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Brihatta's quiet revolution in Hazaribagh

RBR

Essentially a research-based, artist-run, non-profit organisation, Brihatta Art Foundation has worked in Dhaka for quite some time. With an objective to integrate locals in community development, they have given the people of Hazaribagh greater accessibility to art and culture.

"Literally anyone can walk in to take part in the creative endeavours we offer, from a man who pulls a rickshaw, children of the slums, madrasa children, to a tea vendor," says Bishwajit Goswami, co-founder of Brihatta.

Goswami is a firm believer that art is not for elites to enjoy alone. "Aesthetics," he adds, "have no language or class!"

The Foundation connects diverse voices across borders between artists, craftsmen, local and expat community members, and global practitioners to bring artworks closer to the real world.

"Focused on creating and curating art within the public domain, we offer residencies, exhibitions, and community engagements," Bishwajit Goswami adds.

Currently, the foundation is focused on the exhibition and the book launch

ceremony of their two-year cultural initiative that focuses on the legacy of the Buriganga River.

"Gangaburi: The River Heritage Project" is one of their endeavours that explored the interdependence of the river and this city through artistic interventions, archival research, and community engagement.

Celebrating the relationship between Buriganga and Dhaka, the project has reconnected citizens with the river's ecological, historical, and cultural significance.

With Gangaburi art-based research publication launch on 25 April at Goethe Institut Bangladesh, and an exhibition – "Paal: Moving through memories, myths, & motion" at Brihatta Art Space in Hazaribagh, they celebrate an ongoing relationship and experience of the communities living and working along the Buriganga River in Old Dhaka.

The exhibition – set to run between

April 25 and May 2 – pins a powerful image of the interconnectedness of communities living along the Buriganga, the people, and the ecology in time. At the same time, it gives one a different look at Hazaribagh!

Meaning "A Thousand Gardens", the locality is notorious for its industrial leather manufacturing units and tanneries that have long suffocated the river and the surrounding environment. The stench, the filth, and the tannery waste have made the community almost unliveable, yet in this ruin stands the sprawling green art space.

Brihatta (which means immensity) has a garden of all white flowers, herbs, and other green plants. They have intentionally planted white summer flowers; the garden is filled with the fragrance of jasmine and frangipani. Their crowd puller is the rare Saraswathi Champa, this sweet-scented flower that is in bloom now, attracting visitors from

afar and near, and once there, they get to behold aesthetic pleasure through art in the space.

"Nurture art, literature, and culture from within yourself," is what Goswami preaches. He stays tied to his roots with six words that influence his artworks – Ma (Mother), Mati (earth), Manush (people), Bhasha (Language), Swadesh (Motherland), and Prakriti (Nature) – allowing him to find his fabled garden in the area.

Acclaimed printmaker Julia Lebrao Sendra's words, "...the courage to love a world in decline", left a profound impact on me. I was struck by this half-sentence and was reminded that all is not lost while visiting the Brihatta Art Foundation, housed inside Mukti Tannery 1 at Hazaribagh.

It is true that everywhere you look, Dhaka bleeds decay. My city is a chaotic disaster, an absolute ruin, and shrouded in greed. Then again, within this sinful decadence, I get to witness the finer nuances of Dhaka and the society at large. Some of us still find ways to create beautiful initiatives like Brihatta Art Foundation, and that's a relief!



Civil bureaucracy burdened with top-tier posts

FROM PAGE 1

Defending the government decision, an additional secretary at the public administration ministry said many officials with ranks of deputy secretary, joint secretary and additional secretary are assigned to departments and also given responsibilities of project directors or similar roles outside ministries.

"That is why, in some cases, promotions beyond the approved organogram become necessary," said the official seeking anonymity.

Data shows that several ministries and divisions are currently hosting more officials than sanctioned posts.

For instance, the public administration ministry has eight additional secretaries against just two sanctioned positions.

In the Health Services Division, 11 officials hold the position of additional secretary against only two sanctioned posts. Though the division's administration wing has no sanctioned post of joint secretary, seven officials now hold the position.

FRUSTRATION AMONG OFFICIALS OF OTHER CADRES

Of the 26 cadres in civil service, the administration cadre gets the lion's share of supernumerary promotions. Police, foreign affairs, and tax cadres also get some shares.

Aggrieved officials said the undue favour towards the admin cadre created resentment, prompting officials from 25 cadres to stage protests for fair promotion practices after the July uprising. But the supernumerary promotions in the admin cadre continued.

They alleged that while their demands for regular promotions are being ignored, current and ex-officials of the admin cadre are getting promoted in phases.

Mohammad Omer Faruque, an

information cadre official, said, "The interim administration, much like a political government, is favouring one cadre over others."

"For the benefit of 6,000 admin cadre officials, the government is discriminating against nearly 60,000 from the rest 25 cadres, ignoring their rightful promotions," said Faruque, a coordinator of the aggrieved officials.

Amid growing discontent among officials from various cadres, 765 officials of education cadre were promoted to associate professors on a supernumerary basis in January. Besides, more than 7,000 doctors are likely to be promoted, say ministry sources.

An official from the agriculture cadre said that following the mass uprising, there has been a change in admin cadre officials' attitude towards other cadres.

"They no longer oppose our promotions. They now say, 'go ahead with yours but don't oppose ours,'" the official said on the condition of anonymity.

Terming the long-standing practice "a glaring example of waste of taxpayers' money," a retired official of the information cadre said, "I'm not aware of any other country where bureaucracy operates like this."

"Such practice must end. There cannot be any promotions for a cadre beyond sanctioned posts," said the ex-official seeking anonymity.

Contacted, Mokhles Ur Rahman, senior secretary to the public administration ministry, said, "Promotions at top tiers are made on the basis of the government's policy decisions. I won't comment further on this matter."

Replying to a query from this newspaper at a recent event, Salehuddin Ahmed, finance adviser

and convener of the Advisory Committee on Public Administration Affairs, said, "It was becoming almost impossible to keep people working without promotions. Some even went on hunger strike. We have to keep the system running."

OVER 500 OFFICIALS MADE OSD More than 500 officials, including at least 13 secretaries, have been designated as Officers on Special Duty (OSD) – the highest number in recent times, according to public administration ministry officials with knowledge about the matter.

In civil administration, officials are made OSD for either punitive or administrative reasons such as special assignments or study leave.

The officials, made OSD for punitive reasons, are sidelined and not given any responsibilities. They, however, continue to receive full salaries and benefits.

According to officials at the ministry's Appointment, Promotion, and Deputation Wing, the interim government has so far made 120-130 officials OSD for punitive reasons.

They said the number of such officials was much higher during the tenure of the Awami League government

The majority of the 500 officials were made OSD for administrative reasons, which is not unusual, they added.

Firoz Mia, a civil service expert and former additional secretary, said the officials, who were made OSD over allegations of irregularities and corruption, should be punished through proper investigation.

But the officials, who are not facing such allegations, should be given postings immediately as the public servants are paid with taxpayers' money, he added.

independence or a merger with Pakistan.

Tuesday's assault occurred as tourists enjoyed tranquil mountain views at the popular site at Pahalgam when gunmen burst out of the forests and raked crowds with automatic weapons.

Survivors told Indian media the gunmen targeted men and spared those who could give the Islamic declaration of faith.

Indian security forces have launched a vast manhunt for the attackers, with large numbers of people detained.

The attack has enraged Hindu nationalist groups, and students from Kashmir at institutions across India have reported experiencing harassment and intimidation.

Troops exchange fire along Kashmir border

FROM PAGE 1

India's army confirmed there had been limited firing of small arms that it said had been "initiated by Pakistan", adding it had been "effectively responded to".

Indian security forces yesterday intensifies a massive manhunt for those responsible for the killings on Tuesday – with police naming two Pakistani nationals among the fugitive gunmen.

Armed with Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) and drones, Indian security forces yesterday scoured the dense forests.

The security personnel drawn from army, paramilitary and Jammu and Kashmir police searched the dense jungles of the Pir Panjal range, overlooking Pahalgam and the Jammu-Srinagar national highway.

Indian officials said initial investigations into the attack indicate that the number of terrorists involved could range from five to seven.

At least two local militants aided them, they added.

Meanwhile, authorities in Indian Kashmir demolished the houses of two suspected militants, one a suspect in Tuesday's attack, reported Reuters, quoting an official.

Denying any involvement, Islamabad called attempts to link Pakistan to the Pahalgam attack "frivolous" and vowed to respond to any Indian action.

"Any threat to Pakistan's sovereignty and to the security of its people will be met with firm reciprocal measures in all domains," a statement said, after Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif held a rare National Security Committee with top military chiefs.

Pakistan's Senate yesterday passed a resolution condemning a "campaign by the Indian government to malign the Pakistan government".

"I say to the whole world: India will identify, track and punish every terrorist and their backer," Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi said Thursday.

"We will pursue them to the ends

of the Earth."

UN spokesman Stephane Dujarric told reporters in New York that issues between the countries "can be and should be resolved peacefully through meaningful mutual engagement".

Kashmir has been divided between India and Pakistan since their independence in 1947, with both claiming the territory in full but governing separate portions of it.

Rebel groups have waged an insurgency in Indian-controlled Kashmir since 1989, demanding independence or a merger with Pakistan.

India's air force and navy both carried out military exercises Thursday.

Indian police say the three gunmen are members of the Pakistan-based Lashkar-e-Taiba group, a UN-designated terrorist organisation.

They offered a two-million-rupee (\$23,500) bounty for information leading to each man's arrest.

A day after the attack, New Delhi suspended a water-sharing treaty, announced the closure of the main land border crossing with Pakistan, downgraded diplomatic ties, and withdrew visas for Pakistanis.

In response, Islamabad on Thursday ordered the expulsion of Indian diplomats and military advisers, cancelling visas for Indian nationals – with the exception of Sikh pilgrims – and closing the main border crossing from its side.

Pakistan also warned that any attempt by India to stop the supply of water from the Indus River would be an "act of war."

In reply, India's Water Resources Minister CR Paatil yesterday said New Delhi is working on measures to ensure that "not even a drop" of water goes to Pakistan.

"We will ensure that not a single drop of the Indus river's water reaches Pakistan," he said in a post on X.

India has formally informed Pakistan of its decision to keep the Indus Waters Treaty of 1961 in abeyance with immediate effect.

India's Secretary of Jal Shakti

Make best use of intellectual property, copyrights

Yunus urges countrymen on eve of World Intellectual Property Day

BSS, Dhaka

Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus has urged all to become proactive in ensuring the best use of intellectual property and protecting copyrights so that a prosperous Bangladesh can be built.

"To build a prosperous Bangladesh, everyone must be proactive in making the best use of intellectual property and protecting copyrights," he said in a message yesterday on the eve of World Intellectual Property Day.

"I welcome the initiative to celebrate World Intellectual Property Day 2025 in Bangladesh, like in other countries across the globe."

He added that this year's theme, "IP and Music: Feel the Beat of IP", is very significant for Bangladesh.

Prof Yunus said that the proper implementation of intellectual property laws and policies is necessary to build a strong connection between creativity, innovation, and economic progress in the music industry.

"This will further accelerate the pace of our cultural and economic development through the combination of art and modern technology."

He hoped that everyone would effectively contribute to building a strong innovative culture in the country to strengthen Bangladesh's position in the global creative competition.

2 children drown

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Noakhali

Two children drowned in a pond in Subarnachar upazila of Noakhali yesterday.

They are Pakhi Akhter, 7, daughter of Manu Mia, and Alisha Akhter, 7, daughter of Saifur Rahman Masud of Dakshin Char Clerk village. They were students of Fakir Market Noorani Madrasa.

The incident took place around 2:00pm in the village in Ward 8 of Char Clerk union of the upazila.

Local Union Chairman Abul Basar said the two children were playing in the yard of their house in the afternoon when they fell into the pond near their house and drowned.

"Their guardians searched for them and did not find them initially. Later, they searched the pond and found them."

The girls were taken to a local doctor, who declared both of them dead.

Char Jabbar Police Station Officer-in-Charge Mohammad Shahin Mia also confirmed the matter.

UN urges maximum restraint

FROM PAGE 1

developments we've seen do not deteriorate any further," UN spokesman Stephane Dujarric told reporters in New York on Thursday.

"Any issues between Pakistan and India, we believe, can be and should be resolved peacefully through meaningful mutual engagement".

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday vowed to hunt down the gunmen responsible for killing 26 civilians at the popular tourist site of Pahalgam, after Indian police identified two of the three fugitive gunmen as Pakistani.

"I say to the whole world: India will identify, track and punish every terrorist and their backer," Modi said in his first speech since Tuesday's attack in the Himalayan region.

"We will pursue them to the ends of the Earth."

Denying any involvement, Islamabad called attempts to link Pakistan to the Pahalgam attack "frivolous" and vowed to respond to any Indian action.

"Any threat to Pakistan's sovereignty and to the security of its people will be met with firm reciprocal measures in all domains," a Pakistani statement said after Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif held a rare National Security Committee with top military chiefs.

Kashmir has been divided between India and Pakistan since its independence in 1947, with both claiming the territory in full but governing separate portions of it.

Rebel groups have waged an insurgency in Indian-controlled Kashmir since 1989, demanding

be set up soon to expend gas supply to factories in Bangladesh, the press secretary said.

About the chief adviser's Doha tour, he said it was a very successful and fruitful visit.

"I would say it is one of the most

successful and very engaging visit," he said.

Due to this tour, Alam hoped, the reputation of Bangladesh will spread across the world and many foreign investors will come forward towards investing in Bangladesh.