

Dhaka Day by Day

Of Escapism and Exoticism

by Fayza Haq

Qamrul Hasan Qalon believes in escapism. That is because he feels the reality of life as it exists in Bangladesh is something he cannot quite grapple with. He has made public protests before, in the form of posters, for which he has been taken to task earlier.

Now he takes refuge in abstractions with question marks as symbols of the soul searching of mankind. He has done other abstractions too in which he has cleverly bended fragments of nature like the sun or leaves.

Qalon, who recently had an exhibition at the Sheraton, has made a series of mixed media in which he has brought in the local landscape with flowers blossoming amidst the grass. There is the brilliant sun in the backdrop, shown from different angles and delectable branches of trees in the foreground. The artist has not used human figures in these pieces.

There is then "The cry of motherland." The poet here feels that a lot is done in the name of religion. "The country wants peace but there is nothing but poverty and flood ruining the situation," he says. The artist has brought in mother earth. She is depicted as naked but with brilliant jewellery on her.

The artist has done a sculpture with folded palms which is meant to be a supplication to God. Tigers are shown around the main structure. The artist's message is that man's prayers to God remain specially when there are perils and problems.

The main difficulty in Bangladesh, according to Qalon, is poverty. More often than not he wants to forget it. "I want to survive in a beautiful atmosphere," he insists.

Speaking about the standard of the existing art, Qalon comments, "We in the east are like



Damsel in distress. Oil on canvas.

The artist has sought refuge in exotic subjects such as dancing girls with swishing 'saris'. The 'sitar' player at the side looks on the beauty with adoring eyes.

There is a piece with a woman's seductive bosoms, barely clad with a transparent red 'dupatta'. The piece is decidedly voluptuous and decorative. The hovering 'sitar' player once again enters the scene in darker colours. There is too the young girl dreaming about her admirer. The girl is bejewelled with earrings and various items of gold ornaments.

The couple in "Love" has a deer in the backdrop. The woman is obviously a village one while the lover with the "lungi" is there beside her, in the typical eastern romantic fashion.

There is then the village house with the "alpina". There is great stress on decoration and physical beauty. The creations with the butterflies are exotic and colourful too. The artist says, "I have put in a specific image of a butterfly but even if it did not exist you would still visualise a glamorous insect."

There were other sentimental pieces too like the mother wanting to feed the young, but with the infant not responding. "The feeling is parallel to the teacher wanting to teach but the child is not wanting to learn", the artist com

ments. We wear masks and ape the west without giving it much of a thought. Just as we wear western clothes, in the same manner we copy western techniques. We are not completely abandoning our cultures but there are those who are departing from it absolutely. I am a Bangladeshi. I don't want to be like a Japanese in western garbs. I find many of the paintings little more than window dressing."

Why does he repeat the themes of the country scene? "I am a city man but I am charmed by the landscape of the villages. I am searching for mental peace and escape for the same reason that I seek the flowers and butterflies," he replies.

He does not go in for the experimental. "In that you have to find your own meanings, and I don't fancy that. In places like Europe and America they have the time and facilities. I prefer Impressionism which I combine with the Oriental. Similarly I do not go in for symbols."

How is it that he did not portray the recent cyclone like some of the other painters? "Life has enough agonies without having to make them permanent on canvas", is his response.

Qalon has had several solo exhibitions before in Dhaka and has exhibited his works abroad.

First ever art auction

The first ever art auction in Dhaka was held on Friday at La Galerie in the presence of a throng of art lovers of the country, reports BSS.

La Galerie, the only promotional art gallery in the city, arranged the auction at its permanent art gallery at 54, Kamal Ataturk Avenue, Banani, yesterday afternoon.

paintings, drawings and sculptures from a broad range of artists like messrs. Kibria, Basset, Rafiqun Nabi, Hamiduzzaman, Kalidas Karmakar, Mahmoodul Haque, A A Sattar and Jamal Ahmed featured in the auction.

La Galerie has held nine exhibitions this year to promote art and artists in Bangladesh and next year the Galerie plans to hold more exhibitions of foreign and local artists.

Discussion on Ataur Rahman tomorrow

By Staff Correspondent

The people of Dhamrai Upazila will hold a milad mahfil and discussion in memory of late Ataur Rahman Khan tomorrow (Sunday).

The function, organised by the local condolence meeting convening committee, will be held at 2-30 pm at the upazila office premises.

Italian team visits Rupsha bridge site

A two-member Italian government delegation led by Dr. Aldo Sicignano visited the Rupsha bridge site at Khulna Friday, reports BSS.

Senior officials of the Railway Division of the Ministry of Communications and Chalna Port were present.

The delegation will submit its recommendations to the Italian government to consider Italian assistance for the feasibility study for construction of Rupsha railway-cum-road bridge over the River Rupsha at Mongla, Khulna.

Muzammel Haq's anniversary of death Dec 16

A milad mahfil will be held on the occasion of the second death anniversary of noted journalist and cultural personality and acting news editor of Daily Sangbad Mozammel Haq Montu on December 16 after Asr prayer at his residence, 45/1 Shantinagar, reports BSS.

Relatives, friends and admirers have been requested to attend the function.

Five get 'Mahub Ullah' Award '91

Five important personalities will be given 'Kazi Mahub Ullah' Award - 1991 for their outstanding contributions in different fields, said a press release, reports BSS.

The recipients of the award are poet Sanaul Haq for literature, Katiyum Chowdhury for painting, Mohammad Aslam for sports, Prof. Rehman Sobhan for economics and Mrs. Basanti Guha Thakurata, wife of Shaheed Prof. Jotimoya Guha Thakurata, for women education.

Each awardee will be given Taka 25,000 and a gold medal. Eleven scientists of Sugarcane Research and Training Institute, Ishwardi will be awarded for their joint contributions in the field of science.

Death anniversary of Dhir Ali today

The seventh death anniversary of eminent musician Dhir Ali Mia will be observed today, reports BSS.

Dhir Ali Sangeet Academy has chalked out a day-long programme which includes offering of lateha and placing of wreaths at the mazar of the musician, day-long Quran Khwani, milad mahfil and feeding of destitutes at his residence at Mohammadpur.



Saturday

- 5.00 Opening announcement, Al-Quran, Programme summary
- 5.10 News in Bangla
- 5.20 Recitation from the Triptak
- 5.30 Sports
- 6.00 Documentary
- 6.30 Mott-O-Manush
- 7.05 Banshari
- 8.00 News in Bangla
- 9.00 Shilpa-O-Sahitya
- 10.00 News in English
- 10.30 Special programme on martyred intellectuals
- 11.30 Khabar/The news
- 11.45 Close down



French ambassador M Serge Degallaix inaugurated the solo art exhibition of Iftikharuddin Ahmed at the gallery of the Alliance Francaise in the city yesterday. —Star photo

Discussion on Martyred Intellectuals' Day

Call to give democracy a permanent shape

Jute Minister Hannan Shah has called for united efforts of all quarters to give democracy a permanent base in the country, reports BSS.

He was speaking at a discussion, held in observance of the Shaheed Intellectual Day at the Shishu Academy auditorium yesterday afternoon.

Organised by Students Welfare Organisation of Bangladesh, the meeting was addressed by Awami League leader Muzaffar Hossain Paltu, student leaders Fazlul Huq Milon, Shaif Ahmed and Ohiduzzaman Chand and Mujib Khan, president of the organisation.

Prof. M. Muniruzzaman Miah, Vice Chancellor of Dhaka University, presided.

Mr. Shah criticised the acts of violence like vehicle damaging and burning and rampage in the city by some quarters.

What is the political motive of such acts? He asked any misunderstanding can be removed through discussion and the opposition can protest the government's excesses if any, but violence can bring no solution, he said.

The Jute Minister appealed to all to refrain from creating any confrontation or violent situation on any issue.

Giving a brief resume of the last anti-autocracy movement, he called for holding high democratic norms and values, avoiding the path of violence and confrontation.

The minister laid stress on

projecting the true history to the new generation and accepting truth as truth.

Referring to nationalism, Mr. Hannan Shah said the thinking that "Bangladesh is for Bangladesh" has created unrest in the hill tracts.

The tribals including the Chakma, Garo and Saotal also had fought side by side with the Bangladesh in the war of liberation, he pointed out and said, "here in Bangladesh we are all Bangladeshis."

He paid tributes to the memory of the Shaheed intellectuals, who had laid down their lives for the country's independence.

Prof. Muniruzzaman said the dreams of the Shaheed intellectuals were the establishment of a democratic order, rule of law, people's fundamental rights and an exploitation-free society.

Prof. Muniruzzaman said though a democratic process has been started, democracy is yet to take roots in the soil of Bangladesh.

He asked all quarters to show restraint, respect to law and extend mutual cooperation in eliminating campus violence and establishing democracy.

He also urged all to take pledge so that there could be no recurrence of terrorism on the campuses.

Mr. Muzaffar Hossain Paltu stressed the need for awakening patriotic feelings to get over political, social and economic crisis. Underlining the

importance of projecting true history, he said correct evaluation should be made about those, who had contributed to the country's liberation war. Mr. Hossain said the present political process, established through a lot of sacrifices, must be maintained.

Mr. Fazlul Huq said the present democratic order was the reflection of the spirit of the shaheed intellectuals.

He urged the country's intellectuals to play a neutral role on different issues and give the nation correct direction.

Students Welfare Organisations of Bangladesh also organised painting competition for children and set-speech programmes on the occasion.

Steps taken for self-reliant economy: Hafiz

Law and Justice Minister Mirza Golem Hafiz said yesterday that the government had undertaken pragmatic steps to build rural development infrastructure to attain self-reliant economy in the country, reports BSS.

He was addressing the first conference of Bangladesh Registration Tax Collection Employees Association (TC Karmachary Samity) at Wapda auditorium here.

State Minister for Law and Justice Aminul Haq addressed the conference as special guest. Secretary-in-Charge of Law Ministry Sirajul Islam, IGR of Registration Department Siddiqur Rahman and General Secretary of T.C Karmachari Samity Abul Hussain also addressed the conference.

The Law Minister, who was the chief guest said the present democratic government could ensure the overall development of the country. He said people of all strata should come up to stabilise and give institutional shape to the hard earned democracy to fulfil hopes and aspirations of the toiling masses.

Mirza Hafiz said despite resource constraint the government had successfully tackled the consecutive natural calamity and as such earned laurel for the country. He said peace and tranquility were the pre-requisite for our economic development. Necessary steps would be taken to root out terrorism, he said.

Referring to various demands of T.C employees, he said that these people had been rendering their sincere responsibilities towards earning revenue of erases of Taka. The Minister assured that their pay and service structure would be framed in conformity with other government employees.

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Accidents claim 2000, cripple 3000 every year

Timely measures can reduce road mishaps

Home Minister Abdul Matin Chowdhury on Friday stressed that timely measures, awareness, respect for law, application of law and discipline can reduce road accidents, reports UNB.

Speaking at a seminar on 'Accident Prevention' he called upon the journalists, teachers, intellectuals, literate section and people of other professions to come forward in motivating people in this regard.

Chaired by Additional Secretary, Ministry of Health, the workshop jointly organised by World Health Organisation and Bangladesh Police, was addressed, among others, by Mayor, Dhaka Municipal Corporation Mirza Abbas, Secretary, Road and Road Transportation Division, Manjurul Karim, WHO representative in Dhaka Abbe Sundari, Inspector General of Police Enamul Huq.

Quoting statistics the minister said on an average every year road accidents claimed 2,000 lives, crippled about 3,000 people and damaged property worth Tk two crore.

He observed that maximum number of road accidents in the country were due to faulty driving.

Inspector General of Police Enamul Huq speaking on the occasion said man made accidents is the major problem. Man, machine and methods are responsible for these accidents.

Secretary, Road Division of

the Communication Ministry Manjurul Karim informed the seminar that for 81.8 per cent accidents drivers are responsible, while faulty vehicles are responsible for 6.5 per cent accidents, 2.94 per cent for unsuitable roads and intersections, and 9 per cent for environmental causes which include mixed transport system, ignorance of traffic rules and setting of bazar and other establishments on roads.

ANA Abbe Sundari, WHO representative in Dhaka underscored the need for national commitment in the highest level to prevent accident.

The WHO representative emphasised that data relating to road accidents should be collected and preserved for proper law and policy formulation to be taken in this regard.

Shafiul Azam's qul khwani today

The qul khwani of former minister SM Shafiul Azam will be held today after Asr prayer at his residence at 27, Eskaton Garden in city, reports BSS.

Mrs. Zebunnessa Azam, wife of late Shafiul Azam has requested colleagues, friends and admirers of her late husband to attend the Qul Khwani and pray for the peace of the departed soul.

Weather

Dry weather to continue

The persisting dry weather which is continuing for the past three days, may also occur across the country during the next 24 hours till 6 pm today (Saturday), reports UNB.

Met office says night temperature is also likely to remain nearly unchanged over the country.

Today's maximum temperature in Dhaka was 27 degree Celsius and the minimum 16.2 degrees. Mymensingh registered the lowest 12 degrees.

Percentage of humidity was 78 in the morning and 65 in the evening.

Sun sets today (Saturday) at 5:14 pm and rises on Sunday at 6:33 am.



Aftab's photo exhibition begins tomorrow

By Staff Correspondent

On the occasion of the Victory Day a solo photographic exhibition of photo-journalist Aftab Ahmed will begin at the National Press Club tomorrow (Sunday).

Organised by Bangladesh Photo Journalists' Association the three-day exhibition entitled 'Independence' will be inaugurated by Begum Nurjahan Shiraj, wife of Shaheed journalist Shirajuddin Hossain at 10 in the morning.

Aftab Ahmed is a senior photo-journalist of the Daily Ittefaq.

Govt committed to uphold spirit of liberation war

Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman on Friday said the present democratic government was committed to uphold the spirit of the liberation war, reports BSS.

The government was also working to make the independence meaningful, he said, while inaugurating a children art competition organised by the National Museum at its premises.

Paying glowing tributes to the martyrs of the liberation war, and those who laid down their lives during the anti-autocracy in movements, Mr Saifur urged all to help the government efforts in making the independence meaningful through building a self-reliant economy.

Later, the Minister went round the premises to see the works of the child artists.

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