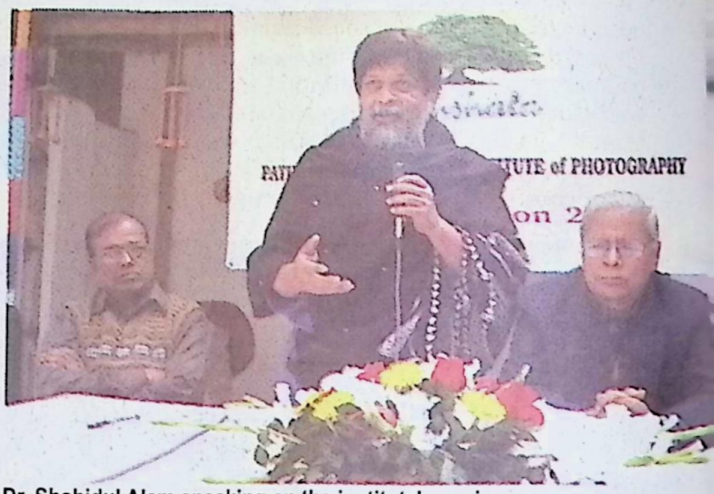
written work, rather than act as a side support. "Newsrooms have news editors," says Shahidul Alam. "However, the concept of a photo editor is not seen in newspaper offices here." According to Alam, it was the Independent in the UK which had practically revolutionised the way photographs were used in newspapers, hence breaking the system. "Other newspapers like the Guardian had to eventually accept this idea as well."

Pathshala also has regular academic exchanges between Oslo University College in Norway and Edith Cowan University (ECU) in Australia. It is not really an exchange programme, since students from these countries come to Bangladesh to learn about photography and not the other way around, adds Alam. However, this provides Pathshala students an opportunity to share experiences with students of very different backgrounds. "The long-term partnerships with Sunderland University, Bolton University and the Danish School of Journalism, offer educational opportunities for students with other world class institutions. The internship opportunities at Drik, Chobi Mela and Drik News offer on-the-job training that is invaluable in professional life. The regular participation in international festivals and workshops provide a world-view essential to becoming established in the global marketplace. And then there is the acid test. Emerging students are in demand, and ever since Pathshala started, all students who have graduated are gainfully employed. Some are already at the very top of their profession," says Alam.

Norman Leslie, the programme director from ECU, says that his students have had the chance to experience life in all its reality and colours through this exchange programme. "ECU is located in Perth, which is a city extremely isolated even in Australian terms," says Norman. "Students from this university, besides having the advantages of international exposure through this programme, have also created a certain bond between the two cultures which is extremely important when it comes to the art of photography."

Even though passionate about art and photography from an early age, Shahidul Alam had decided to take up photography as a profession by accident. Back in the 80s, Alam was doing his PhD in Chemistry in the United Kingdom. As was the norm and still is in the society, studying a proper subject define the integrity and depth of being a true man. "And that is what my parents believed as well," says Alam. "I did not have much money and would work to pay my tuitions." One of his close friends got into the airlines business and asked him to fly to the United States with him. "A poor student like me would never get this opportunity ever again and so I decided to go. My friend in the UK asked me to bring him back a camera since cameras were cheaper in the US." Alam got a full set complete with a tripod and lens and got back to the UK, only to find that his friend did not have the money to pay him back. "And I was stuck with it!" laughs Alam.

Pathshala recently entered its tenth year. Celebrating the school's anniversary, a three day festival was organised



Dr. Shahidul Alam speaking on the institute's anniversary.



Pathshala's certificate awarding ceremony.

where both the old and the new students presented their works, amidst other festivities. A photography exhibition titled "Studying Life" began marked the beginning of the festival on February 1 at the Drik Gallery. Exhibiting works by some of the most celebrated students of the school, this event was inaugurated by Atiqul Huque Chowdhury and Dr. Shahidul Alam. The exhibition, which will continue up to February 15, features thirty six photographers, including Munem Wasif, Abir Abdullah, GMB Akash, Tanvir Ahmed and many more.

On February 2, certificates were distributed to the students who had finished their respective courses, starting from the basic to the undergraduate level. "We had a full-fledged festival, complete with a winter Pitha Utshob," says Joseph Rozario, the Administrative Manager of Pathshala. "Students, teachers, along with a few photographers from outside the country had discussions on photography. These photographers also presented some of their unique works. The day ended with a film made by one of our own students," he says.