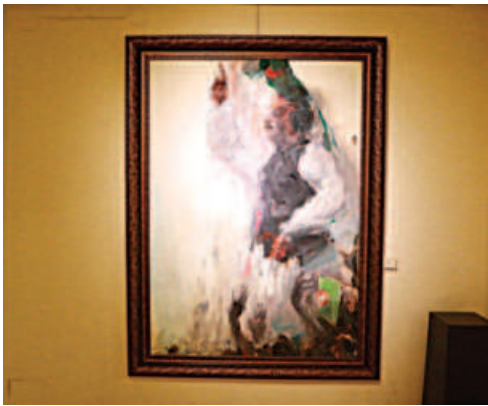




Remembering the Father of the Nation through ‘Braveheart’

Exhibition underway at Gallery Cosmos

A talented team of 12 child artists and future master painters participated in an exclusive group art camp at the exhibition venue, where they showcased their earnest tribute to the Father of the Nation, at the beginning of the show.

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK

Observing National Mourning Day (August 15), Gallery Cosmos organised an exclusive combined art, photography and sculpture exhibition on Father of the Nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. The exhibition, titled ‘Braveheart’, was inaugurated on Friday, and is currently underway at Cosmos Centre in the capital’s Malibagh.

Mofidul Hoque, founding trustee of the Liberation War Museum, virtually inaugurated the exhibition as the chief guest, while eminent artists and freedom fighters Rafiqun Nabi, Biren Shome and internationally acclaimed artist Shahabuddin Ahmed attended the inauguration ceremony as the special guests. Tehmina Enayet, Director of Gallery Cosmos and Masud Jamil Khan, Deputy Managing Director of Cosmos Group also attended the ceremony.

The event is supported by the Cosmos Foundation. The media and knowledge



PHOTOS: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

partners of the event are UNB and Dhaka Courier, respectively.

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The exhibition will continue showcasing artworks of few eminent artists including Shahabuddin Ahmed, Biren Shome, Alakesh

Ghosh, Nasir Ali Mamun, Afrozaa Jamil Konka, Bashkor Rasha, Shahajahan Ahmed Bikash, along with Azmeer Hossain, Bishwajit Goswami, Abu Kalam Shamsuddin, Devdas Malakar, Dilip Karmakar, Sourav Chowdhury, Abdullah Al Bashir, Iqbal Bahar Chy, Maneck Bonik, Kamruzzoha, Azmol Hossain, Mohammed Fakhru Islam Mazumder Shakil, and Md Rafiqul Islam.

The open-for-all exhibition will run until August 31, at the venue.

After Salman Rushdie, J K Rowling faces death threats

The attack on former Booker Prize-winning author Salman Rushdie on August 12, 2022 left the literary world in a state of shock.

Reacting to the news when ‘Harry Potter’ author JK Rowling expressed her support to Rushdie on Twitter, she was given a public death threat by twitter user.

“Feeling very sick right now. Let him be ok,” Rowling had tweeted, expressing her shock about the attack on Rushdie.

Twitter user Meer Asif Aziz replied to Rowling’s tweet by writing, “Don’t worry you are next.” Aziz’s Twitter bio described him as ‘student, social activist, political activist and research activist’.



Arifin Shuvoo’s ‘Black war’ to release in October



The highly anticipated film “Mission Extreme 2: Black War” is all set to be released on October 14. The first instalment, starring Arifin Shuvoo, was released on December 3, last year. T Arifin Shuvoo released the official poster of “Mission Extreme-2” on his official Facebook account.

Jannatul Ferdous Oishee, Taskeen Rahman, Fazlur Rahman Babu, S h a h i d u z z a m a n Selim, Shatabdi Wadud, Iresh Zaker, and Manoj Kumar Pramanik, will be returning in the sequel.

NEWS

Bangabandhu’s 1952 trip to New China

FROM PAGE 1

February 21. Although in jail, he would direct events from there, along with other young, firebrand leaders, inspiring students participating in the movement and ordinary people to do their part. On April 28, Mujib became the acting general secretary of the East Pakistani Awami League. In this capacity he met the governor of East Bengal and gave him a memorandum on behalf of his party. In May, he spent some days in Karachi with other leaders of his party and met the Pakistani prime minister. Hope was in the air, for here was his beloved East Bengal, which became East Pakistan in 1955, whose people were uniting to make Bengali a state language, and demanding full civic rights for Bengalis and more autonomy for the province from the central government.

Mujib had gone to China as an East Bengali delegate to the Peace Conference of the Asian and Pacific Region held in Beijing. Given the opportunity to tour parts of the country as well as its capital city, and with escorts/translators to help him go past the Chinese language, he wanted to get the maximum out of his first trip outside the subcontinent. He would get whatever benefited his beloved East Bengal from “New China”; his was a new country as well! How could his province benefit from the Chinese experience of rebuilding itself, inspired by a dynamic leader leading from the front? Wide-eyed, with a capacious memory, and a personality endearing him to all, he was going to nurture the impressions of his visit in his memory until the time came to write them down. No doubt he wanted to transfer what was being done in China into what he felt was doable in East Bengal as well.

Unfortunately, the young leader was not able to do anything at all on his return to apply in practice what he had learned from his China trip to transform his province. The one opportunity he might have been able to use would be negated when the United Front government of East Bengal that he was part of was dissolved abruptly by the Pakistani Central Government. Significantly, Mujib was then the minister for agricultural credit, cooperative and rural development. But there was no chance of his achieving anything, for

his people were in government for only 15 days.

But the young Mujib held on to the memories of the China trip. In Dhaka Central Jail in 1954 he wrote a detailed account of what he had seen and done in prison notebooks. This would come out posthumously in 2021 as Amar Dekha Naya Chin (in English as New China, 1952; cited hereafter as NC). What he was so enthusiastic about a country bent on transforming itself would also be penned down in another prison notebook that is part of the posthumously published Ashomapto Atno Jibani (in English The Unfinished Memoirs; cited hereafter as UM). This narrative comes to a dozen pages in the published autobiography. Clearly, “New China” had gripped his imagination so in 1952 that he wanted to get all the details he could remember on paper again and again for future nation-building use!

II

The narrative part of the details of his short China tour in the two books are quite similar. New China, however, provides much more detailed accounts of the events he witnessed, the people he met and the places he went to.

We can summarise the main events of both narratives easily. His delegation had come to Canton via Hong Kong, where they were treated to an official dinner on the day of their arrival. The delegation then flew to Beijing. Three days after arriving in this city, some sight-seeing, eating out, and meeting people here and there, the young Mujib and his fellow delegates became part of the grand festive occasion commemorating the third anniversary of China’s independence. They then took part in the Peace Conference meetings. One memorable occasion then was when he chose to speak in Bengali in an official session—surely the first time that a Bengali used the language in a major international meet. After the official tour ended, a section of the delegation decided to travel across the country, taking in as much of it as they could. They went to Shanghai where they visited “the world’s largest textile mills” (NC, 114). Afterwards, they visited Hangzhou. The delegates next went to Canton and finally returned home, once more via Hong Kong.

Other than the events he

participated in, the places he visited, and the people he met, what strikes one in both narratives is how the young Mujib is most animated by his encounter with radical change in “New China”. Taking every opportunity coming his way, he talks to Chinese delegates, official representatives and ordinary people he meets in different parts of the country to understand the extent of the change and the reasons behind them. Mujib is impressed with the cleanliness and orderly aspects of the cities he visits. At first he has his doubts about the ever-enthusiastic responses he gets to the searching questions he asks, but he gradually begins to accept them as not untrue. Always, he introspects on the positive things he encountered in China, contrasting them with the moribund state of affairs of the country he had a bit part in making independent, and the arrogance and extravagant lifestyles of its administrators. Mujib is amazed, for example, at the lack of a “privileged” class in China (NC, 92), other than its children, whereas in independent Pakistan he had seen the lavish lifestyles of aristocrats and high officials. He is impressed, too, with the way “men and women are treated equally” as a matter of government policy (NC, 92). He is impressed as well with the way a working class couple whose house he visits on impulse live—simply, comfortably and happily. A barber he talks to also responds positively to his probing queries about the state of the country and its government’s policies.

The young politician from East Bengal sums up his final impressions about New China based not only on what was shown to him but also his persistent attempts to go beyond what guides and officials said and ascertain the real state of things in these lines from the final pages of his account of the trip in The Unfinished Memoirs: “I saw that the people of the new China had a wholly new way of thinking. Their eyes lighted up with ideas and hopes of a New World” (UM, 236). He stresses that he is neither a communist nor a capitalist by inclination but a “socialist” (UM, 237), and it is as one that he is endorsing so enthusiastically what he presents as the positive aspects of “New China”.

III

What makes New China 1952 so fascinating for anyone interested

in Bangabandhu and his vision of Bangladesh, and so relevant for anyone wanting to pursue the path laid out by the Father of the Nation for his nation, are the last 50 pages of his work based on his visit to China. Indeed, this surely is one of the most important legacies he has left behind for all Bangladeshis.

What follows is merely the barest summary of what he has done in these pages by looking at “New” China and the moribund, even regressive aspects of the “new” Pakistan he represented as a delegate to the 1952 Peace Conference.

The first point he makes is about unemployment. New China has forbidden begging and set up “homes” for the destitute, but except for the really disabled poor, everyone works for food. Its government acted decisively with gangs as well as beggars. It made tackling “unemployment...its number one priority” (115) and did away with landlords, absentee or not. Agricultural land belonged mostly to those who tilled it and was no longer left fallow! “Fair” price shops had been opened. Bribery was dealt with firmly and corruption eliminated. The turbulent Hwang Ho had been tamed and people joined spontaneously in building a dam on it and more and more roads elsewhere.

Cottage industries thrived as did large industries. Government employees worked in tandem with village councils and cities everywhere. Justice was being ensured for those wronged. In short, unemployment and injustice were being tackled firmly and decisively.

Mujib is especially impressed by the changes in the lot of women in New China. Dowry was a thing of the past; so was prostitution and discrimination against them. As Mujib notes, women here were now joining farms, factories and the armed forces and had equal rights with the men. Chinese women now had the right to choose their mates and have children as and when they wanted to. They were working everywhere!

Answers given to Mujib’s searching questions negate whatever skepticism he had before coming about Chairman Mao. He had ensured that those at the helms be not corrupt and had even executed “one of his closest friends” who was found to be corrupt (NC, 139). Mujib finds out

that Mao lived simply and frugally in a small building, although for security reasons it was inside a “huge palatial context” (135). Reading this passage as I write this in the second week of August, I wonder: why didn’t Bangabandhu do the same thing?

The last major observation about what was happening in New China has to do with religion. Mujib finds out from the Muslim governor of Sin Kiang province about how Muslims and other religious groups were given space to practise their faith, Buddhist clerics bent on spewing hate checked and secularism promoted.

The major reservation Mujib has when he leaves China after his short but seminal trip to a country bent on building itself anew is that people still didn’t have the right to dissent and articulate views contrary to the ruling party. As he puts it in his concluding paragraph, people “must have the right to express their own beliefs” (NC, 160).

IV

It was only after 1971 that Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman came to a position where he could put into practice what he had been inspired by in New China. With his constitutional experts and the support of the parliamentarians who had been elected, he gave us our 1972 constitution whose founding pillars are secularism and socialism in addition to nationalism and democracy. To the University of Dhaka, he gave the Dhaka University Order granting it considerable autonomy. Surmounting almost impossible odds, including famine, left-wing extremism, an energy crisis, he tried to create a new form of government and a party called BAKSAL—perhaps inspired by his visit to “New” China. But he was assassinated before he could go any further—just over three and half years after he had assumed power. But even if he failed to put into practice he has left behind his three prison books, which we Bangladeshis can still turn to for guidance as we move into the future for good governance and a secular and truly socialist nation, as well as a democratic one.

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Power cuts

FROM PAGE 16

But luckily for the city residents, the scheduled power cut didn’t occur yesterday as the demand for electricity was lower than usual on a working day, thanks to a fall in temperature due to heavy rains.

“There is no loadshedding in the capital today [yesterday] after about a month. It’s a relief for the city residents...,” said a Desco official seeking anonymity.

The government went for countrywide loadshedding for up to an hour on July 19 due to a shortage of natural gas supply to power plants.

Later, it was extended up to two hours as the power distributors struggled to cope with the demand amid a fall in power generation.

“Earlier in the morning, we had planned to go for loadshedding for three hours today [yesterday], but later the authorities told us that there would be no need for that,” said DPDC Managing Director Bikash Dewan.

The demand for electricity in the capital is a maximum of 4,500MW a day. At present, the two power distributors are facing a shortage of around 500MW every day, according to Bangladesh Power Development Board data.

At a programme yesterday, Nasrul Hamid, state minister for power, energy and mineral resources, said people have to be patient for another month.

“We hope to overcome the situation [power cuts] at the end of the next month [September],” he said.

“We are doing fine compared to many other countries,” he added.

Statements

FROM PAGE 16

To Bangladesh, said Bangladesh had never sought any specific information on the money deposited by Bangladeshis citizens with Swiss banks.

According to the annual report published in June by Switzerland’s central bank, Bangladeshis deposited about Tk 3,000 crore last year, Prothom Alo quoted Chuard as saying.

“We have provided the government with all available information on how to reach an agreement on these matters, but no request has been made about any particular funds,” she said at the Diplomatic Correspondents Association, Bangladesh Talk.

Chuard’s statement has created an embarrassing situation for Bangladesh, the HC said the following day.

Subsequently, the bench wanted to know from the government whether that was the case.