

**WHAT'S  
ON THIS  
WEEK**



**Solo Exhibition**  
Title: The Limitless Luminosity of Lines  
Artist: Safuddin Ahmed  
Venue: Bengal Gallery of Fine Arts, H 275/F, Rd 27 (old), Dhanmondi  
Date: June 23-July 13  
Time: 12pm-8pm

### Exhibition

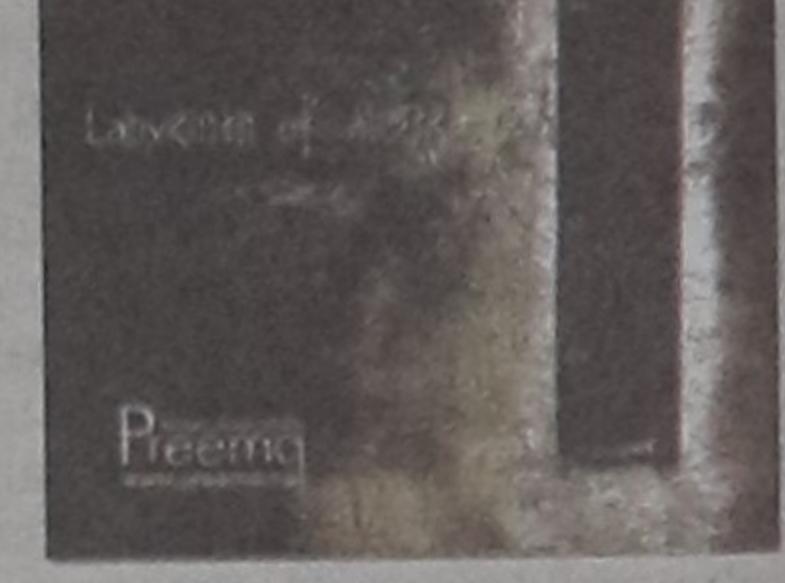
Title: Bhijey Hoye Ashey Megh  
Featuring designs by artists Hashem Khan, Qayum Chowdhury, Dhrubo Esh and others  
Venue: Gallery Nitya Upohar, Aziz Cooperative Super Market, Shahbagh  
Date: July 5-24  
Time: 10am-8pm



**Film Screening**  
Celebrating the 106th birth anniversary of Vittorio De Sica  
Film: The Bicycle Thief  
Organiser: Bangladesh Film Centre  
Venue: Bangladesh Film Centre, 160 Lake Circus, Kalabagan  
Date: July 11 and 12  
Time: 5 pm and 7 pm



**Solo Exhibition**  
Title: Labyrinth of Abstraction  
Artist: Nazia Andaleeb Preema  
Venue: La Galerie, Alliance Francaise, 26, Mirpur Road, Dhanmondi  
Date: July 3-16  
Time: 9am-12pm; 5pm-8pm (Saturdays 5pm-8pm)



## Birthday felicitations for Abdullah Al-Mamun

SHAMSHER CHOWDHURY

Who does not know Abdullah Al-Mamun in this country? Abdullah Al-Mamun by any measurement is definitely one of the pioneers of the theatre movement in this country and has a profile that is well recognised in our culture.

There must have been numerous articles and essays that have been written on this indisputable titan of our theatre. I am not the right person to make an assessment of his multifaceted talent. Since I know very little of the technical and professional aspects of theatre and the world of drama, I shall merely dwell on some of the intrinsic humanistic side of the man that he is and reflect on some of his works both as scriptwriter and an actor.

I came to know Abdullah Al-Mamun through Ramendu Majumdar and my sister Ferdousi Majumdar. All through the early days right up to his rise to prominence I found him to be a gentleman per excellence and humble -- a combination that is rare in individuals of this country no matter what profession or field they belong to. Extremely soft spoken, yet a man of conviction and high commitment, Mamun is perhaps one of those rare personalities who continues to dedicate himself in projecting the lives of the poor and the downtrodden of this country both on and off the stage as a class actor and playwright of the highest standard.

What makes Mamun unique



is that he always puts his work above everything else. So dedicated is he that some years back when his wife was taken ill with an incurable disease he came with her to our Central Road home for rehearsals with a number of boys and girls of the Theatre group. He greeted me with a smile and a gentle handshake that I remember to this day. Shortly after that his wife passed away. May her soul rest in peace. I wonder how this

man who gives you the impression of a fragile and a shy person be so strong and determined.

For some years now, Mamun has been burdened with a number of debilitating ailments. He has been in and out of the hospital. Unlike most of the personalities of his times and the rising ones in the extended world of art and culture, Mamun has seldom cared to come into the media's focus. His body and soul has

always been engaged with the job at hand. His passion has always been to selflessly dedicate himself to the task of lifting the moral and ethical content of our present day society, which is now on a steady downward swing.

As a playwright, Mamun is unique. His themes are simple yet powerful. His works often rally round the lives of the poor, their tragedies and happiness. He has this uncanny ability to project

humour even in a tragic environment. Mamun is a patriot and a thinking man. He goes on with his mission relentlessly without looking for any awards or public recognition as such. Yet success and recognition have come his way.

Over the years he has won many prestigious national awards. Winner of Ekushey Padak, National TV Award, National Film Award and the Bangla Academy Award, Mamun continues to be as humble as he was when he set his first footsteps in the world of our culture and performing arts. Theatre art has come a long way and today stands out as one of the windows of our excellence both at home and abroad.

Mamun is a founder member and playwright-director of one of the earliest and most renowned theatre groups by the name Theatre.

He has over 20 published plays to his credit. Of significance is also the fact that he himself acted in more than 15 of those on stage. Mamun has also directed films every now and then.

Although you are not in good health today, be of good cheer my friend, you have no reason for despair. Rest assured that your achievements in life far exceeds those of many others. Our world of art and culture needs you now more than ever. My heartiest greetings on your 67th birthday. Many happy returns of the day.

The writer is a freelance contributor

### Theatre

## Palakar to celebrate Dhaka's 400th anniversary with "Bayanno Hajar Tippanno Goli"



Actors of Palakar in a scene from *Bayanno Hajar Tippanno Goli*

ERSHAD KAMOL

To celebrate the 400th anniversary of Dhaka City, theatre troupe Palakar is going to stage its new production *Bayanno Hajar Tippanno Goli*, written and directed by Aminur Rahman Mukul on July 17 at the National Theatre Stage.

"Through a romantic comedy, we are going to observe the 400th anniversary of proclamation of Dhaka as the capital of Bengal (by Mughal Subedar Islam Khan in 1608). I know that there is a controversy regarding the year as many researches claim that the proclamation was made in 1610. But, we are staging the play this year,"

commented Aminur Rahman Mukul, the chief of Palakar.

Focusing on an aristocratic family of old Dhaka of contemporary time, *Bayanno Hajar Tippanno Goli* features the uniqueness of Dhaka as a city, its heritage, history and contemporary reality in a comic manner.

On the storyline of the play Mukul informed, "Shayesta, an inhabitant of old Dhaka, teaches history at a local college. Shayesta always tries to prove his mastery over history. He also does it when selecting from the suitors for his two daughters."

"The aim of the play is not just to present the heritage and history of

Dhaka. The distortion of historic

relics and contemporary unplanned urbanisation have also been portrayed in the play," he added.

Mukul further said, "Though the story is a contemporary one, the characterisation especially the approach and temper of the characters in the play are similar to the Mughals."

"We are working hard to present a realistic comedy. There will be no flashback, but, through the dialogue the history and heritage of Dhaka will be presented."

"The audience will get an impression of the glorious history of Dhaka through set and light design," Mukul hoped.

### Aromatic Gold Dhaka Fashion Week '08



PHOTO: SAZZAD IBNE SAYED



Prêt-à-porter statements on day five at the Aromatic Gold Dhaka Fashion Week 2008 organised by Tupa and Associates.

### In Focus

## "Bishar Blues": A radical look at the Fakirs of Bengal

KAVITA CHARANJI, New Delhi

"Know yourself and then decide your spiritual practice." "One day everything will dissolve." "Why is there this division between Hindus and Muslims?" These are the voices of the fakirs of Bengal captured on film by Kolkata-based filmmaker Amitabh Chakraborty

in *Bishar Blues*. Recently screened in New Delhi, the film has bagged the Golden Lotus this year for the best non-feature film at the 54th National Film Awards. The film also won in the Editing and Audiography categories.

Why this fascination with the fakirs in whose life music is inextricably linked with their spiritual practice? "The fakirs stand com-

pletely against institutionalised religion, which has created all the divisions among human beings. The fakirs practice religion in such a way that completely sidelines the institutions of religion and instead locates divinity in human beings rather than in the mosque, mandir or priests. This brings out a certain equality and love which interests me,"

explains Chakraborty. *Bishar*, points out the filmmaker, is derived from the rural term *Besha* which means outside the *Shariat*. Today it is recognised as an offshoot of Islam and practiced widely by the lower castes who have drawn on the Buddhist, Tantric and Vaishnavite traditions.

To gather material for this path-

breaking film, Chakraborty tra-

versed through Birbhum,

Murshidabad, Nadia and Burdwan in West Bengal. Here he encountered a number of fakirs at their homes, *mazars* and festivals such as *Pathar Chapodi mela*.

"The primary challenge was to

understand the basic essence of

what they were saying. They use a

lot of codes in their songs which

were initially difficult for me to

crack," says Chakraborty.

The film was three years in the making. He shot around 50-60 hours of footage. Stuck for funds, he turned to the India Foundation for the Arts, which agreed to support him. The film has been screened at the Amsterdam IDFA documentary festival as well as Munich and Japan along with Kolkata. He has also managed to screen it in the four districts of West Bengal. "Many people in the villages used to look down on the fakirs. However, after seeing the film they got to know more about them," says Chakraborty.

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## Robert Downey Jr. to play Sherlock Holmes

AP, Los Angeles

Robert Downey Jr. is trading Iron Man's metal suit for Sherlock Holmes' deerstalker hat.

Downey is following his action blockbuster "Iron Man" with the title role in "Sherlock Holmes," a mystery drama based on Arthur Conan Doyle's detective and an upcoming comic-book about Holmes by Lionel Wigram, one of the movie's producers.

Guy Ritchie ("Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels") is directing the Warner Bros. film, which is set to begin shooting in October, the studio said last Thursday.

That should put it ahead of the schedule for a "Sherlock Holmes" comedy in development at Sony, which will star Sacha Baron Cohen as the

detective and Will Ferrell as his partner, Dr. Watson.

No other cast members have been announced for Downey's film, which will be set in Holmes' late 19th-century London. The producers include Joel Silver and his producing partner -- Downey's wife, Susan Downey -- who previously worked with the actor on "Gothika" and "Kiss Kiss Bang Bang."

Downey co-stars with Ben Stiller and Jack Palance in the August comedy "Tropic Thunder," about a group of pampered actors stranded among dangerous drug-dealers while shooting a Vietnam War movie in the Asian jungles. This fall, Downey stars with Jamie Foxx in "The Soloist," a drama about a schizophrenic music prodigy living on Los Angeles' skid row.



A scene from the film *Bishar Blues*