



VISUAL ART EXHIBITION

‘Kromosho’: Munem Wasif’s artistic homecoming at Bengal Shilpalay

From a critical perspective, Old Dhaka is the most unlivable part of the city and a testament to our greed and collective amnesia. Yet, strangely, this part of the city also has a “life,” which is inexplicable.

SHAHBAZ NAHIAN

Around the mid-2000s, a young Munem Wasif, with his rickety Soviet-era Zenit camera, found himself indulging in the allures of the older parts of Dhaka. Infinite lived experiences and thousands of shutter counts later, his magnum opus, *Belonging*, came to life in 2012. Little did he know that the photo book would become one of the most revered photographic bodies of work in Bangladesh’s visual art history.

Since then, much has flown through Buriganga’s black water park, and Wasif’s artistic practice evolved and branched out. From *Seeds Shall Set Us Free* to *Collapse*, he chiselled himself into one of the finest from this part of the world. More importantly, his love affair with Old Dhaka never ceased after *Belonging*.

After almost 16 years of his journey with visual arts, Munem Wasif is currently hosting a solo exhibition in Dhaka. Titled *Kromosho*, the ongoing exhibition at Bengal Shilpalay witnessed a house full opening day last Friday. Notably, photographer-activist Shahidul Alam and architectural historian-urbanist Kazi Khaleed Ashraf, among others, graced the inauguration. Moreover, Tanzim Wahab is credited as the exhibition’s curatorial adviser, with Iftekhar Hassan as project assistant, and Dehsar Works on architectural design. The open for all event is scheduled to run until May 31.

When inquired about *Kromosho*, Munem Wasif expressed, “I felt something was missing after the publication of *Belonging*. I figured that perhaps I only captured the outer shell, the people, and their festivities. I failed to touch the soul of their day-to-day life. That is when I first



Kazi Khaleed Ashraf, Shahidul Alam, Luva Nahid Choudhury, and Munem Wasif (from left to right) spoke during the opening ceremony.

PHOTOS: THABIT AL BASHAR

thought of producing my film *Kheyal*... This exhibition bears witness to my transformation over more than a decade.”

*Kromosho* is predominantly arranged in three phases, showcasing a blend of photography, film, and sculpture that revolves around Wasif’s exploration of Old Dhaka. From the ethereal black-and-white images of his *Belonging* era, juxtaposed with newly shot colour images in *Stereo*, to the screening of *Kheyal*, and the installations featured in *Shamanno* and *Paper Negative*—the exhibition offers a vast collection of moments spanning past, present, and future: some recorded, some

staged, and others entirely imagined.

From a critical perspective, Old Dhaka is the most unlivable part of the city and a testament to our greed and collective amnesia. Yet, strangely, this part of the city also has a “life,” which is inexplicable. If you learn to perceive far beyond the clichés and breathe the true air of its alleys, this part of the city will engulf and take you to an addictive space that cannot be captured through cameras or words.

However, Munem Wasif’s *Kromosho*, which translates to “gradually” in Bangla, becomes more than just another psychological journal of an artist. Perhaps it is trying to remind us to introspect.

Sabina Yasmin to grace Toronto stage for Bangladesh Festival



Sabina Yasmin is all ready to return to the stage at the eighth Bangladesh Festival, scheduled for May 17, at the Toronto International Pavilion. Organised by Weekly Bangla Mail, the festival marks her first international performance after recovering from a health setback.

In a video message, Yasmin invited her fans to the event, saying, “On May 17, I hope to see you all. We’ll talk, share stories, and, of course, there will be music.”

Joining Yasmin on stage will be other notable Bangladeshi artistes, including Mosharraf Karim, Robena Reza Jui, and Tanzika Amin.



Actors Equity gets new leaders

Actors Equity Bangladesh has elected new leadership for a three year term. Azad Abul Kalam won the presidency with 310 votes, defeating Abdullah Rana, while Rashed Mamun Apu became general secretary with 367 votes, beating Shahed Sharif Khan.

The results were announced last Saturday evening by Naresh Bhuiyan and Faruque Ahmed, in the presence of Chief Election Commissioner Khairul Alam Shabuj.

The newly elected members of the new committee are Azizul Hakim, Shams Sumon, and Iqbal Babu (Vice Presidents); Rajib Saleheen and Sujat Shimul (Joint General Secretaries); Masud Rana Mithu (Organising Secretary); MA Salam Sumon (Event Secretary); Suchona Sikdar (Legal and Welfare Affairs Secretary); Mukul Siraj (Publicity and Publications Secretary); and RA Rahul (Information and Technology Secretary).

Additionally, Muhammad Nur-e-Alam (Finance Secretary) and Masud Alam Tanvir (Office Secretary) were elected unopposed.

NEWS

Chaos over cuffs at ICT

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former prime minister’s advisers Salman F Rahman and Tawfiq-e-Elahi Chowdhury, former justice Shamsuddin Chowdhury Manik, former home secretary Jahangir Alam, and former lawmaker Mohammad Solaiman Salim.

Our correspondent saw at least two of them in handcuffs.

According to police, the accused, after being disembarked from the prison van in cuffs and taken to a lock-up room on the court premises, held a meeting. Forcibly retired Maj Gen Ziaul Ahsan threw his helmet in anger, while several others were visibly enraged.

Taking the defence lawyer’s objection into consideration, the tribunal’s chairman, Justice Md Golam Mortuza Mozumder, immediately summoned the police officer responsible and demanded an explanation.

Two officers told the tribunal that they had been instructed by the Police Headquarters to keep the accused “disciplined and silent” while being transported.

Unconvinced, the tribunal chair asked, “Why were they brought into the courtroom in handcuffs?”

One police officer alleged that an accused had threatened to “look into them”, while another accused said his family would do the same.

At this, the accused in the dock protested in unison: “No! No! No!”

Former minister Qamrul Islam appeared agitated and shouted, “This is not true. None of that was said!”

The tribunal chair intervened and said, “You are former ministers and leaders. Please behave accordingly. If there is any breach of discipline, the police will take appropriate action in the interest of security. But they mustn’t be excessive.”

ICT Chief Prosecutor Tajul Islam said that, due to a shortage of keys to the cuffs and the rushed transfer, there had been a delay in removing all the handcuffs, which led to some of the accused still being cuffed when presented before the court.

He also claimed that some of them had hurled insults such as “Rajakarer bachcha (offspring of Razakars)” in the lock-up room.

At that, tribunal member Justice Md Shohil Alam Mahmood said no such phrase should be uttered on court premises.

Defence lawyer Mustafizur sought a hearing on the use of handcuffs and shackles, referencing relevant provisions of the jail code. The tribunal scheduled Tuesday (tomorrow) for the hearing.

On July 3, 2018, the High Court directed the police to remain cautious so that they do not misuse handcuffs on detained people. Lawyers told The Daily Star at the time that the HC order means police cannot put handcuffs on any detained person at places where there is no possibility of their escape.

During the proceedings, former minister Shahjahan Khan sought permission to speak. He refuted the police officer’s claims: “What has been said here is not true.”

Clad in a white panjabi and pyjama, he said, “I was handcuffed from behind when inside the van and outside. I’m a freedom fighter. My father and we six brothers fought in the Liberation War under the leadership of Amir Hossain Amu. So did Rashed Khan Menon and Tawfiq-e-Elahi Chowdhury. We liberated this country. We deserve dignity.”

“I asked the police whether handcuffs were necessary for such a short distance [from jail to court]. They said it was a court order. I don’t know if that is true.”

Chief Prosecutor Tajul stated that Ziaul’s act of throwing his helmet posed a security risk, adding that all the accused were treated as per protocol.

Shahjahan also objected to Tajul allegedly calling him a “former Awami League leader”, saying that the Awami League is not a banned party and thus he is not a “former” leader.

Later, Shahjahan Khan said, “We didn’t handcuff the Razakars. Why are we being handcuffed? This is shameful.”

Of the 19 accused, Lt Col (retd) Faruk Khan, visibly exhausted, was walking with a cane while being escorted by police. Salman F Rahman entered with his head lowered, while Kamal Ahmed Majumder stumbled, appearing frail.

Meanwhile, the tribunal extended the deadline for the investigation of a case filed against former minister and Awami League general secretary Obaidul Quader and 44 others, including those who were in court yesterday. The new deadline is July 20.

Bangladesh, China

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Bangladesh Investment Development Authority Executive Chairman Chowdhury Ashik Mahmud Bin Harun said preparations are underway and, once completed, the zones will be handed over to developers to begin implementation.

Both sides reaffirmed their commitment to launching a long-term 50-year master plan on water management, including work on the Teesta River system.

They also discussed a plan to procure four new vessels from China, with the Chinese side assuring that the process would be completed by June this year.

The Chinese ambassador further stated that China’s commerce minister will visit Bangladesh soon, accompanied by a 100-member delegation of investors aiming to explore new investment opportunities.

“We will organise a mini-investment

summit focused on Chinese investors to strengthen sector-specific collaboration,” said Ashik.

Healthcare cooperation featured prominently in the discussions.

The Chinese side reaffirmed their commitment to building a 1,000-bed hospital in Bangladesh, as initially proposed during the China visit. They also highlighted ongoing support for the establishment of a specialised burn unit in Chattogram.

Chinese Ambassador Yao Wen said progress is being made to launch a direct Kunming–Chattogram flight, and efforts are underway to expedite medical visas for Bangladeshi patients.

The chief adviser stressed the importance of cultural exchange, proposing the establishment of a Chinese Cultural Centre and Language Institute to enable young Bangladeshis to engage more closely with Chinese

language and culture.

Yunus also raised the possibility of expanding jute exports to China and urged greater Chinese investment in the locomotive sector. He proposed setting up locomotive manufacturing and maintenance hubs in both Chattogram and Saidpur, alongside capacity-building workshops and training programmes.

Agricultural trade was another area of progress. Bangladesh will begin exporting mangoes to China this season, with jackfruit exports scheduled for next year. “I’ll send a basket of fresh mangoes to President Xi myself,” said Yunus.

The meeting was also attended by Foreign Adviser Md Touhid Hossain, National Security Adviser Dr Khaliur Rahman, BIDA chairman Ashik Mahmud Bin Harun, special assistant Faiz Taieb, cabinet secretary Siraz Uddin Miah, and SDGs affairs principal coordinator Lamiya Morshed.

Freeze 70 accounts

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On December 26 last year, the ACC filed three cases against Nasrul Hamid, his wife Seema Hamid, and his son Zarif Hamid for allegedly amassing illegal assets.

In the cases, Nasrul faces charges for acquiring Tk 36.37 crore in illegal assets, while Zarif and Seema are accused of unlawfully holding Tk 20.87 crore and Tk 6.94 crore, respectively. The investigation revealed that Zarif operated 13 bank accounts where Tk 7.84 crore had been deposited, with Tk 5.82 crore withdrawn. Seema, meanwhile, maintained 20 accounts, which saw deposits of Tk 12.78 crore and withdrawals of Tk 11.18 crore.

Shortly after the fall of the Awami League government, law enforcement agencies raided a Banani property owned by Nasrul. The operation yielded Tk 1 crore in cash, a firearm, and 50 rounds of ammunition, fuelling further allegations of financial impropriety.

One lands in jail

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unidentified people the same day.

In primary investigation, police found the involvement of the five and arrested them on Saturday night. During interrogation, they confessed to the offence, said the OC.

The five suspects were produced before the Judicial Magistrate’s Court in Pabna yesterday. They made confessional statements, the police officer added.

Air freight capacity to increase

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was cost.

While sending a kilogram of apparel from HSIA to Europe typically costs \$2.90-\$3.20 during off-peak periods (and up to \$4.50 in peak season), shipping through India costs about \$2.60 per kg, even after accounting for overland transport to Indian airports.

Major international buyers like Inditex (Zara’s parent company), which maintains a distribution hub in Delhi, preferred the route for speed and efficiency.

Local suppliers relied on it to shorten lead times and optimise delivery schedules.

By contrast, exporters have long complained about bottlenecks at HSIA.

The airport’s cargo village has a maximum capacity of 300 tonnes, but it handles more than 800 tonnes daily even in the off-season, and up to 1,200 tonnes during peak periods.

Ground handling inefficiencies and mismanagement have plagued the Dhaka airport for years. Often, shipments are left exposed to the elements.

Another sticking point is the ground handling fees.

Dhaka charges 29 cents per kilogram compared with just five cents at Delhi airport.

Combined with slower service and a lack of modern equipment, these high costs have driven exporters to seek alternatives abroad.

Both CAAB and Biman are working to revise the current civil aviation and

ground-handling tariffs to make air cargo more cost-effective, said CAAB Chairman Md Monjur Kabir Bhuiyan.

The government also plans to form a task force led by the ministry of civil aviation and tourism, comprising all relevant stakeholders, to streamline and reduce charges associated with cargo operations.

“We have been instructed at the highest level to ensure air cargo operations remain functional regardless of external disruptions. We expect to announce reduced handling charges very soon.”

To address the crisis, CAAB has already deployed additional manpower at HSIA’s cargo terminal.

Moreover, full-scale cargo operations at Sylhet Osmani International Airport will begin on April 27, with Chattogram to follow shortly. The authorities are also working to speed up customs clearance.

“Our existing infrastructure will soon be capable of handling two to three times more cargo ahead of the opening of HSIA’s third terminal,” Bhuiyan said, noting that Sylhet’s modern cargo terminal has substantial capacity.

Biman is hiring 400 additional ground handlers to support its current team of over 700 at HSIA, said its director of cargo Shakil Mirza.

It is also preparing to provide ground-handling services in Sylhet, where Galistair Aviation’s Airbus A330-300 freighter is scheduled to

Polls must be held by Dec

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national stability, the election must be held by December.”

He added that since political parties already submitted written reform proposals to the National Consensus Commission, it is certainly possible to finalise a “July Charter” based on the agreed issues and proceed to election by December.

The BNP yesterday also held its first round of informal talks with leaders of the Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB) and the Bangladesh Samajtantrik Dal (BSD), as part of its efforts to forge an all-party consensus on holding the next parliamentary election by December.

“We believe the election must be held before December. Any delay will only deepen the crisis,” CPB General Secretary Rubin Hossain Prince told this newspaper.

transport 60 tonnes of garment items to Spain on April 27.

Ground-handling equipment has been transferred to Sylhet and is ready for the inaugural operation, he said.

Once HSIA’s third terminal becomes operational by the end of this year, it will significantly boost Bangladesh’s export competitiveness.

There is renewed optimism surrounding the new terminal, which industry leaders say is equipped with modern scanning, testing, and temperature-controlled facilities.

“The third terminal is the finest – it’s just like the airport in Singapore,” said Kabir Ahmed, president of the Bangladesh Freight Forwarders Association.

Biman’s cargo handling capacity will double with the launch of the new terminal, said Bushra Islam, its general manager for Public Relations.

Currently, Terminals 1 and 2 have a combined export cargo space of 19,600 square metres and can handle 200,000 tonnes annually.

The third terminal will offer 36,000 square metres of space and a handling capacity of 546,000 tonnes per year.

At present, about 16 to 17 percent of HSIA’s annual 175,000-tonne cargo volume is carried by Biman’s passenger flights.

Major international airlines including Emirates, Cathay Pacific, Qatar Airways, Turkish Airlines, and Ethiopian Airlines currently operate dedicated cargo flights from Dhaka’s HSIA.