



tion and lack of transparency diminish its ability to lead the country's artistic community.

The tension between creative freedom and the political control exerted over Shilpakala Academy is another major concern. Officials have openly acknowledged the underlying rigidity in framing historical narratives at the academy.

The academy's vulnerability to political interference is a defining feature of its operation. One insider remarked, "If we want to reduce this undue influence, or if we want Shilpakala Academy to be seen as a cultural institution governed by the arts and literature — not politics — we must reflect on the fact that for the past 16 years, the academy was singing praises of the Awami League, often compelled in doing so. Now, with the emergence of a new political party, we see attempts to dominate BSA once again." Political interference often turns artistic expression into a tool for political gain, undermining the academy's role as an independent cultural body.

To mitigate these challenges, cultural leaders like Fahal Hossain, president of Shilpi Samity, and Ehsanur Rahman suggest that Shilpakala needs a

neutral, apolitical leadership. "We need an experienced bureaucracy at the helm of the DG position if we want to make Shilpakala a truly self-governed institution," they argued. "Political interference not only compromises the academy's neutrality but distorts its cultural programming. We need to rethink the structure and operation of the academy."

Furthermore, Hossain and Rahman have proposed that the Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy Act of 1989 and Service Rule 1992 be revised to address the institution's outdated financial and administrative framework. The current structure, they argue, fails to meet the present-day needs of the academy, particularly regarding budget allocation and financial management. Additionally, a more robust employee appraisal system would ensure fair promotions and wages, fostering greater morale and commitment.

The internal disarray continues to cripple the academy. "There are real problems, especially regarding the types of projects undertaken by Shilpakala. There's chaos within the management," one insider admitted. However, efforts to resolve these issues are often stymied by a lack of dialogue and cooperation. "Have we ever actually sat together and tried to talk about it?" one official asked, reflecting the prevailing atmosphere of miscommunication

and finger-pointing that plagues the institution.

Despite these internal divisions, many officials acknowledge the necessity of structured meetings to resolve ongoing challenges. Quarterly meetings mandated by the academy's governance structure have long been neglected. Moreover, the inclusion of representatives from all employee associations would significantly improve the academy's performance and accountability.

Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy faces monumental challenges, stemming from deep-rooted corruption, political interference, and internal disarray. If the institution is to fulfill its potential as a beacon of artistic and cultural excellence, it must undergo a sweeping overhaul. The current leadership needs to establish a clear, unified vision, free from political pressure, and restructure the academy's outdated governance model. Only then can the academy regain its status as the cultural spearhead of the nation.

By Dowel Biswas

Photos: Sheikh Mehedi Morshed