

Vignettes of 1971

Photo exhibition on Liberation War at Drik Gallery



The Flag on display at Drik Gallery

KARIM WAHEED

A recurring complaint is that there's not enough footage or photographs of the Liberation War. Images of the war evoke memories among many -- some painful, some of conviction and some of desperation. Yet, it is imperative for a nation to preserve records of its history and study them to have a comprehensive understanding of the different aspects and dynamics of the phenomenon.

The ongoing exhibition, titled *Amar Dekha '71*, at Drik Gallery features never-before-seen photographs taken by Abdul Hamid Raihan during the war.

Raihan, a freelance photographer living in Kushtia, has a collection of over 500 photographs taken during the Liberation War -- an invaluable documentation of the time, and of the people who set a new record of endurance in their struggle to be free.

During the war, Raihan moved to India with his family. Leaving his family members in Karimpur (in India), he joined the war. Up until September 14, 1971 he was the assistant in-charge of Karimpur recruitment camp, also known as a youth/feeder camp. He then joined the volunteer service core of the then Mujibnagar government as a photographer. He was assigned to



Photographs(Top and Below) by Abdul Hamid Raihan

document freedom fighters as they prepared for combat, as well as the carnage and damage caused by the

Pakistani army and their local collaborators. The image of an anonymous



PHOTO COURTESY: DRIK PICTURE LIBRARY LTD

freedom fighter in shorts, holding a submachine gun is quite compelling. The photo (taken on December 2, 1971 in Debhata thana, Sathkira) was perhaps shot during a target-practice session.

A photo (taken on December 11 in Jessore) of two children -- standing naked, shells left by the Pakistani army surrounding them -- reminds one of the proverbial image of the Vietnam war -- a nine year old girl running naked after being severely burned during a napalm attack.

Another image shows members of the Allied Forces standing in front of a bridge blown up by the Pakistani army (shot in Jhikargachha, Jessore). Four blindfolded *razakars* (local collaborators of the Pakistanis) holding a Pakistani flag after being captured by freedom fighters in Munshiganj bazar, are seen in a photo (shot on November 22, 1971 in Chuadanga thana, Kushtia).

Apart from the photos, a memorabilia on display is sure to grab the viewers' attention. It's a flag (with the map of Bangladesh inside the red sphere) made during the war. During the war many freedom fighters used to attach similar small flags on their rifles. A photographer from the globally renowned picture agency, Magnum, was covering the war and she was given two flags by freedom fighters. The photographer (name deliberately not disclosed) was so intensely moved by what she saw that she gave up her profession and joined a Buddhist monastery. Twenty-one years later, in 1992, the Magnum office in London opened her trunk and found the two flags among her belongings. In 1993, Chris Boot (director of Magnum) presented one of the flags to Shahidul Alam (director of Drik). The other flag remains at the Magnum office in Mount Pleasant, London.

The exhibition opened on March 25 and will continue till April 3.

Dance Festival by Shadhona and UNESCO begins

'Bhanushinger Podabali' staged



PHOTO: STAR

Dancers of Bhabna perform in 'Bhanushinger Podabali'

MAHMUDA AFROZ

A three-day dance festival showcasing different dance forms in Bangladesh began at the National Theatre Stage, Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy on March 28.

Under the sponsorship of Grameenphone, GMG Airlines and Duncan Brothers Bangladesh Ltd, Shadhona (A centre for advancement of South Asian music and dance), in association with UNESCO Dhaka, has organised the festival.

Alimur Rahman Khan, President of Shadhona and Malama Meleisea, Country Representative of UNESCO, Bangladesh spoke at the event. Without further ado the stage was set for the day, Rabindranath Tagore's dance-drama *Bhanushinger Podabali*.

Bhanushinger Podabali is a

collection of poems written by a young Tagore in 1875. It was his first published work. Podaboli refers to poems devoted to Vaishnava that narrate mythological stories about the eternal lovers Radha and Krishna. Krishna, one of the incarnations of Vishnu, symbolises the unattainable and Radha is his ultimate devotee.

Through songs, Podaboli tell the story of the love, separation and union between the flute playing *rakkhal* Krishna and the *gopi* Radha. On an esoteric level, Radha is understood to be the individual soul that petulantly feels abandoned by God, symbolised by Krishna, who, in turn, loves all souls and is therefore accused of infidelity by Radha. But Radha finally overcomes her disgruntled state of mind and rejoins her lover in a passionate union. These devotional classics describe

a trail to return to oneness with the Divine. Like other Podaboli works, Tagore's poem too, is written in the Maithili language (of Mathura and Brindaban) the cradle of the myth of Krishna.

The lead role of Radha was played by Samina Hossain Prema and Mehraj Haque Tushar enacted the part of Krishna. The dance is choreographed by Prema with the support of her mentor Sreemati Kalavati Devi. Laiza Ahmed Lisa rendered Radha's songs. Azizur Rahman Tuhin was the music director.

Last night Chhayana presented Monipuri dance and tonight Nrityanchal will perform Kazi Nazrul Islam's *Badolo Borishoney*. The festival is open to all.

TV plays tonight

'Nikot Otit' on ATN Bangla

ATN Bangla will air *Nikot Otit*, an Independence Day special play, tonight at 8:45pm. The play is scripted by Sumona Siddiqui and directed by Fuad Chowdhury.

In the play, Shomo, besides teaching, writes about the liberation war in newspapers. He was told that his father lost his life during the liberation war. He decides to dedicate his life for research works on the war. As a part of this, he goes to his village

to hear the story of his father's sacrifice in 1971. He was surprised to learn from the village elders that her mother, not his father, was a freedom fighter. In fact, his father was a collaborator of the occupation army. Shomo becomes impatient to know the facts that were kept undisclosed for so long.

Parvin Sultana Diti, Tony Dias and Deepa Khandakar are the major casts of the play.



Parvin Sultana Diti, Tony Dias and Deepa Khandakar in the play

'Kepe Uthe Nirjon Bonobhumi' on Channel i



Joya Ahsan, Ferdousi Majumdar and Moinul Haq Oli in the TV play

TV play *Kepe Uthe Nirjon Bonobhumi* will be aired tonight at 7:50pm on Channel i. Ferdousi Majumdar, Joya Ahsan and Moinul Haq Oli are the main cast members of the play.

The play is set in 1986, fifteen years after the Liberation War. A visually impaired mother is still waiting for her son to return. He left

to join the war at the age of seventeen. One day the son returns. It is an amazing phenomenon. She arranges a marriage for him with a girl of her choice. But her ecstasy does not last long as she is faced with the cold hard truth.

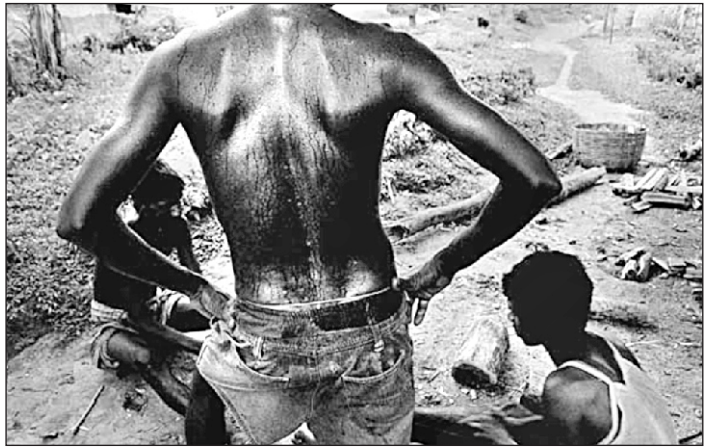
The play is written by Faria Hossain and directed by Arif Khan.

Three Bangladeshi photographers honoured at China International Press Photo Contest

Three Bangladeshi photographers won awards at the 3rd China International Press Photo Contest held in Shanghai recently (from March 21 to 25), says a press release.

Munem Wasif won the bronze prize in the 'Daily Life' category with a powerful image showing modern forms of slavery, through his story on the workers in the tea gardens of Bangladesh.

Andrew Biraj won the bronze prize in the 'Topical News' category with his compelling piece on the attempts by multinational



companies to take over the land of indigenous communities.

Shafiqul Islam (Kazol) won an honourable mention in the same category for his photographs on police brutality against women.

All three photographers are former students of Pathshala and now work for DrikNews.

(Clockwise) Photographs by Munem Wasif, Andrew Biraj and Shafiqul Islam (Kazol)



Fish by Shumona Haque

Jatiya Rabindra Sangeet Sammilon Parishad, Comilla unit holds biennial conference

Jatiya Rabindra Sangeet Sammilon Parishad, Comilla unit held its biennial conference at Birchchandranagar Auditorium recently, says a press release. The two-day conference was dedicated to the memory of Waheedul Haque. The conference featured a competition on Rabindra sangeet, discussion and more.

Thirty-three participants in two groups took part in the Rabindra sangeet competition. Reepa Datta and Shakila Akhter won in the two groups.

On the second day, a seminar titled *Learning from Culture: Culture of Education* was held. Shantanu Kaiser presided over the event while Bishwajeet Ghosh presented the keynote paper. Mannan Hira, Azad Abul Kalam and Abu Ayub Hamid took part in the discussion.



Artistes render chorus at the programme