

Victory Day Celebration Kushan Gaan staged at Liberation War Museum

JAMIL MAHMUD

ON the third day (December 12) of the weeklong Victory Day Celebration programme at Liberation War Museum, *Kushan Gaan* -- an indigenous performing art form from the northern part of Bangladesh, dance, recitation, rendition of folk and patriotic songs were performed.

The programme started with reminiscence by Major General (Retd) K M Shafiullah, commander of sector 3 during the Liberation War. Shafiullah recalled his last few days during the war. He also urged the government to initiate the trial of war criminals as soon as possible.

Members of cultural organisation Ustad Montaj Ali Khan Sangeet Academy rendered patriotic and folk songs including *Bangladesh matir, Amar desher moton emon* and more at the programme. Members of Banhishikha rendered patriotic songs -- *Ekhon Yahya-r grihabash, Prantarey prantarey*



Jharna Sarkar recites poetry on Liberation War

PHOTO: STAR

shara jagiye and Bangali mashaal joichhey -- that inspired freedom fighters during the Liberation War.

Bodhon Abriti Sangsad, an organisation of reciters from Chittagong and this year's Bangla Academy award recipient

Amirul Islam became charter members of the museum.

Cultural organisation Spandan presented solo and group dances. Hasan Arif, Jharna Sarkar and Rafiqul Islam recited poems on Liberation War written by eminent poets.

The last performance of the evening was the traditional *Kushan Gaan*. Kripashindhu Roy and his troupe from Kurigram presented the traditional *pala*. *Kushan Gaan* features episodes from the epic *Ramayana*. Traditionally the troupe performs the *pala* at rural festivals including *puja, mela, anyaprasnan* and more.

At the programme, the troupe performed the *Lava-Kusha pala* from *Ramayana*. The episode focuses on the lives of Ram and Sita after their return to Ayodhya, Sita's exile, Sita and Ram's transition to the next world.

Kripashindhu's troupe was formed nearly 40 years ago. They usually perform in the northern districts. This year the troupe was invited by the organisers of the SAARC Folklore Festival, which was held in New Delhi from December 6 to 9. The troupe participated in three programmes in Delhi and earned much acclaim.

Today artists of Chhayana will perform at the programme.

TV Watch

Daylong 'Bijoy Mela' on Channel i

CULTURAL CORRESPONDENT

To celebrate the Victory Day, Channel i has arranged a daylong programme titled *Bijoy Mela* on December 16 at its Tejgaon office. The event will be telecast live on Channel i from 11 am to 5 pm.

The programme will include songs, recitations, plays, interviews, recounting of memories of the war and more. There will also be a book fair, painting and photography exhibitions on the Liberation War as well. To discuss the programme, a press conference was held at Channel i's Siddeswari office.

Seven memorial structures, as tribute to the seven Birshresthas, are being erected at the Tejgaon venue. Eminent artists will paint on

the theme of victory at the programme. Proceeds from sale of the paintings will be donated to the Liberation War Museum.

Chhayana, Surer Dhara, Kranti, Wishiz Shilpi Goshthi and other cultural organisations will perform at the *Bijoy Mela*. Renowned singers Apel Mahmud, Subir Nandi, Syed Abdul Hadi, Indramohon Rajbongshi, Kumar Biswajit and Ayub Bachhu along with the artists of Swadhin Bangla Betar Kendra will present songs. Artists of Chittagong Hill Tracts and Kishoregonj will also perform at the programme. Jayanto Chattopadhyay, Kazi Arif, Pragna Laboni and other reciters will take part in the programme as well. Asad Chowdhury and Apu Mahfuz will host the event.



Faridur Reza Shagor speaks at the press conference

"Code Name Alpha" on ATN Bangla tonight



Mamunur Rashid plays the central character in the TV play

CULTURAL CORRESPONDENT

Marking the Martyred Intellectuals' Day, ATN Bangla will air a special play *Code Name Alpha* at 8 pm tonight. Based on Anisul Haque's concept, Iqbal Hossain Choudhury has written the play. Based on a true story of a Freedom Fighter Musa Miah, the play is directed by Ridwan Rony.

The story follows an impoverished Freedom Fighter Musa Miah who works as a night

guard at a local school. Living in a slum, Musa often recalls his heroic moments during the Liberation War. While facing economic hardship out of desperation, Musa writes to the Ministry of Liberation War Affairs for help. But he never hears from them.

The cast includes Mamunur Rashid, Shamima Naznin, Kachi Khandaker, Rifat Choudhury, Sohail Khan and others.

French-Bangla fusion goes off with a bang Festive mood at TSC

FAYZA HAQ

Combining Renaissance and Baroque music with traditional Bangla tunes, a form of fusion was presented by Lorraine Prigent (vocals) and Olivier Labe (lute). In their *kurta* and *kaftan* they blended well with the rest of the musicians with all wearing saffron *uttariyo*. After the French and Italian secular pieces were performed to usher in peace and romance for the year, a group of five local musicians brought in their Lalon and eastern classical notes on the flute, *tabla*, *sitar*, harmonium, and *esraj*. As the evening wore on, they trilled, chanted and played in harmony with Labe and Prigent, to the delight of the ecstatic audience.

The fascinating fusion music was dedicated to Sanjib

Chowdhury Bappa Majumdar with his group 'Dalchhut' wined up the concert amidst much cheers and cries for encores.

This was at the TSC Auditorium on December 11. The special guests for the occasion were Professor SMA Faiz, Vice Chancellor of DU and Myriam Bassinot, Director of Alliance Francaise, Dhaka.

Labe took music lessons at the National Conservatory of Paris while Prigent has studied at the Foundation Royaumont for 15 years. She went through vocal training in contemporary, classical, Medieval, Renaissance and Opera music. His interests are late Renaissance and early Baroque.

Asked why they chose Renaissance music, Labe said that there was a lot of poetry in that period and that it was a good selection for duet. Also, the music of the text is easily understandable. This is

Labe's third visit to Bangladesh and last year he took *tabla* lessons at Chhayana. He had found his experience remarkable as one had to learn by ear.

Discussing his experimentation with fusion, Prigent said that the duo learnt the Bangla traditional songs while the local musicians learnt theirs. Said Prigent, "This was a game, putting together the wealth of music and words, preserving both the eastern and western identities, while making a step forward." "Ami Opar Hoye Boshey Achhi" the Lalon song.

Labe said that they practiced for four hours each day for five days. He added, "Ma belle si ton ame (My beauty, if your soul is enlightened by this song) -- a Renaissance number -- was picked up in five days by our Bangladeshi counterparts. We adapted *Raaga Bhairavi* for a presentation.

Prigent said, furthermore, "We had a nice progression. They played our 'thing' and we played their 'thing'. At first we sat and listened to each other. On the second day we began with the fusion with songs and the lute, and little by little the others joined us. This was an enriching experience. Our counterparts were skilled musicians so it was a great pleasure playing with them."

Murtaza Kabir Murad, the flute player, said on behalf of his group, "For a classical musician like myself and the other local musicians, joining in fusion music is no problem. The exchange of views, ideas and expertise is unique and amazing."

The year ending soiree was indeed a memorable one, especially for the young music enthusiasts.



The French duo, Olivier Labe (2-R) and Lorraine Prigent (2-L) with local artists



Participants at the programme

Picasso's "Guernica": History of a painting Exhibition held at the Zainul Gallery

ERSHAD KAMOL

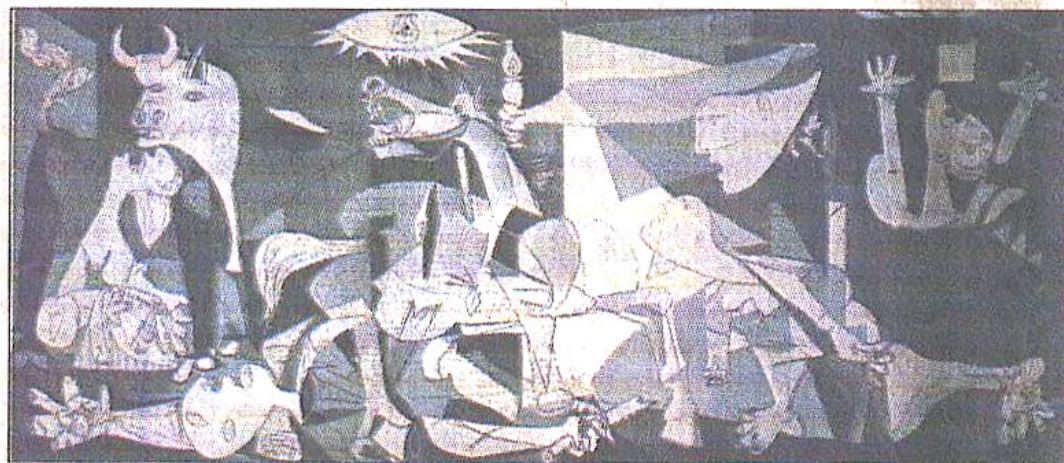
"My work is not symbolic. Only the *Guernica* mural is symbolic. But, in the case of the mural, that is allegorical. That is the reason I've used the horse, the bull and so on. The mural is for the expression and solution of a problem and that is why I've used symbolism." -- legendary artist Pablo Picasso on his masterpiece *Guernica*, which is on display at the Museo Reina Sofia in Madrid, Spain. *Guernica* depicts people, animals, and buildings wrenched by violence and chaos.

Pablo Picasso painted *Guernica*, a black and white, 3.5 metre (11 ft) tall and 7.8 metre (23 ft) wide mural, in oil, in 1937. The painting depicts the bombing of Guernica, Spain, by 24 Nazi German bombers, on April 26, 1937 during the Spanish Civil War, in which a number of people -- varying between 250 and 1,600 -- were killed and many more injured.

An exhibition of text and image panels outlining the history of the *Guernica* creation was recently organised by the Department of Spanish at the Institute of Modern Language, University of Dhaka, in collaboration with the Embassy of Spain. The exhibition was held at the Zainul Gallery-2 at Institute of Fine Arts.

The exhibition is a part of the travelling show developed by the Embassy of Spain to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the start of Spanish Civil War.

The Government of Spanish Republic commissioned Pablo



Guernica by Pablo Picasso

Picasso to paint the mural for the Spanish Pavilion at the International Exposition in Paris. In the course of 35 days, in addition to a series of several sketches, Picasso produced *Guernica*.

The overall scene of Picasso's *Guernica* is within a room, where, at an open end on the left, a wide-eyed bull stands over a woman grieving over a dead child in her arms. The centre is occupied by a horse falling in agony as it had just been run through by a spear. The shape of a human skull forms the horse's nose and upper teeth. Two "hidden" images formed by the horse appear in the work. A human skull is overlaid on the horse's body and a bull appears to gore the horse from underneath. The bull's head is formed mainly by the horse's entire front leg, which has the knee on the ground. The kneecap forms

the head's nose. A horn appears within the horse's breast. Under the horse is a dead, apparently dismembered soldier; his hand still grasps a crushed sword from which a flower grows. A light bulb blazes in the shape of an eye over the suffering horse's head.

To the upper right of the horse, a frightened female figure, who seems to be witnessing the scenes unfolding in front of her, appears to have floated into the room through a window. She is carrying a lamp. From the right, an awe-struck woman staggers towards the centre below the floating female figure. She looks up blankly into the blazing light bulb. Daggers that suggest screaming replace the tongues of the bull, grieving woman, and horse. On the far right, a figure with arms raised in terror is entrapped by fire from above and below. A

dark wall with an open door defines the right end of the mural.

Interpretations of *Guernica* vary widely and are often contradicting. According to art historian Patricia Failing, "The bull and the horse are important characters in Spanish culture. Picasso himself certainly used these characters to play many different roles over time. This has made the task of interpreting the specific meaning of the bull and the horse very tough."

In *The Dream and Lie of Franco*, a series of narrative sketches also created for the World Fair, Franco is depicted as a monster that first devours his own horse and later fights with an angry bull. Work on these illustrations began before the bombing of Guernica, and four additional panels were added. Three of these relate directly to the *Guernica* mural.

Musical soiree at Bengal Shilpalaya

To celebrate 72nd birth anniversary of the eminent artist, sculptor and entrepreneur Nitun Kundu, Bengal Gallery of Fine Arts has arranged an exhibition of the artist's works. Beginning from December 3 (the artist's birthday) the exhibition will continue till December 17.

To mark the exhibition, a musical soiree titled "Swadesher Gaan-er Ashor" will be held at the Bengal Shilpalaya, Dhammondi on December 15 at 7:00 pm, says a press release.

Dhaka Theatre to stage "Nimajjon" in Kolkata

CULTURAL CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka Theatre's latest production *Nimajjon* will be staged in Kolkata at three festivals. *Nimajjon* will be staged on the opening day of Nandikar's 24th National Theatre Festival (December 16-25, 2007) at the Academy of Fine Arts, Kolkata.

The festival is dedicated to Leela Mazumder. Moreover, *Nimajjon* will be staged on December 15 at Geerish Mancho at another

festival arranged by Nior, a Kolkata based cultural troupe. Another show of *Nimajjon* will be staged on December 18 at Bahurampur.

Selim Al Deen's play *Nimajjon* does not follow any conventional structure; neither does it develop any particular storyline. Through narratives, the play presents a chronological look at genocides that have taken place around the world. According to the play, the history of civilisation

and genocides are interwoven -- every civilisation has had a history of genocide. And the repetition of these brutal incidents has brought down humans from the superior position. It is a paradox. The play also stresses that unless the structure of a state is not designed for the welfare of humanity, genocides will never end.

Nimajjon is directed by Nasiruddin Yousuff.

SAARC cultural festival: From fusion music to glitzy fashion and more

KAVITA CHARANJII, New Delhi

From trendy fusion music to glitzy fashion and food, fascinating folklore to a car rally, photo exhibition and crafts -- the recently concluded South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) cultural festival in New Delhi showcased them all.

Food Festival

The Ashoka Hotel reverberated with activity at the inauguration of the SAARC food festival as chefs from the eight member countries -- India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bhutan, Maldives, Nepal and Afghanistan -- unleashed their culinary delights for visiting dignitaries. From the mouth watering Afghan *tandoori* chicken to Bhutanese red rice and Maldivian tuna to Pakistani *Kadai Gosh*, the host country of India offered gourmets a taste of *Murgh Rehana* and *Paneer Sidampukht*, a cottage cheese dish in gravy.

The Bangladesh stall was managed by entrepreneur and celebrity chef Tommy Miah. His offerings to the guests included a jackfruit chutney, *shorshey chutney* and Bengal green chicken. Behind all the glitz and glamour, there is a mission behind such a festival devoted to cuisine, says Tommy, pointing to the misconceived popular image of Bangladesh as a land of floods and poverty. As he points out, "At every opportunity I try to project the positive side of the country."

Tommy, attired in the colours of the Bangladesh flag, builds bridges with other South Asian countries through his delectable fusion dishes. "I have a fusion style of cooking, where the techniques of different countries or areas are brought together to produce unique combinations and flavours," he asserts.

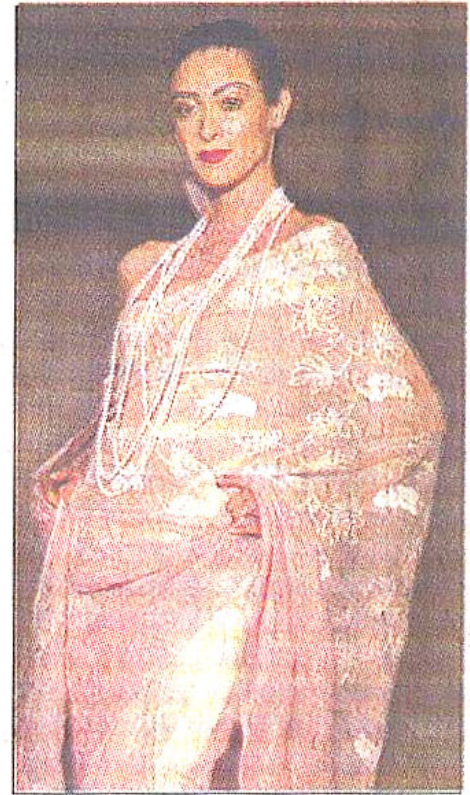
In the view of the erudite Dr Karan Singh, Rajya Sabha member and president of the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) which organised the event in tandem with the Indian Tourist Development Corporation, "This is a unique festival as it is the first time chefs from seven other South Asian countries have come together to present authentic food from their respective countries."

Another accolade comes from the sociable Pinak Ranjan Chakravarty, Indian High Commissioner to Bangladesh. "The greater the familiarity between member nations, the better for SAARC."

The food festival was inaugurated by Pranab Mukherjee, Indian Minister of External Affairs. While the inaugural day was attended by dignitaries from member coun-



Designs by Mina Sherzoy and Rina Latif



tries, the festival was thrown open to the general public on subsequent days.

Fashion show

Wine and cheese greeted visitors at the SAARC fashion show, aptly named "Threads of Unity", held in the plush environs of the Maurya Hotel. The evening was truly stunning as models walked down the ramp attired in traditional and contemporary outfits. "The collection captures the rich cultural heritage, textile traditions and indigenous handicrafts and embroideries that are distinct to each of the SAARC nations," says a press release.

The show stealers were the creations of designers Ritu Kumar from India and Mina Sherzoy of Afghanistan. The former said that her work showcased "the couture and bridal collection using the finest of crafts skills which the designer has revived across the weaving, embroidery and printing guilds from the Indian subcontinent." The occasion, as she pointed out, celebrated the textiles of India, which are "embellished by approximately 16 million practicing craftspeople of the subcontinent."

Representing the SAARC nations were 12 designers. Bangladesh was well represented by the talented Rina Latif and Nasrine R

Karim. The former attracted attention with her ethnic creations -- mostly *ghararas* and *saris*. Local fabrics such as muslin, she says, are her forte. She has also used silk, chintilly lace, local embroidery. "Tapestry is my signature line," she points out.

Meanwhile, Nasrine brought three design labels together for the show: her own Dia and Sozodori and By Deshi. "I showcase typical *jamdani* and hand-woven fabrics of Bangladesh," she says. Altogether there were 10 outfits -- *saris*, cocktail evening dresses, *sherwanis* and also western apparel made of Chittagong Hill Tract weaves. The latter were designed by the upcoming young duo from Sozodori -- Symon and Tenzing Chakma.

The well-organised show had great music and choreography. Making waves was the highflying Media Makers, a Delhi-based creative unit that handles choreography. Says Asha Kochhar, one of the two partners of the organisation, "Our USP is blending a diversity of cultures through a holistic approach and showcasing the unity of all nations."

The superb programme was organised by the Fashion Design Council of India in collaboration with the Union Ministry for External Affairs and ICCR.