

TANGENTS

BY IHTISHAM KABIR



The photograph in question.

PHOTO:
IHTISHAM KABIR

The Photograph

in Question

The photography bug bit me – for the long haul, it turned out - when I was an undergraduate student in the United States. The immediate catalyst was an exhibition of photographs of the great Ansel Adams which I found compelling and powerful. Soon I was immersed in photography, spending countless hours taking black and white pictures and developing them.

In 1984 I made a trip to Bangladesh to visit my family. During this trip, I walked the streets, taking photographs of people, and rediscovered my native land.

This is the story of one of those photographs.

Sitting on the roadside near a construction site in Dhaka, an elderly couple was breaking bricks using hammers. The woman had cut her finger and her husband was bandaging her wound. I quickly took their picture and moved on.

After returning to the US I processed all my film. Among the pictures was the brick-breaking couple. I thought it was a poignant and meaningful moment. It told the story of their love for each other. I showed it to many friends.

But I was about to learn that different people can read the same photograph differently.

Around this time, my aunt Shejo Phuphu (Mrs. Hasna Haque) visited the US from Bangladesh and spent a few days with me in California. I proudly showed her this photograph, expecting her to appreciate and praise it.

She took it in her hands and - putting on her eyeglasses - scrutinized it carefully. She remained silent for a minute. Then she cleared her throat.

“This photograph is nice. You took it, brought it outside our country, and

are showing it to many people. But...”

She paused, measuring her words carefully before resuming. “But...*tui ektu bhebe dekhechish* - have you thought what it says about our country to the world?” she asked.

I was taken aback.

“I feel very deeply for this couple and their situation. But do you want outsiders to see only the poverty of our country?” she asked.

Her words stung me. But over the long-term, they influenced my thoughts about what to photograph and which photographs to show others. I became sensitive to the image of Bangladesh shown outside the country.

While the poverty here is undeniable, many people and organisations have worked very hard for many years to move the country forward. Somehow, though, international images of Bangladesh seem to favour poverty and disasters over progress.

This is not to deny the suffering and struggles of the poor. But where is the balanced view? Otherwise we deny the tremendous efforts made every day by Bangladeshis to improve their lives.

Foreign newspapers are quick to jump on disaster stories from Bangladesh – be it a fire, cyclone, or some kind of disease. But how many bother to tell, for example, the story of the mothers who turn their world upside down so their children can attend a good school?

It has been almost thirty years since I took this photograph; Shejo Phuphu passed away four years ago. But her words taught me to accord dignity to this country through my camera – a dignity that is hard-earned and well-deserved.

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Freak accident cuts

short dreams

WASIM BIN HABIB and
SHAHEEN MOLLAH

Last Wednesday was just like any other day for Mehedi Hasan.

He was walking back to his uncle's residence in Maddhya Badda after attending first semester BBA classes at Brac University in the capital's Mohakhali, engrossed in his own thoughts.

But nothing could have prepared him for what happened next. “I could not understand what happened to me. I just saw my severed leg lying on the roadside,” he said.

Mehedi, undergoing treatment at National Institute of Traumatology and Orthopaedic Rehabilitation (Nitor), recounted to The Daily Star yesterday the moments before the freak accident.

Upon reaching the main road in Maddhya Badda, he had taken a look at both sides and carefully crossed it.

Just as he was about to step onto the footpath, he saw, out of the corner of his eye, a man some 10 to 12 feet before him trying to pull down a steel drum from a rickshaw-van.

The drum fell with a loud bang and he felt something hit his left leg. “I fell down. I felt blood rolling down my forehead,” he said. Locals rushed him to a local clinic and later he was shifted to Nitor. Mehedi was conscious during the



whole ordeal.

Witnesses said the drum was empty. Iqbal Hossain, officer-in-charge of Badda Police Station, said some type of gas must have accumulated inside the drum, causing it to explode once it hit the ground.

The explosion flung a piece of the drum's lid at Mehedi's direction, severing his leg from below the knee, he said.

The drum belongs to a shop named Rhidoy Steel King, he said, adding that its owner and employees are now absconding and had left the drum behind. A case was filed with Badda Police Station in this connection.

Sources at Dhaka Medical College morgue, where the severed leg was sent, said the muscles were being examined to determine what was stored in the drum.

Mehedi's father Abdul Kuddus Halder, headmaster of a high school in Morolganj in Bagerhat, said Mehedi was crying all the time, asking only one question, “what has happened to me?”

Abdul had sent Mehedi, the eldest of his two sons, to Dhaka with a lot of expectations. “But all is ruined,” he said.

Doctors at Nitor said Mehedi was out of danger and could walk with the help of an artificial leg.

Despite what had happened to him, Mehedi dreams of finishing his studies and doing whatever possible to make his family proud.



Handicrafts on sale at a three-day “Karu Mela” (crafts fair), organised by Bangladesh Jatiya Karushilpa Parishad and Bengal Foundation, beginning in the capital's Bangla Academy yesterday.

PHOTO:
STAR

3 die in road crashes

METRO DESK

Three people were killed and 40 others injured in separate road accidents in Chittagong, Rangpur and Netrakona yesterday.

Our staff correspondent from Chittagong reports, a bridegroom was killed and eight others were injured as a microbus carrying the bridal party skidded off Dhaka-Chittagong highway in Mirsarai upazila yesterday morning.

The deceased was Nizam Uddin, 27, son of Taher Mistri of Madhyam Sonapahar in Mirsarai.

Our Rangpur correspondent reports, 17 people were injured as a bus fell into a ditch beside Rangpur-Dhaka highway in Baradargha of Pirganj upazila yesterday.

Later, Abu Taleb, 25, of the upazila, died on the spot when another bus ran him over while he was taking a look at the rescue operation of the injured persons.

Our Netrakona correspondent reports, a bus passenger was killed and 15 others were injured when a train hit the bus on Jaria rail crossing in Purbadhola upazila of Netrakona yesterday. The deceased was Aminul Islam, 14, son of Abdur Rashid of the upazila.

NEWS IN

brief

South-western transport strike

postponed till Jan 22

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jessore

An indefinite strike by transport owners and workers of the country's 21 south-western districts, scheduled for tomorrow, was postponed till January 22 due to Biswa Ijtema, which began yesterday.

The strike was called demanding that the government either withdraws the recent fuel price hike or adjusts fares of commercially-run vehicles.

Sharak Paribahan Malik Sramik Oikya Parishad, which called the strike, came up with the postponement decision at a meeting in its Khulna Bus

Boy drowns while chasing

poultry bird

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

An employee of a poultry shop drowned in a canal in the capital's Nandipara area yesterday.

The victim, Saddam Hossain, 15, of Islampur of Jamalpur, joined the shop only three days ago, said his uncle Amir Ali.

Fire service officials said Saddam chased a poultry bird after escaped its cage. At one stage, he fell into the canal after failing to catch the poultry bird around 5:15pm.

On information, firefighters rescued the body

Girl stabbed in capital

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

An eight-year-old girl was stabbed allegedly by one of her neighbors in Kamrangirchar area of the capital yesterday.

The victim was Sathi Akter, daughter of Arju Miah, and a student of Class-I at Matbarbazar Primary School in the area.

She is undergoing treatment at the National Institute of Diseases of Chest and Hospital. Earlier, she was taken to Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

Sathi's mother Taslima Begum said she came out of their house after hearing screams of her daughter around 6:30pm, and found her lying on

Justice Mahbub's birthday celebrated

METRO DESK

The 102nd birthday of former chief justice Syed Mahbub Murshed was observed in the capital yesterday.

On the occasion, family members organised some programmes including placing of wreaths at his grave at Banani graveyard, and a doa mahfil, said a press release.



Severe cold wave may continue

UNB, Dhaka

Weather is likely to remain dry with temporary or partly cloudy sky over the country in 24 hours till 6:00pm today.

Thick fog may occur over the river basins and moderate to thick fog elsewhere over the country during midnight till noon, Met Office said.

Severe cold wave is sweeping over Rajshahi and Rangpur divisions and the regions of Jessore, Kushtia, Srimangal, Sitakunda and Mymensingh and moderate to mild cold wave is sweeping elsewhere over the country may continue.

Night and day temperature may rise slightly over the country.

The sun sets in the capital today at 5:30pm and rises tomorrow at 6:43am.

Country's highest temperature 23.5 degree Celsius was recorded yesterday at Cox's Bazar and lowest 04.0 degrees at Sayedpur.

Highest and lowest temperature and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:

	Temperature in Celsius		Humidity in percentage	
	Max:	Min:	Morning	Evening
Dhaka	19.4	08.0	97	66
Chittagong	20.8	09.2	93	61
Rajshahi	20.0	05.4	96	79
Rangpur	18.7	04.5	97	72
Khulna	22.5	08.5	100	73
Barisal	21.7	07.6	100	81

Drug traders

attack three

journos of

Ekattor

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

Three journalists of private television channel Ekattor were injured after they were attacked by alleged drug traders while working on a report on drug trading at Ghatail upazila in Tangail yesterday.

Among the injured are the channel's staff reporter Faisal Alam, its Tangail district reporter SM Razzak and videographer Mohammad Mamun.

A group of about 50 drug traders attacked the journalists when they were going to Sawdagor Para in Hamidpur area of Ghatail around 6:00pm for reporting, the victims said.

The miscreants also took away all valuables, including a camera of the channel, from the journalists, they said.

On information, Kalihati police rescued the journalists and admitted them to Kalihati Upazila Health Complex.

KALPANA CHAKMA ABDUCTION

Re-investigation

demand

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at different programmes yesterday reiterated their demand for a fair re-investigation into the abduction of Kalpana Chakma.

Despite being identified by eye-witnesses, the abductors are being protected through systematic attempts rather than being punished for their crime, they said.

On June 12, 1996, Kalpana, the then organising secretary of Hill Women's Federation (HWF), was abducted from her residence at New Lallaghona in Bhaghaichhari upazila of Rangamati allegedly by security personnel in plainclothes.

At a roundtable organised by HWF at Dhaka Reporters Unity in the capital, speakers rejected all official investigation reports published so far in Kalpana's abduction case, including the final probe report submitted by Criminal Investigation Department last September, as those had failed to name the real perpetrators.

HWF demanded that new cases be filed against the perpetrators responsible for abducting Kalpana as per the accounts of witnesses.

Kalindi Kumar Chakma, Kalpana's brother and an eye-witness to her abduction, said the previous investigation reports had distorted his statements and favoured the false accounts of the security personnel.

Meanwhile, leaders and activists of three front organisations of United Peoples Democratic Front, including HWF, Pahari Chhattra Parishad and Democratic Youth Forum, held a protest rally followed by a procession in Khagrachhari town yesterday, demanding a fair investigation into Kalpana's abduction.



Discussion

Committee to Celebrate Hatem Ali Khan's 110th birth anniversary will organise a discussion; Venue: Moni Singh-Farhad Trust Bhaban, 3, Comrade Moni Singh Road, Purana Palta; Time: 4:00pm.

Memorial meeting

Gono Oikya will hold a meeting in memory of its central committee member Atiar Rahman; Venue: Liberation War Museum; Time: 3:00pm.

Human chain

Governance Advocacy Forum will form a human chain demanding enactment of a democratic decentralisation policy; Venue: before Jatiya Press Club; Time: 11:00am.

Discussion

40 Garments Sramik Federation will organise a discussion on labour laws and rights; Venue: Eden Complex, 2/1-A, Arambagh; Time: 11:00am.

Rally

BSC in Health Technology (Dental) Students' Association will hold a rally protesting the foiling of their January 9 programme to lay siege to the health ministry; Venue: before Jatiya Press Club; Time: 11:00am.

Discussion

Bangladesh Centre for Development, Journalism and Communication will organise a discussion on developing the economy through foreign remittance; Venue: Cirdap Auditorium; Time: 10:30am.

Lecture

Prof Raman Shibkumar of Faculty of



Passengers wait in vain for vessels on a pontoon of Sadarghat Launch Terminal yesterday, the third day of an indefinite strike called by waterway transport workers demanding a pay rise.

PHOTO:
BANGLAR CHOKH