light Bangladesh's intangible cultural heritage and utilizing it in a promotion of the cultural and economic development of the country. That is where UNESCO came in. Between 17 July and 20 July 2013, UNESCO organised a national workshop here in Dhaka to underscore the imperatives involved in positive action over the intangible nature of cultural tradition.

The effort paid off, with government officials , leading scholars, researchers and other stakeholders taking part in the workshop through presenting a series of papers rich in their enumeration of history and at the same time placing emphasis on what needed to be done in the matter of correcting conditions as they existed. The workshop highlighted the issues related to the country's intangible cultural heritage, focusing especially on its richness as well as its vulnerability. The ministry of cultural affairs was there with its support. It surely was reassuring that the recommendations made by the workshop regarding a preservation and strengthening of the intangible cultural heritage of Bangladesh could end up with obviously tangible social and economic benefits for the country.

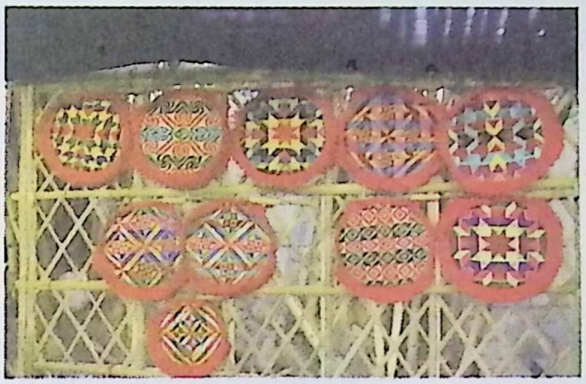


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UNESCO has published the proceedings of the national workshop, highlighting the principal features of the deliberations and stressing the need to develop some policies to safeguard Bangladesh's intangible cultural heritage. The publication is certainly a broad hint of how the need for a preservation of cultural traditions is an imperative the nation ought not to and cannot turn away from.

International as also local experts and participants at the workshop reflected on such significant intangibles as Pahela Baishakh, Nakshikatha, Gambhira song and Shokher Hari. It was made clear at the workshop that Bangladesh had no specific policy pertaining to its intangible cultural heritage. That surely was food for some serious thought. In order to develop a policy or the broad outlines of it, as the workshop put it unambiguously, it was essential that an inventory related to intangible cultural heritage be prepared. Additionally and crucially, the involvement of the community in upholding cultural traditions, through nurturing in citizens a sense of the importance of the historical past was a responsibility one could not ignore.

The way forward ought to be clear to everyone. Through coming forth with its support for UNESCO's efforts in underlining the significance of a preservation of the country's intangible cultural heritage, the Bangladesh government has held out the promise that in an effort to understand the present, it will necessarily uphold the affluence of the past as a mirror for the nation to comprehend its place in history and prepare to step into the future. UNESCO has pointed out the road ahead, a route the department of archaeology has taken note of.

History is but the story of nations thriving in their present through a necessary throbbing of the past in the landscape of their heritage. That is the lesson UNESCO has once again driven home to us, here in Bangladesh.

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