has to cover by cycling. She was the one who first learned the craft and proceeded to teach it to her younger siblings.

It all happened when a Taekwondo teacher from Dhaka's Cambrian College came to Jannati's college to teach them martial arts. Sharker Rani Roy, the sensei, visited the college in 2017 on two three-

month term and trained them within that time. Jannati ended the training period with a Red Belt, which in Taekwondo is just below a first-degree Black Belt.

Khadizatul Kobra Moni, the middle sibling, is currently in her first year of HSC at a college 12km from home. With the help of her sister, she has already ranked up to a yellow belt. The youngest, Fatema Yasmin, is a student of class five starting out with her own training.

Their mother Rasheda Begum is a pre-primary teacher at a school run by Brac, while their father Jafar Uddin works as a day labourer. In their homestead of four-decimal land in Kisamat Chandrapur village of Aditmari upazila, all five of them live under two tin-shed rooms.

Despite their struggles, the sisters at least have peace of mind. Khadizatul said they now feel safe to cover the long routes to their schools and colleges.

Following their example, girls from their village now come to them to learn martial arts. "Everyone should learn martial arts. It could serve as an inspiration for a safer and better life," she added.

"Martial arts is more than just a self-defense tool, it keeps the body

and mind fresh and strong too. It's never an obstacle for any kind of work, but makes them more dynamic," chimed in Jannati.

Jamila Khatun, a student of class ten and daughter of local farmer Zaminur Rahman, said, "I and a few other girls go to Jannati and Khadiza apu to learn self-defense. It's having a positive impact in strengthening our confidence and morale."

All of this is changing the village's attitude on gender roles too. Local farmer Mazidul Islam told this correspondent, "Initially, the idea of girls learning martial arts did not sit well with the villagers. But over time, we've started to get it. The girls who learn martial arts are also helping others become confident," he said.

Their mother Rasheda Begum told The Daily Star that it's a tough task for the family to ensure the sisters get formally educated. With their meagre income, it's hard to meet the needs of the siblings, Rasheda said. That they choose to keep fighting for a better life despite all of this makes her really proud.

"I am proud of our daughters. They are moving forward with a very optimistic and disciplined take on life," she said.



Amidst all their financial woes, sisters Jannati, Khadizatul, and Fatema cannot afford institutional lessons, but they keep up their practise by sparring with each other at their homestead in Lalmonirhat's Kisamat Chandrapur village. This photo was taken on Thursday.

PHOTO: STAR

Joint operation to save jatka continues

9 jailed in Barishal region

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barishal

A joint operation is being carried out to save jatka (hilsa less than nine inches in length) and other fishes in coastal areas since January 10.

Mobile courts jailed nine fishers for different terms for catching fish with illegal nets in Barishal region from January 10 to 14.

In 129 joint drives, 118 mobile courts fined fishers Tk 18,000 and seized 420 nets, 18.77 lakh metres of current nets, 576 other illegal nets, 1,214 items used for fishing, 2.8 tonnes of jatka and 0.48 tonnes of other fishes from their possessions.

The operation is being conducted by the fisheries department, naval police, coastguards and police, according to the department.

Anisur Rahman Talukder, deputy director of Divisional Fisheries Office, Barishal, said

they are acting in coastal areas to save jatka. Protection of other fishes is also a part of the drive, he added.

The office's Deputy Assistant Director Abdul Mannan said behind, current, mosquito, charghera and khota are different locally-made nets used for catching fish in large numbers. The government has banned all these nets to save the country's fish, he said.

Anisur Rahman said on January 10, six behundi nets, 3,000 metres of current nets and 5,000 metres of charghera nets were seized from different rivers in Rajapur, Jhalakati.

They urged the upazila administration to launch a campaign to discourage fishers from using illegal nets, he said.

"I hope production of hilsa and other fishes will increase in the future." The joint drive will continue till February 1, the official said.

Congratulations



Australian International School Dhaka delightfully announces the great achievement in the WACE (Western Australian Certificate of Education) Examination 2020. Our student, Sagufta Shahrin Khan has scored 92% ATAR (Australian Tertiary Admission Rank) which is recorded the second highest score in the history of the school. Heartfelt congratulations for her excellent success and good luck for more progress.



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