

LAILA SHARMEEN'S 'GOLDEN BENGAL'

A thoughtful, artistic tribute to nature

“I am deeply inspired by literature and philosophy, and they hold a special significance in my portrayal of nature. My artworks also reflect my childhood, spent in Gendaria, among gardens and lakes. The spontaneous beauty of the geese from our pond, dhundul flowers in the backyard, and soft breezes across the gardens all find a spot in my paintings,”

MAISHA ISLAM MONAMEE

Laila Sharmeen's 12th solo painting exhibition, *Golden Bengal*, has begun at the La Galerie of Alliance Française de Dhaka (AFD). The exhibition's opening ceremony took place on Saturday, May 20, and was graced by the presence of Dr Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury MP, Speaker of Bangladesh Parliament as the chief guest. HE Marie Masdupuy, Ambassador of France to Bangladesh, Prof. Shibli Rubayat-Ul-Islam, Chairman, Bangladesh Securities and Exchange Commission, and Mr. Faruque Hassan, President, Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) were also present as special guests.

“AFD has played an important role in the art scene of Bangladesh, by supporting art for many years now. Art moves beyond barriers, and transcends borders, being able to communicate without words. In our history, it has inspired common people during different movements,” Dr Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury asserted. She further applauded the artist, mentioning her use of metaphors to denote climate change and the existential threat it possesses.

Prof. Shibli Rubayat-Ul-Islam noted how human civilisation has developed



PHOTOS: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

solely due to the power of art and words. Faruque Hassan explained how he believes that art and culture could play a pivotal role in branding the real Bangladesh. He congratulated the artist, and spoke about BGMEA's efforts in terms of promoting art.

The 30 artworks on display feature Sharmeen's delicate use of colours and distinctive brushstrokes in mixed media on paper and acrylic on canvas. She paints an imaginary world with natural elements using dramatic textures on white canvas with sinuous lines and lyrical strokes. The majority of the artworks were

made during the previous two years and depict a colourful interpretation of nature. Her meditative observation on her surroundings lends a symbolic complexity to her artworks, which use nature as a metaphor to capture her lived experiences and imagine reality.

The artworks in this series explore the grandeur of Bangladesh's nature. She draws inspiration from Bangla literature, philosophy, and mythologies, as well as the writings of literary and philosophical luminaries such as T S Eliot, Jibanananda Das, Kant, Derrida, and Foucault. Her artworks include *kash* and hyacinth

flowers, paddy fields, rivers, birds, butterflies, fish, fireflies, and the immense expanse of the sky.

It takes the audience on a transformative journey of exploring the essence of nature, in its true glory.

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lakes. The spontaneous beauty of the geese from our pond, *dhundul* flowers in the backyard, and soft breezes across the gardens all find a spot in my paintings,” she mentioned.

Her poetic self can be found in an essay accompanying her art, titled *Bedbug, Dhaka, and Toronto*. It expresses her artistic purpose as she explains how she found fresh ideas for art in a variety of mediums. Her wide range of genres, from etching to painting to mixed media, is surprisingly minimalistic. The liberal use of empty space, in contrast to the rich colours and textures, enables visitors to contribute their own colours of imagination to complete the picture.

The exhibition also included her latest project, *Return to Nature*. Vegetable seeds, contained in jute pouches, were coiled like a snake on the gallery floor, intending to fascinate visitors as they toured the display. After the inauguration, the pouches were distributed with the request that

the seeds be planted in kitchen gardens.

Sharmeen wants her audience to have a united experience with the exhibits while raising awareness about deforestation, global warming, and climate change.

“My works convey a clarion cry to return to nature. It has a tint of nostalgia as I look back at the pristine nature of my childhood home, while also shedding light on the alarming changes brought about by capitalism,” she explained.

The exhibition is open to all till Monday, May 29.



COUNTRYWIDE

Hindu family faces eviction threat

S DILIP ROY

A family from the minority community in Kurigram's Phulbari upazila is now living in fear of eviction from their ancestral home by an influential land grabber.

Locals said there had been a longstanding rivalry between Ratikant Roy, 45, a day labourer from Naodanga village, and one Azimul Islam of the same village over the ownership land.

Ratikant alleged that Azimul and his men are trying to evict them from their ancestral home for long.

“Azimul's men attacked my family thrice in the last one year,” he said.

On May 14 this year, a gang led by Azimul, equipped with sharp weapons, tried to attack him and his wife, but they somehow managed to flee the scene, Ratikant said adding that, “Then I dialled 999 and sought help from the local police, who reached the spot and the situation.”

On April 22, Ratikant and his wife Dadoshi Rani were brutally beaten up by Azimul and his cohorts.

“After the brutal torture my wife had to take treatment at Phulbari Upazila Health Complex for six days.

On April 27, he filed a case with Kurigram Judicial Magistrate's Court accusing six people including Azimul, Ratikant said.

Currently police are investigating the case.



Ratikant and his wife Dadoshi, residents of Naodanga village in Kurigram's Phulbari upazila, are now passing days in fear of being evicted from their ancestral home by a local influential.

PHOTO: STAR

Earlier, on August 9 last year, some unidentified criminals vandalised a temple at Ratikant's house and set the temple afire.

The following day, a case was filed with Phulbari Police Station accusing some unnamed attackers.

After investigation, police submitted a report before the court on January 1 this year where they mentioned the attackers could not be identified.

“Although we did not saw the attackers on that night, we believe that Azimul and his men launched the attack,” Ratikant claimed.

Ratikant's wife Dadoshi said, “Though we have been facing constant inhuman torture for long, we are not getting proper justice.”

They have been passing days amid insecurity as the attackers are continuously threatening them with dire consequences, she added.

Contacted, Azimul admitted that he has a land related dispute with Ratikant, but denied the allegation of attacking Ratikant and his family members.

“Ratikant filed a false case to harass me,” Azimul alleged.

Meanwhile, Officer in Charge (OC) of Phulbari Police Station Fazlur Rahman said he will hold a discussion with Ratikant and Azimul soon to resolve the issue.

DSA to be amended by September

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He said the government will not allow the misuse of digital space to defame the country, the government and any individual.

“Women are harassed in online, which needs to be addressed. All countries are governing digital space as it is the need of the hour. We need to protect our national interest and our people who are vulnerable to target and attack. There is no question of repealing this law, but

review is definitely being considered,” the law minister added.

At one stage of the function, the speakers joined an open discussion and questioned the minister about the DSA.

Jatiya Party lawmaker Ahsan Adelur Rahman said punishment under some sections of the DSA are harsher than those in the Penal Code, and those are unfortunately a big barrier to freedom of expression.

He requested the

minister to specify the sections and amend the law to reduce the punishment.

Senior journalist Monjurul Ahsan Bulbul said misuse and abuse of the DSA must be stopped. The law must be amended, incorporating the bail provision, he added.

UN Resident Coordinator in Bangladesh Gwyn Lewis chaired the event, jointly organised by the office of UN resident coordinator and Brac University.

China envoy visits Teknaf

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delegates during the visit.

The Chinese diplomats returned to Cox's Bazar after visiting the repatriation centre and its adjacent jetty. But they did not visit any Rohingya camps, said Hannan.

Some Rohingyas believe Chinese mediation would be crucial to begin the repatriation process. However, others say Rohingyas won't go back to Myanmar without ensuring their citizenship status.

“R Rohingyas are not much enthusiastic about his (Chinese ambassador's) visit. Rohingyas will go back to Myanmar only after securing citizenship,”

said Noor Mohammad, a Rohingya community leader at Kutupalong refugee camp in Ukhiya.

Bangladesh is home to about a million Rohingyas, most of whom fled a 2017 military crackdown in Myanmar that is now subject to a United Nations genocide investigation.

Around 11.5 lakhs registered Rohingyas are now living in 33 refugee camps in Ukhiya and Teknaf. Their repatriation could not be started due to dilly-dallying of Myanmar authorities.

As part of the Bangladesh government's repatriation initiative, a delegation of 20 Rohingyas

visited Myanmar's Maungdaw township on May 5 to see two model villages build as a pilot project for the resettlement of the persecuted minority.

After the visit, a delegation from Myanmar was supposed to visit Bangladesh to convince Rohingyas for the repatriation. But it was postponed due to cyclone Mocha that hit Bangladesh and Myanmar coast on May 14.

Contacted, Rohingya Relief and Rehabilitation Commissioner Mohammed Mizanur Rahman said, “We want to begin repatriation. But we cannot confirm its timetable right now.”

‘ACC being used to harass me’

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“I was elected mayor of Gazipur City Corporation for five years. I was suspended through an illegal order from Dhaka,” he said yesterday.

There is no need for voting if a public representative can not

assume the position, he said, adding, “After I was elected mayor, I did not receive any allowance or honorarium in three years.”

There were only two projects worth around Tk 1,500 crore at the city corporation, but the allegations of corruption

involve about Tk 7,500 crore, he said.

Zahangir is facing two separate investigations by the ACC.

Officials earlier said they found a suspicious bank account of the GCC with the Konabari Branch of Premier Bank.

Trial of Tarique

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London since 2008.

Tarique is accused in 15 other cases, mostly filed during the caretaker government rule in 2007 and 2008, and Zubaida has been indicted only in this one.

Accepting the charges brought against them, this court on November 1 last year issued arrest warrants against the duo.

On June 26 last year, the HC declared Tarique and Zubaida “fugitives” and rejected their writ petitions challenging the filing of the graft case.

The HC also withdrew the stay order on the case.

On September 26, 2007, the ACC filed the case with Kafrul Police Station against the two

and Zubaida's mother Syeda Iqbal Mand Banu, on charges of amassing assets worth Tk 4.82 crore through illegal means and concealing the information of Tk 2.16 crore in their wealth statements.

After a probe, the investigation officer pressed charges against the three on March 31, 2009.

However, trial proceedings against Zubaida's mother were cancelled.

Tarique has been sentenced to life imprisonment in the August 21 grenade attack cases.

He was also sentenced in two other cases, including the Zia Orphanage Trust graft case.

Bangladesh losing \$3.3b a year

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large consumers, the WB recommended the amendment of the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Rules with provisions for annual energy consumption reports, periodic energy audits, and capacity development.

The lender expected that the amendments and their implementation would result in the energy saving of around 1,000GWh in five years from 2022.

The government amended the rules in line with the WB recommendations in February with provisions for all industries to submit annual energy consumption reports and conduct audits by a certified energy auditor within 18 months and then every three years.

The finance minister in his letter said the government would adopt a market-linked system from September that would periodically and automatically adjust diesel, heavy fuel oil, and octane prices.

“The power and energy ministry has prepared a roadmap for the automated price adjustment mechanism for petroleum products, including the necessary institutional responsibilities, consultations process, and other activities needed to approve the system by September 2023,” he said.

“We will support the establishment of an independent system operator as envisaged in the electricity act to improve the dispatch and efficiency of the power generation system,” he said.