



# Rising Stars



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## Traditional Boats of Bangladesh

Venue: Nalinikanta Bhattashali gallery of the National Museum

**B**OATS, boat-building and traditions surrounding water-based communications have always been rich in Bangladesh. This is because of the geography of the country, which is part of the biggest deltaic plain in the world, sheltering the one of the most densely populated nations. About 60% of Bangladesh is covered in a vast river system. Waterways and boats are thus understandably an integral part of the country's communication system. While sea vessels from the Bay of

Until the mid 20th century, the riverboats of Bangladesh remained the same, but around the 1980s two big technical revolutions took place, which suddenly changed the river-scapes of Bangladesh from colourful sceneries of hundreds of sails to a bare noisy one. With the advent of cheap diesel engines the first revolution was the sudden motorisation of traditional boats. This enabled the crew to save in costs of masts and sails. However, technological change caused the disappearance of mar-

'Traditional Boats of Bangladesh' was inaugurated on March 22 at the Nalinikanta Bhattashali gallery of the National Museum. The exhibition is organised by Friendship and sponsored by AB Bank. Established in 1998 in Bangladesh, Friendship is a value-based organisation, which identifies and reaches the most vulnerable and marginalised communities. Friendship promotes its work of cultural preservation at home and abroad through an on-going travelling exhibition. The boats on



Bengal adopted exotic styles due to the influences of foreign traders, the wooden boats of the inland waterways developed their shapes and forms free from foreign influences into more than 50 different types. These riverboats were built using skills and technologies that have been passed down orally by boat-builders from generation to generation.

vellous rigging in less than five years. The second one was the change of boat-building material from wood to tin and welded steel sheets. Rural electrification and the political will of preserving forests, encouraged boat-builders to use these sheets to build their new boats. Wooden boats soon became too expensive and less economically viable.



display are handcrafted maintaining every single feature and detail of each type of boat. The exhibitions also have materials traditionally transported by life-size boats. Jute, ropes, bamboos and clay pottery gives a sense of what the daily life on the boats were like. Films and descriptive panels complete the visual material. The purpose of these exhibitions is to

raise national and international awareness on the impending loss of our ancient fleet.

The exhibition 'Traditional Boats of Bangladesh' is part of Friendship's Cultural Preservation Programme, which strives to conserve the heritage of traditional boat building in Bangladesh and facilitate socioeconomic development of the boat builders and their families. And their ultimate goal is to establish the first 'Living Museum on the Boats of Bengal' in the country. The exhibition will be running daily from March 23 till March 31 from Saturday till wednesday from 9:30am till 4:30pm and from April 1 till 19 from 10:30am till 5:30pm. The museum is closed on Thursdays and on Fridays the exhibition will be open from 3:30 till 7:30pm.

By **Zabir Hasan**