

TANGENTS

BY IHTISHAM KABIR

Our Deer



Spotted deer, Sundarban, Bangladesh.

PHOTO: IHTISHAM KABIR

Four species of deer are found in Bangladesh: spotted deer, barking deer, sambar deer and hog deer.

The spotted deer is our most common deer. Among the sixty-odd deer species of the world, it has to be one of – if not the – prettiest. Its luxurious reddish-brown coat is decorated with white spots. An adult spotted deer can be large, up to five feet in length. The males have long antlers that attain full growth during breeding season.

Spotted deer are found in Sundarban, where leaves of Keora trees are their favourite diet. From a distance, the bottom of the green crown of some Keora trees often appear pruned to the same height. This is the height that a spotted deer's teeth can reach while it stands on its hind legs. In Kotka, when the tide is low, large herds of spotted deer come in search of leaves of Keora tree. When the tide rolls in, the herd rushes from the area into higher elevations inland out of tide's reach. Most people

visiting Sundarban get at least one view of this deer.

Outside of Sundarban, I have also seen spotted deer in the planted mangrove forests of the coastal island Nijhum Dwip. Once, the island's deer population was large. But when I went in 2017, I had to search much harder for this deer than I ever had to in Sundarban.

The barking deer – also known as muntjac – is an uncommon mammal of Bangladesh. It resides in the forests of Sylhet and Chittagong Hill Tracts. It is a small deer the size of a calf, about three or four feet in length with a plain brown coat. On its face there is a V-shaped bony ridge. There are dark lines that run along this ridge, creating a facial pattern. It is extremely shy and, in my experience, emerges mostly at dusk. Males have two short antlers with sharp pointed tips. I saw them at a watering hole which they approached with extreme caution and left immediately after drinking.

Our other two deer species are rare.

With a length of five feet, the sambar deer is our largest deer. Its coat is plain brown. Males have large antlers; both males and females have a mane of hair on the throat. It resides in the forests of Sylhet and Chittagong Hill Tracts. This nocturnal creature is very hard to find.

The hog deer is our rarest deer, considered critically endangered. In fact, it was declared extinct in Bangladesh in 2000. But a few individuals have since been found. It lives in remote locations of the Hill Tracts. It is roughly about the same length, but somewhat shorter than, the spotted deer.

In the past we had a deer called barasingha in Sundarban. It is mentioned in the book *The Vanishing Forest* by Guy Mountfort as being extirpated by the 1960s.

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COVID-19 SURGE

South Korea bans issuing visas for Bangladeshis

EZAZ MAHMUD

South Korea has imposed a ban on issuing visa for Bangladeshi nationals due to reported increase in Covid-19 positive cases among passengers arriving from Bangladesh. The ban came into effect from yesterday, according to a notice issued by Bangladesh embassy in Seoul on Facebook.

According to diplomatic sources, the Bangladesh embassy issued the notification, after receiving a letter from the Korean foreign affairs ministry yesterday morning.

Earlier, the South Korean embassy in Dhaka in a notice warned Bangladesh authorities concerned in this regard. The Daily Star published a report in this regard on April 9.

In its notice issued on April 5, the South Korean embassy said, "Covid-19 positive cases are found successively among Bangladeshi nationals, despite having Covid-19 negative certificates. Infection rate increased significantly in the later part of March 2021, which turns out to be a matter of serious concern for the Korean authorities."

South Korea imposed an indefinite ban on visa issuance and flight operations from Bangladesh for the first time on June 23 last year. Through diplomatic efforts, Bangladesh was able to convince the country to lift the ban after eight months on February 8 this year.

After the ban was lifted in February, 17 people in March and another 16 in April reportedly tested Covid-19 positive after they entered South Korea from Bangladesh with Covid-19 negative certificates, according to sources in South Korea.

South Korea is home to about 18,000 Bangladeshis. Although small in number, they have been playing an important role in remittance inflow to the country, because of their high education status and high salaries.

More than a thousand workers have remained stranded at home due to complications regarding visa, after they came home on holiday amid the pandemic, while sending workers under Employment Permit System, Korea's temporary labour migration programme, remains suspended.

The reporter is a freelance journalist writing for The Daily Star.

Price hike of eggplant puts a damper on iftar

AKANDA MUHAMMAD JAHD

The hefty price of eggplants is draining the wallets of Dhaka citizens that enjoy the traditional iftar item, beguni.

Traders are taking advantage of the lockdown to put a large mark-up on the Ramadan necessity, although many vegetables are in steady and sufficient supply.

At the kitchen markets in Shukrabad, Razabazar and Karwan Bazar, eggplant was being sold at Tk 100 per kg. The price of cucumber had also risen to Tk 100 per kg, but yesterday price fell to Tk 60 per kg after supplies increased.

Meanwhile, the prices of lemon and green chilli have also been hiked. A hali (four pieces) of lemon costs Tk 60-80, while a kilogramme of green chilli is being sold at Tk 80-100.

An elderly seller at Karwan Bazar said, "What else can I do? These items are in great demand during Ramadan. I could only buy half of what I needed because the wholesale price was high."



The soaring prices of Ramadan staples, especially eggplant, have added to the woes of people amid 'lockdown'.

PHOTO: STAR

"I'm cutting corners on transport fare. Price of goods is very high. I always come to the Karwan Bazar on foot these days from West Razabazar. But even here the prices aren't that good, they're the same as what my neighbourhood sellers charge," said Shafiqul Islam, a private service holder. Multiple retailers said they were selling eggplants at Tk 40 per kg and cucumbers at Tk 40-50 per kg just a day before Ramadan. They claimed that wholesale prices have increased so they have to charge high prices from customers.

Asked if there is any shortage in supply, they said there is no shortage, but the prices have been increased simply based on the high demand. Meanwhile, the price of rice has increased by Tk 2-3 in the wholesale markets and Tk 3-5 in retail markets.

Yesterday, miniket and najirshail rice was selling between Tk 60-65 at wholesale markets while it was Tk 65-70 per kg in retail markets. According to the data of Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS), consumers had to spend more in March to purchase goods and services owing to an increase in food and non-food prices. Due to the price hike of food items, inflation rose by 15 basis points to 5.47 percent in March, the BBS report said.

This was the third month in a row that the Consumer Price Index, a measure of the general increase in prices of a basket of commodities, has been rising. In January, inflation was 5.02 percent.

Landlord drives family out of home over rent

They were able to return with help of police

MOSTAFA YOUSUF, Ctg

A landlord in port city's Lalkhan Bazar has allegedly drove a family out from their home on Thursday night for failing to pay rent, forcing them to pass the night on the street. The incident took place at Dubai Colony on High Level Road.

It came into the public's attention after a photo of the family sitting on the footpath of Wasa Intersection went viral on social media, prompting police to help the family go back to their flat yesterday.

Sri Dham, a member of the family, told The Daily Star that his elder brother owed landlord Md Mostafa three months of rent. Formerly a contracted worker at Chattogram Wasa, his brother had lost his job during the first "lockdown" last year.

"We had been struggling already before the current lockdown hit. We were barely eking out a living and couldn't pay the

rent. The landlord kept pressuring us," he said.

On Thursday evening, Mostafa knocked at the family's door and asked them to vacate, Sri Dham said. Once they were out, he locked up the home and went away. "We had no option but to spend the night on street. Then police came to our aid yesterday and helped us enter our home."

Abu Bakar Siddique, additional deputy commissioner of CMP, said, "It is really disheartening to see a landlord driving the family out over rent at a time like this. Once we heard the news, a team was dispatched to the spot to help the family. We told the landlord that police will take responsibility if the family can't pay the house rent."

"During this pandemic, we must stand by each other," he added. Despite repeated attempts, Mostafa could not be contacted for comments.



Out of job with no other source of income, the family had to spend the night out on the walkway of Chattogram city's Wasa Intersection.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

'Stand by media houses'

Bangladesh envoy to UK urges Commonwealth members

DIPLMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Saida Muna Tasneem, high commissioner for Bangladesh to the UK, has called upon the Commonwealth to support sustainability and economic viability of news and media houses across the Commonwealth, especially in the developing countries during the Covid crisis.

She also called for enhanced transparency of internet companies, and greater media and information literacy among young people to ensure that information is indeed delivered as "public good".

The diplomat said Bangladesh government is committed to work closely with the UK, Namibia and Commonwealth fraternity to continually uphold and improve media freedom nationally, globally and within the Commonwealth.

Tasneem, also board of governor member at the Commonwealth, made the remarks at a virtual event organised by the British Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) and High Commission of Namibia, on "Media Freedom in the Commonwealth" on Wednesday in London, said a press release.

The event was co-hosted by the UK and Namibia at the advent of the World Press Freedom Day Conference 2021 scheduled to be hosted in Windhoek, Namibia on April 29-May 3 in collaboration with the Unesco.

Reflecting on the theme of this year's World Press Freedom Day, "Information as a Public Good", the high commissioner paid her tributes to journalists all around the world including those who lost their lives in the line of duty.

Tasneem also briefed the Commonwealth meeting on wide-ranging initiatives and reforms undertaken by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's government towards rapid liberalisation, privatisation and expansion of Bangladesh's print, electronic and digital media industry over the past decade.

Commonwealth Secretary-General Rt Hon Patricia Scotland QC and high commissioners of a number of Commonwealth countries, spoke on the occasion.

The meeting was co-chaired by head of Media Freedom at the UK FCDO, Kanbar Hussein and High Commissioner of Namibia to the UK, Linda Scott.



Rickshaw-vans stay parked and workers pass the day sitting idle, as nothing needs to be transported, which means no income, amid the 'lockdown'. This photo was taken from the port city's Rail Station Road on Thursday.

PHOTO: STAR

Struggling to make ends meet

People from low-income group in Ctg suffer for lack of assistance amid 'lockdown'

ARUN BIKASH DEV, Ctg

Before the pandemic, rickshaw-van puller Ramjan Ali used to earn Tk 300-400 by mainly transporting furniture. But his worst times started from April 5, when the government announced the lockdown, which compelled shops to remain shut.

"The pandemic not only snatched away my income, but also that of my wife, who used to work as a domestic help in three houses," Ramjan told The Daily Star yesterday. "She was refused to come to work by all three families at the end of March."

"We haven't gotten any assistance from anybody," said the 45-year-old. Like Ramjan, many people from the low-income group in the city are struggling to make ends meet.

Tilak Paul, helper of a city bus, has been sitting idle at his house in a city slum with no income since April 14. "I used to earn Tk 350 a day, but as public vehicles are not plying since Wednesday, I've lost my

work," said Tilak. "What little savings I have are disappearing."

Meanwhile, the district Administration distributed relief materials among 300 families at Tiger Pass area on Thursday, and among 1,000 people yesterday.

"We have enough food in stock," said Chattogram Deputy Commissioner Mominur Rahman. "We will continue to do this every day as long as it is needed."

Chattogram police have also decided to stand by the poor with food. Their programme started at 23 points under Bandar division of CMP on Thursday.

CMP Commissioner Saleh Mohammad Tanvir said 5,000 poor families would be given assistance.

Besides, some individuals were seen helping the poor. One of them, Tossaddek Nur Chowdhury Topu started distributing free daily essentials. "One can take 3kg of different daily essentials from my rickshaw-van, which roams the city," he said.

2013 MAYHEM Hefajat leader sent to jail

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday rejected the bail petition of Mufi Sharifullah, an assistant publicity secretary of Hefajat-e-Islam, and sent him to jail in a case filed with Jatrabari Police Station on May 6, 2013.

Dhaka Metropolitan Magistrate Begum Yeasmin Ara passed the order after the IO produced him on completion of one-day remand. On May 5 in 2013, Hefajat members clashed with law enforcers and Awami League men, turning Motijheel and Paltan into a battlefield.

Barishal city roads as busy as ever

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barishal

On the third day of the lockdown, the streets of Barishal did not exactly look as expected.

Even in the morning, when police surveillance was heavy, everything and everyone from rickshaws carrying rice sacks to courier service vehicles to people in cars could be seen plying the road, along with emergency service providers.

A police unit on duty at Najirpole, one of the city's most important traffic points, said they were trying to check as many vehicles as possible. But Abdul Halim, a member of the team, said, "Everyone keeps coming out to the street -- how many can we stop?"

At Jail Mor, this correspondent saw a truck with 11 people on board returning with foodstuff. None of them were wearing

masks, though some had their faces covered with towels. Some motorcycles were seen plying the roads brandishing stickers of unknown news portals.

Gathering at the mosques for Juma prayer was not too big -- most were attended by at least 20 people, this correspondent saw.

Port and Bazar roads, the city's wholesale fish, fruit and daily food supply centres, were as busy as they were pre-lockdown. In the morning, executive magistrate Nirupam Majumder distributed leaflets outlining health guidelines, which were being casually flouted. Executive magistrate Subrata Biswas Das conducted courts in Ruptali, Nathullabad and Kashipur areas.

In separate drives, they fined offenders Tk 2,900 for not maintaining health guidelines.



At times, it was hard to say whether there was a lockdown in effect in Barishal city yesterday. This photo was taken from Ruptali area.

PHOTO: TITU DAS

Three killed in road accident

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

Three people were killed and two others injured as a truck hit another truck on Bangabandhu Bridge east link road in Kalihati upazila of Tangail yesterday.

Police said they could not identify the victims immediately.

The law enforcers and witnesses said the accident occurred around 4:30pm in Char Bhabla area when a truck carrying iron sheets hit another truck parked on the road, leaving three people dead on the spot.

On information, police rescued the injured and sent them to a Tangail hospital.