

ENTERTAINMENT'S RISING STARS

Dance and dreams have no gender: MOFASSAL AL ALIF

Fuelled by his inclination towards global dance forms, nurtured by his love for Bollywood films, the talented artiste enrolled in a two-year dance programme at Terrence Lewis Training Institute in Mumbai in 2018.

ANTARA RAISA

"When I was little, I remember humming tunes and dancing in front of a mirror by myself," said Mofassal Al Alif with a smile tugging at his lips. "Despite living in a village where music and dance schools were a distant dream, the fire of dance burned vigorously within me."

Within only six years, Alif has established himself as one of the emerging dancers and choreographers in the country. He is also the founder of Alifia Dance Atelier, an academy where dancers are empowered to explore various international dance forms, including Bollywood, hip hop, jazz, and contemporary.

Alif first stepped into the arena of dance under the guidance of his guru MR Wasek, after

Fuelled by his inclination towards global dance forms, nurtured by his love for Bollywood films, the talented artiste enrolled in a two-year dance programme at Terrence Lewis Training Institute in Mumbai in 2018.

Upon completion of his training, he returned home in 2020. Alifia Dance Atelier emerged the following year in June, providing a platform for young dancers.

"There is no doubt that the traditional dance forms prevalent here are rich. However, a dedicated contemporary dance industry, akin to Bollywood or the West, is still a distant dream," added Alif, who has been tirelessly working to fill this void through various initiatives.

Creating magic on stage, Alif and his crew, Alifia Dance Squad, are now a popular name, performing and choreographing hundreds of corporate shows and events.

Stressing the need for more trainers in global dance forms, he said, "While the contemporary dance market in Bangladesh may be small, it offers ample opportunities for growth. However, without trainers, this transition would stop and the industry would fail to flourish."

Being a performer, a mentor, and a freelance choreographer, he also emphasised the role of motivation for young dancers.

"Initiatives, such as reality shows, would provide them the recognition they deserve. Also, instead of just putting the spotlight on legends or celebrities, ensuring that each (background) dancer is utilised as per their capacity would also inspire many to work harder and improve," he added.

Alif is determined to kindle a passion for dance amongst the youth. "I have seen that most young people do not want to learn dance or lack consistency. However, there is no substitute for training. Alifia Dance Atelier, provides scholarships to such dancers so that they can access free training," he shared.

"Don't let others dictate your path. Dance and dreams have no gender, and art knows no bounds," Alif concluded.



he moved to the capital to pursue academics at Jahangirnagar University.

"I didn't face much criticism from my parents for choosing to become a professional dancer.

However, they preferred that I choose a traditional career path, as dancing might not have been financially lucrative," he mentioned.

Yet, his journey was full of challenges. "I had to repeatedly listen to taunts from the neighbours as they all believed that dancing was definitely not for men."



PHOTOS: NAZMUL HOSSEN



'Antarjal' steps back as 'Jawan' arrives in Bangladesh.

Film enthusiasts had been eagerly anticipating the much-talked-about blockbuster battle between Atlee's *Jawan* and Dipankar Dey's *Antarjal*. However, the makers of *Antarjal* decided to withdraw from the race and postponed the film for the third time this year.

Sources close to the movie have confirmed this news to The Daily Star, announcing that the film will now be released on September 22.

Previously, the film, starring Siam Ahmed, Bidya Sinha Mim, ABM Sumon, and Sunerah Binte Kamal, faced delays in theatres due to technical issues and delayed censor certification. *Antarjal* was originally scheduled for release on September 8.

Five Bangladeshi films to enthrall the Netherlands



Five short films by talented Bangladeshi filmmakers are set to grace the screens of the Netherlands. This exhibition, titled *Best of Bangladesh*, has been organised by the Bangladesh Embassy in the Netherlands and is scheduled to light up the screens today and tomorrow.

Nuhash Humayun's *Moshari*, Mahde Hasan's *I Am Time* and *Photograph of a School Teacher*, Golam Rabbani's *Surot*, and Fuaduzzaman Fuad's *Salvation of Tree* will be screened during this two-day special film exhibition.

The event's primary goal is to introduce European cinephiles to the rich history of Bangladesh's cinema and culture. Lead by the dynamic young filmmaker Arifur Rahman, this cinematic extravaganza promises to be a visual treat.

COUNTRYWIDE

Punjee people opting for alternative livelihood

MINTU DESHWARA

Sixty-year old Sujan Dolo, a resident of Balukona Punjee, indigenous village, in Moulvibazar's Kulaura upazila, used to be solely involved in cultivating betel leaves for a living.

However, due to different problematic reasons like land grabbing, fall in prices of betel leaves and its vulnerability to various plant diseases in recent years, he had to face continuous losses for long.

But, after being listed as one of the ultra-poor indigenous persons, he got a calf from the Department of Livestock Services (DLS) in December 2020, and started a new venture in the form of cattle rearing.

In the past few years, Sujan has gradually developed a deep affection for the cow and it proved to be a profitable investment.

The cow gave birth to two calves and he recently sold one of the young bullocks for Tk 50,000.

In addition, he has been selling milk throughout the year.

Now, Sujan has found a more profitable and sustainable source of income, compared to relying on betel leaves cultivation.

Not only Sujan, but many others living at different punjees in Sylhet region are now gradually opting for alternative professions.

While talking, Subimol Lindokiri, assistant public prosecutor (APP) at

Moulvibazar Judge Court, said about 60 indigenous families, living at Berenga Punjee in Barlekha upazila, have been bearing the brunt since 3,000 betel leaf plants and 60 betel nut trees on several jhum fields were chopped down in May this year.

Such incidents have been occurring quite often in an attempt to occupy the land belonging to indigenous people, but nothing has been done so far to end the harassment, he added.

Dr Mithun Sarkar, livestock officer at Kulaura Department of Livestock Services (DLS), said in order to increase the financial capacity, savings and work skills of the indigenous families living in the plain lands the government has distributed a total of 74 calves in 2020-2021, 618 sheep in 2021-2022 and 77 bullocks in 2022-2023 among as many indigenous families.

Dr Ashim Kumar Das, project director of Tribal/Ethnic Community Development Project, DLS, MOFL, said, under the initiatives of the Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock, DLS has taken a project titled "Integrated livestock development project aimed at improving the socio-economic and living standards of the backward minority groups living in the plain land," to be implemented in 210 upazilas under 29 districts across the country.

This project started in July 2019 and will continue till June 2024, he added.



PHOTO: STAR

Teesta water sharing to be on agenda

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the Teesta water-sharing issue."

In 2011, Bangladesh and India failed to sign the Teesta water-sharing agreement due to West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's last-minute opposition during then Indian prime minister Manmohan Singh's visit to Dhaka. The issue remains unresolved as of today.

Dhaka and Delhi then stepped towards a new deal on six small rivers and the optimum use of the Ganges water treaty. The six rivers are Manu, Muhuri, Khowai, Gumti, Dharla and Dudhkumar.

On a follow-up discussion on the UN 2023 Water Conference, the foreign secretary said there is a general feeling that Bangladesh has abundance of water and there is not much to worry about.

However, there is much to worry about water in the next 10-20 years. The Himalayan glaciers are melting fast, which has short, mid and long-term implications.

"So, we will have to work on this based on scientific data," Masud said.

There has to be a lot of public awareness on this – how to better utilise the water and mobilise resources for better use of the climate-

related fund, he added.

The meeting also discussed excavation of canals across the country and preservation of water. The issue of transboundary rivers was also discussed but not so detail as it is a bilateral issue, he said.

Water Resources Ministry Secretary Nazmul Ahsan said the government is working to implement the Delta Plan 2100. Under it, a number of projects have been implemented and protection of about 80km of the Jamuna river is one of them.

"We are also doing such protection work for the Padma. Thus, we are

ensuring flow of the river. We will be implementing more projects in the days to come," he added.

Meanwhile, the schedule of bilateral meeting between Hasina and Modi has yet to be finalised. Initially, it was slated for September 11, after the G20 summit on September 9-10.

In another development, French President Emmanuel Macron is likely to arrive in Dhaka on September 10.

"In that case, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is likely to return home on September 10 to welcome the French president," a foreign ministry official told The Daily Star.

A trip to Germany

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director of disease control unit at the Directorate General of Health Services.

He added that fogger machines are used to destroy culex mosquitoes. So entomologists could have contributed better if they were trained.

Contacted, Pintu Bepary, who signed the office order, said, "I just issued the letter upon instructions. So, I am unable to comment on the matter."

At least 16 dengue patients died, eight of them in Dhaka, in the last 24 hours till yesterday morning, according to health department data.

Selim Reza, Chief Executive Officer of DNCC, declined to comment on the rationale behind sending bureaucrats for the training.

Meanwhile, at least 16 dengue patients died, eight of them in Dhaka, in the last 24 hours till yesterday morning, according to health department data.

With this, the total death toll from dengue rose to 634, of which 464 were from outside Dhaka.

Some 2,608 dengue patients were hospitalised in the last 24 hours at different hospitals across the country, 892 of whom were in Dhaka.

With the new cases, the total number of dengue patients rose to 1,30,302. Of them, 60,484 are in Dhaka.

Currently, 8,845 dengue patients are undergoing treatment at different hospitals across the country, of whom 3,928 are in Dhaka.

Rohingya, security issues

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Delhi, and Paris are working to finalise the schedules.

DEFENCE AND SECURITY
According to a US Embassy note, the civilian-led security dialogue will include discussions on Indo-Pacific regional issues, security and human rights, military cooperation, peacekeeping, security assistance, and counterterrorism, among other topics.

It is to follow the bilateral defence dialogue held in Dhaka on August 23-24. "The US and Bangladesh have a strong security partnership and share many interests in the Indo-Pacific region... Both countries share a vision to ensure the Indo-Pacific region is free, open, peaceful, and secure," the note said.

The US has been seeking to sign two defence agreements – the General Security of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA) and the Acquisition and Cross Servicing Agreement, which are foundational agreements for a closer defence relationship. In 2021, Washington

passed a draft agreement of GSOMIA, which Dhaka was examining, officials concerned said.

ROHINGYA AND ROOPPUR POWER PLANT
Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov will hold a bilateral meeting with Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen and make a courtesy call on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

Officials of the ministry concerned said Dhaka would urge Moscow to help solve the Rohingya crisis, as it has strong relations with Myanmar. Moscow is a major arms supplier to Myanmar, which faces a myriad of sanctions from Washington for its military takeover and oppression of the civilians fighting for democracy.

"The Russia-Ukraine war is affecting us all badly. We will call for ending the war and going for negotiations," a foreign ministry official said. Last week, Momen said Dhaka would request

Moscow to ensure the timely implementation of the Russia-funded Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant project. The project faced challenges because of US sanctions against Russia.

Dhaka will also discuss the possibility of Moscow employing Bangladeshi workers in Russia's shipbuilding sector, an official said.

PARIS EAGER TO DEEPEN TIES
During his visit, French President Macron will hold bilateral meetings with PM Hasina.

Foreign ministry officials said Dhaka will seek increased trade and investment from France, while France wants to enhance its cooperation in the areas of aerospace, defence, trade, and climate change.

In November 2021, the two countries signed a letter of intent on defence cooperation as France is paying attention to improving relations with the Indo-Pacific countries. Bangladesh's first-ever



Mira Resnick