'ANNiE' wins award at Geneva International Film Festival

Nazifa Tushi starrer miniseries ***ANNiE***, directed by Abdullah Mohammad Saad, has won the Future Is Sensible Award at the 32nd Geneva International Film Festival (GIFF) in Switzerland.

The festival's Future Is Sensible section holds special significance for the entire team as it celebrates stories that go beyond entertainment, explore human values, raise questions and encourage audiences to reflect on the world and its future.

Reflecting on her experience of playing the titular character, Tushi described Annie as more than a role, saying the journey of understanding her silences, emotions, vulnerabilities and strengths had changed her in ways she was still discovering.

The series stars Tushi alongside Yash Rohan, Symon Sadik, Sarika Subrin, Farhana Mithu and Nazah.



'Non-duality' explores the fading connection between nature and the living

AISHWARYA RAIHAN

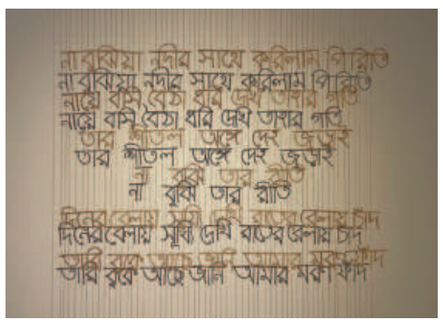
On October 30, artist Moni Majhi's solo exhibition, ***Non-duality***, was inaugurated at La Galerie, Alliance Française de Dhaka (AFD). The opening was attended by art critic Moinuddin Khaled, artist and cartoonist Professor Shishir Bhattacharjee, and AFD Director François Chambraud. The exhibition thoughtfully explores the fading kinship between nature, its natural forces, and living beings, while offering visual possibilities for reconnecting with the environment.

Hailing from Khulna, Majhi draws deep artistic inspiration from the Sundarbans—a region where rivers, forests, tides, saline soil, and wildlife are intricately intertwined with human life. He notes that the animals, myths, and folk beliefs of the coastal belt have long shaped his understanding of existence as an interdependent relationship built on memory and connection. However, contemporary





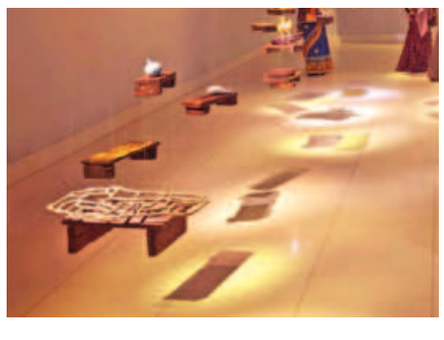
PHOTOS: **ABRAR FAIYAZ NILOY**



political and economic systems, unchecked natural resource exploitation, narrow-minded concepts of development, and the worsening climate crisis continually disrupt the fragile structures sustaining this connection. Consequently, rivers alter their course, soil turns saline, wildlife loses habitats, and local communities lose vital fragments of their memories, languages, and cultural identities. Majhi poignantly describes those displaced by these ecological disruptions as "refugees of the green."

Through ***Non-duality***, the artist gives tangible form to his vision of reviving humanity's lost harmony with nature—a vision extending far beyond formal religious doctrines. Upon entering the gallery, visitors are greeted by wooden *piris* (traditional Bengali sitting tools) suspended from the ceiling, almost as if holding sacred offerings. In coastal communities, offering *sinni* or *payesh* (a traditional milk-and-rice dessert) on a *piri* is a ritual intended to calm raging storms and winds attributed to deities like Paban Pir or Paban Thakur. Offering a *piri* to a guest is also an enduring gesture of hospitality.

Drawing on these rich cultural associations, Majhi collected wooden *piris* in distinctive colours from homes across his village to serve as his primary canvas. Carved with folk sayings, poems, and imaginative creatures, key pieces include a woman with a fish's tail and wings—symbolising ecological symbiosis—and a miniature representation of mangrove respiratory roots.



Elsewhere in the gallery, an embroidered work depicts Bonbibi, the guardian mother of the Sundarbans, holding roots on her lap for protection against a stark white backdrop, visually echoing Michelangelo's Pietà. Another map-based artwork highlights the traditional "Ashtamasi" (eight-month) earthen embankment, a temporary local flood-adaptation method that works in harmony with natural rhythms rather than disrupting them. Additional pieces incorporate jute embroidery and wood carvings featuring folk poems about the mythical Badar Gazi and traditional adages on harvesting and natural disasters.

Ultimately, ***Non-duality*** reminds urban dwellers and coastal inhabitants alike that we do not own nature; we are an intrinsic part of it. The exhibition remains open at Alliance Française de Dhaka until November 10, daily from 3 :00pm to 9:00pm.



SAMIRA KHAN MAHI crowned Miss Universe Bangladesh 2026

Renowned actress Samira Khan Mahi has been crowned Miss Universe Bangladesh 2026 at a ceremony held at a hotel in the capital.

Last year's winner, Tangia Zaman Methila, placed the crown on her head. The two embraced before walking across the stage together to applause.

According to the organisers, Mahi will represent Bangladesh at the 75th Miss Universe competition in Puerto Rico, with activities scheduled to begin on November 11.

A familiar face on television, Mahi now adds a national pageant title to her acting career.

Mahi succeeds Methila, who represented Bangladesh at the 74th Miss Universe competition in 2025. She will now follow in her predecessor's footsteps as she prepares to represent Bangladesh on the international stage.

NEWS

Jamaat's old guard retains grip on local leadership

FROM PAGE 12

social responsibilities, when electing ameers.

He said members often preferred experienced leaders and that their re-election reflected the confidence of party members.

Among the new district ameers are Golam Kibria in Joypurhat, Kabirul Islam in Khulna, Mahfuzur Rahman in Barishal, Hasmat Ali in Rajbari, AR Hafizullah in Lakshmipur and Minhajur Rahman in Khagrachhari.

Others are Mohammad Alamgir in Thakurgaon, Enamul Haque in Dinajpur, Enamul Haque in Rangpur, Nazrul Islam in Pabna, Mahfuzur Rahman in Naogaon, Abdul Awal in Jhenaidah, Saeed Ahmad in Magura, A Rob in Pirojpur, Azizul Haque in Kishoreganj, Sefaul Haque in Gazipur, Ibrahim Bhuiyan in Narsingdi, Imtiaz Uddin Ahmad in Faridpur and Shamsuddin in Sunamganj.

The new metropolitan ameers are Abdul Malek in Bogura, Md Jahangir in Rajshahi, Asaduzzaman Sohel in Mymensingh and Khairul Hasan in Gazipur.

Masudur Rahman, appointed acting ameer of Narayanganj district earlier this year, has now been elected to the post.

In Kurigram, Md Azizur Rahman, who served as district ameer from 1996 to 2018, returned to the position in December last year and has been re-elected.

Meanwhile, the ameers of Bogura, Chapainawabganj, Sirajganj, Jhalakathi, Mymensingh, Sherpur, Meherpur, Tangail, Rangamati and Bandarban, each of whom has served for at least 10 years, retained their posts.

Jhalakathi's Hafizur Rahman has served since 2004, completing 22 years in office. Mohammad Abdul Alim of Rangamati and SM Abdus Salam Azad of Bandarban have held their posts for 16 years, while Md Shahinur Alam of Sirajganj has served for 14 years.

The ameers of Natore, Barishal metropolitan unit, Barguna, Narail, Dhaka North and South metropolitan units, and Manikganj were also elected for a fifth term.

However, the party did not announce the names of the new ameers for Cumilla metropolitan and Jamalpur district units.

On October 14, crude bomb explosions and vandalism took place at the Cumilla metropolitan Jamaat office over the formation of the committee.

Two days later, the party dissolved the committee and relieved longtime ameer Kazi Deen Mohammad of his post. No election was held to choose his successor.

In Jamalpur, voting was held, but the result has been withheld pending further review.

Under the Jamaat constitution, district and metropolitan ameers serve two-year terms. Voting for the latest term took place from October 9 to 31 under a five-member central election commission led by Assistant Secretary General ATM Masum.

Abdul Halim said the candidate securing the highest number of votes was elected in accordance with the party constitution, adding that leaders could be replaced if members lost confidence in them.

EC sticks to old laws, key reforms left out

FROM PAGE 12

elections before the national election.

The Local Government Reform Commission proposed amending Article 119(1) of the Constitution to empower the EC to schedule and conduct local elections independently, without waiting for government requests.

Another major proposal was to replace direct elections for mayors and chairmen with a parliamentary-style system, under which voters would elect councillors and members, who would then choose executive office holders.

The commission also recommended bringing all five tiers of local government under a single law and election schedule, with nationwide voting in phases.

Commission members argued that the reforms could reduce the election process to one or two months from the current 225 days and cut costs. The government spent approximately Tk 2,300 crore on local government elections between 2021 and 2024.

The proposed rotational reservation system would allow women to represent their own wards directly, eliminating dual representation.

On MPO-enlisted teachers, Masud said the EC had proposed barring them from contesting local polls.

Zahed Ur Rahman, adviser to the prime minister and a former Electoral Reform Commission member, said proposals requiring legislative changes must first be approved by parliament.

Asked whether the government would consider the recommendations before the UP polls, he said, "Political parties, through the National Consensus Commission, have reached a consensus on many of the recommendations made by the Electoral Reform Commission and the Local Government Reform Commission regarding local government elections, while several others have been met with notes of dissent."

He added, "The BNP government is different. BNP does not agree with all the recommendations of the Local Government Reform Commission. The party will implement only those reforms that are included in its election manifesto."

Former Electoral Reform Commission member Abdul Alim said several important proposals remained unaddressed, particularly constitutional amendments to strengthen the EC's authority over local elections.

"The necessary amendments can be made now," he said, arguing that the current political environment offered an opportunity for reforms unavailable to previous governments.

Former Electoral Reform Commission chief Badiul Alam Majumdar said holding all local government elections on a single day could reduce costs, provided adequate security arrangements were ensured.

He also called for mandatory affidavits for UP candidates, saying voters should be able to examine their assets and backgrounds before voting.

Dhaka University Prof Kazi Maruful Islam, a former Local Government Reform Commission member, said the government had implemented the recommendation to abolish party symbols in local elections but had shown little interest in other structural reforms.

"One of our key recommendations was to abolish party symbols in local government elections, and the government has done that. But it has shown little interest in our other major structural recommendations, and we have seen no initiative to implement them."

He warned that the upcoming polls might produce elected representatives without ensuring the decentralised framework needed to meet public expectations.

Maruful suggested forming an expert committee to review the recommendations of all reform commissions to make local governance more effective, inclusive and citizen-oriented.

Gazprom makes fresh push for Bhola gas

FROM PAGE 12

and could consider Gazprom's proposals in connection with some of those upcoming projects, a senior official of the division told The Daily Star.

"There are several drilling projects coming up. We may consider their proposals for some of those projects."

The meeting would provide an opportunity to discuss how Gazprom could be engaged in future projects.

According to an invitation letter dated November 3, the delegation will include Nikita Belous, head of international cooperation and business development, and Alexey Belebezyev, country director of Gazprom International.

The agenda includes cooperation in oil and gas exploration, geological and geophysical activities, well drilling operations, prospective onshore exploration blocks and related technical collaboration.

The latest move does not represent an entirely new set of project proposals.

In its recent correspondence, Gazprom has asked Bangladesh to proceed with submissions made in earlier years, seeking progress on initiatives that have yet to materialise.

The proposals were brought to the Energy Division through diplomatic channels.

In a note verbale dated May 11, the Russian Embassy in Dhaka referred to meetings between Russian Ambassador Alexander Khozin and Power, Energy and Mineral Resources Minister Iqbal Hassan Mahmood on March 30, as well as Foreign Affairs Minister Khalilur Rahman on May 2.

The embassy asked the foreign ministry to advance the company's proposals. The foreign ministry subsequently forwarded them to the Energy Division on June 2.

Gazprom's proposals were submitted in stages from 2023. In October that year, the company expressed interest in setting up a small-scale LNG facility in Bhola, initially proposing a pilot plant with a capacity of up to 11.7 million cubic feet per day.

In February 2024, it proposed a 3D seismic survey covering around 1,930 square kilometres in Bhola, Char Fasson, Hatiya and adjoining areas. The survey could help identify around 30 potential well locations by building on existing 2D seismic data, it said.

Two months later, Gazprom proposed a pipeline from Bhola to Barishal, offering different implementation options, including engineering, procurement and construction, a financing-linked arrangement and a build-operate-transfer model.

It also proposed forming a joint working group involving Petrobangla and the Gas Transmission Company to work on the project.

According to multiple officials from the Energy Division and Petrobangla, the proposals were being considered for implementation under the Awami League government's tenure through the controversial Quick Enhancement of Electricity and Energy Supply (Special Provisions) Act 2010.

Following the July uprising and the subsequent change of government, the interim administration repealed the special law, which had allowed energy sector projects to be awarded without the usual competitive bidding process.

Gazprom subsequently submitted another proposal in March 2025, offering to undertake drilling work at five wells: Shahbazpur North East-1, Bhola North-3, Bhola North-4, Shahbazpur-5 and Shahbazpur-7.

The company offered to provide drilling rigs, crews, supervision, monitoring and materials for the work.

However, the government opted for competitive tendering, and the contract was eventually awarded to China's Sinopec International Petroleum Services Corporation. The government approved the Tk 907.29 crore contract in December 2025.

The notification of award was published in January this year, a senior official of the Energy Division told The Daily Star.

The package covers four appraisal-cum-development wells and one exploratory well; one of the wells has already been completed, he said.

The five wells covered by the Sinopec contract are the same ones Gazprom had offered to drill in its March 2025 proposal. The Russian company therefore did not secure that assignment, as the government proceeded with an international tender.

Gazprom's latest approach, however, seeks to revive its broader proposals and explore the possibility of participating in other projects.

In its latest non-paper, the company referred to the gas potential of Bhola, saying nine existing wells in the area could produce around 200 million cubic feet of gas per day. It also argued that further seismic work could help identify additional drilling prospects.

"We don't know what Gazprom wants to propose actually, as the proposed wells have already been awarded to someone else. Let's see what they offer in tomorrow's [today's] meeting and how we can accommodate them in future projects," a top official of the ministry told The Daily Star.

Gazprom International says it has designed and constructed around 20 appraisal, exploration and production wells in Bangladesh over more than a decade, under contracts with Bapex, Bangladesh Gas Fields Company and Sylhet Gas Fields.

Its work included 10 wells completed in 2014, five more in 2016, two in Bhola in 2017 and three under an agreement signed with Bapex in 2021.

The company also signed a memorandum of understanding with Bapex in 2020 to assess the potential of existing fields and exploration prospects in Bhola.

Eisenkot begins bid to form govt

FROM PAGE 12

on and off for nearly two decades. He has taken the country in a sharply rightward direction and led wars in Gaza, Lebanon and Iran.

Both Eisenkot and Herzog acknowledged Israel's growing isolation under Netanyahu, who is wanted by the International Criminal Court.

"We are in the midst of a devastating diplomatic crisis. Even our closest friends and strategic allies are saying their relationship with Israel must be reassessed," Eisenkot said.

Eisenkot appealed to Netanyahu's Likud Party as well as the far-right party of Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich to join -- but only with himself as prime minister.

"My door is open and my hand is extended, wholeheartedly and willingly, to anyone who understands the gravity of this moment," he said.

In consultations last week with Herzog, Eisenkot received recommendations from parties accounting for 67 lawmakers, against 46 for Netanyahu.

But that vote count included Israeli Arabs, whose seat haul surged to a historic high on anger over Netanyahu's government and whom several parties oppose having in government.

Avigdor Liberman, a former Netanyahu aide turned sharp critic who nonetheless shares his hawkish views, has been adamant against any alliance with Arab Israelis, who are descendants of Palestinians who stayed after Israel's creation in 1948.

Taking back one of his signature campaign pledges, Liberman instead voiced an openness to an alliance with ultra-Orthodox Jews, whose almost singular priority is ensuring that they remain exempt from military service.

Trump orders DOJ probe of Democrats

FROM PAGE 1

House of Representatives and the Senate in Tuesday's midterms.

Democrats have vowed investigations into Trump and senior members of his administration, including Attorney General Todd Blanche and Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth.

"The Democrats are going around threatening a lot of people," Trump said in a post on his Truth Social platform. "This is extortion at the highest level, and they should be held accountable," he said, arguing that there had been "no impeachable acts committed."