

WHAT'S
ON THIS
WEEK

Theatre

Play: Khudhita Pashan
Troupe: Subachan Natya Sangsad
Venue: Mahila Samiti Auditorium, Natok Swarani
Date: August 1
Time: 7pm

Photography
Exhibition

Title: Shudhui Bangla
Organiser: Shudhui Bangla Photographic Association
Venue: Drik Gallery, H 58, Rd 15A (New), Dhanmondi
Date: July 31-August 4
Time: 3pm-8pm

Solo Painting
Exhibition

Title: Perception II
Artist: Subrata Das
Venue: Alliance Francaise, 26, Mirpur Road, Dhanmondi
Date: July 25-August 6
Time: 9am-12pm and 5pm-8pm (Saturdays 5pm-8pm)

African Film
Festival '08

Organiser: Zahir Raihan Film Society
Venue: Alliance Francaise, 26, Mirpur Road, Dhanmondi
Date: August 1
Time: "The Wind and the Lion" at 10am, "Z" at 5pm and "The Battle of Algiers" at 7pm



"Raarang" representing Bangladesh at Korean theatre fest

A new opportunity for Bangladeshi theatre troupes



Mamunur Rashid (right) with other discussants at a press conference going over the tour

ERSHAD KAMOL

Theatre troupe Aranyak Natya Dal will represent Bangladesh at the 20th Masan International Theatre Festival (MITF) to be held in South Korea. A 15-member team headed by Bikash Kishore Das, secretary of Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy (BSA), will leave Dhaka tomorrow (August 2) to participate at the festival. *Raarang* will be staged at the festival on August 6.

Earlier, *Raarang* was staged at Bharat Rang Mahotsav, the national theatre festival organised by Ministry of Cultural Affairs, India at National School of Drama in Delhi.

Claiming this opportunity as "a milestone", an enthusiastic Mamunur Rashid, chief of Aranyak as well as the director and playwright of *Raarang*, said, "This is for the first time a theatre troupe has been selected by the Ministry of Information upon suggestions from Bangladesh Group Theatre Federation (BGTF)."

However, the process of sending a theatre troupe as a government delegation has not been smooth.

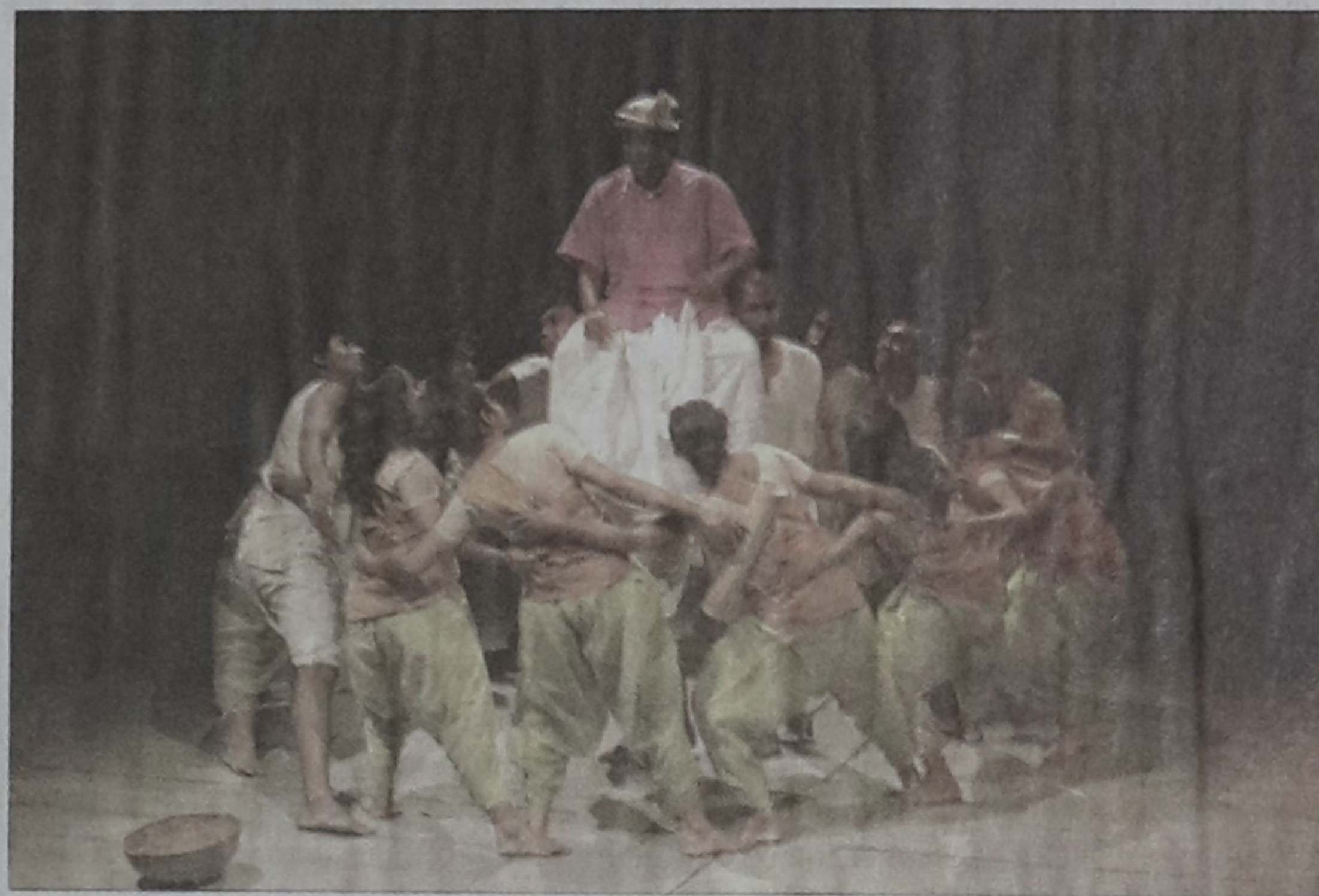
Aranyak was nominated in 2006 to participate at the Cairo Theatre Festival, however, because of bureaucratic tangles that opportunity did not materialise. This year pressure from BGTF as well as positive intention of the authority has made the participation possible.

There are a few problems, however. Usually 27 artistes perform in *Raarang* -- a play featuring the strife of the impoverished *Santals* to survive the discrimination imposed by the dominating Bengalis -- at the Korean festival however, 13 actors will perform in the play.

Director Mamunur Rashid said, "It shouldn't be a big issue. *Raarang* is a flexible theatre production. Several actors will perform more than one character."

"I was worried about the last combat scene in the play, but it's also been handled well," he added.

Is it a compromise to stage the play abroad? According to Rashid, "Not at all. The standard of the production has been maintained. We agreed with the government proposal of sending 13 actors



A scene from *Raarang*, featuring the strife of the impoverished *Santals*

PHOTO: MUMIT M.

headed by a government official. Otherwise, no troupe could go through government channel."

"It should also be mentioned that substantial funds are required to send a delegation abroad. We also considered the limitations of the government," he added.

On the selection process, Bhuinya Shafiqul Islam, director general of Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy (BSA), informed, "Ministry of Cultural Affairs through BSA, asked BGTF to suggest names for the festival. Based on their suggestion the government has decided to select the top troupe. As per suggestions of BGTF, the government will send Dhaka Theatre's

production *Nimajon* at the upcoming Cairo Theatre Festival in Egypt."

"Representation of our culture and literature through theatre productions at international festivals will enhance our image," he hoped.

Theatre leaders are also optimistic on the issue. Claiming the selection process "fair", M. Hamid, chairman of BGTF, said, "Considering the performance, we selected five troupes for government consideration for the tour. I believe the whole process will boost the amateur theatre activists of the country."

"I appreciate the government

initiative as earlier theatre was not considered for international festivals," he added.

His view was reflected in Deputy Director of Department of Theatre and Film, BSA Golam Sarwar's tone. Sarwar is the Team Manager of the Korean trip, who will also operate lights during the staging of *Raarang* at MITF. He said, "BSA received several offers to send theatre troupes abroad, but because of bureaucratic tangles, instead of sending theatre troupes we used to send dance troupes."

"The current trip would create a window of opportunity for the theatre troupes of the country," he hoped.

Dhaka Theatre celebrates 35th anniversary

"Joiboto Konyar Mon" staged

CULTURAL CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka Theatre, one of the leading troupes in the country, celebrated its 35th anniversary with a special programme at the National Theatre Stage on July 30. Formed in 1973, Dhaka Theatre has produced several quality productions and talented actors who are dominating theatre and the small screen.

On this occasion, Nasiruddin Yousuf, chief of the troupe, said, "We are dedicated to uphold theatre and the spirit of our Liberation War."

However, the demise of one of the founder members of Dhaka

Theatre, Natyacharya Selim Al Deen -- the most gifted playwright in Bangla litterateur after Rabindranath Tagore who has developed a unique theatre form blending our traditions and modern concept -- has been an irreparable loss. But, we are dedicated to the cause of theatre."

"To observe the birth anniversary of Selim Al Deen, we will organise a theatre festival from August 18 to 23," Yousuf announced.

After the speech, Selim Al Deen's play *Joiboto Konyar Mon*, directed by Yousuf, was staged.

Two parts of the play narrate the sufferings of two women from

different era. Kalindi, a representative of the 18th century, is the protagonist of the first part. This part features the death of Kalindi -- a victim of the flawed social system.

Pori, a contemporary *jatra* artiste, is the protagonist of the second part who also becomes a victim of the social system.

The play was premiered in 1993 and continued till March 2002. It was the first show after a long gap.

Proceeds from the show was donated to Shaswato Satya, an ailing student of Department of Mass Communication and Journalism, Rajshahi University. Tk 35 lakh is needed for his treatment.



Shomi Kaiser (R) and co-actor in a scene from the play

PHOTO: MUMIT M.

Olympic boost for "Mummy" blockbuster?

As all eyes turn to Beijing for the Olympics, the third instalment of the successful "Mummy" films offers its own take on China -- swapping Egyptian Pyramids for the Tomb of the Dragon Emperor.

So is the timing a coincidence? Or are the filmmakers hoping for a box office boost from the Olympic Games?

Seven years after the bandages last came off, actor Brendan Fraser returns in "The Mummy: Tomb of the Dragon Emperor" as archaeologist Rick O'Connell, this time retired, and with a grown-up son Alex.

When Alex, played by Australian actor Luke Ford, accidentally awakens the Dragon Emperor (Jet Li), his parents leap from their sedentary retirement to help save the world.

For Fraser, China offered the perfect setting for this latest romp.

"It's an archaeologically rich nation, many national treasures, the Great Wall, history, mystery, mystique," he says.

Apart from being slightly loose with the term 'mummy' (does it really include the un-dead, encased in clay?), the film also has some fun with Chinese history.

"I wanted to make a fantasy, which is what the film is, but I really wanted it to honour the Chinese culture," says director Rob Cohen.

"They have dynasties that have lasted longer than America's been in existence... I wanted to make (audiences) feel there was a love and respect for the Chinese culture. At the same time we've got mummies running around."

And lots of them -- courtesy of China's awe-inspiring Terracotta Army.

In reality, they were 8,000 clay soldiers and horses buried alongside an ancient emperor, and unearthed in 1974.

In the film, thanks to impressive computer animation, they are the cursed legions of the evil Dragon Emperor, brought back to life in his quest for world domination.

And the only army that can defeat them are his undead enemies, who he buried beneath that other internationally-known Chinese symbol, the Great Wall.

But what do the Chinese think of that?

"This is not a documentary,"



Jet Li as the Dragon Emperor in the third instalment of "The Mummy"

says Malaysian-Chinese actress Michelle Yeoh who, as the elegant good witch Zi Yuan, is responsible for the curse that entombed the Dragon Emperor in the first place.

"This is a fun-filled action adventure, it's a fantasy. And it's just taking our precious Terracotta Army and giving you a fun ride with it, so don't take it too seriously!"

And, according to the filmmakers, Chinese authorities welcomed them, to the extent that they were

able to shoot large sections near Shanghai, making for more authentic locations.

"It's monumental," says Fraser, "in terms of it being the first Western picture and the one on the largest scale to have worked on the mainland and to have had the cooperative collaboration of the government and the Chinese filmmakers. It's groundbreaking."

Of course, the Chinese may have

"I do think that when Universal heard there was a possibility to do this movie we got a lot of wind in our sails because of the synergy of the Olympics and the Mummy franchise lining up."

"We didn't do it for that reason, the producers had already been trying to make it in China for years before, but I have a feeling somewhere in the corporate structure the lightbulb went off... and I think at that point the movie was going to

be made."

This summer's movie release schedule is crowded with blockbusters and it remains to be seen if *The Mummy: Tomb of the Dragon Emperor* can repeat at least some of the success of its two prequels.

In China, however, it will not open until after the Games, and the filmmakers can surely only dream they will attract as big an audience.

Source: BBC

"Shob Charitro Kalponik": Bipasha Basu makes her debut in Bangla cinema

She is sexy, beautiful and graceful. Actress Bipasha Basu has been in the spotlight recently for her role in the upcoming film *Shob Charitro Kalponik* (directed by Rituparno Ghosh). The theme is riveting. Says *Filmfare* magazine, "How much does art owe to life and vice versa? Can life truly be depicted in art? Is life as complex as art? These are some of the questions Bipasha Basu's debut Bengali film attempts to answer."

Shob Charitro Kalponik follows the inner world of a woman. The plot revolves around a discordant couple: Manisha (played by Bipasha) and Indranil (Prosenjit). Tired of the daily squabbles, Manisha is attracted to Shekhar. Life falls apart for Manisha when her husband dies suddenly. Forced to complete Indranil's unfinished work, she begins to see her husband in a new light.

Believe it or not, had Bipasha not ventured into the film world, she would have ended up as a doctor. After passing out in the course of her dissection class, which was opening up a rat's innards, she switched from science to the commerce stream. Later, she acquired a degree in commerce. Her initial plan was to be a chartered accountant but fate led her in a radically different direction. At age 17, she ended up being the Ford Supermodel of the World. After this triumph, she was crowned Miss Vivacious, sponsored by Tulips.

Born on January 7, 1979 in New Delhi, the Basu family moved to Calcutta. Unbelievably in her younger years, her dark complexion earned her the sobriquet of

'ugly'. Strangely enough, her name means 'dark deep desire.'

Bipasha has bagged many an award for her histrionic skills. Over the last few years, there has been many a landmark in her young years -- the 2007 nomination for Star Screen Award as Best

Actress for *Corporate* and she has received the Bollywood Movie Award Best Actress for *Corporate*, among others.

Bipasha is quoted in *Stardust* magazine, July 2006 as saying, "In *Corporate* my character is tough but at home she is simple and

vulnerable. The balance is the essence of the woman, which I think has come out beautifully in the film. I hope every career-oriented woman will relate to her."

Compiled by Cultural Correspondent



Bipasha Basu in a scene from *Shob Charitro Kalponik*