

WHAT'S ON THIS WEEK

Group Art Exhibition

Featuring 167 artworks by 107 Bangladeshi artists
 Venue: Saju Art Gallery, F-40-41, D.C.C. North Super Market, 2nd Circle, Gulshan
 Date: April 11-May 12
 Time: 10am-8pm



Architectural Exhibition

Featuring works by the 1st year student, Dept of Architecture, BUET
 Title: Swakritia
 Venue: Alliance Francaise de Dacca, 26, Mirpur Road, Dhanmondi
 Date: April 9-13
 Time: 10am-12pm, 5-8pm



Solo Art Exhibition

Title: Lyrics of Line
 Artist: Sanat Kar
 Venue: Bengal Gallery of Fine Arts, H 275/F, Rd 27 (Old), Dhanmondi
 Date: April 3-14
 Time: 12-8pm



35th Anniversary of RCSC

Organiser: Russian Centre of Science and Culture
 Venue: RCSC, H 42, Bhasha Shoinik MA Matin Road (Rd 7), Dhanmondi
 Date: April 12
 Time: 6:30pm



Shah Abdul Karim



By the river Kalni...

JAMIL MAHMUD, back from Sunamganj

Shah Abdul Karim is one of the most recognised and celebrated baul icons of his time. He was born into a financially strained family in one of the most remote villages, Ujan Dhal, under Derai upazilla of Sunamganj district. The bard, who turned 94 this year, was unable to join his birthday celebrations owing to several age-related ailments.

During a recent visit to his residence (on the occasion of the two-day 'Shah Abdul Karim Loko Utsab '09' arranged by the villagers and sponsored by banglalink), this correspondent found that for much of the time the nonagenarian remains asleep. His only son Shah Nur Jalal spoke on Karim's life and works as well as his current state.

Asked about Karim's present physical condition, Nur Jalal said that most of the time the bard remains in bed. He does not like being disturbed or talked to. Which is why, initially Nur Jalal had reservations about meeting us. After repeated requests, he escorted us to Karim's room. Nur Jalal tried to wake him up. An elderly woman, perhaps a caretaker, said that the bard might be up for a while in the afternoon.

After waiting, in vain, the whole afternoon for the 'Baul Samrat' to wake up, we decided to meander around the village and try to experience the ambiance that inspired the bard to pen several of his remarkable songs.

First we stopped at the bank of the



Bauls in song -- yearning for the spiritual.

PHOTO: MUMIT M

river Kalni, flowing by Karim's residence. The beautiful river is a landmark, dividing the landscape in two (the other part of the area is called 'Bhati Dhal'). During the monsoon, the horizon goes under water and becomes a 'haor' (huge lake). In the rainy season, boats are the lone source of communication in the locale. During the dry season, villagers cross miles of distance on foot from one village to another.

At the bazaar, some 15-minute walking distance from Karim's home, we discovered another honorific by which Karim is known. Many of his fellow villagers call him a 'Pir' (holy man)! Villagers even call his residence the 'pir bari'!

Greater Sylhet is famous not only for its saints but also for mystic bards like Radha Raman, Hason Raja, Shah

Abdul Karim and many others.

Karim's songs often address spirituality but employ everyday issues and incidents that the common villagers can relate to. It can be safely assumed that Karim wrote many songs sitting by the Kalni, watching boats drift by, fishing or contemplating the mysteries of nature. He must have observed homebound cowherds singing soulful 'bhatiali' at dusk. Some of Karim's creations deal with inter-religious harmony and the bard worries that it may not remain the same over the passage of time. Secularism in Shah Abdul Karim's songs is not forced but is rather intertwined with culture and celebrations.

There is a debate over the accurate number of Karim's compositions. It is widely known that Karim has composed around 1500 songs, which have

been compiled in six books. However, according to Bashiruddin Sarkar, who claims to be a disciple of Karim, the accurate number is close to 2000. Then there are some who say that it's not over 600.

A great confusion has always surrounded the authentic number of Lalon songs as well. Lalon passed away over a century ago and his contemporaries overlooked his works. Shah Abdul Karim is still alive and it is absolutely possible to collect and preserve the whole collection of his songs to avoid further confusion in future.

On the first day of the music festival, Karim enthusiasts from different areas gathered at his home. They usually honour the bard with their music throughout the night. That night was a memorable one for us. The soiree, locally called 'ashor', took place at the music school run by Nur Jalal, and started around midnight. The soulful renditions soon captivated us. The 'ashor' not only featured Karim's songs but also compositions of many known and unknown bards. Many of Karim's lesser-known songs were also performed.

The use of instruments at the soiree deserves mention. A percussion, locally known as 'dopki', was the lone instrument accompanying the renditions unless a troupe of three or four musicians started singing with more common instruments like the harmonium and violin. Immersed in messages of Sufism and mysticism, the night passed and dawn knocked at the door unbeknown to the listeners.

Weeklong programme marking Bangla year-1416 begins

JASIM MAJUMDER, Khagrachhari

A week-long cultural programme to celebrate Bangla New Year-1416 began yesterday in various parts of Khagrachhari hill district. The organisers are government, non-government and socio cultural organisations.

In their ranks are the Khagrachhari District Administration; Khagrachhari Hill District Council (KHDC); Zilla Shilpakala Academy; Bangladesh Shishu Academy and Tribal Cultural Institute (TCI).

Baishabi, is the most important traditional festival for Chakma, Marma and Tripura communities in the hill districts.

Various NGOs have also organised cultural programmes to mark Pahela Baishak: among others are, Bangladesh Marma Unnayan Sangsad (BMUS); Bangladesh Marma Sanghathan Aikka Parishad (BMSAP); Bangladesh Tripura Kallyan Sangsad (BTKS); Bangladesh Buddhist Welfare Association (BBWA); ALAAM, Shantinagar Baul Samity; Chenghi Khelaghor and Konchi Kanchar Ashor.

As part of the Boishabi programme, Sammita Nagorik Samaj took out a rally on Saturday through the main roads of hill town Khagrachhari. Lawmaker from Khagrachhari constituency, Jatindra Lal Tripura inaugurated the week-long event.



An indigenous couple in traditional attire sitting on a cart take part in a rally.

PHOTO: STAR

Internet-based TV for children to inaugurate on Pahela Baishakh



The first ever Internet based television channel of the country, dugdugi.tv, officially starts its journey on Pahela Baishakh, according to a press release.

Children's Film Society Bangladesh and Multimedia Content and Communication are

jointly launching the channel, which is exclusively designed to broadcast programmes for children.

The TV channel will initially go on the Internet telecasting programmes made by children and for children. The organisers believe that, through the channel, children's interest will be upheld through films, etcetera, on them.

The owners hope that dugdugi.tv will help children's hidden talent to flourish. It will also create cultural diversity as an Internet-based channel through exchanging culture with other countries.

Within two years of inception, dugdugi.tv will go on satellite telecasting.

Int'l French Drama Festival '09 begins today

CULTURAL CORRESPONDENT

The second edition of the 'International French Drama Festival' begins today at the National Theatre Hall, Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy. The eight-day festival, which will feature eight French plays translated into Bangla, is also part of the 50th anniversary programme of Alliance Francaise de Dacca (AFD). AFD in association with Natukay Theatre and Fame School of Dance, Drama and Music, Chittagong has been organising the festival.

The festival gets underway today with the staging of 'Romeo et Jeannette' by Kalyani Kalamandalam of Kolkata. Santanu Das is the director of the play adapted from Jean Anouilh's work. Before the staging of the play, National Professor Kabir Chowdhury will inaugurate the festival, while Minister for Foreign Affairs Dipu Moni will be present as chief guest.

French artiste Simeo will perform a solo musical performance mixing theatre and music together on the second day.

Theatre troupe Natyachakra will stage 'Goar' on the third day. Translated from Moliere's work 'Le Misanthrope' by Professor Kabir Chowdhury, 'Goar' is directed by Golam Sarwar. Natukay will stage 'Now You See It' on the fourth day.

A seminar on 'Theatre Practice in Bangladesh and French Drama' will take place on April 17 at the venue. Bhaswar Banerjee will present the



A scene from the play "George Dandin."

keynote paper. As part of the festival, the organiser will honour Professor Kabir Chowdhury, Professor Sayeed Ahmed and Professor Zia Haider (posthumous) for their contributions to theatre.

Among other participating troupes, Fame School of Dance, Drama and Music will stage 'Neta' (adapted from Eugene

Ionesco) on April 18.

The organisers stated that the festival would highlight classics like works from Moliere and Eugene Ionesco as well as most contemporary French authors such as Georges Feydeau. "The festival is a part of the cultural policy of Alliance Francaise for the promotion of both French art and of Bangladeshi

talented artistes," said Jacques Bounin, deputy director, AFD. Of the eight plays of the festival, four will be performed for the first time in Bangladesh.

On the concluding day, awards will be handed out for the best staged plays at the festival. The first International French Drama Festival took place last year.

Variety Show Bibhrat on ntv

CULTURAL CORRESPONDENT

On Pahela Baishakh, the first day of the Bengali New Year, a special variety show, "Bibhrat" will be aired on ntv at 12:10 am.

Several eminent personalities of our cultural milieu such as Partha Pratim Majumder; Professor Abdullah Abu Sayeed; Bashir Ahmed; Ramendu Majumder; Mustafa Monwar; Mita Choudhury and others will be present on the show.

আন্তর্জাতিক ফরাসী নাট্য উৎসব '০৯
INTERNATIONAL FRENCH DRAMA FESTIVAL '09
 12-19 April 2009 at National Theatre, Shilpakala Academy, Dhaka

Today at 6:00pm Inauguration ceremony Jean Anouilh's Romeo et Jeannette Director: Santanu Das	Monday 13 April, 6:30pm Solo concert of SIMEO	Friday, 17 April, 7:00pm Jean Giraudoux's La folle de Chaillot Design & Director: Ashim Das
Wednesday, 15 April, 7:00pm Moliere's Le Misanthrope Director: Golam Sarwar	Thursday, 16 April, 7:00pm George Feydeau's Now you see it Design & Director: Ashim Das	Saturday, 18 April, 8:00pm Eugene Ionesco's The Leader Design & Director: Ashim Das
Sunday, 19 April, 6:30pm Moliere's: George Dandin Design & Director: Ashim Das	Closing Ceremony at 8:00pm	

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