



PHOTOS: STAR

DNCC IN ACTION Transforming Dhaka with vibrant murals

RBR
Dhaka North's newest venture is painting murals on flyovers, dustbin depots, free walls and spaces to make city streets look vibrant and colourful. Mayor Md Atiqul Islam of the Dhaka North City Corporation has taken the initiative to paint Dhaka in flamboyant colours and folk art. Personally, I like the over-the-top graffiti. However, many have raised questions about the quality of the artwork and the repeated use of the same traditional motifs. To give murals a distinctively different spin, artist, Nabila Rahman, founder of "Art & Soul", is spearheading a project in Banani Road 21/A, with approval and funding of DNCC Mayor's office and under the patronage of mayor and an important donor, Ameenah Ahmed, of the Meena Trust. Emphasising the fact that she

chooses to pay tribute to the almost lost or neglected flora and fauna of Dhaka city, Nabila said, "With the generous funding from both donors, Art & Soul has brought together nine talented artists to create a stunning 250-square-foot mural on one of the walls of Banani Bidyaniketan School and College." The project manager and curator, renowned artist and teacher Fareha Zeba, says "Krishnochuras lighting up our streets in April and May rarely gets the spotlight it deserves. So, this large wall is painted with the fiery red flowers as the centre of focus." Artist Shakti Bhowmik explained how there is no background colour because they wanted to highlight their subject in realistic art forms. "We decided on an off-tone theme and not go with pop art in garish colours. Also, we did not want to go with any message or famous quotes." The team felt that we destroy nature

to build cities but forget that the city also belongs to the trees and the animals. Dhaka once had hornbills, wild cats, foxes, squirrels, vultures, parrots, and cranes but now we hardly get to see even crows. "This mural will be a beautiful reflection of Bangladesh's diversity and beauty, featuring immersive 3D and realistic natural elements, with animals and birds claiming the streets as their own. It's not just a static piece of art; it's an interactive experience designed to be shared and enjoyed by everyone," Nabila said. This project aims to foster a sense of community and belonging, sparking conversations, and inspiring positive changes and awareness of sharing our city with animals. The mural project was open for all to see from yesterday onwards, to enjoy, and create moments, and memories in the selfie zones.

"We have exclusively ordered Berger weather coat paint in our chosen colour palette of 10 lighter and darker shades of the primary colours, and contrasting accent tones. "This wall is good for six years and with the school trees shading the wall, it will not fade easily. Moreover, the city corporation has cameras installed at strategic points to ensure that it is protected from vandalism," said Zeba. Nabila Rahman, with her vast experience as a gallery curator and owner, feels that she wants to bring art outside the gallery's walls. She intends to have a quick response (QR) code set up, which children can scan on their devices and gather information about each animal drawn on the wall. "This is the beginning of many such projects, and hopefully it will make people kinder and gentler to the city's bio-diversity," she said.

Bangladeshi shot dead by BSF members

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinaipur

A Bangladeshi man was shot dead allegedly by members of India's Border Security Force along Nitpur border in Naogaon's Porsha early yesterday. The victim, Al Amin, 33, was the son of Abu Bakkar Siddique of Nitpur village of the upazila. According to BGB sources, Al Amin, along with others, entered the Indian territory through the border on Monday night. When they were returning home around 4.00am yesterday, the BSF members of Agrabad camp saw them and opened fire, killing Al Amin on the spot. However, others managed to flee the scene. Subedar Mahfuzur Rahman, company commander of Nitpur Border Outpost, said a flag meeting between BGB and BSF members was held and the BSF members agreed to return the body after autopsy. Killings by the BSF continue despite repeated assurances made by the Indian side of bringing down the border casualties to zero.

Two cops remanded over highway robbery

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

A Tangail court on Monday placed two police personnel on a two-day remand in a case filed over highway robbery. Judge Monirul Islam, additional judicial magistrate in Tangail, passed the order, said Tanvir Ahmed, court inspector in Tangail. The two are Ripon Rajbonshi, 28, and Mohsin Miah, 31, constables of Daulatpur Police Station in Manikganj. Around 10:00pm on Sunday, locals caught them in Dherua area on the Dhaka-Tangail highway after they snatched Tk 11,500 from staffers of a pickup. The locals handed them over to Deohata police, according to the case statement and police sources. Police later seized handcuffs, a motorcycle, and Tk 30,000 from their possession. Locals held the two cops in uniform after hearing the screams of the driver and the helper of the vehicle. The driver later filed a case against them with Mirzapur Police Station. Rezaul Karim, OC of Mirzapur Police Station, told The Daily Star that the two police personnel were being interrogated. Golam Azad Khan, superintendent of Manikganj police, said, "We formed a three-member committee, led by an additional superintendent of police, to probe the incident. We will take departmental action as per the findings of the probe report."

Reverse migration

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"The pressure from both inadequate job opportunities and high cost of living force people to migrate," he told The Daily Star. Former vice chancellor of Jahangirnagar University Prof Abdul Bayes said, "People from the lower-middle income group are leaving because they believe the civic amenities have become better in rural areas. Besides, modern technology is also available there." This group also believes that the cost of living in the cities is very high

and so is the insecurity, he added. Prof Bayes said infrastructure development outside the cities was a key driver of reverse migration. "Due to smooth communication services, people's mobility has increased. People come to cities and leave after doing what they came here to do. The earning opportunities also increased to some extent in the village. "The reverse migration will continue to rise in the coming days, and we should equip our villages with the necessary infrastructure," he added.

Independence Day observed

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a wreath at his portrait in front of the Bangabandhu Memorial Museum on Dhanmondi Road-32 in Dhaka. After placing the wreath, she stood there in solemn silence for some time as a mark of deep respect to the memory of Bangabandhu, the architect of Bangladesh's independence. Hasina, also the Awami League president, stayed at the museum for some time. Flanked by central AL leaders, she laid another wreath at the portrait of Bangabandhu on behalf of the party. The national flag was hoisted atop government and private buildings while the government and semi-government buildings were illuminated. Different socio-cultural and political organisations observed the day holding elaborate programmes. National dailies published special supplements while Bangladesh Betar, Bangladesh Television, and private

radio and television channels aired special programmes highlighting the significance of the day. Special prayers were offered at mosques, temples, churches, and other places of worship across the country, seeking divine blessings for the eternal peace of the departed souls of the Father of the Nation, four national leaders, and martyrs of Liberation War. Special food was distributed at hospitals, jails, childcare and daycare centres and old age homes. Children's parks and museums remained open throughout the day yesterday. Vessels of Bangladesh Navy and Bangladesh Coast Guard were opened to people from 9:00am to 2:00pm at Chattogram, Khulna, Mongla, and Payra ports, and BIWTA terminals in Dhaka, Narayanganj, Barishal, and Chandpur. Programmes were organised in districts, upazilas, and Bangladesh missions abroad to highlight the significance of the Independence Day.

Top BNP leaders in two minds

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Yesterday, The Daily Star approached at least three BNP standing committee members for comments, but none of them wanted to be named considering the sensitivity of the issue. The issue came up for discussion at the BNP standing committee meeting as the party's Senior Joint Secretary General Ruhul Kabir Rizvi at a press conference on March 20 expressed solidarity with the movement. He threw his Indian shawl on the road in front of the party's Nayapaltn central office. Later, some other BNP leaders also talked about the campaign for boycotting Indian products. At Monday's meeting, none of the BNP standing committee members contradicted the statement by Rizvi. But a member told the meeting that the way Rizvi threw his shawl was not decent. At this stage, another standing committee member said Rizvi later

informed the media that he personally threw his shawl, not as a BNP leader. Another committee member told the meeting that BNP must criticise Indian's measures (regarding Bangladesh) but that criticism should be well thought out. Another BNP leader said that the party has nothing to do if people start boycotting Indian products and that the party will not be able to ignore the public demand at some point. "But supporting the campaign of boycotting Indian products will not be wise for the party," he told the standing committee meeting. The BNP is yet to decide on participating in the upcoming upazila elections. All the standing committee members observed that the party should stay away from the polls. Some BNP leaders, however, said the party should not bar any individual from running.

The final push

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education movement. It was there that Chhatra League leaders Aftab Uddin Ahmed and Chisti Shah Helalur Rahman first chanted the now-famous slogan "Joy Bangla" at Madhur Canteen on September 15, according to the book titled "Slogane Slogane Rajniti" by Abu Sayed Khan. As the six-point movement gradually gained momentum, Chhatra League formed a group called "Joy Bangla Bahini," which organised a rally at historic Race Course Maidan (now Suhrawardy Udyan) on June 7, 1970, to garner further support for the movement. At the rally, Ducsu vice-president ASM Abdur Rob presented Bangabandhu with a red and green flag emblazoned with a map of an independent Bangladesh. The map was designed by Chhatra League leader Shihb Narayan Das.

1970 BHOILA CYCLONE
On November 12, 1970, a catastrophic cyclone slammed the coastal region of East Pakistan, causing extensive damage to life and property. According to some estimates, 3-5 lakh people perished in coastal areas, including Hatia, Sandwip and Bhola. The cyclone and the government's inadequate response significantly impacted the 1970 election, as public discontent swung voters towards Awami League, Liberation War researcher Dr Mahfuzur Rahman told The Daily Star last week. Soon after the cyclone, Sheikh Mujib visited the affected areas, and called on the government to mobilise resources and expedite relief efforts. Maulana Bhasani also visited the flood-ravaged island of Hatia. At a public rally in Paltan on November 23, Bhasani heavily criticised the government's poor response to the crisis, saying "No leader from West Pakistan has come to see the people of East Pakistan in this difficult time." The next day, Bhasani announced his decision to boycott the election, citing the catastrophic impacts of the cyclone, according to Dr Mahfuzur Rahman's book titled "Bangalee Jatiyotabadi Andolon O Muktiyuddho". "He [Bhasani] was under the impression that even if his party won, West Pakistan would not hand over power, as was the case in the 1956 elections," Mahfuzur told The Daily Star last week.

THE 1970 ELECTION
Awami League won a landslide in the December 7, 1970, election, bagging 160 of the 300 seats in national assembly, prompting Mujib to embark on a provincial tour to rally

support for the six-point movement, according to "Jatiya Rajniti 1945-1975" by Oli Ahad. "The struggle will continue until our goals are achieved," he told a press conference just two days after the election. In February, Yahya scheduled a National Assembly session in Dhaka for March 3. Two days after this announcement, Mujib warned that no force could deter him from his commitment to the six points. Meanwhile, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, chairman of Pakistan People's Party (PPP), announced that his party

where he would deliver his historic speech essentially calling on the people to prepare for resistance with whatever they have. Earlier that month, at a rally organised by Kendriya Chhatra Sangram Parishad on March 2 in front of Dhaka University's arts faculty, Ducsu VP ASM Abdur Rob hoisted the first flag of Bangladesh. The following day, Chhatra League general secretary Shahjahan Siraj read out the manifesto for independence in presence of Bangabandhu at a mass gathering at Paltan Maidan. The gathering,

Regiment, strategically delayed the surrender. When this news broke, thousands of Bangalee civilians, led by Awami League leader Shamsul Haque, took to the streets of Joydevpur in a show of solidarity with the Bangalee troops. They put up barricades to block the arrival of Brigadier General Jahanzeb Abrar Khan, who was tasked with overseeing the surrender of arms. A skirmish erupted between the Bangalee crowd and Pakistani forces. This clash on March 19 marked the first act of armed resistance in East Pakistan's fight for liberation with tragic consequences -- at least 13 were killed and 40 injured, according to Dr Mahfuzur Rahman's book titled "Bangalee Jatiyotabadi Andolon O Muktiyuddho".



Students protest postponement of national assembly session.
Bangabandhu with four key student leaders, known as char khalifa.
Bangabandhu votes in the 1970 polls.
Student leaders take oath to fight for independence.

Protesters burn a Pakistan flag in Dhaka.
The same day, Bangabandhu held a meeting with Yahya, and two days after that he met both Yahya and Bhutto again. Pakistan's National Day on March 23 turned into a day of defiance in East Pakistan on Bangabandhu's call. That day, the flag of an independent Bangladesh was raised at Bangabandhu's residence in Dhanmondi. Meanwhile, president Yahya's scheduled radio address for the National Day was cancelled. On March 25, following a meeting with Yahya, Bhutto declared that a solution to the crisis seemed impossible. That evening, Yahya secretly left Dhaka. Later that night, Pakistani forces launched a brutal crackdown, codenamed "Operation Searchlight", unleashing violence upon the Bangalee people. Bangabandhu declared independence in the early hours of March 26, and Bangladesh was born.

also organised by Kendriya Chhatra Sangram Parishad, was chaired by another Chhatra League president Nur-e-Alam Siddique, according to "Jatiya Rajniti 1945-1975" by Oli Ahad. At a mammoth rally on March 7 at Race Course Maidan, Mujib called upon the people to prepare for the liberation struggle. Two days later, Bhasani announced his support for the all-out movement. As the non-cooperation movement continued to paralyse East Pakistan, Yahya made a surprise visit to Dhaka on March 15, and held a closed-door meeting with Bangabandhu at the President's House over two days. Tensions further escalated in the third week of March. The Pakistan military ordered Bangalee soldiers of the East Bengal Regiment to surrender their firearms, but the Bangalee troops stationed at Joydevpur, led by the 2nd East Bengal

Correction
The first part of our special series on independence movement titled "Inner Group: the first push for liberation" published on March 25, 2024, had a factual error committed during editing phase. The first line of the story mistakenly read: "The 1940s witnessed the rise of some of the first movements for self-determination in East Pakistan." It should have read: "The 1940s, 1950s and 1960s witnessed the rise of some of the first movements for self-determination in East Pakistan." We have made necessary corrections in our online version. We sincerely apologise for the mistake.