



DOLILE DRISHYAPOT

A celebration of Bangla calligraphy

TASMIAH RAHMAN

Imagine entering a gallery filled with canvases, where sepia-toned papers with brittle edges and faded ink burst into life with vibrant colours and witty catchphrases from ancient Bengal. On his 20th solo exhibition — the versatile artist Arham-ul-Huq Chowdhury presents one such immersive show titled “Decorated Deeds: Bangla Calligraphy on Antique Documents” (Dolile Drishyapot).

The ongoing exhibition is being hosted at La Galerie of Alliance Française de Dhaka in the capital's Dhanmondi. The event was inaugurated on 14 April to welcome the Bangla New Year. It features 31 artworks as Chowdhury breathes new life into worn-out administrative paperwork with a unique blend of our linguistic



heritage, refreshing colours, and old-school aesthetics.

“Some of the papers are over 150 years old,” commented Chowdhury, the calligraphy artist, sculptor, landscape and interior designer who also works with heritage and environmental issues. “Many of them date back to the East India Company era (early to mid-

1800s), the British colonial period, and the Pakistan era.”

According to the freelance researcher, even though the original purpose of these papers has long been served, they still have lots to say. “Every piece is a conversation between the past and the present, telling stories that might otherwise fade.”

One of the fascinating aspects of this show is the revival of Bengali proverbs.

We all grew up hearing sayings like: “Lekhapora kore je gaari-ghora chore shey” (He who studies rides cars and horses), “Bel pakle kaaker ki” (What matters to the crow if the wood apple is ripe), “Dhar kore haati kena” (Buying elephant with borrowed money), etc. For this show, Chowdhury drew inspiration from these sayings and attempted to render the essence of the phrases with acrylic on paper.

Artistic portrayals of gods and goddesses, sacred trees, and boats,

fierce Bengal Tigers, royal horses, and majestic elephants — vivid storytelling is at the core of Decorated Deeds. Visitors were spotted interpreting the meaning of the idioms while wondering which era the old documents belonged to!

“One of my favourite pieces is ‘Paaperdhon shape khay’ (Evil earning is eaten by snakes),” remarked Ajanta, a visitor at the gallery. “I think the lesson here is timeless,” she added with a smile.

Common expressions we use in our day-to-day lives, such as “Laat Shaheb,” “Bheja Biral,” or “Koler Putul,” came alive with Chowdhury’s skilled brushstrokes. Reflecting on his inspiration behind bringing back these sayings, the artist stressed that these phrases and idioms speak to the core of human nature.

“Bengali language is rich with philosophy, metaphor, and lived

experience. Often wrapped in humour, satire, or poetic imagery, their truths remain startlingly suitable in today’s fast-paced, digital world,” he observed.

Prapti, another visitor, admired the creative resurrection of the century-old bureaucratic papers as one-of-a-kind canvases. “The stylish calligraphy and playful messages make this show stand out,” she mentioned.

After almost three decades of practising as a calligraphy artist, Arham-ul-Huq Chowdhury’s approach in Bangla calligraphy is a blend of classical form and experimental design, taking a cue from the Persian Islamic “tughra.”

This exhibition is, in his words — a tribute to our collective memory and a reminder to value what we inherit. So, if you are in the mood for retro vibes and colourful wordplay, drop in anytime from 3:00pm to 9:00pm. The exhibition concludes on April 26.

5 CU students freed a week after abduction

UNB, Khagrachhari

Five students of Chittagong University (CU), who were abducted a week ago, have been released, according to a statement issued by the Pahari Chhatra Parishad (PCP), an organisation representing students of ethnic communities.

Although the five students from various ethnic communities were reportedly freed on Wednesday, the matter came to light yesterday after PCP issued a statement confirming their release.

The five students, who had gone missing from the Giriful area in Khagrachhari on April 16 while returning home after celebrating the Biju festival, are now staying at their respective village homes, said police.

“PCP has issued a statement confirming the safe return of their students. We’ve also contacted the students’ families, and they too have confirmed that the abductees have returned home,” Khagrachhari Superintendent of Police Arefin Jewel told UNB.

The five abducted students are Rishon Chakma, a student of international relations; Maitrimoy Chakma and Aldrin Tripura, both students of fine arts; Dibby Chakma of the theatre department; and Longi Mro from the zoology department.

All of them are first-year students enrolled in the 2023-24 academic session at Chittagong University.

They were abducted along with an auto-rickshaw driver who was later released.

Following the abduction, the PCP — aligned with the Parbatya Chattogram Jana Samhati Samiti (PCJSS) — accused the United People’s Democratic Front (UPDF) of being behind the incident.

However, Angya Marma, a district organiser of the UPDF, repeatedly denied the allegations, claiming their group had no involvement.

South Korea prosecutors indict ex-president over bribery

REUTERS, Seoul

South Korean prosecutors indicted former president Moon Jae-in for alleged bribery on Thursday, making him the latest former leader of the country to face legal troubles in a case linked to the appointment of his then son-in-law at a Thai airline.

Moon, 72, was indicted for bribery, while in the same case former lawmaker Lee Sang-jik was indicted for bribery and breach of trust, Jeonju District Prosecutors’ Office said in a statement.

Prosecutors had been investigating whether Lee’s appointment as the head of the SMEs and Startups Agency was in exchange for Moon’s former son-in-law getting a job and receiving a salary plus living expenses at the Thai-based corporation that Lee controlled in 2018-2020, the statement said.

Qatar will help rebuild Bangladesh

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investment support for building a new Bangladesh, including creating new opportunities and a prosperous future for the country’s nearly 180 million people, notably its young population.

“We need your support to build the country of the dreams of our youth,” Yunus said.

The Qatari prime minister also urged the Bangladeshi leader to send a technical team to Qatar to hold discussions on a wide range of cooperation.

The discussion also centred on the Rohingya crisis, with the chief adviser calling for all possible support “to make sure Rohingya people can return home with dignity.”

Yunus also thanked the Qatari premier for helping organise a high-level dialogue on the Rohingya crisis on the sidelines of the Earth Summit.

The Qatari PM appreciated Bangladesh’s role in hosting more than one million Rohingya refugees in the country.

He called for mobilising more international support to resolve the crisis and reiterated the continued support of Qatar for the Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh and a sustainable resolution of the issue.

The two leaders also discussed the Gaza situation. Prof Yunus expressed his regret that much of the world is still silent over the plight of the Gazans.

The chief adviser also thanked Al Jazeera, which he visited yesterday, for covering the Gaza crisis despite enormous challenges.

The CA sought Qatari support for Bangladesh’s female sports athletes, including providing training and building facilities for them.

He invited the premier to visit Bangladesh at a convenient time—a request gladly accepted by Sheikh Mohammed.

While delivering a speech at Qatar University, Yunus yesterday said the current generation is the most powerful in all of human history.

“I remind the young people, the most powerful generation in the entire human history. I repeat, you are the most powerful generation in the entire human history.”



Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus meets Qatar Prime Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al Thani at the latter’s office in Doha, Qatar yesterday.

PHOTO: PID

In his speech, Yunus encouraged the young people to dream big, saying the youth of this generation can do anything faster than any other generation ever.

At the beginning of the programme, Prof Yunus was given an honorary award for his outstanding contributions to global humanity, reports BSS.

During an interaction with the Bangladeshi community members at a hotel, Yunus yesterday said the expatriates are helping Bangladesh become stronger by overcoming the challenges and helping the economy to bounce back.

“You are extending big support to make our position stronger.”

He assured the expatriates that he would address their issues, making their path easier and ensuring due respect. The CA listened to the expatriates as they put forward some proposals, including enhanced incentives for the remittance senders, reports UNB.

Yunus is likely to fly to Vatican City today to attend Pope Francis’ funeral on Saturday.

On Wednesday, Yunus held a closed-door meeting with several prominent foreign investors in Doha, aiming to attract investment in some of the country’s key sectors.

The gathering included notable

figures such as a former deputy prime minister of the Maldives, a member of the Malaysian royal family, a former Malaysian minister, a Qatari royal family member, top bankers, and several wealthy non-resident Bangladeshis.

Addressing the investors, the chief adviser said that the interim government aims to transform Bangladesh into a manufacturing and economic hub, welcoming all forms of foreign investment.

“We want to be a top manufacturing country in the world,” he stated, emphasising that his government is offering one of the most attractive investment climates in the region.

The investors expressed interest in exploring opportunities in sectors such as manufacturing, waste management, energy, banking, and tourism, particularly in the resort district of Cox’s Bazar.

On the same day, Yunus urged Qatari investors to invest in Bangladesh to take advantage of the immense potential that the country offers.

“Bangladesh is now back to business and back to business in a big way. We want your partnership,” the chief adviser said in his speech in a programme titled “Bilateral Investment Opportunities Between Qatar and Bangladesh”.

Kuet VC to be relieved of duties

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read out an official message from the education ministry about the process of relieving the VC and pro-VC of their duties.

The student movement began following a clash between two groups on campus on February 18. According to the protesters, members of a student body, along with outsiders, attacked students.

Although a case was filed, it lacked specific details, and no arrests have been made.

A counter-complaint filed by an

outsider named 22 students with specific information, including names, departments, and roll numbers. The protesters claim such information could only have been accessed through administrative support.

Following the incident, the university temporarily suspended 37 students.

In the aftermath, students raised a six-point demand, including the resignation of the VC, pro-VC, and the director of Student Welfare, and also called for a ban on student politics in the university.

Meanwhile, the Teachers’ Association

of Kuet yesterday stated that the decision to relieve the VC and pro-VC without a proper investigation was a defeat for justice.

In a statement, Prof Md Shahidul Islam, president of the Teachers’ Association, and Prof Faruk Hossain, general secretary, expressed their concern over the developments.

“We had hoped for a politically neutral campus. But now we see that those who once advocated for such a campus have themselves fallen prey to dark political forces,” the statement read.

India-Pakistan tensions soar

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South Asian visas issued to Indian nationals.

Islamabad will also exercise the right to hold all bilateral accords with India, including the 1972 Simla Agreement, in abeyance until New Delhi desists from “fomenting terrorism inside Pakistan”, Pakistan’s Prime Minister’s Office said in a statement.

The Simla Agreement lays down principles meant to govern bilateral relations, including respect for a ceasefire line in Kashmir.

The announcement from the Pakistan Prime Minister’s Office followed a meeting of the National Security Committee.

There was no immediate response from New Delhi to Pakistan’s announcement.

Muslim-majority Kashmir has been at the heart of the animosity between India and Pakistan, with both claiming it in full and ruling it in part. It has been the cause of two of their three wars and also witnessed a bloody insurgency against Indian rule.

Islamabad also said it “vehemently rejects” India’s suspension of the Indus Waters Treaty and said that any attempt to stop or divert water belonging to Pakistan would be considered an “act of war and responded with full force across the complete spectrum of national power.”

The water treaty, mediated by the World Bank, split the Indus River and its tributaries between the neighbours and regulated the sharing of water. Pakistan is heavily dependent on water flowing downstream from this river system from India for its hydropower and irrigation needs.

The suspension of the accord is not expected to have an immediate impact on the flow of water to Pakistan, as

India does not have enough storage capacity. But India’s move could bring uncertainty for Pakistan’s agricultural system. New Delhi will also not be obliged to release a minimum amount of water during the lean season.

Pakistan’s response came hours after Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi vowed to pursue, track and punish the militants who killed the tourists.

It also came after the Indian foreign ministry announced the suspension of all visa services to Pakistanis and revoked visas that had already been issued.

“We will pursue them to the ends of the earth,” Modi said at a rally in Bihar, without referring to the attackers’ identities or naming Pakistan.

“They have made the mistake of attacking the soul of India. I want to say clearly that those who have planned and carried out this attack will be punished beyond their imagination,” Modi said to cheers from the crowd.

The Ministry of External Affairs also strongly advised Indian nationals to avoid travelling to Pakistan, and those Indian nationals currently in Pakistan are also advised to return to India at the earliest.

It also said medical visas issued to Pakistani nationals will be valid only till 29th April.

Meanwhile, an all-party meeting with opposition parties yesterday adopted a resolution unequivocally condemning the “heinous and inhumane” attack on innocent civilians in Pahalgam, said the meeting’s convener, Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah.

India also briefed envoys of the US, the UK, France, China, Russia, Germany and several other countries on the Pahalgam terror attack and its link to cross-border terrorism, reports our New Delhi correspondent.

US wants Bangladesh’s work

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is heavily tilted towards Bangladesh, which exports goods worth over \$8 billion to the US in a year. Its annual imports of American goods stand around \$2 billion.

A team in Bangladesh has been working on finding ways to reduce the trade gap, the Bangladesh delegation told the USTR officials in the meeting.

For instance, Bangladesh is the second-largest importer of US cotton after China. The trade gap will reduce if Bangladesh imports more cotton from the US.

Apart from cotton, Bangladesh has also been working on ways to increase the import of liquefied natural gas, soybean oil, soy seeds and other goods from the US.

The US delegation acknowledged that the trade gap will not reduce overnight, and it will take more time. However, the US wants to see that Bangladesh has started working on it, and the progress is visible.

The US government will work based on the proposal sent by Bangladesh.

The next discussion will take place as soon as Bangladesh sends its work

plan for reducing the trade gap to the USTR, Golam Mortoza, press minister at the Bangladesh embassy in Washington, DC, told The Daily Star over the phone.

Lutfey Siddiqi, the chief adviser’s special envoy for international affairs, led the Bangladesh delegation in the meeting. It also included Commerce Secretary Mahbubur Rahman, National Board of Revenue Chairman Abdur Rahman Khan and Finance Secretary Md Khairuzzaman Mozumder.