

Reminiscing exodus '71

Exhibition at Liberation War Museum



KARIM WAHEED

One becomes a refugee by choice, yet currently there are around 10 million refugees worldwide. People become refugees when they are subjected to violence or persecution in their homelands. They see no other alternative and flee to a country they are often not familiar with, living in tents or slums, struggling for food, medication and education, most often being labelled as 'unwanted elements' by the natives of that land.

Bangladeshis are not unfamiliar with the concept. We do have our history of exodus. In 1971, during the Liberation War, around 10 million Bengalis from East Pakistan migrated to India, living as refugees in 829 camps all over West Bengal, Tripura, Meghalaya, Assam, Bihar and neighbouring areas.

To observe World Refugee Day 2007 (June 20), Liberation War Museum has organised a photo exhibition at its premises. The exhibition was inaugurated by Pia

Prytz Phiri, UNHCR representative in Bangladesh, on June 27.

The exhibition is dedicated to the memories of Sufia Kamal and Jahanara Imam -- both of whom had made immense contribution to the Liberation War. Photographs and other memorabilia bring to light the plight of Bengali refugees crammed in camps as well as contributions of three women -- Mother Teresa, writer Maitereyi Devi and Anjali Lahiri -- who became 'angels of mercy' to these distressed.

Mofidul Haq, a trustee of the museum said, "Every year Liberation War Museum tries to mark the World Refugee Day through different programmes. This exhibition is an attempt to pay homage to the mothers who carried the dreams of a nation waiting to be liberated, with them to the refugee camps."

Ziauddin Tariq Ali, another trustee of the museum said, "In 1971, 10 million refugees, living in inhuman conditions, gave the global conscience a wake-up call. Their cause mobilised campaigns around

the world against the atrocities by the Pakistani junta."

Ali recalled Sufia Kamal's involvement in the war and called her "the major inspiration for the Liberation Museum." According to him, "Sufia Kamal taught us how to be defiant in the face of repression without losing humility."

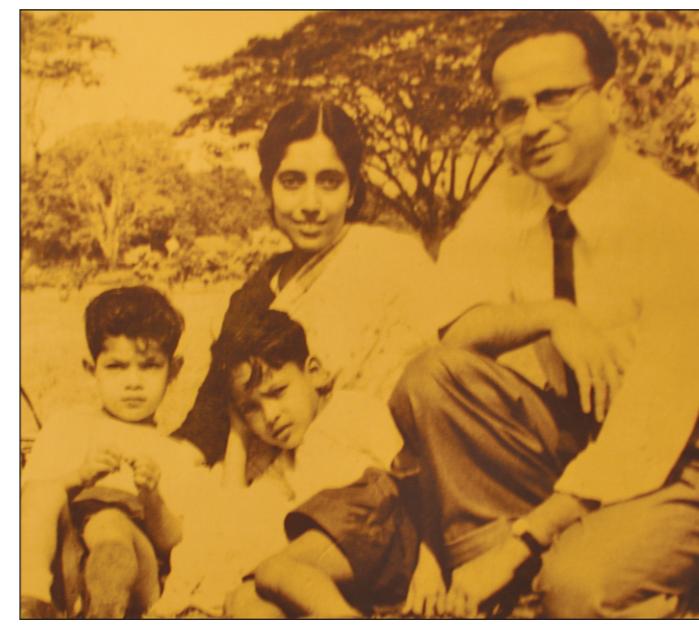
AKKU CHOWDHURY, also a trustee of the museum recalled an unfortunate period in the '90s when the nation "seemed to have forgotten its past." "Jahanara Imam led the Ghatak Dal Nirmul Committee and voiced a demand to bring the razakars and other war criminals to justice," said Chowdhury.

Saif Imam Jami, Jahanara Imam's son, said, "On June 24, I was privileged to open the Jahanara Imam Memorial Museum. I'll always remember three words my mother stressed on: Conviction, sacrifice and compromise. She used to say, 'Conviction is what drives us. We are Bengalis first and then, Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists and Christians. Without conviction one cannot make sacrifices. When you can't make sacrifices, you often find yourself making compromises.'

A photo taken at 'Khelaghar' shows smiling children, a stark contrast to the bleak images surrounding it. Maitereyi Devi, set up 'Khelaghar' for the children of refugees from East Pakistan.

Photos feature Sufia Kamal speaking at a public procession before the war broke out. Family photos of Jahanara Imam show her with the son she lost to the war.

Also on display is a poster of 'Strings & Stars', a fundraising show



(Clockwise from top left) A news on Bengali refugees published in the June 7, 1971 issue of Daily Mail, Jahanara Imam seen with her family, Jahanara Imam (L) with Sufia Kamal

for Bengali refugees, held in Mumbai in 1971. Leading Indian movie stars including Raj Kapoor, Dilip Kumar, Ashok Kumar, Sunil Dutt, Amitabh Bachchan, Dharmendra, Nargis, Saira Banu, Sharmila Tagore, Waheeda Rehman and several others, along with ace musicians took part in the show.

A translation of noted Indian poet Kaifi Azmi's verses on the refugees pouring in from East Pakistan, makes its place among the memorabilia.

One complaint of the visitors was that several photographs do not have captions.

Filmmaker Jahanara Noori presented a documentary on Julian Francis and Sanghamitra Desai, both of whom had worked at the refugee camps in India during 1971.

The exhibition will continue till July 3.



Molla Sagar and his three daring documentaries

FAYZA HAQ

Three of Molla Sagar's documentaries were recently screened at Alliance Francaise. These are interview-based films. *Dudh-Koila*, a 22-minute film, took him nine months to complete. The film deals with the views of people, living in Fulbari, about the coal mine that was to be there. Over a lakh of people would have had to leave their homes and the film portrays their resentment.

Another documentary by Sagar, *Shironamheen* 23 July, deals with the police brutality on the female students of Shamsunnahar Hall on the night of July 23. A successful movement followed and the film is a record of it. The students went on fast at the Shaheed Minar and demanded the resignation of the VC and proctor. There was a report on what actually took place but which is yet to be published. The film shows how and why the students were attacked. The reaction of the University authorities was also recorded.



Stills from Shironamheen 23 July (Top) and Dudh-Koila

Sagar also captures other social events taking place alongside the student agitation, such as the dance

programme at the National Museum, implying how life proceeded untouched by the tragic incident, even right next to the Dhaka University campus.

The third documentary *Cholo mon natok dekhite jai* ("Let's go and watch a play") deals with folks songs and the views of rural singers from remote corners of Bangladesh.

Prior to these films Sagar made *O Pakhi* and *O Pakhi reeti kotha*, on the subject of bird hunting.

Sagar started off as a student of fine arts but gradually moved to photography. He was keen on films from the outset. He is inspired by Ritwik Ghatak and Satyajit Ray. He finances his films through his photography.

Kuchipudi dance at National Museum

CULTURAL CORRESPONDENT

Ustad Momtaj Ali Khan Sangeet Academy arranged a cultural programme on the occasion of certificate giving ceremony among the participants of a workshop on Kuchipudi dance. The workshop was conducted by Indian dancer Bobby Chakrabarty. The programme was held at the Sufia Kamal Auditorium, National Museum, on June 27.

Kuchipudi, a classical dance form that originated in the South-East Indian state of Andhra Pradesh, derives its name from the village of Kuchipuram. It is known for its graceful movements and bold dramatic character. The dance form is however, not widely practiced in Bangladesh.

At the programme, Chakrabarty along with students of the workshop, performed *Kuchipudi* dance. The artistes presented three dances -- *Rabindra Nritya* and *Taraana* followed by *Marakata*. Young singers of the Academy also rendered songs at the programme.

Anil Kumar Matta, second secretary of the Indian High

Commission, was the chief guest at the programme. Dance director Amanul Haque and poet Dr. Muhammad Samad were special guests. Rupu Khan, executive director of the Academy presided over the programme.



Bobby Chakrabarty receives crest from Anil Kumar Matta

Book on Ferdousi Majumdar

Peers on her work and achievements



The cover-jacket of the book

CULTURAL CORRESPONDENT

Pioneering theatre actress (Neo Theatre Movement in the post-Liberation War era) of the country Ferdousi Majumder, was recently presented with the publication of *Pothikrit Natyajon Ferdousi Majumdar*. The book was launched on Majumder's birthday and features articles on her illustrious acting career. Sara Zaker is the editor of the book.

The articles included in the book are recollections of Majumder by her peers as well as near and dear ones. Some are appraisal of her works from different perspectives. Kabir Chowdhury, Ramendu Majumder, Abdullah Al Mamun, Ataur Rahman, Syed Shamsul Haq, Atiqua Haq Chowdhury, Dr. Muhammad Younis, MM Akash, Biplob Bala, Asaduzzaman Noor, Ela Majumder, Laila Khandaker, Dr. Enamul Haque, Tarique Anam Khan, Mofidul Haque, Mamunur Rashid, Nasiruddin Youssuf, Shimul Youssuf, Tropa Majumder, Apon Ahsan, and several others have contributed write-ups for the book. The book also includes an elaborate interview of Ferdousi Majumder and an article by her on her mother.

"Birthday is something very personal which I like to celebrate in an informal setting. I was a bit hesitant about the way my colleagues, friends and family wanted to celebrate my birthday this year," said Ferdousi Majumder.

"However, it all went well and I thoroughly enjoyed my birthday gift, in the form of a book," she added.

Shona Rang, a literary magazine, is the publisher of the book.

A tribute to dancer Hari Das in Sylhet

MOHAMMAD SHAFIQUL ISLAM

To pay homage to dance Guru Sri Hari Das, (a pioneering figure in dance in the Sylhet region) on his 12th death anniversary, Bangladesh Dance Artiste Organisation, Sylhet, arranged a programme at Sarda Hall recently. The programme was chaired by Sri Anil Kishan Singh, president of the organisation.



Dancers perform at the event

The chief guest of the programme was Md. Azam Khan, Mayor-in-charge, Sylhet City Corporation. Rahiza Khanam Jhunu, chairperson of Bangladesh Dance Artiste Organisation; Bidit Lal Das, renowned Sylheti musician; noted cultural personality Hemchandra Bhattacharya; Aman Ullah Chowdhury, general secretary of Bulbul Lalitakala Academy, Dhaka and Sajid Ahmed, general secretary of Bangladesh Dance Artiste Organisation, attended as special guests.

At the discussion, Professor Jhunu Paul, director of Nityangan, Sylhet, delivered the welcome speech. The chief guest stressed on the rich tradition of dance in Sylhet. He spoke highly of the role played by different cultural organisations in Sylhet and assured assistance for further development and practice of the performing art form.

On the occasion, Rahiza Khanam Jhunu and Chandra Devi, a veteran Manipuri dancer, were awarded the Hari Das Memorial Medal.

Artistes of Bangladesh Dance Artiste Organisation, Nityangan, Nityoshilpa, Shilpangon, Nityokala and Nityorangan presented dance compositions. The dances were conducted by Jhunu Paul, Nilanjana Das Jui, Biplob Kor, Shyamol Ghosh and Nandita Das.

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PHOTOS THAT CHANGED THE WORLD

In celebration of Magnum's 60th birthday this spring, Magnum and Slate present a selection of photos that have informed the world of stories best told via images that capture the political and cultural zeitgeist of our time.



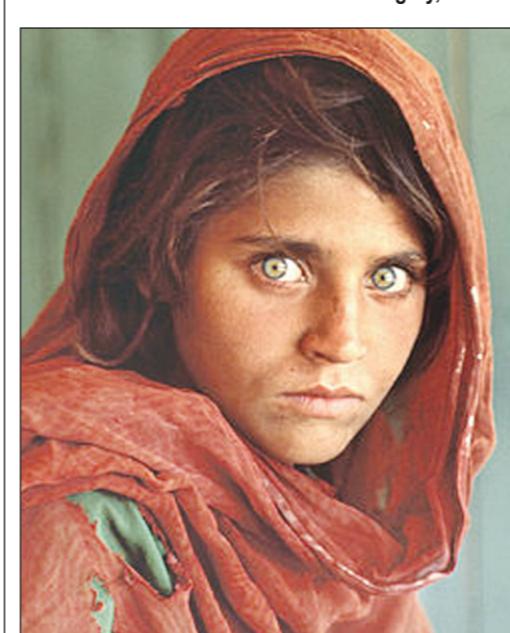
At the climax of his "I Have A Dream" speech, Martin Luther King Jr. raises his arm on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C. and calls out for deliverance with the electrifying words of an old Negro spiritual hymn, "Free at last! Free at last! Thank God Almighty, we are free at last!" (USA, 1963)



The Saigon fire department, which has the job of collecting the dead from city streets, has just placed a girl, killed by U.S. helicopter fire, in the back of their truck, where her brother finds her. (Vietnam, 1968)



A young man bridges the wall between East and West Berlin. (Germany, 1989)



An Afghan girl at Nasir Bagh refugee camp, Peshawar, (Pakistan, 1984)



Teresa, a child in a residence for disturbed children, grew up in a concentration camp. She has drawn a picture of "home" on the blackboard. (Poland, 1948)



Veiled women learn how to shoot in the outskirts of Tehran. (Iran, 1986)