



PHOTOS: AISHWARYA RAIHAN

‘BODY AND THE MAP’ Stories of chaos, trauma, and scars through art

AIISHWARYA RAIHAN

Bengal Shilpalay is currently hosting ***Body and the Map***, a contemporary art exhibition illustrating stories of violence, destruction, injustice, pain, and loss of humanity. Our bodies bear testimony to the resistance against societal darkness, the trauma inflicted upon us, and the generational scars.

According to curator Sharmillie Rahman, the body reflects the endeavour to belong in a place with a broken, anarchic political system. Following this notion, 10 emerging local artists have given shape to their imagination and interpretation of the current political instability, moral decay, and indifference towards these—that is caused by the economy, not just in our nation, but also worldwide.

Body and the Map features artists A Asan, Afsana Sharmin, Ashang Mong, Farzana Ahmed, Mong Mong Shay, Niazuddin Ahmmed, Palash Bhattacharjee, Rasel Rana, Razib Datta, and Ripon Saha, each with a collection of their artwork.

Reaching the 3rd level of Bengal Shilpalay, the first art piece greeting me in the lift lobby with its unique appearance was ***Ria Moni***, a tower constructed with children's toys. Created by Afsana Sharmin, this sculpture is a memorial for the mother

who was shot dead in her apartment during the Student Against Discrimination (SAD) Movement, leaving behind her infant Ria Moni. An intimidating installation with bamboo, sharp objects, water lilies, and severed doll parts is her way of visualising the movement.

The next artwork with enormous volume was Rasel Rana's installation, a part of his ***Desire Peace*** series. Made with cotton and fabric, this piece symbolises the ascending of the martyrs of the movement to the sky, a pain that we who are still alive are carrying. Pages from his memoir during these horrific incidents are also on display.

Mong Mong Shay, through his digital manipulation, depicted the savagery committed via the abuse of power, including the silhouette of Tofazzal Hossain, an innocent man mocked, bullied, and beaten to death by a group of students at Dhaka University. ***In the Field of Duality*** is a combination of five brightly painted panels put together, all of which are Shay's way of saying, "Something is wrong with whatever is happening around us."

A Asan painted a being on a gabardine cloth, begging for bullets so it could end the hatred, terror, and violence that are prevalent in the world. Her small woodcut prints are her way of showing that there is still a ray of hope amidst this chaos and that

we should always hold onto it just like she does.

Niazuddin Ahmmed summarised the injustice on protesters as a 'fall' of conscience, compassion, empathy, and morals. His minimalistic watercolour drawings are the remembrance of the events. The video and installation together symbolise the never-changing venom of political power that corrupts anyone who claims it.

Not only during the July Uprising, but the attacks on students and their supporters, the hate crimes against minority groups, the injustice in the mountains, the political instability, and even the genocide in the land of Palestine have shaken Farzana Ahmed to her core, resulting in her creating massive scrolls of overwhelming images. She has also made a sculpture to portray the horror of being injured by a chopper, reminding us of the murder of Biswajit Das in 2012.

Ashang Mong's humongous bird with white plumage had its head stuck in the roof—a unique depiction of our current political and economic instability, unpredictable future, and declining mental health. His ***Here, There, and Elsewhere*** series focuses on various intriguing elements of our mind, such as horror, imprisonment, awareness of the presence of lives around us, differences in spaces, etc.



Razib Datta sought refuge in satirical expressions with minimalistic execution, illustrating the effects of radical nationalism developed in recent years, generating the July Uprising. His installation connects with the fear, aggression, and irregularity we feel at present.

Ripon Saha's drawings on canvas and single-channel video, ***Birth of a Content***, show his aversion to politics. For him, everything around us, including love and hatred, war and peace, education and administration, business, and economy, is just content, and there would be a world in the future revolutionised by content. Those five days of internet shutdown in July prompted Palash Bhattacharjee to create a tiny journal with pieces from a newspaper, accompanied by a video. This piece is called ***The Days of Log Out***. His ***Broken Glass*** speaks the story of his experience during a halted cultural gathering.

It requires immense strength to be an artist. To be able to represent sensitive issues thoughtfully is a skill that requires years of patience, practice, and honesty, and these virtues are vividly present in all the artworks in ***Body and the Map***.

Inaugurated on November 15, Bengal Shilpalay will run this open-to-all exhibition till December 28.

NEWS

WI hammer Tigers in Antigua Test

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had overnight batter Hasan Mahmud (0 off 12) edge one back to the wicketkeeper in just the second over before following it up soon by trapping in front Jaker Ali (31 off 58), the only recognised batter left.

Joseph welcomed the last batter Shoriful Islam (1 off 4) with a bouncer that hit the right-hander on his shoulder, eventually rendering him unable to continue batting as he had to go off as retired hurt in the following over—ending the Tigers' misery.

"That 140 run partnership, I think that was the turning point," Mehedi Hasan Miraz, Bangladesh's stand-in skipper in place of injured Najmul

Hossain Shanto, pointed out the record eighth-wicket stand between Kemar Roach and Justin Greaves in the first innings as the game changer.

Roach and Greaves' stand—now the highest ever for the wicket in Tests against Bangladesh—helped the Windies pile up a mammoth 450/9d in the first innings from the depths of 261 for seven.

Miraz, meanwhile, credited the pacers' efforts that gave the Tigers a glimmer of hope by bundling the hosts out for just 152 in the second innings, leaving the visitors to score 334 to win the contest.

"I think we bowled well. Taskin got

six wickets. We have good pacers in our attack, they bowl really well. In these conditions, we have some good spinners as well," Miraz added.

However, at the end of the day, as it so often happens, it was the batters' failure that made the Tigers pay in yet another match. None of the Bangladesh batters were able to get to a century in the game while a shaky 45 run knock from skipper Miraz remained the highest in the second innings.

"In this Test, we didn't bat well in both the innings. We'll see how to get better," Miraz hoped to get things in order for the second and final Test, beginning from November 30 in Jamaica.

Israel, Hezbollah

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evacuation warning yet, telling civilians to leave 20 locations.

Lebanon reported three deaths in the Israeli strikes. The Iran-backed Hezbollah has kept up rocket fire into Israel.

The UN rights chief voiced concern about the escalation of bloodshed in Lebanon and his office said nearly 100 people had been reported killed by Israeli airstrikes in recent days, including women, children and medics.

Israel's security cabinet under Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was due to start meeting at 1400 GMT for up to three hours to discuss the ceasefire deal, which a senior Israeli official said was likely to be approved.

Nationwide BBS survey

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formulate recommendations through discussions based on the proposals we receive from different stakeholders."

Prof Riaz expressed optimism about the commission submitting the recommendations within the specified timeframe.

Clarifying the commission's role, he said, "The Constitution Reform Commission's duty is to submit recommendations to the interim government. The commission began its journey on October 6. We are hopeful of working until January 5, although it is being suggested that the time might end by December 30."

He emphasised, "The constitution is not solely about elections. We will prepare recommendations based on the opinions received regarding elections in the constitution. However, specifics such as when the election will be held and the process for conducting it are matters for the government to decide, not the commission."

Referring to the commission's website, which has received over 50,000 opinions, Prof Riaz added, "We are continuing discussions with stakeholders. We'll also consult more organisations and prominent individuals."

Statement of India goes against spirit

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Sammilita Sanatani Jagaran Jote, in Dhaka on Monday on charges of disrespecting Bangladesh's national flag in Chattogram's New Market area during a rally of the Hindu community on October 25.

Earlier yesterday, Indian Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) issued a statement, expressing concern over Chinmoy's arrest and denial of bail.

It said the MEA has noted with deep concern the arrest and denial of bail to Chinmoy, which follows "multiple attacks on Hindus and other minorities by extremist elements" in Bangladesh.

According to the statement, there are several documented cases of arson and looting of minorities' homes and business establishments, as well as theft and vandalism and desecration of deities and temples.

"It is unfortunate that while the perpetrators of these incidents remain at large, charges should be pressed against a religious leader presenting

legitimate demands through peaceful gatherings."

The MEA said India notes with concern the attacks on minorities protesting peacefully against the arrest of Chinmoy, and urged the Bangladesh authorities to ensure the safety and security of Hindus and all minorities, and their right of freedom of peaceful assembly and expression.

The Bangladesh foreign ministry said the government took note of the MEA statement on a matter concerning the country's internal affairs.

"[It [MEA statement] also completely disregards that the Government of Bangladesh is determined to conclusively end the culture of impunity to the perpetrators of gross human rights violations against the people of Bangladesh, thus treating the religious majority and minorities alike."

It said Bangladesh reaffirms in the strongest terms that every Bangladeshi, regardless of his or her religious identity, has the right to establish, maintain or

perform respective religious rituals and practices or express views without hindrance.

"Ensuring safety and security of all citizens, particularly the members of religious minorities remains a duty of the Government of Bangladesh. This was yet again vindicated by the peaceful observance of Durga Puja throughout Bangladesh only last month."

The Bangladesh government reiterated that the country's judiciary is fully independent and it does not interfere in the work of the judiciary. The matter under question is at present being dealt with by the court of law.

It is also committed to upholding communal harmony in the country, the foreign ministry said.

Expressing deep concern over the brutal killing of lawyer Saiful Islam Alif yesterday afternoon in Chattogram, the ministry said the authorities have stepped up security in the port city to ensure that religious harmony is maintained at any cost.

Members split over ex-Shibir leader joining

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Zonaed, a former student of Women and Gender Studies department of DU, led the DU unit's activities underground in 2019. He was one of the secretariat members of Shibir's central committee before he joined the Nagorik committee, said a source.

Samantha Sharmin, spokesperson for the Nagorik committee, said, "No one has been included because of their post or position in any other parties. All are equal here and have been incorporated for their contributions in anti-fascist movement."

She denied that there were any divisions among the members on the inclusion of any particular person.

"The decision of the extension was unanimous," she said, adding that it was not the time for divisions and that they wanted to include all anti-fascist groups.

There is no denying that Shibir men played an important role during the anti-fascist movement, she said.

She, however, said the Nagorik committee has a stance that Jamaat-

Shibir as parties must make it abundantly clear their role in 1971 if they want to be in politics henceforth.

"People are only being included in our committee after they have resigned from their previous party posts," she added.

She said they included all sorts of people in the extended committee irrespective of their ideologies, including people from Chattra Dal, Chattra Shibir, Chattra Federation, Chattra Union, independent candidates of the 2019 election to Dhaka University Central Students' Union, journalists, female representatives, and indigenous communities.

Insiders said Zonaed played a key role in the quota reforms protest from behind the scenes. He was one of those who joined Prof' Muhammad Yunus' swearing in ceremony.

Contacted, Zonaed said he left Shibir in 2020 and joined a research firm.

"We had contacts with key organisers of the quota reforms protest in July and I joined in person when it turned into an

anti-government protest," he said.

About conducting underground politics during the Awami League regime, he said they were forced to do so as the then government created an atmosphere of fear by putting their leaders behind bars and torturing them out of vengeance.

The extended Nagorik committee now has 107 members and around 8-10 of them are former Shibir leaders.

Most of the people included in the committee on Monday were known faces.

Sarjis Alam was one of the faces of the Anti-Discrimination Student Movement; Sk Tasnim Afroz Emi is a former vice-president of DU's Shamsunnahar Hall union; Umme Habiba Benojir is a former Chattra Federation president of DU unit; Aurore Semonti Khan is a former independent VP candidate of DUCSU; Mir Arshadul Hoque is a former VP of Dhaka University Journalists' Association; Debashish Chakrabarty is an artist; and Syeda Nilima Dola is a cultural activist.

Vested group out to destabilise

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urge everyone to refrain from such self-destructive activities. Please support efforts to institutionalise democracy," he said.

The BNP believes that the government has failed to control the recent protests in the capital.

Party leaders said an electoral roadmap could have prevented the deterioration in law and order. They warned that delaying the announcement of the roadmap would only worsen the situation.

Wishing anonymity, a senior BNP leader said, "Despite concerns over conspiracies and potential violence, the government did not take strong measures, leading to a crisis."

A BNP standing committee member said targeting the offices of media

outlets is unacceptable.

"While differences of opinion are natural, harassing media outlets in such a way is truly embarrassing,"

He also pointed out that seeing things from only one perspective is risky, suggesting that a vested quarter was trying to portray Bangladesh as a "radical" nation.

"This is a dangerous game. The BNP believes in liberalism and we are really worried about it."

Fakhru yesterday said a dreadful activity is going on—attack on the press, attack on freedom of expression.

"We need to have patience. This is an interim government, and it cannot achieve everything all at once. We are not against reforms, but challenges like these cannot be addressed without

elections."

He said that seeing the current situation in the country, many are feeling a little worried.

"You [people] must understand that our enemies, who have left the forefront, are now trying to destabilise the country from behind the scene. We need to remain extremely vigilant for this."

In another development, the BNP has decided to form grassroots committees, from union to district levels, within 90 days, party leaders said.

Organisational teams have been tasked with overseeing the formation of the committees.

The BNP has made the move to revitalise the party by picking dedicated leaders who are capable of leading the organisation effectively.

Seven killed as train hits auto-rickshaw

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to Comilla Medical College Hospital, said Mostafa Kamal, sub-inspector of Cumilla Railway Police Outpost.

Locals and witnesses said the autorickshaw was heading towards Fakirbazar from Bakshimul village. It was hit by the train just as it got onto the rail tracks in Kalikapur, where the level crossing had no barriers or a guard.

After the collision, the train dragged the mangled autorickshaw for about

1.5km from Kalikapur towards Razapur railway station, said police.

ABM Kamruzzaman, divisional railway manager of Chattogram, confirmed that the rail crossing where the incident took place was unauthorised.

He said his department was not responsible for appointing guards or setting up barriers at unauthorised level crossings.

When asked how there was an illegal level crossing at the spot, he said it

could have been set up by another government agency.

When asked who is in charge of hiring a guard to protect such an unauthorised level crossing, the railway officer did not make a comment.

Burichang Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) Shahida Akter could not be reached for a comment.

According to Bangladesh Railway data as of August 2022, there were 3,111 level crossings in the country. Of those, 1,225 were unauthorised.