

# DON'T POLICE THE POLICE, PLEASE

Exasperation. That would be the word best used to describe a Gulshan man's disposition when he realised a cop was demanding 1200 taka as bribe from a rickshaw van. When the cop casually explained that he only wanted 120 taka, the man burst out, yelling "What for?" his voice dripping with rage and bemusement, in equal measure. The traffic constable himself appeared confused; it's only 120 taka, he must have been thinking. This was Dhaka, after all, where the traffic police were used to making up rules and taking bribes from kids to "teach them heart-warming lessons" about the monetary damage getting caught with drugs could do.

For what it's worth, a local daily reported that the Deputy Commissioner (DC) clarified that it wasn't 120 taka but 1200 taka and was not required as a bribe but rather as a fine, terms almost interchangeable in this country. You see, he explained, the cops would never allow rickshaw vans and rickshaws to ply the fancy, glitzy, #VIP4Ever roads. Rickshaws damage roads way more than trucks laden with cement for high paying construction firms and the traffic-inducing but pocket-heavy owners' boasting buses. Facts are, no one understands what the cops or sergeants can consider a violation of a law no one was educated on. And many of us doubt whether the cops themselves are well-versed in whatever they think is their version of the law that governs them and us.

It is impertinent to mention that cops are actually above the law and a lot of citizens seem to not understand that. Think about it for a minute; when a VIP has blocked the city so they can tell themselves there's no traffic in Dhaka, who are the only ones allowed to stand on rooftops? The police. Who are the only armed people allowed to stand on footover-bridges? The police. Who are allowed to drive the wrong way whenever they damn well please? The police. Who park wherever they want, whenever they want? The police. Who have gotten away the most after hitting someone else's vehicle with their vehicle? The police. Who feel they can get a free bus ride? The police. Therefore, this should establish that the police themselves are above the law. In fact, police officers reportedly conduct trials for their own police officers. The Court of Law can mind its own damn business. Thus, while if I asked you for a bribe to slip your name into this article, it might be unethical and illegal but we shouldn't hold officers of the law to the same standards.

Did you buy your way into the position in your current place of employment? Did you pay your superior a cool million to stand under the sun in a busy intersection on a hot day? You damn well didn't, so you have no reason to resort to bribes. Plus, do you know how low police officers are paid? It's almost as if no one told them about



their salary before they applied for and got their government jobs which regularly publish circulars and news on the amount of salary available. So obviously, with less money earned than even I do (Seriously, can someone flexload me something?), you can't always fault them for being a little greedy because it's a need and playful greed. However, just understanding their problems aren't enough. Guarding this city full of jerk drivers and evil, generally less-tax paying citizens is never easy. Which is why our Mayor never misses a chance to remind the rest of us how poor we are. It's why Gulshan is Fort Knox during holidays and VIP roads tolerate rule-breaking bus drivers and rule-breaking cars with white flagstands and not beggars. Beggar Free Areas mean ZERO POVERTY. Problem. Solved.

All things said, remember these few incidents to never make the same mistakes as these lawfully ignorant folks. A photojournalist was recently assaulted for daring to wear a red coloured t-shirt during a VIP movement in the city. That's basically asking for it. VIPs are actually cows in disguise who freak out at such alarming colours. In 2013, a poet was arrested for being a poet and researcher;

the warrant was a fake one so the police never had to accept they arrested him for writing those poems that only your friends think are poems while the rest of us know are excruciatingly terrible. Sometimes the cops may just show up to your door and ask for a few lakhs, because what the hell? That was what a couple in the city's Rupnagar area discovered to their shock. The incident went unreported at the time but the cops were brutally suspended. Leave with pay. Go learn your lessons in your mini-vacation while we transfer you to a location with less press coverage. So don't keep more than a few lakhs in your account. Finally, do not dare die of bullet holes in the posh Gulshan road. Last month, a woman's body was found in the city's VERY CLEAN/RICKSHAW FREE area of Gulshan and the police said it was obviously a car accident. Forensics experts found two bullets though, in the bullet holes in her body we assume, and explained to the cops why it wasn't a car accident. Cops are just the goofiest mad lads at times.

The question we must finally ask is what to do. Well, since even our police high officials don't know themselves, I guess there's no point in waiting for me to come up with something. I'll leave you with a joke next time. ■



OSAMA RAHMAN

## CHOBIMELA

In the world of visual arts, Nasir Ali Mamun needs no introduction. For more than five decades, his iconic photographs have inspired many a young artiste. Best known for his portraits of internationally recognised celebrities, Mamun is considered to be the first person to popularise portrait-photography in the country. Over the years, his work has been exhibited in several galleries and also been published -- 55 solo exhibitions and 10 books. This year, at the ninth edition of Chobi Mela, Nasir Ali Mamun, along side prodigious photographer Sayeeda Khanam were awarded with the Lifetime Achievement Awards. This year, Mamun's creations and the stories behind them have been exhibited at this year's Chobi Mela.

Nasir Ali Mamun remembers the year 1966, when 'portrait' was a term only used in newspapers or tabloids. "When I was a child, I used to see photographs of famous people in newspapers and they used to make me think about the stories behind the creations," says Mamun. He first held a camera when his brother and he borrowed an A1 camera from a nearby studio, planning to take some pictures near Dhanmondi Lake. "I remember taking a portrait of my brother -- the first portrait I ever took. The first time I clicked, I felt like the world was my oyster." For young Mamun, the camera was still a curiosity rather than a profession— until the 70s.

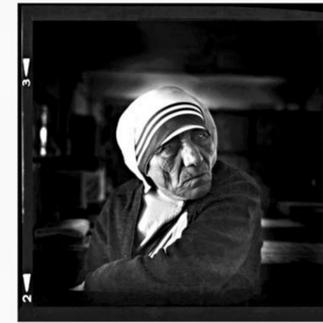
"It was a burning time— high oil prices and food crisis," remembers Nasir Ali Mamun. "In 1969, man landed on the moon and astronauts took portraits of earth. It was an exciting yet unsettling time for human civilization! Around then, I decided to go into a new frontier and take portrait photography as a profession," says Mamun.

The first professional portraits Mamun took were of poet Ahsan Habib, poet and writer ANM Bazlul Rashid and communist leader Comrade Moni Singh -- all taken on the same day. "I first went to every famous person I could find—not to take their pictures but to make a list of eminent people. Figures from Samsur Rahman to Professor Abdur Razzaq, contributed to this list of mine."

Chobi Mela IX featured some of his earliest works which included legendary figures such as Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, ASM Abdur Rob, Ahsan Habib, Shamsur Rahman, Syed Shamsul Haq, Al Mahmud, Ustad Gul Mohammad, Professor Mohammad Yunus, Samar Das, Hamidur Rahman, Khan Mohammad Moinuddin, Golan Mustafa, Suborna Mustafa, Abdul Hafiz, Mahmuda Khatun Siddiqua and others. The gallery filled with Mamun's work was named 'The Poet with Camera'.

Mamun's portraits have always been poignant. "My portraits may reflect some obscurity, because most of the famous people I have worked with have a sad side to their lives." Mamun's portraits of eminent artist S M Sultan can be a perfect example of his style.

"I first met Sultan around 1977 in his house at Norail," he remembers. "The first thought that popped into my head after meeting him was that he himself was a



SUPER PAN 24, 811



# POETRY IN FRAMES

APURBA JAHANGIR

PHOTOS: NASIR ALI MAMUN

master artwork; the way he talked, the way he walked, everything had an artistic touch! His house was filled with animals from snakes to cats and I remember I had to share a room with some of his animals!" Mamun was one of the lucky few who had the opportunity to see Sultan up close and personal. "The man was a saint. From animals to humans, everyone considered him to be a person above mere beings. All that being said, Sultan was a lonely person. He had no family other than his pets and students. This loneliness reflected in the photos I took of him—as his smile spoke of all his sorrows."

The same emotion was bestowed upon Dr Muhammad Yunus's portrait as well. Mamun met Yunus in 1985 when he was teaching at Chittagong University and had just come up with the concept of Grameen Bank. "I needed funds for an exhibition for which a friend of mine suggested I meet with this professor at Chittagong who had his own bank. That was the first time I met Dr Yunus." The photo which was showcased at the exhibition of the Nobel Laureate portrays a young Yunus, at the Chittagong

Continued to next page



SUPER PAN 24, 811



PHOTO: STAR

## 12 NUMBERS

12 is the number of people who were killed and thirty others injured after a bus collided with a microbus in Belabo upazila of Narsingdi, last Sunday. The deceased were identified as Manik Mia, 45, his wife Halima Begum, 26, sister-in-law Jumma Begum, 16, her son Ishan, 8, Manik Mia, 45, his wife Mafia, 35, son Antan, 10, Hira Mia, 35, Amena Begum, 32, Jannat, 35, and Nazmul, 10, reports our local correspondent quoting police. The bus collided with the microbus in Darikandi area on Dhaka-Sylhet highway around 8:00 am, leaving 11 passengers of the microbus dead on the spot, said Badrul Alam, officer-in-charge of Belabo Police Station.

Source: The Daily Star