



PHOTOS: AISHWARYA RAIHAN

## ‘SCAPE BETWEEN SPACES’: Divinity on canvas

AISHWARYA RAIHAN

As a child in art school, I was known to my painting teacher as the student obsessed with landscapes. I might not have bloomed into a remarkable landscape artist, but fast forward to 2025 – after work, I dragged my exhausted self to Dwip Gallery in Lalmaatia just to witness the landscape art exhibition they are currently hosting.

*Scape between Spaces* was inaugurated on November 14, 2025, featuring 45 artists from various academic, religious and cultural backgrounds, and age groups, whose works were selected from an open call a few months back.

The participating artists have showcased their skills through different

methods and mediums. The reflections of their clever and thoughtful imagination are presently beautifying the interior of Dwip Gallery. Every canvas, every piece of paper holds a window to a different world through the eyes of an artist.

Upon entering the gallery, I was met with a heavily textured painting of a tree – a demonstration of what lies ahead. The first set of paintings that drew my attention belonged to Mostaque Ahmed, and they reminded me of the fluidity of alcohol ink. Muhtasim Galib Inan displays his unlimited patience and precision with a pen through *The Red*

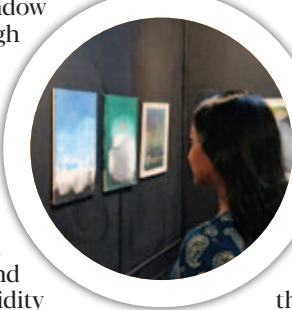
*Tree*. Sajjan Rana’s surrealistic painting is thought provoking, whereas Shafin Asrar’s minimalistic photography of bird silhouettes is much more adorable.

Our precious rivers, canals, swamps, ponds, lakes, wetlands and the bay are a large part of our livelihood, and thus the endless number and structures of boats adorning the landscapes. It is no wonder that multiple artists portrayed marvellous landscapes in their own unique art styles – some as prints, some as paintings; some with muted colours, some with vibrant hues; some proving the saying

“God is in the details”, and others, “Less is more”. Samia Sabiha Rini, Apurba Ranjan Biswas, Md Hamim Biswas, Shibananda Adhikary Biplob, Md Sajjadur Rahman Shihan and Uttam Kumar Talukder are some of the remarkable creators of these boats.

A landscape art exhibition is incomplete without flora. Debrupa Ghosh’s *Darkness and Light* in monochrome looks otherworldly, whereas Rituparna Saha and Monidipa Dasgupta created pieces straight out of fairy tales.

In short, *Scape between Spaces* showcases the mesmerising charm of our diverse landscapes and the versatility of artistic practices in Bangladesh. Dwip Gallery will run this exhibition till November 27, 2025.



## Cultural affairs ministry unveils tribute documentary on Humayun Ahmed

The Ministry of Cultural Affairs has released a 25-minute state-produced documentary honouring renowned writer and filmmaker Humayun Ahmed. Directed by *Debi* filmmaker Anam Biswas, the film revisits Humayun’s life, influence and contributions to literature, television and cinema.

Published on the Chief adviser’s office’s official Facebook page on November 18, the documentary is part of the ministry’s *Celebrating Bangladeshi Legends* series. The accompanying note highlighted Humayun as Bangladesh’s most beloved author and the creator of iconic characters such as Himu,

Misir Ali, Rupa and Shuvro. Cultural Adviser Mostofa Sarwar Farooki, who had earlier pledged state recognition for Humayun, shared the film, calling him “the man, the myth.” The documentary also features reflections from Afzal Hossain, Faruk Wasif, Luna Rushdi and others.



## NEWS

### Strict conditions raise syndication fear

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hotel, Expatriates’ Welfare and Overseas Employment Adviser Asif Nazrul said several of the conditions were unacceptable.

Bangladesh, he said, had already conveyed its objections and would continue talks with Malaysian authorities to secure “a more favourable position for Bangladeshi workers”.

“Only a handful of agencies would be able to send workers if these standards are enforced. We want an open and competitive labour market,” he added.

The expatriates’ welfare ministry has formally asked Malaysia to review the three contentious conditions.

Malaysia had initially sought a list of compliant agencies by November 15 but extended the deadline after Dhaka requested more time.

An official at the ministry told The Daily Star on November 15, “We think these were difficult to fulfill by our recruiting agencies. However, we also asked the licensed recruiting companies to submit applications.”

About 1,000 agencies applied and the ministry shortlisted roughly 500, officials said. After further scrutiny, a final list will be sent to Malaysia.

However, officials acknowledge that “hardly a few agencies” could truly meet all 10 Malaysian conditions. “Therefore, we have asked the Malaysian government to relax the three criteria,” one official said.

At least 10 agencies wrote to Adviser

Asif Nazrul on October 30, opposing Malaysia’s criteria outright.

“I don’t think any of the Bangladeshi recruiting agencies can fulfill the three criteria. These are also not important at all,” said Mohammad Fakhru Alam, former joint secretary of Bangladesh Association of International Recruiting Agencies, and one of the signatories to the agencies’ letter.

He said the demand for a 10,000 sq ft office and fully controlled training centres would only inflate recruitment costs, which had already soared to Tk 450,000–600,000 between 2022 and 2024. It was “totally unnecessary” to require such office space and training centres when Malaysia itself does not mandate specific training, he said.

The letter from the 10 agencies argues that most local recruiters would fail to meet the requirement of sending at least 3,000 workers in the past five years due to disruptions caused by the Russia-Ukraine war, the global economic downturn, long-running syndication in the Malaysian labour market, and the closure of labour channels by the UAE, Bahrain, Qatar, Oman and Libya.

Migration researchers and industry insiders say Bangladesh’s past experiences with Malaysia are fraught.

During 2022–24, a syndicate of 101 agencies, handpicked by Malaysia, operated under the influence of two powerful business figures, one based in each country. The same leaders were

behind the syndicates that controlled recruitment during 2016–18. Malaysia halted recruitment twice, in September 2018 and again in 2024, citing widespread labour exploitation.

A Malaysia-based researcher said exploitation persists. “Even now, everyday, four to five workers call me, saying that they are jobless. A lot of them don’t even get a redress after complaining to the labour department,” he told this correspondent on November 16, requesting anonymity.

Around 8 lakh Bangladeshis live in Malaysia, but thousands remain undocumented and out of work, the researcher said, adding, “A major problem in Malaysia is you bring excessive workers and leave them jobless.”

Although the 2022 memorandum of understanding capped migration costs at Tk 79,000, expenses soared to Tk 600,000 under the syndicate-run system.

Observers fear that limiting recruitment to a few agencies again would revive the very practices Bangladesh has struggled to escape.

“I am sensing putting old wine in a new bottle,” a Bangladesh-based migration researcher said.

Asked whether the new Malaysian conditions would lower costs or ensure fair recruitment, a senior expatriates’ welfare ministry official replied, “We are in the process of negotiation. Let’s see.”

footage, Rab believes they planned the murder and issued the instructions.

“Initially, we learnt that Pata Sohel paid the shooters and Joni received Tk 30,000. But we still don’t know where Sohel got the money or who was behind him. This requires further investigation,” said Lt Col Mahbub.

According to the Rab, the arrestees admitted during primary interrogation that the murder took place over establishing supremacy in Mirpur.

Sohel faces eight cases, including on murder, robbery, and drug-related charges, while Sujon is accused in 18 cases involving murder, robbery, narcotics, firearms, and explosives.

The Rab said Sujon had long evaded arrest while supplying firearms for criminal activities in Mirpur and leading organised gangs across parts of the capital.

Kibria was killed just days after listed criminal Tariq Saif Mamun was shot dead in broad daylight, only yards from Dhaka’s court area.

### 3 Bangladeshis ‘shot dead by Libyan mafia’

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irregular channels, and that over the past year alone he sent more than 50 youths from Adityapur via Libya.

His brother Selim reportedly assisted him. After news of Imran’s death, families of both brothers fled their homes, locals added.

Fatema Akter, Imran’s elder sister, told The Daily Star, “One day my brother told me, if we paid Tk 20 lakh to broker Shipon, he would take him to Italy. Several of my brother’s friends were planning to go, and he wanted to tag along with them.”

She said she had warned Shipon to ensure her brother was taken directly to Italy. “Today, my brother is lost in the Mediterranean due to some local mafia.”

### Mobile retailers demand

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officer of Times PR, from their homes.

The media invitation to cover the MBCB press conference came with Sohel’s mobile number.

Sohel, a board member of online air ticketing agency 24kt.com that allegedly swindled about Tk 50 crore from small agencies and customers a few years back, was released yesterday morning.

Piyash, also the CEO of gadget retailer Sumash Tech, was released yesterday evening.

DB Chief Mohammad Shafiqul Islam confirmed the duo’s detention.

“They were organising a press conference against NEIR, so we detained Piyash to ask why they were opposing it. He said that he is not against NEIR, so we released him,” Islam said.

After his release, Sohel, also the head of online at Bhorer Kagoj, described his experience in a Facebook post.

“Around midnight, using the excuse that the DB chief wanted to talk to me, 5–6 DB members forcibly picked me up... My name was written in the accused register... I realised that on the instruction of a government adviser, I was detained just to allow nine mobile phone businessmen to run a monopoly business,” he wrote.

After news of Sohel’s detention spread, social media discussions mentioned Faiz Ahmad Taiyeb, special assistant to the Chief Adviser responsible for the Posts, Telecommunications and ICT Ministry.

Taiyeb rejected the allegations. In a press release from the ministry, he said: “With ill intentions, some media outlets have blamed me based on a Facebook post... Law enforcement agencies do their work. There is no scope for me to be involved.”

Reacting to this, MBCB Vice-President Shamim Mollah said: “I request you – if

Fatema said the family sold land and paid Shipon Tk 42 lakh in instalments after he claimed Imran was being detained and tortured by the mafia. “He later demanded more, but we could not afford it. Because we could not pay, the mafia killed my brother.”

Munna’s aunt, Khadija Akter, told journalists, “I gave Shipon a loan of Tk 40 lakh. We cannot accept the death of my nephew. We demand exemplary punishment of this broker and request the government to return the body.”

Bayezid’s father, Kuddus Sheikh, said, “How can I accept my son’s death? The broker initially denied involvement, and only later did we learn my son was in Libya. He is now no more.”

you are involved in these activities, please step back with your self-respect. Do not make such manoeuvres to increase the profits of a syndicate.”

In another Facebook post, Taiyeb wrote that the press conference invitation – titled “Addressing Concerns Regarding NEIR Implementation” – was issued under the name of Mohammad Aslam, who claimed to be the president of the MBCB, but the organisation is not registered with the commerce ministry. Indicating Sohel’s involvement with illegal importers, he said the phone number listed on the invitation as Aslam’s was actually the journalist’s own, and that Sohel had personally sent the invitation to other journalists.

He wrote: “How can a journalist organise a press conference on behalf of a smuggling accused group... using a fake title, fake identity and his own phone number? How can a journalist act as the spokesperson, PR agent, consultant or beneficiary of smugglers? Is this within journalistic ethics?”

“Therefore, no one is above the law... If anyone goes beyond ethical boundaries and becomes involved with an illegal group, then they must face questioning by law enforcement.”

Such questioning should happen in daylight, ensuring transparency.

“I personally want NBR to rationally reconsider mobile import duty and the tax structure for local manufacturing so that handset prices come down,” Taiyeb added.

Asked about the allegation, Sohel told The Daily Star: “Alongside journalism, I have been running a PR agency called Times PR for 13–14 years... Since I was coordinating media for this programme, the letter was issued in the name of the organisation’s president. The phone number was mine so that journalists could contact me.”

### WHAT’S THE HAPS?

## ‘Siddhartha’

Aarshinagar brings Hermann Hesse’s timeless novel to the stage, tracing a young Brahman’s restless journey from asceticism to enlightenment. Directed by Reza Arif, the play explores spiritual hunger, disillusionment, and the search for truth – moving from sacred renunciation to worldly experience in a lyrical, visually meditative production.

Date: Thursday–Friday| November 20–21, 2025

Time: 7:30pm onwards

Venue: Experimental Theatre Hall, BSA



## BotTala unveils 25th production ‘Jojongondha Maya’



BotTala Theatre Company is set to premiere its 25th production, *Jojongondha Maya*, at the Experimental Theatre Hall of the Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy on November 27 at 7:30pm, with two additional shows on November 28.

Written by Badruzzaman Alamgir and directed by Imran Khan Munna, the play follows a mother searching for her

missing child, framing personal grief within the broader realities of war and its aftermath. Alamgir describes it as a reflection on how the powerless carry the heaviest costs of conflict, while Munna notes the emotional pull of a mother’s vigil. The cast includes Samina Luthfa Nitra and Mohammad Ali Haider, supported by a creative team overseeing music, costumes, and lighting.