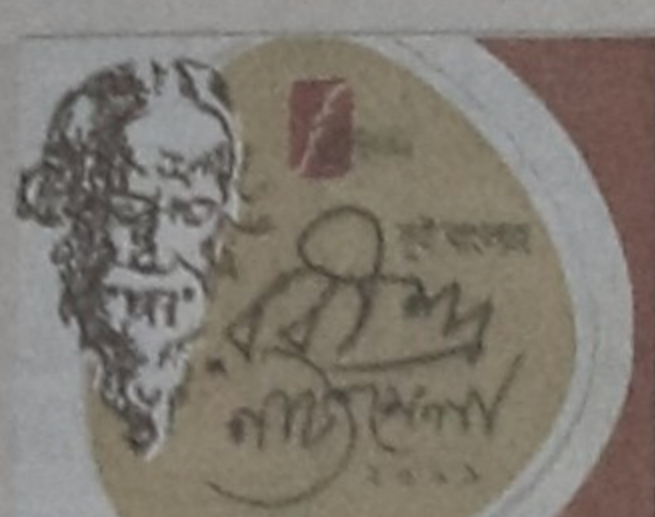
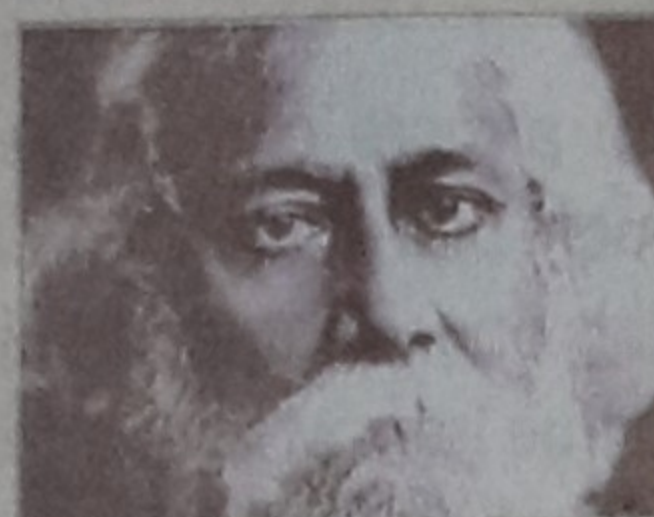


WHAT'S ON THIS WEEK

Rabindra Theatre Festival
Organiser: Pranganey Mor
Venue: National Theatre Hall, BSA
Date: May 1-8
May 6 at 6pm
Play: Khudhita Pashan
Troupe: Subachan Natya Shangsad



Jatiyo Rabindra Sangeet Utshab
Organiser: Bangladesh Rabindra Sangeet Sangstha
Venue: Shawkat Osman Auditorium, Central Public Library
Date: May 5-9
Inauguration at 6:30pm



Solo Art Exhibition
Title: Urban Delight
Artist: Kazi Salauddin Ahmed
Venue: Bengal Gallery of Fine Arts, H 275/F, Rd 27 (Old), Dhanmondi
Date: May 7-20
Time: 12-8 pm



Clay Art Exhibition
Title: Clay Art by Harappa
Organiser: Harappa
Venue: Drik Gallery, H58, Rd 15A (new), Dhanmondi
Date: May 2-8
Time: 3-8pm



20th Nat'l Rabindra Sangeet Festival begins



Over 100 Tagore artistes from and outside Dhaka are participating at the five-day festival.

CULTURAL CORRESPONDENT

With the slogan "Durjanerey Hano," the five-day '20th Jatiya Rabindra Sangeet Utshab' (National Rabindra Sangeet Festival) began at the Shawkat Osman Auditorium, Central Public Library on May 5. The annual programme, organised by Bangladesh Rabindra Sangeet Shilpi Sangstha (BRSSS), marks the 148th birth anniversary of Rabindranath Tagore. Over

100 Tagore artistes from and outside Dhaka are participating in the programme. The highlight of the first day's programme were solo and group performances.

The day's programme commenced with a rendition of the National Anthem. This was followed by choral renditions of "Akash bhora shurjotara" and "Byartha praner aborjona" by the artistes of BRSSS. A brief inaugural ceremony came next. In his welcome speech, Tapan Mahmud, general secretary, BRSSS, introduced a seven-

point agenda to create a favourable environment for the practice of Rabindra Sangeet. The list of demands also included the establishment of a Rabindra Academy and mandatory musical programmes on Rabindra and Nazrul anniversaries at all educational institutions.

Chief guest A.A.M.S. Arefin Siddiqui, vice chancellor, Dhaka University, formally inaugurated the programme. Nazrul exponent Sudhin Das, also an advisor to BRSSS, presided over the session. In the course of the

programme, the organisers felicitated noted 'tabla' artiste Md. Shahjahan for his contribution to music. Shahjahan has been involved with several musical institutions and had the rare distinction of performing alongside legendary singers Kanika Bandopadhyay, Hemanta Mukharjee, Manna Dey and many others. He has been involved with music for the last four decades.

After the inaugural, the musical soiree resumed. Aditi Mohsin rendered "Ratri eshey jethaye meshey."

Nafisa Rahman and Steve Turjo (from Faridpur) rendered "Amar praner porey" and "Tomar khola hawaye" respectively.

Rabeya Akhtar and Sima Sarkar's performance of "Ei korechho bhalo," and "Shey din amaye bolechhiley" came up next.

Among others, Tipu Chowdhury, Liton Chandra Baidya, Rita Majumdar, Lili Islam, Ashok Saha, Mahiuzzaman Chowdhury and Shanchita Mitra performed on the first day.

Artistes of Surtirtha and Bishwabina performed group songs at the programme. Their renditions included "Nitya shatye chintan," "Taharai aarti korey" and "Shundor boty tobo." Yesterday (May 6), an open discussion on different aspects of Rabindra Sangeet from the contemporary point of view was held prior to the musical soiree.

Today, a similar discussion along with a musical soiree will be held at the venue. Tomorrow, on the occasion of Tagore's birth anniversary, a daylong programme will commence early in the morning. A documentary by Satyajit Ray on Tagore will be screened at 11:30am. Members of BRSSS will also celebrate the 86th birth anniversary of Tagore exponent and president of the organisation Kalim Sharafi.

Channel i's Rabindra Mela Kalim Sharafi to receive lifetime achievement award



Faridur Reza Sagar, (2-L) speaks at the press conference.

CULTURAL CORRESPONDENT

Channel i is holding a "Rabindra Mela" at its Tejgaon office to celebrate the 148th birth anniversary of Nobel laureate poet Rabindranath Tagore on May 8. The announcement was made at a press conference at the channel's Siddeswari office yesterday. Faridur Reza Sagar, managing director, Impress Television Ltd and Channel i, artist Hashem Khan, Shahidul Alam Sachchu, poet Asad Chowdhury and others were present at the conference.

This is the fourth "Rabindra Mela" by Channel i. Also, as part of Rabindra Jayanti celebration, Channel i will honour Tagore exponent

Kalim Sharafi with a lifetime achievement award. The veteran artiste will receive an amount of Tk 10,000 every month, as part of the award. Last year, Channel i honoured Tagore artist Ajit Roy with the award. Japan Bangladesh Friendship Hospital will also offer free medical services to Kalim Sharafi. The 'mela' will feature stalls on Tagore, performance by leading and noted Tagore artistes, poetry and works of Tagore and more.

The 'mela' will start from 11:05 am and will end at 5 pm. The event will be aired live on Channel i.

Apart from the 'mela,' Channel i will air special programmes marking Tagore birth anniversary throughout the day.

Swapnabhumi lauded in Bahrain festival



A scene from Tanvir Mokammel's "Swapnabhumi"

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA

Acclaimed Bangladeshi director Tanvir Mokammel is pleased that his film "Swapnabhumi" (The Promised Land) has been well received by the audience at the Second Bahrain International Film Festival, held from May 1 to 4.

"Swapnabhumi," a documentary on the plight of "Bihari" Muslims (also known as stranded Pakistanis) in Bangladesh, was the only entry from the country at the festival where the director and the researcher, co-producer of the film Shafiqur Rahman were present.

The festival screened 35 films from 24 coun-

tries and the film, which received the best human rights documentary award, was the Chinese short film "PLEASE VOTE FOR ME."

This was the second edition of the Bahrain International Film Festival and the organisers plan to hold the festival every year, the only event of its kind in the Gulf region.

Returning from Bahrain, Mokammel will travel to Kolkata to edit his documentary on 1971 with Mahadeb Shi.

The filmmaker is also busy showing his previous feature, "Rabeya," made in the backdrop of the Liberation War.

The much-awaited retrospective of Mokammel's feature and documentaries in Delhi is likely this month-end but there is no official confirmation on the dates.

Conveying a social message

"Tantra Bilas" staged in Pabna

AHMED HUMAYUN KABIR TOPU, Pabna

'Pabna Drama Circle', a leading Pabna-based theatre organisation, presented a play 'Tantra Bilas', at the Pabna community centre on May 4. This is the 37th production of the organisation after it was established in 1981, said Gopal Sannal, president of Pabna Drama Circle.

Managing director of the Universal Group Sohani Hossain inaugurated the play by lighting candles. Over 300 candles were lit around the stage, symbolising the need for an enlightened society. President of Pabna Drama Circle Gopal Sannal chaired the opening ceremony while several cultural activists spoke on the occasion.

The speakers stressed the importance of theatre. As they said, "Theatre presents an authentic picture of society complete with its glaring



Actors of Pabna Drama Circle stage the play.

social inequity and irregularities. Theatre can generate awareness about social issues and also bring

about reform." And theatre, they asserted, has played a vital role in the nation's

history. "Theatre has played a vital role in society at different times. Theatre inspired our people to raise their voices against the occupation forces."

However, they went on to add, that stage plays are fast losing their appeal. The speakers also urged more theatre organisations to come forward and stage quality stage dramas.

Later, 'Tantra Bilas' was staged on the occasion. Firoz Khondoker and Mostafizur Rahman Russel directed the play. Among the artistes in the play were Firoz Khandaker, Mustafizur Rahman Rusel, Hasibul Hassan Rubel, Wahidul Kawsar, K S Morshed Ullas, Sinthia, Saiful, Azam, Aminul, Shishir and Tinni.

The play 'Tantra Bilas' presents the psychology of people oppressed by various rulers. The play was a clarion call for rulers to work not for self interest but for the welfare of the masses.

Theatre

Be-Libaas: Power equations in society

KAVITA CHARANJI, New Delhi

A recently staged play in Delhi, "Be-Libaas" (The Naked Truth), does not present a pretty picture of relationships. Instead it poses a number of disquieting questions about power politics in society -- be it in the office, neighbourhood or even at home. Quite often it is women who are victimised but sometimes the women are the exploiters.

Thus at the beginning of the play we have a garishly dressed village woman making advances and finally seducing a village simpleton. On the other hand, a man returns home to find that everyone is out, except for an attractive maid. Proceeding slowly by getting her to sit with him and have

a cup of tea, he finally forces himself on her.

Then there is a girl in who arrives at her neighbour's door ostensibly to seek a loan for her father. Actually, she has been sent by her father to earn money for sex -- the real intent hidden. This becomes evident only at the end of the scene when the father tells the occupant that he was not pimping his daughter for just Rs 50 and that the occupant is a 'namard' or impotent.

As we know, the office can be a hotbed of sexual politics. Twice over a steno is sacked when she rebuffs the boss -- in one case a young man and in the other an old fogey. Finally at the advice of her hardheaded friend, she decides to be more worldly wise and play along. This time, ironically she

gets the sack for being "loose and immoral."

So where does that leave the exploited?

"Be-Libaas" was staged by IPTA, a well-known theatre group dedicated to meaningful and socially relevant theatre. Says Aziz Quraishi, director of the play, "Be-Libaas" is a reflection of life and relationships between men and women in some social situations. The message is that exploitation can and does take place on the perceived weaker sections of society. It is a wake up call to all human beings who see and know and about this and yet do not act or raise their voice against this victimisation." Quraishi does not force a judgement on this delicate issue. As he says, "It is up to the viewer to decide whether it the women who

are mostly exploited."

For the bulk of women in our society, the answer would be a resounding "yes." How many times have women been raped, suffered domestic violence, sexual harassment and gender inequality? How long before they are heard and able to shake off the fetters that have been imposed on them by men? By making the viewer pause and think about such issues, IPTA has definitely chosen a vital theme -- a change from the slapstick plays that pass as theatre.

IPTA's latest production, "Aetraaf-E-Ghalib" (Confessions of Ghalib), will have 10 shows all over India, while "Be-Libaas" will also go to various parts of the country. Here's hoping for more such hard-hitting fare from this leading theatre group.



"Be-Libaas" poses a number of disquieting questions about power politics in the society.