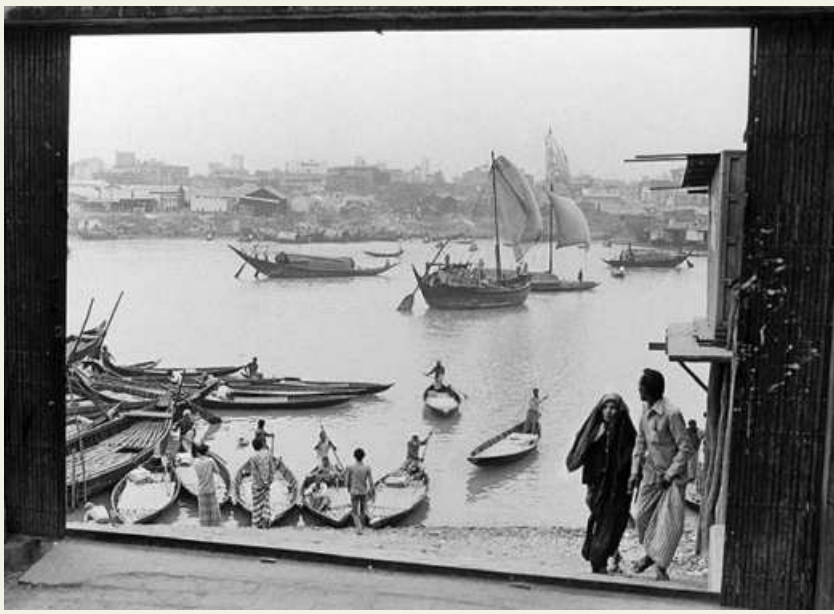


TANGENTS

BY IHTISHAM KABIR



Bangladesh, 1986.

PHOTO: IHTISHAM KABIR

Old Photographs

While in lockdown I pulled out my old black and white negatives. These are photographs of Bangladesh I took during vacations home while I was living and working in California's Silicon Valley. From 1984 to 1999, whenever I came home, I spent my days wandering the streets of Dhaka taking photographs. If possible I also went outside the city – outskirts of Dhaka, a boat trip to Chittagong, trips to our family home in Sylhet, as well as to plantations owned by our family.

After each trip I returned to California and reported back to my engineering job. But I spent free weekends carefully processing the film, making sure all those scenes of Bangladesh were “developed.” I stored the negatives – cut into strips – in cellophane sleeves to prevent them sticking to one another. When working with them – to make black and white enlargements – I followed an analogue workflow with the negative. That required looking at the contact sheets through a magnifier and picking out a “good one” to work with.

Today I no longer have access to the tools and chemicals needed for printing my negatives. In any case, working with digital cameras, I have become accustomed to a digital workflow, which is much more powerful and flexible than the analogue one.

But how can I apply digital workflow to those old negatives which have been sitting idle? I need those negatives in my computer, and for this I must convert them into digital pictures using a scanner. Over the years I had shied away from this tedious and lengthy work. However encouraged by a favourite cousin who loves my work, I started doing this

during the lockdown. I used a low-quality but fast scanner built around a point-and-shoot camera.

And so I found myself in a topsy-turvy ride through the years – as Bangladesh revealed herself to me, again and again, through various guises, changing every time I looked through the camera. For example, in 1984, I often walked into a village on a weekday and found myself surrounded by children eager to be photographed. But during the 1990s I could hardly find village children as most of them were at schools, many operated by BRAC.

There were photographs of relatives and friends – often a quick snapshot during an office encounter or a chance meeting in the street – that flooded my mind with memories. Family photographs – particularly with my departed parents and relatives – filled me with good memories and wistfulness.

What subjects attracted me those days? Undoubtedly the children and their boundless energy was the one constant motif running through fourteen years. It was almost like I wanted to re-live my own childhood here, over and over again. I was also attracted to street art of various forms: rickshaws, movie billboards, graffiti and advertisements. One particular trip, watching Dhaka expand rapidly mostly through the hard work of manual labourers, I photographed that. Another trip I decided to photograph tea workers in our plantation.

So now I have a window into a time of our country before it changed dramatically. I hope to make something of it one day, but I am not sure what.

facebook.com/ikabirphotographs or follow ihtishamkabir on Instagram.

FIRST TIME IN UN HISTORY

Biman carries Bangladeshi peacekeepers

UNB, Dhaka

For the first time in the United Nations Peacekeeping history, the UN chartered a Biman Bangladesh Airlines flight, the flagship carrier of the country, for carrying Bangladeshi UN peacekeepers to the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA).

This comes as a true recognition of Bangladesh's invaluable contribution to the UN Peacekeeping operations for more than three decades, said Permanent Mission of Bangladesh to the United Nations yesterday.

The Permanent Mission of Bangladesh to the UN remained deeply engaged with the UN Headquarters for coordination and finalisation of the agreement, which culminated in achieving this milestone.

Earlier, the Bangladesh Biman flight carrying a contingent of 179 Bangladeshi UN peacekeepers from Bangladesh Army and Air Force departed from Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport, Dhaka for the capital city of Central African Republic, Bangui.

The contingent is composed of 125 members of the Armed Utility Helicopter Unit, 20 members of the Advance Party of Quick Reaction Force Company, and 34 members of Stranded Peacekeepers.

Currently, 6,543 Bangladeshi UN peacekeepers are deployed in nine several missions, among them 1,061 are working in MINUSCA, which started operation on April 10, 2014.

An unwavering commitment

Covid-positive BITID lab chief awaits recovery

ARUN BIKASH DEY, Ctg

In isolation, all Prof Dr Shakeel Ahmed thinks about is rejoining the fight against Covid-19. At the same time, he has also made sure that the work continues during his absence.

The in-charge of BITID Covid-19 testing lab in Chattogram himself tested positive on May 26.

“I will be available over the phone and will guide them with necessary instructions,” he told this correspondent.

He had not been feeling well since May 23. But with the number of samples increasing every day in Chattogram, Dr Shakeel powered through it and continued.

On May 26, he decided to test his own sample and found the result positive.

Still, he decided not to leave the workplace immediately as he was working on 331 samples on that day. “I wanted to finish my pending work; many patients were eagerly waiting for their reports for three to four days,” he told The Daily Star.

“By afternoon, I came to know that I was Covid-19 positive but I worked till 11pm to complete pending work,” he said.

Of the 331 samples, a total of 51 showed positive for Covid-19 that day.

“I prepared test reports, signed those and then left the lab to go into isolation,” he said, adding, “I even signed my own report that showed Covid-19 positive.”



Dr Shakeel Ahmed

Asked about the safety of other doctors and assistants in the laboratory, Prof Shakeel said he was not infected there. “I was infected by a patient at BITID hospital,” he said.

“As I have to work around 14 hours everyday, I have to go outside the lab. The hospital compound is overcrowded with patients; many of them do not even use face masks.”

“In the lab, we all use PPE and there is a slim chance of contamination,” he said. “Please pray for me so that I can rejoin the battle against Covid-19 soon.”

BITID is the first institution in Chattogram where Covid-19 test was introduced on March 25 under the leadership of Prof Shakeel.

All the samples from at least six districts under Chattogram division were tested in the laboratory until tests were introduced in more institutions in the division.



As operation of public transport is set to resume tomorrow, owners and workers are busy preparing their vehicles to ply on the roads. Experts, however, are discouraging the move amid rising infections and deaths. They say resumption of such transport will only exacerbate the already terrible situation, as citizens must come in close contact with each other, increasing the risk of transmission. These photos were taken from the capital's Kamalapur and Mirpur yesterday.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED, PRABIR DAS

Crocodile Juliet lays 52 eggs at Karamjal

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bagerhat

Crocodile Juliet has laid 52 eggs at the Karamjal Wildlife Breeding Centre in the Chandpai Range of the Eastern Sundarbans yesterday morning.

Juliet laid the eggs beside the pond of the breeding centre, Azad Kabir, in-charge of Karamjal Wildlife Breeding Centre in the Sundarbans, told The Daily Star.

“Of the eggs, 14 were kept in Juliet's own cage, 26 in old incubator and 12 in the new incubator,” he said, hoping the eggs will hatch in 85 to 90 days. He said they are using natural methods and expecting a good outcome.

Earlier on May 9, 2019, Juliet had laid 44 eggs.

Karamjal Wildlife Breeding Centre started its journey in 2000 while crocodiles started laying eggs there from 2005. So far, 292 crocodile offspring were born in Karamjal at different times, he said.

Of these, 195 cubs are still in the cage while 97 were released in various rivers and canals of the forest, the official added.

Reopening will pose more risk to public health: Mahila Parishad

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Mahila Parishad yesterday expressed deep concerns over reopening of government offices and public transport amid the increasing number of Covid-19 patients and deaths.

“We are surprised to note that at a time when the number of coronavirus-infected patients in the country is increasing day by day and the death tally is getting longer, the government has announced to open public transport including government, non-government and autonomous organisations in limited scale from May 31,” read a statement by the organisation.

The government's decision to keep markets open conditionally on one hand and to ban movement of people on the other seems to be a reflection of lack of coordination, it said, adding that the notification to open office and public transport at

this time will put public life at a higher risk.

The government shut down most public and private offices, and all public transport from March 26 and extended it till May 30 in several phases.

On Thursday, the Ministry of Public Administration issued a notification announcing the end of the temporary shutdown.

Meanwhile, the government's technical committee on coronavirus and other health experts and the World Health Organization have said the only way to prevent the spread of Covid-19 infection is to maintain social distancing and adhere to hygiene rules.

“Bangladesh Mahila Parishad is demanding reconsideration of the notification by extending the shutdown and implementing a strict lockdown across the country,” read the statement signed by Bangladesh Mahila Parishad Acting President Fawzia Moslem and its General Secretary Maleka Banu.

Prince Charles condoles losses due to Amphan

UNB, Dhaka

Prince Charles in a letter to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has expressed sympathy over the losses caused by super-cyclone Amphan in Bangladesh.

PM's Press Secretary Ihsanul Karim said Charles, the prince of Wales, wrote the letter on behalf of himself and his wife Duchess of Cornwall Camilla.

“My wife and I wanted you to know how deeply we feel for the people of Bangladesh following the loss of lives and utter devastation caused by cyclonic storm Amphan,” Charles wrote in the letter.

Prince Charles said their hearts go out to all those who have been so cruelly bereaved or injured, or whose homes have been swept away.

“We understand how dreadfully difficult this must have been, as your people prepared to celebrate what should have been a joyful Eid,” he wrote in the letter.

“Our greatest possible sympathy and our special prayers are with the people of Bangladesh at such a desperately anxious time, as you battle against the effects of both the Covid-19 pandemic and this appallingly severe storm,” he added.



PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Shoppers pass through a disinfectant tunnel to enter the kitchen market in Motijheel's AGB colony in the capital. With movement restrictions eased from Sunday, more and more people are likely to get out, and such markets will possibly see higher footfall. The World Health Organization has recently advised against spraying people with disinfectant, citing health reasons and ineffectiveness of the method, but the message does not seem to have reached many. In being cautious against the coronavirus, such well-intended malpractices could jeopardise public health if information is not disseminated properly. The photo was taken yesterday.

Mango, litchi, veggies to be included as relief

Govt directs deputy commissioners

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has directed the deputy commissioners to add mango, litchi and vegetables to the list of relief items for the destitute to tackle the Covid-19 situation.

The Disaster Management and Relief Affairs Ministry on Thursday came up with the direction while allocating Tk 6.30 crore and 9,750 tonnes of rice to the deputy commissioners of 64 districts to operate the ongoing relief activities during the Covid-19 pandemic.

In the direction, the ministry said, “Vegetables, mangoes and litchis can be bought and distributed as relief items.” Besides, the ministry also said each relief recipient may be requested to plant at least five trees.

On May 16, Agriculture Minister Abdur Razzaque in a virtual meeting with experts, business leaders and economists had requested the authorities concerned for marketing seasonal fruits and agricultural products, including mangoes and litchis, during this time of crisis.

The meeting had also decided to include mangoes, litchis and other fruits along with essential items as relief so that the growers do not have to worry about their summer fruits due to the transport crisis amid shutdown.

The meeting also said poor people who had lost their jobs due to Covid-19, will also get nutrition if seasonal fruits are included in the relief items.

Later, the Ministry of Agriculture sent a letter to the ministries concerned, requesting them to include seasonal fruits in the relief materials.

Online concert for Ranesh Thakur today

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

To protest the incineration of Baul Ranesh Thakur's music room, a group of Bangladeshis in different countries are organising an online solidarity concert today.

The “Solidary Concert for Baul Ranesh Thakur” will be broadcast live on the Facebook pages of Das and Co., Nagamat, and Sylhettoday24.com from 8pm.

To stand by Ranesh and all baul musicians living under duress, renowned musicians will perform at the online event.

Ujjal Das, coordinator of the programme, said, “This concert is not only to protest the heinous attack on Baul Ranesh Thakur's house, but also to protest the continuous attack on Baul musicians of Bangladesh.”

Performers include Baul Shofi Mandal, Bappa Mazumder, Rahul Ananda, Sayed Hasan Tipu, and Baul Basir Uddin Sarkar. They will be joined by Ashiquezzaman Tulu from Canada, Sohini Alam from the UK, along with artists based in India, Australia, and Germany.