



BRIHATTA PAAL

Moving through memories, myths and motion

ASHIF AHMED RUDRO

Art studios and exhibitions are great storytellers. We often say that a picture is worth a thousand words. In that sense, any sort of visual art has a lot to say. Brihatta Art Foundation's exhibition, called "Paal", has that same essence.

Paal and Gangaburi

Gangaburi is a river heritage-focused art project that exhibits the rich heritage of the river Buriganga through artistic expressions. This project, named after Kafil Ahmed's song "Gangaburi", is curated and directed by Shehzad Chowdhury and Bishwajit Goswami, respectively. The landmark cultural initiative "Gangaburi" is reaching its conclusion after two years.

The British Council and the EUNIC (European Union National Institutes for Culture) Bangladesh Cluster jointly celebrate the completion of the project, and the project's culmination is being celebrated through a public exhibition at Brihatta Art Space, Hazaribagh, that was exhibited from April 25 to May 2.

"This journey has led me to reflect on the collectiveness amongst us -- where 'us' extends beyond people -- it encompasses the nature, the unseen forces, and elements shaping our existence," said Bishwajit Goswami, project director of Gangaburi.



PHOTO: COURTESY

The exhibition

Goswami said, "it is a symbol of movement, of journeys taken... Land, water, and air -- three fundamental elements of existence -- come together through collaboration on creating the sails, reflecting the delicate balance between survival and spirituality, between nature and human intervention."

And the exhibition is an artistic expression of these words. There are three pieces, but intertwined within each of the pieces there are so many untold stories, and the way they represent our people's relationship with rivers, as well as the fundamental elements of existence, really implores one to look through the art. It's as if watching the pieces lend you a magical

pair of glasses, through which you can visualise the untold stories.

The first sail conceptualises Bhumi (Land). Patches of fabrics sewn together, while forming a visual and tactile representation of Ail (ridges) and furrows of lands, where verses from Khona has been inscribed. Khona-r Bochon as they are known, has been part of our culture for as long as we can remember. The artwork reminds one of our farmlands from a bird's eye view. Perhaps, a more accurate description would be poet Jasimuddin's Nakshi Kanthar Math.

A parallel narrative on Jol (Water) unfurled on the second sail. Verses from folk poetry and music, and verses of the boatmen inscribed by urban traditional artists who reside near the Buriganga, became a part of the composition. Much like the "Gamchha",

which is a woven everyday textile, this piece imbued with profound cultural implications through the weaving acts, where the act of weaving becomes an act of remembrance.

The last sail completes the dialogue by adding air to earth and water. Paban (Air) blends the themes through bold, expressive strokes. The installation of the sail structure, majorly reflected through the painting of Bishwajit Goswami transforms the physical form of the sail to become a vibrant testament to nature's expressions. There is a veil in front of the sail, which captures the fluidity of the river, the motion of the air -- weaving these elements into a visual narrative.

Brihatta itself

Of course, aside from the art pieces, the art space itself deserves its own recognition, given that it's an experience itself. Located in the heart of Hazaribagh, Dhaka, a place well known for tannery industries, an unexpected place for an art foundation, Brihatta uses all that to emphasise the point it is trying to make -- art is for everyone.

Once you are here, you become one of them, and Brihatta becomes yours. "To connect -- with others, nature, and ourselves -- is both an artistic pursuit and a human necessity," said Bishwajit Goswami, who invites everyone to Brihatta.

Maa, Mati, Manush, Bhasha, Swadesh, Prokriti -- these six words are inscribed on wall of the garden. That's right, Brihatta welcomes you with a rooftop garden. To pay tribute to the name of the locality -- Hazaribagh, meaning thousand gardens.

ACC summons Hasina for quizzing today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Anti-Corruption Commission has summoned ousted prime minister Sheikh Hasina for questioning today over allegations of embezzling Tk 812 crore from development projects at three major airports across the country.

Hasina fled to India on August 5 last year amid a mass uprising.

ACC officials said she has been asked to appear at the commission's headquarters in Dhaka at 10:30am.

It also summoned Mahbub Ali, former state minister for civil aviation and tourism, and Mokammel Hossain, ex-civil aviation secretary, for interrogation.

Speaking to journalists yesterday, Akhtarul Islam, ACC deputy director and public relations officer, said letters summoning Hasina were sent to her addresses in Dhanmondi's Sudhasadan and in Tungipara, Gopalganj. The summons was signed by ACC Deputy Director Monirul Islam.

"She has been summoned for questioning over allegations of misappropriating thousands of crores of taka over the past 15 years in the name of airport development. The charges include collusion, fraud, forgery, irregularities, and large-scale corruption," Akhtarul said.

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All prosecution witnesses testify in Magura child rape, murder trial

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jhenaidah

The hearing of prosecution witness testimonies in the case over the rape and murder of a child in Magura's Nijnanduali village ended yesterday after eight working days.

Testimonies of 29 witnesses were recorded by the District Women and Child Repression Prevention Tribunal.

Two doctors from Dhaka Medical College Hospital's forensic department testified on the final day.

The hearing ran from 10:00am to 11:00am.

All the accused, including the prime suspect Hitu Sheikh, were brought to court from Jhenaidah District Jail.

Hitu, the father-in-law of the victim's sister, allegedly raped the child on Mar 6.

She died a week later at the Combined Military Hospital in Dhaka while receiving treatment.

The victim's mother filed the case.

Police submitted the charge sheet on Apr 13, and the court began the trial by framing charges on Apr 23.

Witnesses started testifying on Apr 27.

World urges calm as India strikes Pakistan

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three of its fighter jets had crashed on home territory.

However, the Indian embassy in Beijing called reports of fighter jets downed by Pakistan "disinformation".

At a media briefing in Delhi, India's Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri detailed India's rationale for the attack.

Misri said the Pahalgam terror attack on April 22 that claimed 26 lives aimed to "undermine normalcy returning to Kashmir," making a firm response imperative.

"Our intelligence indicated that further attacks against India are impending. Thus, compulsion, both to deter and prevent and hence earlier this morning, India exercised its right to respond to deter such more cross-border terrorism," he said.

Misri also briefed 13 foreign envoys in New Delhi on the strikes, an Indian source familiar with the developments said.

"India made it clear that if Pakistan responds, India will respond," a source who attended the meeting said.

The largest Indian strike was on an Islamic seminary near the Punjabi city of Bahawalpur, killing 13 people according to the Pakistan military.

A government health and education complex in Muridke, 30 kilometres from Lahore, was blown apart, along with a mosque in Muzaffarabad -- the main city of Pakistan-administered Kashmir -- killing its caretaker.

Four children were among those killed in yesterday's attacks, according to the Pakistan military.

Pakistan also said a hydropower plant in Kashmir was targeted by India, damaging a dam structure, after India threatened to stop the flow of water on its side of the border.

India's Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said the overnight operation was New Delhi's "right to respond" following the Pahalgam attack.

"The targets we had chosen were destroyed with great precision and sensitivity, ensuring that no civilian population or area was affected," Singh told reporters in New Delhi.

"We only targeted terror camps,

exercising our right to respond to the attack on our soil."

Pakistan had denied any involvement in the Pahalgam assault and called for an independent probe.

India said it hit militant groups Jaish-e-Mohammed and Lashkar-e-Taiba. Jaish later said 10 relatives of its leader Masood Azhar -- who was released from an Indian jail in 1999 in exchange for 155 hostages from a hijacked Indian Airlines plane -- were killed, with no mention of the fate of Azhar himself.



Villagers carry their belongings as they move to safer areas after authorities ordered evacuation near the border at Jeora Farm on the outskirts of Jammu in Indian-occupied Kashmir yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Meanwhile, Modi yesterday briefed Indian President Droupadi Murmu about the cross-border operation.

India has called for an all-party meeting today to brief them about the military strikes in Pakistan and Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir, according to Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju.

Meanwhile, Pakistan's National Security Committee called on the international community to hold India "accountable" for the violation of its sovereignty.

The neighbours also exchanged intense shelling and heavy gunfire

across the "line of control", their de facto border in Kashmir, officials there said.

In Muzaffarabad, United Nations military observers arrived to inspect a mosque that Islamabad said was struck by India.

"There were terrible sounds during the night, there was panic among everyone," said Muhammad Salman, who lives close to the mosque.

"We are moving to a safer place... we are homeless now," added 24-year-old Tariq Mir, who was hit in the leg by

based group Lashkar-e-Taiba, a UN-designated terrorist organisation.

The two nations have traded days of threats and tit-for-tat diplomatic measures, while Pakistan has conducted two missile tests.

"Escalation between India and Pakistan has already reached a larger scale than during the last major crisis in 2019, with potentially dire consequences", International Crisis Group analyst Praveen Donthi said.

Diplomats have piled pressure on leaders to stop back.

"The world cannot afford a military confrontation between India and Pakistan," the spokesman for UN chief Antonio Guterres, Stephane Dujarric, said in a statement.

US President Donald Trump told reporters in Washington he hoped that the fighting "ends very quickly".

"I want to see it stop. And if I can do anything to help, I will be there," he told reporters in the Oval Office.

Concern poured in, including from China -- a mutual neighbour of both nations -- as well as from the EU, Britain, France, Russia, Germany and Turkey, while airlines have cancelled, diverted or rerouted flights.

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi was expected in New Delhi yesterday, two days after a visit to Islamabad, as Tehran seeks to mediate.

EU's foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas said the India-Pakistan situation is very concerning, adding that the EU was trying to mediate the crisis.

China's foreign ministry called on "both India and Pakistan to prioritise peace and stability, remain calm and restrained and avoid taking actions that further complicate the situation".

Russia's foreign ministry called on the parties to exercise restraint to prevent further "deterioration".

Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan talked with Shehbaz Sharif to convey his solidarity.

During the call, Erdogan told Sharif that Turkey supported what he called Pakistan's "calm and restrained policies" in the crisis, his office said in a statement.

CA hails UAE investment proposals

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during a meeting with the chief adviser at the State Guest House Jamuna.

The UAE delegation, headed by Al Nahyan -- also a former minister for higher education -- arrived in Dhaka on a short visit at 2:45pm. The delegation was received by the Chief Adviser's Special Envoy Lutefy Siddiqi at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport.

Ahmed Bin Ali Al Sayegh, state minister for foreign affairs in the

UAE, and Mohammad Abdul Rahman Alhawi, undersecretary of the investment ministry, were also part of the delegation.

"I am here under the instruction of our president to express solidarity and underline our friendship with Bangladesh," Al Nahyan told the chief adviser, adding, "We appreciate the enhanced dialogue that our two governments have been fostering in recent times. We wish to assure and collaborate in all areas -- from investment to visas."

In response, Yunus said, "We welcome the engagement and support. We also welcome investments across a range of industries."

Acknowledging the easing of visa restrictions, he added, "Thank you for opening the door. A few steps still need to be taken. We hope that we'll remain engaged and resolve those."

The UAE has recently begun issuing 30 to 50 visit visas daily, while bulk visas for business delegations have also been expedited in recent weeks. Additionally, the country's human

resources ministry has reactivated its online visa system for skilled workers.

Visas for marketing managers, hotel staff and others have been issued through this route in recent weeks. Furthermore, 500 visas for security guards have already been issued, with another 1,000 pending issuance.

UAE Ambassador to Dhaka Abdullah Ali Abdullah Alhmoudi and Bangladesh Ambassador to the UAE Tareq Ahmed were also present at the meeting, after which the UAE delegation concluded its visit.

Refrain from any steps

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situation in India and Pakistan.

"In the spirit of regional peace, prosperity and stability, Bangladesh remains hopeful that tensions will be defused through diplomatic endeavours, and that peace will ultimately prevail for the benefit of the peoples in the region."

Early yesterday, India attacked nine sites in Pakistan and Pakistani Kashmir.

Pakistan said it was mounting a response, as the worst fighting in years erupted between the longstanding rivals.

At least 26 people were killed in Pakistan, according to its military. Meanwhile, 12 have reportedly been killed in India.

On Monday evening, Pakistan Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar called Bangladesh's Foreign Adviser Touthid Hossain.

On Tuesday, Touthid told the media that he had conveyed Bangladesh's

desire for peace and avoidance of conflict in the region. "Since the Pakistan Foreign Minister phoned me, I told him we want peace. We don't want to see any conflict here."

Asked whether this message would also be conveyed to India, he said, "If India wants to know anything from me, I will tell Delhi the exact same thing. I don't need to say anything in advance."

In his conversation with his Pakistani counterpart, he also stressed the importance of dialogue in resolving any issue.

Touthid said Ishaq Dar had called to brief him on the steps Islamabad has taken in light of recent developments in the region.

"He did not ask for support or any particular reaction. I simply said that peace needs to prevail, and steps should be taken to de-escalate tensions... That is our expectation. We want any problem to be resolved through dialogue."

India pushes 123 individuals

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"If they are identified as citizens of Bangladesh, we will accept them. This will have to be done in a formal channel. Pushing them in is not the way."

THE DETAINEES

Of the total, 44 people, including 35 Rohingya, were detained from Roumari and Bhurungamari upazilas of Kurigram.

BGB officials said 30 were held in Roumari and 14 in Bhurungamari.

Lutfur Rahman, officer-in-charge of Roumari Police Station, told UNB that of the 30 people who were pushed into Bangladesh from India through various border points in Roumari, it is believed that 22 of them are Rohingyas.

Lt Col Hasanur Rahman, commanding officer of 35 BGB Battalion, said the detainees' identities are being verified. "Necessary steps will be taken after confirmation."

In Bhurungamari, 14 Rohingyas, including women and children, were detained from the Bhawalpuri border, said Lt Col Md Mahbub ul Haque, CO of Kurigram 22 BGB Battalion.

Meanwhile in Khagrachhari, at least 79 more Bangla-speaking individuals were detained after they were pushed in through three border points.

Of them, 27 were detained at the Shantipur border in Matiranga upazila, 22 at the Taitong border in Dighinala upazila, and 30 at the Panchhari border in Panchhari upazila.

Talking to this newspaper, Abu Taher, a resident of Shantipur, said he sheltered one of those who came from India. "I was told they were flown from Gujarat to Agartala and then forcibly pushed across the border."

"At that time, BSF members allegedly told them to never come back, or else they would be shot."

Nazmun Ara Sultana, acting deputy

commissioner of Khagrachhari, said, "BGB is monitoring the situation; all of them are currently under BGB custody. The local administration is in close coordination with the BGB."

BORDER ON ALERT

BGB Director General Maj Gen Mohammad Ashrafuzzaman Siddiqui told The Daily Star yesterday, "Some Bangla-speaking people have illegally entered Bangladesh from India, and BGB has taken them into custody."

"These people have no IDs or passports. Their identities are being verified. After verification, appropriate action will be taken in coordination with police."

"We have lodged a strong protest note with BSF and told them not to undertake any such push-ins. Flag meetings have been called at various levels, too."

"We have also asked the home and foreign ministries to communicate with the Indian authorities concerned. We have strengthened border security and enhanced surveillance. We are on high alert and maintaining vigilance, too."

Inspector General of Police Baharul Alam said, "Our borders are indeed very porous, so this kind of possibility is always there. In light of the ongoing conflict [India and Pakistan], we have already issued warnings to the superintendents of police in the 31 border districts, including those along the Indian and Myanmar borders."

He was speaking with reporters after a programme in the capital's Gulshan yesterday.

"We will make every possible effort to ensure that our national security is not compromised in any way as a result of this."

[Our correspondents in Chattogram and Lalmonirhat also contributed to this report.]