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Name of Publication	Key aspects highlighted
The Daily Star	<p data-bbox="532 317 976 348"><b>A dose of Deshi, a touch of French</b></p> <ul data-bbox="581 401 1430 852" style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="581 401 1430 569">• The France-Bangladesh Chamber of Commerce and Industry arranged their annual French gala evening at Radisson Water Garden Hotel in Dhaka last Saturday evening to promote the countries' cultural diversity</li><li data-bbox="581 590 1430 852">• Riffat Rashid, director, France Bangladesh Chamber of Commerce and Industry, in her welcome speech thanked all their <b>silver sponsors</b> AEI-English Electric of Bangladesh, Legrand, Lafarge Surma Cement Ltd, Knit Concern and Square Pharmaceuticals; their bronze sponsors Bureau Veritas Bangladesh Limited, ECM Services Ltd and support sponsor Aamra</li></ul>

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## A dose of Deshi, a touch of French

The France-Bangladesh Chamber of Commerce and Industry arranged their annual French gala evening at Radisson Water Garden Hotel in Dhaka last Saturday evening to promote the countries' cultural diversity.

First half of the programme featured a unique fashion show, where designer Bibi Russell introduced a young and talented designer, Debashis Chakma, from Khagra-chhari, whose forte is creating lines that use the rich weaves and vibrant fabrics from the Hill Tracts.

The second half showcased a dance number that was a delicate fusion of east and west -- combining both classical and contemporary concepts -- by renowned French artiste Isabelle Anna.

The evening started off with a signature Bibi Russell line of casual wear that has an in vogue-high street look to it. Her line takes inspiration from oft-overlooked Bangladeshi crafts like gamchha and rickshaw art, and turns them into vibrant trendy must-haves. Russell's collection on display at the event was, in one word, à la mode.

“When people see my collections, I want them to understand and appreciate all the work and effort that have gone into them. I want to preserve the heritage of my country, foster creativity, provide employment, empower women and contribute towards the eradication of poverty -- that's what I'm committed to do,” she said, emphasising on the fact that she was elated to introduce and promote a designer, who is working hard to compete in a field that is currently crowded with “shop owners claiming to be designers.”

It was indeed a treat to see one of our fledgling indigenous designers being taken under the wing of a graceful and humble Bibi Russell, allowing him to be highlighted at a major event. Chakma's collection for the night took inspiration from the hill tracts of Bangladesh, where on a charcoal background one sees bursts of colours from wild blooms that makes the landscape appear extraordinary.

With the theme of wild flower, Chakma has ably merged the untamed beauty of the hills, the colours of the people, culture and craftsmanship. His collection showed off pencil skirts, full skirts and trousers complemented with off shoulder, haltered, frilled tops, some of which had sensuous side knots. Rich silky black, royal blue and luminous green were highlighted with red and navy blue stripes.

The basic character of any indigenous weave is coloured border stripes on a plain canvas; Chakma cleverly manipulated those striped weaves into sashes, belts, scarves, jackets and capes. The women's line featured contemporary, fashionable party wear and the men's line was a sober synthesis of contemporary, yet traditional take on panjabi.

Highlight of the show was definitely the models; they made the ramp come alive with their perfect postures and professional looks; and with Bibi Russell backstage, this was quite expected. The make-up was very modish -- tight ponytails, dark smoky eyes and nude lips gave the models a chic look. The men were all looking their masculine best, minus any make up, sporting only spiked hairstyles. These were all done by Bangladesh's celebrated beauty expert, Farzana Shakil, who authored "Looks", the first book on fashion and beauty in the country.

Isabelle Anna's solo dance performance was a mesmerising Kathak recital. Her piece included both traditional aspects of the Lucknow Gharana and her experimental work based on the genre.

President of the Chamber, SS Kamal, in his speech emphasised on the fact that the Chamber is only a facilitator between Bangladesh and French business houses. He said the economic conditions of the country are at their opportune best now, and France being the fourth largest trade partner of Bangladesh, feels it right to explore businesses in ship building, leather industry etc.

"December is the month of victory, high spirits and aspirations; we remember millions of our martyrs and proudly recall the courage of the father of the nation to make us dream of and achieve a independence. We have won the political war, now we want to win the economic one," he said.

A spirited man himself, he strongly feels that between aid and trade, Bangladesh prefers the latter, where technological know-how and other expertise can be dispersed to improve the status of the country.

Riffat Rashid, director, France Bangladesh Chamber of Commerce and Industry, in her welcome speech thanked all their silver sponsors AEI-English Electric of Bangladesh, Legrand, Lafarge Surma Cement Ltd, Knit Concern and Square Pharmaceuticals; their bronze sponsors Bureau Veritas Bangladesh Limited, ECM Services Ltd and support sponsor Aamra. Their partners, Alliance Francaise, Dhaka helped in arranging the cultural part of the show. This annual gala started in 1997 and she believes it is going strong with lot more to come in future.

<http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?nid=165782>