

## WHAT'S ON THIS WEEK

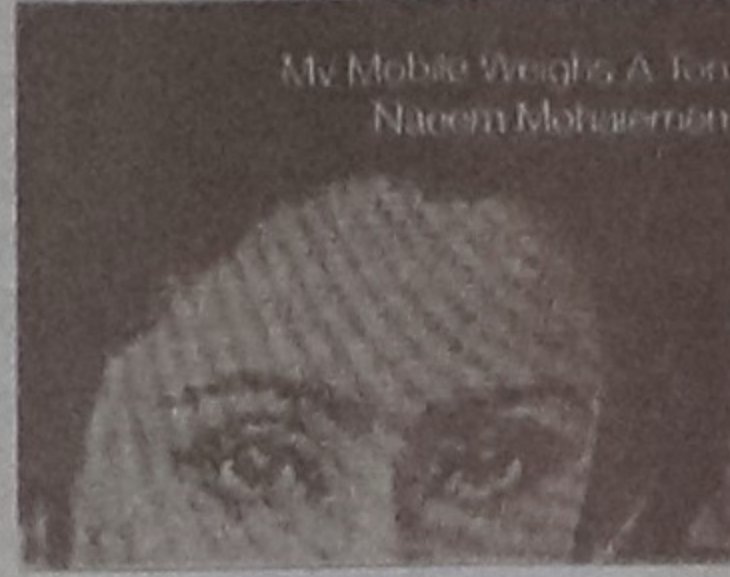
### Selim Al Deen Janmo Utsab

Organiser: Dhaka Theatre and Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy  
Venue: National Theatre Stage, BSA  
Date: August 18-23  
Time: 7pm everyday  
August 23, Play: Binodini



### Installation and Photography Exhibition

Title: My Mobile Weighs A Ton  
Artist: Naem Mohamed  
Venue: Gallery Chitral, H921, Rd 4, Dhamond, Dhaka  
Time: August 21-31  
Time: 10am-8pm



### Film Screening

Documentary on Kazi Nazrul Islam  
Organiser: Indian High Commission, Dhaka  
Venue: Indian High Commission Cultural Centre & Library, H 35, Rd 24, Gulshan 1  
Date: August 23  
Time: 6:30 pm



### Theatre

Play: Eksho Bosta Chal  
Troupe: Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy  
Venue: National Theatre Hall, BSA  
Date: August 24  
Time: 7pm

### ONE HUNDRED SACKS OF RICE



## The ever-changing TV industry

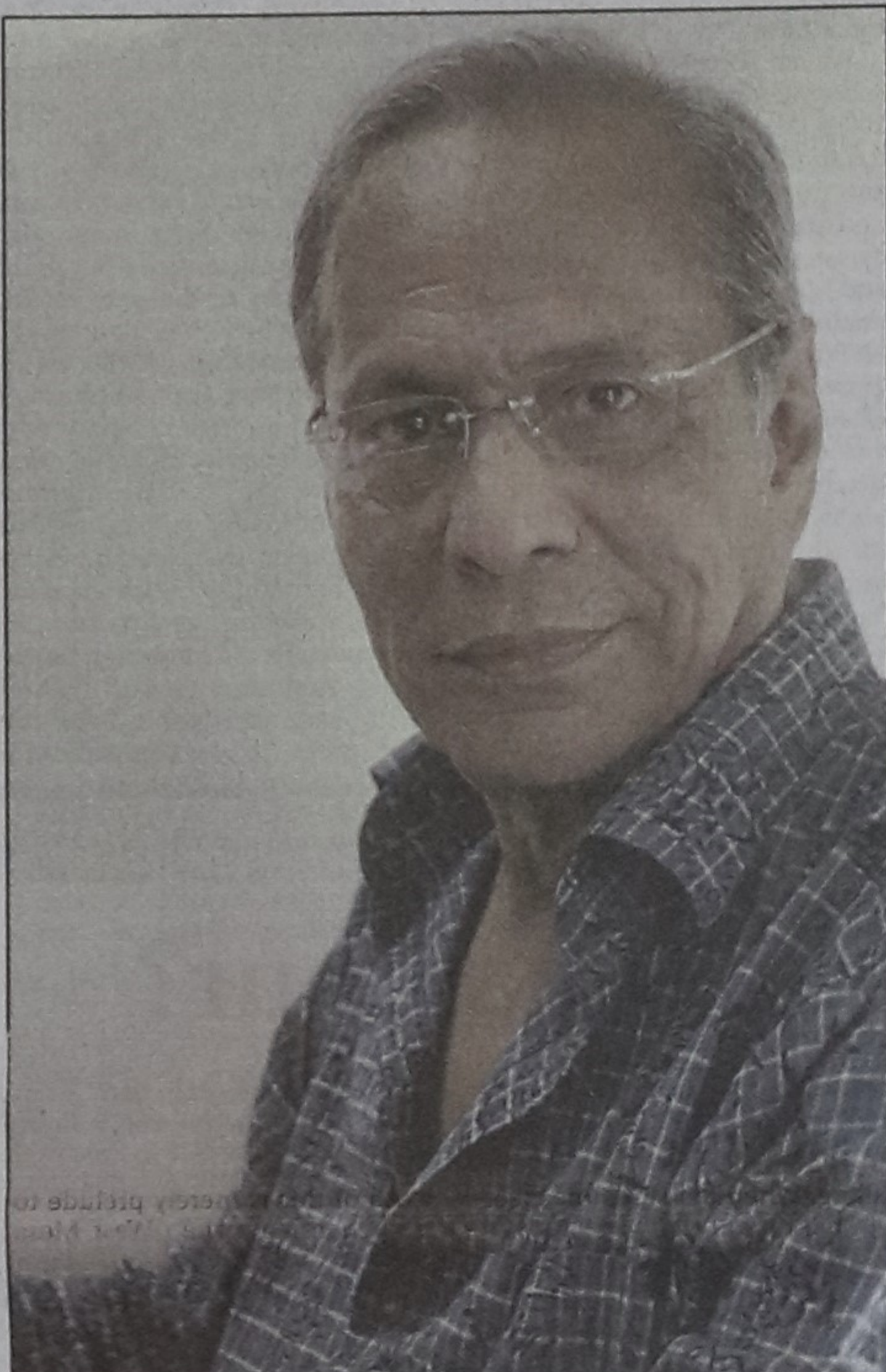
In conversation with Mustafa Kamal Syed

KARIM WAHEED

He is one of the most experienced TV officials in the country. Joining the then Pakistan TV's Dhaka wing as a producer in 1967, Mustafa Kamal Syed had Mustafizur Rahman, the late Abdullah Yusuf Imam and Badrunnesa Abdullah as his colleagues. Throughout his career, he has worked as a Programme Manager, General Manager, Director, International Relations and Deputy Director General, Programme. In 2004 he retired from BTV and joined satellite TV channel ntv as its Chief of Programme. The media personality recently shared his views on gradual changes in the TV industry and more with *The Daily Star*.

"Revenue wise, TV plays are the most popular programmes," says Syed. *Kul Nai Kinar Nai* -- a two-hour-long play adapted by Momtazuddin Ahmed from a novel -- produced by Syed and featuring Subarna Mustafa, Afzal Hossain and Asaduzzaman Noor in the lead roles attained major popularity in the mid '80s. The play was aired on NHK's Channel-3 Network (Japan) in 1988 (as part of the Asian Drama Festival) and received accolades. It was also aired on CCTV (China) as part of a cultural exchange programme. Among his favourite TV productions are: *Mukhora Ramani*, *Bashikaran* and *Raktakarobi* (produced by Mustafa Monwar) and *Borof Gola Nadi* (by Abdullah Al Mamun).

What are the key elements that make a TV play successful? Syed's response: "A bold script and a relevant social message. As a producer I feel that an effective play should have a message. On that note, I think negative messages should not be conveyed in TV programmes. As a mass media, television has a major impact on impressionable young minds."



Mustafa Kamal Syed

Though Syed has been lauded as a TV play producer, the early years of his career were marked by his accomplishment as a music producer. He was the producer of a widely watched musical programme, *Sur Bitan* that was aired every Sunday in the '70s.

Mega-popular songs like *Sagoree ter thekay*, *Jey chhilo drishtir shimanaye*, *Ekbar jetye dena*, *Khola janalaye* and *Amaye jodi proshno korey* were aired first on the show. Mustafa recalls discussing the ideas with the lyricists and composers. "That's the only way to work when

One must not forget that there should never be editorial autonomy without responsibility or freedom without restraint.

producing musical programmes are concerned," he says.

A memorable experience: "There were many limitations back in the day. To begin with, programmes were aired live from the DIT studio and there was a 25-minute prep-time. Everything -- set, lights, musicians, and artistes -- had to be ready in that time. These programmes were quarter-based (three months). In the next quarter, the then programme manager told me that the prep-time will be cut down to five minutes. I couldn't believe what I was hearing but apparently the decision had been made. We'd get just five minutes to get everything ready and air the programme live under the new circumstances for the next three months."

"It was a challenge and we all geared up to the best of our ability. Keramat Mawla was the set designer. There was a long veranda next to the stage at the DIT studio. Keramat was asked to get the set ready at the veranda. There was no time for rehearsal. Some of the most popular and respected artistes like Ferroz Begum, Sanjida Khatun, Mahmudun Nabi, Ferdousi Rahman, Syed Abdul Hadi, Shahanaaz Rahmatullah and Sabina Yasmin worked without

any complaint. The crew managed to pull it off. Maybe no one would believe this now because this attitude is rare these days. That kind of dedication, teamwork and commitment are dwindling. Most want a shortcut."

"The again, technology has advanced and modern equipments take longer to tune and adjust," says Syed. Delving further into the differences, he says, "When we started working in TV, we couldn't shoot outdoors. Editing was linear, meaning if we wanted to change something we had to start from scratch again. Now this is not an issue."

Many who grew up watching TV serials and plays in the '70 and '80s complain that these programmes do not enjoy the same level of popularity now. Addressing this issue, Syed says, "The problem with contemporary serials is that often they don't progress. Also options are limited within the same group of actors. So, you have over-exposure and repetition at times."

"However, there is a positive aspect of this. Opportunities have increased with exposure. Now young individuals can seriously consider a fulltime career in media. TVCs (TV commercials) have also become a major factor. If serials and plays were not popular, we wouldn't have to bear with the repeated complaints from the audience that there are way too many commercial breaks. Talk shows are catching on too," he adds.

Word of advice for young directors: "There is no lack of talent. But young makers often struggle with values and propriety. It is up to the seniors to guide them. One must not forget that there should never be editorial autonomy without responsibility or freedom without restraint."

## Selim Al Deen's birth anniversary celebration Contemporary issues addressed in plays at the festival



Scenes from the plays *Joboti Konyar Mon* (left) and *Nimajon*.

ERSHAD KAMOL

Four Selim Al Deen plays -- *Joboti Konyar Mon*, *Prachya*, *Horgo* and *Nimajon* -- were staged at the festival jointly organised by Dhaka Theatre and Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy. Contemporary issues such as feminism, social discrimination, adverse impact of globalisation and fall of humanity have been depicted in the plays staged at the festival. Featuring the stories of two women belonging to different ages -- Kalindi (representing the 18th century) and a contemporary *jatra* artiste Pori -- Al Deen in *Joboti Konyar Mon* showed how they become victims of a flawed social system. The play belongs to *Kathanatya* form, a term intro-

duced by Al Deen.

In *Prachya*, belonging to *Panchali* form, Al Deen recreated the popular *Behula-Lakshindar* myth, the most popular representative of medieval Bangla literature. In *Prachya*, the bride dies from snakebite on the wedding night and the groom Saifar Chan chases the snake so that he can avenge his beloved.

However, analysing the play, in particular the memories of Saifar on the long journey home escorting his bride from the in law's as well as the last scene when an exhausted Saifar watches the serpent leaving boldly -- one can come to the conclusion that the protagonist represents those who can do very little against social injustice as well as natural calam-

ities. *Horgo*, written when communism collapsed in many countries around the world in late 1980s, takes man in a situation where he is pitted against the concept of 'state'.

Set against the backdrop of a rescue team's struggle to help people in a chaotic situation just after a tornado, Al Deen protested the ongoing 'imperialism' in the shape of globalisation.

Selim Al Deen addressed global politics furthermore in the play *Nimajon*, where histories of genocides since the birth of civilisation have been depicted through the dialogue between a stranger and professor of political science.

### "Banopangshul": First publication of Selim Al Deen Pathshala unveiled

As part of the festival organised to celebrate the birth anniversary of theatre icon Selim Al Deen, a newly formed organisation 'Selim Al Deen Pathshala' launched its first publication *Banopangshul* -- a quarterly little magazine -- at the plaza of National Theatre Stage on August 21.

Eminent Indian critic Professor Arun Sen was the chief guest of the launching ceremony. Theatre personality Nasiruddin Yousuff and Sohel Hassan Galib, editor of *Banupangshul*, delivered speeches at the programme.

Discussions at the programme hoped that Selim Al Deen

Pathshala would arrange regular programmes on theatre and literature around the country. Moreover, it would regularly publish *Banupangshul*. Title of the magazine is taken from Al Deen's popular play *Banopangshul*, featuring oppression on the Mandai community by the Bengalis.



(L-R) Professor Arun Sen, Al Deen's widow Begumzadi Meherunnesa, Nasiruddin Yousuff, Ahmed Iqbal Haider, Apurba Majumdar, Shahiduzzaman Selim and A.K.M. Jahangir at the launching ceremony.

## Light and shadow

Photography exhibition by Prism



Clockwise (top): Photographs by Elius Hasan Elu (special jury award), Mohammed Golam Sarower (one of the best three) and Emu Imran (certificate of merit).



JAMIL MAHMUD

Photographic Forum; Prism arranged a weeklong photo exhibition at the Drik Gallery, which ended on August 21. A total of 70 photographs taken by 25 photographers were on display. The weeklong exhibition was titled "Aloy-Kaloy Aanka".

"The basics of photography lie behind the concept of light and shadows. That's why, we selected the title 'Aloy-Kaloy Aanka', referring to the relationship between light and darkness," said Md. Rafiqul Islam, convenor of Photographic Forum; Prism. "Earlier we arranged two more exhibitions with the same title," added Rafiqul Islam.

Prism started its journey in 1998 as an institution through a publication titled "Photography Kolakoushal O Monon". Later, the present, former students of Prism and their photographer friends with the same frame of mind came together and formed a new platform, which is "Photographic Forum; Prism". Since then, the forum has been organising photographic excursions, contests and exhibitions regularly.

A panel of judges -- including Golam Mostofa, Dr. Rashidunnabi and Shankar Sawjal -- selected six out of the 70 photographs on display for the awards at the exhibition-competition. The awards were conferred in categories such as best photographs (three), certificate of merit (two) and special jury award (one).

Kaoser Ahmed, K.M. Jahangir Alam and Mohammed Golam Sarower received the best photographs awards. Works by Emu Imran and M. Yousuf Tushar were selected for the certificate of merit while Elius Hasan Elu won the special jury award.

Scenic beauty, womanhood, childhood, abstract themes, cultural practices of different communities, architecture and terracotta plaque were some of the themes of the entries. Mohammed Golam Sarower's award-winning photograph depicts a woman washing clothes on a floating boat. Sarower's other works on display at the exhibition highlight the diverse cultural practices in different regions of Bangladesh.

Elius Hasan's special jury award winning photo captures a familiar rural image -- a woman holding her child around her waist, looking towards the nearby *kheya ghaat*. A photograph, taken by Noor Ahmed Gelal shows thousands of people fishing together -- giving the event a festive look.

Spider's web or making a flute out of bamboo, architectural heritage of Old Dhaka and working at a dockyard are some of the subjects. "The forum wishes to arrange such exhibitions every year from now on," said Rafiqul Islam.

NADIA SARWAT

Dhaka University Theatre Festival which began on August 12 as a part of the Honours final examination of the Department of Theatre and Music, DU, ended on August 21 with the play *Chhyahen Kaya* at Natmandal, DU campus.

Dr. Nazrul Islam, Chairman of Bangladesh University Grants Commission, was the chief guest at the concluding programme. Dr. A.F.M. Yousuf Haider, Pro-Vice Chancellor of Dhaka University; Bhuiyan Shafiqul Islam, director general of Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy; eminent litterateur Selina Hossain and Professor Abdus Selim, Department of English, North South University were present as special guests at the event.

Noted educationist Professor Zillur Rahman Siddiqui presented the concluding speech. The event began with observing a one-minute silence in honour of Abdullah Al Mamun who passed away that day. The last day's programme was dedicated to the memory of dramatist-theoretician Selim Al Deen.

"The theatre and Music Department of the university has already managed to create a wave in the cultural arena of the country. This annual festival of the department exclusively organised by the students also contributes to theatre of the country. We are contemplating on

opening a faculty for performing arts now," said Dr. A.F.M. Yousuf Haider, welcoming the audience. Appreciating the efforts of the students, Bhuiyan Shafiqul Islam promised on behalf of Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy to provide all kinds of support to the department.

What the students are learning here is a preparation for their future life. Our theatre has a universal and timeless dimension. Through the activities of the department, the students can relate to global theatre, which includes European literature from classics to renaissance to the contemporary, and combine the values with our own," said Professor Zillur Rahman Siddiqui in his speech.

*Chhyahen Kaya*, a translation by Abdur Rashid of the play *Men without Shadows* by French philosopher and playwright Jean Paul Sartre was directed by Belayet Hossain, a fourth year student of the department. Characteristically typical of Sartre's writings, this play also reflects the essential absurdity of human life and the existential crisis of individuals.

The play began with Francois (Mirza Sakib), Lucie (Nusrat Sharmin), Canoris (Atikul Islam) and Henry (Atikur Rahman), members of a revolutionary group captured after a disastrous attempt to liberate a village. Their hopeless situation is troubled by the thought of approaching torture but what's more frightening is their sacrifice suddenly appearing meaningless to some of them. Entrance of a new

captive, Jean (Nasirul Islam), the leader of the group, however, provides inspiration to bear all the tortures for the sake of idealism.

The play gets a new dimension when the situation is seen through the perspectives of the military officials whose captives are the five. The actors did justice to their respective characters, especially Muntazir Karim in his role of a disturbed military official who cannot cope with the brutality he needs to execute and Atikur Rahman in the role of Henry. The director could have been more concise presenting the scenes, as they sometimes seemed unnecessarily lengthy. Atzal Kabir's set design was effective.

About the festival, Professor Israfil Shaheen, chairman of the department, said, "This year's festival is significant in the sense that for the first time, the students did everything on their own. They worked as independent, spontaneous individuals and presented their works through a creative process led by themselves -- from choosing the plays to casting. We also invited parents to see the presentation, aesthetics and the tremendous effort their sons and daughters gave to make the festival a success."

"As the art of theatre needs a direct interaction between the actors and the audience, this festival provides the students with an opportunity to win the hearts of the audience. I believe this type of formal education will help to widen the sphere of professional theatre," he added.