



Youth art brings 'Transformation' to Dhaka

JAWWAD SAMI NEOGI

On September 24, a youth art exhibition, titled "Transformation," came to a successful close in Dhaka. The event, held at the Residence of the Kingdom of Netherlands, brought together young artists, cultural leaders, and art enthusiasts for an evening that celebrated creativity, wellness, and community.

The exhibition drew most of its participants from young artists at leading universities across Bangladesh, including some pursuing studies abroad, and it also welcomed talents beyond specific academic degrees.

"Transformation" showcased works in a wide variety of mediums, including woodcut, acrylic, digital art, etc. From surrealist paintings of hibiscus and water lilies to vibrant pieces inspired



PHOTO: JAWWAD SAMI NEOGI

One of her pieces, "Tea in the Winter," portrayed how something as small as a warm cup of tea, made with the warmth of 'mamar haater jadu,' can transform an ordinary moment into comfort and connection.

Rowshun Ara Polly, mother of Niharika Awhona Barsaat, an artist studying abroad, shared her pride: "I may not know the full meaning of her artwork, but I definitely know my daughter poured her heart into it. I am proud that her work is being praised by everyone."

Anzareen Chaudhury, a graduate from SOAS University of London, explained her artworks "Twins of Sunlight - Inara" and "Hibiscus When We Meet," where she added

textures and patterns to create surreal environments. Using waterlilies, hibiscus, ponds, and rivers as her subjects, she transformed the natural elements of Bangladesh into dreamlike scenes. Her works showed how everyday landscapes can be reimagined to reflect inner change and new perspectives.

Organised by The Flow Fest, in collaboration with the Embassy of the Kingdom of Netherlands and The Bangladesh Dialogue, the exhibition reflected a joint commitment to well-being, creativity, and youth empowerment. The Flow Fest, a wellness platform based in Dhaka, curates festivals, workshops, and cultural collaborations rooted in South Asian traditions while embracing global

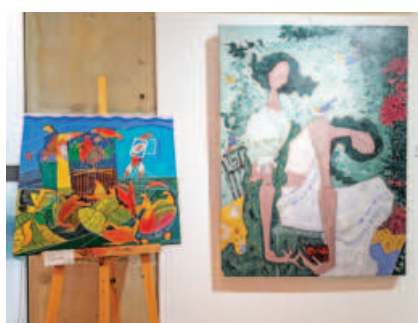
ideas. The vision is to help individuals find their "flow," a state where purpose and peace align.

Distinguished guests attended the evening, including Joris van Bommel, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Netherlands. Speaking about the spirit of the young artists, he shared, "Art helps us make sense of the world, especially in times of uncertainty and change. This exhibition captures transformation: of identity, memory, culture, and place, through diverse yet interconnected visual languages."

Shazia Omar, CEO and founder of The Flow Fest, highlighted the role of creative expression in well-being. "We create these spaces so young people can feel empowered. Picking up a brush or a camera is not just about art; it's a way to process, to heal, and to grow. Through this, we hope to raise awareness, encourage young minds, and remind everyone that creative expression is essential for well-being."

Meherba Sabrin, director of The Bangladesh Dialogue and a partner in the exhibition, said, "Art is not only a reflection of society, it is a language of transformation. This exhibition shows resilience, imagination, and the dreams of our young generation."

The exhibition concluded with a message of hope: that art is not a luxury, but a shared journey, helping individuals and communities connect, reflect, and reimagine the future together. With this success, The Flow Fest and its partners promised future collaborations that would give youth a platform to share their visions and foster "transformation."



by everyday life, each creation carried a personal story.

Fareen Ahmed, a young artist from North South University, presented works inspired by Bangladeshi culture and the simple joys of life.

3 shot dead in Khagrachhari

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locally made weapons, injuring 10 soldiers, including three officers. BGB personnel were also attacked, with one vehicle vandalised.

The statement added that around 11:30am, armed members of UPDF (main) opened fire from a hill west of Ramesu Bazar, targeting both Bangalees and hill people engaged in clashes as well as army troops trying to control the situation. An estimated 100-150 rounds were shot from automatic weapons, leaving several locals injured.

The army later advanced, forcing the group to flee, while outsiders linked to the UPDF set fire to Ramesu Bazar and nearby houses. Additional forces were deployed, and the situation was brought under control by around 4:30pm.

According to the ISPR statement, communal tensions in Khagrachhari had been rising since September 23, following the alleged rape of a schoolgirl in the Singinila area. Police, with army assistance, arrested suspect Shoyon Shil the next day. Legal proceedings are ongoing.

However, despite the arrest, UPDF-linked organisations staged protests, rallies and a half-day hartal in Khagrachhari on September 24-25.

The ISPR alleged that social media propaganda from both domestic and overseas bloggers fuelled communal incitement during this period.

"The events of September 19-28 clearly indicate a greater conspiracy to destabilise the Chittagong Hill Tracts and incite communal riots," the statement read, adding that evidence has been preserved with law enforcement agencies.

The army urged leaders of all political parties and communities in the region to act with restraint, and

called on the public to cooperate with security forces in restoring peace.

Meanwhile, the home ministry in a statement yesterday evening expressed deep sorrow over the incident in Guimara.

It claimed three people were killed in an attack by "miscreants". Thirteen army personnel, including a major, as well as three policemen, including the officer-in-charge of Guimara Police Station, and several others were injured.

The ministry assured that those involved in the incident would be brought to book following an investigation, and that no offenders would be spared.

The ministry urged all to remain calm and be patient. In a statement, the BGB said, "Seven platoons have been deployed in Khagrachhari to maintain law and order."

The alleged rape took place on Tuesday when the eighth grader was returning from private tuition around 9:00pm.

The Jumma people began protesting on Wednesday. Responding to their call, a half-day road blockade was observed on Thursday.

On Friday, a rally was held at Chengi Square in Khagrachhari Sadar, protesting violence against women. Stones and brickbats were hurled at army vehicles.

On Saturday, a day-long blockade was called. During the picketing, tensions flared when a group of Bangalees was blocked.

From around 11:30am to 4:00pm, chase and counter-chase took place in the upazila headquarters. In the afternoon, the administration imposed section 144.

However, when news spread on social media of an attack on a local

Buddhist temple, members of the Marma community again took to the streets, resulting in further confrontations with Bangalees.

By evening, the law enforcement brought situation under control.

On Sunday, protesters again staged a road blockade. As part of this, they set up barricades at various points.

JUMMA STATEMENT
Jumma Chhatra Janata has announced an indefinite road blockade across three hill districts from today, demanding justice for the rape victim.

In a statement posted on the organisation's official Facebook page last night, it also said that all tourism activities in the region would remain suspended during the blockade.

The group alleged that since September 27, Khagrachhari town has witnessed widespread army raids, assaults, and arbitrary detentions. It also accused settler groups of looting and arson in Guimara, claiming that four people were killed and many were injured in attacks carried out by the army and settlers.

The Jumma platform has demanded that authorities guarantee protection against attacks or intimidation during and after any dialogue, and called for the immediate arrest of the two remaining suspects in the Khagrachhari rape case.

It also demanded a speedy trial of the accused; adequate financial compensation and full rehabilitation for the survivor; an impartial investigation into the 27-28 September incidents in Khagrachhari and Guimara; compensation for damages in Jumma homes and businesses; free treatment for the injured; immediate release of all detained Jumma students; and withdrawal of section 144 in Khagrachhari Sadar and Guimara.

Govt mulls hiring from outside

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"We will highlight the pros and cons of lateral appointments in the administration, but the final decision rests on the government," one of the sources said.

Another source said, "Lateral appointments cannot solve the administration's ongoing problems. Still, since the government has requested it, we are preparing a report."

He also said it is important to understand why the country's top talents, upon joining the administration, get involved in corruption or fail to show their capabilities when needed.

Speaking to this correspondent, several senior officials said sudden appointments at the joint or deputy secretary level could create conflicts among officers of the same rank.

Officers expecting promotions may also react unfavourably. Lateral appointments could limit promotion opportunities for junior officers, potentially causing instability within the administration.

Top officials interviewed by this newspaper for this report believe that if competent officers are assessed on merit and skills and deployed impartially, the existing workforce alone can handle the expected level of administration.

Under existing rules, the president can make special appointments to 10 percent posts, and such appointments are already being practised by recruiting former civil-military servants, which is known as the "President's Quota".

A joint secretary, speaking on condition of anonymity, said, "Irresponsible conduct by some senior officers has created unprecedented distrust in the administration. I fear

that lateral recruitment could be used to bring relatives of powerful individuals into the administration, which would further weaken an already fragile administration."

Officials at the public administration ministry say they have learned that lateral recruits are to be inducted into the administration after just three months of training.

An additional secretary at the Cabinet Division said, "Joint secretaries are promoted after 20 years of experience. It is hard to see how lateral recruits will perform well with only three months of training."

"They need to assess competent officers properly, while also ensuring that dishonest officials cannot enjoy wealth earned illegally. Only then will the administration be able to move in the right direction. Research by experts alone does not make the administration function."

Officials also said they have no objection to lateral appointments to technical positions - bringing in specialists for a specific period in technical posts, such as scientists, doctors or engineers.

Another joint secretary said the government should carefully take factors like opportunities for corruption and politicisation into account.

"Even though recruits who enter the administration through the existing structured process come in through a transparent, bribe-free system, many of them still become involved in corruption. A lateral entry system could create unlimited scope for corruption and politicisation."

"It will also create opportunities for outsiders to enjoy bureaucratic authority, shrinking promotion

and other facilities of the career bureaucrats," he said.

Former secretary Abdul Awal Mazumder told The Daily Star that the government has failed to set good examples in transfers and promotions, which makes the prospects of the lateral recruitment initiative yielding positive results slim.

Many cite the American spoils system as an example, but Mazumder noted that the US no longer follows that approach.

The spoils system is a practice in government where political leaders reward their supporters, friends, or party members with government jobs or positions, rather than hiring based on merit or qualifications.

Badiul Alam Majumdar, secretary of Citizens for Good Governance (Shujan), welcomed the move. "In principle, introducing a lateral entry system in the administration is a very good initiative. At the very least, it should be tried and tested," he told this newspaper yesterday.

"However, I don't think the officers in the existing structure will allow it. They consider themselves to be the elites of the minds, though their performance no longer reflects that reality," he added.

A senior official at the Pakistan High Commission in Dhaka told The Daily Star yesterday that Pakistan had provisions for lateral entry in the past, but the practice is no longer in place.

The Daily Star's New Delhi correspondent reported that India had introduced lateral entry into the Indian Administrative Service and other tiers of the bureaucracy on a limited scale in 2015. However, it remains unclear how many such recruitments take place each year.

Corruption impeding investment in Bangladesh

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Trade Representative's Special Report List, it is highlighted as being one of the top five source economies for counterfeit clothing.

"Although Bangladesh made progress over the past decade to improve fire and building safety standards in the export-focused ready-made garment (RMG) industry, workers face significant legal barriers in exercising their rights to organize and collectively bargain," the report said.

The interim government's investment climate reform efforts remain in the early implementation stage, it added.

Bangladesh made gradual progress over the past decade to reduce constraints on investment, such as efforts to better ensure reliable electricity service, but foreign investment continues to be hindered by issues such as inadequate infrastructure, limited financing

instruments, bureaucratic delays, unfair tax burdens for foreign firms, and corruption.

"The interim government is working to remove two Hasinara practices that hinder foreign investment: delayed foreign currency payments owed by state owned enterprises (SOEs) and a requirement that the Bangladesh Bank approve the transfer of foreign currency from the country," the report said.

The foreign currency shortage coincided with a banking scandal in which several major Bangladeshi banks made large, questionable loans to companies linked to members of the ruling AL party that later defaulted on the loans.

By December 2024, the value of non-performing loans rose to \$28.57 billion. The interim government has prioritised banking sector reform to align the sector with international best practices.

After the ouster of former prime

minister Sheikh Hasina, the interim government began work on reforming the state administration, but much of the day-to-day regulatory landscape remains unchanged, the report said.

It said the government has made incremental progress in using information technology to improve the transparency and efficiency of some government services. Nevertheless, regulations are often unclear, inconsistent, or not publicised, making it difficult for investors to find the correct channel to address issues, such as protectionism and subsidies in certain industries.

"Some investors have cited unclear regulations and lack of implementation as key barriers to investment," the report said.

The Right to Information Act (2009) provides for stakeholder consultations; however, this consultation process is weak and needs improvement, it added.

We need strict enforcement of electoral laws

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ballots, as there is a high risk of disputes.

Adopting the proportional representation system in the upcoming polls without prior testing or public awareness would not be wise, he added.

"The EC must ensure that voters feel secure at the local level - this must be visible now," said Mohammad Harun Chowdhury, member of the Police Reform Commission.

Many candidates are unable to appoint polling agents because major parties resort to intimidation. "The EC must prevent this," he said.

It seems that preparations are underway for an election excluding certain parties, said journalist and columnist Sohrab Hasan.

"The chief adviser has said it will be the best election. But how can it be the best if some are excluded?"

Ensuring voting rights is the responsibility of the government, the EC and the law enforcement agencies. Arrangements must be made so all candidates can campaign on the same platform as it would reduce the influence of black money, he said.

"The entire nation is watching you.

The EC must be transparent," said Robaet Ferdous, professor at the University of Dhaka's mass communication and journalism department.

International observers should be engaged as much as possible, he said.

Transparency International Bangladesh Director Mohammad Badiuzzaman called for a system to verify the affidavits submitted by candidates.

He also called for the inclusion of a "No Vote" option in all constituencies.

"If this election is to be free and credible, you must stand strong," said Mohon Raihan, president of Jatiya Kabita Parishad.

Once the EC announces the election date, many regular activities will come to a halt and the entire administration will come under the EC's authority, said Abdul Wazed, senior fellow at Power and Participation Research Centre.

"It's crucial that the EC officials can command and control the field administration if it is to conduct the election properly," he added.

Former caretaker government adviser Rasheda K Choudhury demanded ensuring 33 percent of representation of women in parliament.

Chief Election Commissioner AMM Nasir Uddin said the EC will try to implement all suggestions made during the series.

"This time, it will not be like in the past. We have reinstated the authority to cancel an entire constituency's election if irregularities take place at any centre," he said, adding that the EC has taken preparations in case of technical failures too.

In the second session, Dhaka University Vice-Chancellor Niaz Ahmed Khan said that caution is needed regarding IT-supported postal ballots.

Election responsibilities must be entrusted to morally sound individuals, said Kamrul Ahsan, vice-chancellor of Jahangirnagar University.

"It is essential to examine who is being placed where and what their track record is," he said.

The experts and resources of different universities must be engaged to prevent fake news and AI-generated false content during the election, said Gitara Nasreen, a professor at the University of Dhaka's mass communication and journalism department.

Is Jamaat getting a new logo?

MAMUNUR RASHID

The Jamaat-e-Islami exhibited a new logo in meetings between its Ameer Shafiqur Rahman and foreign diplomats yesterday without formally unveiling the new emblem.

A leader said the party is considering changing the logo as part of efforts to reshape its image in what it calls a "new Bangladesh" after the July uprising.

The new design features a rising sun, a pen and a balance scale placed on an open book against a green background.

Photographs released by the party show the emblem displayed at the meetings between Shafiqur, Spanish Ambassador Gabriel Sistiaga Ochoa de Chinchetru, and a delegation of the European Union Election Observation Mission at his residence in the capital's Bashundhara Residential Area.

Contacted, Jamaat Assistant Secretary General Ehsanul Mahbub Zubair said the change was still under discussion. "The change has not been finalised. Several designs have been made, and that one is among them. Once it is final, we will announce it," he said.

Leaders said the party has changed its name and logo before, most recently in June 2016. After the change, the logo carried just the word "Bangladesh" written on a red portion and "Jamaat-e-Islami" on green.

Previously, the widely used logo had carried the electoral symbol - scale - the Arabic word "Aakimuddin" (establish Islam), along with "Allah" in calligraphy.

Jamaat rarely uses the red and green version even for official purposes, often reverting to the older logo with the calligraphy in programmes and documents.

Its electoral symbol - the balance scale - was dropped from the Election Commission's list of symbols in March 2017 after the Supreme Court reserved it exclusively for the judiciary. But in June this year, Jamaat's registration and the scale symbol were reinstated following an Appellate Division verdict.

Explaining the latest move, Ehsanul said, "The previous logo has become quite old. That's why there is a proposal for a new design. We are trying to reshape everything with a new look in a new Bangladesh. This initiative is part of that effort."

