

paste from the dust of burnt rice and achieved a different kind of surface quality," discloses Monir. He is dead against keeping technical secrets. "This is not the age of keeping professional secrets to oneself," he says emphatically. As an artist, Monir is disseminating the latest technique he mastered. "Technique can seem like a trap if one cannot use it to achieve one's own end," he cautions. In the workshop, in going about doing what artists do well, which is making paintings, all caution seems to be set aside. The floors of the two-story building are taken up -- artists at work are oblivious to the arriving

nature. In their usual romantic gesture, the river, the rain, have made their way into the otherwise abstract expressions.

Ronni too believes that newer things and ideas are creeping into his paintings as he is in a different ambience. "Here the existing expertise of many artists may have been renewed," says Ronni. As a keen observer of the art scene, he also explains that "here in the workshop the tendencies in mainstream art practices are distinctly surfaced". When I ask him about the effort each artist puts in his work to attain a distinct personal identity,

*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.*



Mohammad Yunus, putting the last few touches to his *Symphony of Rain*.

guests. Some even feel a bit trammled by our presence, but most keep at their work.

Ronni Ahmed, one of the youngest participants, is in his usual form -- full of irony-fueled mirth. If most painters are schooled in high-art sensibility, he is an exponent of the low. The first sight of an indigenous collage material on Ronni's canvas amuses many. I ask the artist how it got there in the first place. "I just went out for a stroll and noticed these dried twigs and picked them up to add them to my canvas," says Ronni. Monir is duly excited about this, as it is his contention that the environment will inevitably encroach on the space of the painting.

In the warm and cosy interior of the rest house, many other artists were harping on the subject of communion with



Lipi, working on her self-portrait with a doll as the added element.