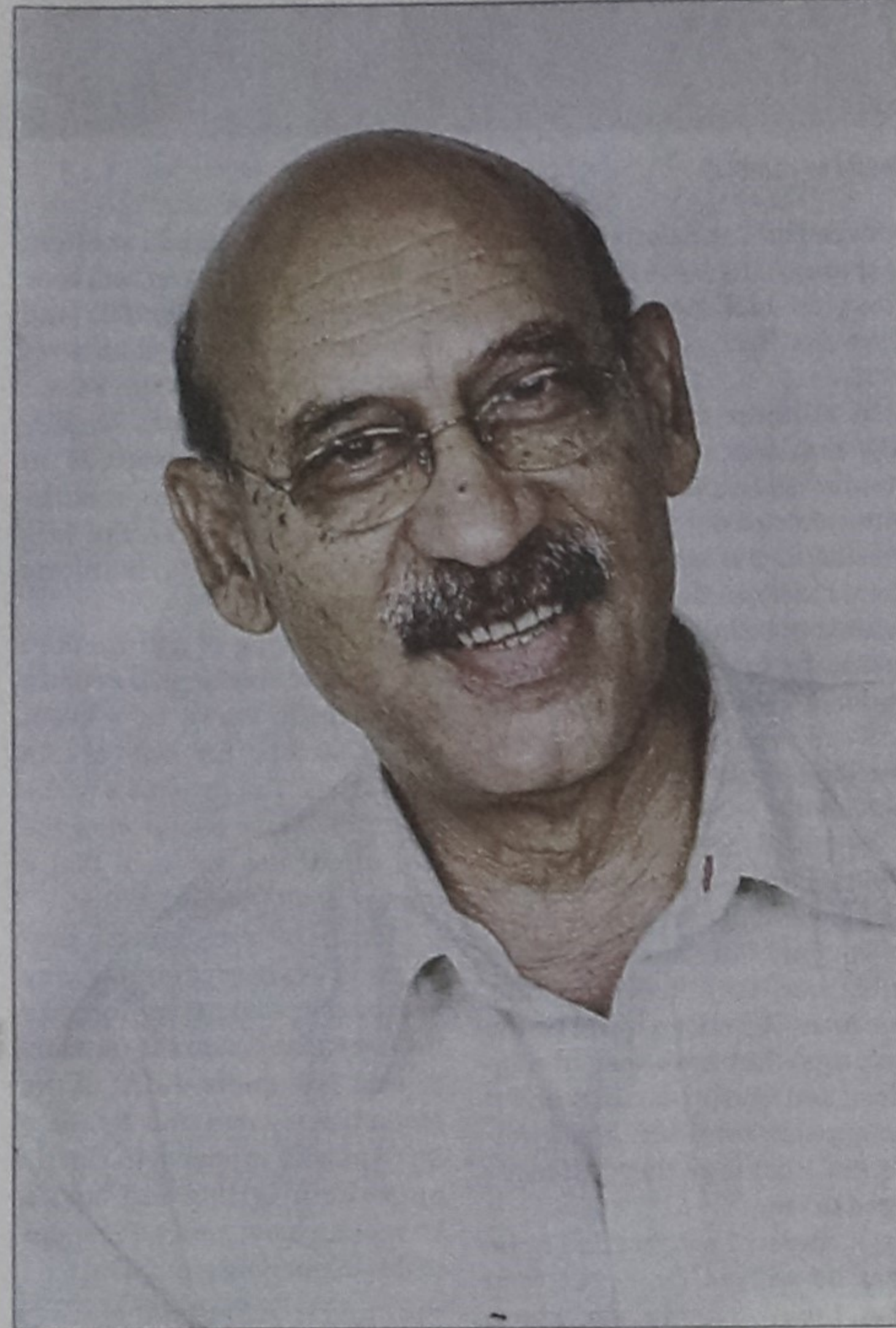


Taking on multiple roles

In conversation with actor-director Abul Hayat



NADIA SARWAT

Veteran television personality Abul Hayat needs no introduction. As a playwright, director and actor, his talents are acclaimed by both the audience and critics. Though he never wanted to confine himself to any particular kind of roles, the audience's acceptance of him as a father figure seems to consume his urge for diversity. Yet Abul Hayat sustains his versatility through his multidimensional involvement in the media. For a brief period, the audience missed him as an actor as he was busy with directing and writing plays. But the seasoned actor could not distance himself from acting for long and has again concentrated on acting. *The Daily Star* recently talked to the actor-director about his thoughts on the media and more.

"Directing is quite challenging and it demands hard work. One cannot give much time to anything else if he takes the job seriously. At one point, people started to ask me if I decided not to act anymore... I told myself, let's assure them I did not. Besides, I was unwell and couldn't work hard."

Abul Hayat is now busy shooting for the *Eid* special TV plays. About the plays he says, "As usual, directors work with a view to entertain the audience on *Eid*. Most of my roles in these plays are also entertaining. In the play *Aajke Robibar* directed by Ferdous

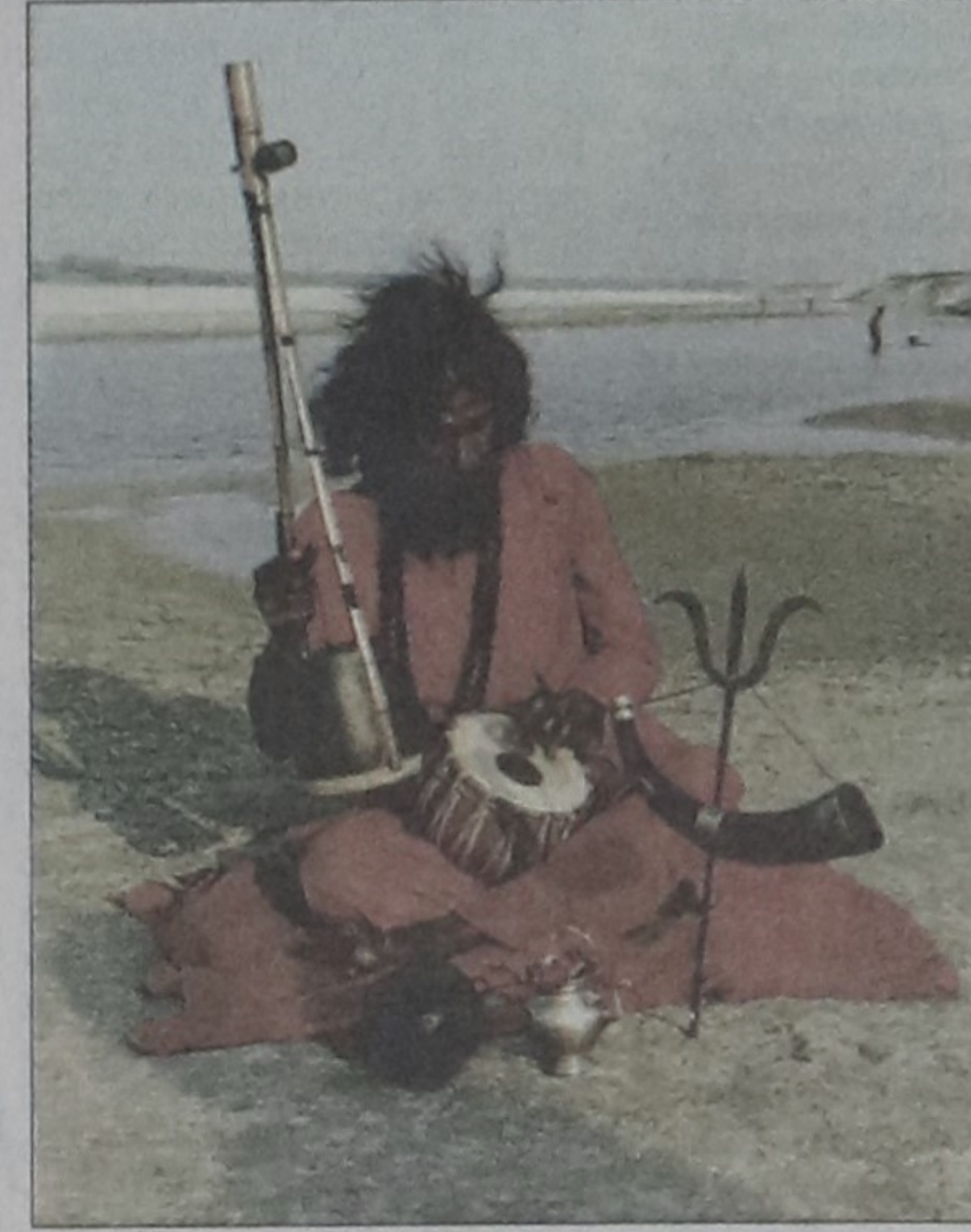
Hasan, I play an elderly *Dhakaiyya* man who escorts his daughter to college everyday. The character is quite interesting."

So many plays on different TV channels are aired these days. What does Hayat think of them? "I would say it is a positive sign. One may argue that when there was only BTV, we had more quality plays than at present. But in my opinion, people didn't miss any good play then, as there was only one TV channel. There were 'not so good' plays also, but these were accepted by the audience. Now with so many channels, many quality plays have been made. But the 'not up to the mark' plays have also increased in numbers, that's it," says the veteran actor-director.

Abul Hayat is impressed by the emergence of a group of young, talented and innovative directors working on experimental projects. "I think many of them have the potential to make it big in the media. Even the newcomers are doing well. And there are also those with theatrical background. There is a vacuum created by the passing away of a number of talented media personalities in the recent years. I hope the young directors are ready to fill the gap, if not now, may be after a few years," Hayat says.

Abul Hayat is set to direct a serial after *Eid* titled *Uttar Dakkhin*, based on his own story. The serial deals with the conflict and harmony between the old values with the new.

"Sattyer Gahiney" participating at Brazilian film festival



A scene from the documentary.

ERSHAD KAMOL

Ahmed Muztaba Zamal's documentary *Sattyer Gahiney* (Truth and Beyond) is participating at the 'Religions and Movies Festival' in Sao Paulo Brazil, which will run from September 23 to 28. Based on Zamal's concept, Saymon Zakaria did the research and script of the documentary.

Earlier, the documentary featuring mysticism in Bangladesh participated at Film and Art Festival Dwa Brzegi in Poland; 36th Festival of Nations in Ebensee, Austria; Festival Internazionale del Documentario Religioso in Florence, Italy; 11th Pusan Film Festival, South Korea; Brisbane International Film Festival; VII International Documentary Film Festival, Perm in Russia and South Asian International Film Festival in New York, US.

The documentary features the essence of any religion. In fact, religions are meant for the welfare of man. In the documentary, I've focused on the diverse mystic sects in Bangladesh and their way of worshipping. More-

over, comments from the mystic gurus and experts on mysticism have been included in the documentary," said Zamal.

Zamal further said, "The aim of the documentary is to present a realistic image of religions in Bangladesh, though there is a propaganda that Bangladesh is full of fundamentalists at present. However, the fact is that Islam was preached by the mystic Sufis in this part of the world, and not through any *jihād*. The simple ways of the Sufis won the hearts of the common people who later converted to Islam."

Besides the touching, subtle and humane nature of conventional Islam (Islam of Shari'at) or classical Islam, the practice of other sects of Islam through songs and other non-fundamental popular way have also been addressed in the documentary, informed Zamal.

The documentary was filmed at districts where the mystic sects live such as Kushtia, Chittagong, Sylhet, Manikganj and Tangail.

'Karam Puja' celebrated in Thakurgaon

KONGKON KARMAKER, Dinaipur

The two-daylong Karam Puja, a key festival of indigenous people of northern districts, was celebrated in Thakurgaon with songs and dances and the offering of food and songs to their deity.

To celebrate the festival, the indigenous men and women observed a dawn to dusk fast on the first day of the Puja and in the evening they prepared special dishes at their home for the visitors and kin and served them after offering the food to their deities.

The Karam Puja began with a whole day of fasting by four indigenous girls. Later they fetched branches of the Pakur tree from Gabindanagar and sang and danced to the beats of drums.

They then built an altar and planted the branches of the Pakur tree while lighting incense. In the course of the plantation, the young male and female indigenous people danced around the altar.

The indigenous priest began the Puja by reciting verse explaining the significance of the festival. According to indigenous researchers, the Karam festival is basically organised by the indigenous people expressing their affinity for nature.

The four girls ended their fast by offering food to each other as the priest ended his sacred recitation and served the food among relatives and visitors.

The festival ended on the second day with solemnity under the Pakur tree by the Tanger River.



Celebrating the Karam Puja.

PHOTO STAR

Actor Alec Baldwin promotes memoir

AP, New York

Alec Baldwin, at a bookstore event he didn't want to attend, gave a fired up talk Tuesday night about a book he says he didn't want to write.

A standing room only crowd of more than 100, plus about 20 protesters outside, came to a Barnes & Noble in Manhattan, where the award-winning actor discussed "A Promise to Ourselves," a new memoir about his devastating divorce and child custody battle.

"I wish I weren't here. I wish I weren't doing this," Baldwin, 50, said at the beginning of a 20-minute discourse on family law and feminism, with references to civil rights, the Wall Street crisis, Beverly Hills lawyers and the notorious voicemail he left in 2007 with his then-11-year-old daughter, Ireland.

Wearing a dark blue blazer, a light blue shirt and no tie, his hair greyer and spikier than it usually appears in public, Baldwin spoke emotionally, compulsively, promising "This is the last thing I'll say" often enough that he finally joked, "I know, I said this before."

His book tells of his split with actress Kim Basinger, and his estrangement from their daughter, brought about, he says, by a court system that effectively drains both soul and pocketbook.

Baldwin's talk was held near the restaurant from which, Baldwin writes in his book, he slipped away last year during dinner and



phoned his daughter. Failing, as he had for days, to reach her, Baldwin "snapped" and exploded, calling Ireland a "rude, thoughtless little pig." After the tape was leaked to the media, his private tantrum turned into a public fiasco that left Baldwin feeling suicidal for weeks.

His remorse remained Tuesday night, and so did his anger. "Who gained from that?" he asked of the tape's public airing. The entire incident, he said, was designed to "humiliate people," to embarrass and to taunt.

Baldwin took no questions, but he did respond to members of the Voices of Women

Organising Project who marched and chanted on the Broadway corner in front of the store. They were opposing Baldwin's defence of Parental Alienation Syndrome (PAS), a controversial theory about how one parent, often the father, is effectively demonised by the other parent, with the child's help.

"It's junk science, and has not been validated or supported," said Kalima DeSuzo, lead organiser of the women's group, which advocates for victims of domestic violence.

Inside, Baldwin acknowledged the protesters, agreed with most of their arguments, but said they failed to explain "how they would like to stop women who falsely accuse men." He then offered a brief history of the feminist movement, saying nothing would have been achieved without "the support of men, open-minded men," and that their help was needed now.

Baldwin, who on Sunday won a best supporting actor Emmy for "30 Rock," writes in his book of meeting Basinger in 1990 and being impressed by her determination to succeed on work and talent alone. "It was this quality, more than any other, that most attracted me to her," he recalls.

They were married in 1993, but their relationship never recovered from Basinger's own courtroom horror -- a breach of contract lawsuit after she left the production of "Boxing Helena," that shattered her financially and emotionally. Ireland was born in 1996 but the couple divorced in 2001.

Disruption in theatre space addressed with improvisation



Members of Prachyanat during the performance.

PHOTO: AMIRUL RAJIV

CULTURAL CORRESPONDENT

Members of theatre troupe Prachyanat during an improvised performance at the Coffee House premises of Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy (BSA) on September 24. The performance was a part of an initiative to address the inconsistencies and disruption that have become prevalent adjoining the area of theatre performances at the BSA over the years.

A number of theatre activists took the initiative demanding a better infrastructure at BSA. Through the performance they presented their demands to the concerned authorities. The disruptions are created by the outsiders at the Chinese restaurant and Coffee House premises of the academy and chaotic individuals during different festivals and theatre programmes. The organisers informed that the performance would be held fortnightly throughout next several months, where a number of theatre troupes would participate.

EID SPECIAL

"Hello, Hridita Achhey?" on ATN Bangla

CULTURAL CORRESPONDENT

Eid-special TV play *Hello, Hridita Achhey?* will be aired on the day before the Eid on ATN Bangla at 11:30 pm. Written by Sumonto Aslam, the play is directed by Taher Shipon.

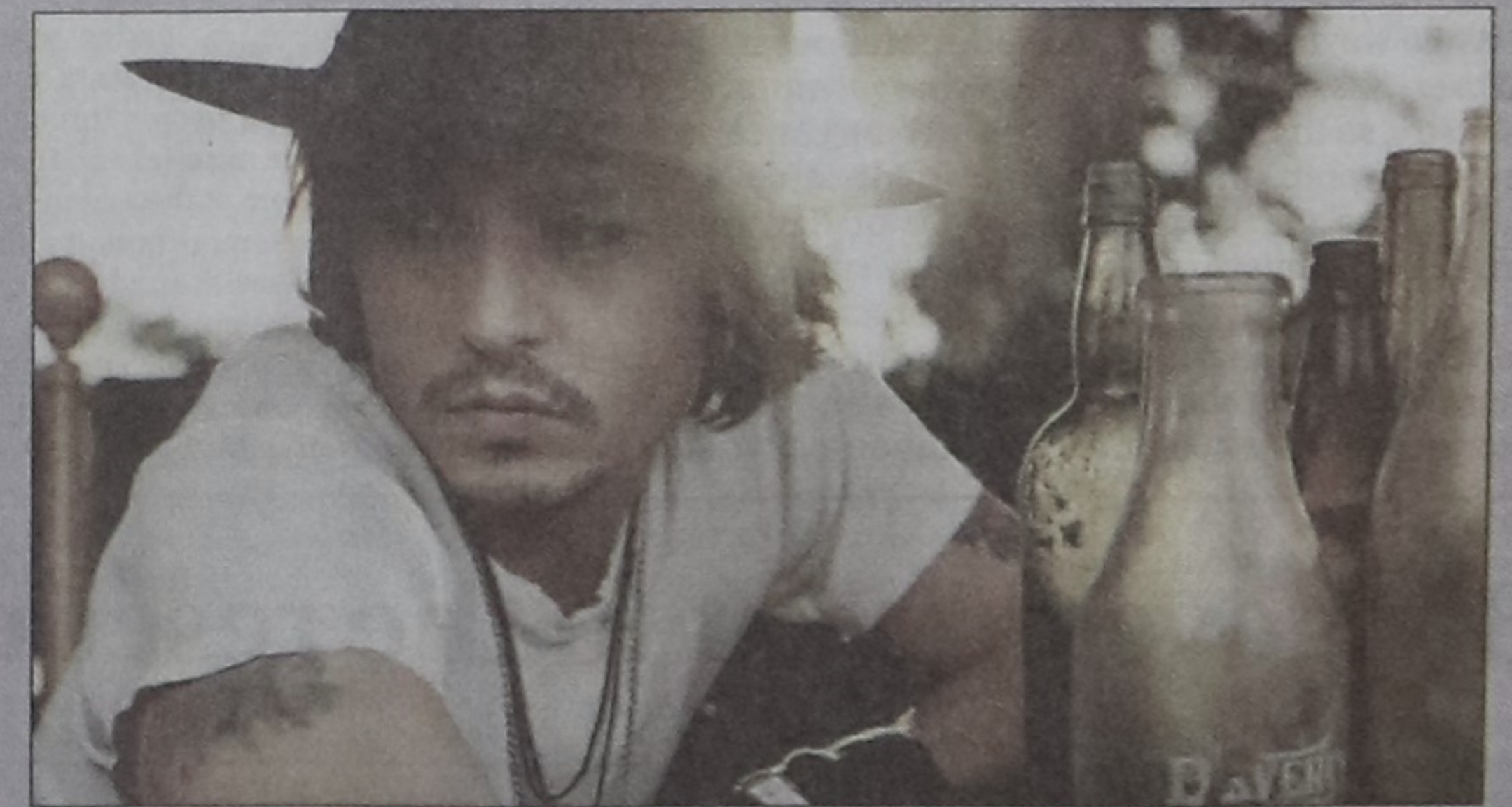
The story revolves around a man who has come to the city to see the planetarium. Incidentally, he finds a piece of paper with the name Hridita and a phone number. The number is missing the last digit as the paper is torn. But the young man, consulting with his best friend, takes a vow to find Hridita and starts making phone calls.

The cast includes Anisur Rahman Milon, Shatabdi Wadud, Bijori Barakatullah, Dr. Ejaz and Tania.



Bijori Barakatullah in the play.

Johnny Depp to star in "Lone Ranger," "Alice in Wonderland"



Johnny Depp is becoming the new face of Walt Disney Studios. The actor will preside over the manic tea party in Tim Burton's "Alice in Wonderland" as the Mad Hatter and will play Tonto in "The Lone Ranger," whose latest screen incarnation is being produced by Jerry Bruckheimer.

Disney formally announced the casting Wednesday at a studio presentation. It also said it is officially in development on a fourth instalment of "Pirates of the Caribbean," which would see Depp reprise his popular role of Captain Jack.

On the "Alice" front, Depp and Burton -- who first worked together in 1990's "Edward Scissorhands" and most recently collaborated on "Sweeney Todd" -- have formed one of the longest-running director-actor partnerships in modern Hollywood. When Burton committed to filming a new live-action/CG-animated version of "Alice," Depp was touted as the most likely candidate to play the Mad Hatter -- after all, having worked with Burton on "Charlie and the Chocolate Factory,"

he's practiced in wearing a top hat.

Mia Wasikowska, the young Australian actress who appeared in HBO's "In Treatment," has the film's title role.

Matt Lucas, who stars in the sketch comedy series "Little Britain USA," is set to play the dual roles of Tweedledum and Tweedledee.

"Ranger," meanwhile, puts Depp back in business with Bruckheimer, who produced the "Pirates" movies. Tonto is the Native American colleague of cowboy hero the Lone Ranger. The casting could stir up controversy with Native American groups, who might accuse the studio of putting a white actor in the role. One factor that could counter such an argument is Depp's mixed ancestry, which includes German, Irish, and Cherokee.

"Ranger" is being written by "Pirates" scribes Ted Elliott and Terry Rossio and has no director at this time.

Source: Internet