

WHAT'S ON THIS WEEK

Theatre Festival
To celebrate Abdullah Al Mamun birth anniversary
Organiser: Theatre
Venue: Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy
Date: July 10-17
Time: 6.30pm onwards



Rabindra Festival
Organiser: Chhayanaout
Venue: Chhayanaout
Sanskriti Bhaban, Dhanmondi
Date: July 17-18
Time: 10am (1st day), 6pm (2nd day)



Solo Art Exhibition
Title: Pahariya Pathay
Artist: Shohag Parvez
Venue: La Galerie, Alliance Francaise of Dhaka
Date: July 3-16
Time: 9-12am & 5-8pm

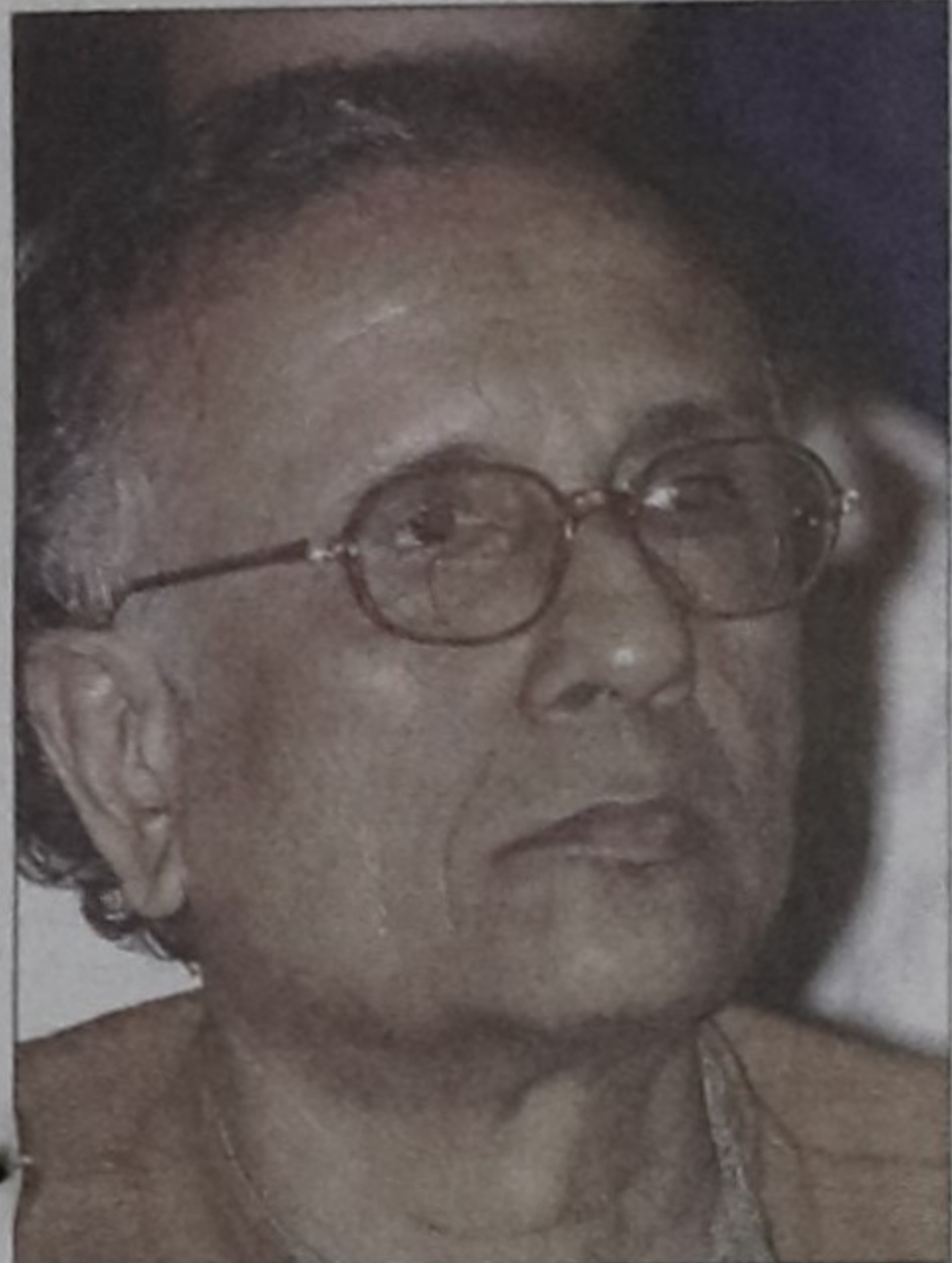


Concert: Tribute to King of Pop
Organiser: Old School
Venue: Bangladesh China Friendship Conference Centre
Date: July 18
Time: 7pm



Mamun's plays in new light

An overview of the festival celebrating birth anniversary of the theatre icon



Ramendu Majumdar
CULTURAL CORRESPONDENT

"The objective of this festival is to generate interest in Mamun's plays among this generation of directors, actors, theatre activists and enthusiasts," says noted theatre personality and president of ITI, Ramendu Majumdar on the ongoing Abdullah Al Mamun birth anniversary celebration at Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy (BSA).

The event has been jointly organised by Theatre and BSA. Highlight of the festival being nine plays written by Mamun.

So far 'Spordha' (a Theatre production), 'Shapath' (BSA), 'Subachan Nirbashoney' (Rupankar), 'Bibisab' (Palakar) and 'Shenapati' (Centre for Asian Theatre) have been staged. Two short plays -- 'Tritio Purush' by Department of Theatre and Music, Dhaka University and 'Mike Master' by Theatre -- will be staged today. Tomorrow Nagarik Natya Samparadaya will stage 'Ekhn Duhsamay.' The

festival will wrap up on July 17 with Theatre staging its much-acclaimed, popular production 'Meraj Fakir-er Ma.'

Though some of the plays being staged at the festival are overly familiar, others 'haven't received much exposure in the last couple of decades,' says Majumdar.

According to him, "Prior to this festival, 'Spordha' was last staged 5/6 years ago. Theatre staged 'Shapath' in Pakistan era." Another interesting aspect is that young directors (who have not directed Mamun's plays before) are presenting some of these plays in new light. "Subachan Nirbashoney," directed by Nadejda Farzana Mousumi; "Bibisab," by Aminur Rahman Mukul and "Mike Master" by Farhad Zaman Polash, for example.

When selecting Mamun's plays for the festival, Theatre invited other troupes to share their views and preferences. Troupes like Nagarik Natya Samparadaya, Rupankar and Centre for Asian Theatre selected plays they were keen on.

Apart from plays, the celebration also includes screening of three feature films -- "Sareng Bou," "Ekhn-i Shomoy" and "Dui Jibon" -- directed by Mamun. Also being screened are an award-winning documentary "Ferdousi Majumdar: Jibon O Abhinoy" and "Muktijuddhey Chattagram" (a 10-episode yet-to-air documentary Mamun made in 1987/'88 for BTV).

"Mamun" (directed by Dildar Hossain) and "Dhruvotara" (by Nadejda Farzana Mousumi) -- two documentaries on the theatre icon -- are also part of the celebration programme. The films are being screened at the Studio Theatre, BSA.

The response has been overall encouraging, says Ramendu Majumdar. The films and documentaries are being screened at 5pm on weekdays, hence not drawing a full house. The organisers have decided to screen "Sareng Bou" at the National Theatre Hall, BSA so that it gets a bigger audience, according to him.

"I'm impressed with the response. We'll certainly try to hold this festival annually," Majumdar says.

Bibisab: A woman going beyond gender roles



Actors of Palakar in a scene from "Bibisab."

PHOTO: MUMIT M

JAMIL MAHMUD

Abdullah Al Mamun plays invariably have powerful social messages and "Bibisab" -- set in the Old Dhaka -- is no different. As part of the ongoing festival to celebrate Mamun's birth anniversary (organised jointly by Theatre and Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy), theatre troupe Palakar staged the play at the National Theatre Hall, BSA on July 13.

Young directors Aminur Rahman Mukul and Shahriar Khan Rintu took the challenge to bring to the stage a remarkable character created by Mamun: a loud,

foul-mouthed, yet compassionate 'Bibisab'. Bibisab aka Mariam Bibi is a woman who runs a rickshaw garage somewhere in Old Dhaka.

Bibisab lost her husband and children during the Liberation War. Come hell or high water, she never gives up. The garage is her only source of income. Her dirt-poor neighbours, most of who have come from villages, rent rickshaws from Bibisab's garage on per-day basis. Billal looks after the garage and assists Bibisab.

Bibisab's acid tongue and larger than life valour are part of her defence mechanism. She has to be bold and loud to compete with men in her

male-dominated society. She may appear to be a shrew but she is not dishonest. Her benevolence towards her poor neighbours, helping them whenever she can, demonstrates her well-placed sensitivity, just the opposite of Bashiruddin Mollah.

Mollah, an influential resident of the area, is a crafty, self-seeking individual. His palatial house is behind Bibisab's garage. Mollah calls the garage "an eyesore" and continually hatches plans to wipe out the garage from the area. But a born-survivor Bibisab never budes. She and her garage stay put.

This conflict, however, goes way back. The audience gradually discov-

ers that during the Liberation War, Mollah was a collaborator of the Pakistani army and was instrumental behind the killings of Bibisab's husband and children.

The much-discussed issue of the trial of war criminals is the highlight of the play. Jelly, Shahriar, Liku and Nuri played the central roles. Aniket Paul designed the set that resembled a real rickshaw garage. Ajay Das did the music, most of which featured a lone 'dotara' recital in a mellow mood.

This evening, Department of Theatre and Music, Dhaka University will stage "Tritio Purush" followed by Theatre's "Mike Master."

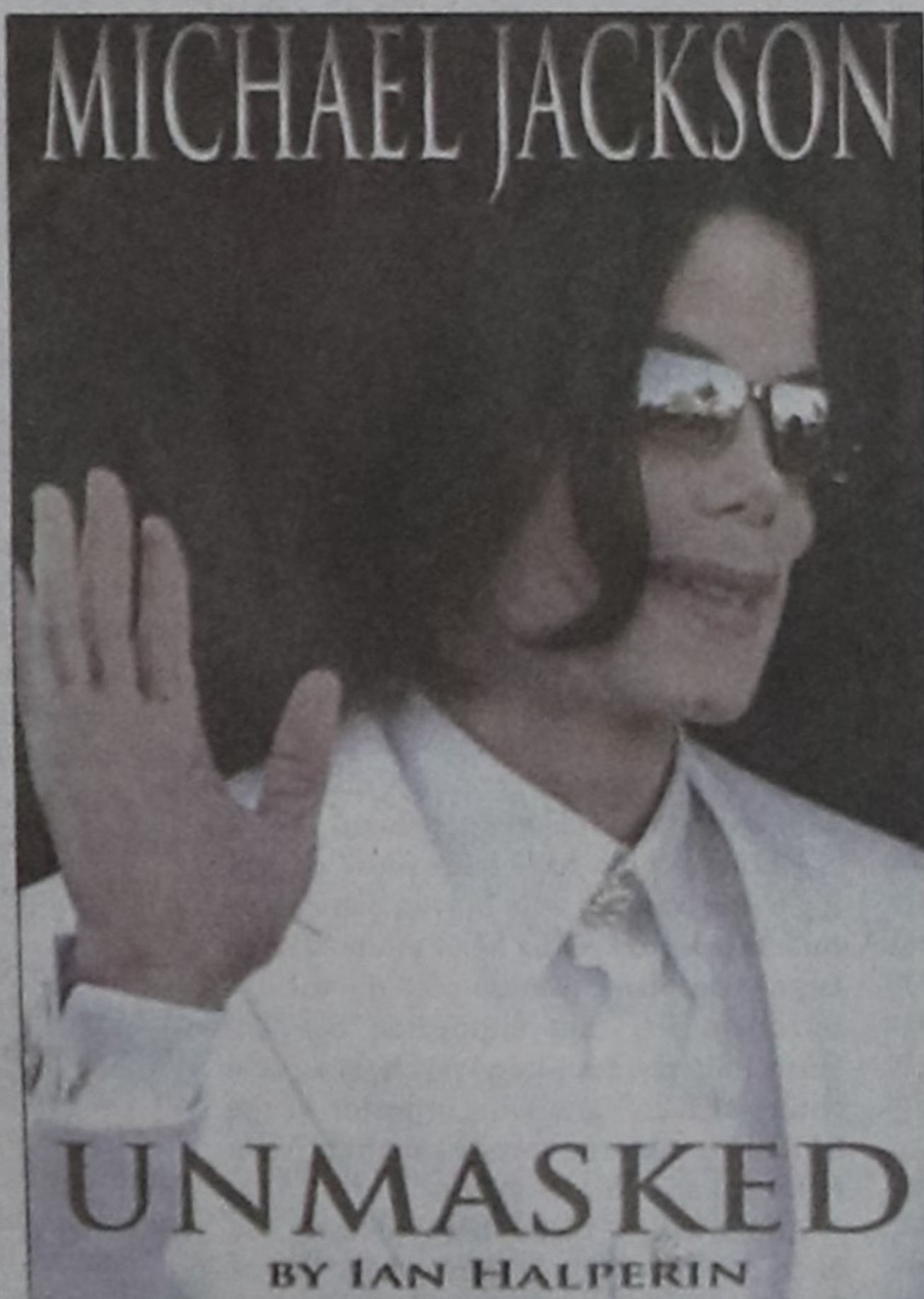
Unmasked: Jackson told daughter he was dying

"Unmasked" by Ian Halperin is a sympathetic portrait of Michael Jackson that explores Jackson's prescription drug use, ties to Scientology, multiple plastic surgeries, skin bleaching and the lineage of his three children. In this excerpt, Halperin writes about Jackson's waning health in the months leading up to his death.

Before long, however, 10 concerts had turned into 50 and the potential revenues had skyrocketed. But those who knew Jackson best knew he was in no shape to perform 10 shows, let alone 50. "We knew it was a disaster waiting to happen," said one aide. "I don't think anybody predicted it would actually kill him but literally nobody believed he would end up performing."

Meanwhile, everybody around him noticed that Jackson had lost an astonishing amount of weight in the months leading up to the London concerts. His medical team even believed he had become anorexic. "He goes days at a time hardly eating a thing and at one point his doctor was asking people around him if he had been throwing up after meals," one staff member revealed in May. "He suspected bulimia but when we said he hardly eats any meals, the doc thought it's probably anorexia nervosa. He seemed alarmed and at one point said, 'People die from that all the time. You've got to get him to eat.'" Indeed, one of the known consequences of anorexia is cardiac arrest. This is what killed another iconic pop singer, Karen Carpenter, who admitted to suffering from anorexia shortly before her

death in 1983. For the first time, those in Jackson's inner circle began to urge him to cancel the shows, but their pleas fell on deaf ears. "There was just too much money at stake," recalls one aide. "The people who had his ear told him he would be a laughingstock if he cancelled."



They had to have known he was in no shape to go on, he was so frail, he kept cancelling rehearsals. We wondered if somebody was going to cash in whether or not he performed. It just didn't make any sense. I know his family was concerned, especially his

brother Jermaine, but Michael was kept very isolated during those last weeks."

One of Jackson's closest friends claimed a month before Jackson died that Michael told his daughter Paris he only had weeks to live. "He called her into his room and told her not to get

wanted to make sure he didn't bail on the London gigs."

Although the financial details of his arrangement with AEG won't fully emerge until the estate is settled in 2010 and beyond, most of Jackson's long-time inner circle suspect that the people who had the most to benefit from the London concert were those associated with the complex web of businesses associated with Tohme, including the giant real estate firm Colony Capital LLC. Colony Capital had saved Neverland from foreclosure more than a year earlier by purchasing a \$23.5 million credit note in a deal brokered by Tohme. Somehow this action allowed Jackson to retain his prized estate.

On May 20, 2009 concert organisers suddenly announced that the first London concerts had been delayed for five days while the remainder have been pushed back until March 2010. At the time, they denied that the postponements were health-related, explaining that they needed more time to mount the complex technical production, though scepticism immediately erupted among ticket holders. Their doubts were well placed.

Behind the scenes, Jackson's mental and physical health was rapidly deteriorating. According to a member of his household staff, he was "terrified" at the prospect of the London concerts.

He wasn't eating, he wasn't sleeping and when he did sleep, he had nightmares that he was going to be murdered. He was deeply worried that he was going to disappoint his fans.

Source: Internet

Vibrant cultural programme by Shishu Mela

KONGKON KARMAKER, Dinajpur

The Dinajpur Shishu Academy (Children's Academy) organised a three-day 'Shishu Mela' at its complex in Dinajpur recently. The objective was to focus on school children's rights to better education and health care.

Mohammad Abdul Jalil, Deputy Commissioner of Dinajpur, inaugurated the festival as chief guest while Dilip Kumar Bonik, Additional Deputy Commissioner, was special guest at the programme.

Around 2,000 students from 30 schools in the district participated in the celebration, which combined fun with creativity. Among the high points of the Mela were traditional rural sports, quiz,



Young participants at the programme.

art and cultural competitions. The cultural programmes included solo Tagore and Nazrul songs and a drama competition.

The organisers also screened short films on diverse subjects such as environment for the benefit of the

assembled children.

On the concluding day, Dilip Kumar Bonik, Additional Deputy Commissioner, of Dinajpur, thanked the parents and said that such programmes not only fuel the imagination of students but also inculcate discipline and

harmony.

The chief guest handed over prizes to the lucky winners of the competitors. The curtains came down with a colourful cultural programme performed by the students, much to the delight of the audience.

Tribute to 'King of Pop' Concert in Dhaka on July 18

CULTURAL CORRESPONDENT

Old School will be holding a musical tribute to the 'King of Pop' Michael Jackson at the Bangladesh China Friendship Conference Centre on July 18. Several popular and upcoming singers and bands will cover some of Jackson's biggest hits. Among the artistes/bands scheduled to perform are: Renaissance, LRB, Artcell, Black, Fahmida Nabi, Miles, Elita, Laura, Mehreen, Metal Maze, Milla, Old School, Radio Active, Shunno and Topu.

The nearly three-hour show will wrap up with all-star performance of "We are the World."

ATN Bangla, amadergaan.com, the daily Ittefaq and Radio Foorti are the media partners of the event. Tickets will be available at the venue before the show.

The organisers would like everyone to light a candle honouring the legend, at the show prior to the concert.

Natyalay turns two

CULTURAL CORRESPONDENT

Natyalay, a young theatre troupe, observed its second anniversary on July 13 at Shawakat Osman Auditorium, Central Public Library in Shahbag.

Vice Chancellor of Dhaka University, Professor AAMS Arefin Siddique, was the chief guest at the programme. Eminent media personality M Hamid and secretary general, Bangladesh Group Theatre Federation (BGTF), Jhuna Chowdhury were special guests. The programme started an hour late.

In his speech, Professor Siddique said, "We must uphold our culture and our education system should encourage cultural practices and generate interest in this regard -- grooming youngsters into enlightened citizens."

M. Hamid spoke on the history of the theatre movement in Bangladesh. Jhuna Chowdhury, congratulated the troupe's efforts. ABM Fazlul Haq, adviser, Natyalay, presided over the function.

Members of Natyalay performed dance and staged a play, titled "Beyadobi Maaf Korben," scripted and directed by Siraj Hyder and Habib Sarker, respectively.

The troupe's performance, however, seemed not up to the mark -- perhaps due to insufficient rehearsals. Improper Bangla pronunciation of the actors also marred the performance.