



Artwork by Amit Nandi.



Artwork by Arpa Das Piu.



Artwork by Pragati Chakma.



Artwork by Sharat Kumar Sahoo.

‘Finding Nirvana’ at AFD: A HOMAGE TO BUDDHA

ZAHANGIR ALOM

Every great soul has shown the path of human welfare and enlightened life through his philosophy. By following that ideal path, differences between people are eliminated and a life of peace and comfort is attained. The great sage Buddha overcame suffering by striving for ‘Nirvana’, which shows us the path to disillusionment.

On the occasion of Buddha Purnima in 2023, Oriental Painting Study Group (OPSG) and Alliance Française de Dhaka (AFD) organised an art exhibition titled **From Suffering to Liberation: Buddha of Bengal** at La Galerie in Dhaka. In continuation of that, **Finding Nirvana in Life: Buddha of Bengal** by the 42 artists of Bangladesh and India, was observed on May 20, this week.

Bringing together 71 artworks, this exhibition explores traditional expressions of Buddhist art within the region. A total of 33 Bangladeshi and

nine Indian artists are showcasing their diverse artworks in the media including oriental painting, sculptures, ceramics, paintings on palm leaves, rickshaw painting, cinema banner painting, gouache, calligraphy, tempera and patachitra.

Wonderful portraits of Buddha, created by renowned artist Professor Abdus Satter, brightened up the exhibition. The elegance of line, the mature colour scheme and the oriental eyes of the meditating Buddha complement the Nirvana practice.

Amit Nandi has depicted Lalon, Buddha, and Shree Chaitanya under a Bodhi tree on a moonlit night. These three great men, who paved the way for the transcendental philosophy of world peace, love for life and humanity, have tried to reiterate what is more relevant in today's conflict-torn world.

Another of Nandi's works consists of illuminating colour treatment. The farewell episode of Buddha's beloved horse is laden with pain in his



Play ‘Nirvana’ being presented at AFD's courtyard. PHOTOS: COURTESY

painting titled *Maya*.

Buddha's words guide our lives. That connotation has blossomed into calligraphy. On the occasion of this exhibition, the supervisor of Oriental Painting Study Group, Professor Dr

Malay Bala conducted an exclusive workshop. Malay Bala depicts the Buddha's vision of *Ashtamarga* through the flowery chakra in calligraphy through gouache. The artist has indicated in this work that

when the path of *Ashtamarga* is followed, the fragrance of life spreads like a flower.

The exhibition is curated by Mikhail I Islam. Buddhist Vante Sanghananda Mohathero, principal, Sylhet Bouddha Bihar, François Grosjean, director, Alliance Française de Dhaka and Dr Saymon Zakaria, Bangladeshi folk researcher and deputy director of the Department of Research, Bangla Academy, attended the opening event as special guests.

The opening ceremony was followed by the premiere of the play *Nirvana*, directed by Dr Lata Samadder at the courtyard in Alliance Française de Dhaka. The play was adapted from Ashwa Ghosh's *Buddhacharita*, which was translated by Sadhankamal Chowdhury.

Dr Lata Samadder and Md Zahidul Islam jointly transformed the play. The students of Department of Theatre and Media Studies, Tejgaon College, Dhaka and the members of OPSG performed different roles in

the play.

Liaquat Ali Lucky, director general of Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy, and chairman of Bangladesh Group Theatre Federation, graced the premiere as chief guest. Professor Dr Md Harun Or Rashid, principal, Tejgaon College, Dhaka, inaugurated the premiere show.

Mikhail I Islam, designer of Learning Design Studio and curator of the show, presided over the programme. The second show of the play *Nirvana* was staged at the same venue and time yesterday (May 22).

Dr Niru Shamsun Nahar, researcher, author and former director of Bangladesh National Museum, presented a paper titled **Buddhist Lifestyle in Terracotta Art of Ancient Bengal (8th-12th Century AD)** on May 21. The artists of Bhavnagar Sadhusangha will offer the performance of Charjapada Songs of Ancient Bengal yesterday, as well.

The author is an artist and art critic.

NEWS

Paris looks to bolster ties with Dhaka

FROM PAGE 12
between our foreign ministries soon," Masdupuy said.

During President Macron's visit, Bangladesh committed to buying 10 new A350 airplanes from Airbus, a multinational aerospace corporation of Europe, and signed a letter of intent with France for buying the Bangabandhu-2 Earth Observation Satellite System.

"I am very hopeful. Airbus technology is far better," the envoy said when asked if the agreements on buying aircraft and the satellite from Airbus will be signed as US company Boeing has also been pursuing the sales of its aircraft.

French industrialists and military officials are holding regular visits and exchanges of ideas with all sectors including with the navy and air force in Bangladesh, said Masdupuy, but did not elaborate.

French funding agency AFD will have a policy dialogue with the Economic Relations Division between July and September to further the economic cooperation.

There is also higher level of interests from Bangladeshi and French companies for investments. Also, more businesspeople and students from Bangladesh are going to France. To reciprocate it, a number of French universities will also be coming to Dhaka and Chattogram to attract students from here, said the French envoy.

French companies are interested

Khamenei leads Raisi's funeral

FROM PAGE 12
by tightening political and social controls and a worsening economy.

Growing numbers of voters have shunned recent elections, a worrying sign for the leadership, which sees turnout as a credibility test for the 45-year-old Islamic Republic.

"The establishment lacks options to secure a high turnout in such a short period of time," said a former Iranian official, who asked not to be identified due to the sensitivity of the matter.

State TV showed Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei leading prayers as tens of thousands of mourners thronged streets at the funeral in Tehran, which will move to the cleric's eastern home city of Mashhad for burial today.

in the areas of energy, goods, shipbuilding, food, while some Bangladeshi companies are interested to invest in France, especially in the pharmaceutical sector.

A large business delegation from France will also be visiting Bangladesh soon, said Masdupuy.

The two countries will also hold migration dialogue as more Bangladeshis are migrating to France in recent times, she added.

The diplomat said France will support Bangladesh's skills development, facilitate emergence of new industries that can help the transition from LDC to a developing country.

Diversifying trade and upholding labour rights will be important challenges for Bangladesh in the post-LDC period, Masdupuy said.

On a different note, she said Bangladesh's people and its public opinion are being targeted by massive informational manipulation, distorting the reality when it comes to what France is doing with Ukraine. The diplomat said since early May, she noticed some videos on YouTube channels and other social media platforms in Bangladesh, explaining that France has troops in Ukraine.

"I wanted to alert you to that because you are a very professional and serious media. And it's your duty to not only debunk all these but to pre-bunk," she said.

The envoy said Russia has targeted countries like Bangladesh for such

information manipulation, which can have serious consequences.

Masdupuy said Russian President Vladimir Putin has no limits and if he would win the Ukraine war, Russia could be invading some other states.

Low-pressure

FROM PAGE 12
gusty or squally wind, in many places over Rajshahi and Rangpur divisions, at a few places over Dhaka, Mymensingh, Chattogram and Sylhet divisions, and one or two places over Khulna and Barishal divisions starting from 9:00am.

Besides, a mild heatwave is sweeping over Sylhet division and the districts of Dhaka, Netrakona, Chattogram, Rangamati, Feni, Cox's Bazar, Bagerhat, Jashore, and Chuadanga and it may continue.

Day temperature may remain nearly unchanged and night temperature may rise slightly over the country. Due to increase of moisture incursion, the discomfort may increase, according to the BMD bulletin.

Yesterday, the highest temperature was recorded at 37.5 degrees Celsius in Bagerhat's Mongla, and the lowest 22.4 degrees Celsius in Panchagarh's Tentulia.

The highest 64mm rainfall was recorded in Patuakhali.

Arakan Army

FROM PAGE 12
victory it has claimed against the junta in Rakhine state.

It said it had warned residents of the town to leave and had subsequently been "assisting people in moving to safer areas" but did not give any details.

It accused the junta of destroying Buthidaung and of inciting "racial and religious violence" by recruiting Rohingya to fight the AA.

The Rohingya groups' statement also accused the junta of conscripting "several thousand" Rohingyas to fight and of using them as "cannon fodder".

The junta has not responded to requests for comment on the latest clashes around Buthidaung.

AFP has also contacted the AA for comment.

The latest clashes have killed hundreds and displaced at least 300,000 people across Rakhine since they began in November, according to the United Nations.

DW docu raises questions

FROM PAGE 12
Bangladeshi peacekeepers were actively deployed worldwide, said the documentary.

DW found that more than 100 Rab officers went on peacekeeping missions, 40 of them deployed after the Committee against Torture, a UN body, published a report in 2019 on alleged abuses by the security forces in Bangladesh.

It mentioned the names of three Rab personnel who were on peacekeeping missions. The three worked for Rab's intelligence wing with two serving as its deputy directors.

The documentary brought allegations against the intelligence wing saying that the unit "runs a secret network of torture cells across Bangladesh, some of them located in safe houses, others hidden deep inside Rab's compounds".

It raised questions as to how the officers could be sent to the peacekeeping missions despite being the part of the intelligence wing.

Contacted about the DW documentary, Commander Arafat Islam, director of legal and media wing of the Rab Headquarters, said the UN mission is not an issue of Rab.

"So, we have no observations to make," he told The Daily Star.

In the documentary, Andrew Gilmour, a former UN Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights, said the UN's hands are seemingly tied.

He explained there was a time in the past when the majority of UN peacekeepers came from places like Sweden and Ireland.

Ireland, Spain, Norway

FROM PAGE 12
occupied West Bank, and by Hamas, which has ruled the Gaza Strip since driving the PA out of the enclave in 2007. Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Qatar also praised the European countries' recognition of the Palestinian state.

Around 144 out of 193 member-states of the United Nations recognise Palestine as a state, including most of the global south, Russia, China and India. But only a handful of the 27 EU members have done so, mostly former Communist countries as well as Sweden and Cyprus.

Britain, Australia and EU member Malta have indicated in recent months

that they could soon follow suit. Meanwhile, Israeli tanks advanced to the edge of a crowded district in the heart of Rafah yesterday during one of the most intense nights of bombardment of the southern Gaza city since Israel launched its offensive there this month.

Residents and Hamas said tanks had taken up new positions further west than before along the southern border fence with Egypt, and were now stationed on the edge of the Yibna neighbourhood at the centre of Rafah. They had not yet entered the district as fighting had been intense.

But over the years, as the Cold War drew to a close in the early 1990s, faced with deadlier missions, Western governments increasingly started to pull their troops out of peacekeeping operations, preferring to pay for them instead.

The DW interviewed a political source from a western European country with inside knowledge of the workings of the UN who said democratic governments had to weigh whether they could pay a certain blood toll.

If soldiers deployed to UN missions returned in body bags, he explained, their governments could soon have a parliamentary inquiry on their hands. That, however, was not a problem countries like Bangladesh had to deal with, the source told DW.

And the result: "Very, very few highly trained, Westernized troops for the United Nations," said Gilmour.

He further said, "There are almost never enough" troops. "So that means it's not as if the UN then can say, OK, we'll take this group because we think this country respects human rights. And I'm sorry guys, we're not going to take you."

The UN "don't have that option," Gilmour continued.

He said, "...Where literally thousands of people could be killed in the absence of UN peacekeepers, which - when you have to balance things - perhaps sending two or three bad apples is a less bad option than thousands of people getting killed."

Bangladesh is currently the third largest contributor to the UN peacekeeping missions in different parts of the world. The country has

been lauded on various occasions for its contribution to bringing in peace and stability in conflict zones, risking their own lives.

The documentary said that in 2012, after several sexual abuse scandals by peacekeepers made headlines, the UN implemented a new human rights policy for its personnel.

According to that policy, while troop-contributing countries generally continue to select and vet the military personnel they send to missions with the exception of Force Commanders and their deputies, they have to attest for each soldier that they have not committed or are alleged to have committed any human rights violations.

In response to the query of DW, UN in writing replied, "...The resources to screen each and every person and have a long-standing policy that places specific responsibility on troop and police contributing countries."

In the case of Bangladesh, the UN spokesman went on: UN Peacekeeping "has continuously engaged bilaterally with national authorities to convey concerns about serious allegations of human rights violations by defense and security forces, in particular by members of Rab".

Rishi Sunak

FROM PAGE 12
to voters.

The former investment banker and finance minister took over as prime minister less than two years ago. Since then he has struggled to define what he stands for, becoming increasingly frustrated that what he sees as his successes have failed to be appreciated.

Both parties have all but kicked off campaigning for an election, with the attack lines on the economy and on defence already firmly drawn.

Sunak and his government accuse Labour of preparing to increase taxes if in government and say the party would not be a safe pair of hands for Britain in an increasingly dangerous world as it lacks a plan, charges the opposition benches.

Labour accuses the government of 14 years of economic mismanagement, leaving people worse off, with a series of chaotic administrations that have failed to give the stability businesses have craved to spur economic growth.

Labour said before the announcement it was more than ready for an election.