

# Dhaka Day by Day

## Behind the Lens

by Lavina Ambreen Ahmed

It's a sweltering afternoon and the Institute of Fine Arts ground is abuzz as usual. Soft music — the sound tracks of 'Exodus' and 'Phantom of the Opera' at the Zainul Gallery greet the visitors. Amateur photographer Mozharul Hoq Monju's second solo photo exhibition is going on. The lighting is just right and the room is spacious. Fortyfour coloured photographs are displayed quite thoughtfully on the walls. "I didn't confine myself to any particular theme", Monju says about his exhibition.

A businessman by profession, photography is Monju's passion. He often leaves Dhaka for a few days and visits different places in the country in search of subjects. But he complains, "my work keeps me so busy, I barely get the time to take pictures." In fact, the beautifully framed 12" x 16" photos all around were mostly taken during hartal days. Monju's exhibition mainly focused on the life and nature of Bangladesh. The appreciable feature is, his works are not sad and depressing as one might expect. He deliberately left the pressing problems like — poverty, pollution, political strife out of his series. Therefore, one can see photos of smiling children, tranquil landscapes of nature and day labourers at work.

There is an interesting picture of a dilapidated, ancient bridge in Khilkhet titled 'ruins'. The snapshot was taken last winter, at approximately 6:30 am. Monju, was going to his friend's place; they had planned a day-long picture-taking trip, when he discovered the bridge.

"The funny thing is, nobody could say anything about the derelict construction. Local people are pretty vague, they only know that it has been there for more than twenty years", the photographer says. Monju really seems to have a fascination for bridges. There are several photos of them. One is an appealing picture of a wobbly, makeshift bamboo bridge sitting precariously on a neat row of long, narrow boats over Beel Dakatia in Khulna. The caption is catchy: 'Necessity is the mother of invention.' The interesting aspect about the Bil Dakatia bridge is that it is adjustable. When the boats move, the bridge is folded and later on put back together again, explains Monju. Another photo illustrates a bamboo bridge under water standing useless in the monsoon, near the China Friendship Bridge. Then, there are two rather disturbing exhibits of the Harding Bridge showing carts plying through the now, dusty, dry grounds of the once mighty Meghna. They remind one instantly of the Farakka problem. An interesting photo of a wooden sculpture like creation captures the attention. It's actually the picture of a broken branch resting on top of another log near a lakeside. The top branch has two uneven parts and hence, the caption reads: "mother and baby sculpted by nature, the master craftsman."

Childhood: My father's Bedford is very touching. It's the snap of some happy toddlers playing with their father's cart. To Monju, the children seem to

be just as proud of their father's 'vehicle' as any city-bred child might be of the big Toyota his father drives. While taking this picture, his ever-seeking eyes found another compelling subject. A young girl was watching the kids playing from the window of her home. She had a lovely, almost sacred smile on her face and the idea of a 'sacrosanct passion of life' suddenly came to Monju. This thought prompted him to take the photo of the girl titled, 'sanctity'. Few weeks later when he visited the same location, the kids were there, but the girl was missing from the scene. He learnt that she had left for Dhaka looking for employment. A somewhat morbid item portrays vultures devouring a carcass near Mirpur. There are some impressive shots of workers. "Hand in hand" shows a man and woman holding a basket over their heads, as if sharing the work load. "Two generations," preparing child for future struggle, depicts a father and daughter walking on an embankment near Tongi, one fine morning. It's a refreshing change to see 'father and daughter' and not 'father and son' working together for once.

A gorgeous, rust sunset at Patenga beach, mesmerising views of boats and three close shots of unknown, wild flowers are also present in his series. There are many photos of children. Monju loves to capture the innocence of childhood. Scantly clad kids standing on the sandy shores of Cox's Bazar under an azure blue sky, boys playing with their animal friends in the water and plenty more.

Did Monju, encounter any difficulty during his photographic expeditions? "Not much. People are just suspicious about my intention at times," he says. He recalls an incident. He was taking the picture of boats when a man rushed towards him and screamed to others present: "Stop him, he is going to sell picture of our miseries abroad!" Monju did manage to get away with the picture but didn't display it in this exhibition. All in all, the amateur photographer is happy with his exhibition, which is organized by Bhuvan Academy. "The public response is great. The criticism and comments I have received are quite encouraging," he explains. But Monju feels more people would have come if the exhibition was held elsewhere. "After all," he jokes "people do, avoid the volatile DU area like the plague." He wants to take part in international competitions, but says it's very expensive. An enthusiast usually has to pay 25 dollars per photograph to participate. The entry fee prevents many talented photographers from trying their luck abroad. Monju wishes, there was a state-run gallery to promote young, promising photographers in Bangladesh.

His pictures are pretty, if not very imaginative. Some of the captions are however quite confusing and inappropriate. Monju's lively exhibits make one forget about the harsh realities, albeit for a short time and transports one to a different world, his world, behind the lens.



Sculpted by nature

## Weather

### Dry weather forecast

Weather is likely to remain dry throughout the country with partly cloudy sky during the next 12 hours till 6 pm today, reports UNB.

Met office said day temperature may remain nearly unchanged over the country during the period.

In outlooks for subsequent two days, Met office forecast a little change in weather while giving extended outlook for another five days it predicted gradual fall of night temperature.

Yesterday, the country's highest temperature was recorded 34.7 degree Celsius at Kutubdia and the lowest 20.2 degrees at Srimangal.

Sun sets today at 5:26 pm and rises tomorrow at 6:01 am.

### Durga Puja ends in Ctg

CHITTAGONG, Oct 22: The five-day Sharadia Durga Puja, the greatest religious festival of the Hindus, concluded here today with the immersion of the goddess Durga, reports BSS.

### 149 rounded up

Police arrested 149 people on various charges from different parts of the city yesterday, reports UNB.

Of them, 14 were warranted criminals and 60 held on charges of murder, dacoity, snatching, extortion and terrorism, said a DMP press release.



Jubadal activists of ward no 53 brought out a procession in the city yesterday demanding punishment to the persons responsible for the 'killing' of Tuhin in Motijheel thana custody cell recently.

— Star photo

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# traffic jam

SO ?

Scene : Motijheel C/A, 9.30 A.M. am



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