



Tiger Lily



Rongon



Peony Chrysanthemum



Gerbera



Hydrangea



Carnation



Orchid Cherry Blossom



Lotus

## ZOHRA ISLAM an unwitting virtuoso

### ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK

The above paintings by Zohra Islam exhibit different kinds of flowers, done with intricate details, distinguishing one from the other. The artist, however, did not name the flowers she painted, and after great effort, with the help of her sister, her niece and a flower shop owner, 12 of them could be identified.

The artist had painted 50 other paintings on various subjects and themes, but had no formal education or training on art. However, at a young age, she had learned dancing from a professional teacher, namely Gowher Zamil, and sometimes performed publicly. She was married to M Matiul Islam, Bangladesh's first Finance Secretary, in 1958, but until 1978, she did not realise that she had the talent and a natural gift in painting.

This was discovered when

her husband got posted as Secretary, Ministry of Industries, and got allotted an official residence in Gulshan, where one of the neighbors was Mr Kemal, representing the IMF. It was during a social visit to her home that Mrs Kemal discovered her talent in painting by spotting a sketch of a rooster, which she painted much before her marriage, hanging in the dining room. Mrs Kemal and Zohra Islam started to paint together, engaging an art teacher. She had an intense love for flowers, which she inherited from her father.

The artist often travelled to



Zohra Islam

Barishal to be with her mother-in-law during holidays. During the steamer journey, she watched intently the country boats, and developed a propensity to paint them. During this period, she also developed a number of new paintings. On December 1981, Mrs Islam moved to Vienna along with her husband, when he was posted in UNIDO. She had the opportunity to continue her passion in art, and participated in an art exhibition organized by United Nations Women's Guild (UNWG).

The sale proceeds of the

painting were donated for charitable purposes. In this exhibition, several ambassadors bid for her painting of an anchored cargo boat. Padma Venkataraman, who was the President of UNWG during the 80s, said on Zohra Islam in relation to her paintings - "Mrs Zohra Islam's paintings reflect her innate artistic talent and keen observation of nature. It was a passion for her. Zohra generously donated her magnificent artworks to United Nations Women's Guild for conducting International art exhibitions. Funds raised during the events

were used for the cause of children around the globe.

Zohra's paintings are adorning walls of people around the world, and are a constant reminder of her cheerful nature. She moved into her Gulshan residence in the year 2000, and continued painting again, along with couple of friends engaging a new art teacher. She stopped painting in 2010.

Zohra Islam passed away in 2021, at the age of 84.

*Narrated to The Daily Star by M Matiul Islam, the first Finance Secretary of Bangladesh. He also worked as the Secretary, Ministry of Industries, Alternate Executive Director in the World Bank, Head of UNIDO/ World Bank Cooperative Program, Vienna and Country Director for UNIDO, India.*



Daisy



Sonalu



Roses



Magnolia

## NEWS

### More banking reforms

**FROM PAGE 1**  
Nonetheless, larger than-expected spillovers from tightening of global financial conditions, and still elevated international commodity and food prices, coupled with domestic vulnerabilities, have led to persistently high inflation and declining foreign exchange reserves.

This has exacerbated pressures on the economy and heightened the complexity of macroeconomic challenges, the IMF mission said.

"Against this backdrop, we welcome Bangladesh Bank's bold actions to realign the exchange rate and simultaneously adopt a crawling peg regime with a band as a transitional step toward greater exchange rate flexibility to restore external resilience."

Following the liberalisation of retail interest rates, additional tightening of monetary policy should help alleviate any inflationary pressures resulting from the exchange rate reform.

"Fiscal policy should support these monetary tightening efforts through revenue-based consolidation. If external and inflationary pressures intensify,

the authorities should stand ready to tighten policies further," the IMF said.

Considering Bangladesh's low tax-to-GDP ratio, the lender thinks it is imperative to prioritise sustainable revenue generation to bolster investments in social welfare and development initiatives.

To this end, tangible tax policy and administrative measures should be incorporated into the budget for the upcoming fiscal year of 2024-25 to augment tax revenues by 0.5 percent of the GDP, it said.

It called for a medium- and long-term revenue strategy, with an accompanying implementation framework, to guide future reforms.

"Reducing subsidies, improving expenditure efficiency, and managing fiscal risks will allow for additional spending on social safety nets and growth-enhancing investment."

On the banking sector, the IMF said Bangladesh Bank should continue the transition to risk-based supervision to enhance financial sector resilience while continuing legal reforms to

improve corporate governance and regulatory frameworks.

"Looking ahead, domestic capital market development will be instrumental in mobilising long-term financing to support growth."

Also, maintaining the reform momentum is critical to align with the authorities' goal of reaching upper middle-income country status by 2031, it said.

After the latest review, the IMF mission projected that Bangladesh's GDP will grow by 5.4 percent in FY24. In April, the IMF in its economic outlook projected Bangladesh's GDP growth to be 5.7 percent.

However, inflation is projected to remain elevated at approximately 9.4 percent year on year in FY24. It is anticipated to decline to around 7.2 percent in FY25, on the back of the continued tighter policy mix and projected lower global food and commodity prices.

"Nevertheless, uncertainties surrounding the outlook remain high, with risks predominantly leaning towards the downside," the IMF added.

### Survey to determine

**FROM PAGE 12**  
AstraZeneca said on Tuesday it had initiated the worldwide withdrawal of its Covid-19 vaccine due to a "surplus of available updated vaccines" since the pandemic, according to international news agencies.

The company also said it would proceed with the withdrawal of the vaccine Vaxzevria's marketing authorisations within Europe.

The UK-based company has taken such a decision after concerns and controversy in various quarters about the rare side effects of the vaccine.

Asked about AstraZeneca's decision,

the health minister said, "Until I know how many cases of side effects are there in our country, I can't say anything."

"But we are concerned about it. AstraZeneca has asked us to withdraw the vaccine. But how can we say until we have proof?" said the minister.

Asked about preparations against dengue infections in the coming monsoon season, Samanta Lal said, "I lost my mother to dengue fever back in 2000. I don't want anyone else to lose their mother this way. But let's say one thing about dengue, the health ministry alone cannot control the viral disease. We'll have to work together."

The minister said that stopping dengue at the source is critical; otherwise, no matter how many hospitals are built, it'll be of no use.

"Our doctors are highly skilled in treating dengue patients. I request anyone with a fever to consult doctors at government hospitals as soon as possible. Because delay will increase the risk of death," he added.

Responding to a question about the crisis of saline last year, the health minister said, "There will be no saline crisis this time. I have had a meeting with pharmaceutical companies, and they will not increase the price of saline and medicine."

### Chicken price soars

**FROM PAGE 12**  
through Karwan Bazar.

At Ibrahimpur Bazar, Moyna Begum said she had to buy a smaller chicken than she usually did because of the price, despite having guests at home.

"A chicken that weighed less than a kilogramme cost me Tk 350."

Jashim Uddin, a poultry salesman at Karwan Bazar, said that his daily sales have nearly halved, explaining that his sales to regular customers dropped

from 100 to 50 chickens, while the demand from restaurants dropped from 150 to 100 chickens.

He said he sold two types of chicken: sonali chicken for Tk 400-420 per kg and hybrid sonali chicken for Tk 380-390 per kg.

Before Eid-ul-Fitr, he sold these chickens for Tk 50-60 less per kilogramme.

Babul Mia, the proprietor of Noakhali Poultry, spoke of a significant drop in chicken supply. "Whatever we

receive, comes at high prices."

Speaking on this issue, Sumon Hawlader, President of the Bangladesh Poultry Association (Prantik), explained that many poultry farms across the country have witnessed chick mortality rates of 5-30% during this year's severe heatwaves, causing a decline in the chicken supply in the market.

"Poultry farmers have raised chicken prices at the source to recoup their losses, but it will take time for them to recover fully," Sumon added.

### Maiden meeting comes 7 years

**FROM PAGE 12**  
advisory council was formed after the law came into force.

Road crashes and fatalities have increased by 60.28 percent and 40.33 percent respectively in the first three months of this year compared to corresponding period of last year, shows BRTA data.

On April 16, a head-on collision between a bus and a pickup in Faridpur left 15 people dead. The bus had no route permit, fitness certificate, or tax token, while the pickup carried people illegally.

The following day, a truck ploughed into several vehicles in Jhalakathi, killing 14 people and injuring 12 others. The man at the wheel did not have a heavy vehicle driving licence.

Probes into road crashes found either the vehicles involved had no fitness clearances, the drivers had no valid licences, or the roads had issues.

Experts and road safety campaigners have often alleged that some vested quarters having links with the ruling party are behind the anarchy and indiscipline in the road transport sector, which lead to road crashes and deaths. These quarters, who have been benefiting from this situation, want to keep the situation unchanged for their own interests, they said.

#### WHAT THE LAW SAYS?

The section 10 of the BRTA Act-2017, which was assented by the president in July 2017, says that the advisory council will work to fulfil the purpose of the act.

The road transport and bridges minister will lead the council while the BRTA chairman will act as its member secretary, reads the act.

The mayors of two Dhaka city corporations, secretaries of home, commerce, housing and public works, railways, and shipping ministries, Road Transport and Highways Division, Bridges Division, the inspector general of police, the chief engineer of Roads and Highways Department, Local Government Division, the executive director of Dhaka Transport Coordination Authority, a government nominated expert and one representative each from the transport owners' and workers' associations will be the members of the council.

The council, if necessary, will be able to coopt any new member.

The act mentions seven terms of actions for the council. They are: fixing policies in line with the target and purpose of the authority; fixing short, medium and long term plans for road safety; innovating strategies to ensure road safety and giving directives to the authorities concerned to implement those; giving advice to reduce road crashes, coordinating with ministries,

divisions and agencies concerned; taking initiatives to bring discipline to the transport sector; identifying corrective measures to establish a people-friendly, time and cost-effective public transport system and giving advice to implement those; and solving the issues raised by the government agencies.

Four of these activities are directly involved in road safety. The authorities, however, are struggling to ensure road safety.

Road Transport and Highways Division Secretary ABM Amin Ullah Nuri on Monday told The Daily Star, "Although we are taking actions, road crashes are not coming down. We are going to hold a meeting [with the divisional commissioners and deputy inspectors general of different ranges] to know why this is happening."

BRTA Chairman Nur Mohammad Mazumder said the council could not meet for different reasons, including the Covid-19 pandemic.

"It takes a long time to get the names of the nominated members. Besides, the date of the meeting was changed several times," he told The Daily Star yesterday.

Three forums - National Road Safety Council, Cabinet Committee on Road Safety, and a taskforce - are responsible for ensuring road safety, but they do not meet regularly.

### 2 Bangladeshi men shot dead by BSF

**FROM PAGE 12**  
that, BSF members took the bodies into their custody.

Following the incident, a BGB-BSF flag meeting was held at the zero line of the same border.

SS Sirohi, commandant of the 176 BSF Battalion, led the Indian side, while BGB-18 CO Jubayed Hasan led the Bangladeshi side.

In the meeting, BGB strongly protested the killing and asked BSF to return the bodies as soon as possible.

Regretting the killing, the BSF commandant said a patrolling team of BSF from Fakirpara camp under 176 BSF Battalion opened fire on a group of people numbering 10/12 as they attacked BSF men after they trespassed into Indian territory by cutting through the barbed wire fence early yesterday.

The BSF official agreed to return the bodies after completing legal formalities.

### Chances of hitting oil, gas

**FROM PAGE 12**  
thermogenic gas, according to the findings of the study, is also a positive disclosure.

Imam, who attended the seminar, said a "Fan" means a vast area with a good potential of getting natural resources.

Gillbard mentioned that the source rocks of the area have very high potential and that they have found a huge number of direct hydrocarbon indicators (DHRs) in the shallow and deep waters.

On March 10, the government floated a tender for "Oil and Natural Gas Exploration under Bangladesh Offshore Bidding Round 2024" fixing the bidding deadline for September 7.

Till date, seven international companies have purchased bidding documents, according to State Minister for Power, Energy and Mineral Resources Nasrul Hamid. He said many others have expressed interest.

"The interests of the country and the investor companies were considered in the tender process. As a result, we are very optimistic about this year's

tender," he said.

More than 10 international companies, including Petronas, Exxonmobil, Chevron, JOGMEC of Japan, KrisEnergy, ONGC, Inpex Corporation, and ENI SPA of Italy, participated in yesterday's seminar.

Prime Minister's Energy Affairs Adviser Tawfiq-e-Elahi Chowdhury said there were various changes made to the new tender compared to the previous years.

"Benefits have been increased significantly. Now this is a lucrative opportunity for both parties. We have prepared a PSC [product sharing contract] adopting the middle path," he said.

The adviser said South Asia is a very peaceful region.

"Those who think about long-term investments should consider this. There is a big gas market around our sea. Investing in this area is less risky than in other countries. Considering the overall situation, we think many firms will participate in the tender process."

"Chevron has invested \$4 billion in our country. This shows how promising our country is," he added.