

Playing songs of rural motifs

Bayan Sangeet, an exhibition of weaving craft by Nitya Upahar, opens

DURDANA GHAS

A cock with a crash on its head, a peacock, a flower plant with two buds and diamond patterns -- all sound quite common as elements. But only a few have the eyes to see through the mundane aspects of these objects and create eye-catching articles based on them.

Chandrashekhar Saha, an established designer and Mariam Begum, a creative village housewife from Charkakra village of Companiganj in Noakhali district, have the eye for this type of familiar objects and they created a new trend of design using rural motifs.

The motifs applied in the designs of sari, kamiz, fatua, T-shirt and mat displayed in the exhibition 'Bayan Sangeet' (Song of Weaving) by Nitya Upahar, a fashion outlet, express the trend of the folk art of our country.

Around eight exclusive motifs bearing the core of our rural culture are brilliantly used with an implied insight of musical notation to create an idyllic setting in the urban fashion arena.

Bahar Rahman, a member of Nitya Upahar, organiser of the exhibition, said that the exhibition has tried to look into the sources of our culture.

"Mariam had no formal training on designing. She has a small dyeing unit of her own where she makes dyes. She picked up the motifs from the rural way of life and that is very encouraging," he said.

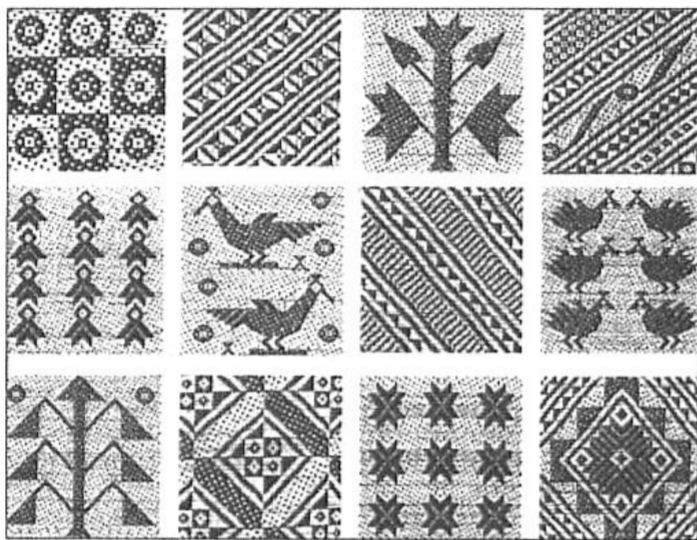
"We organised this exhibition to uphold our tradition. We want to promote our culture, our people and their skills," said Bahar.

Chandrashekhar Saha, who has been working on handloom-based products since 1981, said that he found the inspiration of working with rural patterns by observing the singular motifs by Mariam Begum.

"These designs are based on the rural themes. I got inspiration from Mariam's work. Then I gave



Mariam Begum, 2nd left, weaving mats with her mates at her village in Noakhali (above). Exclusive motifs crafted by Mariam used in the dresses and articles being displayed at the exhibition. Some of the traditional motifs (right).



her assignments and started thinking of exhibiting the designs based on the motifs," he said.

"I have a penchant for traditional concept. So I tried to create new trends preserving the authenticity of the source at the same time. I worked to create contemporary designs using traditional motifs," said Chandrashekhar.

According to him, the mats woven in our villages are excellent examples of surface ornamentation. A mat is an indispensable part of the village life and is the core theme of the exhibition. The designs of a mat bear traditional art. In rural areas guests are welcomed to sit on mats that bears the taste of the owner of the house.

"The main job of weaving a mat is done by the rural housewives. Following two indigenous ways of weaving they create beautiful designs of cane based on traditional motifs. I have tried to maintain the rhythmic pattern of their weaving," he said.

There are many types of mats - prayer mats, bed mats, sitting mats. The idea of Patishapta, a

traditional winter cake, came from the notion of mats. Mat is called 'Pati' in Bengali. The designers tried to bring that pattern on clothes.

Many artisans of Companiganj area of Noakhali are involved with weaving mats from the passion and interest they have for the art. Among other areas of the country, Sylhet, Faridpur, Barisal, Rajshahi, Tangail, Khulna, Rangpur, Dinajpur, Comilla and Chittagong are renowned for making mats.

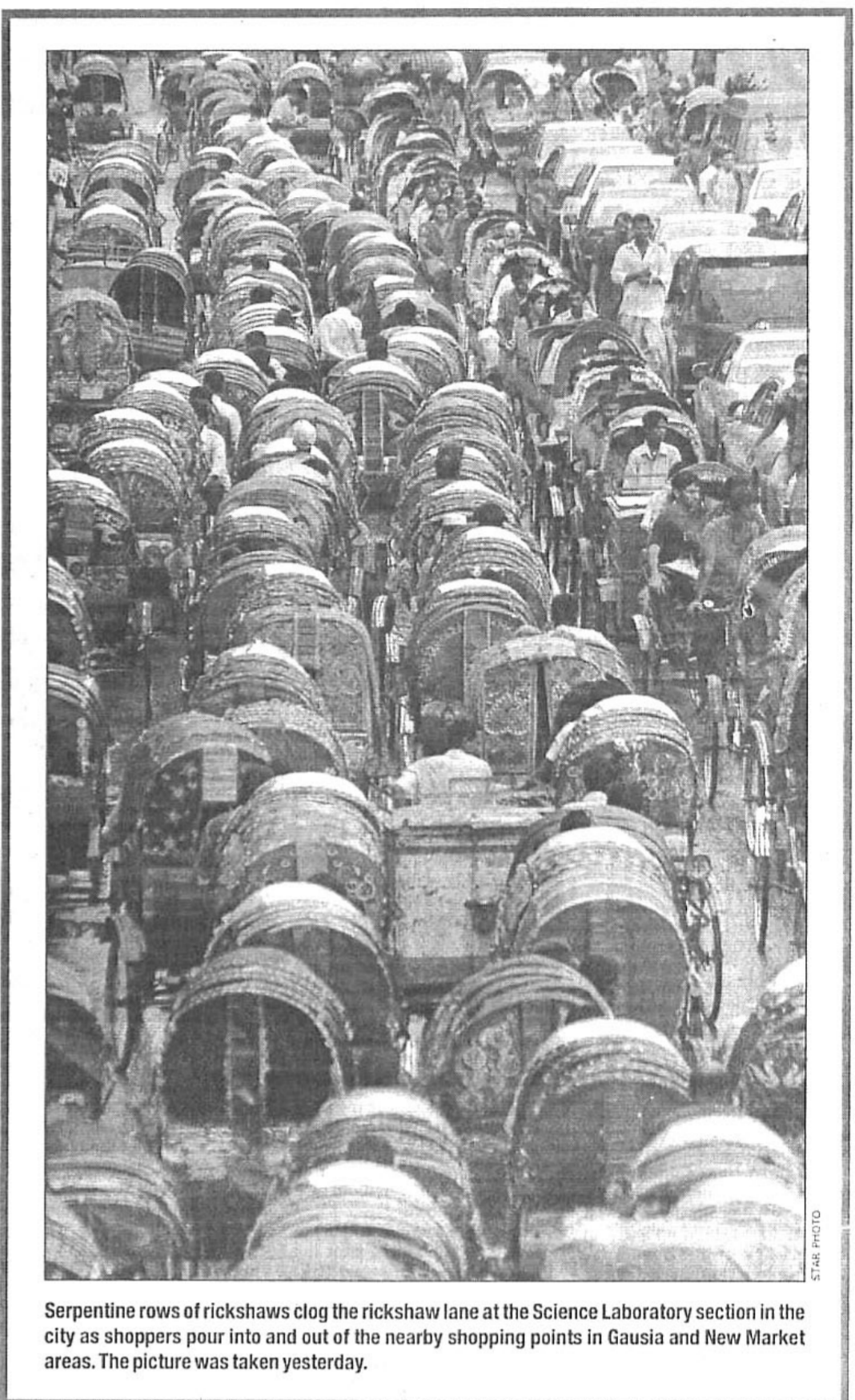
"This motif-based art can be revived to breathe life into our cultural identity. Unfortunately a section of our young generation is suffering from identity crisis. We do not need Indian designs to dress our youths. If we can look into the potentials of our own culture then we can live into our traditions and have global outlook at the same time," said Chandrashekhar.

"I believe that our consumers are quite conscious about the heritage but they are sleeping. Through this kind of works we can wake them up and introduce them with our core culture. We are also trying to show them how the products were made through a short film," he said.

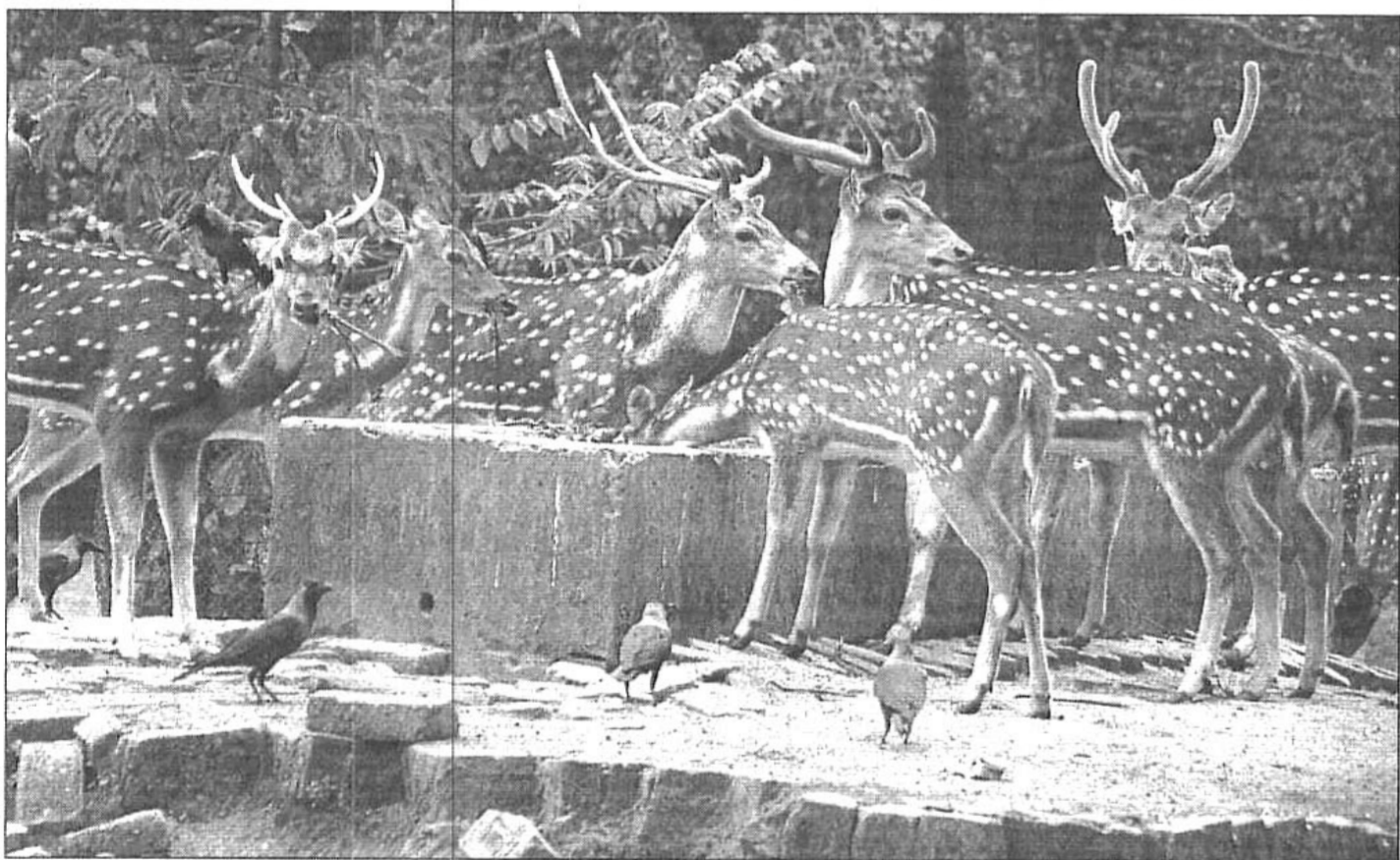
Chandrashekhar previously worked with the designs created from the clay moulds used by village housewives for making designs on Shandesh, a traditional sweetmeat.

Chandrashekhar is a member of the executive committee of Bangladesh National Craft Council, a consultant at Aarong and Nogordola and co-writer of the book 'Behind the Products.' Mariam Begum is an award-winning craftswoman at the National Crafts Council.

The exhibition opened on October 6 and will continue for seven days on the third floor of Aziz Super Market at Shahbagh.



Serpentine rows of rickshaws clog the rickshaw lane at the Science Laboratory section in the city as shoppers pour into and out of the nearby shopping points in Gausia and New Market areas. The picture was taken yesterday.



Deer too dear, sale dull at zoo

CITY CORRESPONDENT

The sale of deer at Dhaka Zoo has plummeted from 70 deer last year to only three this year due to the introduction of pricey possession certificates and renewal fees imposed by the Department of Forest, said zoo officials.

A zoo official on condition of anonymity said, "The deer selling scheme was a good source of our income. The possession certificate fee and the price [fixed for a pair of deer] made it very expensive and discouraging for buyers."

Before the new policy was imposed, the zoo earned Tk 10.5 lakh last year from the sale of 70 deer.

Under the new policy, a buyer is required to obtain a possession certificate for a pair of deer at a cost of Tk 10,000 --

additional to the payment against a price tag of Tk 30,000 for the animals. Moreover, the owner will have to pay Tk 5,000 in renewal fees every year for the deer.

It has also been made mandatory for the owner to pay fees once a doe gives birth to any fawn.

"There was no possession certificate fee before and the sale declined after it was introduced in January this year," the official added.

As the spotted deer population was growing rapidly, the zoo the authorities in order to solve an acute accommodation problem came up with the idea of sale of the deer in 1986 with the permission of the Department of Forest.

Sale of any pregnant doe, which generally gives birth to one or two fawns at a time each

year, is prohibited and all sales are suspended from February through April during the reproductive season of deer.

"The idea was to find good foster homes for the deer. It kind of solved our problem too," said the official.

The number of deer and some carnivorous animals are increasing every year, but the budget allocation remains the same, he said adding that 154 deer are being housed there in three cages meant for only 50.

On an average, a deer eats Tk 38 worth of fodder everyday. Therefore, the present cost of feeding all the deer in the zoo each year is Tk 21,35,980.

Out of an annual budget of Tk 3.75 crore, Dhaka Zoo spends Tk 2.50 crore on animal fodder alone, said the official.

Though the expense of feeding herbivorous animals (ani-

mals that feed only or mainly on grass and other plants) is less than that of carnivorous animals (animals that eat other animals), the zoo now has to spend a significant amount of its budget just to feed the deer.

Another zoo official speculated, "The recent newspaper coverage on illegal possession of animals including deer, peacock and different types of birds by detained political leaders also scared some people [prospective buyers] away."

Established in 1974 on an area of about 186 acres, the zoo currently is home to 165 species of animals totalling around 1,823. Out of those, 55 are mammals, 72 birds and 32 are fish.

Different species of reptiles including snakes and crocodiles are also in its collection.

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- Isha Khan Shopping Complex-Friday
- Rajlaxmi Complex-Friday
- Stadium Market-Friday
- Bangabazar Market-Friday
- National Museum-Thursday
- Ahsan Manzil--Thursday
- New Market-Tuesday
- Gausia Market-Tuesday
- Mouchak Market-Sunday
- Dhanmondi Hawkers Market-Tuesday
- Dhanmondi Hawkers Market-Tuesday
- Eastern Plaza-Sunday
- Farmview Super Market-Sunday
- Mukajuddha Jadughar-Sunday
- Dhaka Zoo-Sunday
- Shislu Jadughar-Sunday