

THE rest house of the Bengal Jute Factory is a modern building surrounded by a well-planned garden. It is a patch of land designed according to urban taste. As we disembark, the employees who accompanied us, and the ones who greet us on the bank, lead us to the fare that we all came here for -- the Collage Kalpa or a "project of collage" -- the art workshop conducted by expatriate artist Monirul Islam.

Amidst the quaint natural environ, the rest house seems unreal a place, fit for an expensive weekend away from the treadmill of Dhaka. Though only 20 or so kilometres away from the capital, in this hub of nature, all preconceptions must be set aside. The artists are all working indoors, a few have also lodged themselves on the veranda. The intermittent rain for the last two days, has kept the artists packed inside the rest house. "Otherwise you would have seen them on the lawn or out on the river bank working on their paintings," says Luva Nahid Chowdhury, an official of the Bengal Foundation.

Seventeen artists from all over Bangladesh are participating in this Collage Kalpa. Luva puts a different spin on the concept of collage. She says, "The workshop itself is a

an image, whether an oil painting or a water colour, to be called a collage, it entails the artist to put together scraps of paper or other materials that comes outside the canvas or paper. Any painting with added or extraneous materials in it, is considered a collage. But here on the bank of the river Bangshi, under the auspices of Monirul Islam, things have to be a little different. As we greet the artist of international fame and ask him how his workshop is coming, Monir, with his usual humility declares that he is only trying to assume the role of mediator, one who is here to

trigger off the urge to explore something new.

In this workshop, water-based acramyn colours are put to the test, and on top of that, one innovative process of making the colour black is being introduced for the first time. The colour is made from the dust of charred rice.

As a matter fact, on July 15 -- the day the workshop was inaugurated at the Bengal Gallery, Dhaka, where Qayyum Chowdhury was present as chief guest -- Monir asked all the participants to gear up to do something they had not tried before. He was determined to



Ronni Ahmed explains his work to the visiting journalists.

collage of sorts, there are artists of different age and stature."

The Bengal foundation has so far been instrumental in stretching the corporate clout to help nurture art and culture. After two major art camps and one workshop on art writing, the Collage Kalpa is set to bring together artists from far and wide -- not only in terms of where they are working now, but also of the artistic languages they practice.

The word collage stands for a collection of things. For



Engrossed in work: Tarun Ghosh sticking pieces of silvery paper on his abstract composition.

do something out of the ordinary by using indigenous materials. Another feature of this workshop, which the artist wished to incorporate, is that the participant will try and work on corrugated and grey boards. Monir, with his usual panache, and a tendency to transgress rules, has tried out many materials as the surface of his paintings. In Collage Kalpa he wants others to feel that joy of breaking free from the use of conventional material.

"I thought we should grab this chance to spend four days away from the hustle and bustle of the city and try