



PHOTOS: GALLERI KAYA

Sunflowers and beyond WITNESSING CROSSROAD

RBR

By sheer stroke of chance, I stepped into the exhibition space of Galleri Kaya in Uttara and managed to take a quick look at the group art exhibition titled "CROSSROAD ... not a project".

Organised by Galleri Kaya and sponsored by ADN Group, it is an extraordinary presentation by 11 contemporary Bangladeshi artists.

What struck me immediately were the yellow canvases. From the very entrance, two enormous works — A Drying Sunflower and A Fallen Sunflower — rare displays of Sahid Kazi's brilliance in oil, exerted a hypnotic pull with muted greens and luminous yellows. Turning left, Shahanoor Mamun's monumental acrylics, Rhythm of the Reapers and Whispers of the Harvest, transfixed viewers with their golden glow.

Colour here was not just pigment, it was power. The brief, informal preview felt like stumbling into a magical loop, leaving me quietly exhilarated. Mamun explained:

"Harvest expresses the energy of the countryside; it is more than an agricultural act. It is a celebration of patience, resilience, and the enduring bond between people and nature. Through vibrant, impressionistic brushstrokes, the warmth of the sun radiates across the canvas, capturing the rhythm of labour and the gentle

sweep of wind through ripened grain." His words echoed the radiance of his canvases.

For me, yellow has always been a radiant colour: the sweep of sunflower fields, the layered gold of ripened paddy, the cheerful mustard blossoms, the soft calendula petals, the luminous Alamanda blooms. Even the smallest stroke of yellow paint feels like a fragment of sunlight caught and set free.

Stepping deeper into the gallery, the

for the first time, I admired its ease: free of heavy concepts, yet quietly majestic.

The exhibition brings together a dynamic group of Bangladeshi artists born between 1970 and 1989, straddling both Generation X and the Millennials. This carefully chosen group has played a pivotal role in shaping the contemporary art landscape of Bangladesh. The growing demand for their works — driven by diverse trajectories of practice, thought, and visual language — continues to draw

discourse, teaching at the University of Dhaka and shaping emerging artists while sustaining active studio practices.

"The title CROSSROAD ... not a project suggests neither a fixed theme nor a prescribed curatorial framework. Rather, it acknowledges a moment — an intersection of experiences, ideologies, and visual vocabularies. The exhibition resists being framed merely as a project; it is instead a confluence of practices that reflect personal histories, socio-political consciousness, material exploration, and evolving aesthetic languages."

Featuring 46 works in ceramic, stoneware, brass, welded iron, oil, acrylic, gouache, mixed media, and watercolour on paper and canvas, the exhibition showcases creations by Abdus Sattar Toufiq, Ashim Halder Sagor, Azharul Islam Chanchal, Azmeer Hossain, Monjur Rashid, Nabaraj Roy, Shahanoor Mamun, Sahid Kazi, Shohag Parvez, Sushanta Kumar Adhikary, and Ekushay Padak 2026 recipient Tejesh Halder Josh.

Inaugurated by the High Commissioner of India to Bangladesh, HE Pranay Verma, the exhibition will remain open daily from 11:30am to 7:30pm until April 16, 2026 — a luminous stop during the Pohela Boishakh break in Dhaka.

For further queries, visit Galleri Kaya's Facebook page.



mood shifted. Abdus Sattar Toufiq's aqua greens and blues offset the yellows with bold variations of line and form, laying bare his inner landscape. Then came Azmeer Hossain's boats, drifting in soft watercolour washes, merging with reflections of cloudy skies — the fluid medium capturing the lush Bengal monsoon with striking ease.

Beyond the spell of yellow, Monjur Rashid's acrylics Steadfast 1 and Mother elevated seemingly insignificant subjects — hens and roosters — into regal figures. Encountering his work

the attention of collectors, compelling them to enrich their collections with creations of remarkable splendour and significance.

"This generation stands at a decisive intersection — between tradition and experimentation, academic engagement and independent practice, locality and global discourse," said Goutam Chakraborty, Director of Galleri Kaya. "Some continue as freelance practitioners, navigating exhibitions and commissions, while others contribute to institutional

94 deaths in 19 days: govt

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children, health officials and experts attribute the surge largely to immunisation gaps, citing long intervals between special campaigns, repeated disruptions to routine vaccination, and supply constraints.

Measles, a highly infectious disease, often leads to complications such as pneumonia, diarrhoea, ear infections, and encephalitis. It also weakens immunity, putting children and those with comorbidities at higher risk.

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), at least 56 of the country's 64 districts had reported measles cases as of March 28, indicating widespread transmission. Officials fear the number may now be higher, as cases may have emerged in eight additional districts since that report.

The DGHS began publishing measles data on its website on Thursday. Its initial report recorded 3,709 suspected cases between March 15 and 8:00am Thursday, including 585 confirmed infections. It also mentioned 27 deaths, of which 13 were confirmed.

Yesterday, the DGHS revised its data and reported the suspected deaths and cases between March 15 and 8:00am.

It included three deaths and 947 suspected cases in the previous 24 hours. The number of confirmed deaths was revised down to nine from 13. Officials said five deaths were excluded due to incorrect reporting from district-level offices, while one more previously unreported death was added.

An official from the

DGHS Management Information System (MIS) said most of the dead were children.

Hospital data show that of the 5,792 suspected cases, 3,776 patients have been admitted since March 15, and 2,527 have already been discharged.

Division-wise, Dhaka recorded the highest number of suspected cases (2,394), followed by Rajshahi (1,243) and Chattogram (717), while Rangpur reported the lowest (119).

The government had not formally disclosed such high death figures earlier. Around a dozen health officials contacted by this correspondent also did not indicate numbers this high. Most newspapers had reported deaths between 50 and 65, with this newspaper reporting 50 on Thursday.

WHY SO SEVERE
Data from the Expanded Programme on Immunisation (EPI) showed crude vaccination coverage under its regular campaign declined over the past two years.

Special campaigns are held every four years to cover those missed, with the last campaign held in 2020.

But the planned 2024 campaign could not be conducted due to the situation surrounding the political changeover, said Shahriar Sajjad, deputy director of the EPI.

Routine vaccinations were also disrupted at least three times last year due to strikes by health assistants in rural areas.

A funding crisis following the suspension of the Health, Population, and Nutrition Sector Programme (HPNSP) further affected services.

Since 1998, four HPNSPs have been implemented, with the last ending in June 2024. The interim government scrapped the proposed fifth programme in March 2025, opting to integrate sectoral programmes into regular ones.

Several projects were later approved to continue unfinished tasks and ensure supply of medicines and vaccines, but approvals were delayed, some until November last year.

In August last year, Tk 842 crore was allocated to buy vaccines. However, procurement complications arose after the interim government decided to source half through Unicef's direct procurement method and the rest via tender.

"We still couldn't buy vaccines due to these complications," a DGHS official said last week, adding that the shortage led to rationing since January.

Stocks of six vaccines, including measles, were exhausted at headquarters, with shortages also reported at field level, according to the official.

The then health adviser Nurjahan Begum could not be reached for comment over phone.

EPI's Shahriar Sajjad said although the central stock of routine measles vaccines was exhausted, two crore doses were received from Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, for a special campaign planned for mid-April. However, the campaign is likely to be delayed until June or July due to shortages of syringes and other logistics.

The emergency vaccination drive starting tomorrow will proceed after syringes "had been

managed", he added.

Prof Halimur Rashid, DGHS director (disease control), said the emergency campaign will initially run for two weeks in high-burden areas, with possible extension. A meeting is scheduled for tonight to finalise details before a formal announcement.

5 MORE DEATHS
Reports from districts indicate the outbreak's human toll is continuing to rise.

In Cox's Bazar, two children died within hours on Thursday at Cox's Bazar Sadar Hospital, raising the number of deaths linked to measles-like symptoms in the district to four. The deceased included seven-month-old Roushonni from Ramu and nine-month-old Jesin from Moheshkhali.

Acting Civil Surgeon Mahiuddin Alamgir said 92 samples had been sent for testing, with 30 returned positive so far.

In Tangail, a 13-month-old child died yesterday at Tangail General Hospital, while another child died in the district on Thursday.

In Rajshahi, a patient with measles-like symptoms died at Rajshahi Medical College Hospital, taking the death toll there to six since March 29. The hospital did not disclose the identity of the deceased.

In the 24 hours till noon yesterday, 12 new suspected patients were admitted to the hospital and 13 were discharged, said spokesperson Shankar K Biswas.

In Mymensingh, one suspected measles patient died at Mymensingh Medical College Hospital in the 24 hours ending early yesterday, bringing the total deaths there to six.

BNP govt being tested by turmoil

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committed and skilled people to make governance more effective, which in turn will help tackle the crises.

"There were many talented and qualified individuals the party could have used in different ministries and other areas," he said, adding that it should have had a think tank to guide it on ongoing problems.

Home Minister Salahuddin Ahmed insisted the government is doing its best to cope with the situation.

"Like many other countries, Bangladesh is facing challenges from the US-Israel war on Iran. Under the prime minister's direction, we are moving forward. Prices have not increased yet, but depending on the situation ahead, decisions may be taken if needed," he told The Daily Star.

Salahuddin, also a BNP Standing Committee member, said the government

has already taken several steps to handle the situation, including austerity measures.

According to party insiders, the situation has been further complicated as some cabinet members are still adjusting to key ministries after a long absence from government.

"Some of our cabinet members are inexperienced, which makes it difficult to handle complex responsibilities and urgent national challenges," said a senior party leader, speaking on condition of anonymity, adding that the number of experienced officials is also limited.

A minister and a state minister said separately that fulfilling the party's election promises had become a challenge, but they insisted the promises would be kept.

The administration is also facing political pressure over the July charter and the handling of reforms and ordinances in parliament.

15 hours in queue for fuel worth Tk 2,000!

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motorcycles, Tk 1,500 to cars, and Tk 2,000 to SUVs till at least 2:00am today.

A rent a car driver, Alam last bought fuel worth Tk 5,000 on March 25, which was nearly exhausted by then.

"With Tk 2,000 worth of fuel, my hybrid SUV can run about 200 kilometres. I usually drive over 100km a day, which means I will have to queue again within the next two days," he said.

"It's becoming increasingly difficult to manage work under such conditions."

Queues stretching across multiple roads have grown longer over the past few days, despite earlier expectations from officials that the situation would ease after the government announced no increase in local fuel prices.

In the capital, in many areas, queues from one filling station extended up to the next, effectively occupying the entire first lane of the road, and sometimes disrupting traffic flow.

A visit between 3:00pm and 5:00pm to 12 filling

stations in Tejgaon, Mohakhali, and the Gulshan link road area found three stations closed, while the rest were struggling to handle the queue.

The Tejgaon-Mohakhali road was busier than usual for a holiday, with traffic police managing both signals and congestion caused by long queues at fuel pumps.

Visits to the same stations over the past week suggest the situation is worsening.

At the same spot before the Trust Filling Station, Md Jasim Uddin was seen waiting in line at 1:00pm on April 1 after joining the queue at 4:00am — a wait of around nine hours.

Tensions occasionally flared after station-imposed sales limits, with customers protesting after hours of waiting.

"Why didn't you inform us earlier about the cap? Did I wait 14-15 hours just for Tk 1,500 worth of fuel?" a private car owner shouted at staff.

He also questioned why some VIP vehicles were being served from the other side of

the queue, saying it further slowed the process for others.

A staff member at the station, requesting anonymity, told The Daily Star that defence personnel and their families have long received priority at the pump.

"We check IDs for those who receive such privileges," he said.

Similar queues were observed at Ideal, Sikder, Southern, Satata, Clean, Royal, and Eureka filling stations in the area, most of which were rationing fuel.

Most stations were limiting sales to Tk 500-600 for motorcycles and Tk 1,500-2,000 for cars. In addition, stations such as SR, Tashofa, and Shohag were either closed or displaying "No Octane" signs.

Fuel station operators claimed they were not receiving adequate supplies to meet the surge in demand, forcing them to ration sales.

The government say it is supplying fuel to filling stations from depots based on the April 2025 demand, blaming panic buying for the

Development projects

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if the external situation worsens and creates deeper pressure on imports, transport, power generation, and public expenditure.

According to the Cabinet Division, the government will not go ahead with any new development project for the time being. The move is meant to slow fresh spending commitments and help preserve funds for urgent national needs.

Officials added that spending on land acquisition would be reduced by 100 percent.

A Cabinet Division officer, wishing anonymity, said that a 100 percent reduction in land acquisition costs means that ongoing projects requiring the acquisition will remain halted.

At the same time, the government will not undertake any new projects needing land acquisition, at least in the current fiscal year, he added.

Another officer said it is a very tough decision for a new government.

"This is because not taking such projects will effectively create a major stagnation in development work, which will decrease the government's popularity."

The measures announced by the government cover fuel use, electricity consumption, transport, office hours, official travel, training, and a range of other state expenditures.

The government has also stopped giving interest-free loans to officials for buying cars until further notice.

Under the 2020 policy, officials from deputy secretary rank and above were allowed to take interest-free loans of up to Tk 30 lakh to purchase vehicles.

Sources said all government-funded foreign training programmes would remain suspended until further orders, while spending on domestic training would be reduced by 50 percent.

In addition, hospitality costs at meetings and seminars will be cut by 50 percent, seminar and conference expenses by 20 percent, and travel expenses by 30 percent.

As part of the new

measure, the 30 percent reduction will apply to the use of fuel, electricity, and gas across all public offices, meaning ministries, departments, and other state institutions will be required to scale back their routine consumption of energy to reduce overall government demand.

Meanwhile, the government has also ordered cuts in expenses on beautification work.

Expenditure on the beautification of residential buildings will be reduced by 20 percent, while spending on non-residential buildings will be slashed by 50 percent.

Over the power saving target, the Cabinet Division said importance would be given to irrigation for agricultural land, fertiliser production, fertiliser storage, and proper distribution.

It added that fuel supply to industries would continue on a priority basis so that factories can keep running and economic growth is not badly affected.

Sources in the Prime Minister's Office said that while the government wants to cut waste and reduce non-essential energy use, it does not want the austerity plan to hurt farming, fertiliser supply, or industrial output, all of which are closely linked to food production, jobs, and market stability.

The government has also revised office and business hours. Government and private offices, as well as banks and financial institutions, will operate from 9:00am to 4:00pm, while banking services will be available from 10:00am to 3:00pm.

Except for emergency services, all office buildings, shopping centres, and commercial establishments must close by 6:00pm.

The government also approved a proposal allowing registered educational institutions to import brand-new electric buses without duty.

In other cases, such buses may be imported at a total duty of 20 percent. The decision appears intended to encourage cleaner transport and lower long-term dependence on conventional fuel.

reserved seats for women in parliament. Party insiders acknowledged that BNP is also trying to control the activities of some members whose conduct has harmed party image.

Political analysts said the government's ability to manage this phase depends not only on administrative performance but also on how the BNP strengthens its organisation from grassroots to national levels with capable people.

"BNP needs to give more attention to reorganising the party now," said Al Masud Hasanuzzaman, former professor of Jahangirnagar University.

"New faces are being seen in the government. The head of government probably thinks that by giving them responsibility, he can test their ability. In some cases, the results are satisfactory, but some are falling short of what is needed," he added.

shortages at the stations.

The government said a ship brought 25,000 tonnes of octane on April 1, and another ship is expected to bring a similar shipment in mid-April. The shipments are expected to meet the country's demand for around 40 days.

On March 30, Power, Energy and Mineral Resources Minister Iqbal Hassan Mahmood Tuku said fuel sales at Trust Filling Station rose in March to 10,620 litres per day, up from 5,400 litres per day in March 2025.

Meanwhile, the BPC is trying to secure up to 3,30,000 tonnes of diesel in 14 vessels and three consignments through the pipeline.

A vessel carrying 27,000 tonnes of diesel from Singapore reached Chattogram Port yesterday, according to Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation (BPC). Another vessel carrying around 30,000 tonnes is expected to arrive within the next couple of days.