

Think of the enormous variety we have in our music. Even if we get one percent, our primary focus should be on mapping the music landscape of the entire country. Next, we should develop a programme in order to facilitate a huge music archive which will not only project Bangladesh globally as a land of music, but will also earn revenue for the artistes. We are already developing two programmes around music—one deals with music schools and the other with the rich musical variety of Bangladesh. This shall include people from not just Bangalees, but all ethnic groups.

The second priority will be to complete meaningful reforms of the Shilpakala Academy and museums — which are in terrible conditions by the way. Much like our museums, our archaeological department is also not properly functioning. We have failed to take inspiration from the world, and never tried to know how archaeological sites are being presented to in a modern way. It's not enough to just have a beautiful site.

At this time, we are highlighting the needs for reforms and creating a blueprint. However, we have at least targeted one archaeological site and trying to do something during our tenure. We are trying to turn Panam Nagar into a living city of arts, crafts, and gastronomy — a must-visit

place for the people of the world if we can plan things properly. We are already discussing this internally.

In addition, we are formulating a new cultural policy upon which our next action plans should be based. An expert committee is already evaluating policies from different countries and working on making a draft for us. If we had longer tenure, we would have targeted bringing the entire cultural industry under one umbrella and formed a five-year action plan with a set of achievable goals.

What, in your opinion, have you been able to achieve so far during your time in this role?

One cannot expect huge reforms in such a short time, but I think signs of change are already visible. You can clearly see a paradigm shift in the state's cultural policy. From small things like a show at UNESCO or OSACA Expo to this year's Noboborsho celebrations, you can feel the change. For the first time in the history of Bangladesh, all ethnic groups have been included in the new year rally in Dhaka. Rock bands from different ethnic groups were included in the line-up of the biggest ever Chaitra Shongkranti concert. They were not included as tokens, but were

rather treated respectfully and given prime-time slots. An additional day of holiday was declared, which was a valid demand of many different ethnic groups in Bangladesh. This country is for everyone.

Another longstanding issue we've faced is the false binary between religion and culture—especially the tendency to treat Islamic culture as something separate from mainstream cultural identity.

This division, we believe, has contributed to a deep political crisis. That's why, from the outset, we've been focusing on two foundational ideas—'cultural inclusion' and 'cultural healing'. This process is already underway, and we're already witnessing its impact gradually.

Take *Chand Raat*, for example—the night before Eid. This year, a celebratory programme was held at the Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy, followed by an Eid rally. Some critics were quick to accuse us of pandering to Islamists. But to put things in perspective, this year's Buddha Purnima was celebrated not just in Dhaka but in three major districts. For Eid, the Ministry of Culture released a TV commercial on the Chief Adviser's official page, and similarly, a Buddha Purnima TVC—directed by a young filmmaker from their community—was released in the same way. These are clear markers of inclusion. You'll see similar efforts for Durga Puja and Christmas as well.

The tenure of Jamil Ahmed at Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy (BSA) has come to an end controversially, yet no new director general has been appointed. What are the ministry's plans for BSA?

Despite the absence of a regular DG, BSA has remained remarkably active during this year's Noboborsho celebration. At the same time, it needs to be mentioned BSA needs a major reform and restructuring. We have been working on forming a reform committee as soon as possible, just so it can become a modern art space for all disciplines and can cater to today's needs.

While the reform committee works on the much-needed engine overhaul, a new DG will definitely be

