



PHOTOS: COURTESY

# UTTAM KUMAR ROY'S solo exhibition unveils reality through fiction

**Uttam Kumar Roy developed artistic inclinations at a young age, leading him to pursue a five-year diploma in Drawing and Painting at the Bulbul Academy of Fine Arts (Bafa) in Dhaka.**

MAISHA ISLAM MONAMEE

*The Actuality of Fiction*, a captivating solo exhibition by acclaimed Bangladeshi artist Uttam Kumar Roy, is currently underway at Alliance Française de Dhaka. Curated by Mustafa Zaman, the exhibition opened its doors on July 5, and will continue until July 16.

The opening ceremony was graced by the presence of eminent artist Monirul Islam as the chief guest. Renowned sculptor Alak Roy, Art Bangla Foundation Chairman Professor Mohammad Eunus, and Bulbul Academy of Fine Arts Secretary Md Fazlur Rahman added further distinction as special guests.

The 57 artworks on display delve into the intricate relationship between the dynamism of life and the human mind's interpretation of it. Uttam Kumar explores the constant state of flux we experience and the psychological toll it can take. Through his art, he strives to uncover the root cause of this tension with a keen visual eye. The title itself hints at the interplay between reality and the narratives we construct around it.

Uttam Kumar's artistic process is a fascinating exploration of this dynamic. He begins by absorbing the constant movement and pressures of life. This immersive experience triggers a chain reaction within him – a mental reaction that leads to a deeper realisation. This realisation then finds expression on the canvas, transforming into an artwork. The creative journey does not end there. His artistic

choices, particularly his use of colour and technique, further shape the emerging motifs. This introspective process, with its distinct complexities and simplicities, reflects the multifaceted nature of human experience.

"Art is the reflection of the ethos of life and the reality one lives in amid one's actual and imaginary experiences. My art is shaped by life's realities and inner experiences. This ongoing exploration, fueled by the complexities of existence, drives artistic expression," the artist explained.

Upon closer inspection, it can be understood that the artist uses his imagination to make art. He does not focus on myths or stories but allows paint splatters and drips to guide him. These splatters become their own reality, reflecting the artist's physical and mental connection to the world. Unlike traditional paintings, they directly respond to the artist's experiences. Thus, the artworks on display are dreamlike figures that seem to exist in perfect harmony with their surroundings. These rhythmic paintings offer a way to experience life's true nature, not through fantasy, but through the artist's honest expression.



"Uttam Kumar's art challenges the narrow view of art imposed by colonial influence in India, which valued realism over imagination. He defies this limitation by creating abstract paintings that invite interpretation rather than offering a single clear meaning. His complex works demand active engagement from viewers, who are encouraged to be swept away by the experience rather than dissecting the two-dimensional details for a literal message," shared Mustafa Zaman.

Uttam Kumar Roy developed artistic inclinations at a young age, leading him to pursue a five-year diploma in Drawing and Painting at the Bulbul Academy of Fine Arts (Bafa) in Dhaka.

He also holds a Master of Science (MSc) in Botany from Jagannath University. This unique combination of scientific knowledge and artistic expression lends a fascinating depth to his work. He is currently a faculty member at Bafa, and generously shares his vast knowledge and experience with aspiring artists, nurturing the next generation of Bangladeshi art.

The exhibition is open to all till Tuesday, from 3pm to 9pm.

## Faruque Ahmed takes on the director's chair



In his four-decade-long career, renowned actor Faruque Ahmed has earned a name for his performances on the theatre stage, television, and in films. Now, the artiste is set to make his directorial debut with the play, *Rongmohal*, written by Rubaiyat Ahmed.

"I am grateful to the eminent theatre personalities Nasir Uddin Yousuff and Shimul Yusuf for believing in me and giving me such a great responsibility," shared the actor.

The rehearsal of the play is underway and it will be staged in October.

## Court orders removal of Aly Hasan's 'Nana Nati' from YouTube

Rapper Aly Hasan, lyricist of the song *Nana Nati*, received a legal notice for contempt of court, leading to its removal from YouTube.

On June 19, Advocate Fahim Hasnain, assistant public prosecutor of Sherpur District Judge Court, sent the notice. It alleged that the song contained the offensive line, "current court judgments run on money," and demanded its removal within 15 days along with a public apology from Hasan. Failure to comply would result in legal action.

Deputy Attorney General Sheikh Saifuzzaman informed the media that the High Court ordered the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) to remove the song. While no longer on YouTube, the song remains on RBT Entertainment's Facebook page.



# NEWS

## Driving to a fortune!

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after Channel 24 ran a report on question leaks in the exams conducted by the PSC.

The CID arrested at least 16 others, including Abed's son Syed Sohanur Rahman Siam, relief and disaster management secretary of Dhaka North Chhatra League; and six PSC officials.

"Abed Ali recently sold two more flats in the West Shewrapara building. We suspect he has more property ... We are looking into it," the CID official said.

Working as a chauffeur, Abed, who is from West Botla village in Madaripur's Dasar upazila, amassed assets worth millions.

The eldest of three siblings, he left Madaripur for Dhaka after his father's death and began working as a porter. Later, with the help of a childhood friend, he started pulling rickshaws while living in a mess on Indira Road in the capital.

In 1997, he obtained a class-eight certificate from the Open University and managed to secure a job as the driver for the PSC chairman on December 2 that year.

That was when his fate began to change, locals and investigators said.

Within five years of joining, Abed got involved with a syndicate, along with some PSC officials, who were leaking question papers of various PSC recruitment exams to earn money.

He was dismissed from his job in 2014, after the allegations against him of leaking question papers in a recruitment test for first class posts (non-cadre) were proved.

A departmental case was filed against Abed on April 22, 2014, as his active involvement was found in the leak of question papers for the post of "Assistant Maintenance Engineer" for the then Ministry of Information and Communication Technology in the non-cadre category.

"Abed has earned a bad name for many illegal activities and he is involved in habitual misdeeds," the PSC report said, adding that he got the job using a fake permanent address – Sirajganj instead of Madaripur.

According to the CID investigators, Abed continued to work with the syndicate even after losing his job.

His son Siam, who was relieved from his post in the BCL on Monday, used to abet his father in the crime.

CID officials and locals said that

Abed also earned money by lobbying for various candidates to get jobs in many government offices.

Locals said he built a duplex in his ancestral home in West Botla village at a cost of around Tk 3 crore, while his elder and younger brothers continue to live in mud-floored two-room tin-shed houses.

He also has a mango orchard in front of his house and built a mosque at a cost of Tk 1.5 crore, they told our Shariatpur correspondent, adding that he owns at least 25 three-wheelers.

Abed even tried to construct a cattle farm with over 100 cows on the right side of a bridge adjacent to Kamalapur Bazar in Dasar upazila. On the left side, he had put up pillars and laid the foundation for business establishments.

However, as it is government land, the upazila administration stopped both constructions.

Speaking to The Daily Star, Abed's younger brother, Javed Ali, said, "My father was a farmer and my two brothers are also earning their livings by farming. I work as an easy-bike driver to run my family."

About his brother, he said, "If he is guilty, I want him punished."

In Dhaka, Abed has been living with his wife, two sons and a daughter in a flat in the 10-storey "Bismillah Tower" on West Shewrapara's Wasa Road for the past seven years.

Other residents of the building told this newspaper that Abed's family members left the flat after his arrest. They added that he owns three flats in the building and has two cars.

Locals said that he would introduce himself as a car trader and they heard he also owns a six-storey building in Mirpur's Paikpara.

Recently, Abed was vying for the chairman post of Dasar upazila, the polls of which were postponed.

In his Facebook ID, he recently posted videos of campaigning, urging locals to support him in the upcoming election.

In a video post in June, he spoke about owning a seven-story building and an 11-storey building in Dhaka, and about setting up a mosque and cemetery on 71 decimals of land.

"I have now started constructing a house, which already costs Tk 3 crore," the video showed him telling a gathering in the upazila.

## Protesters set to resume blockade today

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"Having said that, since the quota system was once abolished through a movement, we believe there is another opportunity for intervention ... this time, we want to settle the quota issue for good. We want a law passed in parliament as a permanent solution.

"So, our movement is now directed towards the government and the executive branch. The 'Bangla Blockade' will continue until our demands are met."

**EYES ON COURT**

Earlier in the day, two DU students filed a petition challenging the High Court verdict, which was later placed at the chamber court for a hearing today.

Justice Md Ashfaul Islam, chamber judge of the Appellate Division, passed the order after senior lawyer Shah Monjurul Hoque submitted the petition on behalf of the students.

Two students are Al Sadi Bhuiyan, a student of the anthropology department and president of Dhaka University Journalist Association, and Urdu department student Ahnaf Saeed Khan.

Meanwhile, a full bench of the Appellate Division is scheduled tomorrow to hold a hearing on the government petition challenging the HC verdict.

Following a writ petition, the HC on June 5 declared illegal the government decision that cancelled the 30 percent quota for the children of freedom fighters in the civil service for ninth to 13th grades.

Law Minister Anisul Huq welcomed the students' decision to file the petition with the SC against the HC verdict and hoped that the agitators would now call off their movement.

"I think this decision to file the petition is a positive step. They can place their arguments through their lawyers. After hearing the arguments,

the court will ensure justice," he said in response to queries from reporters at his ministerial office in the Bangladesh Secretariat.

Students from public universities and colleges, along with job seekers, started demonstrating a week ago, with a four-point demand, including the reinstatement of a 2018 circular that abolished the quota system in government jobs.

On Monday, they launched the "Bangla Blockade" following a one-point demand for scrapping all illogical and discriminatory quotas in public service through enactment of a law and keeping a minimum quota for marginalised citizens in line with the constitution.

**COUNTRY-WIDE PROTEST**

As part of the nationwide anti-quota movement, students at Rajshahi University held a sit-in at the university's Paris Road for an hour from 3:00pm.

Mehedi Sajeev, one of the coordinators of the movement, said,

"We want all discriminatory quotas to be reformed except the ones for the disadvantaged, disabled, and marginalised communities."

Rajshahi College students blocked a road in front of the college for three hours from 11:00am.

In Chattogram, students of Chittagong University held a mass campaign and formed a human chain at the university's Shaheed Minar premises at 10:30am.

Kaniz Fatima, a student of CU, said, "I'm the daughter of a freedom fighter and I don't want quota in government jobs. I will let my merit speak for itself."

In Savar, hundreds of students of Jahangirnagar University blocked the Dhaka-Aricha highway near the campus for 30 minutes from 3:45pm.

In Barishal, students of Brojomohun College, also known as BM College, blocked the Dhaka-Barisal highway in Nathullahad area for two hours from 11:30am.

## Economy, trade to be in focus

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for Bangladesh, but it will not be easy," said Sk Tawfique M Haque, director of the South Asian Institute of Policy Governance at North South University.

China is Bangladesh's largest trading partner, with bilateral trade between the two nations exceeding \$25 billion. However, exports from Bangladesh account for less than 3 percent of the sum.

Narrowing the trade gap will be a major focus of this trip.

"We would explore all ways of minimising this gap," Foreign Minister Hasan Mahmud told reporters on July 7.

The two countries are expected to sign 20-22 memoranda of understanding (MoUs) in the areas of trade and investment, digital economy, banking, infrastructure development, disaster management, agriculture and people-to-people connectivity. Yesterday, as many as 18 MoUs were signed.

However, hopes of getting a \$5 billion loan in yuan were dashed after Dhaka and Beijing failed to agree on the terms and conditions of interest and grace period of the loan, officials said.

"China will not provide the loan without conditions. Even if they provide the loan and other assistance, it will be a way for China to keep Bangladesh on its fold," said Tawfique, dean of NSU's School of Humanities and Social Sciences.

The Western powers will not be happy if such a currency swap happens between Bangladesh and China because this will be part of the de-dollarisation movement that China and Russia really want, especially after the Ukraine war, he added.

Bangladesh will seek Chinese support for the Southern Integrated Development Initiative (SIDII) centring the Payra Port in Patuakhali, Mahmud said.

Japan is supporting the Moheshkhali-Matarbari Integrated Infrastructure Development Initiative (MIDI) and the BIG-B Initiative (The Bay of Bengal Industrial Growth Belt). "Similarly, Dhaka wants Beijing to support SIDII," said a foreign ministry official informed with the proceedings.

On July 4, Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said China

stands ready to work with Bangladesh to carry forward the spirit of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence.

China wants to "deepen political mutual trust, further synergise development strategies, advance high-quality Belt and Road (BRI) cooperation, speed up implementing the Global Development Initiative (GDI), the Global Security Initiative (GSI) and the Global Civilisation Initiative, and elevate the bilateral relations to a new level", she said.

Bangladesh joined China's flagship Belt and Road Initiative when Xi Jinping visited Dhaka in 2016. Beijing wants Dhaka to join GDI and GSI too. However, Bangladesh is taking time before arriving at a decision.

Recently, there has also been a debate surrounding the Teesta project.

Following a proposal from Bangladesh, China showed interest in funding a part of the \$1 billion project in 2021. But the project saw no progress.

India, meanwhile, showed interest, and Hasan Mahmud said Dhaka would consider India's proposal first as it is a common river between the two countries.

China also wants to improve its political relationship with the Awami League and a delegation will be visiting China for signing an MoU in the days to come.

The objective of improving political relationships is to better implement the Chinese agenda in Bangladesh, said Imtiaz Ahmed, executive director of the Centre for Alternatives.

"China will work with whichever political party is in power. This is the Chinese approach. If the party in power [in Bangladesh] is strong in safeguarding national interest, there is no problem at all," Imtiaz said.

There is a competition between China and India over Mongla Port in Bagerhat, and it may be an issue in the coming days, according to people with knowledge of the talks.

"Bangladesh remains on the back foot because of its governance challenges. Therefore, the balancing act has become difficult for Bangladesh. We, therefore, should improve our financial governance and political consensus on foreign affairs before we fall into further trouble," Tawfique of NSU said.