

seminar

Folk Theatre is a Unifying Event



Dr Christina Nygren, a theatre scholar from Sweden, is speaking at a day-long seminar on Popular and Folk Theatre in China and Japan titled "Theatre of and for the People: A Contextualised View on Popular Theatre," organised by Centre for Asian Theatre (CAT) at the Goethe-Institut Dhaka yesterday.

Dr Cristina Nygren, Doctor of Philosophy in Theatre History and Theory, who held a seminar on popular and Folk Theatre in China and Japan at the Goethe Institut, said that the theatre life in Japan and China shows a great variety of examples of the important functions of theatre and dance for the public at large, in everyday life, as well

by Fayza Haq

as in religious or secular festivals and holidays. She said that popular theatre is integrated in society and in people's life, not only as an aesthetic experience or as entertainment for the common people. The performances, she stressed are often significant for a feeling of community or serve like unifying events for certain groups in the social structure.

Dr Nygren said that the main point of departure for this research work is to reach an understanding of the popular theatre and dance as it appears in its natural context. The work

of art is not looked upon separately, but is regarded in a broad perspective, in which the performance, the acting space, the audience/participants, environment and the social/religious situation are equally emphasised, she added. "A cross-disciplinary method is used in order to investigate encounters in the popular theatre and to shed lights on the overall 'even' as an 'on-the-spot-account'. The total experience is based on tradition, social context, political governing, philosophy and religion. The even is a complex communication where many components contribute to the picture experienced by each and every spectator/participant."

Dr Nygren continued to say, "The term 'popular culture' is defined in its broadest sense, to some extent including mass culture and folk culture, and the definitions of highbrow and lowbrow are regarded as extremes on each side of an overlapping middle zone, where the differences are not clearly visible. Two sub-divisions are recognised defined by popular theatre and folk theatre, de-

pending on the performing space and its aim and function. "Popular Theatre" indicates performances created to be distributed to a large audience, often in the cities and particularly in the big cities, or for extensive touring. "Folk Theatre" designates provincial theatre and dance, connected to traditions, customs and life styles in certain geographical areas. It is specially valuable as a carrier of religion, history, morals and values and permeates the life of the rural people."

Asked why she went to study particularly in China and Japan Dr Nygren says, "I wanted to go there as a child, and having completed my studies there returned home. Since I was a child I was doing amateur theatre. I studied theoretical drama at school and took part in every possible drama group's activities. Eventually I entered the drama department of the University of Stockholm."

Talking about whether she found anything in common with Far Eastern drama and Bangladeshi drama. "Yes, but I don't want to make any specific

comments right now as I have been here in Bangladesh for such a short time compared to ten years in China and Japan. It would be unfair to make a comparison within this situation. I am here to make a pre-research for the popular theatre specially 'jatra', as I see similarities in the folk theatre of China, Japan and now Bengal. I shall include studies of West Bengal. In touring groups, in the entertainment centres in the cities or in the villages, there are many things in common, but as I am working with contextualised study, I don't take the art work of the stage into consideration as the primary interest. I am working with the audience, the place where the play is performed, the political, social and economic situation. This, for me, is as important as the art work. I am trying to put the theatre which is a work of art in the context of everything around. It would not be right to study the art form on its own. I have to grasp the situation in many fields before I am able to make an analysis," she continued.

"I have been to most of the parts of Bangladesh to study my work. In three weeks, this time, I went to eight 'jatra' performances in places like Feni, Manikganj, Munshiganj. We had to go by boat and walk miles for this," she added.

"In the workshop at the Goethe Institut I dealt with the travelling theatre groups in China and Japan and also some of the more sophisticated popular theatre in the cities. These are popular commercial theatres," she informed us.

"I am not against highbrow theatre but I think that it is very important that we respect and accept popular folk theatre as important as highbrow theatre. Let the people who want to intellectualise theatre do that. And let the people who want to experience theatre do that," she said.

This is Dr. Nygren's third trip to Bangladesh and she hopes to come for three years to do research on the popular theatre. This time she came just to make her contacts, and go home and make an application to her government for a fellowship.

nazrul centenary

Nazrul Turns A Century Old

By Nadine Murshid

N AZRUL Islam, Bengal's rebel poet, turned a century old - too bad he isn't here to celebrate it. But with or without him, the Nazrul enthusiasts are celebrating his birthday with enthusiasm and excitement. The Committee of National Level Celebration of Nazrul's Islam's 100th Birthday organized a discussion

yesterday, 30 April 1999, at the National Museum to open the month long celebration of the poet's birthday. Justice Habibur Rahman inaugurated the month long program and State Minister Obydul Kader presided over the ceremony.

The discussion began with Muhammad Nurul Huda's welcoming speech, where he thanked the audience and the guests for their presence. Then

Rafiqul Islam, conveynor of the music part, Shudhin Das, Momtazuddin Ahmed, conveynor of the recitation part, Mohammad Moniruzzaman, conveynor of the poetry part, Dr Anisuzzaman, conveynor of the International part and Hashem Khan, conveynor of the art exhibition spoke on the occasion. They all spoke at length on Nazrul Islam and his contribution to the world of music, poetry and

art. After their speeches Justice Habibur Rahman conveyed his greetings to Nazrul and talked about Nazrul, as a rebel, as a fighter and as a human being. Then, Obydul Kader, State Minister, Sports and Culture Ministry, said a few words on Nazrul Islam and his qualities, which still has a mind-boggling effect on the general people.



Confident on the catwalk: AD 2000 organized a fashion show yesterday at Hotel Purbani.

—Star photo

News



BNP chairperson Begum Khaleida Zia visited JCD leader Sayed Ali, who was injured in an attack by terrorists recently, at a city clinic yesterday.

Rob calls for formation of upper house in parliament

President of Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD) and Minister for Fisheries and Livestock A S M Abdur Rob said in the city yesterday that national progress and political stability could be ensured by enabling the professional social forces to take part in policy-making process, reports BSS.

Speaking at a discussion meeting organised by JSD in observance of the May Day at Colonel Taher Auditorium, Rob called for the formation of upper house in parliament to make an end to what he termed as political unrest.

Diarrhoea claims 62 in Noakhali, Laxmipur dists

NOAKHALI, Apr 30: Diarrhoea broke out in an epidemic form in Noakhali and Laxmipur districts claiming 62 lives and affecting 5,000 people in last one month till April 24, reports UNB.

According to the district Civil Surgeon office, Sudhaman, Companiganj and Hatia of Noakhali district are the worst affected thanas.

Officials said 25 people died and 2,735 were affected by the waterborne disease in the three thanas during the period.

Some 107 medical teams have been working round-the-clock in the affected areas of Noakhali district while 87 in Laxmipur to combat the disease, the officials added.

But unofficial sources claimed that the death toll in the two districts would be higher than the official figure.

According to statistics provided by Poor Development Programme (PDP), a non-government development organisation, 61 people died and 3,860 were attacked by the disease in Noakhali alone during the period.

The death toll from the disease in four thanas of Laxmipur district during the period is 37 while the numbers of affected people are 2,458, the PDP sources said.

Local elite attributed the outbreak of the waterborne disease to scarcity of pure drinking

New central committee of BCU formed

By DU Correspondent

A 41-member central committee of Bangladesh Chhatra Union (BCU) was formed yesterday with Monjur-e-Rhoda Tarik and Hasan Tarik Chowdhury Soher as its president and general secretary respectively.

The new committee was announced on the concluding day of the organisation's three-day national council held at the TSC auditorium of Dhaka University.

Other office-bearers are: Vice-presidents - Atiqul Islam, Hafiz Adnan Riyad, Nadira Sultana Nadi, Abdur Rab Mosharaf, Mostafa Kamal Milan, M Noor Alam and Mohammad Harun; organising secretary - Shariful Islam; treasurer - Aninda Rahman; office secretary - Biswajit Das; education and research secretary - Mahmud Hossain Khokan; publicity secretary - Sarwar Moshed Mannan; cultural secretary - Palash Basak; and social welfare secretary - Nazrul Islam.

Discussion on Ustad Abed Hossain Khan

By Staff Correspondent

A discussion meeting was held at the German Cultural Centre auditorium in the city yesterday marking the third death anniversary of Ustad Abed Hossain Khan, a classical music exponent.

Ustad Ayet Ali Khan Sangeet Niketan organised the discussion meeting and a musical programme in the evening. President of the organisation Mobarak Hossain Khan chaired the function.

After the discussion, singer Nilufer Yasmin gave a presentation of vocal music composed by Ustad Abed Hossain Khan.

A number of artists including Reenat Fauzia, Afsana Khan and Rukshana Khan presented instrumental music composed by Shahadat Hossain Khan.

44 phensidyl bottles seized

MYMENSINGH, Apr 30: Police in a raid seized 44 bottles of Indian phensidyl from an area adjacent to the town's China Bridge on Thursday night, reports UNB.

Acting on a tip-off, a team of police conducted the raid and seized the bottles wrapped in a polythene bag.

The drug users and sellers managed to escape arrest by jumping into the river Brahmaputra.

Govt to build more cyclone shelters

Civil Aviation, Tourism and Works Minister Engineer Mosharraf Hossain said the government has undertaken a masterplan to build more cyclone shelters in the coastal areas to save life from natural calamities, reports BSS.

The minister was speaking at a function in the city on Thursday, organised by the Swadip Samity in Dhaka, in memory of the victims of the devastating tidal surge of April 29, 1991 in the coastal belt.

Presided over by Mustafizur Rahman, MP, the function was addressed, among others, by Deputy Minister for Local Government and Cooperatives Minister Zillur Rahman who called upon the people to build united resistance against the political beneficiaries who are out to create artificial issue in the name of anti-government movement, reports BSS.

"You will have to fight against the cliques who are reaping political fortunes by calling hartals and deteriorating law and order situation in the country," he said.

He was addressing a public meeting at the Sirajnagar M A Pilot School ground yesterday under the auspices of Raypara Thana Awami League, an official press release said today.

Rahman said the Leader of the Opposition is out to impede the democratic progress and the rule of law, encouraging anarchy by calling mindless hartals.

Her only aim is to capture power by destabilising the country and destroying democracy," he said, adding BNP has chosen the path of self-annihilation by calling frequent hartals, inflicting sufferings on the people.

Presided over by Afzal Hossain, the meeting was also addressed, among others, by Science and Technology Minister Lt Gen (Retd) Mohammad Noor Uddin Khan, Raziuddin Razu, MP, president of Narsingdi District Awami League Advocate Asaduzzaman and general secretary Mahbubur Rahman Bhuiyan.

'BNP out to impede democratic progress'

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Arshia Apparels Ltd's default arose from its stock lot amounting to Tk 268.48 lakh. Out of it an amount of Tk 105.72 lac has been paid. The project loan sanctioned for Arshia is being paid regularly. The company applied to the bank to make a payment schedule for the amount owed to them, due to the stock-lot. The bank refused to do it so far. Despite collecting a substantial amount against the stock-lot bank didn't

All this information was conveyed to the Sonali Bank repeatedly. We are now preparing paper for rescheduling of loan as per bank instruction.

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The BUET Teachers' Association (BUETTA) has sent a rejoinder to a news item headlined 'BUET teachers hit back' published in The Daily Star yesterday.

The rejoinder said, "We are shocked to see that our statements made during the press conference on April 29 have been incorrectly reported by your correspondent in the section - 'Admitting that the incidents like giving proxy in examinations have taken place at the university. But we cannot allow such incidents any more,' they concluded."

It added: "There is no question of admitting that incidents like impersonation in an examination had taken place at the university in the past. In fact, this is the first detected incident of impersonation in an examination in BUET. So the question of not taking any action in previous cases does not arise at all."

Inquilab Clarification and our reply

So far Quaderia Publications & Products Ltd, since establishment in 1985, has received 4 project loans from Sonali and Janata Bank.

The default amount claimed by Sonali Bank is being disputed by us for the last four years. There are discrepancies. We borrowed Tk 2.21 crore against which we paid Sonali Bank Tk 2.72 crore. The balance amount claimed is purely interest. We objected to the Bank about the way the interest was calculated. The bank agreed to waive the interest amount only partially. We didn't agree to it. The matter is thus awaiting disposal.

Regarding Riverside Leather & Footwear Industries (Pvt) Ltd, which commenced its production on 25-08-1996, we faced adverse political situation, security power shortage, devastating flood of last year. After watching erratic power situation, our foreign partner did not find any interest in cooperating with us. Although we borrowed crores of taka for importing Gas-Generator, it took Titas Gas over two years to provide gas. Meanwhile we have lost valuable time and business. We suffered another set-back after cancellation of one big order due to devastating flood.

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Our reply: The rejoinder signed by A S M Baqibillah, identified as a 'director of the Inquilab Group Company', clarifies the companies' position regarding business and loan related issues with Sonali Bank.

The rejoinder gives a detailed description of the Group's loans and businesses with Sonali Bank but does not mention how much money remained overdue which was the main focus of the Daily Star report.

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Garments workers brought out a procession in the city yesterday to mark the May Day.

—Star photo

Amran Hossain, Staff photographer of The Daily Star, got married on Thursday.