



# Of birds, women, and poems at the city’s heart



As drops of rain touch the earth, He is still high on the wings of romance. His feet in motion, His feathers spread for his mate, Quivering, glimmering a love dance.

AISHWARYA RAIHAN

“As drops of rain touch the earth, He is still high on the wings of romance. His feet in motion, His feathers spread for his mate, Quivering, glimmering a love dance.” — The peacock dances and the peacock cries, Reza Asad Al Huda Anupam. At Alliance Francaise de Dhaka (AFD), a gallery brims with the seamless integration of poetry and paintings, each element complementing the other in a harmonious blend. One can easily get lost in the artistic world that Reza Asad Al Huda Anupam has created for his second solo exhibition *Poetrimage*, the opening of which took place at AFD on Friday. The event was graced by the presence of veteran artists Prof Hashem Khan as the chief guest, and Prof Mostafizul Haque as the special guest. Hashem Khan in his speech mentioned the importance of the common mass appreciating art. He also asked the artist to go stronger on his path. The chief guest thus declared the opening of the exhibition. *Poetrimage* or *Kabyachitra* is an



Reza Asad Al Huda Anupam



PHOTOS: ARSHADUL HOQUE ROCKY

exhibition comprising the artist’s two years’ worth of work. He had made wonderful use of colours on his canvases. The vibrant hues, the chaotically charming brushstrokes, the forms, lines, and all other elements come together and create their little world from which a spectator can take a sip of creativity. The most dominant trait of his works is definitely the meticulously placed careless patches of colours he has on giant canvases. Several of Anupam’s paintings feature beautiful pairs of birds. Amongst these, the

peacocks were the most eye-catching. They were surrealistically solemn. He has painted day labourers and they were as realistic as they could be. There were bigger paintings of women in sarees and other traditional attires. ‘Green Saree’ was the most prominent one, with more than half of the canvas painted green. The painting ‘Pink Saree’ is that of a bride who according to the artist’s poem died an untimely death. And this is one of many examples of how Anupam has touched everyone with his stories; through poems and paintings. AFD will run this open-for-all exhibition till November 28, 2023. The author is a contributor for Arts & Entertainment, The Daily Star.



## ‘Nona Pani’ sole Bangladeshi selection at KIFF

The 29th edition of the Kolkata International Film Festival (KIFF) is set to take place in Kolkata from December 5 to December 12. Amongst the selected films for this event, *Nona Pani* (Barren Waters in English), directed by Syeda Neegar Banu, is set to represent Bangladesh as the sole entry. As per the festival’s official website, the film *Nona Pani* has secured a place in the Asia Select (Netpack Award) category. Apart from the Bangladeshi movie, five additional movies are featured in this category. The film will also be screened at the ninth Jaffna International Cinema Festival (December 14-19) of Sri Lanka and the 22nd Dhaka International Film Festival (January 20-28).

## Celebrities protest strikes, blockades

Numerous artistes came together to form a human chain, urging an end to the ongoing strikes and blockades in the country. On a Saturday afternoon, in front of the Shahbagh National Museum, they presented a united front under the banner ‘Society of Artistes Against Destruction.’ The human chain comprised of celebrities including Riaz, Ferdous, Mahiya Mahi, Tushar Khan, Tareen, Shampa Reza, SD Rubel, Nipun amongst others. Ferdous stated that he did not want his children to witness violence, while Nipun requested the strike and blockades to be lifted for everyone’s safety. Mahiya Mahi announced that she along with her colleagues will take the necessary steps to guarantee that the opposition party does not create an unstable situation in the country.



# NEWS

## Nur Chy taking advantage

FROM PAGE 12 The six fugitives are Abdur Rashid, Shariful Huq Dalim, M Rashed Chowdhury, Nur Chowdhury, Abdul Majed and Risaldar Moslemuddin. Of them, Nur is in Canada and Rashed in the US. After the coup in August 1975, Nur was posted to the Bangladesh embassies in Brazil and Tehran. When the Awami League was voted to power in 1996, Nur moved to Canada and sought asylum. In 2006, Canada’s Immigration and Refugee Board ruled Nur is officially inadmissible to Canada and ordered his deportation. However, the Canadian Supreme Court had ruled that it was violation of charter to deport anyone who faced death penalty. The CBC report pointed out that Nur took advantage of that rule, saying

he would face the same punishment if he was deported. He earlier claimed he was not guilty but was framed. However, Law Minister Anisul Huq said documents proved that he was directly involved in the killing of Bangabandhu on August 15, 1975. The Canadian Supreme Court also says that people could be sent to their death under “exceptional circumstances”. The CBC report questions whether Nur has fallen through the crack, Prof Robert Currie of international criminal law at the Dalhousie University in Canada told the CBC that it was likely. Bangladesh High Commissioner to Canada Khalilur said he made repeated requests to the Canadian authorities to take the case to the Supreme Court. However, there was no response. The CBC reached out to the

Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, seeking to know the current status of Nur. In a written statement, it said Canada cannot make comments on the specifics of the person without consent of those involved due to Canadian privacy laws. In the interview, journalist Mark Kelley asked Prime Minister Hasina if she could put a moratorium on the death penalty so that Nur could be brought back home. She said she has no power to do that. She asked, “Killers have human rights, but where is my human rights?” The PM suggested that Canada finds a solution to the case and ensure justice. Robert Currie said the Canadian authorities need to review the pending case for the justice of Nur and the people of Bangladesh and Canada.

## Cyclone Midhili ruin crops on 2.16

FROM PAGE 12 3,780 hectares of land, and 16,25 hectares of the total mustard crop on 484 hectares in the district have been damaged, according to the DAE. Abdul Sattar, of Paschim Bill Pabla village in Dumuria upazila, who cultivated Aman on three bigha, said, “My paddy was supposed to ripen in 10-15 days. But the cyclone has flattened all my crops. I’ll maybe be able to salvage half.” He also planted vegetables on five decimals at the edge of a fish enclosure. “Most of those crops also got damaged, in particular red cabbage, leafy vegetables, and radishes.” In Bagerhat, the cyclone has affected the Boro farmers the most. Farmers had started preparing paddy seedlings on large amounts of land in Bagerhat Sadar, Kachua, Fakirhat, Chitalmari, and Mollahat upazila. The sown paddy seeds were washed away from the ground by heavy rainfall. Rustam Ali, of Narendrapur village in Kachua upazila, said he has prepared 18kg of seed. “There’s about two feet

of rainwater on the land where I was supposed to sow the seeds.” In Barishal division, there have been partial paddy damage on 1,46,979 hectares out of the over 6 lakh hectares of land that have been used for rice cultivation. Besides, winter vegetables on 10,430 hectares out of the total cultivated on 20,379 hectares have also been partly damaged. Also, 183 tonnes of fish worth Tk 3.52 crores were washed away from 342 ponds and damaged, according to the DAE. In Jhalakathi, most of the Aman paddy fields in Sadar and Nalchity upazilas were partly damaged, and vegetable fields were found submerged. Hanif Howladar, 60, a farmer from the district’s Dubil village, said most of his paddy on 1.5 acres was damaged by the heavy rains. In Jhalakathi and Pirojpur, around 10,000 hectares of Aman paddy have been affected, said DAE officials. In Bhola’s Kukri, Dhalchar, and Mujibnagar unions, fish worth Tk 15 lakh have been washed away, and

18 boats worth Tk 57 lakh have been damaged, said District Fisheries Officer Abul Kalam Azad. In Patuakhali, the DAE said Aman crops worth Tk 50 crore on 20,000 hectares out of the total cultivated on 1.9 lakh hectares have been damaged. Farmer Abdul Halim, of Kalapara upazila, said he had planted Aman on three acres which was supposed to ripen after 15 days. “But the sudden cyclone has flattened half of my paddies.” DAE Deputy Director Nazrul Islam said 800 hectares of Kheshari Dal and 348 hectares of seasonal vegetables have been damaged in the district. In Chattogram, 3,404 hectares of Aman paddy and 2,496 hectares of early winter vegetables have been damaged, according to DAE. [Our correspondents in Khulna, Patuakhali, Barishal, Jhalakathi, Pirojpur, and Bagerhat contributed to this report.]

## 5 int’l labour bodies urge PM

FROM PAGE 12 of its government to international labour and industry standards is duly acknowledged. The signatories, representing over 2,500 international brands, retailers, suppliers, and workers across global supply chains, have significant ties to Bangladesh with more than 2,900 factories. The announcement of a new legal minimum wage of Tk 12,500 by the RMG Minimum Wage Board has prompted serious concerns. This amount falls short of covering basic needs and a decent standard of living for the workers and contradicts the government’s commitment to

decent work standards. The gap between the legal minimum wage and the average living wage in Bangladesh is the highest among major garment-producing countries, posing challenges to the RMG sector’s aspirations to meet international standards and maintain its position as a responsible sourcing country. In the letter, the signatories also voiced their support for periodic adjustments of minimum wage levels to prevent erosion of workers’ purchasing power and wage inequality. In light of the recent protests, which have resulted in casualties, the signatories further urged the authorities to respect the freedom of association, the right

to strike, and the right to demonstrate. “We also called upon the government to release arrested protesters and drop all charges.” As committed parties, the signatories express their dedication to supporting a new legal minimum wage that ensures a decent living for RMG workers in Bangladesh. The signatories requested the government to reconsider the decision of the minimum wage board and encourage employers and worker representatives to collaborate on setting a legal minimum wage that aligns with international labour and industry standards respecting human rights, the amfori said.

## BNP, allies’ 48-hr hartal

FROM PAGE 12 Chattogram city. But police could not confirm whether those were acts of arson. In Sarishabari of Jamalpur, three carriages of Jamuna Express were set alight around 1:20am today, said the fire service. No casualties were reported. Meanwhile, police fired shots into the air to foil a procession of BNP activists in support of the hartal in Sylhet’s Bandarbazar area around 7:00pm. Mohammad Ali Mahmud, officer-in-charge of Kotwali Police Station, said a BNP activist was detained from the spot. At a virtual press briefing yesterday, BNP Senior Joint Secretary General Ruhul Kabir Rizvi said the government deployed thousands of BGB, police, and Rab members to assume power again and had the polls schedule announced for a one-party election with the “obedient” chief election commissioner. Since October 28, at least 13,210 party leaders and activists were arrested across the country and 296 cases were filed, he said. Of them, 310 were held yesterday. When the police can’t find BNP activists, they are picking up family members and relatives, Rizvi said.

The country’s prisons are overflowing with opposition leaders and activists and yet the government is continuing with its massive crackdown on the opposition to stay in power and establish an autocratic regime, Rizvi said. “In fear of the wholesale arrests, only Awami League leaders and activists live in their houses in villages and towns. No one can do business and their regular activities. Many families have to live without food as family members are staying elsewhere.” The police are detaining people and freeing many of them in exchange for money, Rizvi said. “What country are we living in? This government gives the law enforcers a licence to run the arrest trade. The rule of law in the country has been virtually destroyed,” Rizvi added. In another development, Rab said it detained 497 people on charges of vandalism and torching vehicles from different places across the country since October 28. Rab is also escorting long-haul buses and tankers. Besides patrolling, Rab members will also be on the streets and on buses in plainclothes to protect the people’s lives and properties, said Khandaker Al Moin, director of Rab’s legal and media wing, at a press briefing yesterday.

## 80 killed in Israeli strikes on Gaza camp

FROM PAGE 12 people, doctors and nurses, as loud explosions were heard around the facility. On the way, an AFP journalist saw at least 15 bodies, some in advanced stages of decomposition, along a road lined by badly damaged shops and overturned vehicles, as Israeli drones buzzed overhead. The Hamas-run health ministry said 120 wounded, along with an unspecified number of premature babies, were still at Al-Shifa hospital that has become the focus of the recent fighting. Israel has been pressing military operations inside the hospital, searching for the Hamas operations

centre it says lies under the sprawling complex – a charge Hamas denies. In Gaza City, Israeli troops had called over loudspeakers to evacuate Al-Shifa “in the next hour”, an AFP journalist at the hospital reported. They also called the hospital’s director, Mohammed Abu Salmiya, telling him to ensure “the evacuation of patients, wounded, the displaced and medical staff, and that they should move on foot towards the seafloor”, he said. But Israel’s army denied ordering the evacuation, saying instead it had “acceded to the request of the director” to allow more civilians to leave. According to Ahmed El Makhallalati, a doctor at the hospital,

“most of the medical staff and patients had left” but he was staying at Al-Shifa along with five other doctors. Despite the evacuation order, “many patients cannot leave the hospital as they are in the ICU beds or the baby incubators,” Makhallalati said on X, formerly Twitter. The United Nations estimated 2,300 patients, staff and displaced Palestinians were sheltering at Al-Shifa before Israeli troops entered it on Wednesday. Israel has come under scrutiny for targeting hospitals in north Gaza, but says the facilities are being used by Hamas – a claim rejected by the group and medical staff.