

Celebrating the best of art

25th National Art Exhibition kicks-off

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The inauguration of the 25th National Art Exhibition took place at the National Art Gallery of Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy (BSA) on Sunday, May 28. The ceremony kicked-off with a beautiful musical arrangement.

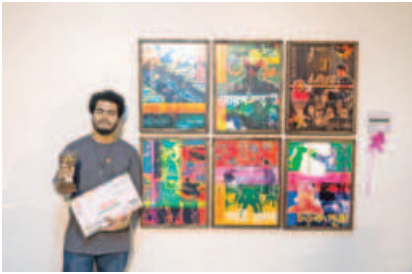
Syeda Mahbuba Karim, Director of Fine Arts at BSA, delivered the welcome speech. Veteran artists Hashem Khan and Khalil Ahmed were present as special guests. Present among the other guests were artists Abdul Mannan and Monirul Islam.

K M Khalid, MP, Minister for Cultural Affairs, appreciated the artists of Bangladesh for uplifting our culture. Liaquat Ali Lucky, Director General of BSA, presided over the event. Salahuddin Ahmed, Secretary of BSA, thanked everyone for attending the event in his speech.

After the opening remarks, the much-awaited award ceremony began. The artists who received crests, certificates, and prize money took their place on the stage for a photo session. The ceremony ended with a cultural performance by a group of dancers



Awardees and dignitaries pose for a group photo.



PHOTOS: ARSHADUL HOQUE ROCKY

in Top View by Md Faruk Ahamad Mullah is a fantastic composition of wooden blocks. The thought-provoking painting with humanoid cats belongs to Ahsana Nasreen Hoque Angona, called **Adaptation**.

To commemorate S M Sultan's 100th birthday, an entire gallery (Gallery 5) has been embellished with his legendary paintings and some of the art supplies he used in his lifetime. The award-winning performance art group holds their piece on the second level of the National Art Gallery.

Aside from all the drawings, paintings, etchings, prints, sculptures, murals, and bas-reliefs, the 25th edition of the National Art Exhibition has some of the best installation projects the country has ever witnessed. This open-for-all exhibition will run at the National Art Gallery of BSA until July 15.



led by Shamim Ara Nipa and Shibly Mohammad. The 25th National Art Exhibition showcases 301 artworks from 261 artists, across 11 mediums. All the galleries of BSA were adorned with wonderful art pieces. Ashraful Hasan's award-winning majestic artwork, **Pyre of Green**, in charcoal and acrylic, portrays the doom of the green spaces of the environment. Farzana Alam took a surrealist approach for her piece titled **Earth and Hope-I**. Zihad Rabby, who won the award for best graphic design with his work **Sharonatit**, explained his attempt to form a connection between our young generation and our local elements such as *putul nach*, *nouka baich*, and *morog lorai* (rooster fight), through his digital poster designs.

Our mountains have undergone deforestation, and the people whose lives are intertwined with mountains have suffered a great deal of misfortune. Jayatu Chakma's **Entity Existence** mirrors the destruction of the environment. Bilas Mandal's installation **Living in Water** portrays a beautiful, futuristic city.

The internet and globalisation have resulted in superficial needs for external validation. Sadatuddin Ahmed Amil's **The Paradoxes of Globalisation** reflects that. *City*



NEWS

China now active

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Rohingya repatriation under a pilot project, the Rohingyas still seem to be lacking in confidence and trust in the Myanmar junta. The junta took control of Myanmar through a coup in February 2021, more than three years after the army carried out a crackdown on the Rohingyas.

During the FOC, Bangladesh Foreign Secretary Masud Bin Momen emphasised the need for engaging the friendly countries, regional and international organisations in the Rohingya repatriation efforts. The statement hinted at involvement of the ASEAN and UN in the repatriation efforts which would boost Rohingya's confidence in Myanmar authorities.

Now the question is: Can China, which brokered a deal between Saudi Arabia and Iran early this year to end their diplomatic rift and open diplomatic missions, effectively pursue the Myanmar junta to amend the Citizenship Law, guarantee citizenship or make arrangement to ensure safety and security in Rakhine? We will have to wait to see if this happens.

While Bangladesh bears the brunt of sheltering more than one million Rohingyas and wants the repatriation to start at the soonest, it also expects the repatriation would be sustainable, safe, and voluntary.

The most important of all is what the Rohingyas want. And therefore Rohingya delegation's visit to Rakhine was very important. After the return of the delegation on May 5, some delegation members said they want their properties in Rakhine be given back to them and also to be granted citizenship, a right denied to them though they had been living in Myanmar for centuries.

A booklet handed to them by the Myanmar authorities during their visit speaks of various initiatives on livelihood, health care, schooling of children etc, but it repeats the same old thing about the Citizenship Law of 1982. The booklet says the Rohingyas will be provided with National Verification Card (NVC) after repatriation and the Myanmar authorities will decide on their

citizenship later.

Rohingyas say that handing them NVCs mean they would be considered foreigners. They questioned why they should be given those cards despite not being foreigners in Myanmar. They demand the Citizenship Law be amended to include Rohingya as one of the ethnic communities of Myanmar -- something that would ensure their all rights like those of any other Myanmar citizen.

Meanwhile, the international community is closely observing the latest move on repatriation. UNHCR Bangladesh Representative Johannes van der Klaauw, during a recent meeting with some foreign ministry officials, reminded that the UN refugee agency in Rakhine was not allowed to assess the situation there and that the voluntariness of the Rohingyas was a must for repatriation. He also discussed the issue with some foreign diplomats in Dhaka.

The international community, especially the western countries, want a guarantee of the Rohingyas' safety and security in Rakhine, and their citizenship. Bangladesh also wants justice for Rohingyas and support for The Gambia's genocide case with the International Court of Justice against Myanmar's Rohingya atrocities.

"Rohingyas lack confidence and trust in the Myanmar authorities. Therefore, we have been urging the Myanmar officials to visit Rohingyas and interact with them for building confidence," a foreign ministry official told this correspondent.

Some Myanmar officials' visit to a Rohingya camp in late March and the Rohingya delegation's trip to Rakhine were parts of the trust-building efforts.

On May 5, a 20-member Rohingya delegation visited a model village in Rakhine.

A 14-member delegation of Myanmar officials visited Teknaf on May 25 to talk to Rohingyas as part of confidence-building measures.

On March 15, a 17-member Myanmar delegation made a visit to Teknaf to discuss Rohingya identity verification.

Students must not cover

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Attorney General AM Amin Uddin appeared for the Bangla department, while lawyer Belayet Hossain argued for the petitioners.

On March 28, the HC stayed for six months the effectiveness of the notice after three students of the department filed a writ petition after which the HC issued the rule.

Talking to The Daily Star, Prof AAMS Arefin Siddique, former vice-chancellor of Dhaka University, said, "I think if [covering faces] can cause discipline if students cannot be identified in the exam halls. If the faces are not open, how will the teachers identify the students? How will the teachers be able to find out if one gives a proxy for a student?"

"Especially, during the viva voce teachers have to evaluate the examinees not just based on their answer and also their behaviour and body language are taken into

account. To do the evaluations, teachers need to identify the students and for this, faces of students should remain open."

"So in my opinion, the decision of the Appellate Division and Bangla department was correct and other educational institutions should follow this," he added.

Prof Tanzimuddin Khan, of the DU's international relations department, said, "There should be a way to identify any student who is attending classes or taking examinations. Even the teachers will not be able to help a student during any emergency if he or she is not known to them."

"The teachers' security may also be at risk if they cannot identify the students," he added.

Tanzimuddin said keeping faces of students uncovered during exams is a very common global practice and it should be followed.

Myanmar not sincere

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the Rohingya people fled Myanmar's Rakhine state in the face of atrocities and that Myanmar has repeatedly promised to ensure their safety and security, but "nothing has been done."

"China has been mediating the issue and that's why Chinese Vice Minister Sun Weidong visited Bangladesh on May 27-28."

"It is because of China that Myanmar delegations have recently visited the Rohingya camps twice as part of a confidence-building exercise."

On May 27, during the foreign office consultation between Dhaka and Beijing, as well as Sun Weidong's meeting with Momen, the Chinese minister said they wanted quick and safe repatriation of the Rohingyas.

Dengue cases

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"Side by side, an extensive mass awareness-raising campaign would also be led by DNCC mosquito workers along with members of Bangladesh Scout and Bangladesh National Cadet Corps from Tuesday [Today]."

The official also said the city corporation cannot control the dengue menace alone and that everyone's awareness is important.

"We ourselves help to breed Aedes larvae by storing water on the roof of our houses or in rooftop gardens. The city corporation workers cannot destroy all the breeding grounds, so it is necessary to have a social movement against dengue."

"In addition to the campaigns, the city corporation magistrates will remain active in the field and will take legal action if they find Aedes mosquito larvae."

Health ministry

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highest allocation among the 15 ministries with highest allocations. However, it has lagged behind all others in implementing the Annual Development Programme (ADP). Among the 58 ministries and departments, the health services division is 43rd in terms of budget utilisation.

According to the IMED report, among the 15 ministries with highest allocations, the average budget utilisation is 51.30 percent. Of them, the health services division has spent 33.04 percent while the bridge department has utilised the highest 65 percent.

Echoing Prof Be-Nazir, Dr Mohammad Akhteruzzaman, joint secretary and programme manager at the Health Economics Unit of the health ministry, said, "In most cases, the health budget is prepared on the basis of assumption. As a result, there has always been a big gap between the plan and the reality, and also, the health managers stay in fear of audit objections."

Health expert MA Sabur said, "The health sector is a specialised and service oriented public sector. But the government does not recognise this fact."

Inefficiency is not the only issue plaguing the sector, said Sabur, also an adjunct faculty at the Institute of Health Economics, Dhaka University.

Man serving extra 7yrs

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acquitted after their appeals.

In the petition, Bivuti requested the HC to order the authorities concerned to produce Alauddin before it and issue a rule asking them to explain why keeping him in jail should not be declared illegal.

The HC bench of Justice KM Kamrul Kader and Justice Mohammad Showkat Ali Chowdhury fixed June 1 for a hearing.

Speaking to The Daily Star, Bivuti said Alauddin, now in Barishal jail, was reportedly arrested on January 27, 1993, in connection with a case filed over the killing of one Selim Miah Dhali on January 25 that year.

A Shariatpur court on January 12, 2001, sentenced 15, including Alauddin, out of total 26 accused, to life imprisonment.

All convicts except Alauddin moved appeals with the High Court and were freed, the lawyer said.

"A big portion of the health budget is allocated for salaries. But 20-30 percent of posts in the sector remain vacant at any given time. Therefore, allocation for salaries of these vacant posts also remains unused," he said.

Sabur, who was also the team leader of Program Support Office at the health ministry from 2007 to 2010, pointed out a systemic flaw in the sector. He said that it takes the health ministry officials four to five months to get procurement plans for different projects passed due to the ministry's heavily centralised nature, adding that many other ministries get such plans passed way earlier.

All public hospitals and government health complexes have separate allocations for medicine, equipment etc. But heads of these institutions and facilities often show reluctance about these funds as using them is followed by audits. That's why they often rely for medicine and other supplies on various sources including the hospital service management unit of the DGHS, said Sabur.

Asked about this, Akhteruzzaman recommended decentralising the utilisation of the health budget to avoid procedural delay as well as training a pool of mid-level health managers who would be engaged in financial management for the rest of their service life.

Bivuti said as per the Supreme Court's Appellate Division guideline, life imprisonment means 30 years in jail and the period is reduced to 22 and a half years after a convict gets remission for seven and a half years.

Alauddin's jail term expired more than seven years ago as he was supposed to get a deduction of his sentence from his custodial period which he served during trial, the lawyer added.

The jail authorities have kept Alauddin in jail for this additional period illegally, he argued.

Replying to a question, Bivuti said he did not contact the family of Alauddin and the jail authorities.

Ratna Ray, senior jail super of Barishal jail, said she was not aware of any convict not getting released from jail after serving his time.

"I can say in details about this issue only after examining the relevant papers," she told The Daily Star.