

**WHAT'S ON THIS WEEK**

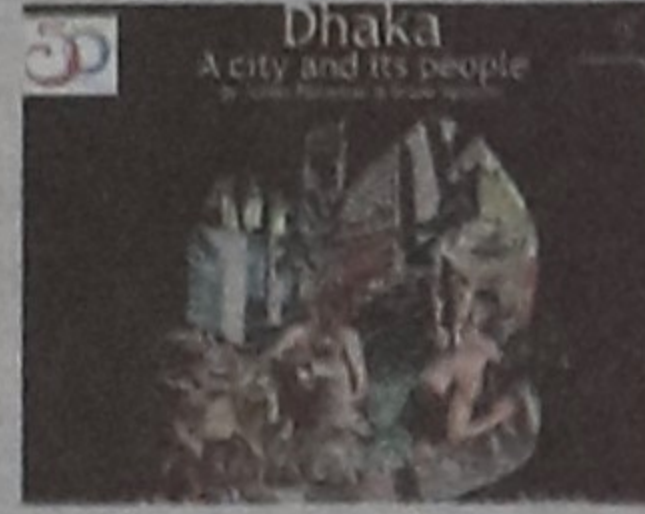
**Ekushey Boi Mela '09**  
 Organiser: Bangla Academy  
 Venue: Bangla Academy premises  
 Date: February 01-28



**Exhibition**  
 On February 21  
 Title: Dali & Others  
 Organiser: Bangladesh Heritage Foundation & Bangladesh Research and Publications  
 Venue: Bliia Auditorium, H 22, Rd 7, Dhanmondi  
 Date: February 20-28  
 Time: 10am-8pm



**Photography Exhibition**  
 By Julien Pannetier and Bruno Valentin  
 Title: Dhaka, a City and its People  
 Venue: AFD, 26, Mirpur Rd, Dhanmondi  
 Date: February 19-March 5  
 Time: 9am-12pm, 5-8pm (Saturdays 5-8pm)



**Award**  
 Title: Shilu Abed Master Craftsperson Award '09  
 Organiser: National Crafts Council of Bangladesh  
 Venue: BRAC Inn Centre Auditorium, 75, Mohakhali  
 Date: March 5  
 Time: 6pm



## Another feather in the cap

Ramendu Majumdar receives Ekushey Padak '09

JAMIL MAHMUD

International Theatre Institute (ITI), worldwide President and renowned cultural personality Ramendu Majumdar is among the 13, who received 'Ekushey Padak' this year. Majumdar, a seasoned theatre activist, received the accolade for his immense contribution in generating interest in the medium throughout Bangladesh and taking our theatre to the world.

"This award will certainly inspire me a lot in continuing the work for development of theatre. Although we are not an affluent nation in the material sense, culturally we have a lot to give to the world. We want to achieve this goal," said Majumdar at a programme held at the Central Shaheed Minar premises on February 23.

Shammilita Shangskritik Jote (SSJ) arranged the programme to felicitate and honour Majumdar. Several member organisations of SSJ took part in the programme and performed dance, recitation and songs.

"Today's programme is significant to me for two reasons. First, the programme is taking place at the Shaheed Minar, which has been the epicentre of cultural movements in our history. The other reason for my excitement is that my colleagues and friends are honouring me," said Majumdar.

Throughout his illustrious career, Majumdar has made significant achievement in several roles. He is the founder president of ITI Bangladesh, former chairman of BGTE, founder editor of the publication "Theatre" and founder member of the troupe Theatre.

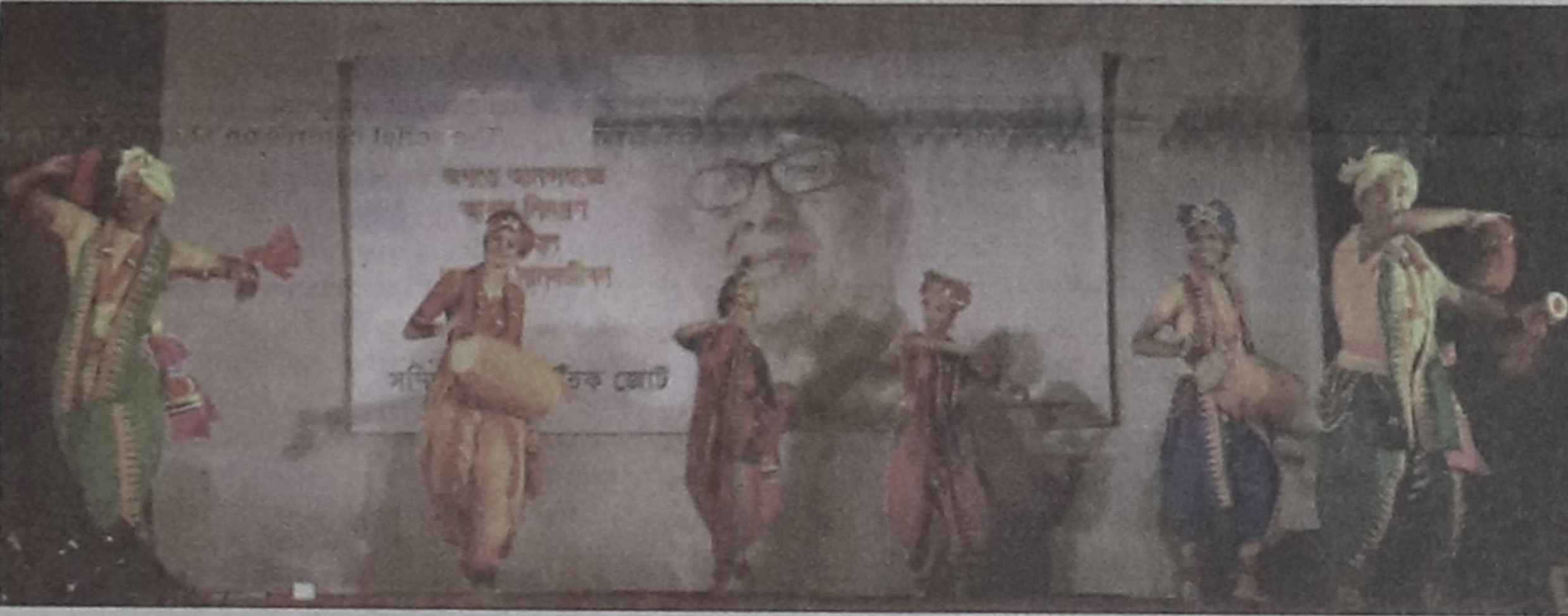
President of SSJ, Nasiruddin Yousuff, who is abroad at present, sent a message congratulating Majumdar for his achievement. Among others, theatre personality Keramat Mawla spoke, while publisher and trustee of the Liberation War Museum Mofidul Haque presided over the programme.

Noted poet and writer Syed Shamsul Haque penned an acknowledgment letter to Majumdar.

At the programme, different cultural organisations including Bangladesh Group Theatre Federation, Bangladesh Patho Natok Parishad, Bangladesh Abritt Shamannay Parishad, Jatiyo Kabita Parishad,



Ramendu Majumdar (2nd from left) flanked by renowned cultural personalities at Shaheed Minar. PHOTO: MUMIT M



A charged dance performance at the programme.

Udichi Shilpi Gosthi, ITI Bangladesh, Theatre, Centre for Asian Theatre, Wishiz Shilpi Gosthi, Kranti, Palakar, Mahakal, Bangladesh Mahila Parishad and Gano Sangeet Parishad congratulated Majumdar with bouquets. Members of Rabindra Sangeet Shammilan Parishad and Udichi Shilpi Gosthi rendered a chorus of "Shobarey

kori abhan," and "Gram thekey jegey otho" respectively.

Tagore singer Mita Haque and folk artistes Rupu Khan and Biman Chandra Biswas presented solo renditions, while Ahkamullah, Rafiqul Islam and Laila Afroz recited poems at the programme.

Noted Gano Sangeet artiste Fakir

Alamgir sang "Muktijoddha manabatabadi biswanjanin natyajan" -- a song dedicated to Majumdar by Syed Ashekur Rahman. Theatre personality Shimul Yousuf rendered "Srijano chhandey anandey nacho natraj."

The programme wrapped up with dance performances by members of Sukonya and Nrityam.

## Beauty, grace, eloquence personified

In conversation with Farah Ruma

SYEDA SHAMIN MORTADA

She is a popular TV personality who exudes glamour. She has been featured in many ads and plays and has made a name for herself. Model turned actress, and now also a TV show host, Farah Ruma, began her career at a young age.

Farah grew up in Chittagong. "I was quite mischievous as a child. But I was also solidly grounded in the sense that I could always differentiate right from wrong and act accordingly," says Farah. In 1990 she moved to Dhaka and started taking dance lessons. That turned out to be fortuitous for the young girl as her dance teacher persuaded her to take up modelling.

Farah continues, "I considered myself smart and fashionable. I began walking the ramps and met many renowned personalities, Bibi Russel being one of them." Farah went on to become one of the top models of the country in late '90s.

In 1997, Farah firmly established her position in the glamour industry by becoming the Lux Anondodhara Photoshundi. Since then there has been no stopping her and Farah started to work in a large number of ads. Farah says, "I did not take my career seriously back then. I was busy concentrating on my studies and had no idea what the future had in store for me. It was Afzal bhai who said that I had the looks and talent and suggested that I make use of my potential."

Farah entered the TV industry with a bang, impressing both the audience and critics with her promising portrayal of a role opposite actor-director Afzal Hossain in a play called "Shankho" (written by Anisul Haque and directed by Afzal Hossain).

Farah kept a low profile for a year or two and came back with another memorable performance in the play, "Shubho Drishti" in 2004. "I consider this to be one of my finest works. I have continued acting since then," she says. Farah has done many challenging roles in her career and has proved her talent. She has also worked with a number of prominent stars in the industry and her performances have always been widely appreciated.

Farah Ruma has proven that an effective model can be an effusive actor too!



"I was quite mischievous as a child. But I was also solidly grounded in the sense that I could always differentiate right from wrong and act accordingly."

The writer is a freelance contributor

## Nirod Biswas: From struggle to success as a musical instrument maker



Nirod Biswas at work. PHOTO: STAR

AZIBOR RAHMAN, Jhenidah

Age has not slowed down 72 year-old Nirod Biswas. He continues to attract a large clientele with his well-crafted musical instruments. Today he supplies harmoniums to different areas of Bangladesh and various reputed institutions in Jhenidah use his musical instruments.

In the words of Ananta Kumar, a music teacher, "Nirod is as an expert maker of musical instruments."

Certainly Jhenidah is proud of this son of the soil. While once he struggled to make a living, now he owns a home at Hardevpur village under Kaliganj upazila, Jhenidah. He has four sons, of whom two are involved in the same business. "I couldn't ask for more," says Nirod.

His early days were like an obstacle race. He was very fond of music, in particular passionate about the harmonium. But he

could not afford the instrument. He tried to borrow a harmonium from his neighbour but was very upset when they declined his request. This incident had an impact on him and Nirod was resolute that he would learn to make the instrument.

Subsequently he left home and made his way to Madhupur. Trained by Mahadeb Biswas for three months, he returned home with a harmonium he had crafted himself. In 1949 he left home for India to further refine his skills. His teacher at this stage was Nando Babu at Krishnanagar in Nadia district, West Bengal. Under his direction, Nirod learnt to make a range of instruments: the harmonium, violin, dotara, ektara, guitar, banjo, sharinda, prem juri and congo. Five years later he rented a shop, selling musical instruments in Krishnanagarbazar in India. In 1973, he returned home. Today he runs his business from a rented shop on Naldanga Road, Kaliganj upazila in Jhenidah.

## More "Madea" from Tyler Perry

He survived abuse as a child and lived in his car at one point. Then Tyler Perry channelled his emotions into a series of popular stage plays and blockbuster movies featuring his mad, black alter-ego Madea.

Now Perry, 39, helps finance and maintains total creative control of his films, his two TV shows and his very own studio just outside Atlanta, where he is based. With Oprah Winfrey as a role model, he is looking to grow his empire, recently launching 34th Street Prods. to help bring films he loves to his loyal audience -- including the Sundance hit "Push: Based on the Novel By Sapphire."

His latest film, "Madea Goes to Jail," opened recently. Here's what this prolific filmmaker had to say about his craft.

**How do you describe your filmmaking style?**

**Tyler Perry:** My stories are usually pretty predictable. The dialogue is always very simple because I am very aware of who I'm speaking to. My audience is from 2- and 3-year-olds all the way up to 90, so I'm not trying to tell any extremely stylistic, artistic stories.

**Why do you think your audience has been ignored by**



**Hollywood?**

**Perry:** For the most part people speak from their own experiences, and in Hollywood, there have not been a lot of African-Americans who have been able to tell their

stories unfiltered, unedited, with no notes, and bring (them) directly to the people. That's why I love my relationship with Lionsgate: It's a no-note, we-don't-show-up-to-the-set relationship. I bring

them a finished film and we test it and it usually does extremely well.

**The studios do so much research about who audiences are and what they want, and this is an audience that for many years was just missed. How is that?**

**Perry:** Even from my first movie ("Diary of a Mad Black Woman"), the tracking was way off. They have gotten better with tracking and understanding my films, but if you're not a part of (the community), you can't really get the information. I don't know what it's like to be Japanese. But if I was there in the culture I could get some sort of understanding. I think you need to be in the culture to understand it. I'm really only beginning to wrap my brain around how Hollywood can be so insulated from the rest of the world. There is Hollywood and then there is New York -- and then America is in the middle. I've been to every major city in this country, with the exception of the Dakotas, I think, and we would sell shows out -- 30,000-40,000 people a week coming in the doors. People find this hard to believe, and most of it was sold by e-mail before we even got to the city. I have the box office

record at the Kodak (Theatre, in Hollywood). I had 18 or 19 shows there that have all sold out.

**Has the audience changed at all since you started making films?**

**Perry:** My last tour was in 2004-05, and it started to change. It was the first time I was onstage and I could look out in the audience and there would be maybe five white people or Hispanics. Then there were 600-700 or 1,000 in the audience. The videos (of the plays) had gotten out there.

**In Hollywood, the conventional wisdom is, "Don't fund your own projects." You defied that. Why?**

**Perry:** When I came into Hollywood, I was doing extremely well. Before I even had a film, my shows were approaching \$100 million on tour. I didn't come in saying, "Give me this money so that I can do a film," because when that happens you lose all creative control. The money is not as important to me as the creative control. So I have to fund it for that to happen, just as I've done it in television.

Source: Reuters