

TANGENTS

BY IHTISHAM KABIR



Sunnyvale, California, 1983.

PHOTO: IHTISHAM KABIR

The Path of Photography

The photography bug bit me when I was a third-year electrical engineering student in the United States. The museum at my university had mounted an exhibition of photographs by Ansel Adams, and after spending several hours there, I felt powerfully and deeply moved. Within three months I had bought a Canon AE-1 for \$130 saved from my scholarship money. Next, I learned to process black and white film. Voila! I was on my way.

I did, however, make a deliberate decision. Although I was sorely tempted to take on photography as my profession, I decided not to. I would become an engineer while practising photography as a hobby, albeit with utmost commitment.

Over the next several decades I managed to do just that. While working full-time as a software engineer in Silicon Valley, I spent my holidays and free time learning photography and chasing photographs. San Francisco was a political and ethnic melting pot and her parades, demonstrations and street parties provided me with ample photographic opportunities. Meanwhile, whenever I came to Bangladesh on vacation to visit my family, I roamed the streets of Dhaka with my camera. I worked in black and white, the preferred medium for classic street photography.

Soon, big changes came my way. I married a wonderful woman and we supported one another pursuing our dreams. When we were blessed with children, I started spending more of my free time at home. As the children grew, I photographed them. Eating, sleeping, studying, playing, bathing... - I photographed all aspects of their lives. Today those photographs are beyond a doubt my most precious.

In 2005, my wife and I decided to move back to Bangladesh. I had lived abroad for three decades and the move

was a major change for me. By this time I had switched to digital photography. I resumed street photography in Bangladesh, working in colour this time. The best photos were found in "happening" places such as festivals or spots with intense human activity. I continued street photography in Bangladesh until about 2012.

Another big change soon came to my life. My father suddenly passed away in 2008. Grieving, I decided to document his life's work in photographs. He had been a planter and a nature-lover, so I spent the next few years doing nature and landscape photography. Starting with my father's trees, I expanded into a variety of landscape and flora photography.

While I was documenting my father's work, for the sake of completeness I started photographing the creatures that lived in his trees: caterpillars and spiders, butterflies and wasps, squirrels and monkeys. Looking back, it seems inevitable that I would turn to birds. Indeed, when I did, I found them attractive but very challenging to photograph. I was hooked before I knew it. After two years of chasing birds, I finally began to get the hang of bird photography. Once I felt a firm commitment, I proceeded with purchasing the best gear for bird photography, particularly a super-telephoto lens.

So birds take up most of my (photographic) time these days. Photography is an immensely rich hobby and I am yet to try out architectural, astronomical and macro photography. Who knows, maybe one day? In the meantime I feel blessed that I have been able to travel down this colourful, invigorating and educational path.

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

Probe into London mission attack starts

Acting High Commissioner Khondker M Talha withdrawn

UNB, Dhaka

The government has formed a high-profile investigation committee to look into the February 7 attack on the Bangladesh High Commission in London.

Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to the United Nations in New York Masud Bin Momen has been made head of the committee, a diplomatic source told the news agency without elaborating on the composition of the body.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh Deputy High Commissioner in London Khondker M Talha has been withdrawn and asked to join the Foreign Affairs Ministry in Dhaka before May 7.

Another source said the government has not shown any reason behind the withdrawal of Talha who has been in London for nearly three years and eight months.

He is expected to return to Dhaka on May 3.

During the February 7 attack, Talha was the acting Bangladesh High Commissioner in London.

Leaders and activists of BNP attacked the staff of the High Commission and ransacked its furniture, which the government saw as "tantamount to attack on Bangladesh".

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China to lend \$2.6b for Padma bridge rail link

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh and China signed a \$2.6 billion loan deal on the Padma bridge rail link project yesterday.

Zahidul Haque, additional secretary of Economic Relations Division of the finance ministry, and Sun Ping, vice president of Exim Bank of China, inked the agreement on behalf of respective sides in Beijing, ERD Joint Secretary AKM Matir Rahman told The Daily Star.

Of the total project cost of \$3.1 billion, Exim Bank will provide \$2.6 billion while the rest would be given by Bangladesh Railway, he said. The loan

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PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Visitors share a laugh while reading a letter at a festival at Bishwo Shahitto Kendro yesterday.

In pursuit of reviving a lost art

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The act of writing things out by hand on paper, sealing it in an envelope, and mailing it makes the message feel much more personal and enjoyable.

A letter written to or from a loved one or a family member, these are not just part of some misplaced nostalgia, they are forever etched into memory.

When it comes to sharing true thoughts, sincere sympathies, ardent love, and deepest gratitude,

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PHOTO: STAR

The Women Cell of Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB) organises a human chain in front of Jatiya Press Club yesterday, protesting violence against women including rape. They demanded that the authorities concerned ensure exemplary punishment for the rapists in a bid to put an end to such aggression towards women.

35 hurt as cops, auto-rickshaw workers clash in Habiganj

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

At least 35 people including 15 policemen were injured during a clash between auto-rickshaw workers and police at Nasratpur in Sayestaganj upazila of Habiganj yesterday.

According to locals, on Thursday, police barred auto-rickshaw drivers from plying their vehicles on Dhaka-Sylhet highway as there is a government ban on three-wheelers and slow-moving vehicles on highways.

In protest, the workers took to the street around 10:00am, blocking the highway. As police tried to foil the demonstration, a clash broke out between the two.

On Thursday, police seized five auto-rickshaws

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Economic growth failing to bridge rich-poor gap

Economists tell discussion

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Although a significant economic growth has been achieved in the past decade, the country is still witnessing an alarming gap between poor and rich people, economists and former bankers said yesterday.

The government has to develop safety programmes for the poor and marginalised and also reform institutions like banks to reduce such inequality, they said at a discussion.

Sammilita Samajik Andolon (SSA), a citizen's body, arranged the discussion on "Recent development of Bangladesh and the scenario of increasing inequality" at the Liberation War Museum (LWM) in the capital.

Presenting a keynote paper, economist Prof MM Akash said agriculture, garment sector, demographic dividend or young workforce including

migrant workers, and small and medium enterprises (SMEs) are the four key economic drivers of the country at present.

These drivers are immensely potential, but they could not flourish fully due to various obstacles, said Prof Akash, a teacher of economics at Dhaka University.

Inequity prevails in the country and the state will be required to create affordable and flawless social safety programmes for the extreme poor, marginalised, and underprivileged people to overcome it, he added.

Khondkar Ibrahim Khaled, a former deputy governor of the Bangladesh Bank, said when politicians give speeches they often talk about the increase of average income of the people in support of their development activities.

But they never explain the real income of poor and rich people. Alongside economic growth, inequality also increased in the country, he said.

Economist Ramani Mohan Devnath said a reform will be required in the existing banking system, which is largely responsible for creating inequity in the country.

Naznin Ahmed, a researcher of Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies, said many women are emerging as medium and small level entrepreneurs at present.

But they are facing discrimination in having sufficient credit for their enterprises, she said.

SSJ Chairperson and LWM Trustee Ziauddin Tarique Ali chaired the discussion, which was also attended by historian Prof Syed Anwar Hossain.

Three to scale Tibet peak

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Three Bangladeshi mountaineers have set their mission to conquer Lhakpa Ri, a 23,113-foot Himalayan peak in Tibet, in the next month.

The mountaineers are: MA Mohit, the first Bangladeshi who conquered the Mount Everest twice, Bahlul Maznu, and Shayla Parvin. Mohit will lead the team for the first Bangladeshi expedition to Lhakpa Ri peak.

On the occasion, Bangla Mountaineering and Trekking Club organised a press conference in the capital's Jatiya Press Club, where the country's national flag was handed over

to the expedition team.

Describing the mission details, MA Mohit said Lhakpa Ri is located at the North-East of Everest in Tibet of China. It is a very popular climbing peak for its proximity to the Mount Everest.

"Our team will leave Dhaka for Nepal on April 29. Then, we will start our 25-day long expedition to Lhakpa Ri from Kyirong of Tibet on May 2," he said.

Speaking at the programme, eminent educationist Prof Abdullah Abu Sayeed, also the founder of Bishwo Shahitto Kendro, said

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PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

Noted folk singers Abu Bakar Siddique and Chandana Majumdar perform in a musical soiree, organised by Star Melodies, The Daily Star. The event titled "Bangla Lokogaaner Oishwarjo Thekey" (From the treasure trove of Bangla folk songs) was held yesterday at The Daily Star Bengal Arts Precinct. The programme also featured musical performance by eminent singer Mustafa Zaman Abbasi and students of Brac University.

Tragedy strikes family twice

STAR REPORT

A family was carrying a body in an ambulance from Dhaka to Naogaon yesterday.

On the way, they became the part of another tragedy after losing another member.

Police said when the vehicle reached Ghoga Battola area in Bogra, it collided head-on with a truck, killing Mamunur Rashid, 30, instantly.

The ambulance was carrying the body of Farhana Akter, 26, sister-in-law of the deceased.

The helper of the ambulance driver, whose identity could not be known immediately, also lost his life, said Sherpur Police Station Officer-in-Charge (Investigation) Bulbul Islam.

The bodies were taken to the police station.

Mamunur Rashid's two-year-old

son Mostafa Kamal, his wife Farzana Begum, 26, and mother-in-law Runa Laila, 55, were injured in the accident.

They were admitted to Bogra Shaheed Ziaur Rahman Medical College Hospital.

The OC said both of the vehicles were seized but the drivers managed to flee.

In Sirajganj, two people were killed and 15 others injured as a passenger bus plunged into a roadside ditch at Bangbandhu bridge intersection yesterday, reports our Pabna correspondent.

The dead -- Tabijal Hossain, 55, and Raja Hossain, 45, of Gaibanda -- were returning home from Dhaka.

Police said the driver lost his control over the steering.

The injured five -- Abul Kalam, 40, Taslima, 55, Asma Khatun, 40, Laboni, 25, and Nur Ali, 30 -- were

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JnU scraps MCQs in admission test

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Jagannath University (JnU) authorities have decided to drop multiple choice questions (MCQ) from its admission tests and all other exams.

The decision was approved in a syndicate meeting on Thursday, said a press statement of the university yesterday.

"The decision came into effect soon after the syndicate approved it yesterday [on Thursday]," Vice-Chancellor Prof Mizanur Rahman told The Daily Star.

From now on, the admission seekers will have to write descriptive answers in the admission tests like they do in the Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC) exams, he said.

"The questions of the admission tests will be based on the HSC syllabus. The way the students take the HSC exams, they will have to follow the same method in the admission tests."

Asked about the reason behind making such a decision, Prof Mizanur said proper evaluation of students was not possible with the MCQ system. Besides, there is scope for forgery if there are MCQs.

"We have taken a number of initiatives, yet

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