



SHAMBHU ACHARYA'S SOLO EXHIBITION

Art that carries years of legacy

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Though the first thing you notice right after entering might be the colours, since they are vibrant, generous, full of life, but there is something more, the scent of something older might carry you away.

Not incense, not paint, but time.

Time cooked down into lines and pigment, and tradition passed through generations. At Galleri Kaya, the solo exhibition of Shambhu Acharya, a name well known in the world of patachitra, surrounds you with artworks that seem to make you forget you're standing in a contemporary space and not a room pulled out of Bengal's own memory.

Patachitra, literally meaning "cloth painting", is a traditional art form rooted in folklore, mythology, and rural life. While many artists practice the form today, what makes Acharya's work feel different is not just the technique but the reverence. Even calling him an artist feels slightly off, it's like calling a monk a craftsman. The process, for him, seems almost like prayer, and that devotion translates into the emotion and storytelling of each work.

It's in the way the colours are made from scratch, pigments ground from brick, seeds, stone, sometimes even riverbed soil. The thickening agent? Extracted from tamarind seeds. The brushes? Made of goat's hair. "Some strokes in these paintings are not possible without these special brushes," Acharya said simply.

Among the vibrant narratives of patachitra, a quieter form of storytelling stood apart, kushthichitra, the artist shifts into monochrome, abandoning the vivid palette for earthier, ink-based minimal tones. One visitor said, "The reason why I like patachitra is these are done using a technique which is our very own traditional technique, using



PHOTO: COURTESY

all natural and handmade colours. Another intriguing thing about this exhibition was kushthichitra, I have never seen these artworks before."

Drawn at the time of a child's birth, especially in Hindu families, a kushthi records more than just name and lineage. It maps the planets, stars, and

celestial alignments at the moment of arrival, a visual document of fate. "Just like we keep records of land or property, a kushthi is the document of a person's life," said Acharya. "It tells the story from birth to midlife to death, following the astrology we've had for generations." If the newborn is a girl, she appears in the

painting; if a boy, then he, The kushthi scroll, though visually simpler than the patachitra, carries a quiet weight, attempting to tell a life before it even unfolds.

Acharya belongs to a legacy more than 450 years old, making him the ninth generation in a family of traditional artists. He didn't so much choose this path as he was born into it, long before he even learned to write the alphabets. As a child, he would drag leaves across walls and scratch bricks onto floors just to see the trace they left. The fascination with colour, its possibility and presence was always there.

That same respect for process runs through the entire exhibition, each on display paints vivid scenes from folklores, mythology and rural life, bride carried on a boat, women fetching water from river, two friends braiding each other's hair, a flute player casting a glance toward a woman and many more.

One of the visitors, Abdullah Bin Amir summed it up, "I really liked the idea about doing artworks on our folktales. It's rare to see. I personally like folklore and tales, and how the artist represented mythical characters in a traditional form, it was more than amazing. Not modernised, not abstract, just raw and true to the tradition."

These days when art is often rushed, modernised and soaked in factory made colours, Acharya's work stands a part with his honesty, devotion and tradition it carries. Both his son and daughter are picking it up slowly, the strokes, the stories, the little rituals that shaped him. And maybe that's what stays with you the most, not just that this art has lasted nine generations, but that it's still alive, still breathing, and still being passed gently, hand to hand.

DU students want Private airlines caught in a bind

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Taking position outside the station premises, demanded the immediate arrest of all those involved in the murder case, a fair trial, and a safe campus.

During this time, police were on alert in front of Shahbagh Police Station.

Mashiur Rahman Shuvo, a postgraduate student of the Institute of Education and Research, said that if the real perpetrators are not arrested within 48 hours, they will announce their next course of action on Sunday.

According to the students, a delegation of teachers, including Muhammad Abdus Salam, Asim Das, and Sirajul Islam from the Institute of Education and Research department, along with four student representatives, entered the station for discussions.

One of the protesters, Ibrahim Munshi, told The Daily Star, "This is a non-partisan banner. Various political parties are now politicising Shammo's death. But our main demand is justice for Shammo's murder."

When contacted, Shahbagh Police Station Officer-in-Charge (OC) Khalid Mansur told The Daily Star, "A delegation of teachers and students came to speak with us. ADC Mir Asaduzzaman of our Ramna Zone spoke with them.

"The teachers and students have presented their demands. We informed them that we have arrested three individuals. They will be brought on remand. The investigation is ongoing, and operations are underway. All those involved in the murder will be arrested soon."

Around 1:30pm, the students left the police station area.

Shahriar Alam Shammo, 25, was stabbed to death on Tuesday night near Suhrawardy Udyan. The protests began on DU campus after the killing.

A group of DU students, including leaders and activists of JCD and left-leaning student organisations, under the banner of Students Against Terrorism, have been protesting over the killing.

Shammo was the literature and publication affairs secretary of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal's Sir AF Rahman Hall unit and a student of the 2018-19 session at the Institute of Education and Research.

The victim's brother has filed a case with Shahbagh Police Station. The DU administration has formed an investigation committee regarding the murder.

So far, police have arrested three outsiders in connection with the case. They have been sent to jail via a court order.

Shahbagh Police Station Sub-Inspector Tawfique Hasan said case investigators would seek a 10-day remand of the three arrestees.

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airlines fail to flourish, Novoair Managing Director Mofizur Rahman said, "Entrepreneurs are often blamed for incompetence and poor planning. This may be partially true. But one must consider that they invest in a sector where every part of the government apparatus is unfriendly, if not outright hostile, towards private airlines."

CAAB regulations are outdated and don't meet global standards, said Rahman, also secretary general of Aviation Operators Association of Bangladesh (AOAB).

"Direct and indirect taxes levied on private airlines account for 50 percent of their operational costs. The industry stakeholders keep on pleading with CAAB, the ministry concerned, the tax authority and government agencies for remedies but their appeals fall on deaf ears."

Imran Asif, chief executive officer of Air Astra, said, "Based on my 15 years of experience as the chief executive of three airlines, I believe three steps could help revive the country's airline industry — adjusting fuel prices, reforming policies on fees and surcharges, and developing skilled manpower."

'Will not back down on our rights'

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"Rights are not granted; they must be claimed — and we are not afraid to claim them," read the declaration.

The programme began with a moving chorus of the national anthem, followed by a range of cultural performances including songs, poetry recital, and theatre performances.

The performances, drawn from diverse traditions, symbolised solidarity.

While Bangladesh has a rich history of women's participation in political and social movements, the promises of the July 2024 uprising are now under threat from patriarchal and reactionary forces, speakers said at the programme.

They said women continue to face daily harassment, exclusion from decision-making, and online abuse, aimed at deterring their political participation.

They also highlighted reports of sudden attacks, disruption of peaceful movements, orchestrated mob violence, moral policing, sexual assault, gang rape, and persistent threats.

Referring to the recent backlash over the Women's Affairs Reform Commission, the speakers said the commission submitted 433 recommendations for reforms. Instead of discussing the recommendations, a certain quarter launched a campaign of misrepresentation and propaganda against the commission members, they said.

"The interim government, established through the sacrifices and bloodshed of countless women during the July uprising, has remained

HIGH FEES, SURCHARGES

Surcharges on outstanding fees for local airlines can accumulate up to 72 percent a year, said aviation experts.

In India, the annual surcharge is between 12 and 18 percent; in Pakistan, it's only 2 percent; in Singapore 8 percent; and in Oman 10 percent.

AOAB has been demanding that the government fix the surcharge at a reasonable rate, scrapping the monthly rate of 6 percent.

"Once you fall into the surcharge trap, it becomes nearly impossible to turn things around," said Kamrul Islam, spokesperson for US Bangla Airlines.

In recent years, GMG Airlines, United Airways and Regent Airways grounded their fleet as surcharge dues kept mounting.

Regent Airways, the latest private airline to cease operations in 2020, owes Tk 283 crore in surcharge; United Airways Tk 355 crore; and GMG Airlines Tk 368 crore, shows CAAB data.

Aircraft landing and parking fees here are also significantly higher than that in many other countries.

Giving an example, Kamrul said the landing fee for a Boeing plane is Tk 15,000 at Kuala Lumpur airport. But if

the same plane lands at Dhaka airport, the charge is Tk 2.50 lakh.

HIGH JET FUEL PRICE

Since jet fuel accounts for 40-50 percent of an airline's operational costs, high fuel prices render commercial operations of local airlines uncompetitive, said aviation industry insiders.

In Bangladesh, jet fuel price stood at \$0.76 per litre in the second week of May, while it was \$0.49 in Singapore; \$0.50 in Malaysia; \$0.51 in Qatar and Thailand; \$0.53 in Oman; and \$0.58 in China.

"Major carriers like Emirates and Singapore Airlines that operate long-range aircraft don't refuel at Bangladesh airports because of high fuel prices. Local airlines, on the other hand, have no option but to buy fuel at prices 20-30 percent higher than that in the global market," Imran noted.

Jet fuel prices here are not determined by free market dynamics or best practices, such as assessments by independent price reporting agencies, which help prevent arbitrary pricing, he added.

Moreover, local airlines pay a 42.62 percent duty to buy jet fuel for domestic flights whereas the duty is below 4

percent in India, said Mofizur.

LACK OF SKILLED MANPOWER, WRONG STRATEGY

Local private airlines largely rely on former employees of Biman and Bangladesh Air Force to build their workforce as the country still lacks infrastructure to train and produce skilled aviation professionals.

These ex-employees constitute the majority of the local airlines' workforce, including pilots, technicians and engineers, said Imran.

"The current situation is far from favourable for the aviation industry. A strong, competitive aviation sector cannot be built without state-backed training facilities," he added.

ATM Nazrul Islam, an aviation expert who worked for several private airlines, said the now-defunct airlines pursued flawed marketing strategies, and most of them chose unsuitable aircraft and also wrong routes.

To support his argument, he cited the GMG Airlines' purchase of a 540-seater Boeing 747 for operating flights on Dhaka-Dubai route which proved commercially unviable.

No Bangladesh airline will survive beyond a certain period unless it pays

attention to proper planning and market analysis, he noted.

WHAT THE REGULATOR SAYS

CAAB Chairman Air Vice Marshal Md Monjur Kabir Bhuiyan said the fees for local airlines have not been increased in recent years.

Asked about high surcharge, he said it becomes applicable only when an airline doesn't pay fees.

"The civil aviation ministry fixes surcharge. We just follow it. As far as I know, they are considering reducing surcharges. Besides, we have taken steps to cut various types of fees, including landing and cargo charges. The ministry will make the final decision."

About the claim that the regulator's policy is unfavourable to private airlines, Kabir said that there are no rules or regulations that go against private carriers.

Referring to high jet fuel prices, he said CAAB has already conveyed the matter to the government agencies concerned.

"We have made every effort to help the aviation sector thrive... If any airline cannot survive due to administrative problems or financial difficulties, there is nothing we can do," he added.

Country heading in right direction

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he was quoted in the report, which tried to paint a picture of the current situation in Bangladesh.

Noting that optimism is necessary, the report, however, highlighted the "tricky" situation the interim government is facing in implementing the reforms that stakeholders of the uprising agreed upon.

Since Sheikh Hasina's ousting, allegations of widespread corruption and abuse have surfaced, including claims that \$16 billion was siphoned annually and serious charges like murder and genocide, all of which the ex-PM denies.

While political parties are united in demanding democratic reforms to prevent such abuses from recurring, the report said bringing out "big changes" and the political consensus needed for those have proved challenging for the Yunus-led government.

The report said reform efforts began soon after Sheikh Hasina fled to India. In September, Yunus formed several commissions, staffed by civil society and academic experts, to propose changes in areas like elections, the judiciary, and the constitution.

To coordinate the reforms, the government also set up a national consensus commission, which compiled 166 recommendations so far, with input from at least 35 political parties, said the report.

The goal is to produce a "July Charter" that would enable elections and mark the start of a "new Bangladesh", Yunus was quoted in the report.

But consensus is hard to build, the

Ukraine reports loss of another F-16 fighter jet

AFP, Kyiv

Ukraine's air force said yesterday it lost another US-made F-16 fighter jet, a significant blow as the aircraft have provided precious help to Ukrainian forces fighting Russia's invasion.

Kyiv has not said how many of the warplanes it has received, but this is at least the second confirmed loss of the Western-supplied jets.

The air force said it lost contact with the F-16 early yesterday during a manoeuvre to repel a Russian attack.

"The pilot destroyed three air targets and was working on the fourth, using an aircraft gun" when "an emergency situation arose on board," the air force said.

The pilot ejected safely, the air force said, adding it appointed a commission to investigate.

In August 2024, Kyiv said that an F-16 had crashed while repelling a Russian missile attack, killing its pilot.

In April 2025, Russia said it downed an F-16. Ukraine did not confirm, but said pilot Pavlo Ivanov was killed during a combat mission.

This is a setback for Ukraine, which has counted on F-16s to intercept missiles and target Russian warplanes.

UN 'alarmed' by new Tripoli violence

AFP, Tripoli

The United Nations expressed deep concern Thursday over new unrest in Libya's capital, warning the clashes risk mass displacement and endangered civilians.

Heavy gunfire and explosions in Tripoli late Monday killed at least six people, according to authorities. Clashes flared again Wednesday in key areas including Tripoli's port, in what a security source called "urban warfare".

Fears of more violence lingered Thursday.

The International Organization for Migration called for a halt to hostilities.

The UN body said it was "alarmed by the recent escalation of violence", highlighting the "severe risk of mass displacement and danger to civilians".

Turkey, which backs the Tripoli-based government, said it was evacuating its nationals from the North African country.

Libya has remained deeply divided since the 2011 Nato-backed revolt that toppled and killed longtime leader Moamer Gaddafi.

The country is split between a UN-recognised government in Tripoli, led by Prime Minister Abdulhamid Dbeibah, and a rival administration in the east controlled by the Haftar family.