

Visions yet to be realised Remembering Begum Sufia Kamal and Jahanara Imam

KARIM WAHEED ONE was a noted poet, writer, organiser, feminist and activist; the other also a writer, educationist and political activist but widely remembered for her endeavour to bring war criminals of the Liberation War to trial. Both became beacons for Bengali women. But trying to categorise them according to their gender would be unfair and unwise. Generations of Bangladeshis with diverse convictions united under their guidance.

June 20 marked the 95th birth anniversary of poet Sufia Kamal and yesterday was Jahanara Imam's 12th death anniversary. A discussion was held at the Liberation War Museum in Shegunbagicha on June 25 where cultural personalities reminisced on the contributions of the two icons. Theatre personality and a member of the Museum's Trustee Board, Aly Zaker said, "I was fortunate enough to have been personally acquainted with both Sufia Kamal and Jahanara Imam. 'Sufia Khala', as we used to call her, with her feeble frame used to slowly get on the stage with the help of others at events. Yet she was a maternal figure to us all, with a vision of a nation, free of gender-discrimination as well as other social injustice."

Jahanara Imam, enduring the agony of cancer, was the key figure in organising the Ghatok-Dalal Nirmul Committee (a committee vowing to bring to justice individuals that committed murders and collaborated with the Pakistani army during the Liberation War). An interesting fact that many may not be aware of is that when a bed-ridden Sufia Kamal was approached during the formation of the Ghatok-Dalal Nirmul Committee, she suggested Imam. Who better to lead the committee than a mother who had lost her son (a Muktiyoddha) to the war?

Actor Subarna Mustafa then read excerpts from works including Anya Jibon and Ekaturer Dinguli by Jahanara Imam. Through Subarna's emotive rendition, images emerged of Imam's childhood, family life, experiences during the war and dealing with a terminal illness. "Allah! Even the blazing pits of Habiah (hell) isn't enough for these 'vigilantes' -- goes a line referring to the war criminals from Ekaturer Dinguli, Imam's most notable publication of her journal written in 1971. A visibly moved Subarna seemed to strike a chord with the audience. The script was edited by Sara Zaker. Veteran theatre activist Ferdausi Majumdar fondly remembered her encounter with Sufia Kamal at the 50th staging of Kokilara (Ferdausi's solo performance). Ferdausi then recited poetry from Shanjher Maya (Kamal's first book of poems). The presentation (edited by Mofidul Haque) also included letters and comments from noted personalities including Rabindranath Tagore, Kazi Nazrul Islam and Begum Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain. Kamal's first book came out in 1938, bearing a foreword from Nazrul and attained acclaim from renowned critics, including Tagore. Shanjher Maya was translated in Russian in 1984. Begum Rokeya, who can be regarded the first feminist of Bengal, had a lasting impression on Kamal. The poet actively took part in the Language Movement. In 1961, when the Pakistani government banned Tagore songs, she became involved in the movement among Bengalis that ensued. During the mass uprising in 1969, which demanded the resignation of General Ayub Khan, she promoted the cause by forming Mahila Sangram Parisad (a women's organisation) and she was deeply involved in the Liberation War. Kamal was also instrumental in getting the first women's dormitory of Dhaka University to be named Rokeya Hall, after Begum Rokeya.

Event Thai cultural bonanza in town



Thai performers decked in traditional costumes at the programme

CULTURAL CORRESPONDENT

A high point in the city's cultural scenario was a Thai performance on June 25, at the National Theatre Stage, Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy. The event marked the 60th anniversary of the Thai King Bhumibol Adulyadej's accession to the throne. A charity performance followed where the donations went to the cause of the Bangladeshi homeless.

The function was organised by the Royal Thai Embassy in collaboration with Thai Airways International Public Company Ltd and Bangladesh-Thai Chamber of Commerce and Industry. Chief guest for the occasion was Begum Selima Rahman, State Minister, Ministry of Cultural Affairs who was received by Suphat Chitranukroh, Ambassador of Thailand to Bangladesh.

The Sbn-Nga group from Chiang Mai, Thailand offered the invitees a tasteful and energetic performance with their vast array of vibrant colours and graceful steps. A large screen projector at the background kept the viewers informed about the significance of each dance, explaining its origin and meaning. Sbn-Nga dance troupe is one of the pioneer dance troupes in Thailand having performed in over 50 countries over the past 20 years. "We focus on spreading the message of friendship among nations," asserted Akadet Nakkabunlung, dance instructor of the troupe.

The performance was divided into four broad categories based on the four different regions in Thailand. The first part of the dance illustrated the hilly areas of north Thailand where people are mild tempered and slow, and hence the dance took a softer approach. The victory drum dance, Finger nail dance, and Peacock dance completed the dance episode, whereas a fusion fashion show titled From the hands of the hill and a song composed by the King, HM Blue took the enthralled audience by surprise at the rich culture of this Asian nation.

The second part was based on the culture of southern Thailand showcasing the vast blue ocean. Their customs are mixed with the Malays and hence a fashion show depicting the Colour of Asia was followed by The Coconut shell dance, Manora dance, Batik dance and a Thai popular song.

Bangkok--the literal meaning being 'the city of

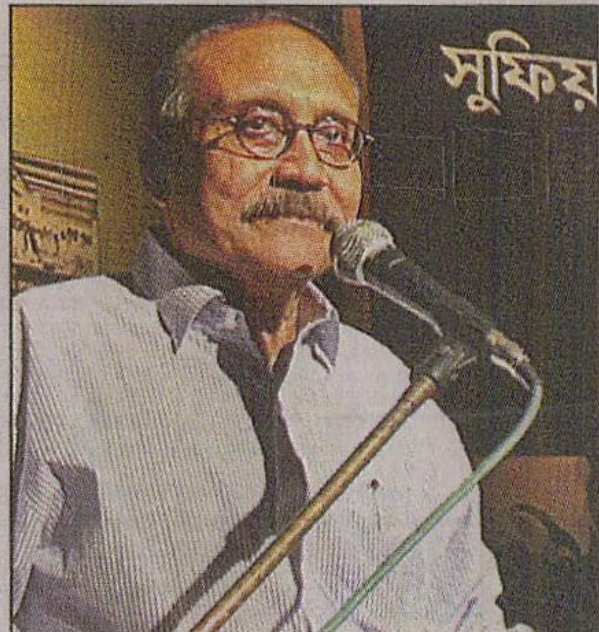
angels' was the predominant theme of the third part and depicted the glory of central Thailand. Siam drum dance, Harvest dance, Angel dance and a King-composed song: Love at sun down was included in this section.

North-eastern Thailand--a melange of Laos and Cambodian traditions, the people are happy go lucky people and hence the performances were fast paced. Happy



dance and the Whisky pot dance ended this section.

Last but not the least was the Good relationship dance. All the members of the troupe came together in a whirlwind of whites, silvers and diamonds signifying the bond between Thailand and Bangladesh. The colour-combination represented peace, whereas the diamonds showed the value the Thais put on this very special relationship between the two countries. Miss Thailand Universe and Miss Thailand World were among the performers.



Ferdausi Majumdar (L) and Subarna Mustafa (R) recite excerpts from works by Sufia Kamal and Jahanara Imam, Aly Zaker speaks at the event

Theatre Festival, Chittagong Today's play Duur Rajonir Swapno



A scene from the play

CULTURAL CORRESPONDENT

As part of the ongoing theatre festival arranged by Nandimukh to mark the 15th anniversary of the troupe, Nandimukh will stage Duur Rajonir Swapno. Portraying the struggle of a middle-class man

named Nahid, Debashish Roy's play features the virtue of honesty as well as the need to remain honest in a corrupt society. Avijit Sengupta directs the play.

Duur Rajonir Swapno will be staged today at 7 pm at the Shilpakala Academy, Chittagong.

The most expensive painting in the world

A stunning gold encrusted portrait known as the 'Mona Lisa of Austria' that was looted by the Nazis and returned to its rightful owner only this year has been sold for a reported US\$135 million.

Gustav Klimt's iconic portrait of his muse and alleged lover, Adele Bloch-Bauer, was bought by the billionaire cosmetics magnate Ronald Lauder, for what is believed to be the highest price paid for a painting, eclipsing the \$104 million for Picasso's Boy with a Pipe in 2004.

Bloch-Bauer died in 1925 of meningitis and in her will requested that the painting be left to Austria after her husband's death.

But in 1938 Nazis seized the painting, and placed it with three other 'Klimts' in the Belvedere Palace gallery in Vienna.

At the end of the war, Adele's heirs began their battle to regain their possessions.

Some of the lost items were recovered but Austrian authorities ruled that the 'Klimts' should remain in Austria, citing Adele's will. The family's case stalled until 1998, when a journalist tracked down her original will, which expressed a wish, not a requirement, that the 'Klimts' be given to Austria.

By then, Maria Altmann was the

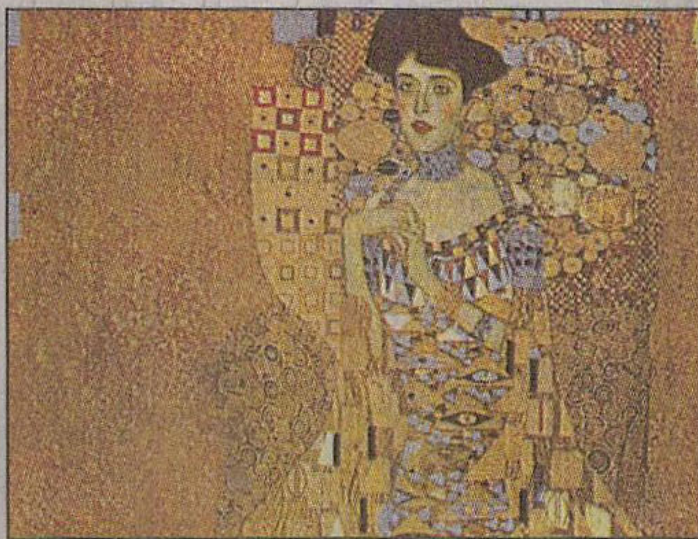
only surviving heir. She sued the Austrian Government for the return of the paintings in 2000, taking the case to the US Supreme Court. In January this year, an Austrian court ruled in favour of the family.

No sooner were the paintings back, than museums and collectors lined up to bid for them. Mrs

Altmann, now 90, sold them because she could not afford the insurance.

The painting, which took Klimt four years to complete, evokes the Adele that her niece remembers well. "I never saw her smile," Mrs Altmann told the New York Times.

Source: Internet



The portrait of Adele Bloch-Bauer by Klimt

Deepa Mehta's Heaven On Earth

Before she starts with her big venture titled Exclusion which will star Amitabh Bachchan, John Abraham and Terence Stamp, Deepa Mehta has decided to make a film with a modest budget that revolves around the life of a Punjabi bride living in Toronto.

The film titled Heaven On Earth follows the story of a Punjabi woman, that takes surprising twists in the course of just seven days. The film is going to be dark like her last film Water. Mehta says that she will shoot the film in seven weeks starting from July 1. The film will be mainly in Punjabi with a bit of English.



Deepa Mehta

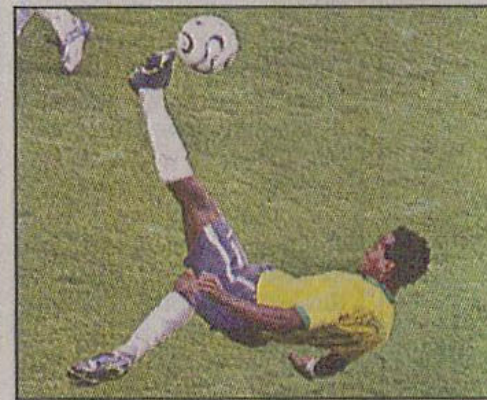
Source: Internet

TV GUIDE

PICK OF THE DAY



ATN Taroka, Tarokader Taroka On ATN Bangla at 08:40pm Talent Hunt Host: Dhruvo and Trisha



FIFA World Cup 2006 On BTv at 08:50pm Brazil Vs Ghana Live from: Dortmund

Table with TV channels and their programs: News Bulletin, BTv, CHANNEL-i, ATN BANGLA, TARABANGLA, BBC WORLD.

Table with TV channels and their programs: BTv, CHANNEL-i.

Table with TV channels and their programs: ntv, ATN Bangla, Rtv.

Table with TV channels and their programs: Rtv, CHANNEL 1, HBO, STAR WORLD, STAR MOVIES.

Table with TV channels and their programs: Knight Rider, Sports Update, General Hospital, Friends, The Price Of Fame, National Geographic, STAR WORLD, ESPN.

Table with TV channels and their programs: Sports Update, Cricket Classics, FIFA World Cup, Wimbledon Lawn Tennis Championships, WWE: Raw, WWE: Smackdown, Countdown to Ryder Cup.