

# Dhaka Day by Day

## Hamlet With a Difference

by Fayza Haq

Producing a Shakespeare play on a Dhaka stage, with all its limitations and handicaps is an achievement. To adapt and translate the play into adequate Bangla, without losing the poetry, irony, soliloquies and philosophy is a tremendous feat. Aly Zaker has converted "Hamlet", which normally runs for four and a half hours to a two-hour forty minutes production by "Nagorik" at the Mahila Samity auditorium, recently.

It would have been difficult to generate interest in a literal translation, explained Aly Zaker. The time, place and characters remained different from the original "Hamlet" as this was necessary for the adaptation. Yet the integral plot of the uncle killing the father with connivance of the mother, and the son trying to avenge the father's murder had been retained. "This was common enough in our villages where usurpation of properties was a regular happening," the producer explained.

However there were definite variations from the original. The interstate feuds were converted into village quarrels. What was political became personal. The name of the hero was changed into "Darpan", which had a double meaning of a mirror, reflecting a tragedy of great consequence.

To organise a play within a play, if a "jatra" had been introduced, one would have required a massive stage. The producer-director had introduced a "jari gaan". A "boyoti" narrated the story through a song.

Aly Zaker avoided the original war scenes as there was no question of delineating a war between two villages. The subsequent scenes had been removed or the production would have been too massive to handle and present in one single evening for our audience.

The vital sword fight had to be adapted into a wrestling bout with knife flicking to draw blood and brought the series of tragic deaths.

"The play was set in many places but I wanted to keep myself to one set to add to the symbolic unifying effect. I could not bring in the numerous changes as I had not the facilities. I installed the drap of red in the back to symbolise bloodshed and cruelty," the producer-director explained.

The dialects of Dhaka, Comilla and Brahmanbaria have been used in the dialogue. Aly Zaker wanted to make the play close to the heart of the people. He has every intention of taking "Darpan" to the varied cities and villages of Bangladesh.

By selling the tickets "Nagorik" met the production of the cost. The performers were not paid. Every actor has some profession of his own. He is either an advertising agent or an engineer or even a doctor. Students were also roped into the caste. It has cost Tk 30,000 which "Nagorik" took as a loan. By selling tickets they expected to meet the loan.

"Nagorik" has performed before in Chittagong, Sylhet, Comilla, Rangpur, Khulna, Jessore, Mymensingh and Tangail.

"We'll go wherever there is an available stage. Local groups invite us and they sell the tickets that offset the cost of taking us there and keeping us. We travel by bus or train and we have been doing this for 17 years now," Aly Zaker commented.

Although "Darpan", as "Hamlet" was called, had used a dialect yet there was a poetic fervour in the lines and the drama of the blank verse had been incorporated.

The tragedy of Hamlet is universal. It can easily be adapted into a Bangladeshi situation if you deleted the interstate feuds, costumes, names and the countries. The emotions are the same. The causes may be different as there are no more large scale wars in the country. Land feuds between families are common. So is the lust for wealth and power. As for murder, if you open the newspapers, you are convinced that family murders are not that uncommon in our society," Aly Zaker believed.

As for the ghost in the village, this was referred to as something ethereal. The producers did not show the ghost but it was referred to as "Adam Soorat" or "Kal Purush" which converted onto the image of "Darpan's" father. People in the play constantly talked about it. An uncanny howling of a dog, by night, was added to the mystery.

Aly Zaker himself has acted before in two Shakespearean plays. One was "Macbeth" which was a translation by "Nagorik" Theatre and the other was "Tempest" which was a Bangladesh Group Theatre production. Directors had been flown in from London by the British Council to produce them. "Tempest" had been directed by Deborah Warner of the National Theatre in London and "Macbeth" had been directed by Christopher Sandford of the Royal Shakespeare Company.

For the setting three elevations had been used. There were also three frames of bamboo placed in different places which looked like doors and added dimension. There was very few furniture apart from "moras" and a "choki". Thus a ple space was provided for the actors to move about.

"Darpan" has been a low cost production as not much has been spent on either the setting or the costume. The actors wore common, normal village clothes. The hero wore a "punjabi" and faded slacks. "Begum" or Gertrude, as the widow, wore white, and transformed into pastel shades of red and green. "Kulsum" or Ophelia was similarly clad in a simple pink sari. The rest were similarly in simple village clothes.

A band of four people were constantly on stage to play their instruments with the change of the scenes. There was the Bangla "dhol"; a "kasha" (bell) and a "mandira" (cymbal). The background music introduced a rhythm rather than a tune, and this was to set the tragic mood of the play.

Khalid Khan, or "Darpan", said that it was not easy to portray Hamlet as he was such a complex character and his mannerisms were difficult to master. He said that what he enjoyed most were the dialogues with "Begum" (Gertrude) and "Kulsum" (Ophelia). He has done eleven stage plays including "Tempest" where he acted as Antoinette.

Shormishta, who is only 18, and an "A" level student in "Scholastica", played "Kulsum" (Ophelia) with remarkable confidence and finesse. Just as Khalid Khan put in his level best to do the part, so Shormishta put her whole being into the play. "My studies are not hampered at all with the rehearsals or the visits to the other cities, which are on weekends." Her favourite part was when she returned "Darpan's" love tokens.

Neema Rahman, who played "Begum" (Gertrude), has been acting in plays since she was five in '68. As an adult she has taken part in 17 TV plays. She has been with "Nagorik" since she was eleven. She felt that the experience of playing the mother to a man who in reality was much older than herself (she is 28) required a lot from her. She has acted in "Macbeth", Married, and with a son, she spends her free time in reading commentaries for advertisements.

"Mridha" or Claudius was played by Kausar Chowdhury. He has acted in ten plays before, and is involved in video film making in his everyday life. "When the script, director and I blend together there are no problems. Yet to act successfully in a place like Bangladesh with a group like "Nagorik" one needs a tremendous sense of commitment," he commented.

It is a treat indeed for the Bangladeshi viewers to have someone present them such a feast as "Darpan". A lot of thought, reflection, difficult translation-work, and hours of practice in acting has gone into the production. It would be marvellous indeed if we could have such viewing more frequently.



Darpan in conflict with

## IPDC okays Tk 35 million for 2 projects

The Industrial Promotion and Development Company of Bangladesh Limited (IPDC) has approved Taka 35 million in local currency for financing two projects-cement clinker grinding and expansion of an existing textile spinning unit, reports BSS.

The approval was given at the 27th meeting of the Board of Directors of the IPDC held here Friday, an IPDC press release said.

The board also approved investment of Taka 16 million in the equity capital of a housing finance company, promoted by the IPDC.

The meeting was presided over by the Secretary, Ministry of Industries and was attended by the directors representing the government, IPC, CDC, DEG, and AKFED.

## Plea to gear up diarrhoea prevention activities

By Staff Correspondent

Jamaat-e-Islami Acting Ameer Abbas Ali Khan and Secretary General Moulana Mottur Rahman Nizami in a statement to the press urged the government to gear up diarrhoea prevention activities.

They said the present steps are not sufficient. There is acute shortage of doctors, saline and other medicine in the diarrhoea affected areas.

The statement also urged Jamaat workers to take up relief operation in the affected regions.

## Lecture series

By DU Correspondent

The second lecture series of Justice Ibrahim Memorial Foundation of Dhaka University will be held on April 28 and 29 at the Teacher's Students Centre (T.S.C.).

The function will be addressed by Prof. Muhammad Afsaruddin of Sociology Department on "person, society and state" with Vice Chancellor Prof. Maniruzzaman Miah in chair.

## Obituary

Noted textile engineer Sirajul Islam Reza of Faridpur town died of heart attack in Dhaka on Thursday night, reports BSS.

He was 60. He served different jute mills as Manager for a long time.

He left behind his wife, two sons and one daughter to mourn his death.

The Qul Khawani of Reza will be held at 9/3, Iqbal Road, Mohammadpur on April 29 after Asr prayer.

Leading industrialist and a philanthropist Goolam Haider Khan died of old-age complications at a city clinic in Dhaka Friday morning. He was 72, reports BSS.

Khan was the owner of Bengal Friends and Chemicals Ltd. popularly known as "Jahaj Marka Alkatra." He left behind his wife, two sons and seven daughters and a number of relatives to mourn his death.

His namaj-e-janaza was held after Juma prayer at Baitul Mamur Mosque near the Science Laboratory. He was laid to rest at the Banani Graveyard.

Friends, relatives and well-wishers have been requested to attend his Qul Khwani to be held at his 40, Mirpur Road residence on April 29 after Asr prayer.

## Weather

### Moderate rain likely

By Staff Correspondent

Light or moderate rain/shower accompanied by temporary gusty of squally wind is likely to occur at a few places over Rajshahi division and at one or two places over Dhaka and Chittagong Divisions and the region of Jessore and Kushtia, meteorological Department says.

Weather may remain dry over the country and the day temperature will remain nearly unchanged till Sunday.

On Friday the highest temperature recorded in Rajshahi was 39.5 degree Celsius while the lowest temperature in Rangpur was 22.4 degree Celsius.

Outlook for subsequent two days: Rainfall may increase. Extended outlook for another five days: Little change. The sun sets today (Saturday) at 6.26 pm and rises tomorrow (Sunday) at 5.27 am.

The temperature and humidity of some cities/towns of the country on Friday were:

Cities/Towns	Temperature in Celsius	Humidity in percentage		
	Maximum	Minimum	9 am	6 pm
Dhaka	35	26	72	55
Chittagong	33.3	25.3	75	68
Rajshahi	39.5	25	78	37
Khulna	35.5	25.2	73	55
Rangpur	32	22.4	77	59
Bogra	Na	24.1	9C	Na
Cox's Bazar	33	24.8	72	71
Rangamati	36	24	73	64
Dinajpur	33	23.4	78	65
Barisal	35	32	80	63
iswardi	36.5	29.3	72	46

## CROSSWORD PUZZLER

**ACROSS**

- 1 "Lou --"
- 6 " -- Your wagon"
- 11 Tails
- 13 Riddle
- 14 Commercial
- 15 Most damp
- 17 Sherry ID
- 18 Title
- 20 Child
- 21 Anglo-Saxon
- 22 Politics
- 24 Fruit seed
- 25 Barrage
- 26 Small rage
- 28 Cite --
- 29 Claret in Germany
- 32 Hind part
- 33 Follows Sunday

**DOWN**

- 1 Drinking vessel
- 2 Radioactive metallic element
- 3 Hebrew month
- 4 At present
- 5 Allowance for waste
- 6 Free ticket
- 7 Plamire
- 8 That thing
- 9 Closer
- 10 Handle
- 12 Hall
- 13 Waggoner
- 15 Journey
- 16 Causes
- 19 Manage
- 21 " -- and Deliver" -- and Stripes"
- 27 Depressed
- 29 Mr. Buttons
- 31 Texas player
- 33 Unmarried woman
- 34 Knitting wool
- 36 Collect
- 37 Stone
- 38 Flooding grounds
- 41 Classy
- 43 Hebrew measure
- 44 Stitches
- 47 Inhabit
- 48 Note
- 51 Hebrew letter
- 52 Italian river

### Answer to Previous Puzzle

RAMP ABLE LET  
ARAR READ ERA  
STROVE WE AIL  
PITA NOVEL  
TROOPERS FE  
RINSE MUG SON  
US ERR MAN VE  
EEL SAG RENEW  
AI PARAGONS  
MASSE SAGA  
ANT TE VETOES  
UTE OGLE EASE  
LID NOON STEW

## PROGRAMME

### LLB exams

The LL.B preliminary and final examinations of Dhaka University will begin from August 17 and 18 respectively.

The detailed time-table will be declared in due course, a DU press release says.

### Film session

Rainbow Film Society and Goethe Institute, Dhaka, have jointly arranged a 3-day film session and seminar beginning today (Saturday) at the German Cultural Centre.

### BCPFA council meet

The first meeting of the newly-elected National Council of Bangladesh-China People's Friendship Association will be held today at 5:00 p.m. at the office of the Association at 18, Purana Paltan.



### Saturday

- 5:00 : Al Quran
- 5:15 : Triptok
- 5:20 : News (Bengali)
- 5:30 : Sports World
- 5:55 : Cartoon : Olligance Planet
- 6:30 : Naba Taranga (New Wave)
- 7:05 : Barishuri
- 8:00 : News in Bengali
- 8:30 : The Cosby Show
- 9:00 : Abohusan
- 10:00 : News in English
- 10:25 : Parliament Roundup
- 10:40 : Return to Eden
- 11:30 : Khabar/The news



Noted educationist Ferdous Khan inaugurating Tagore Song Festival in Dhaka on Friday by lighting ten 'Maugal Pradips'. Seen in the photo (from right) are Poetess Sufia Kamal, Ferdous Khan, Dr. Sanjida Khatun and a volunteer. —Star photo

## 'Tagore equally honoured in both parts of Bengal'

The 10th National Rabindra Sangeet Conference began in a soft and serene musical atmosphere at the Shilpakala Academy in Dhaka on Friday, reports BSS.

Eminent educationist Ferdous Khan formally inaugurated the three-day conference by lighting ten Mangal Pradips fixed on a structure of creepers and herbs which was placed on one side of the simply decorated dias in the auditorium of the Academy.

Begum Sufia Kamal presided over the inaugural function of the conference which was organised by the Council of the National Rabindra Sangeet conference. It is being participated by artists from 27 districts of the country.

Among others, the General

Secretary of the Council Prof. Sanjida Khatun addressed the inaugural function.

In his inaugural speech, Mr. Ferdous Khan said the genius of the Bishwa-Kabi was limitless and he had created a world of his own through his versatile works. "Rabindranath introduced universality in his works and for that matter he was equally honoured in both the parts of Bengal as well as in the world literary arena," he said.

Drawing a comparison with Kazi Nazrul Islam, Mr. Khan said that Nazrul was being treated from divided outlook. "Nazrul's Shyama Sangeet is immensely popular in West Bengal but his Islami songs seldom has any place there. Similarly, the

Islami songs of Nazrul has a peak position in Bangladesh but his Shyama Sangeet is hardly sung here," he added.

In her presidential speech, Begum Sufia Kamal said, "we are proud that a piece of Tagore's song, is our national anthem." "All aspects of his works will remain as source of inspiration in our everyday work," she said.

Begum Sufia Kamal said, poems and songs of Rabindranath give us peace and pleasure and the magical influence of Rabindra works has now spread all over the world.

"I myself got rid of the grief caused due to the bereavement at the death of my son only by the influence of Rabindra sangeet," Begum Sufia Kamal said.

## 'Sher-e-Bangla's ideal to inspire nation in march toward democracy'

Acting President Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed on Friday paid tributes to the memory of Sher-e-Bangla A K Fazlul Haq recalling his uncompromising struggle for the welfare of the nation, reports UNB.

In a message on the eve of his 29th death anniversary, Justice Shahabuddin said the ideals of Sher-e-Bangla would guide the nation in its onward march of democracy.

As an eminent lawyer, orator and leader of the masses, Sher-e-Bangla had turned himself into a legendary figure in the sub-continent in his lifetime, he added.

### Khaleda

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia on Friday said the nation will remember Sher-e-Bangla A K Fazlul Haq for his role in liberating the peasant from exploitation and oppression, reports UNB.

In a message on the eve of his 29th death anniversary, she said Sher-e-Bangla was the undisputed leader of the neglected and downtrodden of this region.

Begum Zia recalled with gratitude his contribution in educating, awakening self-respect and creating awareness among the Muslims.

The uncompromising and struggling life of Sher-e-Bangla was a source of inspiration during the recent democratic movement, she said.

consolidate democracy and ameliorate the lot of common man.

Paying tributes to the later, Begum Zia said he had dedicated his life to the well-being of the toiling masses. She prayed for the salvation of the departed soul.

### JCD hailed

### for expelling Jamal

The Mass Communication Forum of the Dhaka University on Friday congratulated the Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) for expelling Zakir Hossain Jamal from the organisation for his misbehaviour with the university teachers, reports UNB.

The JCD central committee Thursday expelled Jamal, Joint Convener of the Dhaka University unit of JCD, for threatening Dr. Arefin Siddiqi, a teacher of Journalism and Joint Secretary of Dhaka University Teachers Association (DUTA) on April 11.

In a statement, Lutfar Rahman Chowdhury Ripon and Shafigur Rahman, VP and GS respectively of the Forum of Mass Communication and Journalism Department also demanded expulsion of Jamal from the university.

## Traffic movement halted for hours

# 20 hurt as rival transport workers clash at Syedabad

A clash between two rival groups of transport workers halted traffic movement for several hours on the busy road near Syedabad bus terminal on Friday, reports UNB.

The clash ensued over an issue of union leadership among the transport workers, witnesses said.

At least 20 people were injured during the clash when several bomb blasts were also heard.

Later Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) high officials rushed to the bus terminal to quell the situation at about 4 pm. They arrested three people and expelled leaders of both the groups from the terminal area.

One of the bomb blast injured, Shamim, reportedly admitted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital in a critical condition.

the Dhaka University, reports BSS.

In a joint statement Lutfar Rahman Chowdhury Ripon and Safigur Rahman, Vice-President and General Secretary respectively of the Forum also hailed other organisations for taking punitive measures against terrorists.

The forum also demanded the expulsion of Zakir Hossain Jamal from the university.

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