



PHOTOS: ARSHADUL HOQUE ROCKY

'UNTIL THE RONGRANG SINGS' An aching story of our hilly regions

This exhibition, curated by Sharmillie Rahman at Kala Kendra, Dhaka, showcases four years' worth of Jayatu's artistic endeavours.

AISHWARYA RAIHAN

The hill tracts stand as one of the most alluring destinations for a large segment of Bangladesh's upper class. Yet, amidst the facade of joyful vacations, do they ever pause to ponder the tragedies concealed within? These hilly regions harbour tales unfamiliar to most and the colossal business tycoons orchestrating the tourist attractions remain indifferent to the environmental havoc they wreak.

Until the Rongrang Sings hence serves as a wake-up call for Bangladeshis — urging us to safeguard our environment. Jayatu Chakma, an emerging artist



repercussions are dire.

Jayatu's art vividly portrays the multifaceted damage inflicted upon the environment and culture. He highlights how the construction of the Kaptai dam in the 1960s submerged vast areas, displacing indigenous inhabitants. This displacement persists today as tourist spots continue to emerge, erasing indigenous homes. Notably, Jayatu sculpted a submerged Chakma king's palace enclosed within a column, symbolising the submergence of cultural heritage.

His use of excavators in sculptures underscores the environmental peril posed by hill construction projects. His paintings feature people adorned with Rongrang bird faces, representing the intertwined fate of these birds and indigenous communities.

The exhibition also features a sculpture of a sliced water pot, emblematic of ethnic cultures, particularly the Mros, who employ it for storing water and playing music during festivals. This sculpture underscores the erosion of not only habitats but also cultural elements within our nation. Jayatu portrays Jhum (shifting cultivation) farmers as superheroes striving to preserve hill culture.

Until the Rongrang Sings incorporates digital photomontages elucidating how we prioritise tourist comforts without considering their impact on ethnic groups. In essence, Jayatu Chakma's exhibition comprises simple yet thought-provoking drawings, paintings, needlework, digital prints, sculptures, and installations, testifying to our relentless demolition of not just diverse terrains but also the ecology and culture of our hill tracts.

Kala Kendra will continue to host this open-for-all exhibition until May 14.

Rights activists graced the inauguration ceremony.

This exhibition, curated by Sharmillie Rahman at Kala Kendra, Dhaka, showcases four years' worth of Jayatu's artistic endeavours.

Rongrang, in indigenous dialect, or Raj Dhanesh in Bangla, alludes to the Hornbill bird, once abundant in the hill tracts of the Chattogram division. However, rampant deforestation and hill annihilation have brought this exquisite bird to the brink of extinction. The dwindling population of Rongrang mirrors the fate of numerous other animal species, leading to an ecological imbalance in the hill tracts.

Furthermore, indigenous communities residing in these hills grapple with food shortages, exacerbated by soil and pebble removal, which has despoiled hilly rivers, streams, and fountains, precipitating a water crisis. For these communities, deeply intertwined with nature for sustenance, the



from Rangamati, unveiled his second solo exhibition, *Until the Rongrang Sings*, the first one being held in Kolkata.

Renowned figures like artist and Professor Dhali Al Mamoon and Advisor Queen Yan Yan of Chakma Circle and Indigenous Human

The Weeknd pledges \$2m for humanitarian aid in Gaza



Canadian singer and songwriter The Weeknd has recently pledged another USD 2 million from his XO Humanitarian Fund to support the initiatives of World Food Programme (WFP) in war-torn Gaza.

Abel Tesfaye, popularly known as The Weeknd, who is also the goodwill ambassador of the United Nations WFP, will provide 1,500 metric tons of fortified wheat flour to support over 157,000 Palestinians for one month.

Tesfaye, along with his partners and fans, has raised over USD 6.5 million for the fund till date.

Filmmakers protest abrupt screening cancellations at Star Cineplex

Star Cineplex has cancelled continued screenings of several popular films released during Eid-ul-Fitr, within only four weeks since they ran.

The decision has affected blockbuster hit films like *Rajkumar*, *Kajol Rekha* and *Deyaler Desh*, which enjoyed successful runs from the beginning.

The controversy has escalated with the abrupt replacement of these local hits with foreign movies, despite the scheduled release of new Bengali films like *Shyama Kabha* and *Dead Body*.

Producers of the affected films have voiced strong objections, accusing Star Cineplex of prioritising international cinema over local productions.



NEWS

The left wants to oust me

FROM PAGE 1

In this context, she said a good number of political parties have boycotted the polls as they are not capable of taking part in the elections.

Replying to another question, the premier said the AL-led 14-party alliance is there and it will exist in future. She said she would sit with the alliance partners after holding a meeting with her party's advisory council.

Regarding the ongoing heatwave, the PM urged the people to plant trees in large numbers to protect the country from natural calamities.

Hasina said it is very unfortunate that the developed countries, who were largely liable for climate change, do not keep their promises of providing \$100 billion to the climate fund.

She called upon the countries involved in arms race to use the money spend on producing arms and wars to reduce the impact of climate change and ensure the welfare of mankind.

Hasina criticised the US police action on the students and teachers who are staging demonstrations against the Israeli aggression on Gaza in Palestine.

She said America should take care

of itself instead of watching human rights in other countries as gross violation of human rights has been taking place in that country.

"I think our police can follow the American police now. Our police can take measures to curb movements following the American style," she added.

About her visit to Thailand, Hasina said during her talks with her Thai counterpart Srettha Thavisin, the Rohingya issue and the current situation in Myanmar came up.

She informed journalists that the Thai PM pledged that he would extend whatever cooperation is necessary for Rohingya repatriation.

Allegations pile up against founder of charity

FROM PAGE 12

The Daily Star correspondents were not allowed to enter the shelter yesterday. The employees said they would not talk to journalists.

Milton's Facebook posts that reach thousands often show him engaged in helping elderly people and children on streets. He also seeks contribution for his social work.

In one of the cases, DB Sub-inspector Kamal Pasha accused him and the shelter's Manager Kishore Bala of unauthorised burial and making fake death certificates.

Detectives seized at least 50 forged death certificates dated from 2019 to 2023.

Milton impersonated a doctor and gave the fake death certificates to the family members, reads the complaint. In reality, there was no doctor at his shelter home.

Milton and another person named Mohid Khan had seals of physicians. Officers said across different social media platforms, Milton had a combined follower of almost 1.20 crore and he earned a lot through fraud.

"Investigators learned that Milton and his manager used to physically and mentally torture the elderly and children, sold their organs, and trafficked children," reads the complaint. A man named M Rakib filed

another case, stating that he took a two-year-old child he found on a footpath in Dhanmondi to the shelter on September 6, 2020, and donated Tk 10,000 to Milton.

But when Rakib went there for a visit later, Milton told him to steer clear and never come back.

"After nine months, I learned that the boy was sold and trafficked," Rakib claimed in the case statement.

The other complainant, Motiur Rahman Mollick, wrote that he took an elderly blind man to the shelter on March 3, 2021.

After hearing that the elderly man was handed over to his relatives, Mollick and some of his friends went to the shelter to confirm the matter. But Milton and four-five others assaulted them.

On April 15, a man named Shamsuddin Chowdhury filed a case with Savar Police Station accusing Milton and 16 others of battery and assault.

Inspector Abdullah Biswas said the allegations seemed to be true in primary investigation.

In 2020, Milton and his relatives allegedly grabbed the land of Chandrakanta Memorial Church in Wazirpur upazila of Barishal with a fake office order from the Ministry of Religious Affairs, according to court documents.

'Order must prevail'

FROM PAGE 12

of police yesterday cleared a sprawling protest encampment at the University of California, Los Angeles, tearing down barriers and arresting students in the latest clash on US campuses over Israel's offensive in Gaza.

Officers in riot gear ripped down a wooden barricade around the UCLA protest site and dragged tents away in the fresh round of university unrest.

For weeks, authorities on campuses from New York to California have tried to thread the needle between the right to protest and complaints of violence and hate speech, resulting in hundreds of arrests and chaos as university terms end.

UCLA students clad in white helmets linked arms and formed a line facing off against officers, who were detaining protesters and leading them away.

Presiding officer

FROM PAGE 12

Parties can keep the doors open for everyone to vie for the polls, and no parties can publicly force any candidates to quit the race, he said, adding "Threatening or intimidating a candidate is a violation of the code of conduct ... but parties have the rights to make decision in their forums."

The upazila elections will be held in four phases with the first one to 150 upazilas on May 8. In the second phase, 161 upazilas go to polls on May 21, 112 upazilas on May 29 in the third phase, and 55 upazilas on June 5.

Forceful merger of banks

FROM PAGE 1

Talking about Bangladesh Krishi Bank, the economist said the bank got into trouble because of taking short term deposits and providing long term finance.

He recommended raising the deposit insurance to Tk1 crore from Tk1 lakh to earn back the depositors' trust.

A depositor currently gets a maximum of Tk1 lakh in compensation within 90 days if any scheduled bank or financial institution goes into liquidation.

Farashuddin also called for withdrawing all restrictions on term deposits for one to six months.

About the high inflation, he said that inflation stays high in Bangladesh because the central bank injects money into the economy.

Inflation remains over 9 percent since March last year, according to data of the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS).

"I think the liquidity crisis deepened in the banking sector due to repeated rescheduling of defaulted loans. The central bank has to inject money to end the crisis and that is why inflation is yet to cool down."

Farashuddin said powerful people have to make the authorities concerned understand that if the defaulted loans were recovered, there would be no need for the central bank to print money.

"We need a banking commission to restructure the banking sector. But if we have a strong Bangladesh Bank and skilled finance ministry, then there will be no need for a banking commission," he observed.

The former BB governor (November 1998 to November 2001) recommended introducing the January-December fiscal year instead of the July to June period to help the economy.

Replaying to a question, he said

he does not understand why the government and the International Monetary Fund are silent about money laundering, which is harmful to the country.

Regarding inequality, Farashuddin said the inequality between the rich and the poor had existed before, but it has grown further now.

He said both economical and political steps should be taken to reduce inequality.

The economist said all countries have achieved success in reining in inflation but Bangladesh is yet to control high inflation because of a faulty monitoring system. He recommended changing the monitoring system.

Ministers' comments that people are doing well despite 9.7 percent inflation are devoid of reality, he said.

"Salaries may have increased a little, but people are not in a good position due to the inflation."

ERF President Mohammad Refayet Ullah Mirdha chaired the event, moderated by General Secretary Abul Kashem.

People will decide

FROM PAGE 2

The other accused are Grameen Telecom Managing Director Nazmul Islam; Directors Ashrafur Hassan, Naznin Sultana, Parvin Mahmud, M Shahjahan, Nurjahan Begum, and SM Huzzatul Islam Latifee; Sramik Karmachari Union President Kamruzzaman; General Secretary Firoz Mahmud Hasan; representative Mainul Islam; Jatiya Workers Federation Office Secretary Kamrul Hasan; and lawyers Zafrul Hasan Sharif and Yusuf Ali.

On May 30 last year, Gulshan Anwar filed the case with the ACC's integrated district office in Dhaka. The ACC approved the charge sheet on January 29 this year.

AL chief warns MPs

FROM PAGE 12

Lawmakers' relatives should not have participated in the upazila election, she said and hinted that there will be action against those who defied the party instructions regarding the election.

A source said the PM told the MPs that the local leaders should be given a chance. "It is not good that relatives of MPs will run for posts. If this happens,

you will not get votes in the future."

The AL president then asked AL MPs not to make trouble with independent MPs who participated in the national polls with her permission.

Religious Affairs Minister Faridul Haque Khan and lawmakers Salahuddin Miyaji, Mohit Ur Rahman, Draupadi Devi Agarwala, Farzana Sumi, Anima Mukti Gomez and several others spoke at the meeting.

Dhaka city's temperature

FROM PAGE 12

heights, and human activities are the main reasons behind the trend of increasing temperatures in urban heat islands, he said.

According to the United States Environment Protection Agency (EPA), urban heat islands "occur when cities replace natural land covers with dense concentrations of pavement, buildings, and other surfaces that absorb and retain heat. This effect increases energy costs [for air conditioning], air pollution levels, and heat-related illness and mortality."

According to the Bangladesh Meteorological Department (BMD), the average maximum temperature this April was 36.2 degrees Celsius, three degrees more than the average April temperatures recorded in 76 years.

The country has already experienced the longest heatwave ever.

Not only the hottest, but this April was the driest in 43 years. The average rainfall in Bangladesh was one millimetre.

According to the BMD, the average rainfall in April is 134mm.

"It was the driest month in the country since 1981," Abul Kalam Mollik, a meteorologist at the BMD, told The Daily Star.

He also said there was not a single millimetre of rain in Rajshahi and Rangpur divisions while the Sylhet division saw the highest 294mm rainfall.

10 hurt

FROM PAGE 12

supporter of Wahab and Badsha and Matin are the supporters of Shahin.

Wahab, also Sujannagar upazila Awami League president, said suddenly the supporters of his rival candidate attacked his man.

This correspondent called Shahin, secretary of the upazila AL, for comments, but he did not receive the phone calls.

Additional police members were deployed in the area to fend off further untoward incidents, said Masud Alom, additional superintendent of Pabna police, adding that police opened fire when they came under attack.

Sujannagar upazila goes to polls on May 8 in the first phase.