

WHAT'S ON THIS WEEK

Art & Photography Exhibition

on Bangladesh Street Culture
 Artists: Rokya, Kulu, Smita, Ujjwala and Anil
 Date: November 6-23
 Time: 7pm
 Venue: Bay's Galleria, 5th floor, 57, Gulshan Avenue



Dance Drama

Hey Ananta Punya
 Organiser: Shadhona
 Venue: National Music and Dance Centre, BSA
 Date: November 9
 Time: 6:30pm



13th Asian Art Biennale '08

Organiser: Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy
 Venue: Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy, Osmani Memorial Hall and National Museum
 Date: October 21-November 19
 Time: 11am-7pm (Fridays 3pm-8pm)



Dhaka Nritya Utsab

Organiser: Bangladesh Nrityashilpi Shangsha
 Venue: National Music and Dance Centre, BSA
 Date: November 7-9
 Time: 6:30pm onwards everyday



Manipuri Theatre celebrates 12th anniversary

Two-day festival in Dhaka begins today



A traditional "Natpala" performance.

JAMIL MAHMUD

Manipuri Theatre, a Maulavibazar-based indigenous troupe, celebrates its 12th anniversary this year. To mark this occasion, the troupe has arranged a two-day theatre festival, which begins today at the Experimental Theatre Hall, Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy. The programme will showcase two productions of the troupe -- "Shree Krishna Kirtan" and "Ingaal Andhar Pala" -- along with a performance of a traditional Manipuri art form "Natpala."

"Shree Krishna Kirtan" and "Natpala" will be staged today and "Ingaal Andhar Pala" will be staged tomorrow. "Shree Krishna Kirtan" is an adaptation of a medieval piece written by Baru Chandidas. "Ingaal Andhar Pala" has been written by Shubhashish Shameer. Both plays are directed by Shameer. "Natpala" -- a traditional Manipuri performing art -- depicts the socio-cultural aspects of Manipuri life through dance and music.

The inaugural ceremony takes place at 6 pm today. Noted theatre personality M. Hamid, chairman of Bangladesh Group Theatre Federation, is

expected to attend as chief guest at the inaugural programme. Rasheda K. Chowdhury, adviser to the Ministry of Cultural Affairs, will be the chief guest at tomorrow's programme.

Manipuri Theatre, which received the "Arzu Smriti Natya Padak" this year as the best troupe in the country, will honour four noted personalities on the occasion. The personalities are -- Thabee Devi, one of the most refined artistes of Manipuri 'raash leela'; Krishnakumari Sinha, 'sutrardhar' and director of 'raash leela'; noted Manipuri danseuse and teacher Tamanna Rahman and renowned theatre personality Ramendu Majumder, who is also the president of International Theatre Institute (ITI).

Apart from staging the plays and 'pala', exhibitions of traditional Manipuri items like handicrafts, clothes and a book fair are also part of the festival.

Manipuri Theatre started its journey on September 26, 1996 at Kamalganj, Maulavibazar through a production, "Megh Brishti Roud" -- highlights the social inconsistencies. Since then the troupe has staged over 200 shows of its 25 productions. In 2001, the troupe arranged the first Manipuri Theatre Festival.

Every artist should have a personal language

— Monirul Islam

In conversation

TAKIR HOSSAIN

Artist Monirul Islam's works speak of humanity -- bliss and woes, fond memories and more. "After so many years in the world of art, I now realise that artists are not products of any institution or school, they are born this way. And creativity is distilled in one's innermost being, in one's very personal world. You cannot teach someone to be an artist or a poet. It's an inherent trait/talent. Nature works in mysterious way," says the veteran artist.

Monir's observations on contemporary trends: "We are actually going through a time of crises economically, socially and politically. Every hundred years or so crises occur for various reasons. These reasons cannot be definitely pinned down. European artists right now, for instance, are mostly running short of imagination or ideas. So they are travelling the world in search of fresh themes. I think this is possible since art is not limited to any distinct region or country. I think every artist should have a personal language which

makes him or her unique."

He continued, "When I'm working, I like to meander about and evaluate the progress. My work is not concluded, until I'm satisfied. I think an artist can be a critical observer of his/her works. If the work satiates his/her creative urges, then the endeavour is a success. I always try to add new dimensions and novel themes in my works. Past, present and future -- the three stages of time may carry meaningful situations, adding to the sum of our knowledge and experience. We all are shaped and blessed by time."

Before initiating a new artwork, Monir contemplates on it in terms of composition and colour. "Every work has its balance. So, I try to set the balance right first. And this you cannot do, at least I can't, without first drawing out the composition. Then you have to think about space, lines and colours. It's like a structural allegory that enrolls my expectations."

He added, "Sometimes I don't seem to understand what I'm doing. It's very difficult for an artist to explain his works to others. If he could do so, he would be an orator or a writer

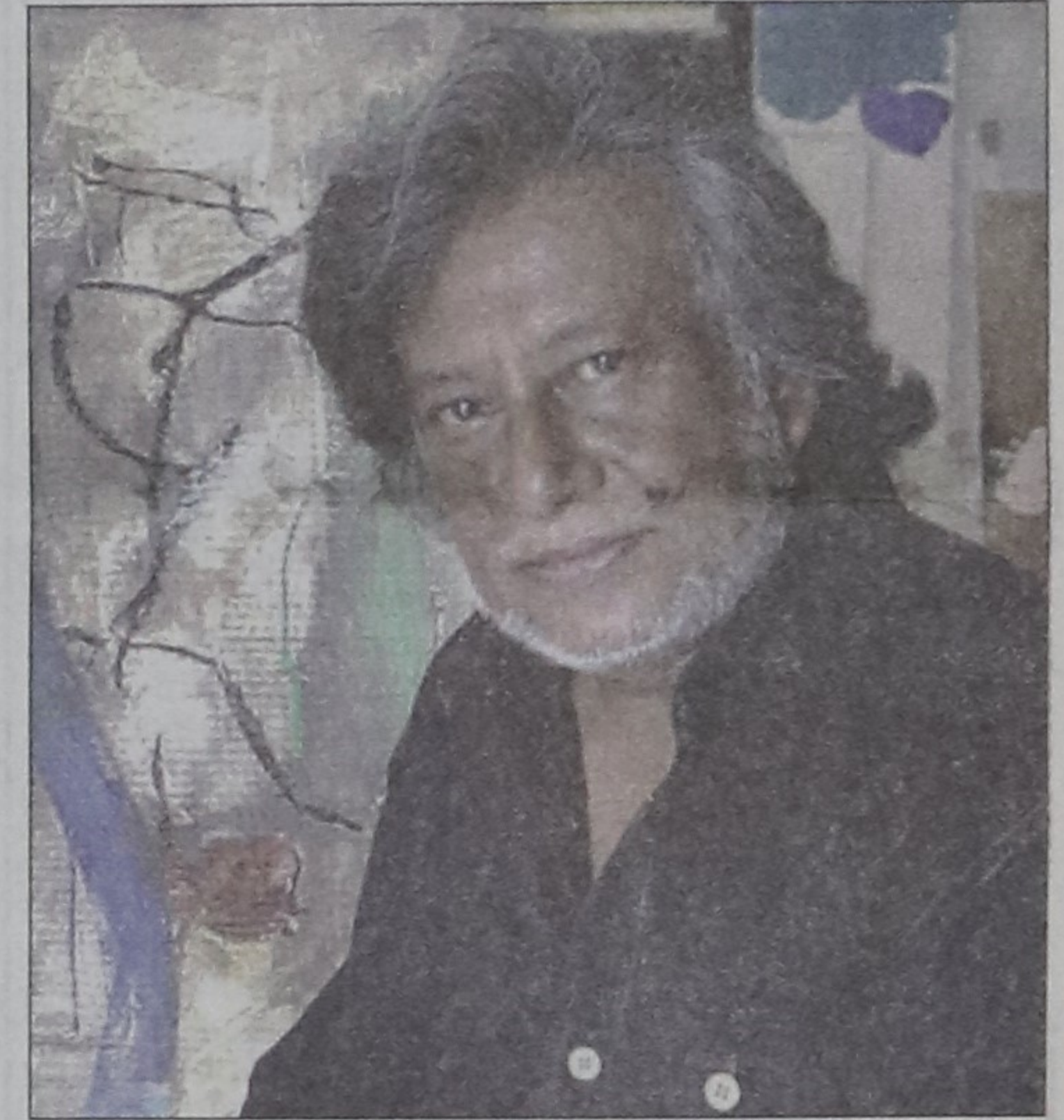
or a critic. Besides, I do not find it necessary at all. When an art lover enjoys an artwork, his/her subconscious mind finds an explanation of the piece. It's not necessary for an artist to explain or define his/her work. When we discover a piece of sculpture, 3000 years old, do we look around for the sculptor to explain his/her work?"

Asked which artists' works made profound impact on him, Monir said that as a student he always admired Zainul Abedin's sketches, Quamrul Hassan drawings and Mostafa Monwar's works. He also admires works of John Miro, Mattise, Rembrandt and Velasquez.

Monirul Islam may be regarded by art critics and experts as having been most influential in the '60s, but in effect he has continued to exercise a profound sway not only over art in this region but also the contemporary global scene in general. Every year Monirul Islam gets invitations to lecture at many renowned universities, including Madrid University of Fine Arts and Fonde Todes, which is the birthplace of the famous Spanish artist Francisco Goya. The artist is now in Dhaka for his upcoming exposition at Bengal Gallery.



"Blue Sonata" by the artist.



Monirul Islam

PHOTO COURTESY: NASIR ALI MAMUN

Highest civilian honour for Pandit Bhimsen Joshi

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA, New Delhi

Legendary Hindustani classical vocalist Pandit Bhimsen Joshi has been selected for India's highest civilian award -- the "Bharat Ratna."

The decision to honour the 86-year-old doyen of 'Kirana gharana' was announced by the office of President Pratibha Patil late last Tuesday night, a press communiqué said.

Credited with ushering in a renaissance of Indian classical music, Pandit Joshi, who left his home in Gadag district of Karnataka state at the age of 11 in search of a guru, is celebrated for 'khyal' form of singing and also for his 'bhajans.'

Gifted with a mesmerising voice, the vocalist through his amazing grip over various 'gayaki' (styles) created a unique blend adding in the process his own improvisations.

Pandit Joshi found his teacher in Ustad Hafiz Ali Khan of Gwalior and later trained under Sawai Gandharva (Pandit Rambhan Kundgolkar) in 1936

where he learnt the basics of performing 'khyal.'

A recipient of several national awards including "Padma Vibhushan" and "Sangeet Natak Academy," Pandit Joshi is credited with creating new ragas like "kalashri" and "lalit bhatiyar."

His first live performance was at the age of 19 and his first album containing devotional songs in his mother tongue Kannada and Hindi was released a year later.

The "Bharat Ratna" has not been awarded to anyone since 2001 when it was given jointly to playback singer Lata Mangeshkar and shehnai maestro Ustad Bismillah Khan.

Among other artistes, recipients of the highest civilian award are filmmaker Satyajit Ray, sitarist Pandit Ravi Shankar and vocalist M.S. Subbulakshmi.

Responding to his selection for "Bharat Ratna," Pandit Joshi, settled in Pune for more than half a century, said he was 'glad and he accepts this honour on behalf of all Hindustani vocalists down the centuries who have dedicated their lives to music.'



Pandit Bhimsen Joshi

Rapper Will.i.am releasing Obama victory song



Rap star Will.i.am is releasing a new song and video to mark Barack Obama's win in the US presidential election.

The musician spent election night editing the final version of "It's A New Day," which made its internet debut on Wednesday.

The Black Eyed Peas singer said the song was a tribute to the American people and their part in events.

Will.i.am scored a viral hit with "Yes We Can" earlier this year, in support of Obama's White House bid.

It set an Obama speech to the rapper's music and racked up millions of hits in February.

The song also featured vocal contributions from stars including actress Scarlett Johansson.

jazz legend Herbie Hancock and Pussycat Dolls frontwoman Nicole Scherzinger.

The new song and video is debuting on the Dipdive website.

Will.i.am also asked for celebrity video contributions for the project.

He said: "The whole thing is really for people to leave testimonials...to create a page and leave testimonials on how they feel about this American accomplishment."

The musician, who scored a top ten hit with Girls Aloud star Cheryl Cole in April, spent part of election night in Chicago, where Obama delivered his victory address.

Source: BBC

"Jurassic Park" author Michael Crichton passes away

Michael Crichton, the million-selling author who made scientific research terrifying and irresistible in such thrillers as "Jurassic Park," "Timeline" and "The Andromeda Strain," has died of cancer, his family said. Crichton died last Tuesday in Los Angeles at age 66 after privately battling cancer.

Through his books, Michael Crichton served as an inspiration to students of all ages, challenged scientists in many fields, and illuminated the mysteries of the world in a way we could all understand," his family said in a statement.

"While the world knew him as a great storyteller that challenged our preconceived notions about the world around us -- and entertained us all while doing so -- his wife Sherri, daughter Taylor, family and friends knew Michael Crichton as a devoted husband, loving father and generous friend who inspired each of us to strive to see the wonders of our world through new eyes."

He was an experimenter and populariser known for his stories of disaster and systematic breakdown, such as the rampant microbe of "The Andromeda Strain" or the dinosaurs running madly in "Jurassic Park." Many of his books became major Hollywood movies, including "Jurassic Park," "Rising Sun" and "Disclosure." Crichton himself directed and wrote "The Great Train Robbery" and co-wrote the script for the blockbuster "Twister."

In 1994, he created the award-winning TV hospital series "ER." He's even had a dinosaur named for him, Crichton's ankylosaur.

"Michael's talent out-scaled even his own dinosaurs of 'Jurassic Park,'" said "Jurassic Park" director Steven Spielberg, a friend of Crichton's for 40 years. "He was the greatest at blending science with big theatrical concepts, which is what gave credibility to dinosaurs again walking the Earth... Michael was a gentle soul who reserved his flamboyant side for his novels. There is no one in the wings that will ever take his place."

In recent years, he was the rare novelist granted a White House meeting with President Bush, perhaps because of his scepticism about global warming, which Crichton addressed in the 2004 novel, "State of Fear." Crichton's views were strongly condemned by environmentalists, who alleged that the author was hurting efforts to pass legislation to reduce emissions of carbon dioxide.

If not a literary giant, he was a physical one, standing 6 feet and 9 inches, and ready for battle with the press. In a 2004 interview with The Associ-

ated Press, Crichton came with a tape recorder, textbooks and a pile of graphs and charts as he defended "State of Fear" and his take on global warming.

"I have a lot of trouble with things that don't seem true to me," Crichton said at the time, gesturing to his graphs. "I'm very uncomfortable just accepting. There's something in me that wants to pound the table and say, 'That's not true.'"

He spoke to few scientists about his questions,



Michael Crichton

convinced that he could interpret the data himself. "If we put everything in the hands of experts and if we say that as intelligent outsiders, we are not qualified to look over the shoulder of anybody, then we're in some kind of really weird world," he said.

A new novel by Crichton had been tentatively scheduled to come next month, but publisher HarperCollins said the book was postponed indefinitely because of his illness.

His books seemed designed to provoke debate, whether the theories of quantum physics in "Timeline," the reverse sexual discrimination of "Disclosure" or the spectre of Japanese eminence in "Rising Sun."

Crichton had a rigid work schedule: rising before dawn and writing from about 6 a.m. to around 3 p.m., breaking only for lunch. He enjoyed being one of the few novelists recognized in public, but he also felt limited by fame.

Crichton was married five times and had one child. A private funeral is planned.

Source: The Associated Press