



# SPREADING COLOURS AND JOY

## Protibha hosts rickshaw-art workshop

RBR

The room was quiet and all 10 participants, aged between nine and 60, were engrossed in their work. They were each given a template and their task was to draw the design given, and later paint it. The paint brushes, the vibrant colours of neon yellow, vermilion red, emerald green, and cobalt blue along with design templates of a shapla, a bird, a tiger, and "alpona" gave the room a festive look.

It was the first-ever rickshaw art workshop organised by Protibha, a social enterprise dedicated to preserving traditional art forms. Its parent organisation, local NGO called "It's Humanity Foundation (IHF)", works on empowering both children and their families through education, vocational training, and livelihood development in marginalised communities.

"Protibha has been actively involved in promoting rickshaw art and artists in Bangladesh since 2016. To pass on this valuable skill to future generations, Protibha recently organised a unique two-hour workshop on March 2 in two batches. The workshop was led by experienced artists, Md Khokon and Md Simon, each with 15 years' experience in rickshaw art," says Maisha Lubana, general secretary of IHF.

The success of this pilot workshop was immensely impressive and they are deciding to organise another one on March 9.

"I came across their post on Instagram and instantly signed up, I am an amateur artist and always wanted to work with rickshaw art. The colours attract me," said one participant, while others said it felt like a therapy



PHOTOS: PROTIBHA



session.

To support rickshaw artists and ensure the preservation of this special art form, Protibha has been collaborating with the artists to transform their artwork into various everyday items, to promote a strong sense of community identity and cultural heritage.

"Rickshaw art is very popular within our expatriate community. They always want to carry a part of Bangladesh



with them when they leave, we have instances where we did customise rickshaw art on skateboards, bicycles, containers and so many different items for them," says Md Adnan Hossain, founder and executive director of IHF.

"By engaging younger generations in workshops and training programmes, we can ensure that these art forms are carried forward and appreciated for years to come. Furthermore, these efforts can inspire participants to

think creatively and innovate within their artistic pursuits."

The future sessions will be day-long and also be divided into levels. Chief artist, Rafikul Islam, with 35 years of experience, will coach the third level, which will be all about speciality skill development.

Dhaka has few facilities for young people and seniors to engage in recreational activities.

In Dhaka, there's only a few recreational activities with fun, interesting projects for young people and seniors to be engaged in. This workshop comes at a time when people feel the need to make their leisure time more interesting and enjoyable.

Art, drawing, painting, pottery-making -- such activities can refresh the body and mind. Thus, Protibha rickshaw art workshop comes at an opportune time.

## 39,000 tonnes of onion to be imported from India

UNB, Dhaka

The government has approved the import of 39,000 tonnes of onion from India through Sonamasjid land port in Chapainawabganj to meet the local demand ahead of the month of Ramadan.

Somir Ghosh, deputy director of Sonamasjid Land Port Plant Quarantine Center, confirmed the information yesterday.

He said 31 importers from the land port got approval, and the importing will begin before Ramadan.

On December 8 last year, India restricted the export of the onion to Bangladesh and other countries until March 31 to check soaring prices in the local market.

## Farmer dies after being trampled by elephants

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

A farmer died after being trampled by a herd of elephants in Haluaghat upazila of Mymensingh Monday night.

The deceased was identified as Saiful Islam, 35, of Mohishati village in Haluaghat.

Quoting locals, Md Mahbulul Haque, Officer-in-Charge of Haluaghat Police Station, said Saiful was watering his cucumber field near the border around midnight when a herd of elephants trampled him.

Saiful died on the spot, the OC added. On information, the police recovered the body and handed it over to family members.

## BSF delegation reaches Dhaka

To attend BGB-BSF border conference

BSS, Dhaka

A nine-member delegation of India's Border Security Force (BSF) led by its Director General (DG) Shri Nitin Agrawal landed in Dhaka last morning to attend the 54th DG-level BGB-BSF Border Conference at the BGB headquarters.

The conference will be held from March 5 to 9. DG of Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) Major General Mohammad Ashrafuzzaman Siddiqui and his wife Naureen Ashraf welcomed the Indian delegation along with the BSF DG and his wife Smita Agrawal at the airport, according to a press release.

## Restaurateurs

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said at a press conference held at the association's office in the capital.

"The responsibility for the accident on Bailey Road should not be placed solely on the restaurant owners -- everyone should play a responsible role."

The ongoing raids are a cover-up for the failure of the authorities, Hasan said.

"Before this, no such initiative was seen from the government."

Unauthorised restaurant business is not possible in Dhaka, he said.

"If you want to do restaurant business in Dhaka, you have to get approval from several organisations. All restaurants have some sort of certification."

Even then, if someone violates the law, action can be taken against them.

"But sealing up restaurants in droves is not a solution. Businessmen will be affected and many others will be unemployed," Hasan said.

Bangladesh has 4.81 lakh restaurants, with a large portion of them being small in size. The sector has created jobs for nearly 30 lakh people. Some 2 crore people are dependent on the sector.

Many small entrepreneurs have invested in the restaurant business.

"But in this situation, there will be no small entrepreneurs. Instead, the restaurant business will go into the hands of capitalists."

Subsequently, the leaders of the association called for an end to the harassment and a discussion to solve the problem.

## BNP

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"There's no point in complaining to foreigners. The country will not be guided by the opinions of outsiders..." she said.

The premier asked the lawmakers to look into the matter and make sure that the culprits get punished for their misdeeds.

The maiden session of the 12th parliament, which was formed through the January 7 general election, began on January 30.

In her speech, the PM said the country's democratic trend will continue and Bangladesh will continue marching forward at an indomitable pace.

She said the January 7 election was held in a peaceful manner, with citizens freely casting their votes.

"There has never been such a fair election as this one," Hasina stated.

Meanwhile, Hasina pointed out that her newly appointed cabinet has outlined several initiatives aimed at improving the country's welfare, which include expediting the completion of ongoing projects, taking effective measures to control inflation, and ensuring the affordability and steady supply of essential goods during Ramadan.

## Bus operators pay Tk 1,059cr a year in bribes

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one year and regional buses paid Tk 1,133. City buses paid a staggering Tk 5,656, it mentioned.

Of the Tk 1,059 crore paid by privately operated as bribes and illegal tolls, Tk 900.59 crore went to BRTA officials for services, Tk 24.97 crore went to people with political clout, Tk 33.48 crore went to workers of city corporations and municipalities and political leaders, Tk 87.57 crore went to traffic and highway police, and Tk 12.76 crore went to transport owners' and workers' associations, it said.

Asked whether the officials and staffers of the BRTA were the only recipients of the bribes or ministry officials also got a cut, Iftekharuzzaman said it was difficult to say. "However, it is assumed that a section of the BRTA officials and staffers gets the money and it is an open secret. As the higher authorities [above the BRTA] is failing at curbing corruption, it could be asked whether a portion of the money goes to them," he said.

Workers' associations are failing to uphold the rights and interests of the workers due to their involvement in

politics, the report read.

These organisations, taking the side of the owners, go on strikes to change the law, have their leaders released from jail, and to increase bus fare keeping the passengers hostage.

They collect Tk 30 to 50 for each trip of buses in the name of management fees, but the fund management lacks transparency, it said.

Ruling party activists lead most of the bus owners' associations, it said, adding that the leaders, who do not even own buses, hold key position in such associations, it said.

Contacted, Khondaker Enayet Ullah, secretary general of Bangladesh Road Transport Owners' Association and also the vice-president of Dhaka South City Awami League, termed the TIB report "fabricated".

Association President Moshir Rahman Ranga is a former Jatiya Party lawmaker.

Enayet told this correspondent yesterday that there was no political influence in the activities of their organisation.

He said police fine vehicles owned by AL and BNP leaders just like they do for vehicles owned by others.

## 6 restaurants, building sealed

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required documents for running their business, the magistrate said, adding that further decisions would be made after getting the relevant papers.

The magistrate said they could not raid most of the buildings that house restaurants as those were found closed.

The Rajuk team also fined Swiss Bakery Tk 1 lakh for not having fire safety measures.

The drive began around 11:00am and ended around 2:30pm.

Meanwhile, a mobile court of Dhaka South City Corporation sealed off a 12-storey building called Sky View Nightingale Tower in Khilgaon's Taltola, as it lacked fire safety measures.

The fire service and local police assisted DSCC Executive Magistrate Md Jahangir Alam in the drive, which started around 11:30am.

When the team gathered in front of a building, most of the restaurants pulled down roller shutters. An eatery worker was shouting to his fellows, "Pull down the shutters, the magistrate is here."

A building that houses several

eateries remained closed since Monday night, said locals.

A notice seen at the entrance to the building said, "The restaurant has temporarily been closed due to maintenance work."

Talking to journalists, magistrate Jahangir said the Sky View Nightingale Tower has restaurants on every floor, which is a violation of the rules.

"We even found a restaurant in the basement, which is risky. We didn't find the owners of the building and restaurants. Some employees were there, but nobody could provide us with any papers."

"For this, we sealed off the entire building. We will call the owners to our office and find a way how the building can be run as per the law."

In separate drives, Dhaka North City Corporation shut down two eateries and slapped fines on eight others in Gulshan, Bhatara, and Mirpur.

In another development, Dhaka Metropolitan Police raided 455 restaurants, 104 LPG shops, and three chemical warehouses.

During the raids, the DMP filed five cases for various violations, including lacking fire safety measures, according to a press release.

Enayet claimed that he was not aware of the allegations of bribery against BRTA and police officials and that some people, not affiliated with transport organisations, were extorting buses at terminals.

Contacted, BRTA Chairman Nur Mohammad Mazumder said all services are now delivered online and that there was no scope for bribery and corruption.

"We will hold a press conference tomorrow [Wednesday] to protest the TIB report," he told this correspondent last night.

Asked about the allegation of bribery against traffic and highway police, Enamul Haque Sagar, assistant inspector general (media) of Police headquarters, said he was not aware of any such report.

"However, our stance is very firm and clear about any kind of bribery. Our stance is the same irrespective of the identity [of the accused]," he told The Daily Star yesterday.

The TIB issued 15 recommendations, including legal action against individuals engaged in extortion on the roads and those responsible for irregularities and corruption.

## Hoarders

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only registered online portals will be allowed to operate to ensure accountability and discipline in the media industry, reports BSS.

Emerging from the meeting with the DCs, Arafat told the reporters that he sought active support from the DCs to combat the spreading of rumours and misinformation.

Arafat said, "The DCs are also concerned about the spread of rumours, and we have discussed how to combat rumours. The information ministry alone can't combat the rumours being spread online," he said, adding that everyone, including the information ministry and ICT division, has to work together.

In another session, State Minister for Power, Energy and Mineral Resources Nasrul Hamid said Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina approved the automatic mechanism of adjusting fuel prices with the global market.

"We will publish a gazette notification this week in this regard," he told reporters after the meeting.

Asked about the rise in electricity demand during the summer, he hoped that there would be no problem with gas and electricity supply when the mercury rises and sought cooperation from the DCs in this regard.

## Govt employees won't need to turn in wealth reports

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policies and ornaments owned or held by them and their family members when joining service.

They are also required to file details of the increase and decrease in their wealth through their respective authorities every five years.

Although the public servants do make a declaration at the time of joining service, they do not submit details on any rise or drop in their wealth.

Experts fear the proposed changes will encourage corruption among government employees.

Previously, the public servants were required to submit wealth statements every year, said Mohammad Firoz Mia, a former additional secretary of the public administration ministry.

But as it was not followed, it was extended to five years, which too was not followed.

"Now, if the new proposals are taken into consideration, it will weaken the process of submitting wealth statements further and may help breed corruption. Accountability of civil servants will not be ensured if the proposals are approved," he added.

Meanwhile, the ministry kept unchanged the provision in which the government employees or their family members cannot acquire or transfer immovable property abroad without permission from the government.

This can turn out to be a very tricky way of legitimising money laundering, said Iftekharuzzaman, executive director of Transparency International Bangladesh.

"If the provisions imply that government officials may be permitted to acquire wealth and conduct business abroad, these may open floodgates of illicit transfers on the one hand and encourage corruption on the other. It goes without saying that legitimate income of government officials at any level can never be consistent with the capacity to acquire properties or run businesses abroad."

Even if in exceptional cases some government officials may have the opportunity to legitimately earn abroad, unless the process and

legitimacy of such income are strictly specified, fungibility of money will be taken advantage of to acquire legality of illegal income and transfer thereof, he said.

"No less important is the fact that the proposed provision is discriminatory and hence unconstitutional because it grants a privilege to a particular category of individuals not afforded to other citizens," Iftekharuzzaman added.

Such a provision could pave the way for corrupt officials to launder wealth abroad, said Badiur Rahman, a former NBR chairman.

"Many may think that those who cannot keep amassed wealth in the country will have the opportunity to keep it abroad. If such a provision is kept, it may increase indiscipline in the administration," he added.

Asked about this matter, Public Administration Minister Farhad Hossain said: "I do not know whether this provision has been in the draft [of the rules]. I haven't got the rules yet, so I can't make any comment on this issue."

The draft rules said that government employees cannot enter into any business transaction with any foreigner, foreign government or foreign organisation.

In case of purchase, sale or transfer of property worth more than Tk 5 lakh in the area of his/her jurisdiction, except for the regular purchases required in the country, the employee will have to inform the head of the department or the secretary, it said.

The draft also prohibits government servants from constructing or purchasing a building, apartment or flat without the permission of the government.

It also proposed to include a social media policy for government employees. Civil servants cannot post anything that can be considered as indiscipline, indecency immoral or contempt of court on social media.

The public servants cannot receive gifts worth more than Tk 50,000 or equivalent to their basic salary in any religious or social programmes without permission from the government.