



PHOTOS: ABRAR FAIYAZ NILOY

ART EXHIBITION

'ARANYAREKHA'**An earnest appeal to preserve the Sundarbans**

AISHWARYA RAIHAN

Bhumi Gallery in Lalmatia is hosting a five-day group art exhibition titled *Aranyarekha*, featuring 12 Bangladeshi artists whose works stem from a workshop in the Sundarbans. The inauguration was graced by Prof Mohammad Eunus, Prof Dr Md Anwarul Islam, and bird specialist Inam Al Haque.

Adyapanto, an artists' collective formed in 2019, recently held an art camp in the

Sundarbans, sponsored by Dr Anwarul Islam and Inam Al Haque. Inspired by the mangrove forest, the artists produced captivating works.

Md Robiul Islam's large, translucent watercolours soothe both heart and eyes. Farzana Rahman Bobby created monotype prints inspired by mangrove roots, some dark, others joyous. Upoma Das Trina's striking blue cyanotype manipulation depicts herons, trees, boats, and waterbodies, evoking Hans Andersen's

fairy tales.

Shakti Noman crafted wooden sculptures of Sundari tree roots alongside acrylic canal paintings. Monjur Rashid painted splendid birds, while Ihsrat Jahan portrayed warm-toned leaves with cheerful vibrancy. Kanak Aditya's minimalist black-and-white painting stood apart.

Zemrina Haque offered vibrant small landscapes. Mamun Hossain used watercolour splatters and crisp ink lines to imagine the Sundarbans uniquely. Couple

Morsena Rahman Rupa and Md Zahid Hossain filled canvases with deep blue hues; Rupa's baby Kaani Bawk stood out.

Nargis Akter Punam painted the majestic Royal Bengal Tiger, likening them to cacti—admired yet untouchable—warning their numbers dwindle due to neglect.

Running from August 16 to 22, *Aranyarekha* celebrates the Sundarbans' beauty while urging preservation of our national treasure and vital greenery.

Govt to ensure higher standards in grant-funded films: Mahfuj Alam

Information and Broadcasting Adviser Md Mahfuj Alam has affirmed that the government will provide full support to enhance the quality of films produced with state funding. While handing over the first instalment of grants to producers



of nominated full-length and short films at the secretariat yesterday, he announced that a workshop featuring filmmaking experts will soon be organised to help improve standards.

The adviser stated that this year's selection process was transparent, and urged producers to complete films on time. He added that all films will be preserved in the Bangladesh Film Archive. This year, 12 feature films and 20 short films have received Tk 1.80 crore and Tk 1.20 crore respectively.

'Coke Studio Bangla' Season 3 returns

Coke Studio Bangla has officially announced that it will resume on August 23, continuing the lineup of Season 3. The announcement follows a teaser earlier this week from Shayan Chowdhury Arnob, who hinted at the platform's next release.

Season 3 has already gained wide acclaim with three songs, the latest being a new interpretation of Warfaze's classic *Obak Bhalobasha*. With more tracks to follow, the season promises to showcase a mix of celebrated artists and fresh talent, reflecting Coke Studio Bangla's vision of blending tradition with contemporary sound.

**Shakib Khan confirms 'Soldier' for December release**

Shakib Khan has confirmed that his upcoming film *Soldier*, directed by debutant Sakib Fahad, will release this December. Speaking from the United States, where he has been vacationing with actress Shobnom Bubly and their son Shehzad Khan Veer.

The megastar said, "This time I want to bring a story-driven film." Rumours suggest he will play a former intelligence officer, with casting details yet to be announced. Shooting is scheduled to begin next month.

Recently, Shakib faced criticism over a Facebook post on Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's death anniversary, which he clarified carried no political intent. With *Soldier* now confirmed, fans anticipate a new dimension to his career through a film focused on duty, personal conflict, and politics.

NEWS**Charges framed against ex-MP**

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opening statements.

Prosecutors earlier said 29 people were killed in Ashulia during the uprising, but the current charges relate to one protester killed on August 4 last year and six others the next day.

In the latter incident, five bodies and one injured person were reportedly set ablaze inside a police van.

CHANKHARPOOL CASE

Two more prosecution witnesses yesterday made statements in the case filed over crimes against humanity committed during the killing of six people in Chankharpool on August 5 last year.

With their testimony, a total of eight prosecution witnesses have so far testified in the case at the International Crimes Tribunal I.

Witness Rahat Hawlader broke down in tears seeing a video clip played in

court and cried, "Sir, this man is my beloved brother!"

Another clip showed a policeman firing from a flyover into a crowd, moments before a man collapsed. Rahat, weeping, shouted again, "Sir, this is constable Sujan. He killed my brother, Rakib Hossain Hawlader!"

Rakib's father, Jahangir Hawlader, the other witness, rushed to the stand to console his son as tears streamed down his own face.

Jahangir said his son worked at a plastic factory in the city's Chawkbazar area. Around 1:00pm on the day of the incident, Rakib left the factory and joined the protest at Chankharpool, where he was shot dead by police.

He alleged that his son was killed under directives from former DMP commissioner Habibur Rahman, former joint commissioner Sudip Kumar Chakraborty, and in the

presence and supervision of former additional deputy commissioner Shah Alam Mohammad Akhtarul Islam, former assistant commissioner (Ramma zone) Mohammad Imrul, and former inspector (operations) of Shahbagh Police Station Arshad Hossain.

He said the fatal shots were fired by former constables Sujon Hossain, Imaz Hossain, and Nasirul Islam.

He demanded justice and exemplary punishment for those responsible for his son's death.

Arshad, Sujon, Imaz, and Nasirul, who are in custody, were present during the hearing, while the rest, including Habibur, remain absconding.

Defence lawyers, including the state defence counsel representing the four absconding accused, cross examined the witnesses.

The tribunal adjourned further witness testimony until September 3.

Bangladesh, Pakistan okay visa-free travel

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with 31 other countries.

Also at the briefing, Alam said the government has planned three international conferences with the aim of bringing the Rohingya crisis to the forefront of international discussions.

The interim government is working with utmost importance on the Rohingya issue, he said.

The first of the three conferences is scheduled to take place in Cox's Bazar from August 24 to 26.

Representatives from the United Nations and around 40 countries are expected to attend the conference, with attendance from Yunus expected on the second day.

'No polls unless our demands are met'

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Under the PR system, voters would be properly valued.

Jamaat is preparing candidates for all 300 constituencies and is reaching out to the people.

"We are working to build public opinion," he said.

Earlier in the afternoon, a five-member Jamaat delegation -- Jamaat central working council member Jasim Uddin Sarkar, Dhaka city north Nayeb-e-Ameer Abdur Rahman Musa, Dhaka

city secretary Yasin Arifat, and head of engineering division Abid Hasan -- met with the CEC at the Election Commission headquarters in the capital.

The delegation discussed parliamentary constituency boundaries, among other things.

"We spoke on an overall basis. We have presented our viewpoints. The EC said that wherever our points are valid, legal or rational, they will consider examining those."

Four judges on the five-member appeals court voted to let the fraud finding stand, but all found problems in the judge's handling of the case and two would have ordered a new trial.

A fifth judge would have dismissed the case altogether, and all five judges would have voided the payout. There was no majority opinion.

Then would-be witness accuses Hasina

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include former chief justice Surendra Kumar Sinha, former ICT chairman Justice Nizamul Huq, ex-law minister Shafique Ahmed, and former state minister for law Qamrul Islam.

Former ICT judge justice ATM Fazle Kabir, former ICT investigator Helal Uddin, former ICT chief prosecutor Syed Haider Ali, ex-prosecutor Rana Dasgupta, former chief of the ICT investigation agency Md Sanaul Haque, and former Pirojpur lawmaker AKM Awal alias Saidur Rahman.

The others are 10 to 15 then leaders and activists of Pirojpur district Awami League, Jubo League and Chhatra League, listed as unidentified accusers.

In the complaint, Bali claimed that in July-August 2010, ICT investigator Helal interrogated him at a local school regarding the killing of his brother Bishu Bali during the 1971 Liberation War.

"I told him the truth, but Helal tried to force me to name Sayedee along with the real killers and give testimony against Sayedee before the tribunal."

"When I refused, saying Sayedee

was in no way involved in the murder of my brother, he started physically assaulting me to give false testimony," Bali wrote.

He alleged that Helal, along with local Awami League leaders including former MP Awal and former Pirojpur mayor Habibur Rahman Malek, repeatedly threatened and beat him for declining to give false testimony.

"They warned me that if I didn't agree to testify as instructed, the next day would be my last," the complaint read. Bali said he went into hiding for months to save his life.

Later, he said, Sayedee's son Masud Sayedee approached him and requested him to testify in favour of Sayedee to reveal the truth. "I agreed and came to Dhaka on November 3, 2012 and contacted Masud Sayedee," Bali said.

On November 5, while being taken to the tribunal by defence counsel Mizanul Islam in his car, Bali alleged he was intercepted near the ICT gate by plainclothesmen and police officers. "They dragged me out of the car, beat me, blindfolded me, and took me away in a white pickup," he wrote.

Better to beg here than die there

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survived by drinking bathroom water and eating rotten bread. The mafia would even pull out people's nails and send videos to our families to demand money."

But Nazrul was not freed; he was sold to another group that kept him in confinement for five months.

To ensure his release, his father-in-law sold 24 kathas of land to gather Tk 8 lakh.

"But the syndicate never freed me -- they handed me over to the local police instead."

He remained in jail until his repatriation along with 174 Bangladeshis. Sakhawat was among them.

"He was actually involved in torturing and extorting migrants. He had no plan to return home but acted as a victim when detained by Libyan police," said Mostafizur Rahman, additional superintendent of the Criminal Investigation Department's Human Trafficking Cell.

He boarded the chartered flight disguised as a victim. The CID and the National Security Intelligence identified and arrested him after interrogating returnees.

This was the third such arrest in the last five months.

Last time, Sakhawat was in Libya

He alleged he was held in a dark room for nearly two months and subjected to severe physical and psychological torture, including electric shocks to his private parts to force him to give statement against Sayedee.

Bali further alleged that his captors offered him "crores of taka and a house" in exchange for the false statement.

When he refused, they allegedly continued the torture until he fell unconscious. He was treated in hospitals at times but after recovery, he was always taken back to confinement and tortured, he added.

Bali alleged that after months of abuse, he was handed over to members of India's Border Security Force (BSF) illegally. BSF also tortured him severely and took him to a sub-jail in Basirhat where he was kept for 22 days, according to the complaint. It added that Bali was shifted to Dum Dum Central Jail where he was kept in captivity for about five years.

Bali has described his alleged ordeal as a "crime against humanity" and demanded accountability and punishment for all those he accused.

for five years and was involved in extorting money from migrants. He is wanted in two separate cases.

Sakhawat confessed to sending 400 to 500 Bangladeshis on four boats -- 125 to 150 people in each boat -- to Italy after extorting huge sums from them.

"We are now trying to trace where these Bangladeshis are. We have also learned that several thousand are still trapped in Libya, waiting for what they call the 'game', the dangerous boat journey to Italy," Mostafizur said.

In 2024, 8,667 Bangladeshis entered Europe illegally, with 7,574 crossing the central Mediterranean, the same deadly route Nazrul had hoped to take, according to the EU's border agency Frontex.

More than 4,000 Bangladeshis reached Italy that year, while at least 700 died in boat accidents and other incidents.

Bangladeshis are now the largest group crossing the Mediterranean to