

# Voicing opinions on poverty and inequality

## Concert at Rabindra Sarobar

MAINUL HASSAN

On the occasion of the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty, a grand musical concert was held at the Rabindra Sarobar open stage, Dhanmondi Lake on October 17. Titled "Stand up, speak out against poverty and inequality", the concert featured popular bands and musicians -- Ornob, Fakir Alamgir, Sumon and his band Aurthohin, Bappa Majumder with Dolchhut, Artcell, Black, Bangla, Bogey & the Ektaar all stars, Nemesis, and Renaissance. Upcoming band NASH-T also performed at the concert.

The programme was organised by CAMPE (Campaign for Popular Education), secretariat of PFM (People's Forum on Millennium Development Goals) -- an organisation of civil society members working in Bangladesh on behalf of GCAP (Global Call to Action Against Poverty). The event was supported by GCAP and UNIC (United Nations Information Centre), Dhaka.

The United Nations General Assembly in resolution 47/196 of December 22, 1992, declared October 17 as the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty. It invited inter-

governmental organisations to support efforts in devoting the day to presenting and promoting activities on the eradication of poverty, as appropriate in the national context.

The programme was an initiative to generate awareness against poverty. In 2006, GCAP adopted October 17 as a White Band Day and 23.5 million people in 87 countries joined the call "Stand Up Against Poverty" in the largest coordinated mobilisation of people. However, the turnout this year is expected to be 50 million from more than 150 countries setting yet another record.

The concert was the first major treat for rock music aficionados right after the Eid and the Rabindra Sarobar venue was abuzz.

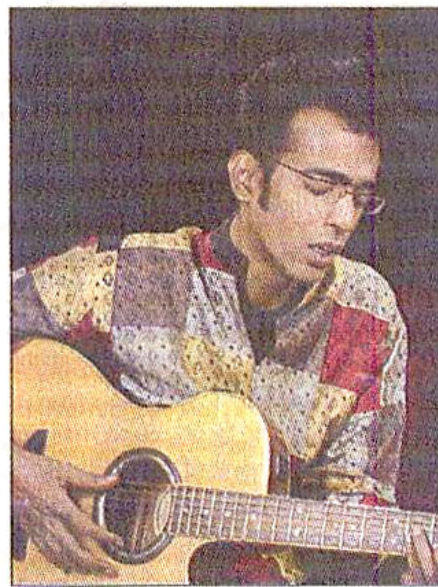
There were regular intervals and during the breaks rockstars appealed to the audience to take a stance against poverty and inequality. None of the bands charged their regular remuneration.

Speaking at the occasion Ornob said, "Poverty alleviation is not an easy task, it requires a worldwide effort. Everyone will have to come forward and help in any way he/she can. Everyone will have to play a role."

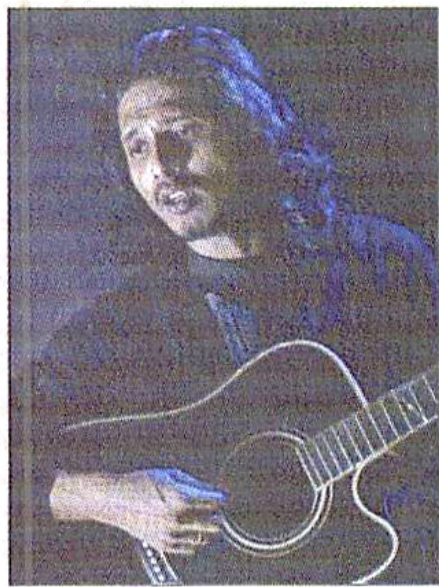
Bappa Majumder said, "A concert alone



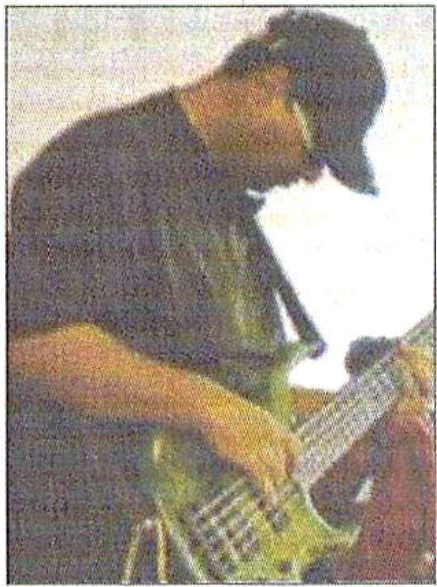
Nemesis performs at the concert



Bappa Majumder



Ornob



Sumon

won't get us anywhere but it can certainly pull in and mobilise masses, specifically young people. And that's what's important. To win over poverty a long-term effort is needed. Public awareness can play a key role."

"When I was informed of the show I knew I'd have to be there," said Sumon of Aurthohin. "To combat poverty a united stand of people from all walks of life is necessary. I appeal to everyone to come forward and do whatever they can according to their ability. No matter how big or small it may be, every effort is important," he added.

Veteran musician Azam Khan and artiste Fahmida Nabi; officials from UNIC Dhaka and UNESCO, Bangladesh attended the event to express their solidarity to the cause.

Also Video footages containing special messages from Fazle Hasan Abed (Founder and Chairperson of BRAC), Aly Zaker, Sara Zaker, Mehreen, Hyder Hossain and other celebrities and civil society members were screened at the concert. Event Solutions was in charge of event management.

## A pioneering Bengali Muslim filmmaker

### Tribute to Obaidul Haque

Veteran journalist Obaidul Haque was one of the pioneers among Bengali Muslims. He was the first Bengali Muslim to direct and produce a feature film prior to the Partition. He had been involved with the film industry as a director, producer, lyricist, playwright, film critic and film society activist.

Obaidul Haque's fondness for cinema developed through relentless movie-going in his youth. By 1945, the fondness became an obsession and he was off to Calcutta with 14,000 rupees in cash hoping to make a film based on a script written by him. Though he was confronted with obstacles -- his lack of experience in the details of filmmaking and the communal tension, he gradually succeeded in his endeavour and thus his first film *Dukhe Jader Jibon Gora* was released.

*Dukhe Jader Jibon Gora*, follows the ups and downs of a Hindu family during the famine in 1943. It was the first intervention by a Muslim filmmaker into the pre-Partition Bengal's highly distinguished film industry based in Calcutta that virtually excluded Bengali Muslims. Fateh Lohani, credited as 'Kiran Kumar', acted in the film and Abdul Ahad was the music director. Sukumar Das Gupta was to direct the film. After completing 14 percent of the film, he abandoned his job because of a dispute between him and Haque. The rest of the film was completed by Haque himself.

At that time, due to the mounting communal tension he was obliged to assume a 'Hindu name' -- Himadri Chowdhury -- included in the credits. *Dukhe Jader Jibon Gora* was released in Calcutta on December 20, 1946. According to Alamgir Kabir the Calcutta-based distributor took full advantage of the volatile political atmosphere and managed to exploit Haque without paying him anything. Haque's personal investment in



the project amounted to over 50,000 rupees.

Reflecting on the film Alamgir Kabir wrote, "I feel that *Dukhe Jader Jibon Gora* was not only a bold attempt but also a tremendously risky venture. Had it not been for family influence of the director, the 'adventure' could have proved ruinous. But, then again, taking risks has always been the way with the pioneers."

Obaidul Haque also established a film distribution house named 'Standard Films' and was a member of Bongioy Chalachchitra Samity. He took initiatives to make a number of films in both Bangla and Hindi but the situation forced him to withdraw from the projects

as the communal harmony was once again dismantled by the killing of Mahatma Gandhi. Haque returned to Dhaka.

In this part of Bengal, Haque directed *Dui Diganto*. *Azan* and *Ontorongo* are film adaptation of his stories. Haque continued his contribution to cinema in different roles -- as a member of National Film Award Committee, Censor Board, film grants and through film society activities.

Obaidul Haque passed away at his Banani residence on October 13 at the age of 96.

Compiled by Cultural Correspondent

Sources: Film in Bangladesh by Alamgir Kabir and Bangladesh Chalachchitra Itihas by Anupam Haysat.

## Prava: A shooting meteor on the horizon

### Parley with a TV star

NADIA SARWAT

Her name is Sadia Jahan Prava. 'Prava', in Bangla, means radiance and her name seems to do justice to her appearance. Prava's enthusiastic expressions and infectious smile made the TV commercial (TVC) of Meril beauty soap one of last year's most popular ads. Overnight Prava became a familiar face to millions. Her appearance in the subsequent TVC of Meril Powder (2007) also proved to be a success.

Like many of her contemporaries, Prava has also stepped into acting and some of her plays have been aired already. She received a warm response from the audience for her performance in the single-episode TV play *Je Megher Brishti Hoy Na*, aired on ATN Bangla. Recently, the up and coming model turned actress talked to *The Daily Star*.

"My first modelling gig was a photo-shoot for the 15th anniversary of *The Daily Star* in 2005. Subsequently I sent some photographs to a modelling agency. After the primary selection, they called me for a screen test the same day (on the last day of my HSC exams). I was selected for the commercial of Meril beauty soap. While shooting, I didn't realise that the commercial would get the kind of response it did. It was like a pleasant shock to



me. However, I don't intend to take up modelling seriously. It is difficult because there are not enough quality TVCs for all of us. I'm more

interested in TV plays." Prava is currently doing Honours in fashion designing at the Santa Maria University. "I plan

to take up fashion designing as my career -- it's really appealing to me. Besides, it can help me in my acting career as well. At least, I'll be able to design my own costumes, if not for others," Prava smilingly says.

Her first TV play titled *Lost Project*, was a production of the Chhabial group for Channel 1. She did a cameo in ntv's popular drama serial, *Mon-e-Mon-e*. "I'm still in the initial stage of my career and the positive response from the audience is really encouraging. I want to continue. As I don't have formal training, I want to hone my acting skills."

Prava spent her childhood in Shariatpur. Every year, her family celebrates Eid there. "I eagerly wait to meet my grandparents, uncles, aunts and cousins. My cousins and I have a lot of fun together. But the most exciting part is to get the *salaami* from the elders."

Talking about the differences between celebrating Eid when she was a child and now, Prava refuses to believe that she has really grown up. "I still fight with my cousins, nag for new clothes on Eid and wait for the *salaami*. I am still a child at heart."

She was on a tight schedule, shooting for several Eid-special plays among which were *Swapnojal*, directed by Diponkar Dipon, *Tona Tunir Golpo* directed by Ashrafi Mithu and more.

## Tele-film "Megher Desher Jonaki" on Channel-i today

Shahed and Sumaiya Shimu in a scene from *Megher Desher Jonaki*

CULTURAL CORRESPONDENT

Eid special tele-film *Megher Desher Jonaki* will be aired today at 10:30 am on Channel-i. Actor Shahriar Nazim Joy has written the story and Dewan Habibur Rahman has directed the tele-film.

The story of the tele-film revolves around three young men

who go abroad in a bid to change their fate. They choose to gamble and in course of time become wealthy. This however, leads to unrestrained lives resulting in one being murdered and the rest of them being detained.

Shahriar Nazim, Joy, Shahed, Debashish Biswas, Mou and Sumaiya Shimu play the lead roles in the tele-film.

## Special play "Antorale" on BTV

Drama often reflects life. The medium can address unnoticed or sidelined aspects of life or social anomalies through entertainment. TV play *Antorale* has a message like this in its core. Based on a short story by Abdul Hakim, the play has been directed by Mirza Shakhawat Hossain.

The plot of the play features some eternal observations on human life. The aspect of

romance has been presented in an interesting way. Rupak Talukdar plays the role of a passionate lover. Priya Dias plays his sensitive yet enduring object of affection. The cast also includes Shamsul Alam Bakul, Ferdousi Ahmed Leena, Hafizur Rahman Suruj, Rahman Raju, Arjumand Bakul and others.

*Antorale* will be aired on October 22 at 6:50 pm.

Priya Dias will be seen in the play *Antorale*

## Bollywood stars team up against human trafficking

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA, New Delhi

While more and more Bollywood stars are coming forward to espouse social causes like the anti-tobacco and anti female feticide or dowry campaigns, a number of them came together for the first time here recently to highlight a problem that afflicts India, Bangladesh and Nepal in equal measure -- human trafficking.

The occasion was the concluding day of a two-day UN-sponsored South Asian conference on human trafficking which is a major problem confronting the three countries.

Actors John Abraham, Amisha Patel, Kiran Kher, Mita Vashisht, singers Talat Aziz, Usha Uthup, Penaz Masani and film makers Onir and Meghna Gulzar, daughter of writer-lyricist Gulzar -- all lent their weight behind the campaign against human trafficking which has taken into its grip women and children who are enticed with promises of job or marriage abroad.

According to UN estimates, about 150,000 people are trafficked within South Asia every year, making the region second only to South East Asia in human trafficking.

"We must do something to put an end to it," said Abraham. Added Amisha Patel, "it's

disturbing to know that young girls are being lured away from their homes and ending up in brothels. A five-year-old girl is sold as a



John Abraham and Sharmila Tagore are among the Bollywood stars taking a stance against human trafficking

prostitute and young boys are ending up as camel jockeys in Arab countries."

Bollywood superstar Preity Zinta was not



personally present but sent a video message saying it was a daunting task to rescue these girls from living hell and restore their dignity. We must bring the perpetrators of human trafficking to justice. To prevent trafficking, it is necessary to promote education and become more vigilant."

Veteran actress Sharmila Tagore in her message said the issue of human trafficking touched the core of lives of women and children and it was a matter of deep concern.

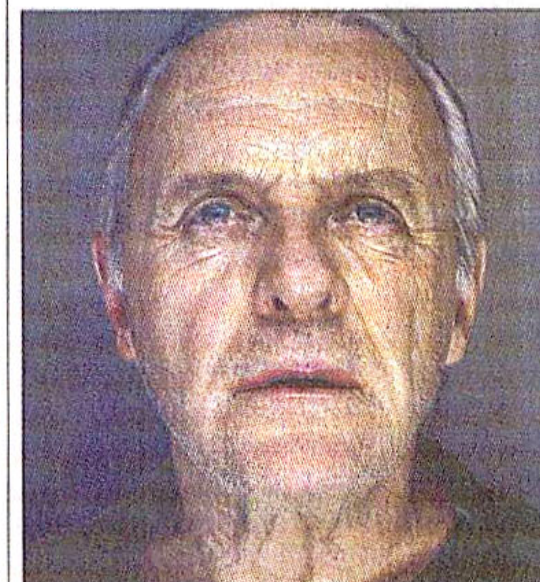
Penaz Masani voiced concern over the fact that 35,000 children and women were brought from Bangladesh and Nepal to India.

Usha Uthup and Masani sang songs especially composed for child victims of trafficking and danseuse Gita Chandran portrayed the plight of a victim through her exquisite dance.

Onir discussed his forthcoming film on human trafficking and Meghna Gulzar talked about her recent documentary on female domestic help.

Given the huge fan following of stars of the entertainment world in the Indian sub-continent, one hopes that people of the region listen to their message and make them more aware of the dangers posed by human trafficking.

## Sir Anthony Hopkins sues Merchant Ivory



Sir Anthony Hopkins

AP, Los Angeles

Whether or not it's accompanied by fava beans and a nice Chianti, Anthony Hopkins wants his money. Samson, Inc., a company co-owned by Hopkins, is suing Merchant Ivory Productions for allegedly failing to pay the actor for his services.

Merchant Ivory owes Hopkins \$750,000 for his work in a film called *The City of Your Final Destination*, according to court documents filed last Wednesday in Los Angeles Superior Court. The lawsuit was first reported by celebrity Web site CelebTV.com.

Hopkins signed onto the film last October and was to be paid in full for his performance by January 10, court documents claim.

He is seeking compensatory damages of \$750,000 as well as interest on that amount, attorney fees and "further relief as the (arbitration) panel may deem just and proper."

Telephone and e-mail messages to Merchant Ivory Productions were not returned. Lawyers for Samson, Inc. did not immediately return a phone message. Hopkins' publicist had no comment.