

# New Year Special

## Catches win matches...

### Notun Kuri's wasted opportunity



The climax of this process is the finals. The frenzied excitement of the live telecast, the winner finally declared, and the million-dollar smile on the child's face. The anti-climax starts from the time the winners walk down from the podium. The 10 minutes of glory over with, the talent disappears behind the stage, and is never heard of again.

SADYA AFREEN MALLICK

THE title is a famous term in cricket, and is a painful for all Bangladesh cricket lovers. Millions on the field, glued to the TV or Internet have been cursing the numerous opportunities we let slip through our grasp, with the inevitable result made all the more certain. This analogy might seem a bit strange if applied to our cultural arena, but its surprising how relevant it actually is. This is in reference to our nation-wide prestigious talent show, Notun Kuri. This event is a massive logistical effort.

Stunning though it may sound, a massive 12,000 to 15,000 hopeful and aspiring talents take part in the competition. A seven-member committee selects three judges from each region. The selectors work tirelessly for the entire year to screen the very best child performers.

And we have it all, dancing, singing, reciting, acting, drawing in droves of talent from all points on the compass. The parents devote tremendous amount of time and money, enrolling their child in overcrowded performing arts schools, accompanying them to audition centres, waiting for hours in the un-shaded enclosures, rain or shine.

The climax of this year-long process is naturally the finals in Dhaka at the BTV auditorium. The frenzied excitement of the live telecast, the winner finally declared, and the million-dollar smile on the child's face. The anti-climax starts from the time the winners walk down from the podium. The 10 minutes of glory over with, the talent disappears behind the stage, and is never heard of again.

There are exceptions of course. Ishita in the role of a young village girl Falani, who brought tears to the eyes of the TV spectators at the Notun Kuri competition some 12 years back. Or Tarana Halim, Tarin and Shawan who won the championship trophy for winning three consecutive events in performing arts. But for the thousands more, there is literally no plan to groom or develop the budding artists.

Isn't that we don't have the

infrastructure. Shilpakala Academy, and other institutions have the resources, the teachers, the physical buildings that can easily be utilised to take these children to the next level.

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enough, within a short time "released" to the world, so we can stand in awe at their performances. And it is these artists who promote their culture internationally, invigorate the industry and keep the wheels of the ever evolutionary culture, rolling.

If we could but take a leaf out of

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such success stories, we just might be surprised at the results. And in a country starved for local cultural performances, shows by the Notun Kuri artists can be a massive crowd puller both by private channels and privately packaged programs sold overseas to expatriate communities. Not to mention the talent pool we can create to promote our rich heritage at the international stage.

With all the effort spent in getting the tournament this far, it's a pity to see how we are letting this opportunity slip away in front of our eyes. Like our beloved cricket, if we can't hold on to our "catches", it will be our culture that will be the ultimate loser.

It is a pity to see how our lethargy is costing us our future.

### MEMORABILIA OF THE GREATS

## Stellar Bangalees and their luminous works

HARUN UR RASHID

Watching the December 16 entry by eminent educationist Abdur Rashid Tarakabagish in his diary, or the invitation card of Nobel laureate economist Amartya Sen's wedding, or the epitaph of Hasan Hafizur Rahman written by the litterateur only the day before his death gives one an overwhelming feeling. It is almost like meeting these historic Bangalees in person at the Bangalee Shamagra Gallery of 235/2 Elephant Road. 'An endeavour to preserve the works of the best Bangalees', the personal enterprise of young Tariq Rahman Shourav, surely contributes to the over-all effort of recreating the history of the country.

Situated in 2000-square-foot space, the gallery displays portraits, memorabilia and documents related to a large number of Bangalees. Besides, a considerable collection of books, photographs and video tapes also add to the effort of preserving the memories of these Bangalees whose immense contributions have shaped the country for its future generations.

Having started its journey in February 2004, the gallery accommodates portraits of 52 Bangalees under four sections: (1) Language-Education-Literature, (2) Society-Politics-Economics, (3) Music-Theatre-Film-Sports, and (4) Science-Architecture-Fine Arts. 'Obviously, there are many more personalities--rather than only 52--who have contributed to these fields,' explains Tariq. 'As a starter, we have decided to display the pioneers only, but gradually we will include all other Bangalees in our exhibition. And we have included West Bengal also in this regard--for, we are actually carrying on the legacy that many intellectuals from the neighbouring Indian state had established for us,' he adds.

The portraits feature Ishwar Chandra Bidyagar, Michael Madhusudan Datta, Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay, Rabindranath Tagore, Dr Muhammad Shahidullah, Jibanananda Das, Kazi Nazrul Islam, Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Mohammad Akram Khan, Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain, Dr Muhammad Ibrahim, Jahanara Imam, Sher-e-Bangla AK Fazlul Haque, Maolana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhashani, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman--the Bangalees who, with their revolutionary ideas, reformed the society and education, the language and literature of the country.

Besides, there are portraits of great musicians--the mystic Lalou Shah and Hason Raja, king of folk music Abbasuddin Ahmad, world renowned classical maestro Ustad Alauddin Khan; artists--first Bangalee Muslim painter Kazi Abul Kashem, Shilpakacharya Zainul Abedin, Pataua Quamrul Hassan and SM Sultan; magician of football Abdus Samad and record setting swimmer Brajen Das; first Bangalee film activist Hiralal Sen, first Bangla filmmaker

Abdul Jabbar Khan, martyred Zahir Raihan; scientists Kudrat-E-Khuda and Jagadish Chandra Basu; and architect FR Khan.

The most interesting exhibits are, however, the large memorabilia collection--manuscripts, diaries, original works and personal belongings of personalities. 'Regarding these mementos, we have always been very strict at displaying only the original pieces--no photocopy of manuscripts or letters, which we have often been offered,' says Tariq. 'From renowned photographer Amanul Haque

Kabir's 16mm movie camera and a *Dotara* of musician Abdul Latif. The collection also contains an oil painting by the first Bangalee Muslim artist Kazi Abul Kashem. Moreover, there are copies of numerous newspapers and magazines of the past including *Saugat*, *Dhumsketu*, *Begum*, *Probashi*, *Shamokaa*, the *Ittefaq* and the *Shangbad*.

The gallery also has interviews of eminent Bangalees recorded on videotape. 'So far we have interviewed veteran journalist Obayed Ul Haque, singers Firoza Begum and



A painting by the first Bangalee Muslim artist Kazi Abul Kashem

we have collected letters of Satyajit Ray, manuscripts of poet Sufia Kamal and Sikandar Abu Zafar from their family sources,' he informs.

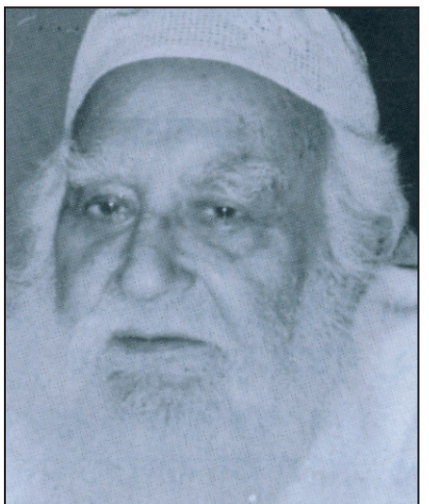
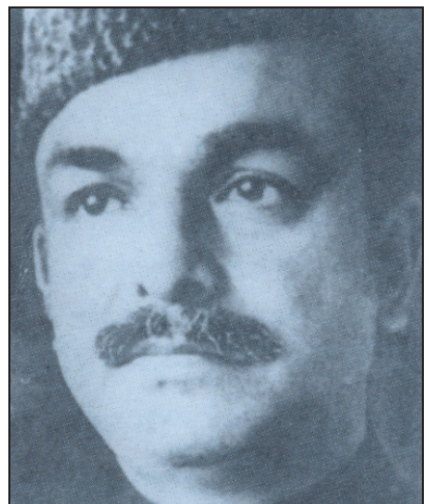
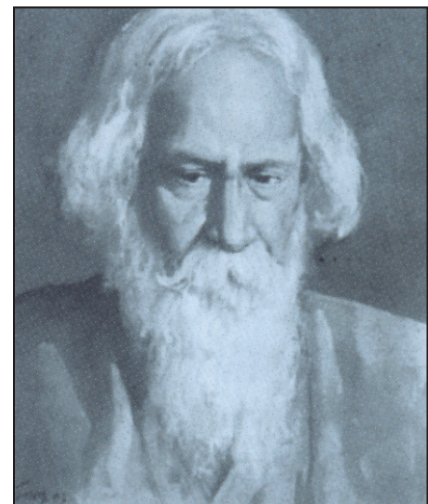
Among the interesting collections are the driving license of Munier Choudhury, the share certificate of Iqbal Films that produced the first Bangla film *Mukh O Mukhosh*, and the chess board used by Dr Kazi Motahar Hossain. An important document is the Mujibnagar government's certificate to swimmer Arun Nandi who swam for a record 90-hour duration in 1971 with an aim to draw international attention to the ongoing war of Bangladesh. There are also the script of Satyajit Ray's *Kapurush O Mahapurush*, musical notation prepared by Ustad Alauddin Khan, manuscripts of Rabindranath Tagore and poet Subhash Mukhopadhyay.

Two very interesting pieces are filmmaker Alamgir

Abdul Latif, poet Shamsur Rahman, *Begum* editor Nurjahan Begum, artist Kazi Abul Kashem and a few others. We hope to make arrangements soon so that visitors can watch these interviews here,' says Tariq.

The gallery also has plans for publications especially biographies of the great Bangalees. It has already published a book on Jahanara Imam.

'Gradually, the gallery will be transformed into a museum in future. Meanwhile, we will carry on our quest for enriching our collection and executing our different schemes regarding preserving and spreading the light that our Bangalees' works emit,' says a confident Tariq.



Rabindranath Tagore

Kazi Nazrul Islam

Habibullah Bahar Chowdhury

Abdur Rashid Trakabagish

## GAINS AND LOSSES OF 2004



The much awaited National Theatre Stage was inaugurated on December 4 at the Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy. The centrally air-conditioned modern National Theatre Stage hall has a seating capacity of 750. It has a fixed proscenium arch stage, modern light and sound equipment, luxury seats, modern greenroom and VIP lounge.

A devastating fire at the New Bangabazar Hawkers' Market on November 22 destroyed around 300 films. The hub of the fire was a five-storey building that housed 21 film-making and distributing offices. The number includes more than a hundred landmark creations of the golden period of Bangla films including *Danga* and *Sipahi*--two acclaimed films on the Liberation War made in more recent times.

