

TANGENTS

BY IHTISHAM KABIR

MARSUPIALS

Night was falling when we left our hotel in a small town in northern Queensland. By the time we reached the forest inside the adjacent national park it was dark. This was Queensland Wet Tropics, a rainforest of tall, dense trees. We stopped near a trail and started walking. Our guide led us while shining a powerful searchlight into the canopies.

Presently we caught movement on a horizontal branch high up. We stopped and trained the beam on it. The animal was negotiating the branch on its way to the next tree, its face and body turned away from us. But curiosity got the better of it and it turned towards us. Perhaps two feet long, the brown animal had inquisitive eyes. Its belly was chubby and pale. Its paws held onto the branch.

Then came the surprise – two tiny paws emerged from an opening in its belly! We were looking at a tree kangaroo, a rare nocturnal marsupial.

Marsupials are a group of mammals that carry their young in an abdominal pouch. Lacking a placenta, mothers give birth to undeveloped (premature) babies that continue their development in the pouch which contains the mother's nipples. There are about 330 species of marsupials in the world. Two-thirds are found in Australia, the rest in the Americas. Kangaroos and koalas are the best known among them.

Another fascinating marsupial I saw was the musky rat-kangaroo, at 4.5 inches the smallest marsupial of Australia, and found in only in Queensland's rainforests. It came out of the forest, looking very much like a rat, and scurried looking for food, using its nose to probe small cavities in the ground. Its movement was a curious mix of running and hopping. After it found some food it retreated into the forest.

I found it difficult to photograph kangaroos in the wild. They were skittish and hopped away as soon as they saw me, their long tails balancing their vertical frame as they quickly vanished out of sight. I had better luck with their younger cousins, wallabies. They were more common and



Tree kangaroo (top) and rock wallaby with joey (bottom.)

PHOTO: IHTISHAM KABIR

slightly easier to approach. At a pond by the road to Kakadu National Park, I stopped near a group of wallabies. I was able to take a few photographs before the most nervous one decided to flee. The rest followed suit, but one lingered.

The rock wallaby lives in caves and rock formations. It is normally a nocturnal creature that sleeps through the day, but I was able to photograph one with its baby. Rock wallabies have dwindled in numbers and many species are now considered endangered. The specimen I saw, which was wild but habituated to humans, did not look particularly healthy. Its joey seemed soft and meek and I

wondered how it would survive in the wild.

Marsupials are believed to have originated in North America. From there they spread and proliferated in South America. In prehistoric times, Australia and South America were connected to Antarctica. This provided the connection for marsupials to migrate to Australia.

Watching the variety of marsupials – and learning about their varied habitats – was eye-opening. One day I would like to see two other marsupials in the wild: the koala and the Tasmanian devil.

facebook.com/ikabirphotographs or follow "ihtishamkabir" on Instagram.

OIL TANKER FIRE
Missing worker's body found in Karnaphuli

UNB, Chattogram

Naval police yesterday recovered the body of a man from Bridgeghat area of Karnaphuli river, two days after he went missing from an oil tanker that caught fire in Chattogram.

Nazrul Islam Saddam (35) jumped into the river to escape the fire caused by an explosion on tanker "OT Ocean" during welding work in its engine room on Wednesday.

A worker named Junayed was burnt to death on board the vessel while several others sustained injuries. But Nazrul remained missing since he jumped off the vessel.

ABM Mizanur Rahman, officer-in-charge of Sadarghat Naval Police, said the body was sent to Chattogram Medical College Hospital for an autopsy.

95 godfathers, 3,500 drug dealers in Dhaka

Says DNC; 5 held with meth, yaba

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

In Dhaka division alone, there are at least 3,500 drug dealers including 95 godfathers who are running the illicit trade under the nose of the law enforcement agencies.

The list was recently updated by the Department of Narcotics Control (DNC).

"Some of these listed drug dealers are directly involved, some are patrons and some are financiers," DNC Additional Director Fazlur Rahman told a press briefing at its Tejgaon office yesterday after arresting five drug dealers along with 560 grammes of "ice" and 1,200 pieces of yaba tablets.

DNC made the arrest after raids in Gulshan, Bhatara, Kuril and Ramna areas of the capital on Wednesday.

The narcotics official claimed that this is the largest consignment of "ice" ever seized in Dhaka.

Alongside yaba, drug traders are now peddling the high-priced

synthetic drug crystal meth, also called "ice", according to narcotics officials.

About the list, he said even if the narcotics department had the list, it could not conduct drive because of lack of manpower. But now, the DNC has added more manpower and logistical support.

Citing the Narcotics Control Act, he said to bring a drug addict or dealer under the law, the drugs have to be confiscated in his possession.

It is usually difficult to bring the kingpins under the law or arrest them, because drugs are found only with the peddlers, Fazlur said.

ICE: AFFLUENTS THE TARGET

Crystal methamphetamine, a powerful drug that affects the central nervous system, poses high risks of stroke, heart attack, teeth decay, and permanent hallucinations, according to the website of the US National Institute on Drug Abuse.

The DNC official said the high-priced synthetic drug is sold to affluent people living in upscale neighborhoods – 10 grammes go for a minimum of Tk 1 lakh.

The arrestees who were held during Wednesday's drive, are -- Jakarta Ahmed (32), Tarek Ahmed (55), Saddam Hossain (31), Shahidul Islam Khan (48), and Jashim Uddin (50). Two private cars were seized from them.

The arrestees include drug traders and addicts. Most of them are from affluent families, officials said.

In the last two years, law enforcers conducted raids in Dhaka and Chattogram, and seized a huge amount of crystal meth.

On August 21, DNC arrested 10 persons with 500 grammes of crystal meth and 5,000 yaba pills from the capital's Uttara, Banani, Banasree, Khilkhet and Bashundhara Residential Area.

DNC officials said in recent times, meth is being smuggled in from Myanmar through Teknaf border, an established gateway for yaba.

52-year-old arrested over rape of minor

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police yesterday arrested a man in a case filed for raping a 10-year-old girl in the Chandaon area of Chattogram.

The suspect -- Md Bulbul Uddin Sonal (52) -- was arrested from his residence in Hamid Char of the port city's Chandaon area, said Mainur Rahman, officer-in-charge of Chandaon Police Station.

"Bulbul raped the minor for two days in absence of her parents at her residence," said the officer-in-charge.

"The victim later disclosed the matter to her parents," he said.

The parents of the girl then filed a case with Chandaon Police Station on Wednesday accusing Bulbul, OC Rahman added.

Rab and BTRC claimed to have arrested four persons with international calling cards and illegal VoIP equipment worth nearly Tk 20 crore during a joint raid at a printing press in the capital's Fakirapool on Thursday.

The arrestees are Mohammad Amir Hamza (33), Alamgir Hossain (45), Shamim Mia (29) and Sagar Mia (27).

Among them, one is a fugitive accused in a case filed with Sher-e-Bangla Police Station, said a BTRC press release yesterday.

Several kinds of electronic equipment used in VoIP business were recovered from them.

If the international calling cards found from them were used, the government could have been deprived of an estimated revenue of Tk 194,747,750 crore, said the release.

Primary investigation revealed that the arrestees are members of an illegal VoIP business ring. They have been running VoIP and international payment and recharge business illegally for seven to eight years.

A total of 150,000 printed cards of 107 types were seized in the raid.

The arrestees were also said to be illegally providing international recharge services and transacting money through hundi services.

Legal action is being taken against them.

Jhuman still in jail

Bail order yet to reach Sunamganj, release before Sunday unlikely

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Jhuman Das is still in jail, a day after the High Court granted him bail, as the order is yet to reach Sunamganj.

The bail order could not reach Sunamganj yesterday or today as the court is closed on Friday and Saturday, said Debangshu Shekhar Das, a lawyer for Jhuman.

"We hope the order will reach the Sunamganj court by Sunday. Jhuman will be released on bail as soon as the order reaches jail," he said.

"We will take the next step after the High Court's bail order reaches the lower court of Sunamganj and the fresh bail order comes to the jail from there," said Shariful Alam, jailor of Sunamganj district prison.

Meanwhile, Jhuman Das' family and relatives are waiting for his release in Noagaon of Shalla upazila of Sunamganj.

"Everyone in the family including my mother is very happy and grateful... But as the bail order has not come from the High Court, our wait is getting longer," Jhuman's brother Nurupur Das said.

"We expect him to return home on Sunday or Monday," he added.

Regarding Jhuman's security, he said, "I do not see any security threat right now. But those who attacked the village on behalf of Hefajat are also free and the case is still under investigation. In that case, there is some security crisis. But now the issue of Jhuman's release is more important."

The HC on Thursday granted Jhuman conditional bail for one year in a case filed under the DSA over criticising former Hefajat leader Mamunul Haque on Facebook.

Jhuman has been in jail for over six months.

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Dengue cases outside Dhaka cross 2,000 mark

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dengue cases outside Dhaka have crossed the 2,000 mark this year.

Meanwhile, at least 189 patients were hospitalised in the last 24 hours till 8am yesterday of which 25 are from outside Dhaka, according to the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

With the new cases, a total of 6,538 persons were diagnosed during the running month out of a total 16,894 infected. Of the total infected, 2,012 are from outside Dhaka.

At least 7,698 were diagnosed in August, 2,286 were hospitalised in July, 272 in June while 43 were infected in May.

According to the DGHS, 59 people have died of dengue infection in the country this year.

Twelve people have died in July, 34 in August and 13 in September so far.

Death toll 59

13 died in Sept so far

34 in Aug, 12 in July

189 more hospitalised yesterday

Total infected 16,894

CITY

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN



Although the intensity of Covid-19's second wave has subsided a bit, the country still saw 31 Covid deaths in the 24 hours till yesterday morning. But at this market under the Babu Bazar bridge in South Keraniganj, traders and customers continue to huddle around to buy fish, most of them without wearing masks, as if the pandemic were already over. This photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Six killed, ten hurt in road crashes in Khulna, Tangail



Left, the mangled auto-rickshaw and truck that fell into a ditch killing four people in Khulna. In Tangail, two people were killed and 10 injured in a collision among truck, bus and a covered-van.

STAR REPORT

At least six people were killed in road accidents in two districts yesterday, according to reports from our correspondents.

In Khulna, four people were killed when an auto-rickshaw tried to overtake a sand-laden truck and got stuck in its bumper. As the auto-rickshaw driver lost control, both the vehicles fell into a ditch beside Khulna-Satkhira highway in East Jilorda.

The deceased -- Ilias Sardar (45) of Dumuria; Reshma Khatun (45) from Rudaghara village; Babu (28) from Sharafpur and his wife Shibli (20) -- were the driver and passengers of the auto-rickshaw, said police.

Dumuria fire service personnel recovered the bodies after a three-hour effort, said Dumuria Police Station Officer-in-Charge Mohammad Obaidur Rahman.

Rakib Sheikh, helper of the truck driver, was detained while the driver fled the scene, said the OC.

4 held with illegal calling cards, VoIP equipment

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

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Primary investigation revealed that the arrestees are members of an illegal VoIP business ring. They have been running VoIP and international payment and recharge business illegally for seven to eight years.

Reckless driving and overtaking were the reasons behind the accident, said Bangabandhu Bridge East Police Station Officer-in-Charge Mohammad Shafiqul Islam. After the accident, a tailback was created on the busy highway until police removed the wreckage from the road, said passengers and transport workers.

The truck driver died on the spot and another passed away while undergoing treatment, he said. Identities of the deceased could not be known immediately.

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