

TANGENTS

BY IHTISHAM KABIR



Can you teach me photography?

PHOTO: IHTISHAM KABIR

My Photography Teachers

I thought I knew everything I needed to know about photography. Then I found myself in a photography workshop taught by Sam Abell. That week ten years ago changed my photographic life.

In fact, lessons I learned from photography teachers over the years guide me every time I raise my camera to take a picture.

But before talking about teachers, I pose a prerequisite question: can photography be taught?

The answer is "Yes." Much of photography is sheer perseverance, hustle and luck. With the right skills, a determined individual can go a long way. And most, if not all, of these skills can be learned in class.

However, only the gifted can become masters – but isn't that true everywhere?

My first photography teacher was Les Dowling at Foothill College in California. After several years of self-learning – camera controls, black and white processing, lighting – his course was my first formal course on photography. Mr. Dowling's instruction – in 1984 – placed my technical knowledge of photography on solid footing.

The following semester I enrolled in Jim Goldberg's Photography People class at University of California's Photography program. Jim had just published a book of rich and poor people of San Francisco. He had photographed the millionaires of Pacific Heights and the downtrodden of the Tenderloin in their homes. His stroke of genius was to augment each portrait with handwritten words by the subject about his or her life. The result was powerful and poignant. Jim pushed his students to go out and photograph people in their own surroundings, getting to know them and their lives.

Michael Kenna, who taught my Advanced Photography class, was Jim's opposite. Where Jim was down to earth, Michael was cerebral. Before every class, we had to pin up our weekly photographs on the wall.

Michael walked into class holding two L-shaped cardboards and immediately started cropping the photographs while critiquing them. He is a master of precise yet soulful composition who taught me to use cropping forcefully and creatively.

I have written earlier before about Frank Espada, the teacher I felt closest to. From him I learned egoless photography and empathy for the subject.

My workshop with Sam Abell was many years after Frank's class. For several decades during National Geographic's glory days Sam was their staff photographer. He is a master of photographic composition, creating impeccable photographs. In class, he was quiet but incisive, always connecting with the students. I learned several techniques including the notion of layers – making the photograph so that the background reinforces the subject instead of detracting from it. To this day I use Sam's lessons almost every time I raise the camera.

When I started bird photography, I quickly realized it came with formidable technical challenges. So I went to Jim Neiger, an expert on photographing birds in flight. For the first time since Mr. Dowling's class, technique dominated. Spending three days with Jim chasing Ospreys and other birds, I learned to use my large camera rig to capture flight. His lessons, particularly on exposure and focusing, have proved valuable.

There were other classes, but these were particularly valuable. Another lesson I learned was that a famous, successful photographer does not automatically make a great photography teacher. Passion, a selfless soul, and actionable techniques make the difference.

And no matter where you are in your photographic journey, there is always more to learn.

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

Abandoned baby rescued from Dhaka airport

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A baby girl was rescued by Armed Police Battalion (APBn) at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport yesterday after she was purportedly abandoned by her Saudi Arabia returnee mother.

The baby, aged about eight to nine months, was found sleeping on a visitor chair near the arrival lounge, said Additional Superintendent Alamgir Hossain of APBn.

On information, an APBn team rescued her from there around 8am.

Later, APBn handed the baby to police to send her to victim support centre in the city's Tejgaon, said the ASP.

The officials found that the baby's mother spoke with an Oman returnee while waiting at the arrival lounge. However, during questioning, the Oman returnee could not tell the name and details of the Saudi returnee.

Citing CCTV footage, the APBn official said a burkha-clad woman wearing a face mask was seen carrying the baby girl while disembarking a plane that arrived from Saudi Arabia around 2am yesterday.

He said the baby's name was missing from the passenger list.

Dearth of ICU beds a big worry

With around 60 beds dedicated for Covid-19 patients in port city, experts suggest 'rationing system'

ARUN BIKASH DEY, Ctg

With the sharp rise of Covid-19 cases, port city is facing a major crisis of available intensive care unit (ICU) beds. With around 60 such beds dedicated for Covid-19 patients in the city's public and private hospitals, people are running from one hospital to another, only to find out that almost all the beds are already occupied.

According to Chattogram Civil Surgeon Office, 518 Covid-19 cases were detected in 24 hours till yesterday, out of 2,535 samples tested, a positivity rate of over 10 percent. The rate was four to five percent just some 20 days ago. For example, on March 7, 63 cases were detected out of 1,607 samples tested.

In Chattogram's government hospitals, only 20 ICU beds are dedicated for Covid-19 patients, but demand for them has increased three-folds from average, said hospital sources.

Although some 40 ICU beds for Covid-19 patients are available at private hospitals, most cannot afford them.

Moreover, most of the beds in both public and private hospitals have been occupied already.

"We have 60 general beds and 10 ICU beds dedicated for Covid-19 patients, and all of them are occupied at present," said Rezaul Karim, managing director of Parkview Hospital.

"Many patients are in queue for ICU, but we cannot accommodate

them."

He said private hospitals charge Tk 10,000-15,000 for an ICU bed per day. Rezaul said if the government gives subsidy for Covid-19 patients at ICUs of private hospitals, it would help save many lives, especially of the poor.

In government hospitals, Chattogram General Hospital (CGH) and Chattogram Medical College Hospital (CMCH) each have 10 ICU beds for Covid-19 patients.

Contacted, Dr Abdur Rob, senior consultant of medicine and head of Covid-19 ward at CGH, said all the hospital's ICU beds are occupied at present.

"More patients at the [Covid-19] ward are waiting for ICU beds but cannot avail them until they become vacant," he said.

CMCH Director Brig Gen SM Humayun Kabir said eight of the 10 beds at the hospital are occupied currently.

"At present, we do not admit patients of private hospitals to our ICU, as we preserve the beds for our own patients," he said. "Critical Covid-19 patients are shifted to the HDU [high dependency unit] at first, and then to ICU as per doctors' advice."

Meanwhile, experts urged the government to go for a rationing system, so that critical Covid-19 patients can get ICU facilities at government hospitals.

"Many Covid-19 patients with mild respiratory problems get frightened

and rush from one hospital to another for ICU support. But they do not need it at that stage. Many such patients can be managed through high-flow nasal cannula, which is now available at CGH, CMCH and Bangladesh Institute of Tropical and Infectious Diseases (BITID) in Chattogram," said public health expert and head of BITID Laboratory Prof Dr Shakeel Ahmed. "Many patients need ICU, and so, a rationing system should be introduced at ICUs of government hospitals."

"Usually, once a patient receives an ICU bed, they cannot be removed until they are fully cured. But in rationing system, when condition of an ICU patient improves, they should be shifted to general bed for the time being, and the vacant bed can be occupied by another critical patient," said Prof Shakeel.

"In European countries, where Covid-19 patients overwhelmed ICU beds, the rationing system was introduced, and it is helping save lives of many patients," he said.

Contacted, Dr Hasan Shahriar Kabir, director (Chattogram division) of Directorate General of Health Services, said the government hospitals have already started rationing system in ICUs.

"The number of patients has increased so much that nothing will work, unless people do not become conscious and follow health rules to curb the infection rate," he said.



Two staffers bring in a portion of the 66 oxygen cylinders that have been supplied to Sher-e-Bangla Medical College Hospital in Barishal yesterday. With the sharp rise in Covid-19 infection rates, there is a pressing need for oxygen cylinders to treat patients.

PHOTO: TITU DAS

58pc Barishal brick kilns illegal: DoE

SUSHANTA GHOSH, Barishal

More than 58 percent of brick kilns are being operated illegally in Barishal division, according to the Department of Environment.

In March, DoE demolished 13 such brick kilns and fined four owners Tk 20 lakh in three drives, said officials. They said they will continue drives against unauthorised brick kilns round the year.

According to the DoE, the division has a total of 406 brick kilns, 102 are made with traditional drum chimneys. The remaining 236 have no such approval. Among the illegal brick kilns, 102 are made with traditional drum chimneys.

Md Muntasir, a biochemist at DoE divisional office in Barishal, said they could not intensify the drive in four months before March due to manpower crisis; besides, no magistrate was assigned in the process.

At present, a magistrate, who has come from Dhaka, is conducting the operation,

he said.

Md Kamruzzaman Sarkar, deputy director of the DoE office, echoed him.

According to the office, five illegal brick kilns were demolished and more than one lakh raw bricks were destroyed in Hularhat, Pirojpur on March 9. Similarly, five brick kilns in Amtali upazila of Barguna were demolished; and in Jhalakati's Nalchhity, three were knocked down and four were fined Tk 20 lakh.

Kamruzzaman also said they were facing a manpower shortage.

Thirty-two officers and employees are posted in the Barishal division while 24 posts -- including the posts of director and two assistant director -- are vacant, said the official.

"But we have decided to continue the operation despite the crisis," he added.

Rafiqul Alam, president of Bangladesh Paribesh Andolon (Bapa), Barishal divisional unit, said the Department of Environment should take strict measures against those involved in operating such illegal brick kilns.

Hotel staffer held over sexual harassment of woman

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

A staffer of Sylhet city's Hotel Noorjahan Grand was arrested yesterday over sexual harassment of a woman staying at the hotel for mandatory institutional quarantine upon returning from the UK.

The woman filed a case with Kotwali Police Station, accusing Shahin Ahmed, a room attendant of the hotel located at Dargah Gate. After arrest, he was produced before a court, which sent him to jail.

The woman came from the UK on Thursday and boarded the hotel for institutional quarantine.

Her family alleged that Shahin was calling the woman's phone repeatedly since Thursday evening, and then entered her room around 11:30pm and harassed her. After she made a complaint, police reached the spot and arrested the staffer, said OC SM Abu Farhad of Kotwali police.

Dr Naseem Ahmed, managing director of the hotel, said, "Our hotel is Sylhet's most reputed one for service, and the room attendant has been working here for around five years."

"However, as the resident complained of sexual harassment against the staffer, we've handed him over to police, and the matter is being investigated by them. We're helping the law enforcers," he said.

Man, daughter killed in Pabna road accident

STAR REPORT

A man and his daughter were killed and his wife was injured in a road accident yesterday when a sand-laden truck hit their motorbike at Tarabaria in Sujannagar upazila of Pabna.

The deceased are Md Alomgir Hossain (36) of village Char Ashutoshpur in Pabna Sadar upazila, and his daughter Sinha (6). The injured is Nasrin Akter (30).

Aggrieved by the incident, locals set fire to the truck. Police later rushed to the spot and seized the truck but its driver managed to flee the scene, said Pabna Sadar Police Station Officer-in-Charge Nasim Ahmed.

The accident took place around 9am

while the three were going to Sujannagar.

Nasrin was taken to Pabna General Hospital for treatment, said the OC.

In Joypurhat, a man died, and his son was injured when a speeding truck hit their motorcycle on Joypurhat-Naogaon road in Tetultoli area yesterday, said police. The deceased -- Abdus Salam (45) of Joypurhat Sadar upazila -- was a manager of Sonali Bank, Badalgachhi Branch in Naogaon.

His son Siyam (12) was undergoing treatment at a hospital. Police seized the truck but its driver and helper escaped.

In Moulvibazar, Sujan Karmakar (22) and Rajan Roy (23) were killed and another was hurt when a bus hit their motorbike on Kulaura-Rajnagar road in Rajnagar yesterday.

MAYHEM IN B'BARIA

Attack on journo, press club protested

A CORRESPONDENT, Munshiganj

Journalists in Munshiganj yesterday protested the attack on their peers and vandalism of Brahmanbaria Press Club by activists of Hefajat-e-Islam during their Sunday's hartal.

They formed a human chain in front of Munshiganj Press Club. Its president Mir Nasir Uddin Ujjal said, "We condemn the attack on journalists. Those involved should be given exemplary punishment."



An illegal brick kiln being dismantled during a DoE drive in Barguna recently.

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