



PHOTO: GALLERI KAYA

Innovating art promotion

Chandra Shekhar De's exhibition at Galleri Kaya

RBR

The art scene of Dhaka is quite robust even though it is a challenging business – one that needs to build a trusted rapport with the buyers. While art is food for your soul, selling artwork is what runs the show.

Dhaka has a few dedicated art galleries that are always innovating ways to bring artworks to collectors and allowing general people to appreciate the nuances of aesthetics.

Goutam Chakraborty of Galleri Kaya fame has always been one modern gallerist who has been trying to revolutionise the patronage of art. He has introduced distinctive ways to promote Dhaka's artists, both young and old.

His most recent endeavour of creating an A2-size folio of celebrated artist Chandra Shekhar De has Dhaka's art aficionados swooning over. This impressive folio is promotional content for De's upcoming solo exhibition at the gallery, beginning on May 3.

The 12 artworks of De in demy size

of 23 by 17 inches art paper, bounded in amber black matte paper by Galleri Kaya, is a definite collector's item. With only 75 copies printed, the folio has an embossed seal of authentication on the right-hand side. It is priced at Tk 5,000.

"Chandra Shekhar De is doing a solo exhibition after almost 23 years. This mere fact deserves celebration and thus this over-the-top, machine-printed, and originally signed in one-page, huge folio is made to make an impact in the art market scene. Collectors always seek an authenticated valuation of the product they want to treasure. Those who cannot afford his artwork can surely afford this beautiful folio," says Chakraborty.

Commenting on the exhibition, De recalls, "I have always been a recluse and shunned away from media; my career as an artist has been dotted with many ups and downs. I did commercial work in many mediums like terracotta, tapestry, drawing, mural work, set design, and floor design just to earn a living. I did very few selected creative works of my own. Those were taken by art dealers and sold, though my



commission was not much in this." At one point in his life, when he was down with health issues, Dey just had enough money to carry him out for two

months and that is when he started working with ballpoint pen because he could not afford drawing pens.

This talented artist got inspired by the colour job done at this father's garage where rickshaws, baby taxis, and bicycles were repaired. At the age of 7 or 8, Dey would spend his entire day observing the activities of painters as they applied colours and drew birds, flowers, trees, and animals on the vehicles.

"Each stroke of my brush is a meticulous move. I strive for nothing less than perfection in every piece, and I do not stop until I am satisfied. Painting is my way of expressing devotion to art. Solitude and silence are essential components to my work," explains Dey.

The solo art exhibition by Chandra Shekhar De titled "Reality, Fantasy & Dilemma" at Galleri Kaya, in Uttara is sure to be the most happening in Dhaka now. However, the A2 size folio of this secluded and gifted artist is creating waves in the Dhaka art scene now, making it a sought-after collector's item.

3 Agrani bank officials sent to jail over Tk 10cr irregularities

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

Three officers of Agrani Bank's Kashinathpur branch in Pabna's Shanthia upazila have been arrested over a Tk 10 crore irregularities.

The arrestees are Agrani Bank's Kashinathpur branch manager Harun Bin Salam, Cash Officer Subroto Chakrabarti and Senior Officer Abu Jafar.

They were sent to the district jail via a court order yesterday.

Shanthia Police Station Officer in Charge Anwar Hossain said an inquiry team of Agrani Bank visited Kashinathpur branch of the bank on Thursday morning.

After a day-long inquiry, the team found discrepancies worth Tk 10.13 crore after auditing the accounts.

"We arrested the three officials after the bank authority filed a police complaint over the discrepancies."

Farmer killed in elephant attack

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

A 65-year-old farmer was trampled to death by a herd of elephants in Nalitabari upazila of Sherpur district on Thursday night.

The deceased was identified as Omar Ali, son of Tamij Uddin of bordering Batkuchi village under the upazila.

The farmer came under attack by the elephants coming from a nearby jungle while he was guarding off the Boro paddy at night, leaving him killed on the spot, said Monirul Alam Bhuiyan, officer-in-charge of Nalitabari Police Station.

Locals recovered the body after the elephants left the spot, he added.

Forest officials and local public representatives rushed to the spot after hearing about the attack.

According to locals, they frequently come under attacks by elephants especially at night when they guard their croplands in Nalitabari and Jhenaigati upazilas of Sherpur.

UN denounces Iran crackdown on women

AFP, Geneva

The United Nations said yesterday that it was concerned by reports of new efforts to track and punish Iranian women, some as young as 15, who refuse to wear the headscarf required under the country's Islamic law.

The UN Human Rights Office also expressed alarm about a draft bill on "Supporting the Family by Promoting the Culture of Chastity and Hijab", which would impose tougher sentences on women appearing in public without the hijab.

First unit to start

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In October 2023, the first Russian shipment of uranium reached the site on the bank of the Padma in Ishwardi, earning Bangladesh the recognition of being the 33rd country in the world to produce nuclear energy.

According to Project Director Zahedul Hasan, the Power Grid Company of Bangladesh will set up four lines by October this year.

"If we get the lines on time, we believe unit-1 will be in operation in December," he said.

The PGCB is building six lines with a combined length of 669km.

From unit-1, there will be a 60km transmission line to Baghabari, 102km line to Bogura, 144km line to Gopalgonj, and 2km line across the Padma.

From Unit-2, there will be an 147km line to Dhaka, 14km of which will be over the Jamuna.

"A mission from the International Atomic Energy Agency is likely to visit the site for an inspection... we will start training the key personnel from May," said Zahedul, who replaced Shawkat Akbar, the first project director, on April 16.

The plant also needs an operational licence before nuclear fuel is loaded, he said.

Shawkat, now chairman of Bangladesh Atomic Energy Commission, which is implementing the project, said the deadline extension was not a matter of concern.

Delwar Hossain, project director of Transmission Lines for Power Evacuation of Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant, told this newspaper that installation of lines on land had seen over 90 percent progress. The line across the Padma saw 40 percent progress and will be completed by October.

The part over the Jamuna will be done by 2025, he added.

Shafiqul Islam, a professor of nuclear engineering at Dhaka University, said, "To lower economic risks and to maintain a good reputation, a project like this must be completed within eight years. Delays will give the wrong message to the international community about our capability to handle such a sensitive project."

Yafes Osman said, "The main construction work did not begin on time. There were obstacles like Covid and Russia-Ukraine war... Almost all similar projects around the world need at least 10 years to complete."

Nuclear power will be a game-changer in Bangladesh's fight against climate change, he said.

Russia's state-owned Rosatom is constructing the plant with two VVER-1200 reactors.

More than 60pc voter turnout in second phase

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governance. Youth and women voters are powering the strong NDA support," Modi wrote on X.

The second phase covered constituencies in Assam, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Manipur, Rajasthan, Tripura, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, and Jammu and Kashmir.

After the second phase, the voters' decision in 190 out of the total of 543 Lok Sabha constituencies will be sealed in EVMs. The first phase of the election, held last Friday for 102 seats across 21 states and union territories, saw a voter turnout of around 65.5 percent.

The result of yesterday's voting will be crucial for BJP as it covers constituencies which are strongholds in states like Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra, reports our New Delhi correspondent.

More than half of the seats in yesterday's contests were in the

southern states of Kerala and Karnataka and the western state of Rajasthan. Kerala is the only major Indian state where BJP has never won a parliamentary seat, though it has seen a steady rise in its voter support from 1.75 percent in 1984 to 13 percent in 2019.

The electoral fate of Congress leader Rahul Gandhi was sealed yesterday in the Wayanad constituency in southern Kerala. Gandhi faced Annie Raja of the Communist Party of India (CPI) and BJP's K Surendran, among others, in the Left Front-ruled state.

Other leading candidates who were in the fray in the second phase of voting include Shashi Tharoor of Congress, Bollywood star Hema Malini and Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla.

Meanwhile, the Supreme Court yesterday declined to order any change to the vote-counting process, rejecting petitions seeking a return to the ballot system or to tally all slips generated as proof of voting via electronic machines, reports Reuters.

The provision not contradictory to constitution

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The petitioners have no jurisdiction to move such a petition, the HC bench that binned it said while passing its ruling.

The then government led by military ruler HM Ershad had inserted a section in the eighth amendment to the constitution making "Islam" state religion on June 9, 1988.

The petitioners were Begum Sufia Kamal, former chief justice Kemal Uddin Hossain, Khan Sarwar Murshid, Prof Kabir Chowdhury, Prof Dr Mosharrar Hossain, Maj Gen (ret'd) Chitta Ranjan Datta (Bir Uttam), Prof Serajul Islam Choudhury, Badaruddin Umar, journalist Faiz Ahmed, Dr Borhan Uddin Khan Jahangir, Prof Anisuzzaman, Justice Devesh Chandra Bhattacharjee, Justice KM Sobhan, Syed Istiaq Ahmed, and Kalim Sharafi.

The HC on June 11, 2011 issued a rule asking the government to explain why the part of the eighth amendment to the constitution that had made "Islam" state religion should not be declared illegal.

The government did not respond

to the rule. On June 30, 2011, the parliament passed a bill on the constitution's 15th amendment retaining Islam's status as state religion. The amendment, however, restored "secularism" as one of the four fundamental principles of the state which had been omitted by a martial law regime after the 1975 changeover.

Following an application filed by the petitioners, the HC in December 2011 issued a supplementary rule asking the government to explain why the part of the 15th amendment to the constitution that gave "Islam" the status of state religion should not be declared illegal.

They said there was no scope to keep "Islam" as state religion after the Supreme Court had declared illegal the fifth amendment and restored "secularism" in the constitution.

The amendment validated all laws made by military rulers following assassination of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman along with most of his family members in 1975. In the verdict's full text, the

HC bench said, "As an attempt to simplify the issue, we have discussed the arguments advanced in our judgement. We have refrained from setting out specific submissions made by the Counsels for the petitioners and respondents because the constitutionality issue should be dealt with "as a whole".

"The conferment of status of 'State Religion' on its own does not tantamount to an action on the part of State to grant political status in favour of Islam.

"Article 2A must be read as a whole and once read, it becomes obvious that the insertion of the concept of Islam being the state religion does not, on its own, affect the constitutional rights of others having different religious beliefs. It does not affect the basic structure of the Constitution and also does not render the Constitution redundant.

The impugned amendment also does not offend the concept of secularism, as provided for in the Constitution," the HC judges said in the full text of judgement.

Seventh grader killed

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"We will not tolerate such irregularities. Strict administrative action will be taken in this regard," he told reporters after visiting the house of the schoolboy in the evening.

Mentioning that a case was filed in connection with the crash, the mayor said they want strict punishment for those responsible. "We want to ensure a fair trial."

Taposh said they had taken strict measures over such irregularities before.

"I fired those found involved in irregularities. I have hired many new drivers. As a result, the city corporation's vehicles did not cause any crash in the last two years. We will take strict measures so such road accidents do not recur," the mayor said.

With the latest incident, garbage trucks of two Dhaka city corporations have so far claimed at least 18 lives since 2016, according to media reports.

Of the victims, six died in 2021 alone, the highest number of deaths in a year in accidents involving garbage trucks.

A lack of skilled drivers, allowing people without training and driving licence to drive garbage trucks, operating unfit vehicles and reckless driving are among the main causes of so many road accidents.

After some recent crashes, the two city corporations formed probe

bodies and recruited some skilled drivers. But these measures proved to be not enough for ensuring safe plying of the garbage trucks on the streets.

The Daily Star has found that many crashes involving garbage trucks were not probed and those who were at the wheel during road accidents got away.

The city corporations also failed to fully implement the recommendations made by their expert committees. The recommendations include ensuring professional drivers for all vehicles, barring cleaners and other staffers from driving vehicles, and hiring an adequate number of skilled drivers.

Mokbul Hossain, spokesperson of the Dhaka North City Corporation, yesterday told The Daily Star, "We appointed 45 skilled truck drivers last year. We are continuously monitoring the activities of all the drivers with GPS tracking devices and cameras fitted to the trucks."

Md Hadiuzzaman, a professor of civil engineering at Buet, said the management of city corporations' trucks should be an ideal example for the others in the transport sector.

"But when unlicensed drivers drive unfit vehicles of the city corporations, it sets a bad example for the drivers in the private sector."

He said the truck drivers and the city corporation officials concerned should be held accountable.

Dhaka to boost trade

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to open negotiations on a Free Trade Agreement by 2024, Hasina said the commerce ministers of the two countries have signed a Letter of Intent on this issue.

To facilitate smooth contact between Thai and Bangladeshi officials, Dhaka and Bangkok signed the Agreement on Visa Exemption for Holders of Official Passports, the premier said, adding that the two countries already have an agreement on diplomatic passport holders.

"For Bangladesh, Thailand is a potential partner to engage in energy cooperation. The Memorandum of Understanding on Energy Cooperation was the second instrument signed to explore the potential of energy cooperation," she said.

Another MoU has been signed on cooperation and mutual assistance in customs matters.

"To benefit from Thai knowledge,

experiences, and best tourism practices, we signed the memorandum of understanding on cooperation in the field of tourism," Hasina said.

Regarding maritime connectivity, she said the two sides discussed the direct shipping route between Ranong Port and Chattogram Port.

Hasina said Bangladesh is following with great interest Thailand's flagship "Land Bridge" project.

Hasina reached Bangkok on Wednesday on a six-day official visit to Thailand at the invitation of her Thai counterpart.

Meanwhile, Foreign Minister Hasan Mahmud, an entourage member of the PM, yesterday said Bangladesh and Thailand have expressed willingness to work together to deal with the Rohingya issue as the two countries are sheltering Rohingyas.

He said this after the bilateral meeting between the two prime ministers.