

WORLD CUP CRICKET 2007

Bring on the swingers, hitters and spinners!

Fazlur Rahman Babu

Despite a hectic schedule, Fazlur Rahman Babu will squeeze in time to watch the giant teams fight for the World Cup. Babu is optimistic and has already declared that Bangladesh will surely outplay the Indian team in the first ODI. "Although Brian Lara of West Indies is one of my favourites, I'm also a great fan of 'Dada' (Saurav Ganguli)," he says. Judging from the recent encounter and victory of Bangladesh over New Zealand and several other countries at the practice matches, Babu is overjoyed. He strongly believes that the Tigers and specifically Mashrafe and Ashrafal are sure to win the hearts of cricket enthusiasts across the world this year. "I am hopeful that Bangladesh will reach at least the second round and West Indies at the finals," says the popular actor.

Tauqir Ahmed

"You can't call me a huge cricket fan, but I enjoy watching the game, especially if it's between arch rivals. I used to play cricket back in my Cadet College days. Needless to say, Bangladesh is my favourite team. I won't be supporting any other team, but will watch the matches. Habibul Bashar, Shahriar Nafees and Mashrafe are my favourites this year. I wish our team all the very best," says actor turned director.

Tarin

"I am a big fan of cricket. I am definitely supporting Bangladesh this time," says the talented TV actress. "I pray that they play with everything they've got, irrespective of the outcome. Ashrafal is undoubtedly my favourite player. I hope the cup stays within Asia, though I have a gut feeling Australia may win. They have such amazing teamwork. Rahul Dravid is one of my all time favourites too," says an excited Tarin.

Champa

The popular movie actress is caught up with cricket fever. "I love the festive atmosphere during the World Cup. It doesn't really matter whether we win or lose, what matters is that we are united. The Bangladesh cricket team has managed to do that and I feel proud to be a Bangladeshi. Now that our cricket team is a part of the World Cup, my favourite is obviously Bangladesh," she smiles.

Mahfuz

"My favourite team? What kind of a question is that? Bangladesh Bangladesh and Bangladesh!!! There can be no other favourite team. If Bangladesh loses I will lose interest in the matches. As much as I want

ICC World Cup 2007 is in full swing. Cricket-buffs all over the world will be glued to the TV screen for over a month. Bangladeshi cricket fans have always been passionate about the game. Homes and streets are already buzzing with "Howzzat!" or "appeals" to the umpire on the small screen. Here's what some of our leading media personalities had to say on their favourite teams and the game itself



Bangladesh to win, Australia may end up winning the World Cup and though it's tough to say right now but Ricky Ponting could be 'Man of the series,' says the busy actor of the small screen.

Diti

Back from a shooting schedule, actress Diti says, "I am not a huge cricket fan. However, I am excited that Bangladesh is playing this year. I have been hearing about the World Cup for months now. It's not a matter of winning only; the fact that Bangladesh has come so far is something to be proud of. I always thank those who represent Bangladesh in a positive light abroad, not only in cricket, but any field."

Hilloi

"Man am I a cricket fan! I used to be quite a bowler myself when I was younger. I was the fiercest and fastest bowler in Rajbari. Other players would want to play on my team and not the opposite one for fear of injuries. What is important today is that we are playing in the World Cup. The Bangladesh cricket



team has said they will make it to the second round and that's what I expect of them. I really enjoy the way Nafees and Aftab play," says the busy mini screen actor. "As far as winning the World Cup is concerned, I think Australia could win. They are my second favourite team as well. Kallis is my favourite player," he says.

Apurbo

"Bangladesh was and always will be my favourite team. I used to play cricket when I was younger. However my family was so much into cricket that at one stage I got fed up of it. We couldn't watch anything else on TV except cricket. Personally I love watching close matches, where there are 10 balls and 15 runs left or one wicket left and 6 runs to win. Even if my favourite team is on the other end, these nail biting matches are irresistible. I also like watching a good fight between India and Pakistan," says the TV star. "Habibul Bashar is my favourite player in the team. I had the opportunity to meet him and he is a won-

derful human being as well. If Bangladesh was not playing I would've supported India or South Africa. I believe we are going to win all the way. I firmly believe that," says the actor.

Bonna Mirza

"I enjoy watching cricket. After Bangladesh my favourite teams are India and West Indies. I am a huge fan of Tendulkar and Lara. I find Dravid to be a little self-concerned. I like his style though. Cricket is so unpredictable; you can't really say who will win or who will be man of the series. The Bangladesh cricket team has said they are well prepared. Now it's time to wait and watch. I still feel Pilot was a key player in our team," says the charming TV actress.

Zobera Rahman Linu

Zobera Rahman Linu, the only Bangladeshi citizen to have her name in the Guinness Book of World Records for outstanding achievement in sports, is eagerly waiting to witness the World Cup finals this year. "Bangladesh having won at the practice matches will definitely be confident and could come up to the second round," she hopes. "Tendulkar and Lara's techniques fascinate me! However, West Indies, India and South Africa are my favourite teams -- after Bangladesh of course. Habibul Bashar, Rafique and Ashrafal have charismatic appeal. However, as this year my nieces and nephews will be busy with exams, I guess I will have to watch the matches all by myself. Half the fun will be missing though, if you can't share and yell at the top of your lungs with your loved ones during the nail biting performances," says the table tennis champion, three-time national cycling champion, who is also a UNICEF goodwill ambassador.

Nasim Ali Khan

"My complete support is for Bangladesh. However performance-wise I think Sri Lanka will win. If Bangladesh were not playing I would have supported Sri Lanka. On the other hand I really admire Gilchrist. His temperament on the field is a plus point for Australia. My all-time favourite is Imran Khan. At times I feel he was just overrated, but nevertheless I am a huge fan. I hope the Bangladesh team keeps their cool and plays sensibly. We are an extremely emotional nation and our cricket team is no different," says the singer of the popular band Souls.

National Theatre Festival '07 Ananya '79 stages 'Rajkobi'



A scene from the play Rajkobi

PHOTO: STAR

Over the years several experiments have been done on Rabindranath Tagore's works. Manoj Majumdar has dramatised Tagore's poem Puroshkar included in Shonchoita. The play, titled Rajkobi, features the

struggle of a poet, whose devotion to the art form gives him the much-coveted title. Listening to his poetry the King honours him with the title of 'Rajkobi' (court poet). There is room for development

when it comes to craftsmanship in Manoj's drama. As the play is based on a poem, it is expected that the form of Rajkobi would be lyrical. However, the play is totally in prose form. Many of Manoj's directorial compositions could be developed. He has tried to present a whole lot of actions -- including the dream and inspiration of the poet -- on the stage; most of them did not seem to work.

Another flaw of the production is that the set and light design are not completely compatible with the directorial compositions. As a result, it is difficult to distinguish between the King's Court with the house of the impoverished poet.

The actors need to develop their skills to keep the audience interested.

As part of the ongoing National Theatre Festival arranged by Bangladesh Group Theatre Federation in association with Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy, Ananya '79, Kushtia, staged Rajkobi. The show was held on March 14 at the Experimental Theatre Stage.



Actors of Natyajan in Anya Gazir Anya Kissa

PHOTO: STAR

'Anya Gazir Anya Kissa' staged

On the same evening Natyajan staged Anya Gazir Anya Kissa by Alok Basu at the National Theatre Stage. The play is set against the backdrop of the plague epidemic in Barisal in 1920. The protagonist of the play is not a heroic figure who saves a community, like those prevalent in the traditional performing art form Gazir Gaan. Rather the 'saviour' of modern dramatist Basu's play is a commoner who appears as the rescuer to the plague-affected people.

As the subplot of the play Alok has featured a familiar trait in politics -- manipulating the disaster for political interest of two rival parties -- Congress and Muslim League.

Debashish Ghosh directs Anya Gazir Anya Kissa. Uttam Guho is the art director and M Jasimuddin is the light designer.

by Ershad Kamol

Classical music soiree at Shilpakala Academy

CULTURAL CORRESPONDENT

A four-day classical music soiree at the Plaza of the National Art Gallery of Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy (BSA) ended yesterday. The programme, organised by Music and Dance Department of BSA, is an annual feature to promote classical music in Bangladesh. A total of 32 classical vocal and instrumental practitioners from different parts of country participated in the function.

At the event, eminent as well as promising artistes get the opportunity to showcase their talent every year.

On the third day on March 14, seven artistes put up impressive performances of classical vocal and instrumental music. Vocalists Ustad Yasin Khan and Amin Akhter Sadmani rendered kheyal based on raga Jog and raga Ragesri respectively while Syed Zakir Hossain performed Pahari thumri, and Sunil

Kumar Mondol performed a kheyal in raga Emon Kalyan.

Instrumentalists Mohammad Yusuf Khan presented raga Kirwani on sarod while Firoz Khan and Manik Khondoker played sitar based on raga Pilu Jongla and raga Malkosh respectively.

The accompanying artistes were Syed Meher Hossain and Rabindranath Paul on tabla and Delwar Haq on Tanpura.



Ustad Yasin Khan performs at the programme

PHOTO: STAR

'Onnyo Nari': Showcasing the women's struggle

In observance of the International Women's Day, Dhaka Photographic Institute, premiered a documentary, titled Onnyo Nari, directed by Shahiduzzaman Badal, at the German Culture Centre, says a press release.

The documentary centers on two hapless women, Khodeja Begum and Alekjan Bibi; one a widow and the other middle aged, who have taken up the tedious profession of fixing cycle rickshaws at the footpath of the Dhaka University. Although the job is unusual for women folk, out of sheer desperation they take up the profession. Professor of Dhaka University, Dr Mahbuba Nasreen has also been interviewed in the documentary. The daunting tale of the two ill-fated women have been depicted in the documentary, setting a new example in women's struggle for existence.



A still from the documentary

Mira Nair and the 'fluidity' of cultures

Mira Nair's next film will be the biggest she has ever tackled, with Johnny Depp as the lead and a budget of about US \$100 million. The film, Shantaram, which she has just agreed to direct for Warner Brothers, is based on Gregory David Roberts' autobiographical novel about an Australian robber and drug addict who escapes from prison and reinvents himself by starting a medical clinic in the slums of Bombay.

Beneath its starry high profile, though, Shantaram engages issues that have obsessed Nair throughout her career. For immigrants and their children, what is home? What is family? How do you forge a new cultural identity?

Those questions have found their richest expression so far in her most recent movie, the beautiful, profoundly moving The Namesake. The story moves from Ashoke and Ashima Ganguli's arranged marriage in Kolkata to their life in the New York suburbs, where their improbably named son, Gogol, grows to become the most contemporary and American of young men. Its source, Jhumpa Lahiri's 2003 novel, is an ideal match for Nair's sophisticated take on the new reality of immigration and assimilation in America, an up-to-the-minute approach too rarely seen on screen.

Nair's films are not about blending in but about forging a new cultural identity, one that is forward looking yet appreciates and incorporates the heritage of the past. Her immigrant and second-generation characters are doctors, professors and architects, yet they do not instantly assume that it is desirable to lose their ancestors' traditions.

In The Namesake, Ashoke (played by Irrfan Khan) is a thoughtful college teacher, hardly cutting edge, but his American-born son is as hip and accomplished as a movie hero comes. As a young man Gogol (played by Kal Penn) becomes a Manhattan architect and falls in love first with a blonde from a privileged family and then with a second-generation Indian. But even as he comes to embrace the Indian heritage he had found so amusingly old-fashioned when he was a pot-smoking teenager, he learns that his background is not the deciding factor in life or romance.

The way Gogol creates an identity that is neither purely Indian nor

white-bread American may be the strongest link between The Namesake and Nair's other films.

The complexities of class, culture and generational change are at the heart of Nair's best-known film, the colorful, joy-filled Monsoon Wedding (2001), in which a sophisticated young woman in New Delhi leaves behind her affair with a married television talk-show host for an arranged marriage with an Indian groom from America.

It is Nair's second feature, though, the ambitious Mississippi Masala (1991), that provides the most direct line to The Namesake. It followed her stunning first drama, Salaam Bombay! (1988), about street children in India, and couldn't have been more different. The film begins in Uganda in 1972, when Indians were expelled by Idi Amin. Jay (Roshan Seth), born there of Indian parents, is forced to leave the only home he has ever known along with his wife and daughter.

When the film leaps to Mississippi in the '90s, Jay is working in one of the South's many Indian-owned motels, yet he constantly looks back toward Uganda. His thoroughly assimilated grown daughter, Meena (Sarita Choudhury) shops at the Piggly Wiggly supermarket, and on her way home runs into a black man -- literally runs into his car with hers -- played by Denzel Washington. They soon fall in love, and into trouble with their respective families.

The idea for the film "came from my experience of being a brown person in the middle of black and white at university here," Nair said. "I was accessible to both communities but of neither."

With a freshness and timeliness few directors match, Nair's films reflect a multifaceted cultural identity, a fusion that is both distinctly hers and emblematic of the way American identity itself is changing. "The fact that families are so fluid today, it's like Monsoon Wedding," she said. "Fluidity, that is my anchor."

by Caryn James (International Herald Tribune)