

WHAT'S ON THIS WEEK

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

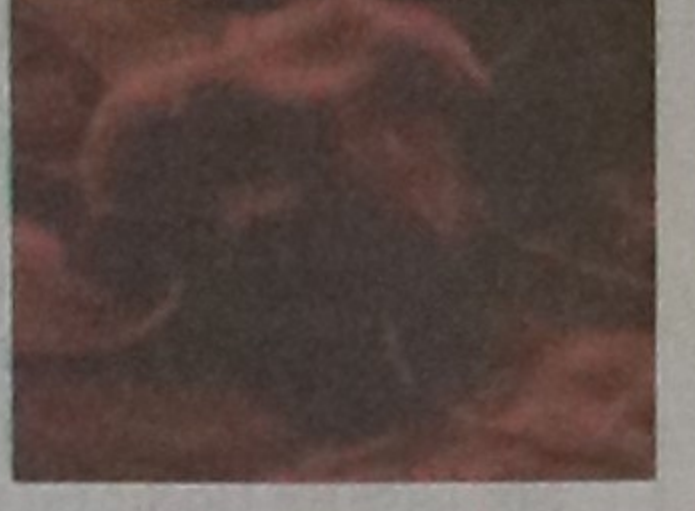


Chobi Mela V
Int'l Festival of Photography, Bangladesh '09
Theme: Freedom
Venues: National Museum, BSA, Drik Gallery, Bengal Council, Asiatic Gallery, Kalpana Bazar and Karwan Bazar underpass
Date: Jan 30-Feb 20



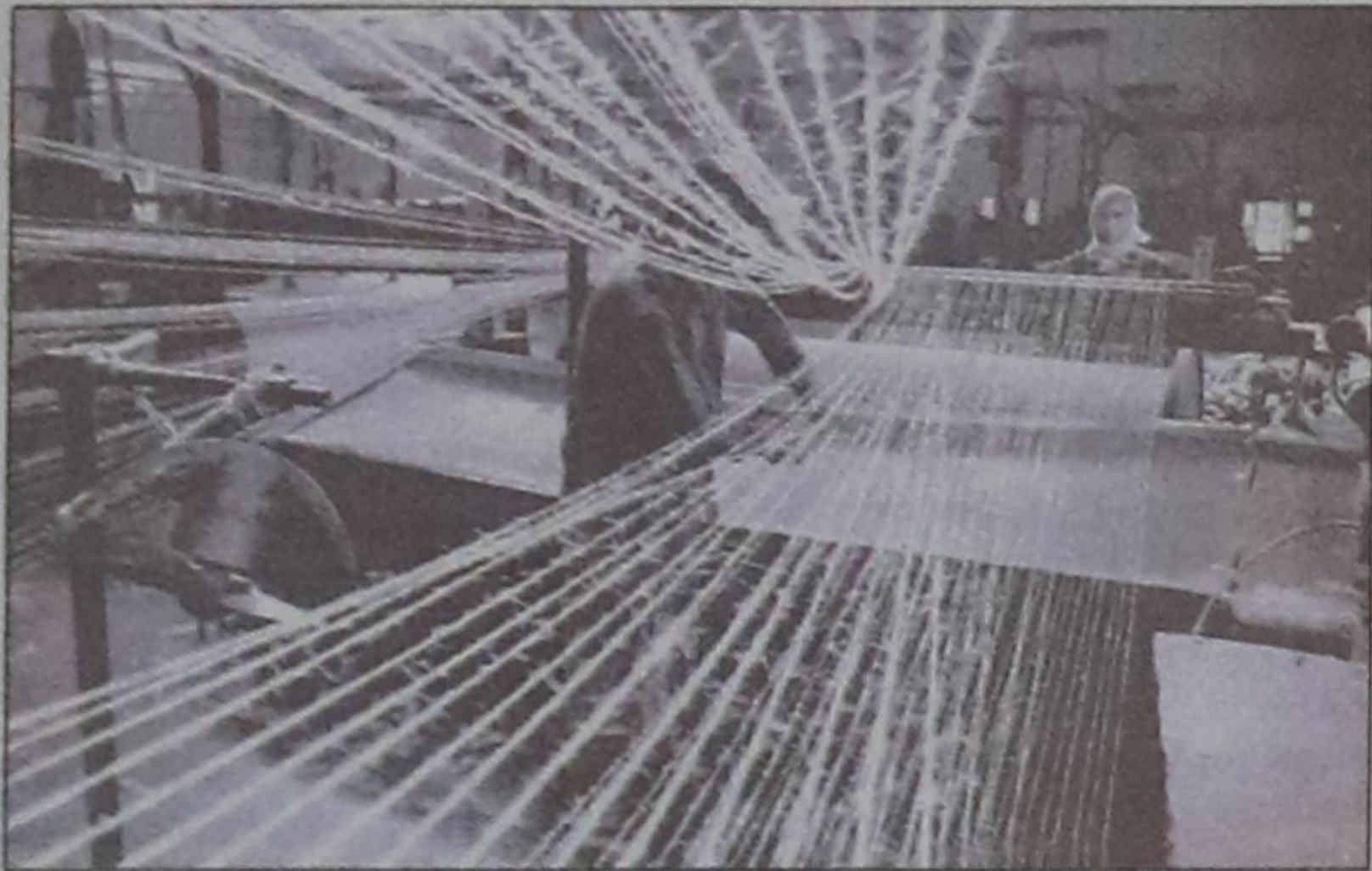
Theatre
Play: Jaiboli Konyar Mon
Troupe: Dhaka Theatre
Venue: National Theatre Stage, BSA
Date: February 5
Time: 6:30pm

Documentary Screening and Musical programme
Generating awareness on cancer
Organiser: Mosabbir Cancer Care Centre
Venue: Bham Auditorium, 63, New Eskaton
Date: February 6
Time: 4:30 onwards



Chobi Mela V: The many shades of freedom

Munem Wasif delves deep into death of the golden fibre



The series, titled "Blood Splinter of Jute," addresses the threat of extinction looming over the Bangladeshi jute industry.

Munem Wasif (left) explaining a photograph to poet Farhad Mazhar at the exhibition.

KARIM WAHEED

The venue certainly was interesting. The narrow lanes of Shakhari Bazar in Old Dhaka possess something of a hypnotic allure. But this is not about Shakhari Bazar; focus was on the opening of Munem Wasif's photo exhibition at Kolpona Boarding on February 3. The exhibition is a part of 'Chobi Mela V' (International Festival of Photography, Bangladesh 2009).

"Jute is the golden fibre of Bangladesh, and is our national asset," I remember this line from textbook essays on jute. Most of the textbooks used in our public schools will have us believe so," says Wasif. He follows it up with a quote from the closing announcement of People's Jute Mill (Khalishpur, Khulna, July 31, 2007): "...It is not possible to maintain the performance at a satisfactory level due to the factors like state of labourers, crisis of raw jute, extreme financial crisis, lack of production and irregular electricity supply..."



A view of the crowd at Kolpona Boarding in Shakhari Bazar.

PHOTO: MUMIT M

Wasif's series, titled "Blood Splinter of Jute," addresses the threat of extinction looming over the Bangladeshi jute industry.

Following the prescription of World Bank and other donors, state-owned jute mills -- once a thriving industry -- have become ghosts of their former selves. It's easier to shut down factories that are not making any money. But for every factory that goes belly up, thousands of workers and their families are left in panic, wondering where their next meal will come from.

The photographer relates his subject with the theme of the festival, "freedom": "It's all about economic freedom. When you have to rely on donors, you have to abide by their suggestions -- beneficial for you or not."

Twenty-four black and white images at the exhibit show the current state of once-thriving jute mills; farmers and labourers involved in the industry living off scraps; some, disillusioned and frustrated with the indifference of the authorities, taking to the streets. Wasif has worked for two and a half years on this project and shot in Khalishpur (Khulna), Kurigram, Rangpur and Dinajpur.

Wasif has earned international acclaim (City of Perpignan Young Reporter's Award 2008 being the most recent) for his documentary photography, zooming in on people living on the fringes of society.

The exhibition will continue till February 12. Alliance Francaise de Dacca, British Council, Canon, Drik, Goethe-Institut Bangladesh, Norwegian Embassy, Pathshala, and Prince Claus Fund for Culture and Development are partners of 'Chobi Mela V'. Prothom Alo, The Daily Star, abc Radio, Ice Today, bdnews24.com, Channel i and Ujala TV are the media partners.

Eksho Bosta Chaal wins Uchimura Prize

"Eksho Bosta Chaal," a Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy production, has won the Uchimura Prize for this year, conferred by International Theatre Institute, Japan, says a press release.

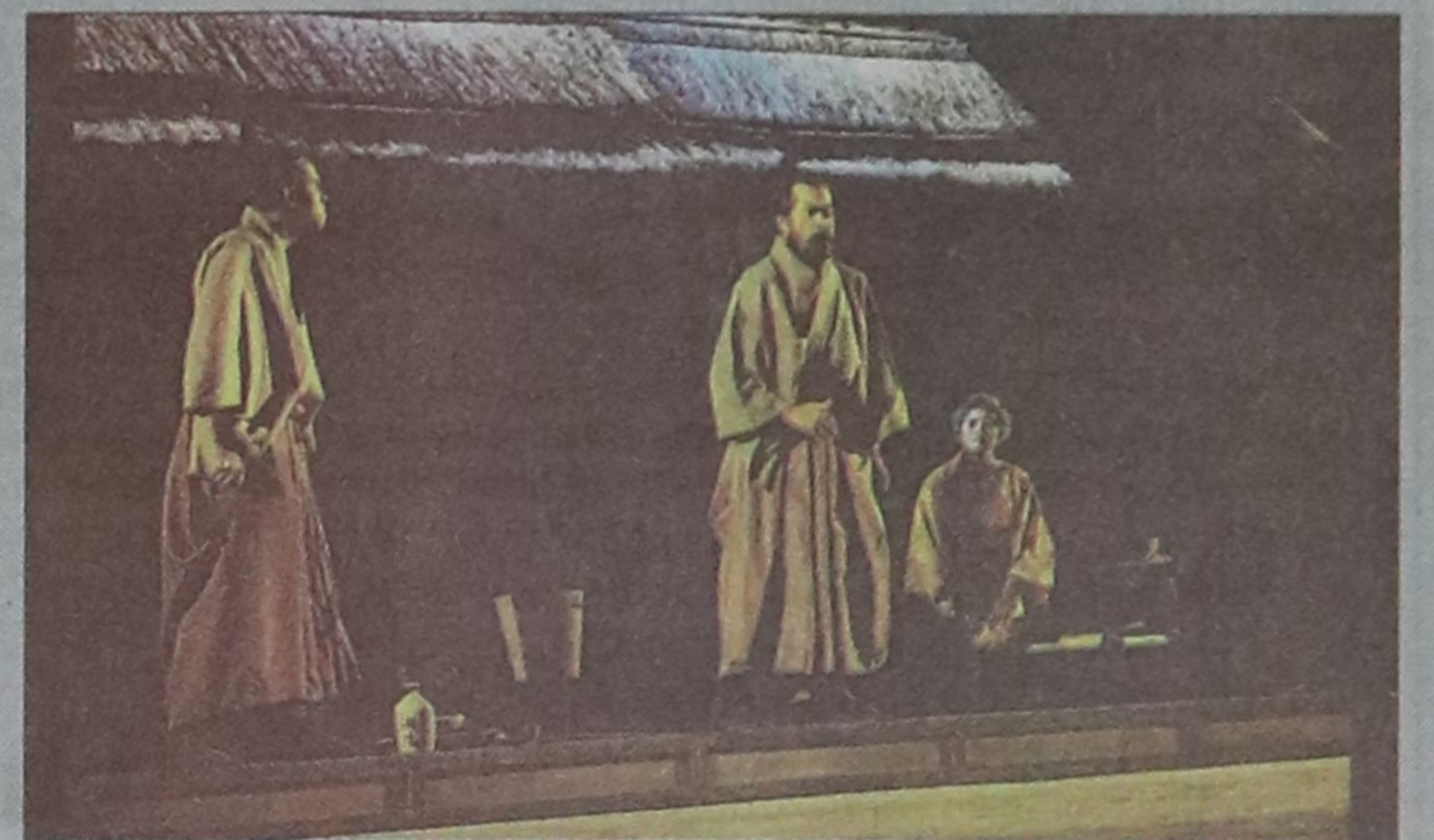
Directed by Golam Sarwar, the production is a Bengali translation of a Yuzo Yamamoto play. The translation was done by noted translator and theatre personality Abdus Selim. The Uchimura Prize is given to an individual or institute that works on Japanese plays outside Japan.

The play is an output of a 10-day workshop on the 'Samurai' style, conducted by Japanese instructor Kimura Shinji. It is a joint production by Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy, Embassy of Japan, the Japan

Foundation and Japan Bangladesh Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

The play is set against the backdrop of the transitional period from 'Shogunate era' to 'Meiji' resurrection. "Eksho Bosta Chaal" features a chaotic scenario of the post 'Boshin War' (1868-69) Japan, where the legendary Japanese warriors, popularly known as 'Samurai,' had to constantly struggle for a dignified existence. Like many other Japanese domains, the people of Nagaoka became corrupt.

The play ends on an optimistic note, with the message that people can keep alive a dream even under the harshest of circumstances.



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Music and dance at Bharateswari Homes

MIRZA SHAKIL, Tangail

A colourful cultural function was held at Kumudini Complex, Mirzapur in Tangail on February 3. The show's organiser was Bharateswari Homes and the venue was Ananda Niketan in the institute's campus.

Students from various classes performed in the event, which ranged from songs, and dances, both group and solo. A poetry recital, rendered by Upama Khurshid, a third year student of Kumudini Medical College, was another feature of the programme.

Ambassador and head of delegation of European Commission in Bangladesh Dr.

Stefan Frowein addressed the audience as chief guest.

Among others, managing director of Kumudini Welfare Trust Rajib Prasad Saha; director (education) Protibha Mutsuddi; director of Kumudini Hospital, Dr. Dulal Poddar; principal of Bharateswari Homes, Ulfatun Nesa and assistant administrator of Kumudini Medical College and Hospital Syed Haider Ali addressed.

Earlier, the foreign dignitaries visited the classrooms of the institute and exchanged views with the students and teachers. Ranada Prasad (RP) Saha, a philanthropist, established the Bharateswari Homes in 1944. The institute has clearly gone from strength to strength.



Students of Bharateswari Homes during a dance performance.

PHOTO: STAR

Watchmen skulk to the screen

When Zack Snyder became the director of the film adaptation of "Watchmen," the graphic novel about troubled superheroes in a declining age, he knew that he was taking on not only a seminal piece of popular culture but more than 20 years of unfulfilled expectations and competing agendas.

From his encounters with the original comics, written by Alan Moore and illustrated by Dave Gibbons, he was well versed in the creators' weighty, grown-up ideas about the futility of heroism and knew that they had no enthusiasm for seeing "Watchmen" turned into a movie. He was also aware that many directors before him had been unsuccessful at the same endeavour, and he expected that he would have to fight his studio to make the film he wanted.

But Snyder said he believed that his greatest challenge would be satisfying the desires of the book's devoted fans, who, like him, regard it as an exemplary work of post-modern storytelling and who would eviscerate him if he strayed too far from the original comics. And he believed that the only path to satisfying these viewers began by breaking from the source material.

"Watchmen," which opens on March 6, begins with a scene depicted only in fragments in the comics: a lengthy fight between an unknown assailant and an over-the-hill



With the release of "Watchmen" imminent, the anticipation and tension among fans is at its peak.

avenger called the Comedian. This is followed by an unhurried opening credit sequence, largely of Snyder's invention, that juxtaposes Bob Dylan's "The Times They Are A-Changin'" with a montage of masked do-gooders with names like Dollar Bill and Hooded Justice as they participate in key moments of atomic-age history, like V-J Day and the assassination of John F. Kennedy. The scenes that follow will be familiar to readers with a panel-by-panel familiarity with the comic: the surreal dream of a costumed vigilante who is plagued by sexual shortcomings and fears of nuclear war; a man-god

created in a scientific accident, strolling the red sands of Mars; the city of New York partly annihilated by a villain's master plan -- all connected by a story about heroes who are corrupted by the darkness they cannot expunge from the world.

Almost from the moment that the first issue of "Watchmen" was published in America as a limited series by DC Comics in 1986, Hollywood has tried and failed to film it. The director Terry Gilliam pursued the project in the late 1980s, only to conclude that it could not be condensed into a movie; Darren Aronofsky set it aside in 2004 to make "The

Fountain," and Paul Greengrass had the plug pulled on his version in 2005 over budgetary concerns.

When Snyder, 42, was approached in 2006 to direct the film, his résumé made many "Watchmen" fans nervous. A director of TV commercials, he was known for flashy and hyperkinetic work. In 2004 he had scored a hit with his remake of the George A. Romero zombie movie "Dawn of the Dead" and was at work on an unheralded action movie called "300," a violent adaptation of Frank Miller's graphic novel about the ancient battle of Thermopylae.

Warner Brothers did not

hesitate to give Snyder the resources he wanted, largely because of "300." "They said, 'OK, we don't understand "300," and it made a lot of money," Snyder said.

Those resources meant that he was able to spend more than 100 days shooting in Vancouver, to cast more for acting chops than for box-office magnetism (Patrick Wilson as the impotent Nite Owl, Jackie Earle Haley as the unstable Rorschach, Billy Crudup as Dr. Manhattan) and have some 200 sets constructed for the movie.

Days before shooting was completed last February, the "Watchmen" curse seemed to strike. Fox, which had advised Warner Brothers that it still owned a portion of the rights to "Watchmen," filed a suit and threatened an injunction to block the film's release. A year of legal wrangling followed. It ended last month, when Warner agreed to give Fox up to 8.5 percent of the gross receipts of the film, or any sequels or spinoffs.

Now, with the release of "Watchmen" imminent, the anticipation and tension among fans is at its peak. Unlike, say, the Batman or Superman franchises, whose titular heroes can be reinvented every 10 or 15 years, "Watchmen" has only one story to tell. If Snyder bungles it, no director will have a second chance at it.

Compiled by Cultural Correspondent

Recitation programme in Thakurgaon

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

A recitation programme, titled "Shatrur shathey lorai korechhi, Swapner shathey bash," was held at Thakurgaon Shilpakala Academy Auditorium on February 2.

'Atahpar', a cultural organisation, arranged the programme and this was their sixth production.

In the course of the programme a discussion was held at the auditorium. Professor Montosh Kumar De, a renowned cultural personality and educationist, also president of Atahpar addressed the inaugural session.



Recitation by members of Atahpar.

PHOTO: STAR

Nirmalendu Goon poem "Amar Kobita Mukto Palestine."

Then the members of the organisation gave choral renditions of poems, including "Ekusher Kobita."

About 200 enthusiastic people, including teachers, students and various professionals, attended the programme.