

An inadvertent encounter with Buddha

Visiting “From Suffering to Liberation: Buddha of Bengal” at AFD

ASHLEY SHOPTORSHI SAMADDAR

The Ukraine-Russia war, the earthquakes in Turkey, and the unrest in Sudan – the world seems descending into chaos. They affect not just the aforementioned countries, but the mind of every single netizen in the world. Amidst the chaos, the calming influence of Buddha and his teachings were much appreciated at Alliance Française de Dhaka (AFD) in the capital's Dhanmondi.

Treasuring the tranquility, philosophy, and beliefs of Buddha, the exhibition titled *From Suffering to Liberation: Buddha of Bengal* radiated a



Md Muslim Mia's 'Young Buddha 1'



Bappy Paul's 'Buddha and Avatar'



Prasanta Maharana's 'Buddha', India

Created as a project by Amit Nandi in collaboration with five other promising artists, this piece is a monochrome treat for the eyes.

Academy, marking Buddha Purnima.

Staying true to oriental roots, the artworks on display, crafted on various eco-friendly mediums like ceramics, palm leaves, *shital pati*, copper, iron ore, stone, straw, acrylic, watercolour on paper, and

fabric, communicate the journey and preaching of Siddhartha Gautama through their vivid intricate patterns.

Nikhil Pal's "Life Sketches of Buddha", a Patachitra narrating the different experiences in the philosopher's (Buddha) life puts forward a vibrant display while Prasanta Maharana's piece on palm leaves, preserving the calmness in Buddha with light shades, is a delight to relish.

Sanjoy Chakraborty's "Theragatha" (acrylic on canvas) also stood out amongst the crowd with its crimson patterns

complimenting its apple-white hand-woven canvas while Abdus Satter's "Spiritual Buddha" (acrylic on brown paper) stopped many curious eyes to take a better look at it while walking past the artwork.

Dipak Rajan Sarker's "Free Bird" (metal), Nargis Poly's "Buddha" (green tea and coffee on canvas), and Namirah Farzana's "Auspicious Symbols of Buddha" (copper metal repousse) also demanded appreciation as they presented a unique understanding of Buddha's ideology and perception, vouching in favour of conserving nature while advocating for animal rights.

However, the showstopper for me was the centre piece – hand sketches voicing Buddha's life, starting from his birth to his coronation and quest to find peace to finally becoming the 'enlightened one'.

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The event, organised by Oriental Painting Study Group, is open for all from 3 pm to 9 pm till May 15.



Amit Nandi's centre piece on display at the exhibition.



Chief guests inaugurating the exhibition with Amit Nandi's project.

PHOTOS: COURTESY OF AFD AND ORIENTAL PAINTING STUDY GROUP

sense of ease presented in style.

Featuring works by around 52 artists hailing from different parts of Bangladesh and West Bengal in India, the exhibition was inaugurated on May 3 by the High Priest of Bouddho Bihar in Sylhet, Vante Sanghananda Mohathero, in the presence of Nilu Rowshon Murshed, chairperson of Abinta Gallery of Fine Arts, François Grosjean, director of AFD, and Dr Saymon Zakaria, Bangladeshi folk researcher and deputy director of Department of Culture, Bangla



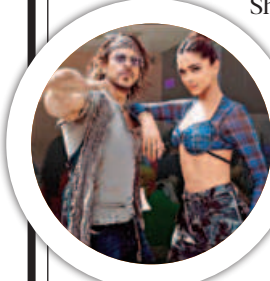
Dads in the Park set for first ever international tour

Recently, Dads in the Park made headlines across the country after performing at Hammersonic Festival—one of the biggest music festivals in Asia—in Indonesia. Tiny Moving Parts, a popular American rock band, noticed Dads in the Park and their ability to connect with the audience.

Now, as Tiny Moving Parts return for a tour of Asia, they have decided to invite Dads in the Park as a supporting act for a few of their dates. The overall tour, which has been titled *Tiny Moving Parts: Asia Round Two* will take place across six countries, namely Japan, China, Thailand, Indonesia, Singapore and Bangladesh.

The tour is set to kick-off with its first show on May 27 in Tokyo, Japan. However, Dads in the Park will be joining Tiny Moving Parts from June 7, when the tour goes to Bangkok, Thailand.

Advance tickets of 'Pathaan' sold out



Shah Rukh-starrer superhit *Pathaan* is releasing in Bangladesh on May 12. Advanced ticket sales have started in various cinema halls nationwide. The import of Hindi movies has been a long standing demand of cinema hall owners. That demand is being fulfilled with the release of the Bollywood film, *Pathaan*.

In front of many theaters across the country, including the Star Cineplex in Dhaka, Madhumita, Nabin in Manikganj, and Madhuban cinema hall in Bogra, posters of *Pathaan* have already been hung.

COUNTRYWIDE

BORO HARVEST Good yield delights coastal farmers

SOHRAB HOSSAIN

Boro cultivation has brought smiles to a good number of farmers at many coastal villages in Barguna, with a bumper yield of the paddy this season.

Farmer Masud Howladar of Charakgachhia village of Barguna Sadar upazila said he has cultivated BRRI 74, a new variety of Boro paddy, on his 80 decimals land this year, spending Tk 31,000 including irrigation and fertilizer cost.

He got 100 maunds of paddy from his land and sold those for Tk 1,000 per maund.

Masud said due to high salinity of the land it was quite difficult to grow any other crop except Aman.

But this year he got a good yield by cultivating Boro on the advice of the local agriculture office.

Shahjahan Fakir, another farmer of the village, said he cultivated Boro on 90 decimals of land this year and got 135 maunds of paddy.

After bearing all the cultivation expenses he made a profit of Tk 1 lakh, Shahjahan said.

Another grower Masud Chowdhury said earlier their lands used to remain uncultivated for at least seven to eight months of the year due to high salinity.

Masud said he will bring more of his land under Boro cultivation next year.

Mizanur Rahman, deputy assistant agricultural officer at Barguna Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE), said the salinity level of the agricultural land in the coastal area is too high.

So a few salt tolerant varieties of Boro paddy have been cultivated for the first time in the area and achieved a record yield, he said, adding that under the initiative farmer have been provided 10kg of seeds and 20ks fertiliser free of cost.

Barguna DAE Additional Deputy Director Badrul Alam said Boro paddy has been cultivated on 9,078 hectares of land, including 3,015 hectares in Sadar upazila, 3,000 hectares in Taltali, 1,900 hectares in Amtali, 460 hectares in Bamna, 353 hectares in Betagi and 350 hectares in Patharghata upazila, this year.

Last year Boro was cultivated on 8,270 hectares of land.



PHOTO: STAR

Chronicler of 'the dark times' dies

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who had a long history of lung problems and breathing difficulties, died at around 6:00pm at the Apollo Hospital on EM Bypass Road in the eastern part of the city. He was admitted to the hospital on April 25 with complaints of brain haemorrhaging and thereafter developed breathing trouble.

The Apollo Hospital spokesperson said, Samaresh Majumdar had long been suffering from chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) and was recently admitted to the hospital with breathing problems.

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee called the death of Samaresh Majumdar "An irreparable loss to Bengali literature."

A prolific writer, Samaresh was best known for the series of novels featuring Animesh and Madhabilata as the lead characters in novels "Kalbela", "Uttaradhikar", and

"Kalpurush" in the backdrop of the Naxalite movement in 1960s and 70s. Kalbela was brought on the big screen by acclaimed director Gautam Ghosh in 2009 with Parambrata Chattopadhyay and Paoli Dam in the lead roles.

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He is also credited with creating

the character of detective Arjun. The Bangla film "Buno Haansh" is based on the novel written by Samaresh Majumdar of the same name.

Samaresh took the Bangla literary world by storm with his first novel "Dour" which was serialised in "Desh" magazine of Kolkata. It immediately earned him huge popularity. It was also made into a film in 1979.

Born on March 10, 1944, in Jalpaiguri in the northern part of West Bengal, Samaresh spent the first six years of his life in the terraced lush green tea gardens of the region. North Bengal forms a distinct and large part of his works.

After having primary education in Jalpaiguri high school, Samaresh shifted to Kolkata in the 1960s and obtained his BA honours degree from Scottish Church College and completed his post-graduation from Calcutta University.

Among the other novels by

Samaresh are "Saatkahon", "Swapner Bazar", "Ujaan", "Ganga", "Victorian Bagan", "Aat Kuthuri Noy Dorja", "Anurag", "Tero Parban", and "Garbhadharini". "Saatkahon" was adapted into a Bangla TV show.

In 1982, Samaresh was conferred Ananda Puraskar and declared an outstanding Bangali by ABP Ananda for his contribution to literature.

Samaresh's death plunged the Bangla literary world into the gloom.

Veteran writer Sirshendu Mukhopadhyay recalled his memories with Samaresh saying he had known Samaresh before he became an author. "I used to stay at a boarding house in Kolkata and Samaresh used to come there. He was such a lively youth with diversified interests."

Sirshendu said he had a special affinity with Samaresh because both were from north Bengal – the former from Siliguri and the latter from Jalpaiguri.

EU plans to invest big in Bangladesh

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looking at the transport sector, for example, metro rail, he added.

The Global Gateway Initiative is not like some other big players who provide funding for infrastructure where there's a certain tendency towards making sure that their own companies get the contracts and their own workers implement the projects, he said, adding that EU's move would be a lot more values-based.

Bangladesh exports goods worth \$24 billion to the EU and enjoys the GSP facility, which will expire by 2029. Then, there will be a new scheme called GSP Plus with tougher conditions.

Whiteley said GSP Plus gives the same benefits as Bangladesh enjoys now, but with a few more conditions, including the requirement for ratifying and implementing 32 international conventions on social, environmental, human rights, and labour rights.

Bangladesh has ratified the conventions and now the work should begin in earnest to be ready



Whiteley said Bangladeshi is one of the leaders in terms of green factory, especially the garment industry. However, other industries need the same kind of approach, for example, brick kilns and construction business.

by 2029.

"If Bangladesh makes progress on this front, then the duty-free and free access will remain."

Also, the export basket needs diversification. It is happening but needs extra push through deregulation in terms of attracting foreign direct investment and making the atmosphere more

business-friendly.

He said the new areas of exports can be logistics or services, including ICT services, bicycles, pharmaceuticals, plastics, jute and jute products.

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On labour reforms, the envoy said there is a need for continued implementation regarding reforms to the labour laws and trade unions. There is still the need for making changes and time is ticking.

Some of the deadlines for implementing changes have now passed, he added, lauding the progress already made.

The EU last year launched Talent Partnership for creating legal pathways for migration. Asked about it, Whiteley said it will allow educated Bangladeshis to go to Europe and live and work, learn more and then come back to Bangladesh.

At the moment, the EU is identifying sectors that need workers from Bangladesh, but the exact time of its operations has not been decided yet, said the EU ambassador.

He lauded Bangladesh's Indo-Pacific Outlook, saying a lot of what Bangladesh put in, chimes very well with how the EU sees this issue.

"Talking about the freedom of navigation, freedom of overflight, and respect for the law of the sea, I mean, grounding your strategy and outlook in international law is always a good starting point. And let's be frank. Not everybody bases their foreign policy on international law."

On Rohingya repatriation, Whiteley said the Rohingyas can only go back when it is safe for them to return in a voluntary manner.

He said the UNHCR is not involved in the latest move, and it needs to be monitored very carefully as the Rohingyas who visited the model villages in Rakhine said they won't go back unless they get citizenship in Myanmar.