

WHAT'S ON THIS WEEK

Ekushey Bôl Mela '09
Organiser: Bangla Academy
Venue: Bangla Academy premises
Date: February 01-28



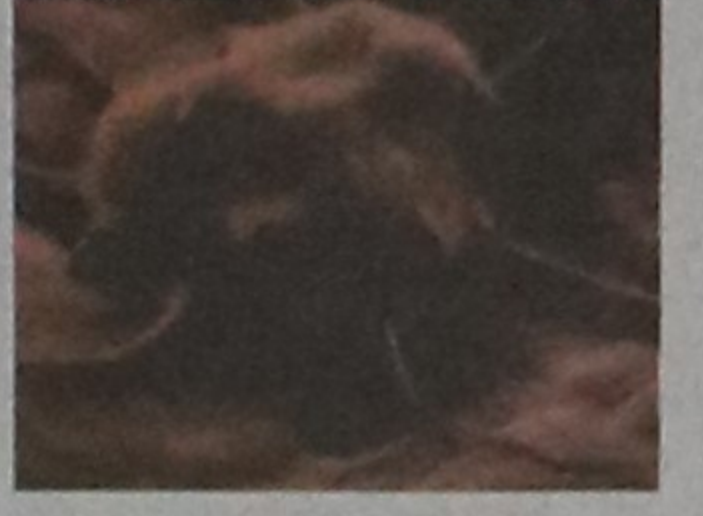
Chobi Mela V
Int'l Festival of Photography, Bangladesh '09
Theme: Freedom
Venues: National Museum, BSA, Dink Gallery, Bengal Gallery, AF, GIB, British Council, Asiatic Gallery, Kalpana Boarding and Karwan Bazar underpass
Date: Jan 30-Feb 20



Solo Flute Evening
Flutist: Ustad Aziz Islam
Organiser: Rotary Club of Dhaka Premier
Venue: Shahid Zia Auditorium, National Museum, Shahbag
Date: February 6
Time: 6:30pm



Documentary Screening
Generating awareness on cancer
Organiser: Mosabir Cancer Care Centre
Venue: Bism Auditorium, 63, New Eskaton
Date: February 6
Time: 4:30 onwards



Homage

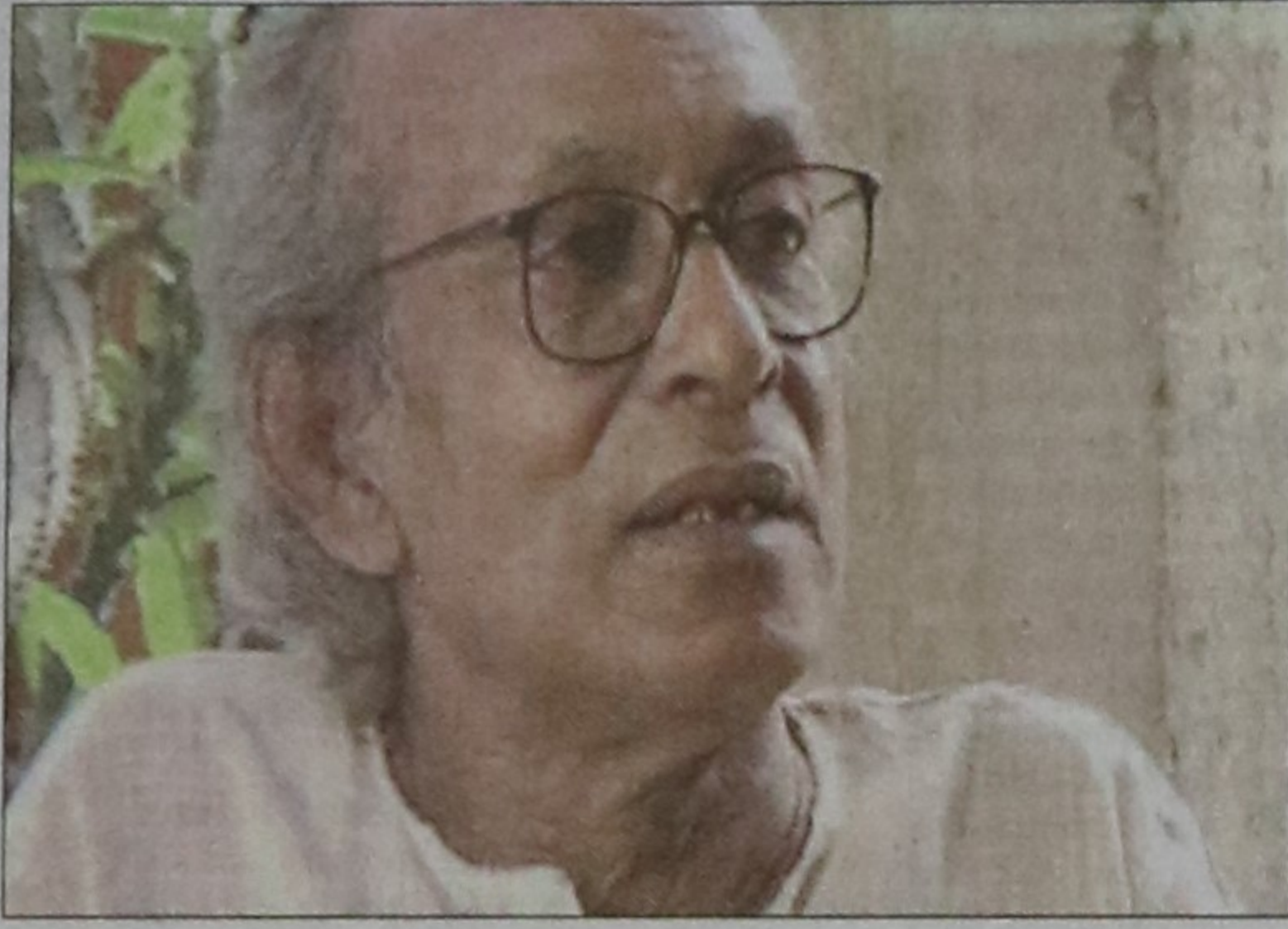
Mahmudul Haque: A track less treaded

TAKIR HOSSAIN

I remember being introduced to Mahmudul Haque (affectionately known as 'Botu Bhai') on a winter evening at his Jhigatala home. It was pretty chilly and there was continuous drizzle. The city was quiet because of the cold weather. Eminent sculptor Syed Abdullah Khalid introduced me to him. At first glance, he seemed to be an individual who has struggled long and hard. He was a bohemian, yet completely sociable. Anyone who had once been introduced to him would never forget his warmth and generosity. His expressions were distinct. He was the focal point at any social gathering.

Haque was a gifted writer. He was not exactly what is considered "popular" in the contemporary literary scene, but most aware readers were well-acquainted with his brilliant writing. He wrote, in fact, a few novels. His books could be finished at one go, as the essence is usually clear and easily comprehensible. The imagery he weaved was practically etched into the minds of his readers.

The most important aspect of all Haque's novels is his passion -- he never narrated a story for the sake of



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storytelling. He analysed the characters elaborately and revealed their relationships with others. One trait that set Haque's novels apart is their slenderness. The thin volume however, should not be considered a disadvantage, as it takes remarkable restraint and skills for a writer to express himself in limited words.

The subjects of Haque's novels are pragmatic and relevant. His

inimitability lay in simplified articulation. He disliked complicated language. That however, does not mean that Haque's language was mundane and uninteresting; rather it was marked with subtlety and remarkable savour.

Mahmudul Haque first emerged as a short-story writer in the mid 1960, when the then East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) produced a num-



ber of outstanding poets, novelists and writers like Mahadev Saha, Shahid Kadri, Rafiq Azad, Belal Chowdhury and Rabiul Hussain. Haque's first novel came out in 1973. Since then -- after long pauses -- a total of six novels were authored by him: "Anur Pathshala (Anu at School)," "Nirapod Tandra (Uninterrupted Sleep)," "Jibon Amar Bon (Life is My Sister)," "Matir Jahaj (The

Clay Ship)," "Kalo Baraf (Black Snow)" and "Khelaghar (Playhouse)." Only one volume of short stories by him, "Protidin Ekti Rumal (One Handkerchief Everyday)" and a book for children, "Chikkore Kabuk." In his last years, Haque became detached and led a solitary life. Last year we lost this virtuoso writer but for the readers he will always shine in the dimension he created.

Snaps:

Shibli Muhammad

CULTURAL CORRESPONDENT

have led me to believe that humans can be more vindictive than wild beasts.

Debut performance

It was a live performance in the mid-1980s at the Bishwa Shahitya Kendra. Among the audience were Abdullah Abu Sayeed, Asad Chowdhury and KM Harun who appreciated my performance. Soon after, I was invited to perform on television.

Partnership with Shamim Ara Neepa

The audience preferred to see us dance together. So did the producers and directors. We are so used to performing jointly that we can even do without a rehearsal.

What scares you?

Honestly speaking, I am scared of fellow humans. I'm not afraid of wild animals. Some unpleasant experiences

Regrets

I don't regret being a dancer. Rather, I feel blessed because it has enabled me to interact with people all over the world.

Dreams

I don't believe in daydreaming. I believe in the present and live for today.

Favourite pastime

Reading. Sunil Gangopadhyay, Shirshendu Mukhopadhyay and Samresh Majumdar are my favourite authors. On a moonlit night, I like listening to Jagjit Singh 'ghazals.' He is my favourite singer.

Fitness

I work out at a gym regularly. Although I enjoy a fancy meal, I try to eat moderately.



Padma Shri for Akshay, Aishwarya

Akshay Kumar and Aishwarya Rai have been honoured with the Padma Shri Award, one of the top civilian honours in the country, for their contribution to the field of cinema. The announcement came as a surprise to Akshay and Aishwarya and their millions of fans on Republic Day.

Akshay may have hit the blues at the beginning of the year with a blooper called "Chandni Chowk To China," but all has not been that bad indeed. This has been a phenomenal month in terms of recognition and rewards. "Singh is King" made it to the prestigious RAAM awards nominations. And now, the Govt. of India has conferred the illustrious Padma Shri honour on him. Looking back, this month should bring good cheer to Akki and his fans in spite of CC2C.



Aishwarya Rai



Akshay Kumar

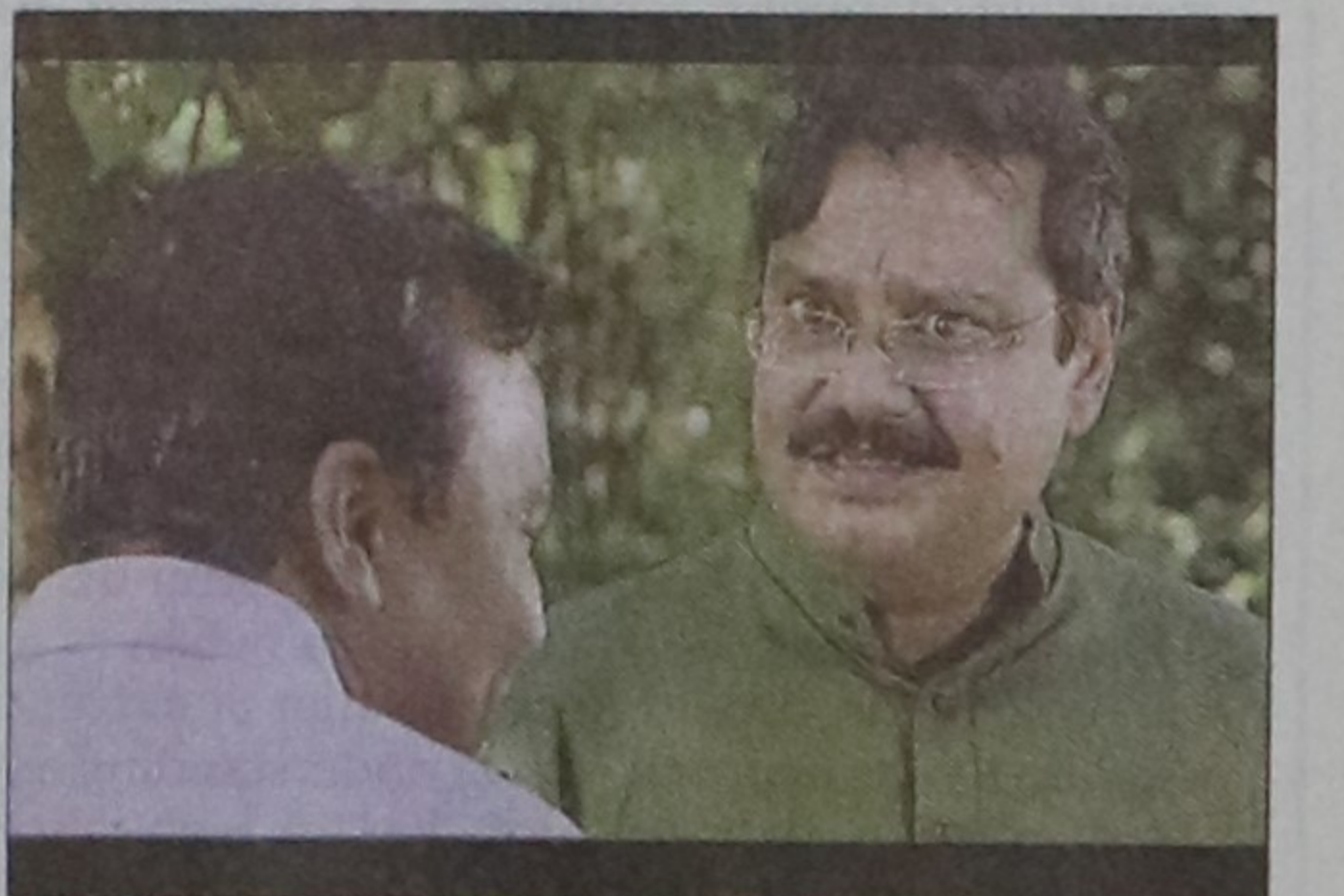
Aishwarya Rai Bachchan, on the other hand, has made the Bachchan family proud once again with the Padma Shri Award. She is the fourth member in the family to be honoured with the award. Shri Harivanshrai Bachchan, Amitabh Bachchan and Jaya Bachchan are earlier recipients of the award. Other members in the film industry who received Padma Shri include actress and dancing queen of yesteryears Helen, renowned playback singers Kumar Sanu and Udit Narayanan, ghazal singer Penaaz Masani, and music composer Pandit Hridaynath Mangeshkar.

Source: Internet



Artisans display idols of the Goddess Saraswati by the Faridpur Thana Road on the occasion of Saraswati Puja, held on January 31.

New drama serial "Mama Bhagney" on Banglavisión



Fazlur Rahman Babu (left) and Challenger in a scene from the serial.

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From February 2, new drama serial "Mama Bhagney" will be aired on Banglavisión Mondays and Tuesdays at 8:15pm. Jointly written by Nazrul Islam and M.S. Rana, and directed by Golam Sohrab Dodul, the humorous serial depicts the relationship of a man and his three nephews.

The plot of the play: Widower Raisuddin Sarkar is an affluent man. However, he is not happy because he has no children. Hira, Moti and Manik are his nephews, who live with him. Raisuddin loves them as he would his own children. Nevertheless, rankled by the thought of not having direct heirs, he decides to marry again. His nephews persuade him to visit Bangkok on a honeymoon with the trio accompanying the newly married couple. The play unravels with several amusing incidents.

Challenger, Fazlur Rahman Babu, Mosharrar Karim, Chanchal Choudhury, Bannya Mirza, Chandni, Jenny among others will be the actors in the serial.

Movie Watch

The Class : Learning to be the future of France

"The Class," the new film from director Laurent Cantet ("Time Out," "Heading South") comes garlanded with the top prize from the Cannes film festival and an Oscar nomination for best foreign-language film.

Such honours might set up misleading expectations. On the surface, at least, this is a small, modest, observational film that refrains from grand gestures and sweeping statements. That it actually cuts to the core of so many issues around identity, education and multiculturalism is testament to its powerful and uncompromising authenticity.

It is a new school year. At a staff meeting veteran teachers introduce themselves to fresh-faced new colleagues, wish them luck and give them friendly pointers on the problem kids.

Francois Marin is already familiar with most of the 11th-grade students in his French class. They are a mixed bunch, girls and boys reflecting the multicultural make up of their working-class Parisian neighbourhood: native French are just one clique among immigrant children from North Africa, China and the Carib-



"The Class" offers an incisive, challenging microcosm of a 21st-century western democracy struggling to assimilate diverse ethnicities and cultures while validating its own heritage.

bean.

The Hollywood movie audience is quite familiar with the problem of engaging kids who have more pressing things on their minds than old books and the imperfect subjunctive.

We know how this will go: an idealistic, if unconventional teacher meets the kids halfway. Keep John Keats in your back pocket; start off with Kanye and Lil Wayne and hope the school board doesn't find out.

At first, Marin seems to fit the bill. He's patient, firm but fair and recognises that digression can impart more valuable learning than any lesson plan. Over the course of the school year he reaches out to the most reticent and challenging kids -- in particular Souleymanne (Franck Keita), a boy from Mali who has been written off by most of his teachers, but who produces a remarkable, touching self-portrait when Francois allows him to use photographs in place of words.

Still, things don't turn out quite how you might think. In this case, good intentions are not enough.

All too often in American movies these days high school students are impersonated by young actors in their late teens and twenties. Cantet's approach is more exacting, much closer to documentary realism. The filmmaker went to a school in the 20th arrondissement of Paris and devoted nearly a year to weekly three-hour workshops with students, half of who ended up in the movie, along with their real-life parents and teachers.

Francois Marin is played by

Francois Begaudeau, a former teacher whose autobiographical novel "Entre les murs" ("Between the Walls") was a primary source for the film. Even so, much of the script came out of improvisations developed with the children in the workshops. Shooting took place in the school over the summer, Cantet following the dialogue with three video cameras that supplied him with 150 hours of raw footage.

"The Class" offers an incisive, challenging microcosm of a 21st-century western democracy struggling to assimilate diverse ethnicities and cultures while validating its own heritage. Perhaps it shouldn't come as a surprise that in the end it becomes a study of power and privilege, even if Hollywood has failed to condition its audience for such an outcome.

Of course, if you're looking for a happy ending, be assured that in movie-making terms Cantet's kids graduate with honours. So does his film.

Compiled by Cultural Correspondent