

SMALL SCREEN

Sharat Chandra's 'Mamlar Phol' on Channel i

To observe the 69th death anniversary of popular Bangla novelist and story-teller Sharat Chandra Chattopadhyay, Channel i will air the play *Mamlar Phol* based on his story tonight at 7:50pm. The play is scripted by Geetali Hassan and directed by Abul Hayat.

In the play, two brothers Shibu and Shambhu are engaged in a feud over land ownership. The zamindar takes the initiative to end the dispute. He decides to divide the land and give equal shares to both. But as a bamboo grove is not divided, new disputes develop over its possession. The situation worsens when Shibu's wife Gongamoni collects some leaves from the grove. Being childless, her motherly instincts go out to Gongaram, the son of Shambhu. The family ties are torn apart when Gongamoni's cousin files a case against Gongaram.

Azizul Hakim and Bipasha Hayat play the lead roles in the play.



Bipasha Hayat

'Sunyoshiri' on Rtv



The TV play *Sunyoshiri* will be aired tonight at 8:50pm on Rtv. Written by Moni Haider, the play is directed by Shahiduzzaman Selim.

The single episode captures a day and a half in the lives of an estranged couple. Their only child suddenly falls ill. The incident brings them closer and they find a new dimension in their relationship.

Shahiduzzaman Selim, Aupee Karim and Rosy Siddiqui are the main cast members of the play.

(L-R): Aupee Karim, Rosy Siddiqui and Shahiduzzaman Selim in the play

'Roshik Gopal' on ATN Bangla

Based on the familiar tales of Gopal Bhar, the legendary court jester in medieval Bengal, ATN Bangla will air the play *Roshik Gopal* tonight at 8:45 pm.

In this episode a relative of Gopal plots to outwit him. Gopal is wrongly accused, arrested and tied with a rope. Though the relative sought to slight Gopal, he himself becomes another victim of Gopal's quick wit.

Rahmat Ali, Chitralekha Guha, Ahsan Habib Nasim, Nupur and Hridoy are the main cast members of the play. The play is scripted and directed by Moin Khan Rupi.



Rahmat Ali and Chitralekha Guha in *Roshik Gopal*

Udichi Shilpi Gosthi UK: Fortifying the Bengali identity overseas

CULTURAL CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Udichi Shilpi Gosthi, better known as Udichi, was formed in 1968. Since then Udichi has been one of the frontrunners among the cultural organisations in the country. Udichi's endeavours have been politically conscious too. Through cultural events, music and plays, Udichi has spoken out boldly against autocracy and fundamentalism, for which the organisation has often been victimised.

At present Udichi has branches even in the remote corners of the country. Not only that, Udichi has made it its way overseas with four branches in USA, UK, Australia and Canada.

Golam Mustafa, president of Udichi Shilpi Gosthi UK, recently talked to *The Daily Star* regarding the organisation's efforts to uphold and nurture Bengali culture among the largest community of Bengalis overseas.

Mustafa has been with Udichi since 1972, when the organisation expanded its activities and branched out into music, drama, dance, fine arts and literature. "I've always been affiliated with cultural

organisations," says Mustafa. "Growing up, I was a member of 'Khelaghar' and have performed in plays."

In '77, Mustafa moved to Germany to study printing technology. In Frankfurt, he along with other culturally oriented expats, formed 'Anusheelan' -- a cultural organisation that celebrated special occasions like *Ekushey* (International Mother Language Day), Victory Day, Independence Day, *Pahela Baishakh* (Bangla New Year) and more. The organisation also arranged films screenings and discussion.

In 1988, Mustafa moved to London. "Udichi Shilpi Gosthi UK was formed in '89. However, many of the community felt that the second and third generation Bengalis didn't have connections with mainstream cultural practices. In '97 Udichi School of Performing Arts was established (at Brady Arts and Community Centre, Hanbury Street, East London) and currently the school offers courses in music, drama, dance, language (Bangla) and recitation. Udichi Shilpi Gosthi UK also has its music and recitation troupes," says Mustafa.

Regarding the raison d'être of

the organisation's activities, Mustafa says, "Besides helping create a strong attachment between generations that have perhaps never been to Bangladesh or come in contact with our culture, Udichi also intends to create a positive image of the thriving Bengali community to the rest of UK. Apart from celebrating Independence Day of Bangladesh, Victory Day, *Pahela Baishakh* and others, Udichi also participates in mainstream events like Edinburgh Festival. Our participation highlights Bangladesh handicrafts and performances by our music troupe."

Udichi UK is also an active member of Cultural Policy Unit of Greater London Authority and London Borough of Tower Hamlets. Among major events by the organisation, Bengali Cultural Festival pulls in a huge crowd. The two-three day long festival features, A-listed artists from both West Bengal and Bangladesh.

Fortifying the bond between people and their roots as well representing Bengali heritage in a multicultural society, Udichi UK deserves kudos.



Students of Udichi School of Performing Arts at a programme

Moushumi: An eventful innings in film industry

ERSHAD KAMOL

WHEN the Dhaliwood film industry faced a terrible shortfall of talented actresses in the early 1990s, Moushumi appeared as a breath of fresh air. Since then she has been one of the leading actresses in mainstream Bangladeshi films.

Arifa Parveen Zaman Moushumi, popularly known by her nickname Moushumi, began her career as a model in TV commercials. Her impressive appearance on the small screen attracted film directors who offered her roles in movies. However, at that stage she did not show interest in mainstream films.

In 1992 she was selected as the winner of the *Anandadhara Photo Shundori* beauty contest. Soon after, filmmaker Sohanur Rahman Sohan offered her a role in the Bangla version of the blockbuster Hindi movie *Quayamat Se Quayamat Tak* and she took up the offer. After the release of the Bangla version titled *Quayamat Theke Quayamat* (1993), both the debutants -- Moushumi and Salman Shah-- became instant heartthrobs. Said Moushumi, "I was a great admirer of the story involving doomed lovers, which motivated me to act in the movie. Subsequently I became a part of the industry."

So far Moushumi has acted in over 100 movies, most of which have attracted sizeable audience. She is content to have performed in movies such as *Quayamat Theke Quayamat*, *Matritwa*, *Meghla Akash* and *Khairun*

Shundori.

Selective about her choice of films, she says she is very picky and does not perform in more than 10 films a



year. To quote her, "It's quite difficult to perform in several quality movies at the same time. To me storyline, director and location are important factors."

Referring to the current scenario, Moushumi said that the film industry of Bangladesh has been struggling to cope with a slump in the market. Moushumi attributes

the lack of quality movies of Dhaliwood to phenomena such as low budgets, lack of talented young actors, lack of government patronage and a shortfall of decent movie theatres. In her words, "Our aim should be to solve problems rather than criticise the movie industry. The highest movie budget in Dhaliwood at present is not more than Tk 80 lakh. And the average budget is only Tk 50 lakh. With the limited budget it is difficult to maintain quality films. Considering film industry a non-profitable sector, educated youth are not interested in joining the film industry."

"To fill the vacuum, the assistants without sound knowledge are often seen donning the mantles of directors and cameramen. As for our successors, so far we only have Purnima. Moreover, let alone the district towns, even in Dhaka city we don't have more than three quality cinema halls."

Moushumi believes that only when the producers are assured of a steady return will they invest more. This in turn will result in promoting the industry as a whole. According to her, the government and corporate houses have a great role to play in promoting the movie industry as well.

So far Moushumi has bagged many awards, including the National Award for her performance in the movie *Meghla Akash* in 2000.

Tête-à-tête

Prema: A dancer to watch for

KAVITA CHARANJII

In this day and age many upcoming dancers pursue their art not through love of it but as a stepping stone to stardom in the media, small screen or filmdom. A refreshing departure from the norm is the talented dancer Samina Husain Prema, a dance teacher at Chhayanat, Sunnysdale School and her own dance organisation called Bhavna.

Prema's repertoire includes Manipuri dance along with creative and folk dance forms. Says Prema in explanation, "The Manipuri genre is my forte. One of the reasons for my interest in this form is Tagore's propensity for it," she says.

For her, dance is an abiding passion. And no wonder given the cultural milieu in which she grew up. Her mother, Rokeya Minakshi Husain, (a lecturer at University Laboratory School and College, Dhaka University) was a well known Tagore singer and continues to be a source of inspiration for Prema. Likewise her aunt, Jibina Shanchita Haque was also a Tagore singer. At the young age of seven, Prema began learning dance at Chhayanat.



Prema has had the fortune to have prominent dancers as her mentors. In the ranks of her gurus are Manipuri dancers such as Shantibala Sinha, Tamanna Rahman, Sharmila Bandyopadhyay and Kalavati Devi. In the domain of Bharatnatyam, she has trained under Belayet Hossain Khan.

Among the landmarks in her career is her direction of Tagore's dance drama *Chitrangada* for Maple Leaf School and Sunnysdale School. Now she is readying for a new production called *Bhanushingho Thakurer Padabali* (a mixture of Manipuri, Bharatnatyam and Odissi). The dance drama features her in the role of Radha (from the Krishna-Radha legend) and she dances along with her students from Bhavna. *Bhanushingher*.. has been staged in a shorter version, but the public will get to see it in its full form in February. Shadhona, the well-known dance organisation, is to sponsor the event.

Prema's long term goal? "To excel as a pure dancer and give the audience a taste of talent," she says ambitiously.



Movie Watch

'Last Exit': Brutal road rage in focus

KARIM WAHEED

Road rage is not an unfamiliar term to urban commuters. On the way to work, school, wherever...people speed aggressively, tailgate, cut others off, weave in and out of traffic, honk for no apparent reason, shout verbal abuses which often lead to physical violence - all because no one apparently has a second to spare in the modern maze.

*Last Exit*, directed by John Fawcett brings out the worst-case scenario resulted by road rage. The film depicts two individuals pushed to the edge of sanity.

Urban setting, stress, anger, frustration and road rage may induce *deja vu* but *Last Exit* is nothing like *Crash*. The movie with a modest budget was made for TV and includes no big name in the cast. Devoid of gloss and glamour, the central characters are real, vulnerable and at times violent.

The film recounts a day in the lives of Beth Welland and Diana Burke. Beth (Kathleen Robertson) is a single mother. She and her son Benji -- confined to a wheelchair -- live in a cramped apartment in a blue-collar neighbourhood. Financially, Beth is barely making it and beneath her beaming disposition a growing desperation lurks. Diana (Andrea Roth) is an executive at an advertising agency and lives in an upper-middle class suburban neighbourhood. Juggling a high-stress job, two kids and a husband who has been recently laid off, often overwhelms her.

The movie starts with a crash scene. As police officers try to rescue both women behind the wheels who are critically injured, parallel flashbacks provide the audience with bits and pieces of their lives that might have led to the accident.

As the movie spools back, Beth is seen struggling with her unreliable old car. While trying to get to work on time, she misses an exit as an SUV, driven by Diana, cuts her off. Beth misses a delivery that was apparently crucial for the firm she works for. In the baking heat, she drives around town to recover the package and gets stuck in unavoidable traffic. As the day unfolds, she realises she might lose custody of her only child as well.

Diana on the other hand is all set to land a major



business deal, which will get her a promotion. Meanwhile she also has to coax a teenage model working for a commercial made by the ad agency she works for. Her son gets into trouble in school. She realises she needs a break too as she is pregnant. Everything seemed to go well in the morning but around afternoon the situation gets uncontrollable.

As their frustrations grow, the two women are locked in a clash that changes their lives forever.

Gripping performances by both actors -- Kathleen Robertson and Andrea Roth -- in the lead roles are bound to make the audience think twice before engaging in road rage.

Aparna Sen's upcoming project: 'Japanese Wife'

Parallel filmmaker Aparna Sen has announced a new film called *Japanese Wife*. She has signed Raina Sen, Rahul Bose and a Japanese actress for the project.

Like all her women-centric movies, *Japanese Wife* too focuses on two women. It's based on a short story by Kunal Basu, a writer from West Bengal. Rahul Bose plays a man, who pursues relationships with two women simultaneously.

Meanwhile Aparna has decided to shelve her other project *Jewellery Box* starring Govinda, Konkona Sen Sharma, Sharmila Tagore and Soha Ali Khan.



'Pirates', Jonny Depp lead People's Awards

The movie swashbuckler *Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Man's Chest* and its stars Johnny Depp and Keira Knightley led winners at the 33rd annual People's Choice Awards.

Jennifer Aniston, Ellen DeGeneres, Carrie Underwood, Kenny Chesney, Rascal Flatts, Nickelback, Justin Timberlake, Eva Longoria and Patrick Dempsey were also favourites.

"If it wasn't for the people, I'd never win an award," Longoria said, laughing as she accepted her award for female television star. Depp, appearing by satellite from London, said he was humbled by the honour.

"I know that I've said this before. But the fact that this award comes from the people makes it all the more special," he said. "And thanks for keeping me employed, yeah? You're the boss."

The show aired from the Shrine Auditorium was hosted by Queen Latifah. Winners were picked by public Internet balloting.



Depp speaks via satellite from London