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## 'DHAKA ART WEEKEND' takes art beyond aesthetics

**With live painting, soulful music, and interactive dialogues in an ambience gilded with art, the Dhaka Art Weekend festival has gone beyond art for a cause. In its quest to raise funds for flood victims, the two-day festival created a space where art worked to heal and restore.**

FAHIM RAHMAN AUNGKITA

The festival took place at The Attention Network, Dhaka Trade Centre, on October 18-19, organised by Resistance Dhaka United. Bringing together artists from different fields, the event aimed to raise funds for the rehabilitation and relief of flood victims across Cumilla, Feni, Noakhali, Khagrachhori, and Sherpur.

"What began as a simple initiative to raise funds through art soon blossomed into a full-fledged festival during the planning process," said Mohammad Mujahidul Islam Khan, founder and CEO of Resistance Dhaka United.

During the August floods, the team mobilised relief and rescue operations in different flood-affected areas and noticed discrepancies in the distribution and communication process. They realised the urgent need for rehabilitation after the worst was

over. No sooner had they made the plans than another disaster struck Sherpur. "While the initial plans were to facilitate rehabilitation in Noakhali, Feni, and Cumilla, we received news of the devastating floods in Sherpur. The team then decided to use the funds for relief in Sherpur as well," Mujahid added. The raised funds will be mobilised in collaboration with Obhizatrik Foundation and Together for Bangladesh Foundation.

The first half of 'Day 1' was solely dedicated to exhibiting artworks received from several artists. The exhibition featured almost 100 artworks, showcasing a diverse array of themes and media, ranging from sketches to oil paintings, and digital art, among others. While there was no central theme, a striking diversity was noticeable in paintings that ranged from mystical, fantasy, personal identity, and emotional expression. Besides abstract and surreal art, there were paintings of landscapes and nature, featuring soothing shores under vibrant skies, scenes from the countryside, and catskins by the cityscape.

Curator Venessa Kaiser shared, "We did not want to restrict the artworks to a particular theme since this was an



endeavour to let creative individuals donate their work for a cause. We did not want artists to take the hassle of creating something new in a short time, as we needed the funds for immediate action."

The art segment featured a collaboration with Art Bangla, where artist Rippi Bangla donated a series of paintings by several senior artists.

Besides art, there were two panel discussions featuring artists and influencers. Moderated by Syeda Fatema Rahman, the first discussion featured influencers such as Masud

Ashraf Taha, Maisha Mahjabeen Priooty, Samina Tun Noor, Amrin Tasnim Jaima, and Rakin Absar. In the session titled **Influencers' Impact During Disaster Management**, the speakers explored the vital role influencers can play in times of crisis by spreading news and mobilising efforts for a prompt response. The panellists shared real-life examples of their involvement in relief efforts during the floods and emphasised policy reforms related to urban planning and climate action.

Art has always played a significant

role in Bangladesh, from moving songs during the Liberation War to modern-day political art. Emphasising this historical context alongside the influence of today's artists, 'Day 2' featured the second dialogue, titled **Artists Leading Paths: Artists in Policymaking**, with artists Monjur Rashid, Mashroor Hasan, Rippi Bangla, and Ishrat Binte Rouf.

Three engaging stalls attracted crowds at the venue. Crafts and Spells showcased artistic stationery featuring pop culture themes, while the title sponsor, Head Gear, presented its signature caps. Also present was Gooft World, which featured handicrafts. Notably, their shelves were lined with hand puppets made by specially abled children, who are a vital part of their artisans. The festival ended on a high note—quite literally—with performances from Shaiyan Kabir, Faisal Hassan Anik, The Tanzanite Project, The Rover, Lisan and The Blindmen, Chitropt, and finally, Joler Gaan.

**Dhaka Art Weekend** was a collaborative effort that brought together different forms of art and immersive experiences for a greater cause. The event was powered by Head Gear and supported by Moar.

## NEWS

### Forestland given away for illegal sand

FROM PAGE 12

to start the lifting work. However, according to the Balu Mohal O Mati Bebothapona Ain (Sand Fields and Soil Management Act) 2010, sand lifting inside a forest is against the law.

As per section 26 of the Forest Act, nothing can be removed from a forest without permission from the forest department.

The proposed land for lifting sand was recorded as part of the reserve forest in a Calcutta gazette issued in 1893 by the Assam-Bengal Forest Department.

It was also recorded as forestland in BS (Bangladesh Survey) on No-1 Khatyan in the Forest Department's name on behalf of Bangladesh government.

The Ramgarh-Sitakunda forest is home to 25 species of mammals, 123 species of birds, eight species of reptiles and 25 species of trees, according to the documents of the Chattogram North Forest Division.

The agreement handing over the land for sand extraction was signed by Abul Bashar Md Fakruzzaman, former deputy commissioner of Chattogram, on behalf of the district administration in July.

He, however, claimed he was not aware it was a reserve forest.

"I gave permission [signed the agreement] based on field inspection reports by several state agencies, including the environment department [DoE]. Maybe they overlooked the land ownership matter."

Meanwhile on October 17, the forest department wrote to the deputy commissioner of Chattogram, demanding the cancellation of the permission.

Signed by SM Khaizer, divisional officer of Chattogram North Forest Division, termed the permission "deplorable" and in violation of the Forest Act.

Speaking to The Daily Star, he said,

"The permission is totally illegal as we have been nurturing this land for years and have been giving revenue to the government. It's our asset. We've decided to take measures against the permission [given to extract sand from the forest]."

The same day, the forest department also sent a letter to the director of the DoE (Chattogram region), demanding a cancellation of the DoE's inspection report saying it was defective and illegal.

"The DoE gave a false inspection report. We've sent a letter to them to cancel it," said SM Khaizer.

**DOE REPORT**  
Ashraf Uddin, a research officer of Chattogram DoE, prepared the report after inspecting the proposed spot in Jitali area under Karerhat forest office in December last year.

According to the report, the proposed land has an open space and Null (crops) land on the east and west sides.

However, this correspondent visited the spot three times in the past five months and saw that the site has only a small canal and is covered in hills and forest.

Abul Hashem, a 55-year-old resident of the area, told this newspaper that a hill there was razed by sand lifters and that was when the canal was created.

This newspaper saw a copy of the DoE report, which also overlooked the ownership of the land.

Contacted, Ashraf Uddin said he was not given any instructions to find out about the ownership of the land.

Asked why the hills and forests were not mentioned in the report, he dodged the question and said he was under pressure to file the report soon.

**'GOT PERMISSION LEGALLY'**

In the contract, the district administration termed the proposed spot "Koylamukhi Sand Field" and leased it out to Ashoka Buildcon Limited on 20 conditions on July 27.

Afsar Uddin, a project engineer, dealt with the sand lifting issue with the state agency on behalf of the firm and was also seen with the DoE team during their visit to the spot.

"We had applied following legal procedures. We got the permission [for sand extraction] after fulfilling the 20 conditions and paying revenue to the government," he told The Daily Star on October 18.

**A FOREST ATTACKED AGAIN**  
The permission to lift sand from the reserve forest came just months after the forest department handed over 90 acres of the forestland to the Roads and Highways Department for the project.

According to an estimate by the forest department, around 4,630 matured trees had to be felled; 18,000 cubic metres of soil had to be removed, and 15,500 saplings had to be transferred for the project.

The handing over process drew flak from environmentalists and experts in February this year.

SM Khaizer said, "We already wrote to the district administration to cancel the permission to extract sand. If the problem is not solved internally, we'll take the matter to court."

Kamal Hossain, a former professor of the Institute of Forestry and Environmental Science at Chittagong University, has researched this forest for over a decade and published five papers on it.

He termed Ramgarh-Sitakunda one of the richest hill-based reserve forests with a vast variety of wildlife and trees.

"Sand extraction disturbs ecosystems, leading to habitat loss and a decline in biodiversity as it is a necessary element in a forest."

He warned of irreparable damages to the forest and impairment of the biodiversity if sand would be extracted from there.

### Dhaka Board chairman to quit

FROM PAGE 12

The HSC and equivalent exam results were released on October 15. This year, students sat for only half the exams, with the rest of their results determined based on their Secondary School Certificate performance.

Before marching to the Dhaka Board, students gathered at the Central Shaheed Minar around 12:30pm. They alleged that the results were "discriminatory" and called for a recalculation of their grades.

The students claimed that errors in subject mapping and improper evaluation of answer scripts had

resulted in unfair grading, and vowed to continue their demonstrations until their results were reassessed.

The students eventually left around 10:00pm but vowed to return at 11:00am today.

Similar protests were reported in other educational boards.

In Chattogram, HSC candidates gathered at the Chattogram Education Board around 11:00am, chanting slogans and alleging discrimination in results. Police and military personnel restored order around 4:30pm.

In Jashore, hundreds of students accused the Jashore Education Board of

issuing "fake results", claiming that despite an easier English exam, many had failed.

The board dismissed their demands as "baseless".

In Cumilla and Mymensingh, students also protested in front of their respective boards, demanding re-evaluation of their results.

This year's HSC exams, which began on June 30, were disrupted due to the July quota reform protests. After the fall of the Sheikh Hasina government on August 5, the interim government rescheduled the exams, and results were published on October 15, with a pass rate of 77.78 percent.

### Abu Sayed secures

FROM PAGE 12

his untimely death during the protests for students' rights on July 16. I pray for the peace of his soul."

University officials present at the event included Professor Md Tajul Islam, acting registrar; Professor Mizanur Rahman, dean of the Faculty of Engineering and Technology; Ilyas Hossain, student adviser; and Md Firozul Islam, additional controller of examinations.

Abu Sayed was a coordinator of the anti-discrimination student movement and tragically became the

first martyr of the protests when he was shot and killed by police.

His death ignited nationwide protests, eventually contributing to the downfall of Sheikh Hasina's government on August 5.

Speaking to The Daily Star, Sayed's brother Ramzan Ali said, "Our parents always believed Sayed would excel in his undergraduate course, and he did."

"It's the happiest moment for our family, but Sayed is no longer with us," he added, stammering because of emotion.

### Future of 62 ASPs

FROM PAGE 2

had been postponed and that our training would continue. We are completely in the dark about what will happen next."

The trainee went through the 40th BCS recruitment process that started six years ago.

According to police sources, 65 ASP trainees were undergoing the year-long training, including three from the 38th BCS and 62 from the 40th BCS. However, three trainees from the 40th BCS failed the final exam, leaving 62 to graduate.

"After passing through highly competitive exams and intense training, we are now left in a state of limbo. If our appointments are delayed or cancelled, all our hard

work will have been for nothing," the trainee added.

Nurul Huda, a former IGP, termed the incident as an "unusual step".

"It is not illegal, but such a step was never taken before for an entire batch. During the training, some trainees are dropped from the job for various logical reasons. But the postponement of the entire batch of parades is probably unprecedented and a bit unusual," Huda told The Daily Star.

Salauddin Ammar, the coordinator of the RU unit's Anti-Discrimination Student Movement, however, welcomed the move.

"The appropriate person should get the appointment after investigation," he told The Daily Star.

### Bangladesh rescue draw

FROM PAGE 12

certainly put the women in red and green to the brink as they would have needed a win against India to qualify for the last four. Now Peter Butler's charges can sigh a breath of relief and prepare for Wednesday's Group A deciding clash against India, with a draw or a small margin of defeat enough to see them qualify for the semifinals.

India, the five-time champions, had started the competition with a 5-2 win against Pakistan on October 17.

Butler, who took over as the team's coach in March this year, made quite a few surprise decisions for his starting eleven, keeping veterans like Maria Manda, Sanjida Akter, and Masura Parvin on the bench.

Sabina Khatun, the top-scorer of last edition, played as a second striker

behind Tohura Khatun but did not see much of the ball in the before being subbed off late in the game as most of Bangladesh's early attempts were crosses down the flanks, which the compact Pakistan defence handled comfortably.

However, it was somewhat against the run of play that Bangladesh conceded the opening goal in the 31st minute – their first against Pakistan in three meetings – when defender Sheuli Azim made a meal of a regulation clearance on a long ball, setting it up for Zahmena Malik to slot the ball past Rupna Chakma into the near post.

Rituporna Chakma, who was tireless down the left flank all game but saw most of her crosses float aimlessly, tried a long-range attempt, but the effort bounced off the crossbar.

### Kerr inspires NZ

FROM PAGE 12

over from Marizanne Kapp.

Plimmer fell for nine but Suzie Bates, playing in her 334th international, kept the scoreboard ticking over until she was bowled by Nonkululeko Mlaba for 32 from 31 balls.

When Devine was leg before to Nadine de Klerk on review, the innings appeared to be faltering but the arrival of Brooke Halliday lifted the tempo as she added 57 in seven overs with Kerr for the fourth wicket.

Halliday hit three boundaries in her 38 but was dismissed when she picked out Bosch on the midwicket boundary.

Kerr slammed back-to-back boundaries off Mlaba before finding Tazmin Brits to fall for 43 from 38 balls.

Maddy Green, however, maintained the momentum with 12 off six balls including the only six of the innings.

Skipper Laura Wolvaardt (33 off 27) and Tazmin Brits (17 off 18) got South Africa off to a roaring start bringing up the 50 in the seventh over before Brits departed in the seventh over.

New Zealand's Kerr soon removed Anneke Bosch and Wolvaardt as South Africa slumped to 64-3.

With the required run rate rising, South Africa's middle and lower order, who have barely batted in this tournament, struggled to get going with wickets tumbling at regular intervals.

Kerr made Annerie Dercksen her third victim of the day to finish with a tournament-leading 15 wickets.

South Africa's last pair held out for the final over but could not prevent New Zealand from celebrating their first title.

Bangladesh took a more direct route into the Pakistan defence after the break but found it hard to get into the box in face of some solid Pakistani defending.

Butler made a number of attacking substitutions late in the game, with Sabina subbed off for Krishna Rani Sarkar first and then Monika Chakma withdrawn for Maria and Mosammat Sagorika brought on for a hapless Tohura Khatun. The intensity of the attacks went up and so did Bangladesh's desperation.

Just when it seemed certain that the Tigresses would fall for their first defeat against a much-improved Pakistan side, Shamsunnahar Jr came up as the saving grace. She was right in front of goal to head home a perfect cross from Rituporna as the clock ticked into stoppage time.