



Eminent guests at the programme.

PHOTOS: COURTESY OF HSBC

# ‘SHOTOBORSHE SULTAN’

## Witness Nasir Ali Mamun’s homage to Bengal’s greatest

AISHWARYA RAIHAN

Bengal Shilpalay inaugurated *Shotoborshe Sultan* last Friday, a solo photography exhibition by Nasir Ali Mamun, held as a tribute to legendary Bangladeshi artist SM Sultan on his birth centenary. The exhibition has been organised by Bengal Foundation, in collaboration with HSBC Bangladesh.

The ceremony, hosted by the director general of Bengal Foundation, Luva Nahid Chowdhury, was attended by HSBC CEO Mahbubur Rahman; eminent Bangladeshi-Spanish artist Monirul Islam, as a special guest; Prothom Alo’s Editor Matiur Rahman; and Bangladesh Bank (BB) Governor Ahsan H Mansur, as the chief guest.

Two books on SM Sultan were also launched to give us the chance to dive into the artist’s life. In his speech, Monirul

Islam mentioned how chaotic SM Sultan’s art style was, and yet everything he put on his canvases came together in harmony. All the guests spoke in celebration of SM Sultan’s 100th birthday and praised Mamun for his brilliant work.

Born in 1953, Nasir Ali Mamun is an Ekushey Padak-winning photographer. He had also bagged the Shilpakala Padak and a fellowship from the Bangla Academy thanks to his photography skills. Moreover, he received lifetime achievement awards from Drik, Standard Chartered Bank, and The Daily Star.

Since 1978, he has been the personal photographer of Bangladeshi Nobel laureate and Chief Adviser Dr Mohammad Yunus. In the mid-to-late ‘70s, he was spellbound by Sultan’s artwork when seeing them for the first time. The universe granted his wish, and he was able to photograph his “man of soil, from the

forest.”

Sheikh Mohammad Sultan is one of the most celebrated artists of Bangladesh, who established his own unique art style that did not align with a typical realistic portrayal of human figures. He glorified the strength of our rural people, men and women alike, and painted them with a muscular appearance. He explained to Mamun that the farmers are the backbone of our country, and even though people can’t see their strength, he can, as they carry this country on their shoulders despite being exploited by the upper classes.

The photos taken by Mamun capture the old Renaissance residence of SM Sultan in Narail, the women in his family, the surrounding greenery, and the rural population who were close to his heart. There are images of Sultan playing musical instruments, his signature flute,

and painting his masterpieces. However, the most beautiful are the photos of him with his beloved cats and the parrot. Sultan once told Mamun that a person cannot love anyone deeply unless they love animals.

Mamun shot the photographs with no artificial light and a slow shutter speed. The images are mostly black and white. Fascinatingly, the single photos are taken in a manner where the background often disappears into nothingness, and only Sultan’s existence with his long curly hair comes as a ray of light.

*Shotoborshe Sultan* not only showcases veteran photographer Nasir Ali Mamun’s mastery in using lenses, but it is also a window to the past where one of the legendary figures of our art and culture exists in all his glory. Bengal Shilpalay will run this exhibition until September 27, 2025.

## Saif Sarwar’s ‘Go Beyond’ nominated at Int’l Motor Film Awards

Saif Sarwar, Bangladesh’s first automotive content creator, made history as his short film *Go Beyond* earned a Best Independent Film nomination at the International Motor Film Awards (IMFA) — the first Bangladeshi automotive film on a global stage.

*Go Beyond* was selected from 242 entries across



12 categories at IMFA 2025, competing alongside Hollywood releases such as *F1, Mission Impossible: The Final Reckoning, Den of Thieves 2: Pantera, Heads of State, and Weekend in Taipei*.

The film features high-octane off-road action with a modified Ford Ranger Wildtrak, capturing the thrill of adventure in cinematic detail.

Dubbed the Oscars of motoring, the IMFA honours excellence in automotive film and TV. The ceremony this year will be held on October 2 at London’s restored Victorian Theatre, Alexandra Palace.

## Bruce Springsteen’s shelved track finally surfaces as ‘Born to Run’ turns 50



Bruce Springsteen’s *Born to Run* studio album marks its 50th anniversary today (August 25). To commemorate the occasion, a long shelved 1975 studio outtake, *Lonely Night in the Park*—a song once strongly considered for the album but never released—will finally make its official debut.

Originally recorded during the Record Plant sessions for *Born to Run*, *Lonely Night in the Park* has circulated as a bootleg for decades, but never in such high quality until now.

The release is accompanied by a collection of rare photographs taken by Eric Meola during the *Born to Run* album cover shoot.

## ‘Agantuk’ to close Toronto Multicultural Film Festival this year



Bangladeshi film *Agantuk* has officially been selected as the closing film of the five-day Toronto Multicultural Film Festival, which began in Canada yesterday (August 24). The film, directed by Biplob Sarkar, also has the English title *The Stranger*.

The ensemble cast of *Agantuk* includes Ferdousi Majumdar, Sahana Rahman Sumi, Ratan Dev, Mahmud Alam, Ehan, Rafsan, Hridoy, Hasimun, and Naima Tasnim.

The ongoing eighth edition of the Toronto Multicultural Film Festival will conclude on August 28 with the screening of *Agantuk*. This year’s festival will showcase 47 films from 28 countries. The opening film was the Canadian production *Universal Language*.

# NEWS

## No closure yet for the families

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grief, and I’m dying a slow death,” she said.

Over the past year, the relatives of the missing people have approached the district administration many times to get answers, but to no avail.

The last search inside the charred six-storey factory building was conducted on August 29 last year, a day before firefighters finally doused the flames. Since then, neither the police nor the fire service has conducted any further searches of the premises.

In September last year, a government probe body recommended conducting a search operation after removing the damaged structure. However, the authorities have yet to take any action.

Contacted on August 21, Mohammad Zahidul Islam Miah, who took charge as the deputy commissioner of Narayanganj this January, said, “I cannot say anything about the probe report ... The families of the missing ones have approached us multiple times. They also submitted a petition, which I forwarded to the police for action.

“We asked police to investigate. Hopefully, there will be an update soon.”

Mehedi Islam, senior assistant superintendent of police in Narayanganj, said police are acting on the list of 182 missing people provided by the district administration.

“We have been tracking their last locations based on mobile phone numbers,” he told The Daily Star on August 19, adding that police will come up with a report as soon as possible.

Talking to this correspondent on Saturday, Mohammad Osman Gani, deputy assistant director of Narayanganj Fire Service and Civil Defence (Zone 2), said, “No further search operations have been conducted there [after August 29 last year]. We have not received any instructions regarding this.”

Seeking anonymity, a senior official of Gazi Group said, “Our own security personnel are guarding the factory premises. The six-storey building, which lies in ruins, has been off limits to all since a BUET expert team declared it risky on August 29 last year.

“Nothing can be done there without clearance from all the authorities concerned, including the district administration and the fire service,”

added the official.

According to the probe body’s findings, Gazi Tyres factory housing multiple structures on a 26.72-acre area saw the first phase of looting and arson attacks on August 5, the day the Awami League regime fell following a mass uprising.

The looting continued till August 8 amid a fragile law and order situation. No casualties were reported during that period.

Following the arrest of factory owner and ex-minister Golam Dastagir Gazi on August 25, the establishment saw a second wave of looting and arson attacks. At least 182 people went missing as a blaze engulfed the six-storey building. The flames raged for five days before firefighters managed to put it out.

**STILL LOOKING FOR ANSWERS**  
This correspondent visited the homes of 22 missing people and spoke to their relatives, who expressed dismay at the authorities’ indifference to tracing their loved ones.

One of them is Rashida Begum whose only child, 21-year-old Aman Ullah, a worker at a battery factory, was last seen entering the premises of Gazi Tyres on August 25 last year.

“My husband has been bedridden for 10 years after suffering a stroke. It was my son who ran the household.

“Will I never get the chance to see my boy one last time?” she asked.

Like her, Farzana, wife of a missing 27-year-old textile mill worker, is looking for answers.

“I approached whoever I could — the SP, the DC, and even army members. But no one could say whether my husband Arif is still alive or dead,” said Farzana who now has to care for their two sons — seven-year-old Ayan and 18-month-old Naim Hasan — entirely on her own.

Truck driver Nur Hossain went missing on August 25 night after he, along with his brother-in-law Russell, entered the factory compound.

Nur’s wife Parveen Begum, a mother of three, now struggles to make ends meet.

“After waiting for a year, I now only want a death certificate so that I can at least get a widow allowance,” she said.

Among the missing people are two brothers, Sabbir and Shahadat Shikder, who used to work as electricians.

Their mother, Nurunnahar, now desperately seeks closure. “For the past year, everyone asked me to be patient. But my patience has run out,” she said.

**GOVERNMENT PROBE**

The local administration formed an eight-member probe committee on August 27, two days after the blaze.

In its report submitted to the deputy commissioner on September 12, the probe body said several structures inside the factory compound were set afire on August 5 last year and looting continued for four days.

The report noted that if law enforcement and intelligence agencies had taken steps to ensure security at the factory after the August 5 incident, it would have been possible to avert the devastating fire about three weeks later.

It mentioned that when a group of intruders went to the fourth and fifth floors of the six-storey building to loot copper and chemicals stored there, another group of intruders locked the gate on the ground floor, started a fire and left. The fire spread quickly as flammable substances were stored in the building.

On September 1, the committee held a public hearing, attended by family members of around 80 missing people, in front of the factory. At one point of the hearing, they forcefully entered the factory, defying restrictions, and recovered some bones and skulls that were later handed over to police.

Asked, Superintendent of Police Prottyush Kumar Majumder said the bones and skulls were sent to CID’s forensic division for tests.

“We have not yet received any updates from the CID,” he said.

## Referendum on July Charter

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constitutional questions related to the July Charter.

It was noted that issues not requiring constitutional amendments could be implemented through ordinances. The law ministry is currently working to identify the recommendations within the charter that are “immediately implementable.”

The National Consensus Commission finalised the draft of the July Charter after two rounds of dialogue with political parties.

The draft includes 84 issues on which consensus was reached, with notes of dissent recorded on at least 11 points.

## Yunus should have invested his authority

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He said the commissions were given no terms of reference. “So, there was really no coordination or cohesion in that reform, nor an underlying set of priorities or even an ideological premise to what you want to carry on.”

Each commission worked out its own ideas in its own sector, he said.

The small group of civil society members was then handed the major task of bringing together the political parties to reach a settlement on what reforms they would commit to, he added.

“We are now operating in a very specific context of a caretaker government, which has probably another six months left before they are committed to holding elections and transferring power to an elected government.”

“So, the discussion should relate to what they are going to do and what outcomes may emerge over the next six months.”

The consensus commission is headed by Yunus himself but its task on so many reform proposals is actually being carried out by Prof Ali Riaz and a few others, Sobhan said.

“The problem over there is that Ali Riaz and his colleagues have been entrusted with the responsibility of bringing in a settlement amongst a collection of political parties, where the representative status is highly uneven and where major political parties have

been initially excluded from the process.

“Are they going to simply make deals that ‘you kindly put your signature to the proposals and then we will show that this has become a Sanad [July Charter] and we will then be able to move on after that?’” he said.

In that case, Sobhan said, “We will have to depend now exclusively on the elected government to determine which reforms can be carried out. We will see what happens when an elected government comes into office, if they are drawn to tradition — their problem will be that they’ve been hungry for 16 years.

“Whether they will be inclined to look after their deprivations in the initial period before they begin reforms is to be seen.”

Regarding financial sector reforms, he said those being talked about are “governance reforms” in reality.

Sobhan said a list of 2,000 defaulters seeking loan rescheduling has been made and a panel has been formed to find out whose applications are acceptable on “very easy terms”.

“This is exactly a process which was twice initiated under the Hasina regime by successive governors of the Bangladesh Bank.

“Now this essentially means that this culture, which was put in place in the first BNP government under Ziaur Rahman and was perpetuated under successive regimes throughout and reached its apotheosis under Hasina

when she was in power for 16 years, has created a major structural problem for the banking system,” he said.

Prof Selim Raihan, executive director of the South Asian Network on Economic Modeling (SANEM), presented a paper at the event.

He said two important reports — the white paper and the task force committee report — highlighted gross anomalies in past governance and laid out detailed recommendations on reform.

However, these efforts have not translated into a coherent reform drive, Raihan said.

“Reform remains piecemeal. There has been no clear drive or mobilisation in terms of reforms. Whatever the government has done is fragmented,” he said.

Prof Mustafizur Rahman, a distinguished fellow of the CPD, said reforms cannot be done at a time, but since peoples’ expectation is huge, it may be embedded in the political system in future if democracy and progressive political system are ensured.

Hossain Zillur Rahman, executive chairman of Power and Participation Research Centre (PPRC), Birupaksha Paul, a former chief economist of Bangladesh Bank, Prof Rounaq Jahan, a CPD trustee, also spoke at the discussion. Economists Prof Nazrul Islam, Prof MM Akash, Syed Akhtar Mahmood and Rushidat Islam also participated in the event.

## Hall provosts flag uneven field

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anonymity, said.

The committees were dissolved after a provost standing committee meeting in March this year amid complaints from several student bodies that they were interfering in hall administration.

Speaking to The Daily Star, DU proctor Saifuddin said, “Some of the provosts said they have effectively implemented the decision [to disband the committees in their halls], others have failed to do so. Around two weeks ago, we sent letters to all provosts again instructing them to dissolve any existing ‘Sringskhola Committee’.”

A provost of a female hall told the meeting that a group of students had questioned her for allowing a student with a political background to enter the dormitory.

“Most of the provosts, except three, said an environment conducive enough for fair elections is yet to be created,” another meeting attendee said.

The provosts, however, did not hint at delaying the polls.

Contacted, Dr Abdullah-Al-Mamun,

convener of the Provost Standing Committee, told The Daily Star they were called to the meeting by the election commission to discuss the overall situation at the halls.

“Collectively, they [the provosts] highlighted the current environment and discussed how the election could be conducted fairly. They also described the present conditions in the halls and put forward suggestions on what steps should be taken to ensure a free and fair Ducus election going forward.”

DU Vice Chancellor Prof Niaz Ahmed told The Daily Star that ensuring a level playing field always requires active efforts.

“We’ve been working on this for over nine months. After multiple discussions, we’ve reached a position to hold the election... If there’re specific problems, we’ll look into them.”

He added that at the meeting, issues were noted and some actions had already been taken as per the provosts’ suggestions. “There was discussion regarding a specific student organisation... We’re working on it.”