

COOKING fish, meat or chicken is no big deal in this day of sophisticated kitchen gadgets like microwave ovens, pressure cookers and tenderizers.

It is therefore a fascinating experience when one witnesses for the first time a traditional method of preparing a fish dish South Pacific-style. In a village in Kei Kecil Island in the southeastern Moluccas region of eastern Indonesia, I got a taste of the *Ikan Bakar Batu* fish dish cooked the way ancestors of the islanders did ages ago.

That traditional method of cooking includes a pit dug in the sand, banana leaves, palm fronds and hot, glowing rocks.

Our local host named Mas Onor told us that "this was the usual cooking practice of their ancestors who used to roam around these remote Kei Islands located in the Banda Sea north of the Australian continent."

He explained further that "many islanders then had very few cooking utensils and faced difficulty in getting access to clean water to prepare their daily food."

As such, the Bakar Batu style of cooking was very appropriate because it required mostly natural materials like palm fronds, banana leaves, firewood and ordinary island rocks, all of which are still found in abundance in the natural environs of the Kei Islands.

Fishy Ritual

by Arjuna

This unique way of food preparation was a very popular and practical method of cooking food in the old days. Locals would only have to carry with them the basic essential ingredients like a small pouch of salt, some local spices and perhaps a handful of hot *chili padis* (small chili peppers), sometimes some curry powder, ginger and garlic.

It seems that other kinds of meat like pork, poultry and even beef could be cooked this way, especially in situations where clean water was not readily available.

Today, this practice has become less used but reserved only for special occasions like welcoming visitors or for local festivals. But many islanders still resort to this method, especially when they are travelling in remote places for several days.

On this special night, Mas Onor and some of our friends from the village had generously gotten us a whole basket of fishes, like *Bubara* fish and *Parrot* fish measuring from six inches to as long as three feet.

It took us a total of about two hours from the moment the fishes were hauled in from the boats, cleaned, grilled in the pit and finally for dinner.

In our highly urbanized and modern context, special

cuisines are always the domain of chefs who usually keep the trade secrets to themselves but delegate menial tasks to assistants. But in this little village, sharing has become so much a part of their lives that cooking the *Ikan Bakar Batu* cuisine is also a community event where everyone shares in all aspects of preparing for the feast.

For instance, while some men and even boys dug the three-foot diameter and two-foot-deep pit, some other villagers cleaned and marinated the fishes. Meanwhile others climbed coconut trees and plucked several fronds which were later skillfully woven into very neat leaf vessels to contain the fishes while they were being grilled in the pit.

Another "team" was assigned to pluck fresh small chili peppers and make the famous Indonesian *Chili Sambal*. It is said that a fish meal is incomplete without this special concoction which is ever-present in every meal.

The secret formula was revealed to us then. Simply pound some chili peppers with a few garlic and onion bulbs and several small tomatoes. Add a pinch of sugar and salt to taste. Top up the mixture with liberal dashes of sweetened black soy sauce and

— Depthnews Asia

Queen Margot

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served the revolt of the nobles against the power of the king.

Beautiful Marguerite was faithful to Catholicism. So, in 1572, her mother married her to the leader of the (protestant) Huguenot camp, Henri de Navarre. It was a political marriage. Marguerite accepted it willingly to serve peace. The wedding was celebrated by Cardinal de Bourbon outside the porch of Notre Dame Cathedral, not inside. It was not yet time for Henri to consider that "Paris is well worth a mass". So Marguerite became Queen of Navarre. But the hopes of peace arising from the marriage were soon drowned in the blood of St Bartholomew's day. The massacre of protestants in Paris set the war going again.

Meanwhile, the throne of France was once again the object of covetousness. After Francois II, who died at the age of 16, came Charles IX.

On the "Dhaka Siege" day (by the local power players, not aliens from outer space), there was nothing better to do than join the Western coffee house concept. It is the traditional Bengalee pastime of talking about everything and saying nothing about anything. It is an art in which we could take on the French, for instance, claimed an exclusive member of our *adda* club.

The errant politicians are surely doing the society a favour: turning us into gentlemen of leisure in the days of pressure. It is plain living and high thinking; not high living, plain thinking (for the majority). While our hard working Prime Minister would like us to export everything except our talent, a section of the traditional *bhadraloks* would love to import the latest ideas or gadgets to enhance the *hartsals* and encourage *adda-baazi*, without the trailing *hukka* pipe. An avid newspaper reader remained us of the 2-month *hartsal* in Nigeria. The intellectual in the group,

Adda-baazi

claimed recognition of his correct prediction that a *hartsal* would be called on the day following the Dhaka Siege. The sudden road transport strike was a puzzle, till the Opposition claimed that it was "pre-arranged", but not by the Opposition.

There was a spirited discussion whether the siege was a preemptive attempt to boost

The Passing Show

Chuckles

Someone regaled us with the anecdote about the post-WW II condition in Britain in the 50s when the English got so fed up with the constant government pressure to increase export, that they protested and brought out a silent procession carrying placards with the message: "Export Cripps also". (Sir Stafford was at that time the Chancellor of the Exchequer). History repeats itself: now we have a Cripps-like Finance Minister.

was a country bursting with genius but with absolutely no talent; as Hugh Leonard had commented at an *adda* of Englishmen (scores of years ago) discussing the Irish contribution to the Empire (as quoted by Godfrey Smith, the former editor of the London *Sunday Times & The Review*, in his delightful book *The English Companion*). This gentleman entertained us with another quotation. "It is important in this world to be pushing, but it is fatal to do so." — Benjamin Jowell. A typical Oxbridge stance, but somehow it sounds rather relevant in the local context. doesn't it?

As for the location of our motherland, a visiting Bangladeshi introduced his country thus in the far, far West: "I live 10,000 miles away, in a country only fifteen feet above the sea level, below the world's highest peak, having the world's densest population; and the name of my country was changed twice in one generation." We are a quiz to the rest of the world. Export *linfoi* or perish.

Controversial political and religious topics are to be avoided in the drawing room, to make the conversation (not monologue) more entertaining. To divert the confrontation (*tarika* and *bitarika*), a book-worm amongst us posed the question whether Bangladesh

Members of the Jatra Opera Group rehearse at Spitalfields Market in East London, before performing the Jatra. The opera describes tales from Bengali history and formed the centrepiece of the recent London Festival of Bangladesh.



A Youth with Aspirations and Visions

by Fayza Haq

NAJIB Tareque, 24, Final BFA, had his second solo exhibition at "Jojon", recently. There were 23 entries in mixed media. In his subjects, he tried to capture the different forms of human beings, seen in different moods. He wished to exaggerate the forms and present them in a manner that brought in both realism as well as cubism. These forms were distorted and then displayed as a composite whole. The exaggerations and distortions were brought because the artist felt that realism alone could not depict movement or the subtle influence of the socio-economic pressures in a man's life.

Najib's style was also influenced by the young contemporary artists' visions, both at home and abroad. He concentrated on presenting both the male and female forms, along with birds and animals, that form the natural environment of mankind in Bangladesh. He depicted what he saw in the country and not beyond it, as he has not had experience of overseas travels, while at the same time, he felt that individuals in Bangladesh could represent all humanity.

In "Joy of Humanity-6" were brought in a female figure, to the left of the composition. Within her *sari* was the image of a child, playing, as the artist saw his subject as the symbol of motherhood. Another patch was seen besides the playing child, in green, and this stood for a stage, as the artist believed that "All the World's A Stage". Within the *anchal* was brought in an image of a cage, because Najib believed that human beings were confined within the bonds of their own intellectual and physical selves, as well as the confining grips of the society around them. On the backdrop at the right, was seen a twirling dancing figure that was remarkable for its complex composition. In "Joy of Humanity" was brought similar ideas, values, and expressions of sentiments. A nude female form was seen juxtaposed within her bosom, highlighted by startling red circles. The hair was depicted as stripes of red, to bring in the present use of henna by women in the Dhaka's beauty parlours. The artist had depicted the female form in the nude because he felt that the nude female figure brought out one of the finest aesthetic elements that one could come across in life. The nude presentation was there for all to see, as Najib insisted that women are preoccupied with the act of beautifying themselves in Bangladesh — both in the city and country.

In the same mixed media piece, the tribal people were brought in the left forefront, with grey shades. This was outlined with dramatic black, to contrast with the development in cities. These tribal people were an integral part of society and should not be ignored or forgotten, while we are busy with the life in the cities," the artist explained. Three male forms, of different sizes, shapes and colours, were depicted as attacking the female form, as the artist believed that male dominated male form was juxtaposed against this, as the artist felt that he could not envisage a father figure without the counterpart of a mother image.

In the backdrop of the same creation, green was brought in to represent the fertility of man, and that of the world that encompassed him. Grey was brought in too, in the background, and this stood for



confusing and overwhelming thoughts. The L-shaped white, in the centre and the right background, brought barren deserts to the mind. This desert colour was included as the artist believed that our culture and civilization have their roots in the empty deserts of the Middle East. Najib had used water colour, wax, ink and crayon in the piece, as in all the other exhibits, at the solo show. The surrounding adult and child images stood for thoughts that extended on to that of the family and friends. One found an oblique division of the green backdrop, as the artist believed that there were various conflicting as well as harmonious elements in this world.

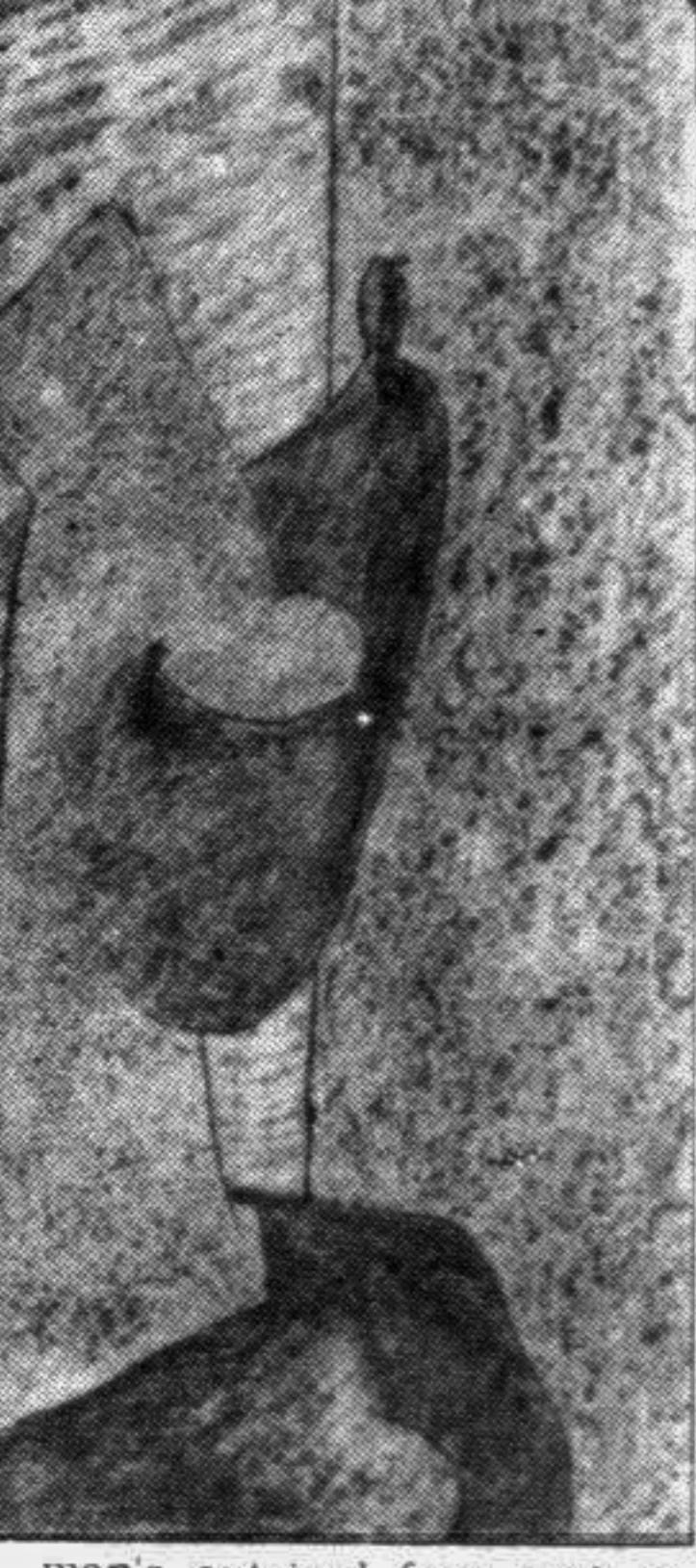
"Untitled-13" depicted man with his folded, curled limbs, the limbs being exaggerated and minimised, according to the imagination of the artist. The head was shown as two distorted oblong shapes, as, "When men move quickly in photographs this comes as repeated oval forms", the artist explained. The artist elaborated that this depicted man's ambition to strive and progress, despite all obstacles.

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white shapes — stood for the numerous desires and efforts of mankind.

A bird was seen in "Untitled-5". The bird stood for mankind and it had been depicted without a tail, as the artist believed that human beings have no strong beliefs or socio-economic support. The bird, with its confused looking eye and distorted beak, was presented as progressing from a light to a darker shade, bringing in the artist's own waves of pessimism.

The theme of metamorphosis was brought in "Untitled-4". This had five scenes on paper, with the figures progressing from that of a bloated fish (complete with a tail and fins) to a human form, seen as almost a shadow of green, purple and yellow, delicately outlined with ink. Next came a



man's outsize face, with a comparatively tiny hand, reaching out for a stick. (Here the artist felt that the mind and the ability to move around, were sufficient, no matter what a man's age might be). Next, a human face was depicted, as people are usually identified by their faces. The final figure was that of a fallen and broken man, seen as a composite whole, in two different forms. This delineated the "fin" in man's life, when he requires an RIP on his headstone.

The artist's belief that the female form was the nonpareil of beauty was continued on to "Untitled-2". The different colours and the geometrical divisions that were used in this subject, reflected the varied moods that one finds in any woman. A typical eastern head was placed atop the limbless torso. Human thoughts, being of foremost importance in the integral whole of mankind, had been expressed by the use of grey in the background.

Najib believed that the younger generation of artists in Bangladesh are taking bold and decisive steps to project contemporary and universal beliefs, thoughts and feelings. They are progressing towards a definite goal without losing sight of the importance of their past heritage." Najib concluded.

Nations Protection Forces (UNPROFOR). From there, the Ensemble took a bus to Ljubljana, Slovenia's capital. Then on 8 September, they flew to Paris aboard a regularly-scheduled airline with tickets provided by UNESCO.

But so far, the short sojourn in Paris has not placated Pasovic, an angry young man whose gray hair belies his 33 years. He is enraged by a war that no one seems able to stop. "Every day people are dying on the streets as the rest of Europe watches," he said.

— UNESCO

UNESCO Brings in First Bosnian Theatre Group to Perform in West Since the War

WHEN the curtain rose on September 12 night in a Parisian theatre, it unveiled a play by the Sarajevo Festival Ensemble, the first festival group who performed in the West since the war broke out in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

UNESCO organized the troupe's trip as part of the Organization's plans to create a "cultural air bridge" to end

AFTER doing extremely well in both the US and British film charts *The Mask* comes to town. John Carr plays Stanley Ipkiss a soft-spoken bank clerk who lives a lonely life watching cartoons with only a dog as his sole companion. Ipkiss has only one problem. He is desperately seeking to find that special person. So he follows his friend's advice and goes with him to a night club. But Ipkiss is thrown out. Cursing his luck, Ipkiss stumbles on a mask. Curiosity gets the better of him and Ipkiss puts it on. Instantly, he is transformed from the average man on the street in the day to a party animal at night who can sing and dance exquisitely. Not only that, the mask also endows him with unbelievable abilities.

After consulting an expert on masks he learns that it is magical one that bestows the holder special powers. With the help of the mask our hero at last finds the woman of his dreams at one such nightclub. The woman, however, is associated with a major criminal boss. As expected he doesn't take the threat of a competi-

Viewing Video

by Lenin Gani

tion lightly. Although the story is in typical Hollywood tradition i.e. the defenceless good guy versus the all-powerful bad guy, the viewer will certainly appreciate the high-tech vi-

sual effects. The film will go down well with families.

Hollywood's highest paid

actor Jack Nicholson stars in

Wolf another of this summer's

blockbusters on both sides of

the Atlantic. Briefly Nicholson alias Will Randall is the editor of a prestigious magazine. One cold night after returning home late from a business trip, his car accidentally hits a wolf and when he goes to investigate, the beast attacks him.

Everybody including his doctor dismisses the story while gradually the effects of the attack causes his senses to become very acute. In the meantime his job is under threat as the result of a takeover bid by a wealthy publisher (Christopher Plummer) who wants to give his job to Nicholson's protégé. Nicholson decides to tell him of his reluctance at a party. At the party Nicholson meets Plummer's daughter, Michelle Pfeiffer. In fact, only she takes Nicholson's predicament seriously. Nicholson through careful manipulation gets his job back after discovering that his rival having an affair with his wife. After the brutal murder of Nicholson's wife apparently by a bite to the throat Pfeiffer becomes confused. It is only after a confrontation between Nicholson and his bitter rival who also becomes a wolf, then all is revealed.

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