



A solemn walk through TEN YEARS AFTER RANA PLAZA

Exhibition ongoing at DrikPath Bhobon

Ismail, who had been residing in France prior to coming to the country for this exhibition, currently works as a member of Agence VU in Paris. He had been photographing the Rana Plaza disaster and its victims since 2013, having taken breaks in between due to the sheer mental exhaustion that he faced as an onlooker of such a tragedy.

MALIHA MASHIAT

In a silent inauguration on July 21, immersive exhibition *Ten Years After Rana Plaza* kicked off at the level 2 of DrikPath Bhobon, Panthapath. The exhibition is composed of the interdisciplinary works of photojournalist Ismail Ferdous, curated to be displayed in a swirling walkway, designed by architect Farhana Nizam Chowdhury.

The exhibition started without any opening or celebration, as a solemn reminder of the tragic history and the aftermath of the event. Ismail Ferdous consciously chose not to arrange the exhibition in April, when the tragedy struck in 2013. According to him, instead of looking for an occasion to remember, this tragedy should be a part of the history that everyone remembers without fanfare, especially the younger ones.

"This exhibition is not for foreigners, this is for us Bangladeshis!" exclaimed Ismail, who does not like to call himself an activist but rather, a photojournalist. This sentiment is also apparent in the layout of the exhibition which is accessible for all, with the walkways

being wide enough to accommodate wheelchairs and other facilities available, which are able to serve specially-abled individuals of all sort.

Some of the artistes who have contributed to the making of the displayed collages include names like Morshed Mishu and Ata Mojlish. The photos displayed contained multiple styles of pictures, some portraits, some landscapes, but all of them shared the common subject of garment workers.

While the large photo of a crowd of garment workers commuting to work invokes a strange sense of omniscience, on the other side, the photo of a victim being pulled out of the rubble by volunteers, reluctantly makes the viewer feel the other side of the omniscience coin, the helplessness of being an observer.

"The first person that I talked to was the architect. That's where the core idea lies. Then I spoke to the artistes, on how to convey the sentiment of 'silence'", Ismail said to The Daily Star.



Ismail Ferdous

"If you look around, you will not see dramatic photos, rather quiet ones. To convey the moment of silence observed for all the lives that have been lost".

Dr Naomi Hossain, Research Professor at American University at Washington, DC and one of the organisers, remarked about the photos

displayed, and shared her insights on the particularly harrowing effects the disaster had on the low-income female work force.

"Despite the tragedy, the industry has not stopped and female workers don't want it to either, they have mouths to feed." She then drifted off by complimenting the exhibition on its layered and nuanced vision, both

literally and metaphorically.

Ismail, who had been residing in France prior to coming to the country for this exhibition, currently works as a member of Agence VU in Paris. He had been photographing the Rana Plaza disaster and its victims since 2013, having taken breaks in between due to the sheer mental exhaustion that he faced as an onlooker of such a tragedy.

His photos of the tragic sight have been displayed in countless places, one of them being a projection onto the Lincoln Centre and stores, places that had sourced from the Rana Plaza, during New York Fashion Week, 2014.

The pièce de résistance of the exhibition, a portrait that Ismail had taken, is set at the last alley of the winding walkway. As per the artiste's request, the description of the photo has been kept secret, as that is something he wants the visitors to experience first-hand. All of the photos, collages displayed are tied to the structure and also the experience, which the photographer hopes will stir the emotions of the younger generations, from within.

The exhibition will remain open to the public every day until July 29, from 3 pm to 8 pm.

NEWS

Biman official found negligent

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"I don't want to comment on the report as I have not seen it yet," he said, adding that he was involved in the question-setting committee by default but his name was not mentioned in the charge sheet.

On October 21, 2022, Biman Bangladesh was to hold a recruitment exam for 10 posts for electricians, mechanics, welders, painters, operators and tailors.

Around two hours before the exam, the recruitment process had to be suspended because it was found that the question paper had been leaked.

The investigation report, turned in on November 27 last year, stated, "The question paper setting committee is responsible for this question leak."

On December 27, 2022, the ministry sent the probe findings to the managing director of Biman and instructed them to "take appropriate action against the employees found responsible as per the findings".

According to the probe report, the question setting was done over two days – October 19 and October 20, 2022.

On the second day, Nizam had invited MLSS (member of lower subordinate staff) Jahid Hasan, along with a deputy general manager and an assistant manager, to print and photocopy the question papers. None of these people were part of the

question-setting committee approved by the board.

As they all were carrying their cellphones, Jahid, unsupervised at the time, took a photo of the question paper while photocopying.

Another investigation report, prepared by Biman itself, also confirmed the incident.

"It has been proved that the question paper has been leaked from the offices of the general manager and director of administration," it said.

Jahid was formally accused by the DB in the charge sheet in the Digital Security Act case filed in connection with the leak.

In a confessional statement, Jahid said, "On October 19, the GM of admin (Nizam) instructed me to report by 10:00am the next day at the director of admin's office. I personally photocopied a thousand sets at first and then 216 more, using the photocopy machine in that office."

"During the last set of 216, GM Nizam went to the washroom and I took a photo using my cellphone."

The Biman report said Jahid was included in the process without any written decision or permission taken.

The ministry's investigation report said the committee is at fault because it not only invited people, who had not been pre-approved, into the room but also allowed them to carry cellphones, adding

that it was "careless and thoughtless management".

The report recommended that nobody be allowed to bring in cellphones or use the internet during the question-setting and printing process.

On June 19, Nizam Uddin was first transferred from his post to the Public Security Division of the home ministry.

But before he could join his post, Biman on June 23 sent him to Saudi Arabia "to assist Bangladeshi hajjis" for 37 days.

On July 9, the division issued an order announcing that Nizam will be promoted to DC of Bhola. Then on July 13, the ministry changed his posting to Shariatpur.

Biman has so far terminated or temporarily suspended at least 21 staffers, including traffic helpers, cleaners, security guards and office aides, over the leak.

Other than Jahid, none of the others was present in the photocopy room. But they were found guilty of either receiving or helping distribute the leaked papers.

It was pointed out to the State Minister for Public Administration Farhad Hossain that the civil aviation ministry blamed the entire question-setting committee for the question leak, to which he responded that it does not mean that every person in the committee was involved.

Palestinian teenager killed by Israel forces

AFP, Nablus

Israeli forces have shot dead a Palestinian in the occupied West Bank, Palestinian officials said yesterday, in what the army described as a "car ramming attempt" near Nablus.

Fawzi Mukhalifa, 18, "was killed by the occupation (Israeli) bullets in the town of Sebastia" late on Friday, the Palestinian health ministry said.

He was the second Palestinian to be killed by Israeli forces in the West Bank within hours.

The army said troops had responded to "a car ramming attempt" in the northern West Bank town "by firing towards the suspects who were in the vehicle. The driver was neutralised."

Another "suspect" who had been

in Mukhalifa's car was wounded and arrested, the army said.

The deadly incident came amid rising tensions in the West Bank, which Israel has occupied since the 1967 Six-Day War.

The territory has seen a string of attacks by Palestinians on Israeli targets, as well as a surge in violence by Israeli settlers against Palestinian communities.

Earlier on Friday, the Palestinian health ministry reported the death of Mohammed al-Bayed, 17, near the city of Ramallah.

Bayed died from injuries sustained by live bullets fired by Israeli forces in the village of Umm Safa, it said, while Israeli border police accused him of attacking officers.

Cops not informed

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to tackle any untoward incidents during polls in the future.

Meanwhile, the case filed over the attack was transferred to Detective Branch of police from Banani Police Station yesterday, Rifat Hossain Shamim, deputy commissioner of DB (Gulshan), told The Daily Star.

All the arrestees are so far ruling Awami League activists, according to media reports.

Hero Alom, however, refuted the DMP commissioner's claim of attacking him outside the polling centre and visiting the centre for the second time without notifying police.

He alleged that AL activists attacked him inside the centre in presence of police, but the law enforcers did not take any action

against them.

"The DMP commissioner told the media that I visited Banani Bidyaniketan centre twice. But the fact is that I visited Banani Model Primary School centre in the morning and the Banani Bidyaniketan centre only in the afternoon after hearing of ballot stuffing there," Hero Alom told this correspondent.

"I'm a candidate and I have rights to visit polling centres. Why would I have to inform police prior to my visit? It is police's duty to ensure security of candidates."

Claiming vote rigging in the Dhaka-17 by-elections, Hero Alom said he would appeal to the Election Commission today, seeking re-election.

Fair polls not possible

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general elections, Quader said.

"A fair election is never possible in such a reality," the JP chief added.

Quader also said, "When the government feels that it needs to make elections appear neutral, it is doing so and when it believes that it must lose, it makes sure that it does."

The election results are now

being determined by the will of the government and not by the people's votes, he added.

The JP chairman finally said democracy is supposed to be a government of the people, by the people, and for the people. "However, the government elected by Awami League is working for Awami League, not for the people."

Hasina not afraid of any threat

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government by waging movements, reports BSS.

Referring to BNP's one-point movement, he said BNP has not been successful in the past 14 and a half years of agitation and would not be successful in the next four months as well.

The AL general secretary said BNP is waging movements to disrupt the ongoing massive development across the country.

Quader urged the party leaders and activists to remain united.

Addressing the people, he said, "Perhaps BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir did not know that Noakhali used to be a fort of BNP. But now it has become a base of Awami League."

Quader attended a similar rally in the afternoon at Noakhali Zilla School, reports our correspondent.

Addressing the rally as chief guest, AL Presidium Member and deputy leader of the parliament Matia Chowdhury asked the BNP to test its fate by participating in the upcoming national polls.

"The [national] election is a few days away, try your luck there," she said urging the opposition party to respect democratic practices.

Matia said there is no point in trusting foreigners. "They themselves are suffering from an economic downturn," she added.

The BNP wants to hold the country hostage in the name of its "youth rally", alleged Jubo League General Secretary Mainul Hossain Khan Nikhil.

"BNP was responsible for the 1/11 in the country. They want to create a similar situation," he said.

Nikhil said the national election will not be held as per foreigners' prescription, rather it will be held in line with the constitution.

From the rally, the JL general secretary announced that they will hold a rally on Monday at the south gate of Baitul Mukarram National Mosque in the capital.

65 percent faced obstacles at work

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Vague terms such as "anti-state activities" and "inimical" or "derogatory" comments about the constitution and constitutional institutions should be deleted to prevent the abuse of the law.

Blocking access to foreign funds is often the chosen method of harassment by the government, the report said.

Whenever an organisation is seen as a "troublemaker", their permission for foreign funding is denied, said the human rights activists interviewed for the report.

The availability of foreign grants is being seen as a negative, said Sara Hossain, honorary executive director of the Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust, a major legal aid provider, at the event.

"The NGO affairs bureau was set up to facilitate the process, make it

easier to bring foreign funds. Now it has become a gatekeeper."

Extrajudicial threats make it impossible to seek legal redress, said Hossain, also a barrister in the Supreme Court of Bangladesh.

Nurul Kabir, editor of the English daily New Age, pointed out how human rights defenders face reprisal from the government for reporting issues to the UN and other international organisations.

"It is my democratic right to report to the UN because my state recognises our membership to the UN," he added.

Zi Khan Panna, chairman of Ain o Salish Kendra, a national legal aid and human rights organisation, and Kamal Uddin Ahmed, chairman of the National Human Rights Commission, a constitutionally mandated entity, also spoke.