

## WHAT'S ON THIS WEEK

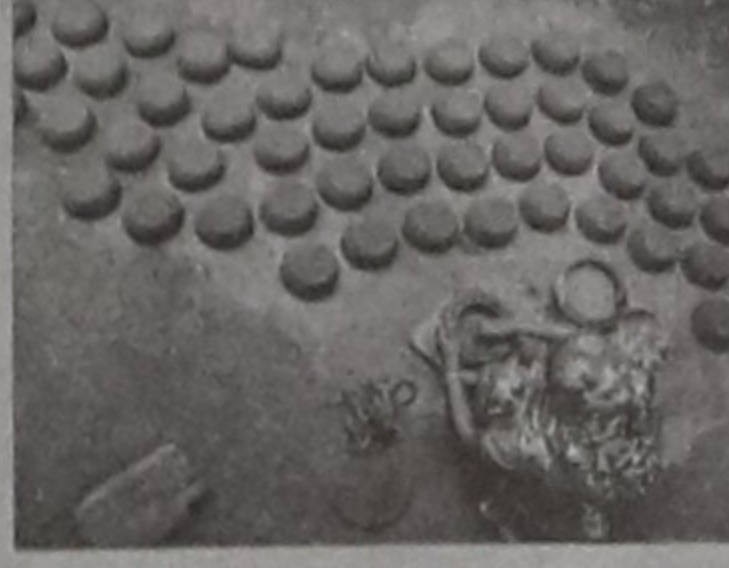
## Observing Hiroshima Day

Poster Exhibition, documentary screening, discussion and staging the play *Tringsho Shatabdi*  
**Organiser:** Theatre Troupe Swapnodal  
**Venue:** Experimental Theatre Hall, BSA  
**Date:** August 6  
**Time:** From 5pm onwards



## 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, 28, Mirpur Road, Dhanmondi  
**Date:** July 25-August 6  
**Time:** 9am-12pm and 5pm-8pm (Saturdays 5pm-8pm)



## Photography Exhibition

**Title:** International Inter University Photography Exhibition  
**Organiser:** NSU Photography Club  
**Venue:** National Art Gallery, BSA  
**Date:** August 3-9  
**Time:** 11am-7pm



## Revisiting a creative bond

Ferdousi and Ramendu Majumdar on Abdullah Al Mamun



Mamun and Ferdousi during the shooting of the documentary on the latter.



Ferdousi and Ramendu Majumdar.

NADIA SARWAT

Abdullah Al Mamun is a name intertwined with the media and theatre world of our country. Simultaneously a powerful playwright, actor, director, producer and filmmaker, Mamun has shaped the theatre and TV industry in post-Liberation War Bangladesh. He is the central figure in the group, 'Theatre', and has written scripts for acclaimed plays like *Akhono Kritodas*, *Tomrai*, *Kokilara* and *Meraj Fakir-er Maa* for the troupe. Alongside enriching the theatre movement of Bangladesh, he has contributed to our cinema, with films like *Akhoni Shomoy*, *Shareng Bou*, *Dui Jibon* and more.

The artiste has been unwell and was admitted at the Square Hospital in Dhaka. However, his condition is improving now, according to his friend, noted theatre personality Ramendu Majumdar. Ramendu and his wife Ferdousi Majumdar, another iconic figure in Bangladeshi theatre, both have an enduring relationship with Mamun. Praying for the ailing artiste, the duo shared their fond memories involving Mamun with *The Daily Star*.

Ramendu recalls, "Back in 1961, when I was a first year student of English Litera-

ture at Dhaka University, I got acquainted with Mamun. A student of history, he was a year senior to me. In 1963, we joined the university theatre group, 'Chhatro Shikkhok Natya Goshthi'. I wrote the script of its first production *Kritodas Hashi* (by Shawkat Osman), in which Mamun played the role of Tatri. We worked together in other plays like *Dondo O Dondodhar* and *Krishnokumari*. That was the beginning of our long friendship. Ferdousi, a student of Bangla at the time, was also acquainted with him.

"In 1964, with the advent of television, Mamun directed the first TV play *Ektola Dotola*, written by Munier Chowdhury. Ferdousi acted in the play. Mamun worked as a senior programme producer for BTV for a long time. The group, 'Theatre', was formed in 1974; we were the pioneers. Of the 38 plays produced by Theatre, Mamun wrote 20 and directed 22. Though he is used to multi-tasking, Mamun has the rare quality to maintain a fine balance. I guess, overwork must have played a role behind his illness."

From Theatre's first production *Subachan Nirbasan* to *Meraj Fakir-er Maa*, Ferdousi Majumdar has been seen in the lead roles in all plays by Abdullah Al Mamun. Mamun even made a documentary on the illustrious career of the actress,

which earned him a National Film Award (best documentary) in 1997. Talking about her mentor and friend, Ferdousi seemed overwhelmed with emotions and gratitude. "I never imagined that I could go on stage without Abdullah Al Mamun," says the actress.

"Without the inspiration and help of my brother Munier Chowdhury, I would have never made it in theatre, as I came from a conservative family. When I was a college student, he introduced me to the world of theatre. Then, again, most of the credit for my reputation as an actress goes to Abdullah Al Mamun, for I learned a lot from him. In our time, there was no school or institution to impart formal training in theatre; it was Mamun who trained me," she adds.

"In *Subachan Nirbasan*, my first play, there was only one female character; it was almost impossible to spot an actress on stage those days. Mamun Always wrote plays keeping the limitation of the troupe in mind. He creates every character keeping in mind the actor best suited for the role. I consider myself extremely fortunate that he gave me the opportunity to get into the skin of such powerful characters. Many people have talent, but only a few get a mentor who can help them hone that talent. Mamun provides an actor with that

opportunity. Indeed, the reason Theatre as a group could stage so many acclaimed plays is that all of them were well written and relatable.

"Mamun's female characters are superb; indeed they reflect his profound respect towards women in general. Especially the characterisation of a mother deserves plaudits. They are affectionate caregivers yet unyielding as a rock when needed -- not like the clichéd weeping image of a mother. They boldly confront evil, even if it's her own offspring. I remember playing the role of the mother in the play *Tomrai* -- when the terrorist son goes out with his loaded gun, people call on the mother for only she has the power to control her misguided son. I think our society needs such mothers to confront the all-pervading evils," Ferdousi says.

According to the actress, "Usually every actor harbours the feeling that s/he could not put in his/her best effort in a character. Even, if I don't act any more, I will always have a sense of achievement. And I thank Mamun for helping me earn this sense of achievement. I may be a loss for words, trying to express my gratitude. I pray that he comes back among us soon. Theatre is incomplete without him."

## 'Geetanjali Lalitokala Academy' celebrates 4th anniversary



Professor Rafiqul Islam (centre) at the programme.

'Geetanjali Lalitokala Academy' celebrated its 4th anniversary at the auditorium of Small and Cottage Industry Training Institute, Uttara on August 1, says a press release. On this occasion, "Geetanjali Shommanona Padak 2008" was conferred to Professor Rafiqul Islam, Vice Chancellor of

University of Liberal Arts and president of the Trustee Board, Nazrul Institute. Producer of ATN Bangla, Shampa Mahmud and singer Nigar Sultana Rumki were given special awards for their contribution to Geetanjali Lalitokala Academy. Shamsul Huda, senior Vice

President, Sales and Marketing, ATN Bangla, and Mahub Amin Mithu, Director of Geetanjali Lalitokala Academy were also present at the event. After the award giving ceremony, a cultural programme was also held, in which students and artistes of the academy performed.

## Cultural programme

## Songs highlighting the beauty of Khagrachhari

JASIM MAJUMDER, Khagrachhari

Artists rendered at least 20 songs written by local cultural personality M.A. Murtoza Polash at a cultural programme held at the district Shilpakala Academy in Khagrachhari town.

The cultural programme titled "Khagrabi" was jointly organised

by Khagrachhari Shilpakala Academy and Khagrachhari Shilpi Sangsad.

Most of the songs highlight the scenic beauty of Khagrachhari with its lush hills, serene lakes and varied culture.

M.A. Murtoza Polash has been active in the local cultural arena since 1985. He is also the President of Khagrachhari Theatre.

Murtoza has been awarded by several cultural organisations in the hill district for his contribution.

Superintendent of Police (acting) Osman Gani; Khagrachhari Shilpi Sangsad President, Mohammad Abul Kashem; Secretary, Khagrachhari Shilpakala Academy, Jiten Barua and other prominent personalities were present at the cultural programme.

## 'Sangram' celebrates 12th anniversary in Pabna

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

Sangram Pabna, a leading sports and cultural organisation recently celebrated its 12th anniversary with much festivity. A daylong programme was held marking the occasion. The highlights of the function were a discussion, reception, and a cultural programme at Pabna Bonomali Auditorium.

Five (three posthumous) individuals were honoured at the programme. The list of honoured includes the late Abdus Sattar Basu, former president of Pabna Press Club (in journalism); late Mobarak Hossain Rotna (nationally awarded shooter), late Fazul Haque, former headmaster of Pabna Zila School

(education), former Pabna Municipality Chairman, M.A. Mohit and Badsha Waresi (in sports and social welfare).

The honourees received crests at the programme. A discussion was also held marking this occasion. President of Sangram, Shiplu Ahmed, chaired the programme. Headmaster of Pabna Zila School, Goura Chandra Mondol; Secretary of Pabna Sports Association Abu Ishaque Shamim; Librarian of Pabna Edward College, Shahidul Haque Manik; President of Pabna Drama Circle, Gopal Sanyal; Manager of Universal Group, Achinto Kumar Ghosh and journalist Sifat Rahman Sanam spoke at the discussion.

The speakers reiterated that a

decadent trend has taken its toll on our culture and sports. "Once upon a time most young people were immersed in sports and cultural activities in their leisure time. However, with increasing urbanisation and tight schedules, the practice is on the wane," they said.

They went on to add, "Regular sports and cultural activities keep the young from bad distractions such as crime. The scope of culture and sports related activities should be expanded."

Later a colourful cultural programme was staged. Local artistes performed music and dance at the function. Sangram was formed in 1996 with the goal of serving as a beacon of light for younger people.

## Incorporating CGI into mythology

"Karna: Warrior of the Sun" staged in Delhi

KAVITA CHARANJI, New Delhi

The selfless and valiant warrior Karna (one of the central roles in the epic *Mahabharata*) was the subject of a play called *Karna: Warrior of the Sun*. Before launching into specifics, here's what captured the attention of viewers -- the stupendous sets which deployed the Computer Generated Images (CGI) for the first time in India.

Thus the viewers came across an array of landscapes, sunsets, mountains that were so brilliantly recreated that one's attention was sometimes more riveted to the set rather than the action on stage and this is not meant to be a criticism. Explained filmmaker Bobby Bedi, the mastermind behind the stellar high tech sets: "Conventional sets can't be changed in the middle of a play. The only alternative is a revolving stage. Now because of this digital technique sets can be changed in 20 seconds."

Scenes that remain etched in one's mind include the anguish of Karna when he discovers he is an illegitimate child and that Kunti is his real mother. Burying his head in Kunti's lap, he goes into an embryonic pose. The other part that remains is of the dainty, chiffon-clad dancers who perform at the court of Lord Indra. Likewise the recitation of Sanskrit *shlokas* set the tone for a perfect



A computer generated image used in the play.

evening.

This is the second recent play for Rudradeep Chakrabarti, the director of the superb work on Karna. His last play called *City of the Djinn*, played to a packed hall. Talking to the director one encountered a highly dynamic theatre personality. A post-graduate from Rabindra Bharati in Kolkata

and National School of Drama, he is well acquainted with Bangladeshi theatre heavyweights such as Jamil Ahmed and Kamaluddin Nili.

Now he is turning his eye to the *Upanishads* and what he calls 'Islamic theatre'.

The playwright is Farrukh Dhondy, who

has written scripts for *Bandit Queen* and *Mangal Pandey*. The play fleshes out all the complexities of Karna -- his superb archery, his burning desire to be a warrior, his angst at the discovery of his lineage and his altruism.

Midway into the play I talked to a variety of people. There was Himanshu Kapoor, a dietician from NOIDA (on the outskirts of Delhi). "I heard about the *Mahabharata* from my mother. To be honest I get a bit confused about the sequence of events. For me the appeal of Karna was in his standing up for his ideals rather than follow rules set by society," he said.

The so-called plebian is far better acquainted with the hero than the 'elite'. Talking to Harsh Kumar, a Class 9 student of Government Boy's Senior Secondary School, one realised that others like him are far more rooted than the average Delhiite. "My class teacher introduced me to the *Mahabharata*. I particularly enjoyed the character of Karna."

You would have thought that the organisers behind this masterpiece would have gotten their act together. As it turned out one had to run all over the place to get tickets, which were available only at the last minute.

However, such glitches can be overlooked. And this superb work is on till August 3.

## Nritya Shilpi Sangstha celebrates monsoon in Sylhet

IQBAL SIDDIQUEE, Sylhet

Sylhet Bibhagiyo Nritya Shilpi Sangstha organised a colourful programme to celebrate the monsoon recently. Performers from different organisations of Sylhet division participated at the programme titled "Kalo Megher Anando Jagno" held at the Salfur

Rahman Auditorium.

General Secretary of Nritya Shilpi Sangstha, Nilanjana Das Jui gave the welcome speech while talented young artistes, who have been awarded at the national level, were accorded a reception. Veteran artiste Bidit Lal Das and Nritya Shilpi Sangstha President Anil Kishan Sinha welcomed

the young artistes for their laudable achievements at national level. Aminul Islam Liton conducted the whole function.

Artistes of Nritya Shalee, Academy for Manipuri Culture and Arts, Nritya Rang, Habiganj Lalitokala Academy, Shilpangan and Nrityasram performed at the function.