



Installation view of ‘Than Para — No Land Without Us’ in Venice

PHOTOS: VICTOR PINCHUK FOUNDATION

RAKSHANDA RAHMAN MISHA

At the Venice Biennale’s collateral exhibition *Still Joy — From Ukraine into the World*, Bangladeshi visual artist Ashfika Rahman finds herself at the centre of a rare moment of global attention, after her work *Than Para — No Land Without Us* was selected as a New York Times Critics’ Pick among the 6 Must-See Venice Shows.

The New York Times described its selection as part of a group of works, calling it “thought-provoking and senses-stirring”, highlighting its engagement with themes of war, memory, and lived experience across different contexts.

For Rahman, the recognition lands quietly but meaningfully—not as a sudden arrival, but as part of a longer, more personal journey of becoming visible within a global art world that has often felt distant.

Inside Venice’s dense, almost overwhelming landscape of international exhibitions, Rahman’s work does not announce itself loudly. Instead, it lingers. Her installation is part of *Still Joy*, a collateral event of the 61st International Art Exhibition di La Biennale di Venezia, curated by Björn Geldhof and Oleksandra Pohrebnyak and presented by the Pinchuk Art Centre.

Built from Ukrainian testimonies

collected by Hlib Stryzhko and Nataliya Gumenyuk, the exhibition repeatedly returns to a central tension: how joy survives—not as celebration, but as something stubbornly persistent in the face of rupture.

Within this emotional terrain, Rahman’s *Than Para — No Land Without Us* feels intimate rather than monumental. It carries the weight of distance and belonging at once, shaped by the ongoing struggles of Indigenous communities in Bangladesh’s Hill Tracts, while also speaking to broader global patterns of displacement and erasure.

Her work remains inseparable from lived reality. Speaking about the Venice recognition, the artist describes a feeling that is both grounding and slightly unreal: “Having *Than Para — No Land Without Us* included in *Still Joy: From Ukraine into the World* is deeply humbling as a Bangladeshi artist.”

But even in that moment of recognition, her attention moves outward rather than inward. She is careful to place

herself within a continuum, not at its centre. “It is important to acknowledge and celebrate all the Bangladeshi and Bangladeshi-rooted artists who have participated, both currently and historically, in different formats within the structure of the Venice Biennale.”

There is a quiet insistence in the way she speaks about her practice—as if it is less about making objects and more about holding onto things that are constantly slipping away. She describes her work as emerging from “displacement, suppression, and violence experienced by marginalised communities”, especially Indigenous groups in Bangladesh.

At the centre of *Than Para* are thousands of small temple bells gathered from different spiritual traditions. They are fragile on their own, almost ordinary, but together they shift into something larger and more insistent. As she puts it, “They function as a collective call for attention, fragile individually, but powerful as a unified voice.”

Even the idea of recognition, for her, resists simplicity. It is not a finish line,

but something heavier and more ongoing. “For me, recognition by The New York Times is meaningful not as a destination but as a responsibility...” she says, framing visibility as a kind of obligation rather than achievement.

That responsibility, she suggests, lies in ensuring that those who are usually absent from global narratives are still present within them—“to be seen, heard, and remembered”.

Rahman often returns to the idea that she is, first and foremost, a storyteller. Raised by a socially conscious and feminist mother, she grew up moving between dance, theatre, photography, and eventually visual art. “Over time, visual art became the space where all these experiences converged,” she says.

None of these stories, in her view, exist in isolation. They are connected across geographies, histories, and struggles. “These encounters reaffirm that we are responding not to isolated stories, but to a shared human condition.”

As *Still Joy* continues its run in Venice from May 9 to August 1, Rahman’s work sits quietly within its larger questions while also stretching them outward. In her practice, joy is not an answer or a resolution. It is something more fragile and persistent than certainty itself—something that survives, even when everything else feels uncertain.

NEWS

‘Tk 2-3cr extorted every day’

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People from the previous government used to do this, and I’m not saying here who is doing it now. But ultimately, the cost of this extortion falls on consumers because traders incorporate it into product prices. So extortion is contributing to inflation.”

In response, reserved-seat MP Mahmuda said, “The honourable MP says extortion is taking place in his area, yet he does not know who is involved. Nothing could be more unfortunate. He should have a clear list of those engaged in extortion and should go to the law enforcement authorities with that list.

“If anyone engages in extortion in my constituency, whether from the

ruling party or outside it, I will declare war against them and certainly take legal action. Therefore, I reject the Jamaat MP’s claims.”

In response to Mahmuda’s counter, Saiful said, “Earlier, people from the ruling party used to engage in extortion, and even now it is people from the ruling party who are doing it. “The biggest extortion hub in my area is Karwan Bazar. Previously, the former home minister himself was involved in extortion. He is from my neighbourhood, and I know everything clearly.”

Saiful mentioned he had discussed the matter with Home Minister Salahuddin Ahmed. “I sought his [home minister’s] cooperation. A

minister advised me to discuss the issue with the prime minister. I want the extortion taking place in Karwan Bazar, the Mohakhali Bus Terminal and the Tejgaon area to stop.”

Saiful further said corruption is the biggest problem in Bangladesh. “The most instrumental people in enabling tax evasion are those involved in tax collection themselves. They are the ones who advise businesspeople and individuals on how to evade taxes.”

To stop wasteful spending, he suggested revisiting contracts with power companies. “We are paying people [companies] sitting idle in the name of capacity charges. Those who made these agreements should also be brought under punishment.”

Work with local leaders, MPs of opposition

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problems and work actively to resolve them. He also asked them to remain informed about ongoing national issues before speaking on such matters.

Citing measles as an example, Tarique said MPs should do research and gather information before making statements on any public issue, according to sources.

During the meeting, the PM said women lawmakers should not limit their work to women-centred issues only. They should carry out positive and impactful work inside and outside parliament.

He said steps would be taken to provide them with training to make them more skilled in parliamentary

work, public engagement, and development activities.

After the meeting, Selima Rahman, BNP Standing Committee member and a reserved-seat MP, said the PM stressed that MPs must work for the people’s welfare.

“The prime minister is very sincere about women’s empowerment. Women MPs will work as partners in implementing the government’s initiatives,” she said.

Several lawmakers said the meeting also discussed political activities at the grassroots.

One MP raised the issue of Jamaat’s women’s wing, saying that its activists went door to door during and after the polls and carried out campaigns.

WB approves \$350m for Bangladesh’s

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East would materially impact fuel and fertiliser supplies, with the poorest households hardest hit.

The original Energy Sector Security Enhancement Project, worth \$350 million, was approved by the World Bank Board on June 18, 2025, and is scheduled to run until December 31, 2031.

Jean Pesme, WB division director for Bangladesh and Bhutan, said the conflict in the Middle East has pushed up LNG prices and disrupted supply. “As a net fuel and gas importing

country, Bangladesh faces significant fiscal pressure to maintain its energy security and keep its economy running.

“As part of our broader dialogue with the authorities on energy and the response to the impacts of the war, the World Bank is stepping up its support to help Bangladesh maintain a stable supply of LNG imports, which is critical for protecting the economy and people from costly energy disruptions.”

By ensuring access to more reliable gas supplies, the additional financing

will support electricity generation, industrial activity, and job creation, he added.

Olayinka Edebiri, WB senior energy expert and task team leader of the project, said gas is a cheaper and less emissions-intensive energy source compared to other fuels, and undisrupted LNG supply provides the foundation for energy security in Bangladesh.

“It will also help generate fiscal savings by reducing dependence on more expensive liquid fuels,” he said.

Leaked cable

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to engineer regime change because of his independent foreign policy stance and reluctance to fully align with the US position against Russia and China.

Washington repeatedly denied the accusations, insisting there was “no truth” to the claims and stating that Imran had never produced evidence proving foreign involvement.

The April 2022 no-confidence vote marked the first time a Pakistani prime minister had been removed through such a parliamentary process.

A year after, Imran Khan and his wife, Bushra Bibi, were convicted of a series of corruption, contempt, and national security charges and have remained incarcerated.

His party, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), was also subsequently outlawed and stripped of its electoral symbol ahead of the 2024 general election. PTI members who won seats as independents were denied certification.

Pakistan

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Iran has demanded compensation for war damage, an end to a US blockade of Iranian ports and a halt to fighting on all fronts, including in Lebanon, where Israel is battling the Iran-backed Hezbollah militia.

Trump said in a post on Truth Social at the weekend that “the Clock is Ticking” for Iran, adding that “they better get moving, FAST, or there won’t be anything left of them. TIME IS OF THE ESSENCE!”

Trump is expected to meet top national security advisers today to discuss options for resuming military action, Axios reported. Stock markets mostly retreated and oil prices gained yesterday after Trump issued the warning.

Pakistan has deployed 8,000 troops, a squadron of fighter jets and an air defence system to Saudi Arabia under a mutual defence pact, ramping up military cooperation with Riyadh.

The deployment, the full scale of which is reported here for the first time, was confirmed by three security officials and two government sources, all of whom described it as a substantial, combat-capable force intended to support Saudi Arabia’s military if the kingdom comes under further attack.

Iran’s Revolutionary Guards said yesterday their forces had struck groups linked to the United States and Israel in the western Iranian province of Kurdistan, near the border with Iraq.

PM to lead high-level

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also responsible for setting national security priorities, supervising coordination among agencies, and outlining the operational boundaries for law enforcement and security agencies.

The body will also recommend amendments to existing laws and regulations; propose drafting of new laws, if necessary; and establish a system for the regular monitoring of online platforms.

National Security Intelligence (NSI) will provide the required manpower and infrastructural support to act as the secretariat for this committee.

Govt to restart ICUs

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Cumilla, Noakhali, Gopalganj, Feni, Munshiganj, Narayanganj, Sherpur, Tangail, Jashore, Sunamganj, Chuadanga, Bagerhat and Madaripur.

Similar ICUs were also established at Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical College Hospital and nine medical college hospitals in Khulna, Dinajpur, Barishal, Sylhet, Faridpur, Tangail, Manikganj, Bogura and Cumilla.

Additionally, five-bed ICUs were set up at the Infectious Diseases Hospital in Dhaka and the Bangladesh Institute of Tropical and Infectious Diseases in Chattogram.

Over 1,000 staff members, including medical officers and technicians, were recruited to operate the units under

The other committee members are cabinet secretary, principal secretary to the PM, principal staff officer of the Armed Forces Division, inspector general of police (IGP), and directors general of DGFI, NSI, BGB, NTMC, and Rab, and additional IG of Special Branch (SB).

Besides, four officers – additional IG of Criminal Investigation Department (CID), additional IG of Special Security Unit (SSU), head of Bangladesh Bank Financial Intelligence Unit (BFIU), and CEO of the National Security Cell under the Cabinet Division – will also assist the committee.

Couple, infant found dead

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upazila in Gopalganj, had been living in a rented house in Amirabad for around three years.

When Chinmoy arrived there, he introduced himself to locals as Misti’s cousin.

“They [Chinmoy and his family] arrived at Misti’s residence around 5:00pm, after which Misti went out shopping,” said Madaripur Police Station Officer-in-Charge Abul Kalam Azad, quoting Misti.

When she returned home around 9:30pm, she found the room where Chinmoy and his family were staying locked. She knocked on the door repeatedly but received no response. At one stage, Misti called the national emergency service 999, the OC said.

On information, police rushed to the spot and recovered the bodies around 1:30am yesterday, said SP Habibur.

‘Coke Studio Bangla’ season 4 in the works

Coke Studio Bangla is set to return with its fourth season, with shooting already underway in Dhaka.

A verified source confirmed to The Daily Star that a song was filmed in Dhaka on May 14 and 15. The remaining songs will gradually go into production in the coming weeks.

When asked about the artistes featured in the upcoming season and the release date of the first song, the source said an official announcement would be made soon.

Earlier, the third season of *Coke Studio Bangla* premiered on April 13, 2024. No new songs were released for nearly a year before the season returned on August 23, 2025, following a break.

Musician Shayan Chowdhury Arnob served as the music curator for the first three seasons.



WHAT’S THE HAPS?

‘Atmospheres of Time’

Avi Shankar Ain’s solo exhibition at Gallery Platform unfolds as an immersive study of shifting light, memory, and landscape. Moving through abstraction, his works dissolve horizons into fluid emotional terrains shaped by sea, sky, and season. The show reflects a contemplative practice rooted in perception, transition, and the fragility of time.

DATE: SATURDAY–SUNDAY | MAY 16–JUNE 7, 2026

TIME: 7:00 PM ONWARDS

VENUE: GALLERY PLATFORM, IZAKAYA, GULSHAN

