

WHAT'S ON THIS WEEK

Genocide Convention, Cultural Programme
 Organiser: Liberation War Museum
 Venue: Liberation War Museum, Segunbagicha
 Date: December 13
 Time: 4pm



Discussion, Cultural Show

Organiser: Liberation War Museum
 Venue: Liberation War Museum, Segunbagicha
 Date: December 14
 Time: 4pm



Recitation, Gono Sangeet

Organiser: Liberation War Museum
 Venue: Liberation War Museum, Segunbagicha
 Date: December 15
 Time: 4pm



Recitation and Dance

Organiser: Liberation War Museum
 Venue: Liberation War Museum, Segunbagicha
 Date: December 16
 Time: 10am



Wanna festival: Going back to the roots



Garo artistes play their traditional instruments at the 'Wanna' festival.

AMINUL ISLAM, Mymensingh

"Every year we eagerly await this festival called 'Wanna' which is a source of spiritual and mental rejuvenation," said Sister Minita of Jhaljhala Mission in Haluaghat Upazila of the district. The sixth 'Wanna' celebration was observed on December 4 and 5 with a thanksgiving to the Almighty.

"God helps us in our survival and 'Wanna' gives us the opportunity to connect with people of different castes, creeds and religions," Sister Minita told this correspondent as she spoke on the conclusion of the two-day 'Wanna' celebration at Askipara village in Haluaghat.

The Garos have been observing this festival for centuries. Now it has become a symbol of the cultural identity of the indigenous Garo people," said Mitali Chisim.

The celebrations revolved around rituals,

dances and the display of the traditional instruments and crafts made and used by the Garos. Marking the occasion, Askipara, a village at the lap of the Garo Hills, took on a festive look. The whole area reverberated with activity as hundreds of Garos participated in the cultural programme. Indigenous cultural groups from other districts also took part in the festivities.

The sixth 'Wanna' festival began with the offering of vegetables and fruits to the Divine for a better future. Jairam Drong, the 'Nakma' (Garo traditional priest) inaugurated the festival and offered 'Chu,' a home-brewed drink, to the assembled people. A huge audience, including high profile foreign dignitaries, enjoyed the vibrant festival. Earlier the guests were received in a traditional manner.

The concluding day was marked by a dazzling display of dances and unique songs performed by 19 cultural groups from in and outside the district.

"Every dance sequence has a different theme," said Tuly Mrong, a cultural organiser. The audience was treated to a chain description of different activities of Garo people round the year. The clearing of jungles to prepare the land for cultivation was the inaugural theme of the dance sequence. Later the theme emphasised the need to collect saplings and plant them, and drive away unwanted birds and insects to save their crops, harvesting, catching fish in groups and the selection of life partners -- the most amusing sequence.

"It was our tradition to choose life partners through 'Wanna' in the past but this tradition has disappeared," said Shimul Rangsha, a performer. "Through 'Wanna' we go back to our roots and such celebrations should gather momentum," asserted Shimul. "This year's Wanna was vibrant and it enables the younger generation to revive their ancestral cultural heritage," said Moitree Snal, another cultural organiser and performer.



PHOTO: STAR

Russian ballet at its best

KAVITA CHARANJI, New Delhi

A cultural feast awaited the audience in the packed hall of Siri Fort auditorium, New Delhi. From the word go, a superb laser display captured the show with lights flashing 2008 and a bird that seemed to fly over the heads of the audience. In the background were two screens depicting the best architecture of Russia and India the Kremlin and Taj Mahal respectively. Then followed a spellbinding ballet recital by a team of Russians bringing back memories of ace ballet dancers Dame Margot Fonteyn and the Russian Rudolph Nureyev.

Among the spectacular dancers were Anastasia and Denis Matvienko who gave themselves wholeheartedly to a piece called Grand pas Diana and Acteon from Sméralda. Other show stoppers were Spring Waters performed with élan by Elena Evseeva and Marat

Shemiunov, and Adiago from the Spartacus, rendered by the same duo.

The solos too attracted attention, particularly the famous Dying Swan, effectively performed by Ulyana Lopatkina.

The sets garnered interest, particularly the backdrops of the Winter Palace and Bolshoi Theatre, Russia.

The credit for the delightful show must go to the Indian Council of Cultural Relations (ICCR) and the Ministry of Culture of the Russian Federation. The show marked the closing ceremony of the Year of Russia in India. In the course of the last one year, a group of Russians showcased the best of Russian culture in various parts of Indiaballet, theatre, fashion theatre, youth circus, dance, vocals, band and folk choir.

Of course dignitaries too had their say at the start of the memorable evening. In short and sweet speeches -- a welcome departure from the

norm -- Indian president Pratibha Devisingh Patil; President of the Russian Federation Dmitry Anatolyevich Medvedev; and Dr Karan Singh, president of ICCR, gave brief outlines of the importance of Russia to India.

As the Indian president said, "This is a one of its kind performance and brings the diversity of Russian culture to India... In our country there is tremendous appreciation of classic and contemporary Russian authors."

Medvedev gave a brief speech: "This is a remarkable and festive occasion. It will go a long way in projecting a modern and dynamic Russia."

Dr. Karan Singh also expressed his view on the Indian-Russia partnership. In particular, he cited Russia's affinity for India and vice versa. Among the instances he gave were those of Rabindranath Tagore, Leo Tolstoy-Gandhi and Raj Kapoor-Nargis, popular icons

in Russia. Clearly this is a valid point of view. On delving into the internet one finds that in 1930 Tagore went to Moscow at the invitation of the Soviet government. In fact, the National Poet went so far as to say, "If I did not come to Russia, life's pilgrimage would have remained incomplete."

Likewise Leo Tolstoy and Gandhi corresponded regularly. Both had similar views on truth, and morality and both had the same heroes Mohammad (PBUH) Buddha and Socrates. Russia also had a love for Indian cinema, particularly the films of Raj Kapoor and Nargis. In fact, Kapoor's "Mera Naam Joker" became a big hit in the country. No wonder that Dr Singh said, "The India-Russia relationship is one of enduring goodwill."

And cultural ties between the two countries will be further cemented when the Festival of India is celebrated next year in Russia.



Russian ballet dancers at the programme.

Art competition for differently-abled children

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

A painting competition for the differently-abled children was held in Pabna recently. Ankur Nursery School organised the event at the school premises. Later a cultural programme was held on the occasion.

According to sources, at least 17 physically challenged children took part in the competition. A discussion was held at the prize distribution programme. Headmistress of the school Meherunnesa Begum; school teacher Nurjahan Begum; Shovona Karmakar and Aklima Akter spoke on the occasion.

The speakers said that despite the popular view, differently-abled children are assets. The potential of such children needs to be developed so that they can contribute their optimum to society. "Such children are deprived and considered as a burden to society. However this view should be radically changed," said speakers on the occasion.

"Every child has unique qualities. We have to give them the opportunity to put their best foot forward. It is our duty to help children who are physically challenged. If we follow this course, the differently-abled children would be productive citizens of our country," added the speakers. In the painting competition, Brishti came up first, followed by Rehana in second place and Nurjahan third.

Eid special

Ditiyo Bashor on ATN Bangla

CULTURAL CORRESPONDENT

TV play "Ditiyo Bashor" will be aired on ATN Bangla tonight 8:50 pm. The play has been written and directed by veteran actor Abul Hayat.

The story revolves around a newly mar-

ried couple Farook and Mithila. They tied the knot last year, despite their parents' objection. On their first anniversary, Farook's father comes to the couple's home. Mithila's parents also come over. However, Mithila has her suspicions about the visits.

The cast includes Shahed, Aupi Karim, Abul Hayat and Abul Kashem.



Shahed and Aupi Karim in "Ditiyo Bashor".

Obak Shishu Shagor Baul on Banglavision

Shagor Baul, a six-year-old prodigy, is the subject of a special documentary on Banglavision. The documentary introduces the viewers to this phenomenon, who at the tender age of six has attained a spiritual maturity many strive for throughout their whole lives.

"Obak Shishu Shagor Baul" will be aired today at 5:10 pm.



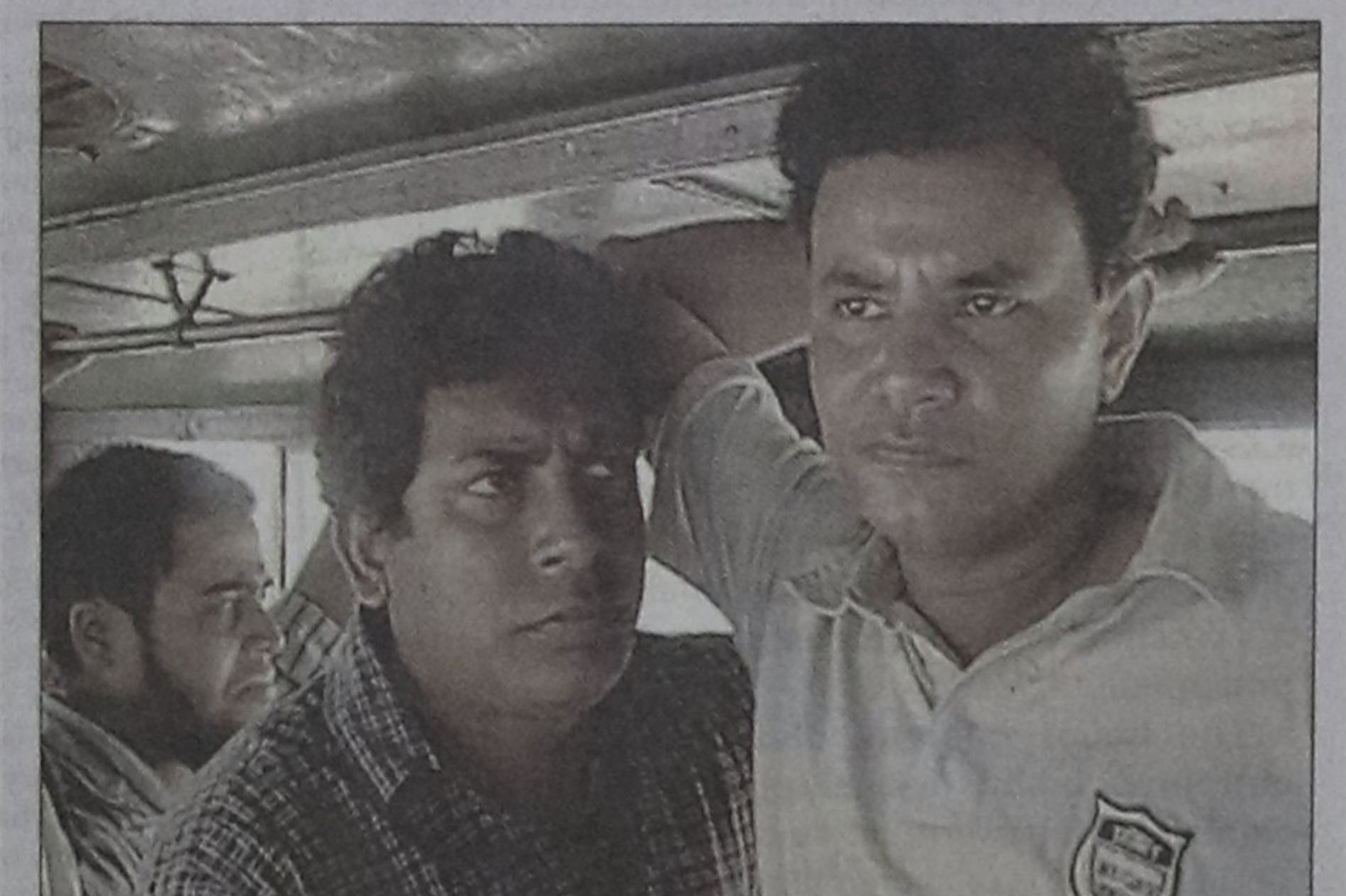
Shagor Baul (centre) during a performance.

Ebong Jadukar on Channel i

As part its special programmes on Eid, Channel i will telecast the single-episode TV play "Ebong Jadukar" today at 4:30 pm. Written by Kamrul Hassan and directed by Abdullah Abu Sayeed, the play revolves around a magician who comes to the city in search of livelihood. He comes across three young man -- Khorshed, Majid and Helal.

They become friends. The magician amazes everyone by his illusions. Everything was going fine until the three ask the magician to teach them the art of pick pocketing, so that they can get rich quick.

The cast includes Jayanto Chattyopadhyay, Mosharraf Karim, Mir Sabbir and others.



Mosharraf Karim (left) and co-actor in the play.