

ENGLISH MEDIUM SCHOOLS

A Case for Transparency and Participatory Management

by Hedayat Ahmed

There is a number of gaps in the system which needs to be plugged. This can only be achieved with the active involvement of school management and parents and guardians under the aegis of the government.

MS Yasmeen Murshed, chair-person of the board of management of Scholastica School deserves commendation for raising some issues which have been agitating the minds of most concerned guardians. I am referring to her article entitled 'Recognising the Role of Private Education' appearing in the DS on Friday, 1 August, 1997. Tracing the genesis of the emergence of private educational institutions (i.e. English medium schools in this context) she has very rightly underlined a number of shortcomings of the system. These are: (a) uncontrolled and unstructured growth of such schools; (b) absence of any regulatory body; (c) inadequate facilities; (d) uneven, sub-standard and/or poor academic standard; and (e) unsatisfactory management.

If I am not wrong, Ms Murshed is a pioneer in the field of private English-medium education in the country. She knows the problem in and out. She speaks from her own experience. Hence, it carries a special significance.

The English-medium schools, in spite of these inadequacies, have carved out a niche for themselves, at the primary, secondary and post-secondary levels of education system in the country. Some have achieved high standing, both nationally and internationally while others are yet to attain the required standard. It will not be fair to put all of them in the same category. Nevertheless, a classification on the basis of internationally accepted criteria will be in order. It will be in the interest of the schools themselves to jointly carry out an exercise so that shortcomings and weaknesses can be identified and measures taken internally to mitigate them; instead of some external agency undertaking the task.

The purpose of this paper is to stimulate a debate on the role of private schooling in the country with a view to making

them responsive to the needs of the community and meeting the total educational needs of their target group.

Over the last two decades a large number of English-medium schools from KG to 12 have sprung up in the country. Though most of them are located in Dhaka and Chittagong, nevertheless district and divisional headquarters have also enjoyed the distinction of having their own share. These schools are, no doubt, filling a void caused by the erosion of quality education in the Bangla-medium schools, both state-run and community-supported, and inadequacies of the conventional delivery mode of public sector education system. There is no denying the fact that poor teaching-learning methods, unsatisfactory quality and content of curriculum and syllabus, overcrowding, inadequate physical facilities, etc. drive away concerned parents from the publicly-funded education system, specially in urban areas. The alternative English-medium system claims to offer quality education in a less crowded and congenial academic ambience with facilities for co-curricular activities and creative pursuits. Whether such claims are substantiated by facts is a different matter. It is in this context that a discussion on the current scenario may be in order with particular reference to the following indicators.

**Administration:** Most of

these institutions are owned by individuals or a group of persons. The owners are the final arbiters and all management decisions are taken by them exclusively. There is very little consultation process within the campus or with parents whose children are the users of the facility. No parent-teacher body exists in a formalised structure to promote interaction between the providers and users. Thus, the parental needs and concerns are hardly addressed.

**Financial Management:** Tuition fees are fixed and enhanced arbitrarily without having due regard to the provision of facilities. Various levies are imposed which the parents are required to meet without question. Annual accounts and budgets are not made public and thus the parents and guardians are kept in the dark about the financial matters of the institutions.

**Quality of Teachers:** There are reports that teachers are not given adequate compensation for the services rendered leading to discontent and resultant management problems. Some institutions have developed in-house teacher education facilities while most have none. Thus, there is very little effort to improve teaching-learning methods. In many cases half and poorly-trained teachers impart teaching which fails to meet the standard of excellence claimed by them. There is a serious shortage of trained teachers, who, on the other hand demand very high pay package.

**Curriculum and Syllabus:** There is no uniformity of curriculum and syllabus among different institutions. In other words, they vary widely from school to school. There is dearth of good text books, specially in such subjects as history, geography, social studies, etc.; consequently the schools resort to imported text books which do not necessarily portray a true picture of our history and culture.

**Private Tuition:** Although these schools are supposed to meet the total educational needs of a pupil, yet most such pupils are required to engage private tutors or attend group tutorials. This puts extra burden on both students and parents, financially and otherwise.

**Home Work:** The authorities tend to burden specially young cohorts with too much home work. In other words, teachers, instead of performing their assigned duties diligently in the class room pass the burden on to the parents, specially mothers.

**KG Schools:** Most KG schools do not have trained teachers with knowledge of child psychology to be able to provide guidance at a very impressionable age. Such children are deprived of a quality teacher care.

**Physical Facilities:** All such schools are housed in residential buildings. Obviously such

facilities fail to meet the acceptable standard of a modern educational institution. One or two schools have started constructing their own customized facilities. All other schools should take steps to establish their own campus. Government should make it obligatory on the part of such schools to move to their own campus over a period of time. This is in line with requirement imposed on private universities.

It has to be borne in mind that land is a scarce commodity in Dhaka city. Thus, the schools may have no option but to move out to the outskirts of the city. With adequate provision of school buses, distance should not stand in the way of relocation. The shifting will also reduce traffic congestion specially in Dhanmondi area during school hours. Incidentally, it may be mentioned that most of the international schools in Bangkok have moved 30-40 kms away from downtown over the last few years. Schools have provided efficient and reliable bus services. Our schools should be forward looking and introduce innovative measures to provide services commensurate with fees charged. At least one private school has taken the initiative by providing bus transportation to its students.

**Private School Education Commission:** A private school education commission may be constituted to monitor the programmes/activities of all commercially-run private schools with a view to ensuring a proper quality of such education in the context of societal needs. English-medium schools are performing a useful function and providing a good service for the well being of the society. At the same time is the need for monitoring their activities so that they conform to our cultural heritage and prepare the students to meet the challenges of the future. In this context, the following suggestions are offered with a view to improving the delivery system of these institutions, bringing about transparency in financial administration and ensuring participatory management.

(a) The ownership should be properly defined and duly incorporated under the relevant laws, e.g. companies act/society act/trust act etc.

(b) Annual accounts should be got audited by a firm of certified auditors and presented before the appropriate forum.

(c) All such institutions should be got registered with a body which may be formed by the government for the purpose, something like an accreditation council.

(d) A standing committee of experts should be constituted to review curriculum and syllabus of such institutions with a view to bringing them in conformity with our heritage and culture, and ensuring relevance with the

needs of an emerging society. This committee will have adequate representation of such institutions as well as educational planners and administrators. It will also formulate a policy on prescribing text books for different classes.

(e) Government may provide guidelines prescribing qualification criteria of teachers for compliance by school authorities.

(f) Each institution must have a board of governors to provide overall guidance and general superintendence in respect of all matters pertaining to the institutions e.g. annual budget and accounts, academic planning and programmes, administrative and logistical matters, strategic planning, physical facilities, etc.

There should be parent-teacher body to improve interaction between parents/guardians on the one hand and teachers on the others.

(h) All English-medium schools should establish close alliance to promote meaningful interaction among themselves with a view to improving their delivery system. This can act as a forum to present collective response to issues of concern and constraints of this sector.

This body can initiate joint programme for teacher education which may be difficult on the part of each institution to develop individually.

(i) Since the demand for English education is spreading, it is imperative that teacher education is awarded a high priority in order to sustain their popularity and image of such schools.

Recognising the positive role of private school education in the country, I feel that there are a number of gaps in the system which needs to be plugged. This can only be achieved with the active involvement of school management and parents and guardians under the aegis of the government.

The writer is a former Secretary Ministry of Education and former Director UNESCO, Asia-Pacific Region

Polite Politics  
by A Husnain

Statecraft is too complex a profession, with specialised knowledge of how not to do things. We do not know the art of doing things. Un-doing is our undoing.

THERE is not much difference between 'polite' and 'politics' — the first five letters are common; the problem is with the phonetic 'tics' (tick-trust). Fools rush in where angels fear to tread. That's what I am doing, coming between AL and BNP. No apology, as I am minding my own business, because the politicians are there to provide political service to us citizens, namely, running the state, according to the 'menu' approved by us. This service is high-profile, and supposed to be transparent to the public — language was given to man to conceal his thoughts.

It is not a *bhat-bhat* affair between the two giant parties, but sisterly skirmishes. We can sympathetically feel the labour pain while pacing the corridor of the maternity labour ward. We plain citizens would like to offer a helping hand, but how?

Statecraft is too complex a profession, with specialised knowledge of how not to do things. We do not know the art of doing things. Un-doing is our undoing.

The weather is more predictable than the political moves in the LDCs. Mboto did not last half a dozen months after going into exile with a billion dollars (misplacement of a few zeroes hardly matters); and a past president of a country north-east of Bangladesh might be pacing the corridors of the law court. A Chief Minister of a state in a neighbouring country got the call from the court; while two countries with eight per cent growth rates suddenly crashed or dipped, perhaps due to crooked dealing by a multi-millionaire individual.

What is happening in Palestine is more fundamental than politics. The decades of

fighting in the Vietnam region was for the politicians, not by them. Bosnia is an ethnic affair, so why blame the politicians? What is happening in Rwanda is not politics, but tug-of-war of tribal loyalty. Where are the politicians, and what they doing? That is the art of doing nothing, and to get away with it.

Our politics has taught us a few virtues. How to bear suffering with patience, with each changing master or mistress. How to resign one's selfishness to the Call, and cling to the rope of poverty with the will to live. Adversity deepens the character, mellows the personality, builds up patience to cope with the severest provocations. Such strength of character bows us down with humility, and we remain closer to mother earth than those with charismatic personalities with flights of fancy closer to heaven. In between, the environment is polluted, because the caretakers are missing in the intermediate layers.

The 'two leaders' are trying their best to get rid of the civic pollution. The job is tough, therefore they have to be nasty every now and then (a mother handling naughty children); and sometimes, merciless, to make the dying lung more alive; and the lively more docile. Discipline means discipline-in-line; therefore democracy is sometimes spelled as demo-crazy. It is all a part of the philosophy of give-and-take, or, as the other party would put it: take-and-give.

Diana's funeral ceremony as seen on television had some lessons for us: the dignity of human sorrow; the quiet repose of consideration; the silence of respect; and the bond of death. But that is not politics.

Tom and Jerry



IAN FLEMING'S James Bond



James Bond



DRAWN BY JOHN MCLUSK



Tom and Jerry



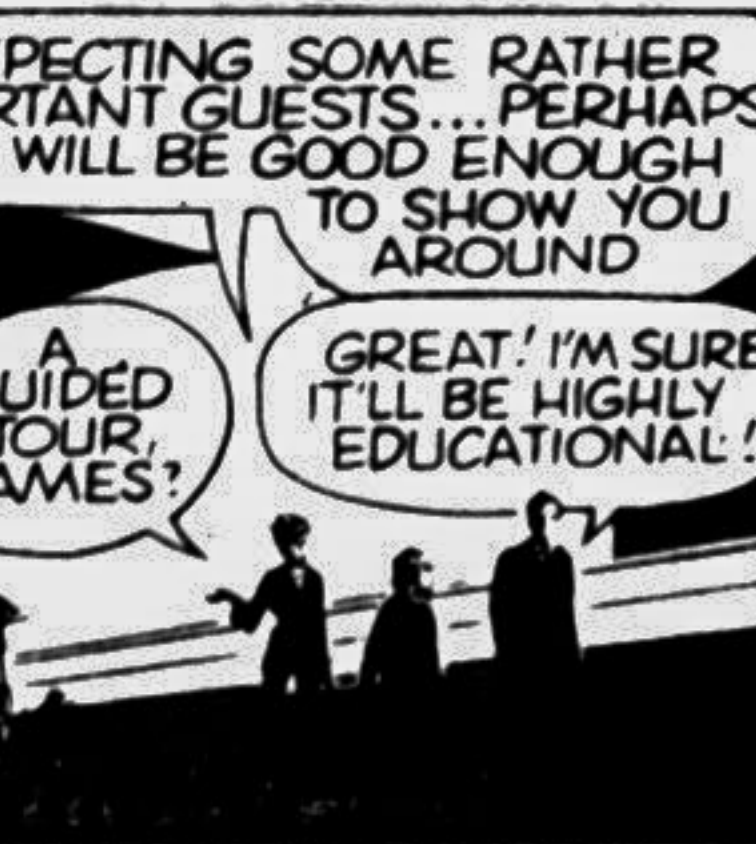
By Hanna-Barbera



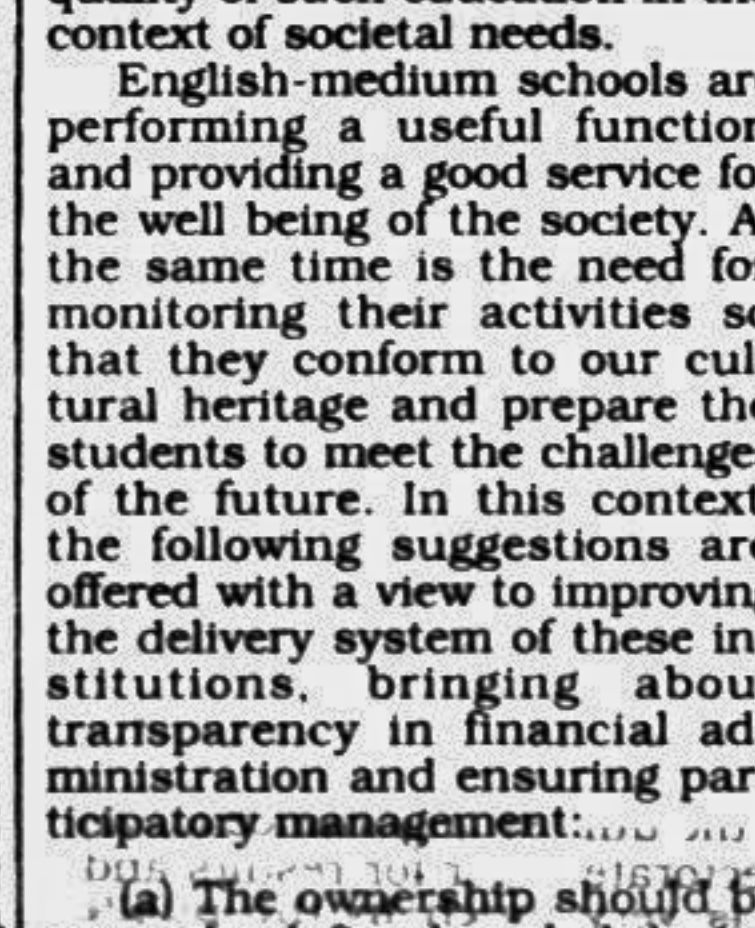
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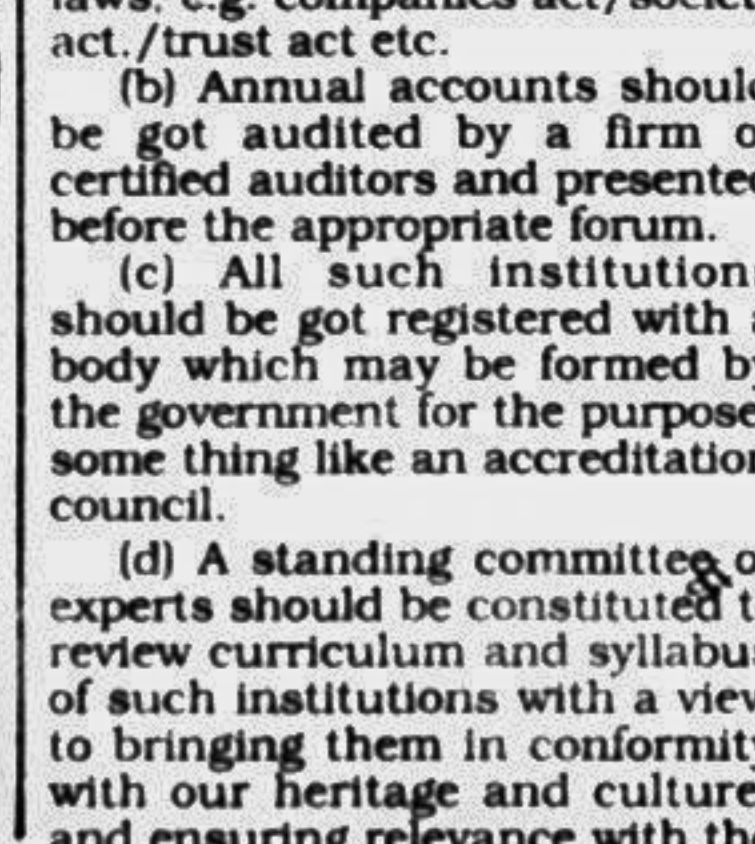
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By Hanna-Barbera



BANGABANDHU MURDER CASE  
Verbatim Text of Cross Examination of Thirteenth Prosecution Witness

Following are the excerpts from cross-examination of Dafadar (ret'd) Shafiuddin Sardar by advocate Abdur Razzaq Khan, defence counsel for accused Lt Col (ret'd) Sultan Shahriyar Rashid Khan:

Q: Did Subedar Major Syed Ahmed receive the parade?  
A: Yes.

Q: Were the Artillery personnel at your jeep from the 2 Filed Artillery?  
A: Yes.

Q: You didn't tell the IO that they were from the 2 Filed Artillery.  
A: I did him.

Q: Did you hear, at one stage of your stay at the radio station, that the chiefs of three forces would come to address?  
A: Yes.

Q: The three chiefs wore their respective ceremonial dresses.  
A: I didn't see their dresses. I saw their cars carrying respec-

tive flags.  
Q: Do you understand protocol? Protocol of the three chiefs?  
A: No, I don't understand the word.  
Q: When did they enter the radio station?  
A: Approximately at 8:30 am to 8:45 am.  
Q: Approximately, when they returned?  
A: I didn't see them when they returned.  
Q: Were the keys of the cars that you used deposited to the custodian at the cantonment?  
A: The key of the jeep that I drove was in my custody. I don't know about others.  
Q: Naturally, the cars were kept at garages of the cantonment.  
A: Yes.  
Q: Did you tell anyone about the incident before you made the statement to the IO on 30/11/96?  
A: No.

Q: Had you anything to explain to anyone about the incident?  
A: No.  
Q: You are an accused.  
A: This is not true.  
Q: This are arranged witness?  
A: Not true.

Earlier, advocate TM Akbar, defence lawyer for accused Lt Col (LPR) Muhiuddin and advocate Abdur Razzaq Khan for accused Hon Capt (ret'd) Abdul Wahab Joardar declined to cross-examine Shafiuddin as the witness didn't mention the names of their clients.

Five state defence counsels for the absconding accused also declined to cross-examine him for the same reason while nine others cross-examined him.

--UNB  
Further texts of cross examination will be published as and when received.



Certificate-awarding ceremony of FSI held



Clare Short, British Secretary of State for International Development, visited projects of Marie Stopes Clinic Society in the city yesterday.



Forest and Environment Minister Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury addressing a seminar marking International Ozone Day at a city hotel yesterday.

HERE and THERE

**Sangbadik Oikya Andolon**  
Sangbadik Oikya Andolan Monday demanded exemplary punishment to the killers of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman to end once for all the muscle power in national politics, reports BSS.

The Andolan at its executive committee meeting deplored the attitude of a section of people to find solution to national problems in a non-political manner.

**Chouddagram Thana Janakalyan Samity**  
Members of Chouddagram thana Janakalyan Samity based in Dhaka on Monday paid tributes to its former president, late Alhaj AKM Siddiqur Rahman at a memorial meeting in the city, reports BSS.

Justice Mahfuzur Rahman was the chief guest and advocate Mujibur Huq Mujib MP and Dr AKM Fazlul Huq were special guests at the meeting. Acting president of the Samity Dr MA Mannan was in the chair.

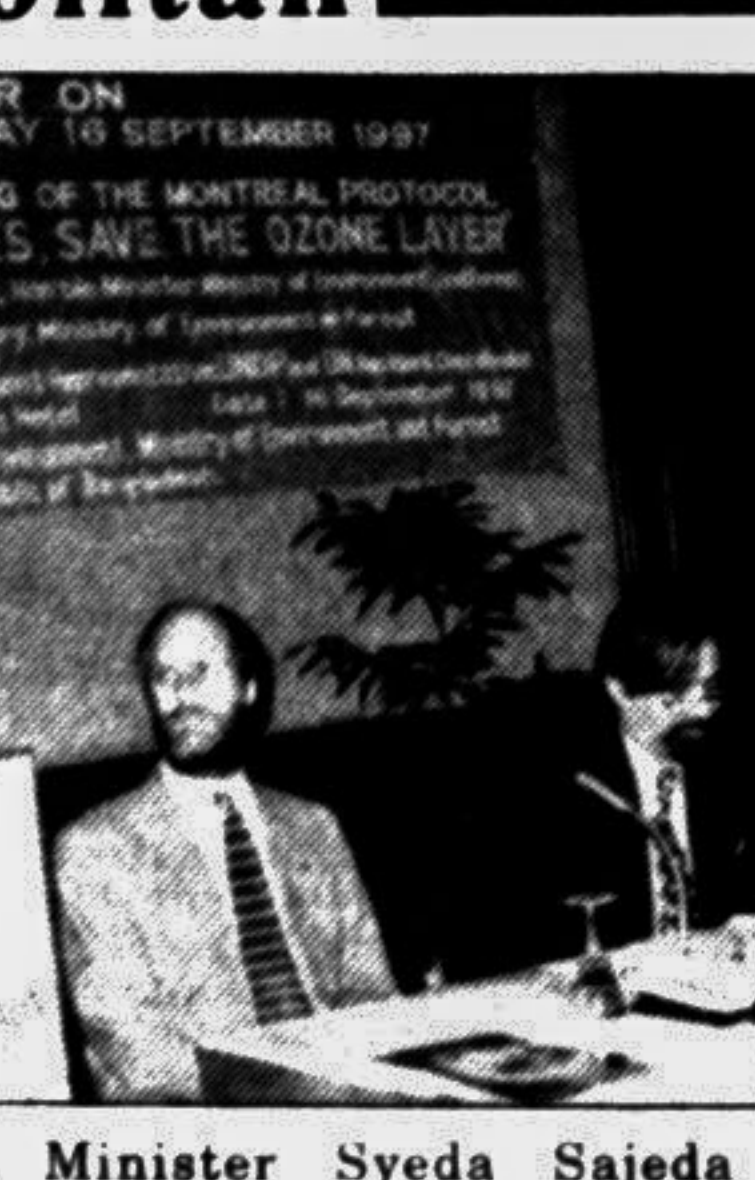
**DMP to check legality of acid sellers**  
In a bid to check women repression, Dhaka Metropolitan Police will launch a drive to examine the legality of acid sellers in the city, reports UNB.

All officers-in-charge of 15 thanas of the DMP have been asked to look into the matter seriously whether the acid traders were authorised or not.

The directive came from the DMP's monthly crime review meeting held at the headquarters with its Commissioner A K Al Mamun in the chair.

The DMP officials were also asked to gear up their activities to combat women repression and acid throwing, snatching and car stealing.

The meeting also had a special highlight on the city's traffic jam following earmarking of seven venues for holding rallies.



INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR ON 10TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE SIGNING OF THE MONTREAL PROTOCOL. USE NON-ODS TECHNOLOGIES SAVE THE OZONE LAYER

World Open University proposed

A seminar on 'Satellite Communication Applications for Distance Education' was held in Manila recently under the sponsorship of UN-ESCAP, says a press release.

Delegates from twenty-five countries and organisations, including Bangladesh, took part in the seminar. Pro-Vice Chancellor of Bangladesh Open University Prof Dr RI Sharif, who represented Bangladesh, was elected vice chairman of the seminar. He also presented a country report on distance education system in Bangladesh.

Appreciating the recommendation for introduction of satellite-based education, Prof Sharif proposed that a 'World Open University' or an 'Asian Open University' be set-up in a suitable place to enable students of different countries to attend international programmes or courses of the university, staying in their own countries.

**BCL leader held for extortion**  
From Staff Correspondent  
CHITTAGONG, Sept 16: Police Sunday night arrested one Chandan Bhowmik, identified as a BCL leader and former VP of M E S College, for extortion from a petrol pump near GEC crossing in the city.

Deputy Commissioner of CMP (north) Iftekar Uddin, during a sudden raid at the petrol pump at around 11:30 pm last night, caught Chandan red-handed at the time of collecting illegal tolls.

The arrested was sent to jail from court today, police said.

Bangladeshi artist participates in art show in NY

Bangladeshi artist AA Zafar Mamun participated in an international art exhibition in New York City recently.

Jointly organised by the Centre for International Art and Culture, New York and the China Art Centre, the exhibition was held at a Manhattan gallery last month, says a press release.

Mamun was the lone participant from Bangladesh at the exhibition, in which some 30 international artists displayed their works.

Mamun completed his Master of Fine Arts degree from the Beijing Central Academy of Fine Arts in 1995. Before leaving for China on a scholarship, he completed his BFA degree from the Institute of Fine Arts of Dhaka University. Six solo exhibitions of Mamun's work was held in Beijing.

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Weather

Moderate rain likely

Light to moderate rain or thundershower accompanied by temporary gusty wind is likely at many places over Rajshahi, Dhaka, Chittagong and Sylhet divisions and at a few places over Khulna and Barisal divisions in the next 12 hours till 6 pm today, reports UNB.

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

The country's highest temperature 33.6 degrees Celsius was recorded at Barisal, and the lowest 24.0 degrees at Sylhet and Swadip.

The sun sets today at 6:00 pm and rises tomorrow at 5:46 am. Maximum and minimum temperatures and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:

City/Town	Temperature in Celsius		Humidity in percentage	
	Max	Min	Morning	Evening
Dhaka	28.8	26.6	92	88
Chittagong	32.0	25.8	72	78
Rajshahi	27.6	26.0	92	92
Khulna	33.2	26.8	84	-
Barisal	33.6	25.4	75	-
Sylhet	30.9	24.4	97	-
Cox's Bazar	31.6	25.0	78	85