

CULTURAL FEAST

Justice for Nurjahan

Photography exhibition at Drik Gallery

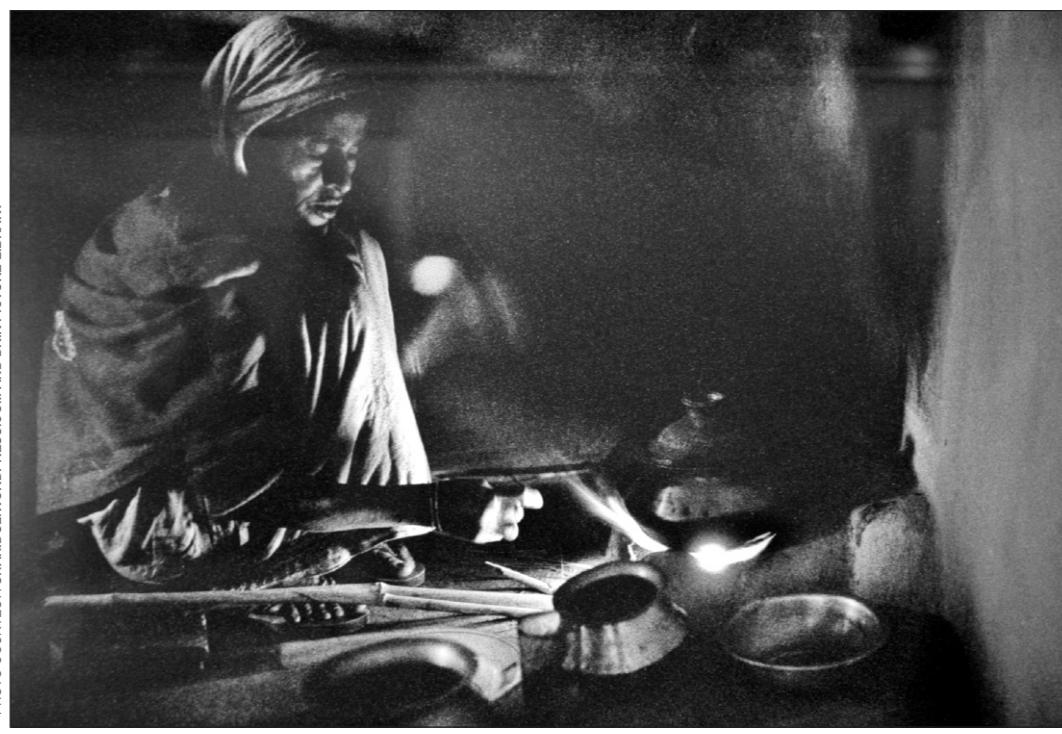
KARIM WAHEED

"JUST give me my daughter back. That's all I ask..." reads a caption accompanying the grainy, black and white image of a feeble elderly man; rage and despair in his eyes.

The riveting photograph is part of the ongoing exhibition at Drik Gallery. Titled *Justice for Nurjahan*, the exhibition opened on March 12 and features photographs by Shahidul Alam and text by Rahnuma Ahmed.

Buried waist-deep in the ground, Nurjahan -- a woman in her twenties -- awaited her punishment. Hundred and one pebbles were to be thrown at her. As she waited, a member of the *shalish* (a rural council for informal adjudication of disputes both civil and criminal, by local influential individuals) approached her and reprimanded her for being an adulteress. She was told that her existence was a shameful one and death should be preferable to that. The next day (January 10, 1993) Nurjahan -- 7th among 9 daughters of dirt-poor parents living in Chattockhara village, Maulvi Bazar district -- was found dead. She had poisoned herself.

Rewind: Like many women from rural impoverished families, Nurjahan Begum returned to her parents' after her husband abandoned her. She was married off five years ago. Her parents arranged another marriage for her, but



Nurjahan's pots and pans are still used by her mother

according to Muslim law, it was necessary to ascertain whether her first marriage had been properly dissolved. Nujahan's father consulted the village *imam* (religious leader) Maulana Mannan, who said she could get married. However,

once the marriage took place, the *imam* annulled his decision and declared that the marriage was illegal. A *shalish* was convened and it found Nujahan guilty of adultery. The verdict: 101 pebbles should be thrown at Nurjahan and her second husband.

Thanks to the efficient journalistic role played by one of the dailies in Sylhet, the whole nation came to know of the harrowing tale that matches barbaric practices from medieval times. A campaign demanding criminal investigation into the circumstances of death was launched. Mass support turned it into a landmark case.

Internationally acclaimed photographer Shahidul Alam is known for his mastery over the use of light and shadows. Dramatic elements are accentuated in the black and white images.

In one photograph, Maulana Mannan and his 8 accomplices (members of the *shalish*) are seen in the dock in Maulvi Bazar Court; their faces seem devoid of remorse, or any human emotion for that matter. Another image shows Mannan in a cell, looking straight into the camera.

Scribbles all over the wall give the image a surreal touch.

Wife of one of the accused is seen waiting outside court room. Vague outline of her face through a *burqa* is visible. A poster on the wall urges everyone to join a long march demanding the reconstruction of Babri Masjid. Nurjahan's mother is seen cooking in a photograph; flames elucidate her face. The family still uses pots and pans Nurjahan left behind -- her only possessions.

Nurjahan of Maulvi Bazar, Firoza of Salkhina, Kadbanu of Rangpur and several others like them -- all punished by their local *shalish* -- have unknowingly become heroes. Their stories have ignited campaigns and movements against traditions that still support men abandoning, judging and penalising women at their convenience.

The exhibition ends on March 22.



"This is where I found my daughter's body" -- Nurjahan's father

Exhibition on Urban Conservation/Reservation

Title: Old But New But Old
Organizer: British Council & North South University
Venue: British Council, 5 Fuller Road, Dhaka
Date: March 15-31
Time: 10am-6pm daily, except Fridays

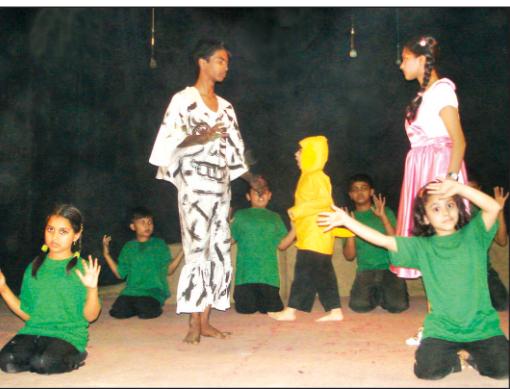
Erratum

In the March 12 issue of our Culture page the photographs of *Saitandha* and *Cyclewala* have been inadvertently misplaced. We regret the error.

'Oz-er Jadukar': A timeless tale revisited

MAINUL HASAN

Choroiboti Children's Theatre School (CCTS) staged *Oz-er Jadukar* (*The Wizard of Oz*), recently. A timeless classic by L Frank Baum, the central theme is the adventure



Young actors perform in Oz-er Jadukar

tures of a little girl named Dorothy and her pet dog Toto. The story begins with a sudden tornado, which transports the duo off to an unknown land. Far from home, the young girl becomes desperate to go back. When all seems lost, the good witch of North comes to her aid. As a first step, she shows her a pair of silver shoes and tells her to wear them. Also the witch tells her that if she can find Oz, a powerful wizard, then he might be able to help her.

Young Dorothy sets out in a quest to find Oz which takes her on a wondrous journey through the mythical land. On her way she encounters a scarecrow, a tin man and a lion. The foursome team up -- each with an individual journey to make. The play was directed by Kazi Toufiqul Islam Emon and translated by Nasiful Walid.

Before the staging of *Oz-er Jadukar*, a short discussion and certificate giving session of the first batch students of (CCTS) was held. Actor Pijush Bandyopadhyay and Jhuna Chowdhury, secretary general of Bangladesh Group Theatre Federation, were guests at the session.

Cultural programme at Scholastica



Students of Scholastica in one of the plays

featured young actors eye-catching costumes, performing their parts superbly.

The last item, titled *Journey through Time*, was an apt name for the depiction of man's journey from the prehistoric times to the birth of Bangladesh.

The middle section of Scholastica School held their annual function recently at the school's senior section in Uttara, says a press release.

The show began with the staging of Tagore's well-known poem *Kanai Master*.

The second item was the all-time favourite *Cinderella*. This classic fairytale

featured young actors eye-catching costumes, performing their parts superbly.

The last item, titled *Journey through Time*, was an apt name for the depiction of man's journey from the prehistoric times to the birth of Bangladesh.

Iranians outraged over hit movie '300'

AP, Tehran

The hit American movie 300 has angered Iranians who say the Greeks vs. Persians action flick insults their ancient culture and provokes animosity against Iran.

The movie, which raked in US \$70 million in its opening weekend, is based on a comic-book fantasy version of the battle of Thermopylae in 480 BCE, in which a force of 300 Spartans held off a massive Persian army at a mountain pass in Greece for three days.

Even some American reviewers noted the political overtones of the West-against-Iran story line and the way Persians are depicted as decadent, sexually flamboyant and evil in contrast to the noble Greeks.

In Iran, the movie hasn't opened and probably never will, given the government's restrictions on Western films, though one paper said bootleg DVDs were already available.

Javad Shamghadri, cultural adviser to Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, said the United States tries to "humiliate" Iran in order to reverse historical reality and "compensate for its wrongdoings in order to provoke American soldiers and warmongers" against Iran.

But aside from politics, the film was seen as an attack

on Persian history, a source of pride for Iranians across the political spectrum, including critics of the current Islamic regime.

The movie comes at a time of increased tensions between the United States and Iran over the Persian nation's nuclear program and the Iraq war.



Gerard Butler (L) as King Leonidas and Rodrigo Santoro as King Xerxes in 300

TV GUIDE

All programmes are in local time. The Daily Star will not be responsible for any change in the programme.

News Bulletin

BTV
News Headlines (Bangla) at 8:55 am; 12:10 pm; 2:00 pm; 3:00 pm; 4:00 pm; 7:00 pm.
News (Bangla) at 8:00 am 1:00 pm; 5:00 pm; 8:00 pm.

News (English) at 3:00 pm; 10:00 pm. Late Night News (Bangla) at 7:00 pm; 11:30 pm; (To be telecast on all Bangla channels).

CHANNEL-i

News (Bangla) at 7:15 am; 9:00 am, 2:00 pm; 7:00 pm; 9:00 pm, 10:30 pm; 12:15 am.

ATN BANGLA
News (Bangla) at 7:00 am; 10:00 am; 2:00 pm; 7:00 pm; 10:00 pm; 11 pm. News (English) 8:20 am; 7:00 pm. Latest News (Bangla) at 9:00 am; 10:00 am; 11:00 am; 1:00 pm; 3:00 pm; 4:00 pm; 6:00 pm and 8:00 pm.

ntv

News Headlines (Bangla) at 10:00 am; 12:00 am; 6:15 pm; 9:30 pm. News (Bangla) 7:30 am; 2:00 pm; 5:00 pm; 7:30 pm; 10:30 pm.

CHANNEL 1

News (Bangla) at 8:00 am; 12:00 pm; 2:30 pm; 6:30 pm; 7:30 pm; 10:00 pm; 12:30 pm.

BANGLAVISION
News (Bangla) at 8:00 am; 2:00 pm; 6:00 pm; 7:15 pm; 10:30 pm. News Headlines (Bangla) at 9:00 pm. News Headlines (English) at 9:05 pm.

RTV
News (Bangla) at 7:00 am; 3:00 pm; 7:15 pm; 10:00 pm. News Headlines (Bangla) at 10:30 am.

BTV

11:15 Cookery Show
11:40 Angona
12:05 Mao A Shishur
12:30 Swapno Shonar
01:00 Shukhi Poribar
02:15 Children's Drama
02:40 Esho Gaan Shikhi
03:05 Cartoon
04:00 Esho Computer
04:30 Bansuri
05:05 Documentary
06:20 Programme

ntv

05:30 Ma Shishur
06:00 Aktel sms Doradori
06:20 Amar Chhobi
07:50 Special Programme
08:20 Drama Serial: Ferari
09:35 Ekhoni Shomoy
10:00 Drama Serial: Nishidho Bonobhumi
12:00 Shikhi
12:30 Gramophone
12:45 Ajker Shangbadpotro

Channel 1

06:20 Apnar Jigysa
06:50 Gaaner Shomoy
07:30 Drama Serial: Ranger Manush
08:15 Drama Serial: Megh Bolechhey Jabo
08:15 Shadhinota Amar
07:20 Shomoyer Shanglap
08:15 ICC World Cup
2007: Zimbabwe Vs Ireland

CHANNEL i

09:30 Shangbad Potre
12:30 Bangladeshi
12:45 Public Reaction
09:50 Grameen Phone
10:00 Trittymatra
10:15 Shangbadpotre
10:30 Ebong Cinemar
10:45 Citticell Tarokakothon
11:00 Shangbadpotre
11:15 Shangbadpotre
11:30 Shangbadpotre
11:45 Public Reaction
12:00 Trittymatra
12:15 Apni
03:05 Hridoye Mati O
07:00 Olpo Sholpo Golpo
08:15 Daak
04:05 Teletalk Bishwa Cup

BANGLAVISION

04:30 Amader Gaan
04:50 Sa Re Ga Ma
05:30 Special
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06:00 Amar Chhobi
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08:20 Drama Serial: Ferari
09:35 Ekhoni Shomoy
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STAR PLUS

09:30 The One
11:00 Gaaner Kotha
Kothar Gaan
09:30 Chokh Mele Dekhi
10:00 Shulela Lagan
10:15 Shangbadpotre
10:30 Ebong Cinemar
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