

Photography

# Commonwealth photographs capture environmental degradation

A total of 35 photographs drawn from 2nd Commonwealth Photographic Awards (2001/2) are being showcased at the city's Drik Gallery

TAWFIQUE ALI

THE British Council and Drik Gallery are jointly presenting a week-long photography exhibition displaying 35 highly praised pieces, including three prize winning photographs, drawn out of 700 entries for 2<sup>nd</sup> Commonwealth Photographic Awards-2001/2. Participated by 40 Commonwealth countries, the theme of this global competition was environment. Director of the British Council Dhaka opened the exhibition at Drik on Wednesday evening at a simple ceremony with the presence of Shafiqul Alam Kiron -- a front ranking Bangladeshi photographer who won the 2<sup>nd</sup> prize being the regional winner for Asia.

In his inaugural note, British Council Director stated that photography is a powerful form of art which conveys social message. He briefly highlighted the origin of this art form terming it as tremendously popular art medium to deal with global issues. "As a theme of photography, environment is very important in the face of rapid environmental degradation across the world. Photography is drawing with light. It gained popularity during the 19<sup>th</sup> century as a potential form of art. Kiron's being a winner in the competition reflects two things. One is Bangladesh's contribution to the Commonwealth. The other is the fact that we face a global issue like environmental decay right here in Bangladesh," he said.

Kiron, who is linked to the MAP photo agency has earned international recognition for his photography.

Commonwealth Photographic Awards is an event jointly organised by the Commonwealth Press Union (CPU) and the Commonwealth Broadcasting Association (CBA) in which both amateur and professional photographers are



First prize winning photograph by Alistair McNaughton

invited to participate. Open to all Commonwealth residents, entrants are invited to interpret the theme as they intend. Entrants send only one image each for the competition. Shots may be taken anywhere in the world focusing on the theme. The photographer writes a footnote briefly describing how the image reflects the theme. Photos will be judged on both technical quality and interpretation

of the theme. First prize for this years (2001/2) Commonwealth photographic Awards went to Alistair McNaughton, a British national residing in Australia. Alistair's snap was taken on a river in the Sundarbans the world's largest mangrove forest- in South Bangladesh. The image was taken at dawn from a paddle steamer - a passenger ferry which travels from

Dhaka to the Sundarbans. The ancient form of transport in the foreground and belching smokestacks of a brick kiln in the background illustrate a dichotomy. Born in Surrey, England, Alistair immigrated to Australia in 1981. He was declared the European regional winner.

A panel of judges comprised of Tim Page, a veteran war photographer, Ray Lowe, Director of British Institute of professional photography and Fernando Calvacanti, the Sunday Times photographer in London, judges the 2001/2 awards.

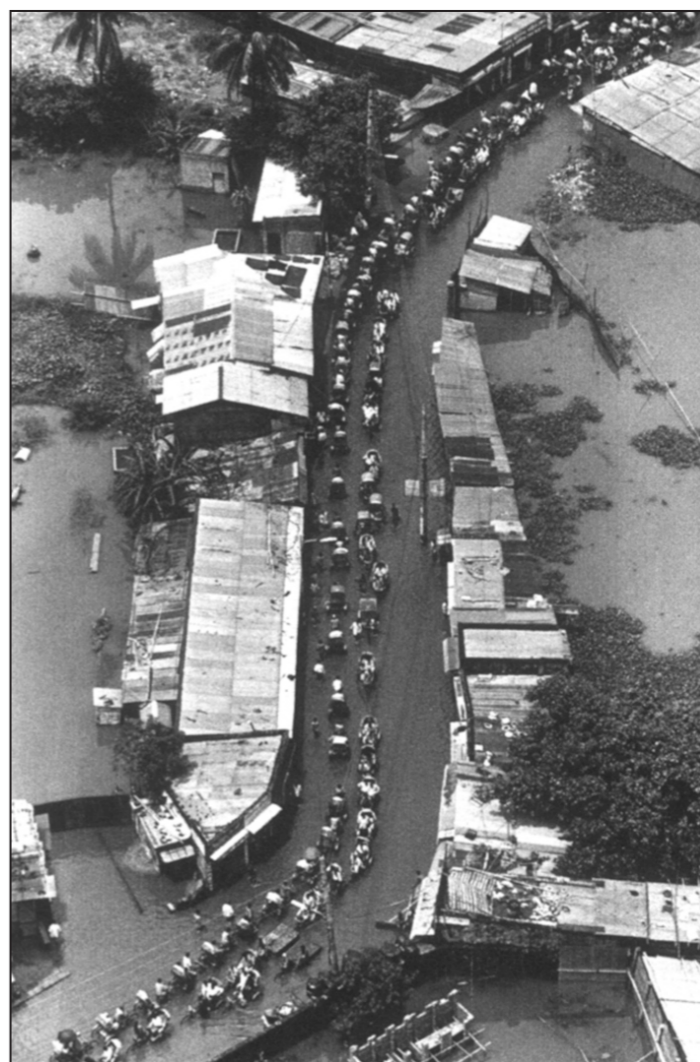
Regarding the First prize winning image, Ray Lowe says, "The photo illustrates how peace and tranquility of everyday life is destroyed by man's greed. Everything is technically and creatively captured in this photograph and that is very rare in a picture."

Shafiqul Alam Kiron's 2<sup>nd</sup> prize winning image is a depiction of importance of rickshaw in everyday life, in particular, during a flood in Bangladesh. This is an aerial view taken from Dhaka's low-lying, Motijheel commercial area. During floods mechanical vehicles can't move and boats and rickshaws are the only way out. Flood waters also seeps through the cracks of the ramshackle buildings in the area. Guy Harrison of Canada has bagged the 3<sup>rd</sup> prize for the Caribbean region. His photo portrays the destruction of the Mangroves which is a critical issue for many Commonwealth societies. This shot, taken on the Grand Cayman Island, shows a boy wading past a lone Mangrove plant. Will there be any for his children to wade past in the days to come?

Charle Lombard of South Africa captures in his shot a young boy of 8 years carrying food to his mother's house. His parents forsook their rural home for a better



Third prize winning photograph by Guy Harrison



Second prize winning photograph by Shafiqul Alam Kiron

harbour to recover from wounds infected by a ship's propeller during its annual migration to the warm waters of the South Pacific. The photo graphically illustrates nature's constant battle with man.

Dr Akhter Husain of Mangalore, India has titled his shot as "Grip on life." The picture portrays the struggle to survive in the harsh

environment. This tree amidst rocks represents perseverance against all odds.

George S. K. Chiew of Malaysia captures with his camera an old car dumped into a pristine mountain stream. It goes to show that people continue to pollute, without worry about the importance of preserving our natural environment. The photo also illustrates the muddy water of the river, caused by logging and construction further upstream.

Dean Dampney of Australia presents through his lens a fable titled "Emu Confusion."

Photographed at one of Australia's most remote stretches of coastline, 'Emu Confusion' provides a rare glimpse of this relatively untouched environment. In the white sand-prints there is a story not meant to be known-huge flightless birds at a rugged ocean's edge treading a mysterious path -- a path reflective of our own in a starkly contrasting environment. Order in disorders is found, which is an environmental phenomenon, whether it is the unified pattern seen in a traffic jam of cars, or birds' displacement of sands.

Above all, 'Emu Confusion' provides a reminder that our world and its environment is one for all to share.

Andrew P. Smith of Jamaica takes his shot to portray drinking water crisis.

This photograph is significant because it portrays the feelings of the community of Farquahs Beach, Jamaica, which lacks a constant supply of potable water. The girl leaning against the one-thousand-gallon water tank is waiting for it to be filled by the authorities on their monthly visit. The water lasts for only two days.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Painting exhibition

Art works of Bangladeshi landscape done by an American artist, Sarah Suto, is being exhibited at Divine Art Gallery at the Pan Pacific Sonargaon hotel in the city. The exhibition is open for all from 10 a.m. to 8:30 p.m. everyday till March 18.

Festival

To commemorate the completion of fifty years of Language Movement, Dhaka Theatre organises a series of programmes including Theatre Festival, Seminar, Village Theater Convention and Reception from March 16 to 22 at Mahila Samiti Auditorium in the city. A two-day seminar on the key notes like Art, Theatre, Poetry and Music will be held on March 21 and 22.

Saree display

A three day saree exhibition of Indian designer, Abha Dalmia starts in the city at Mayasir from March 17. Abha presents a large collection of traditional Indian sarees and the display is open for all from 10:00 a.m. to 8 p.m. on March 17, 18 and 19.

Art Exhibition

Japan and Bangladesh are holding a joint art exhibition at the National Museum art gallery in the city. The exhibition will end on March 20 that is featuring works of renowned Bangladeshi artist Mohammad Kibria, those of Noriko Yanagisawa, a Japanese contemporary artist and works of Kazi Ghiyasuddin, a Bangladeshi artist who is presently based in Japan.

Solo exhibition

A solo art exhibition of Abus Shakoor is being held at Bengal Art Gallery at Dhanmondi in the city. The exhibition features recent works of the artist who is inclined to pause and look back, to lift the fraying mantle and energise a willing legacy. The exhibition will remain open for all from 12 p.m. to 8p.m. till March 29, 2002.

Fashion

## Styles of an Indian fashion designer

Indian designer Abha Dalmia holds an exhibition of traditional Indian sarees at Mayasir in the city from March 17



CULTURE DESK

MAYASIR, a new outlet of local handicrafts, decoration items and clothings, has thought of coming up with fashion related ventures from the very beginning of the year since its inception.

The house, besides presenting traditional Bangladeshi items and designs, has achieved a unique distinction of holding several joint exhibitions of jewellery and outfits at home and abroad, with cooperation from reputed organisations of the Indian subcontinent.

As part of the joint programs of Mayasir, Indian fashion designer Abha Dalmia will be in Dhaka with her exclusive collection of sarees. On March 17, 18 and 19 the sales centre of Mayasir at Kemal Ataturk

Avenue in the city will showcase the exquisite exhibition.

Abha Dalmia is an introducing designer of great excellence and distinction. Her work has received appreciation in India and elsewhere in the world.

She is one of the few Indian designers who has over the years revived the age-old techniques of Indian weaving traditions.

As Maheen Khan, the Managing Director of Mayasir, tells, "We take pride in presenting the remarkable works of Abha to our valued patrons in Dhaka and look forward to bring the best of traditional wearable items in the region".

The saree exhibition of Abha Dalmia remains open for the general visitors from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. on all the three days of exhibition.

Music

## A talent in the world of music

Nirupoma Chowdhury Rahman, a singer of the contemporary times introduces herself to the audience through a newly released album of Nazrul songs

CULTURAL CORRESPONDENT

ZEE series, a musical production house has recently released an album of Nirupoma Chowdhury Rahman, a classical singer of the country. The album in disk titled 'Eto Jol O Kajol Chokhey', is a compilation of eleven Nazrul songs sung by the artist.

The first song of the list is the same as the title 'Eto Jol O Kajol Chokhey...', a popular number composed by the late rebel poet. In this song, Nirupoma performed quite well maintaining the original tune and rhythm.

'Tepantor-er Mathey...', the second song of the album, seems to be sung in a bit deviant manner by the young artist.

Some of the other songs that are popular among the traditional audience include 'Uchaton mon ghorey roina', 'Chaitali chadini ratey', 'Chirodin kaharo shoman', 'Amar apnar cheyey' and 'Shunno ei bukey'.

Nirupoma who has a smart background of schooling in music had the privilege of learning under tutelage of renowned music exponents of the subcontinent like Dipali Nag, Barin Majumdar, Wahidul Haque, Sadi Mohammad, Krishna Kanta Roy and Swapna Roy.

Nirupoma made her debut as a singer in the early 80's by participating in the television program, Natun Kuri. She is an enlisted artist for Nazrul and Tagore songs in Bangladesh Television since the late 90's. It has been a big achievement for the artist who has the credentials of performing in a foreign channel.

Nirupoma Chowdhury appeared a co-artist with Dipali Nag in Doodardarshan channel (DD 7) in 1997.

Apart from this, the artist has won numerous awards in the national level during over the last decade.



Exhibition



BAF Shaheen English medium School organised an art exhibition of the students' of the school on March 12 and 13. Renowned artist Rafiqunnabi is seen with Syeda Nasrin Akhter, Principal of the school, who is accompanied by a few students, to have a glimpse of the displayed works

Art

## Harvard gets gift of Islamic art

Christine Temin writes on the increasing popularity of the general public towards Islamic art in America

CURATORS of Islamic art collections around the country are reporting an increase in attendance in their galleries, a growth they can only attribute to the current political situation.

"We all need to learn more about and better appreciate the achievements of the Islamic world," says Harvard University Art Museums director James Cuno. Harvard is now in a far better position to present Islamic culture than it had been, thanks to a major gift of 120 works just donated to the university's Arthur M. Sackler Museum by Stanford and Norma Jean Calderwood.

The Calderwood name is on courtyards, professorships, and curatorial positions in Boston-area institutions including the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston College, the Boston Athenaeum, and Harvard. The couple have been generous and wise in their patronage. Stanford Calderwood makes it clear that the Islamic collection is his wife's creation, built over four decades of travel and study, but also that he must speak on her behalf regarding it.

"We'll be celebrating our 60th anniversary on March 17," he says. "Unfortunately, it has to be in a nursing home, because Norma Jean is suffering from Alzheimer's."

The new gift to Harvard is in keeping with his other substantial gifts to institutions where Norma Jean Calderwood studied and worked. Boston College, where she taught Islamic and Asiatic art beginning in the 1980s, has received more than 2,000 books on the subject from her library.

Her fascination with the Islamic world was sparked by a trip to Spain in the late 1950s. The Moorish art and architecture she saw there inspired her to follow the route of the Crusades, then to travel ever more eastward. Ultimately, she visited 15 countries in Asia, making four trips to Iran. She consulted with curators

and conservators at Harvard and the MFA. "Harvard, in effect, was co-collector with Norma Jean as she scoured the world to build her collection," says her husband.

That collection includes works from the ninth to the 19th centuries, in several media. A highlight is ceramics of outstanding quality, which represent every significant period and technique in Persian pottery. The ceramics complement the collections of manuscript illustrations that are the Sackler's particular strength in Islamic art. The gift of Norma Jean Calderwood's collection, says her husband, "is my way of paying tribute to her."

The Calderwood collection goes on view at the Sackler next year. Meanwhile, the museum is home to another Islamic exhibition - this one focusing on metal. "Glory & Prosperity" takes its title from a common inscription on metal objects, wishing the owner good fortune.

Melanie Michailidis, curator of this show of 74 pieces, notes that while the exhibition is limited to metal it is otherwise broad. It covers a huge range both in time and geography: from the sixth to the 19th centuries, Egypt to India.

To help the viewer make sense of all this, Michailidis has installed the works in chronological order, as well as according to function. And almost everything here was functional, with the exception of a very few pieces that are purely decorative. Among them are a pair of 19th-century roosters from the Qajar dynasty in Iran. Made of steel with gold overlay, they are animated creatures despite their stylization. Their claws grip the ground; their expressions are alert; their tail feathers jut up as if they could act as sensors.

One of the major misconceptions about Islamic art, says Michailidis, is that depicting the figure is forbidden. This is only true of objects related to religion, and since liturgical objects aren't integral to Islam as they are to Chris-

tianity, the figure appears very so often in the Sackler selection of ewers, bowls, lamps, and other useful forms.

Gazing at a pair of circa 1200 inkwells from Khurasan in Iran, Michailidis notes that the one with figural decoration probably would have been used by a bureaucrat, while the one with flowers could have been used to copy the Koran. She also notes that the decoration was so important that it continued on the bottoms of the inkwells even though no one would see it there.

Some motifs were purely ornamental, including the string of pearl-like circles around a bowl, while others were informational, such as the fish inside the same bowl that meant it was used for water. Unless the bowl was lined with tin, though, the water would have been for washing, not drinking; its copper alloys would have led to verdigris poisoning.

The Koran prohibits the hoarding of precious metals, and the Hadith, the sayings and actions of the Prophet, forbids eating and drinking from vessels of silver and gold. So most of what's at the Sackler is made of bronze, brass, or steel, with silver and gold used judiciously, mostly as inlay.

A patron might have an artisan come to his house to work with gold or silver, carefully melting out the amounts. Silver objects had to be registered, so they could be recalled and turned into coins if need be. A silver pen box in the show was an exception, Michailidis says, because it was used to copy the Koran.

The Sackler show comes with an impressive free brochure. Written by Michailidis, it discusses materials, decorative motifs, craftsmen, and other matters of importance to those unfamiliar with Islamic art. And that is most of us.