

WHAT'S ON THIS WEEK

Solo Painting Exhibition

Artist: Javed Jalil
Venue: Exhibition Hall, Russian Centre of Science and Culture, H 510, Rd 7, Dhanmondi
Date: November 16-23
Time: 11am-7pm



Solo Painting Exhibition

Title: Pata-Chitra
Artist: Raghunath Chakroborty
Venue: Dnk Gallery, H 58, Rd 15A (New), Dhanmondi
Date: November 14-21
Time: 11am-8pm



Graphical Art Exhibition

Title: cOgiO eRGo SuM
Artist: Sunnyur Rahman
Venue: Dnk Gallery, H 58, Rd 15A (new), Dhanmondi
Date: November 18-22
Time: 3pm-8pm



Book Launch

Title: Shaheed Ashfaq-us-Samad, Beer Uttam
Organiser: Shudhui Muktiuddho
Venue: Shawkat Osman Auditorium, Central Public Library
Date: November 20
Time: 4pm



All things old and wonderful



PHOTO: IFTKHARUL HAQUE

Life in Shakhari Bazar (from top): a crumbling ornate facade, renovation and upkeep are the major issues; an artisan making 'shankha'.

NIVEDITA RAITZ VON FRENTZ

Freshly baked mounds of 'bakarkhani' and little potato 'shingara' can be seen at every street corner. There was a palpable festive feeling in the air for it was just a few days before Kali puja. Kali is the fiery reigning goddess of Shakhari Bazar. Idols abound in different stages of completion, their straw innards covered and moulded with clay by artisan families; her tongue sticking out, on realising she has trodden on her destroyer god consort, Shiva.

Following the collapse of a house in Shakhari Bazar in 2004, a further 90 structures in a similar state of ruin were earmarked for demolition. For four long years, the Urban Studies Group (USG) has battled to preserve some of the period buildings here, and in neighbouring Kotwali Road and Tanti Bazar. The USG, fuelled by the commitment of architect couple Homaira Zaman and Taimur Islam, has meticulously documented the condition of the buildings, and are in the process of applying for a grant, in an effort to commence renovations. They also organise weekend walks through the winding lanes, trying to raise awareness for the crumbling remnants that are part of this city's heritage. Despite their efforts thus far, Shakhari Bazar has not been elevated to the status of a heritage site.

Dhaka's first urban re-development project can be traced back to the early 1900s, under the auspices of British urban planner, Patrick Geddes. Back then, Shakhari Bazar was twice its present size; two to three hundred buildings still stand, 25 percent of which have ground floors dating back to the late Mughal period. Despite major congestion, the long corridors of the narrow shops/houses are clearly visible, but one must crane the neck to see what survives of the ornamental facades of the older buildings. It is only due to Taimur and Homaira's special bond with the residents, that the fascinating inner world of their multiple courtyards was accessible, privy to 15 families going about their daily routines.

Shakhari Bazar is Dhaka's oldest neighbourhood (mohalla), where descendants of the original Hindu community are still around today, some carrying on the tradi-



PHOTO: JOYBRATA SARKER



PHOTO: URMEE CHOWHURY

tional craft of their forefathers. Unlike Tanti Bazar and Lakshmi Bazar, property ownership has been retained with the Hindu families. At one end is the country's first private school, Pogob, founded in 1848 by the Armenian merchant J.G. Nicholas Pogose. The old school rooms continue to be used; one even sports a fire place and boarded-up French windows. Sadly, the library is in a sorry state, restoration funds not stretching so far.

Simply buzzing with activity, from shops making traditional spice grinding stones, to 'shankha' shops -- selling conch shell bangles from which the street derives its name -- and Dhaka's oldest musical instrument shop, Jain & Co. which has been in the Mondol family for generations. The surnames Sur, Nag, Nandi, Sen and Dhar keep cropping up in the 'shankha' business. Men sit hunched in corners breaking conch shells; the powder will be used in the different stages of bangle making. Very little persuasion was required for proprietor Dakshineswar Nag to provide an impromptu demonstration on a rather large conch shell. At Amiya Kumar Sur's shop, a bangle-fitting session was in progress. Some 'shankha' makers have branched out into paper craft, selling kites which fly out of the shops during the 'Sankranti' festival.

Turning the corner into Kotwali Road, Taimur and Homaira keenly watch number 27/1, the building with the red chest ('lal shindook'). Half the building has already been demolished; the other half is on a heritage list for preservation, so may be saved once it's been officially designated as such. Follow the road into Tanti Bazar, where a group of 14 buildings is being touted for conservation on the left hand side of Radhika Mohan Das Lane. The jewel in Tanti Bazar's crown is the 19th century Radha Ballav temple, where the original street view must have been stunning; the temple keeper's reduced circumstances have forced her to take in tenants into an eyecore of a room smack in front of the temple steps.

Disappointment is no stranger to Taimur and Homaira, who collected funds to try to save another temple, only to see it demolished before their eyes. It is an uphill struggle, one the couple seems to bear with a smile. Somehow, a single walk leaves one unsatisfied, and the temptation to return to these old Dhaka lanes lingers on.

The writer is a freelance contributor.

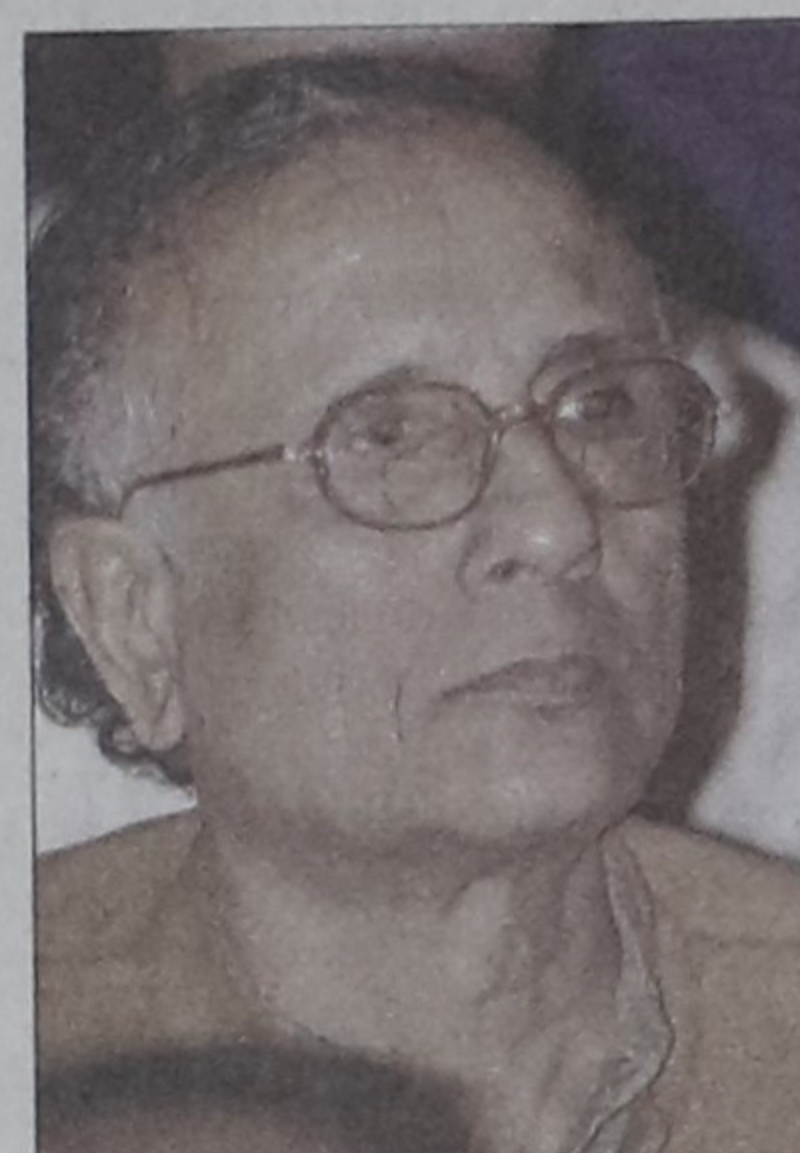
A celebration for Ramendu Majumdar

CULTURAL CORRESPONDENT

Production house Expressions Ltd. has arranged a cultural programme this evening at 7:30 pm at Saffron Restaurant in Gulshan. The event is a celebration of Ramendu Majumdar being elected the president of ITI. Ramendu Majumdar is also the managing director of Expressions.

Majumdar is the second Asian to be elected to this coveted position since ITI's establishment in 1948 as an initiative of UNESCO.

Majumdar was elected President at the 32nd world congress of ITI held on September 25, 2008 in Madrid, Spain. He will serve as the President of ITI for the next two years. He is also the president of the Bangladesh Chapter of International Theatre Institute.



2nd Int'l Children's Film Festival to be held in January

Children's Film Society Bangladesh will arrange the "2nd International Children's Film Festival" next year, says a press release. For this purpose, the organisation has asked Bangladeshi directors to submit their films.

Documentaries, full-length feature films, short films and animation featuring children's issues should be submitted by December 15, 2008.

A jury board will select several films from the entries, which would be screened at the festival. Films have to be submitted at Alamgir Kabir Film Centre, Science Laboratory Road, Dhaka.

The 2nd International Children's Film Festival would be held from January 24 to 30 next year.

McCartney hints at "mythical" Beatles track release

REUTERS, London

An unreleased, experimental track by British band The Beatles could be made public 41 years after it was recorded at London's Abbey Road studios, ex-member Paul McCartney has said.

McCartney, one of two surviving members of arguably the most successful pop band in history, told BBC Radio that "Carnival of Light" was The Beatles at their most free, "going off piste."

"I said it would be great to put this on because it would show we were working

with really avant-garde stuff," McCartney told Radio 4's Front Row culture show in an interview.

He confirmed that he had a master tape of the track, which many Beatles fans assumed until now was a piece of musical myth, and added: "The time has come for it to get its moment."

The 14-minute track was made for an electronic music festival, the only occasion the music was played in public.

"I said all I want you to do is just wander around all the stuff, bang it, shout, play it, it doesn't need to be a

any sense," McCartney told the programme.

"Hit a drum then wander on to the piano, hit a few notes, just wander around. So that's what we did and then put a bit of an echo on it. It's very free."

In order for "Carnival of Light" to be released, McCartney would have to get the agreement of Ringo Starr and the estates of John Lennon and George Harrison. According to the BBC, McCartney had wanted to include the track on The Beatles' Anthology compilations in the mid-1990s, but the rest of the band vetoed the idea.

Mela on Nat'l Agriculture Day in Chapainawabganj



PHOTO: STAR

A 'gombhira' performance at the 'mela'. RABIUL HASAN, Chapainawabganj

A daylong 'mela' was held in Chapainawabganj amidst much festivity last Saturday. Different species of trees were on display at stalls set up by different government, private horticulture

centres and NGO's at the Chapainawabganj Government College premises.

District administration and Department of Agriculture Extension jointly organised the fair that also included discussion, cultural programme and a procession to mark the National Agriculture Day.

Chapainawabganj Deputy Commissioner, Sirajul Haque Khan, attended the inaugural ceremony as chief guest. Shahjahan Ali, a farmer, chaired the event. Deputy Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Farhad Hossain; Mayor of Chapainawabganj Municipality, Aaur Rahman and Abdul Quddus, deputy director of AED spoke on the occasion. Among others, ADC Sultan Md. Abdul Hamid and ASP Mizanur Rahman were present at the discussion.

After the discussion, a culture programme featuring folk songs -- 'gombhira' and 'kobigaan' -- was held. 'Ha-do-do', a traditional rural spore, was an added attraction at the fair. The fair and cultural programme, in particular, live performance of 'gombhira' songs -- a local tradition -- drew a huge crowd. Many hoped that such fairs would become a regular feature.

Earlier, a procession was brought out from the DC office premises with pushcarts and local musical instruments.

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