

## WHAT'S ON



**Book Launch**  
Book: Two Friends, One Cause:  
Remembering the Concert for  
Bangladesh  
Venue: Bengal Shilpakala Academy  
Date: Dec 15  
Time: 4:30pm



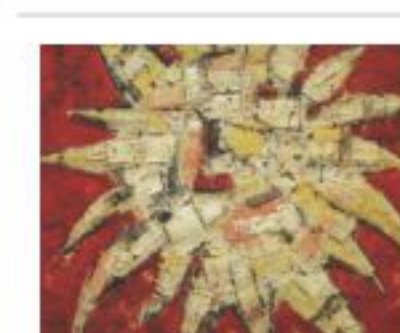
**Annual Art Exhibition**  
Organisers: Shilpakala Academy  
and Dhaka Art Gallery  
Venue: National Art Gallery,  
Shilpakala Academy  
Date: Dec 9-21



**Solo Art Exhibition**  
Title: Quest for Reality  
Artist: Rafiqun Nabi  
Venue: Bengal Gallery, Dharmadhi  
Date: Dec 7-19  
Time: 12pm-8pm



**Solo Art Exhibition**  
Title: Return to Eden  
Artist: Nasima Khanam Queenie  
Venue: Alliance Française de  
Dhaka, Dharmadhi  
Date: Dec 13-27  
Time: 3pm-8pm



**Solo Art Exhibition**  
Artist: Kazi Sahabuddin Ahmed  
Venue: Institute of Asian Creatives,  
Gulshan-2  
Date: Dec 6-15  
Time: 12pm-8pm



**Solo Painting Exhibition**  
Artist: Nurun Nahar Sultani  
Venue: Galerie Zoom, Alliance  
Française de Dhaka,  
Dharmadhi  
Date: Dec 5-19



**An Evening of Nazrul Sangeet**  
Artist: Dr. Pradip Kumar Nandi  
Venue: Indira Gandhi Cultural  
Centre, H-35, R-24, Gulshan-1  
Date: Dec 13



**Theatre**  
Play: Bhager Manush  
Troupe: Shorony  
Venue: Experimental Theatre  
Hall, Shilpakala Academy  
Date: Dec 14



Ashfaqur Rahman

SADYA AFREEN MALICK

For Quazi Akhtuzzaman and Mirana Zaman, March 7, held a special meaning.

"That steel cabinet you see there", he would say pointing to the corner of his living room, "was the make-shift vault that held Bangabandhu's historic speech till the night before the army crackdown." At a time when such an act would have led to certain imprisonment, they held on to the document till the time came to pass it on to the officials of Shadhin Bangla Betar Kendra. Mirana Zaman a cultural activist and a staff of then Radio Pakistan and Zaman, was the circulation manager of Ittefaq in the 70s.

Ashfaqur Rahman, who retired as regional director of Bangladesh Betar, was a witness to the turbulent period at the time of broadcasting the speech on the radio. "There was hatred brewing up among the two wings of Pakistan. During the tidal wave and natural calamity of Nov 12, 1970, it was further evident that the Pakistani rulers were indifferent about erstwhile East Pakistan. On February 28, 1971, after returning from an official picnic we saw military guards posted at the gate—"it was for security reasons" they said.

On March 1, while we were relaying a cricket match from the stadium there was an announcement in news that president Yahya Khan had postponed the assembly session. News was broadcast centrally from Karachi then. No sooner was this announced that you could literally feel the wave of fury that spread across the ground. Then there was an utter explosion of the public sentiment, the match was hastily abandoned and the crowd started to pour of the stands and torch whatever they could find as a protest against Yahya's orders.

"Meanwhile the leader of the majority party Sheikh Mujibur Rahman addressed a press conference and announced the non-cooperation movement from that

# Freedom ON-AIR

## The unsung heroes of Bangladesh Betar

very day," said Rahman. Practically the whole country had come to a stand still and Section 144 was implemented after dark. "From March 4, all the radio stations, which were directly under the central govt., defied all regulations and changed its nomenclature from Radio Pakistan to "Dhaka Betar Kendra". The other stations in Chittagong, Khulna, Rahshahi, Sylhet and Rangpur followed the lead.

"At this important juncture the then-regional director of radio, Ashrafuzzaman Khan played a

Chowdhury. Kazi Abdur Rafique, Bahram Siddiqui, Shamsul Alam, Taber Sultan. We were given orders to face any eventuality and we stayed during late hours in shifts at the radio station.

"During this time, the agitated students and politicians, journalists and intellectuals had been urging the leaders to take immediate steps to declare independence. The artists had boycotted the station, but we were able to convince them that the only option for us was to stay united." Soon after, as we know, the art-

calls from the military authorities. "Meanwhile, there was a tense situation everywhere. Ashrafuzzaman Khan was constantly in liaison with Bangabandhu. He was at the stage and Bangabandhu was due to arrive at the Race Course Maidan to deliver his speech at 2pm. At the station, the seconds seemed like hours as the clock ticked away and we waited impatiently to relay the speech, live.

"Despite all our well-laid plans, disaster struck minutes before the speech was on. An

turning point. Ashrafuzzaman went up on the stage to pass on the message to Bangabandhu that we were not allowed to broadcast. He changed his address spontaneously by repeating this to the thousands gathered, urging all from that moment to stop working for the government. Ashrafuzzaman immediately asked us to leave work and come out of the heavily guarded radio station. From there we practically ran to the Race Course. By a stroke of luck, we had an EMI emergency portable recording gear at the stage to record the historic speech.

"There were substations at Kalyanpur, Nayarhat and Mirpur, from where the transmission was carried out in case the main station failed. So when we came out of the office we called up the people in charge of the transmission stations and we asked them to evacuate the place.

"It was for the first time in the history of radio in our country that the transmission came to a total halt.

"The very next day early in the morning we received orders to broadcast the speech at 8:30am and we resumed our broadcast. "That day was a milestone for more reasons than one. The mood in the stations became defiant and bold. People worked round the clock gathering and relaying news, documentary, speeches anything that would come to the aid of the country. The optimism from that room seemed to become contagious over the airways as it carried news of non cooperation and hope to people in the remotest corners. From muddled trenches to now-empty living rooms, the radio became the day-to-day companion, the one link that tied everyone together.

If it took 3 million courageous lives and countless tragedies to win our war, what we should not forget is that it also took a group of dedicated people, who risked it all, to keep the airways and the spirit of the country alive through it all.



vital role in the history of radio of the country," Rahman went on. "From this day onwards under the able leadership of Zaman, we brought about a complete change in the schedule and started to broadcast news, documentary, commentary and patriotic songs. News editor Saiful Bari also played an important role during this time.

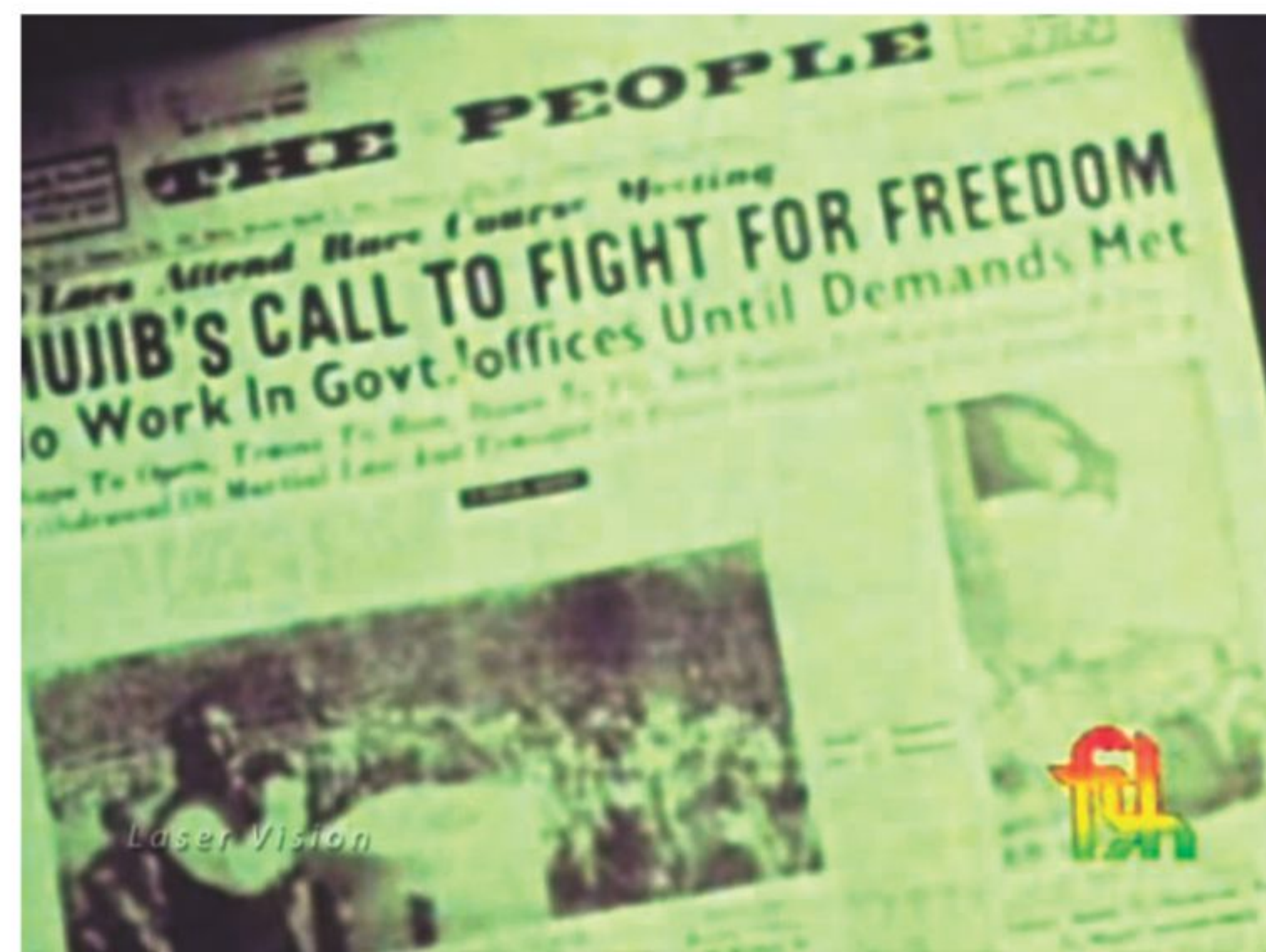
"Meanwhile a nucleus team was formed with assistant director Mazulul Hossain ARD, ARD Ahmeduzzaman, PNO Mofizul Huque, (myself) PO, Ashfaqur Rahman, Nassar Ahmed

official had forgotten to take one telephone of the hook and the call came from the higher authority as we'd feared. Someone brought in a 'chit' ordering us not to broadcast anything on Sheikh Mujib until further notice.

"However, by 2:35pm Mujib had reached the venue and began his speech to the nation and we were still in a deadlock on whether we could broadcast the speech or not. I was at the studio end as we tried wholeheartedly to contact Ashrafuzzaman for his final orders from Mujib. "The next few moments were

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## Capturing a turbulent chapter of history

### Documentaries on War of Independence

FAHMIM FERDOUS

War is a difficult time. Chaos reigns supreme, and nobody knows what's going to happen the next moment. As bullets and bombs fly through the air, anybody could be in their path, and no one seeks explanations. The first instinct is to survive; to get to safety. And that is what makes documentaries of such events such a daunting task. But at the same time, any war has repercussions in many layers; it's not just what appears from the outside at a first glance. From the very big picture to zooming in on a single family unit, every war has a million stories folded in them, and it is thus only that much more difficult to bring out a clear picture.

In 1971 when the occupational Pakistan army attacked Dhaka, and spread around to all parts of the country in a spree of mindless genocide, technology was at a different place altogether. Photo and video equipments were not available just anywhere, and the risks associated were countless. But still, there were those who fought against the odds, and captured the atrocities. Zahir Raihan's "Stop Genocide" was one of the first documentaries made on the attack of 1971; his other film "A State Is Born", Babul Chowdhury's "Innocent Millions" and Alamgir Kabir's "Liberation Fighters" are considered the first films made in Bangladesh. Indian filmmaker S. Sukhdev made "Nine months to Freedom" with a lot of footage he shot himself during the war and in refugee camps, craftily depicting the misery that



the people of the country had to go through. Gita Mehta, a war correspondent of US TV network NBC was also on assignment in Bangladesh during the war, and with what she saw and captured, made another powerful documentary titled "Dateline Bangladesh".

Right after the war, a number of feature films were made on it, but it was still challenging to make documentaries on the war, because of a lack of technology and especially footage. But as days went by, a few of the country's most gifted filmmakers stepped forward in leaving visual documents for future generations of what happened in 1971, on the ground and beyond. Tareque Masud and Catherine Masud discovered footage taken by US filmmaker Lear Levin in his basement, recovered them and used them to bring out another touching picture of the war; the "Bangladesh Mukti Shangrami Shilpi



Shangtha" that went to Freedom Fighters' camps and sang songs to bolster their morale. The duo also made two other documentaries, "Mukti'r Kotha" and "Nari'r Kotha", as part of the series.

However, it is Tanvir Mokammel's epic documentary "1971" that is the most elaborate document of the Liberation War, spanning over three hours in duration. He has two other documentaries on the war: "Swopnobhumi" and "Smriti Ekattor".

Apart from these, many filmmakers have attempted to portray their interpretations of the war from compiled videos, and collections of video footage and pictures have been archived on the internet, most notably by Bangladesh Genocide Archive (genocidebangladesh.org); among private researchers, Omi Rahman Prial has an enriched video library on YouTube featuring many rare footage and interviews.

No one is born with patriotism. But Bangladesh has a glorious past, and everyone born in the country deserves to know what great pride they have to hold. It's said that history is easy to distort, but in this age of information, if someone does intend to find out the true history of the Liberation War and the struggles beyond, these documentaries can possibly be the most powerful resources. Most of them are available on DVD/CD, and those that are not can be accessed on the internet. More than anytime since the birth of Bangladesh, the youth of today require to go back to these films, be aware, and spread the awareness and spirit.

## Recalling a fateful night

In conversation with  
**Shaheen Reza Noor**



A CORRESPONDENT

"We were eight brothers and lived at a rented house in the Chamelibagh area of the city. The atmosphere was eerily quiet. I just got enrolled in college during the Liberation War. On December 10, 1971, some members of al Badr came to our home at midnight. They were looking for my father. My mother started crying and we were puzzled. My father was working late, writing and translating. They picked up my father. We could hear the microbus leaving," recalled Shaheen Reza Noor, executive editor of the daily Ittefaq and son of martyred journalist Sirajuddin Hossain. Noor is the president of Prajanna '71, an organisation formed by the sons and daughters of martyrs of the Liberation War.

Sirajuddin Hossain, Noor's father, was the executive editor of the daily Ittefaq when he was abducted.

"My father was very patriotic. His writings were bold and hard hitting. On December 10, 1971 an editorial written by my father was published. During that time, my father regularly wrote a column titled "Rajnoitki Bhashyokar" in the daily Ittefaq. The column reflected the political and social conditions of that time. My father received many threats. But he never compromised. Eventually he lost his life because of his values.

"On December 18, 1971 former Attorney General Aminul Haque (he was very close to my father) came to our home and suggested that we go to Rayer Bazar. That was the first time I heard of Rayer Bazar killing field. Bangladesh Betar announced the names of the martyred intellectuals. Initially my family members looked there but could not find my father's body. For us that was the saddest part.

"In the meantime, I filed a case against my father's abductors. In January 1972, two of the abductors were arrested in Kamalapur. One was killed by the mob on the spot, while police arrested the other."

"The trails of war criminals are not only the demand of the son of a martyr; but also the collective demand of the people of Bangladesh. I believe the whole country is with us on the issue."

TV WATCH



## Bhalobashi Bangladesh on Maasranga

A CORRESPONDENT

A special musical talent competition, titled "Bhalobashi Bangladesh" will be aired on Maasranga TV tonight. The unique competition, featuring only patriotic songs, saw young aspirants register through SMS in flocks, from which 24 were selected for the final TV rounds. Ahmed Intiaz Bulbul and Samina Chowdhury are the two judges at the programme. Hosted by Putul and directed by Kabir Bakul, the programme airs on Fridays and Saturdays at 9pm.

## Jibondhuli set for release

### Film on Liberation War



PALLAB BHATTACHARYA, New Delhi

Tanvir Mokammel-directed "Jibondhuli" feature film has received the censor certificate and will be premiered at the Public Library Auditorium at Shabbag any day now.

"The Censor Board has cleared the film," Mokammel told The Daily Star today.

The film, based on the Liberation War, is ready to be premiered and released across Bangladesh soon, he said. While the auditorium for the premiere of the film and cinema halls for the release have been booked, the film will at the initial stage will be released in three cinema halls in Dhaka-Balaka, Star Cineplex and Basundhara Film Complex, the director said adding it will be released later in Chittagong, Khulna and Rajshahi.

"We are now waiting for the political situation to improve a bit. As soon as the present volatile political situation is over, the film will be released.

"As December is our month of victory and as the film "Jibondhuli" is on the Liberation War of Bangladesh, we want to release the film in December," said Mokammel.

## Sculptures themed on the Liberation War

TAKIR HOSSAIN

Sculpture is a three-dimensional art form and draws quick attention. It reflects culture, history and time. The main purpose of erecting a sculpture is to demonstrate one's artistic faculties through highlighting a certain theme.

Sculpture is considered one of the longest lasting genres of art. However, the trend of modern sculpture started here in the East Pakistan era, back in the 1950s. Novera Ahmed first achieved prominence in this field and she has popularised the medium in our country. In the 1950s and mid-1950s, Novera Ahmed had several sculpture exhibitions. Sculptures had, by this time, started to catch on in the local art scene. Despite many objections on erecting sculptures at public places, it was increasingly gaining popularity.

The Sculpture Department at the Institute of Fine Arts (now Faculty of Fine Arts, Dhaka University) was founded in 1965. Abdur Razzaque was the founder teacher of the department. Later on Anwar Jahang, Hamiduzzaman Khan and Shamim Shikdar joined the department as teachers. After the Liberation War, sculptures in Bangladesh mainly focused on the theme of the independence movement. Many significant sculptures were built in the mid '70s and early '80s. Here are some of the most remarkable sculptures on the theme of the Liberation War at a glance:

### Jagroto Chowrongi

Abdur Razzaque is regarded as one of the greatest sculptors of the country. He was the first artist to take up sculpture in independent Bangladesh. His 'Jagroto Chowrongi' is considered one of the best sculptures in Bangladesh, considering both form and theme, by art critics. Located in Joydebpur, and built in 1973, it is the first post-Liberation War sculpture. It depicts a Freedom Fighter with a grenade in his right and a rifle in his left hand. The sculpture is an 18 feet high concrete piece on a 24 feet pedestal.

After finishing 'Jagroto Chowrongi', Razzaque was encouraged to erect sculptures in different areas of the country. He liked to work with figures. He has made many semi-abstract and pure abstract pieces. These vary in media, materials and size. As medium he has used cement, stone, steel, iron, bronze and wood. In metals he has used both welding technique and casting.

### Aparajeyo Bangla

Syed Abdullah Khalid is a multi-talented artist. Khalid has not only excelled in sculpture but also made an impression with his paintings.

Khalid's 'Aparajeyo Bangla' on Dhaka University



Aparajeyo Bangla



Shoparjito Shadhinota

campus has become an icon. The sculpture is a reflection of the Bengali vigilance and indomitable yearning for freedom. The project was launched in 1973 when this artist was a young teacher at the Department of Fine Arts, Chittagong University. Throughout the making of the sculpture, Khalid had to face opposition from religious fanatics.

Hasina Ahmed, Syed Hamid Moksood and Badrul Alam Benu, who are very close to Khalid, modelled for 'Aparajeyo Bangla'. The artist closely observed the models' personalities and his close association with them enabled him to do justice with his portrayal. On August 15, 1975, the work suddenly came to a halt because of the heinous murder of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. Political instability and the arrest of the then Vice-chancellor of Dhaka University, Abdul Matin Chowdhury, also disrupted the work.

The project remained incomplete till the end of 1978. Some fundamentalist groups tried to demolish the sculpture in 1977. However, the brave students of Dhaka University fiercely guarded the work. After a long hiatus, the work began once more in the beginning of 1979 -- with a new vision. At last the project was finished on December 16, 1979. The sculpture was inaugurated by wounded freedom fighters.

### Shongshoptok

Hamiduzzaman Khan started his career not as a sculptor but a painter. On careful examination of his works, one will see that Khan endeavours to mix architectural or geometrical shapes with local materials found in his surroundings. His prime concerns are form and

theme. In his form-oriented works, one finds a Western influence.

After 1971, the sculptor tried to understand the significance of sculptures and took interest in this art form. During that time, he concentrated on the Liberation War as a theme, and the subject was a great source of inspiration for Bangladeshi artists. One of his most moving creations is "Shongshoptok". It stands 28 feet high, including the base. It is constructed of steel armature and brass steel. The work has been placed in front of the Central Library, Jahangirnagar University. It depicts a Freedom Fighter with a hand missing, yet ready to fight against the Pakistani forces. The fighter carries a rifle in his hand. It is a sign of the Freedom Fighters' valour and their dedication to the country.

### Shoparjito Shadhinota

"Shoparjito Shadhinota" by renowned sculptor Shamim Sikder in memory of the Liberation War is located at TSC in Dhaka University. This was built in the early 1990 which expresses the delineation of varied sections of peoples' participation during the Liberation War. It represents the masses' movement in the war. This is a rather complex structure demonstrating many facets of 1971 -- violence upon people, Pakistani soldiers' brutality, the mass killing of intellectuals, unruly movements, farmers, valiant warriors, the moment of victory and others. The base itself is significant, as it holds a fresco all round portraying many happenings of the war.



## The Flags A-Flyin'

It's December again, the month of glory in every Bangladeshi's calendar. As victory day edges near, the red-and-green flags become a more common sight by the day. This year has been a little more special in terms of spirit of patriotism than the previous ones, so it should come as no surprise that the surroundings take on the familiar colours.

PHOTO: RIDWAN ADDI RUPON

