

# TANGENTS

BY IHTISHAM KABIR



How background can destroy a photograph. In both pictures, the subject is birds.

PHOTO: IHTISHAM KABIR

## Photographic Wisdom

There is no dearth of quotations by great photographers who dispensed advice for those following in their footsteps. Some spoke about aesthetics, others about philosophy, and yet others discussed practice of the photographic craft. I read them with interest and occasionally glean valuable hints that help me make better photographs.

Before embracing nature photography, I spent decades photographing people on the streets. The words of Robert Capa, the famous war photographer, have always inspired me: "If your pictures are not good enough, you are not close enough." In a war zone, this advice may separate men from boys, but in everyday photography it has also stood me in good stead.

Capa's advice helps the photographer overcome shyness that naturally comes with photographing people. Suppose you see something or someone on the street you want to photograph. His words empower you to go forth boldly and take the best photograph, damn the torpedoes.

The great Ansel Adams spoke eloquently on the aesthetics of photography. When I started photographing I read his famous dictum - "twelve significant photographs in a year is a good crop" - and felt disappointment at such a small number. Today I know better and consider myself lucky if I get five or six significant photographs in a year. And yes, it is difficult to make a really good photograph.

Adams started out as a concert pianist, so music influenced his photographic thinking. He said the negative is equivalent to a composer's score, and the print is like the musical performance. In the digital age, the negative is the image file, and the print has largely been replaced by pictures we share on the web. But the idea still

holds - the raw image that the camera snapped and placed in the image file usually needs work, using Photoshop or similar software, before being presented for viewing. This does not mean adding falsehoods to the photograph, but squeezing the most out of every pixel that you captured.

In a New York Times interview, the French photographer Henri Cartier-Bresson said something that took me time to understand: "The difference between a good picture and a mediocre one is a question of millimetres." What he is saying is that the tiniest amount of movement of the camera or the subject can make or break the photograph. What he omitted is "microseconds." In other words, precisely when the shutter is tripped is also vital and no one demonstrated this better than Cartier-Bresson himself in his timeless book *The Decisive Moment*.

Ruth Bernhard was a German photographer who migrated to America. She said something wonderful but difficult to follow. I paraphrase: try looking at your subject as if you were seeing it for the first time. Fresh eyes see things that jaded eyes miss. I find this advice particularly valuable when photographing common birds that I have seen many times before.

Finally I leave you with a pearl of wisdom from the great National Geographic photographer Sam Abell, who is a master of photographic composition. "The background is as important as the subject," he said. I submit as proof two photographs accompanying this article.

The best quotes encapsulate lessons that photographer learned from decades of hard work. When I find a useful quotation, I feel grateful to the photographer for this precious gift.

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

# JU students call off blockade

Authorities assure them of steps to withdraw case soon

JU CORRESPONDENT

Agitating students of Jahangirnagar University (JU) yesterday called off their ongoing blockade of the administrative building after getting assurance from the university authorities that steps will be taken to withdraw the vandalism case against 56 of their fellows.

The decision was made following a meeting between representatives of the students and the administration on Thursday.

The university authorities also issued a statement in this regard the same day, signed by Registrar Abu Bakr Siddique. According to the statement, the authorities also expressed grief over the police attack and harassment on the students.

"We have reached a reasonable and proper solution..." said JU pro-Vice Chancellor Prof Amir Hussain.

Nazmul Hossain, general secretary of Jahangirnagar Cultural Alliance, who was present at the meeting, said, "We hope the administration would begin the proceedings to withdraw the case soon."

Student protesters blocked the administrative building for the past four days, demanding withdrawal of the case filed by the JU registrar. On July 17, four students ended their hunger strike after the authorities assured them of it.

On May 26, two JU students were killed as a bus hit a human hauler carrying them on Dhaka-Aricha highway in Savar's C&B bus stand area. Agitating students then blocked the highway, demanding speed breakers there. But police fired rubber bullets and teargas canisters to disperse them. At least 10 people, including students, a JU official and two journalists, were injured. Later, they besieged the VC's house. During the demonstration, 42 students were held and later shown arrested in the vandalism case.

# Muhiht resents scrapping of 16th amendment

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Expressing his resentment over scrapping of the 16th amendment to the constitution by the High Court, Finance Minister AMA Muhiht yesterday said they would amend the charter again to re-empower parliament to impeach judges.

"Yes, we will pass the constitutional [16th] amendment in parliament again and we will do it continuously..." he said while talking to reporters after a programme at Sylhet Medical College.

Mentioning that the constitution gives parliament the amendment right, he said, "The military government had curtailed the right but the parliament restored it."

On the other hand, BNP yesterday welcomed the verdict. "It upheld independence of judiciary, democracy and rule of law..." said BNP Senior Joint Secretary General Ruhul Kabir Rizvi at a press briefing at the party's Nayapaltn headquarters. BNP standing committee member Moudud Ahmed termed the verdict a "historic" one.

# 'THE BONES OF GRACE' Last of Tahmima's trilogy launched

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Internationally-acclaimed and award-winning author Tahmima Anam's latest novel "The Bones of Grace", the last of her Bengal trilogy, was launched in Bangladesh yesterday.

Attending the ceremony, renowned academicians, litterateurs and critics praised her endeavour and hoped that the novel will bring further acclamation to her already celebrated career.

"The power of the novel lies in detailed descriptions," said eminent academician Prof Syed Manzoorul Islam, while speaking as a panel discussant. She was able to engage readers through her writing, he said.

Greeting the author, eminent litterateur Selina Hossain said she [Tahmima] has taken Bangla literature to the international arena through English language.

She said the writer took herself to a unique position by presenting the history of the country's Liberation War to the world though she studied and lived abroad.

The ceremony was held at the capital's The Daily Star Centre. The 410-page novel, which depicts the dilemma of a Bangladeshi woman, is published by Daily Star Books.

The novel was first published in the UK in 2016 and earned rave reviews from international newspapers.

Tahmima's two other novels are -- "A Golden Age" (2007) and "The Good Muslim" (2011).

During the launching ceremony, Tahmima briefly pointed out the connection between the novels and read out excerpts from the novel.

The final instalment of the trilogy, *The Bones of Grace* encompasses lost love, history, and perseverance of a young Bangladeshi palaeontologist and Harvard graduate Zubaida Haque.

On the eve of her departure to find the bones of the walking whale -- the fossil that provides a missing link to our

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Dignitaries at the book launching ceremony of Tahmima Anam's latest novel "The Bones of Grace", in the capital's The Daily Star Centre yesterday. From left, US-based writer-critic Prof Ahrar Ahmad, author Imdadul Haq Milon, litterateur Selina Hossain, The Daily Star Consulting Editor Prof Fakrul Alam, the author Tahmima Anam, writer Prof Syed Manzoorul Islam and Brac University's Prof Ferdous Azim. PHOTO: STAR

# Shipping sector corruption to blame

Says NCPSRR

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Corruption in the shipping sector is a stumbling block to ensuring safety on waterways, said speakers at a press briefing yesterday.

National Committee to Protect Shipping, Roads and Railways (NCPSRR) organised the briefing at Mukti Bhaban in the capital's Purana Paltan marking 3rd anniversary of the capsizing of passenger vessel ML Pinak-6.

More than a hundred people presumed to have died after the overcrowded double-decker launch sank in the Padma river near Lauhajang upazila of Munshiganj with around 200 people on board. The 85-passenger capacity vessel was on its way to Mawa river dock from Kawrakandi river terminal on that fateful day of August 4 in 2014.

Demanding Tk 5 lakh compensation for each victim including the deceased and the missing, the speakers also demanded a fresh investigation of the accident by forming a "national investigation committee".

"The shipping minister indulges the corrupt," alleged Ashish Kumar Dey, general secretary of NCPSRR, adding that the "cancer" of corruption will destroy the shipping sector if the authorities continue to "endorse and patronise the corrupt".

The committee formed by the shipping ministry to investigate the Pinak-6 accident was questionable as it did not include necessary experts and representatives from the sector, he said.

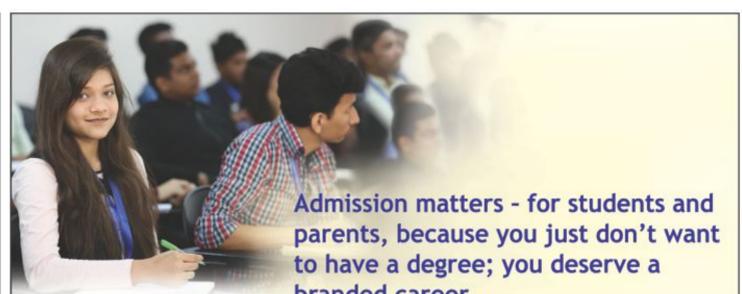
The ministry through its "flawed" investigation report is trying to save the ones responsible for the accident and it is procrastinating to respond to a ruling that the High Court had issued on the government, alleged Ashish.

NCPSRR filed the writ petition seeking the HC's directive over forming a "national investigation committee" to investigate the Pinak-6 accident.

Aside from the demands, the NCPSRR also made nine-point recommendations for better management of the waterways ahead of the Eid-ul-Azha.

Their recommendations include conducting mobile courts on critical waterways with executive magistrates under deputy commissioners in each district from August 20.

Water resources experts, former BIWTA director Emdadul Haque Badsha and M Inamul Haque, also spoke at the briefing.



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PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

A woman tries to squeeze through a median to go to the other side on Dhaka-Chittagong highway at Shanir Akhra. Even though there is a footbridge nearby, there seems to be no stopping of pedestrians' crossing the highway with goods or children even as vehicles whizz by. The photo was taken yesterday.