

Celebrating the spirit of dance

Rethinking the conventional norms of dance on World Dance Day

SUDESHNA SWAYAMPURABHA TATHOI

As dancers, we believe that the flapping of our wings gives hope to the hearts of those who love the art of dance and gives them the courage to overcome this pandemic.

Every year, International Dance Day is celebrated on the 29th of April, showcasing the amazing diversity and spirit of dancers all over the world.

The ITI Dance Committee puts forward a message from a celebrated dancer every year to remind us all to appreciate this amazing art form. This year's message was given by multiple award-winning dancer and artistic director of Korean National Ballet, Kang Sue-jin.

In her message this year, the South Korean ballerina highlighted how the pandemic has impelled us to "rethink" the meaning of dance and dancers.

when "dance and dancers sparkled like jewels, conveying human anguish and anxiety, will and hope for life, and illuminated the world".

"As dancers, we believe that the flapping of our wings gives hope to the hearts of those who love the art of dance and gives them the courage to overcome this pandemic. My heart is already starting to pound," her message ends.

While the world struggled under the shroud of gloom and isolation, artistes from various fields came together to bring relief and joy through their activities. Dance was one of the major ways through which people found a semblance of normalcy in their otherwise unnatural confined states.

Dance, being the most effective way

effects of the pandemic, many danced and filmed themselves to share with the world through social media and other mediums. The performances were all done in confined spaces of balconies, terraces, living rooms, or gardens, making the experience more real, personal, and relatable.

The community of dancers around the world danced selflessly and shared their performances with throughout the pandemic to keep everyone motivated and engaged. Innumerable past and current performances, live streams, dance films, online collaborations and festivals, fundraising raising concerts, practice, rehearsal, and improvisation videos for everyone were posted online to view and enjoy.

Several international dance companies offered online dance classes at almost no or minimal fees. Many enthusiasts, who had stopped dancing several years ago, found inspiration to start afresh. The situation formed great connections between dancers as they got to know each other and their works through the internet and brought the community closer.

While the pandemic steered us in a direction to view dance in another light, it was also a time of great crisis for many who earn their bread and butter through this art form. With the shutting down of theatres and stage shows, dance schools and companies, many dancers were out of job for months on end and had faced severe financial crisis to continue to survive in the pandemic.

In addition, performing continuously before a camera or a laptop in confined places alone took away the thrill and excitement of performing in an auditorium before a live audience. However, the virtual world of dance still managed to find innovative ways.

On International Dance Day 2022 as the world still struggles with the pandemic, let us take time to think of all those who have suffered, but also let us move forward with the best of the realisations. Let us all take time to celebrate ourselves, our dreams, hopes, and togetherness by connecting our minds and bodies through the eternal spirit of motion of dance.

The author is a dancer and choreographer.



James to release new song after 12 years

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK

After 12 years, fans of rock icon James will be able to hear a new song from him. He made the announcement on his official Facebook page.

He is set to release a song on the night before Eid-ul-Fitr. It will be out on the Bashundhara Digital YouTube channel. The track is presented by Radhuni.

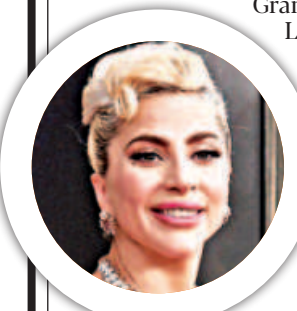
Recently, James performed together with Euphoria and Strings at Dubai Expo 2020.

Lady Gaga teases new single in 'Top Gun: Maverick'

Grammy award winning singer Lady Gaga has revealed that her latest song "Hold My Hand" will be featured in Tom Cruise's "Top Gun: Maverick."

She announced the news on her official Instagram account. The "Poker Face" singer stated that the song is a "love letter to the world" and that she has been working on it for years.

"Hold My Hand" is written by Lady Gaga and produced by BloodPop. The song is slated to be released on May 3.



COUNTRYWIDE

The fertilizer story

SHYKH SERAJ

Boro season is going on in Bangladesh and the harvest will start in full swing within a few days. Meanwhile, farmers in the haor areas of Sunamganj, Netrokona and Kishoreganj have been going through a difficult situation as standing paddy in vast tracts of land have been submerged by the recent flash floods. State Minister for Water Resources Zahed Farooque at a press conference said paddy on 5,000 hectares of land have already been damaged by the flash floods. Many farmers were compelled to harvest their green paddies in fear of getting completely damaged. The haor areas is called the paddy reserve of the country, but farmers have to count huge losses due to such disaster every year.

Two years of the COVID-19 pandemic have utterly devastated the world economy. On the other hand, the Russia-Ukraine war started when the world was trying to return to normalcy. The impacts of the pandemic and the ongoing war spread worldwide. At present, the whole world is hit hard by three Cs: Climate, COVID-19 and Conflict. The fourth C, which is the rise of fuel and fertilizer cost in the international market, is also quite alarming. Especially, the price of fertilizer went up threefold while the prices of various daily essentials have also gone up. One of the reasons of our agricultural development is the uninterrupted subsidy provided by the government. Although Bangladesh is an agricultural country, the entire demand for fertilizers is almost met through import. However, whatever the import price is, the government sells fertilizers to the farmers at nominal prices by adding subsidies. If the government did not provide fertilizers and subsidies as per the regular demand, the cost of production would have multiplied. Fertilizer prices in the world have not only increased, but its production is also expected to decline due to the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war.

According to the Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE), in 2022-2023 fiscal years, the demand for urea fertilizer is 34.02 lakh tonnes (3.4 million), DAP 24.14 lakh tonnes (2.4 million), TSP 10.24 lakh tonnes (1.04 million) and MOP 14.18 lakh tonnes (1.4 million). In addition to these vital fertilizers, there is a demand for other fertilizers, as well. As far as I know, we have the required fertilizer in stock for the current financial year. In other words, whatever fertilizer stock we have, will continue till August 2022.

Shykh Seraj is Bangladesh's pioneer development journalist. He received country's two highest civilian honours, Swadhinata Puroshkar and Ekushey Padak. At Channel i, he is the founder director. He is also director and host of Channel i's popular agro-documentary, Hridoye Mati O Manush.



According to Bangladesh Fertilizer Association, Bangladesh produces about 10 lakh tonnes of urea. The rest of the demand has to be imported from the UAE, Saudi Arabia and Qatar. TSP fertilizer production is about one lakh tonnes while the rest is imported from Morocco and Tunisia. Meanwhile, the DAP fertilizer production is almost the same and the rest is mainly imported from China and Jordan. Most of the MOP fertilizers is imported from Belarus, Russia and Canada. Agriculture Minister Dr Abdur Razzaque said due to increase in the subsidy by additional Tk 9,000 crore (USD 90 billion), now the government will have to pay a subsidy of Tk 30,000 crore (USD 300 billion). This is a big challenge for the government. Although urea is bought at Tk 96 per kg (USD 1.1), farmers get it at Tk 16 (USD 0.18). They are getting TSP of Tk 70 (USD 0.8) at Tk 22 (USD 0.25), MOP of Tk 54 (USD 0.62) at Tk 15 (USD 0.17) and DAP of Tk 93 (USD 1.1) at Tk 16

(USD 0.18) per kg.

I talked to Faizur Rahman Bakul, head of one of the leading fertilizer importers in the country, and he said sustainable development is not possible in any sector without becoming self-reliant. He also added that we can't increase the local production overnight to reduce the import reliance and stressed on government's support for the development of the private fertilizer production industry. However, the issue of wastage of natural gas in fertilizer production is also an 'open secret.' It is said that it is possible to meet one day of the electricity demand of the whole country with the amount of gas wasted by four state-owned fertilizer factories in nine days. The four factories require 43.72 million cubic feet (MCF) of gas to produce an average of around one tonne of urea. In other countries of the world, 25 MCF of gas is used to produce the same amount of fertilizer. According to Bakul, the main reason for this wastage is the old machinery used at the factories.

In the developed world, the practice of organic farming is increasing day by day by reducing the use of chemical fertilizers. Our farmers are also becoming enthusiastic about using organic fertilizers. Organic fertilizers are food for the soil and chemical fertilizers for crops. However, the use of organic fertilizers reduces the need for chemical fertilizers. When it comes to food security, we have to keep in mind that production can never be reduced, no matter what happens.

I believe that the government has a well-thought plan to resolve all the crises of the farmers. Certainly, the world market is planning for the future, keeping the fertilizer crisis in mind. If we can reduce wastage and get our farmers used to with limited use of fertilizers, only then, we will be far ahead. In this case, every stakeholder must remain aware. We must think of our motherland, the farmers and the farming sector, above everything else.

India to step up co-op with neighbours

FROM PAGE 12

The visiting Indian external affairs minister was talking to reporters after a meeting with his Bangladesh counterpart AK Abdul Momen before attending an Iftar at the Foreign Service Academy yesterday.

Jaishankar arrived in Dhaka around 2:00pm by a special flight on a one-day visit. He called on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and conveyed Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's message and invitation to visit India. He will leave for Bhutan this morning.

"We discussed a number of issues. We reviewed bilateral ties as well as regional and global issues," said the Indian minister whose visit is aimed at deepening bilateral engagement.

At the meeting, Hasina said India's northeastern states like Assam and Tripura can use Chittagong seaport by strengthening the connectivity between the two neighbouring countries, reports UNB,

quoting PM's Press Secretary Ihsanul Karim as saying.

"If the connectivity is increased, Indian northeastern states like Assam and Tripura can have access to the seaport in Chattogram," she said when Jaishankar met her at her official residence Gono Bhaban.

Both of them expressed happiness at the state of the existing bilateral relations between the two countries. Hasina said high-level visits give impetus to carry forward the relations between the two nations.

Various issues, including defence cooperation, water sharing of Kushiara and Feni Rivers, the current Covid situation and impacts of Russia-Ukraine war on the global economy came up for the discussion.

At the Foreign Service Academy, Momen said it's unique the way the two countries celebrated the golden

jubilee of Bangladesh's independence and worked together last year.

"From that perspective, whatever small problems we have, we will solve. You know we have solved many major problems," he said.

Jaishankar said the connectivity between the two countries is back to pre-Covid level now, and they are looking at resuming cross border bus and railway services soon.

"It is also a matter of satisfaction for us that trade, disbursement of loan on bilateral projects, travel services, and investments are at new heights, and that they have recovered momentum, which was lost during the Covid."

He said Covid has taught how important it is to have regional supply chains and value chains for essential commodities, including oxygen, medicine and food.

Jaishankar said he hopes to see early commissioning of many projects, including in power and energy sector

as well as connectivity. He is also looking forward to Joint Consultative Commission (JCC) meeting in New Delhi likely in late May.

He avoided replying to a question on Momen's recent statement that Dhaka sought India's help for withdrawal of US sanctions on Rab.

"I think that is a question that you need to ask Dr Momen, not me," he said.

At that, Momen said, "We are working on it."

Our New Delhi Correspondent reports: at a regular briefing in New Delhi,

spokesperson for India's external affairs ministry Arindam Bagchi avoided a similar question from journalists.

"I am not going to say anything at this point on what the discussions have been or have received it in advance... Let the visit happen and then we will see if we are in a position to share with you any further details on this," he said.

Agri ministry defends its decision

FROM PAGE 12

This is the first time Bangladesh will be participating in this fair.

The ministry yesterday organised a press briefing to share their targets and the achievements they are expecting from participating in the fair.

At the briefing, Abdur Razzak, agriculture minister, said, they are trying to send some Bangladeshi students to the Bangladeshi pavilion, along with one or two mid-level ministry officials.

According to The Daily Star's report, those who will be travelling to Europe for other project-related study tours will also stopover in

the fair.

At the briefing, journalists questioned the huge number of participants from different ministries.

Wahida Akter, additional secretary of the ministry, said such foreign trips were halted during the pandemic but they picked up again now as many proposals were placed before the higher authorities.

"However, all ministries were given a circular with directives of cutting the number of participants. We are taking that into consideration."

The official said the number of participants will

not exceed 40.

A total of 16 teams were prepared with two members in each team. Most of the members will be junior officers.

Only during the "Bangladesh Day", likely to be held in the first week of July, high-level officials, including the agriculture minister are likely to attend the fair.

Razzak said as Bangladesh is graduating to the status of developed country, participating in the fair could help the country present the "wonderful achievements" of agriculture sector to the world and help find export opportunities.

He added this participation has given Bangladesh the scope to become a member of the International Association of Horticultural Producers.

According to the briefing notes, the 1,000 square meter Bangladesh pavilion, with the theme of "Back to jute, back to nature", will be showcasing the country's jute products, processed foods and horticulture items.

Mehedi Masood, project director of the ministry's "Year-round fruit production for nutrition improvement" initiative, said jute products are popular in Europe.