

our hands at something unconventional, resorting to newer materials," says Monir. He believes that in collages materials are used to break the monotony of the picture plain. However, as the conversation veers to the subject of the strong presence of nature in all its pristine glory, he says, "One needs to adapt to such beautiful surroundings. The scenes are comforting for the eyes. In Dhaka the horizon is blocked, here the openness seems to overwhelm you." Monir is more than familiar with the effects of the surroundings on the mind of an artist, and he has this personalised tenet that he thinks applies to artists in general -- artists need comfort but they cannot afford to relax.

Here in the midst of nowhere, in proximity with the sloshing water of the river, and with the fresh, damp air constantly presenting the distinct whiff of the virgin nature, one tends to lose oneself in oblivion. Artist Rafi Haq, who lodged himself on one corner of the veranda, says that he is struck by a strong sense of nostalgia. "I grew up beside a river in Kushtia, and I find it hard to keep myself engrossed in work alone," he confesses. This 30- plus artist is working on the prescribed corrugated board, and is contemplating two circles colliding in the middle of his piece. "It may not remain the same, a painting that begins with a circle may change into something else in the end," Haq says to elucidate the uncertainty that guides the course of the creative process.

As for the guideline or the basic principles of art, the man at the helm, Monirul Islam, has humbly asked all the participants to find their own solutions to the problems at hand. Seventeen practising artists have their own way of forging an artistic solution as the works in the workshop testifies.

N the two-storied rest house work is in progress in every corner. Rain keeps them from venturing outdoors. It is the second day of the workshop and many of the participants have amassed two or three works. The workshop provides materials for as many works the artists can produce within the stipulated time frame -- which is four days. However, each artist is to submit four paintings at the end of the workshop.

Monir, the venerable 60-plus artist, has laid out the procedural map for this workshop. He wanted to demonstrate how the acramyn colours which come in dust and are usually used for colouring fabric, can be used. "I brought a strong binder adhesive from Spain, the artists were provided with the same kind of materials to make their own paint," Monir explains. If there is a rule to fol-



Coming together: Monir lends a hand while a finished work on board is being pasted on canvas.



Artist Shajahan Ahmed Bikash takes on the corrugated board -- the newly introduced medium.

low in Collage Kalpa, it has to do with the way colours should be applied.

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. "I first learnt it from a Moroccan artist who made a