

WHAT'S ON THIS WEEK

Solo Art Exhibition
Title: Sensation Within
Artist: KMA Quayyum
Venue: Bengal Gallery of Fine Arts, H 275/F, Rd 27 (old), Dhanmondi
Date: July 24-August 4
Time: 12-8pm



Solo Art Exhibition
Artist: Misako Kobayashi (Japan)
Venue: Zainul Gallery, Faculty of Fine Arts, DU
Date: August 1-6
Time: 2-8pm



Documentary Screening
Film: Bayannor Michhiley
Venue: Shahid Zia Auditorium, National Museum
Date: August 5
Time: 7:00pm



Art Exhibition
Title: Shishu Chitro Prodorshoni 2009
Organiser: Zainul Abedin Art School
Venue: National Museum, Shahbagh
Date: August 2-4
Time: 12-8pm



Down memory lane with a veteran artiste

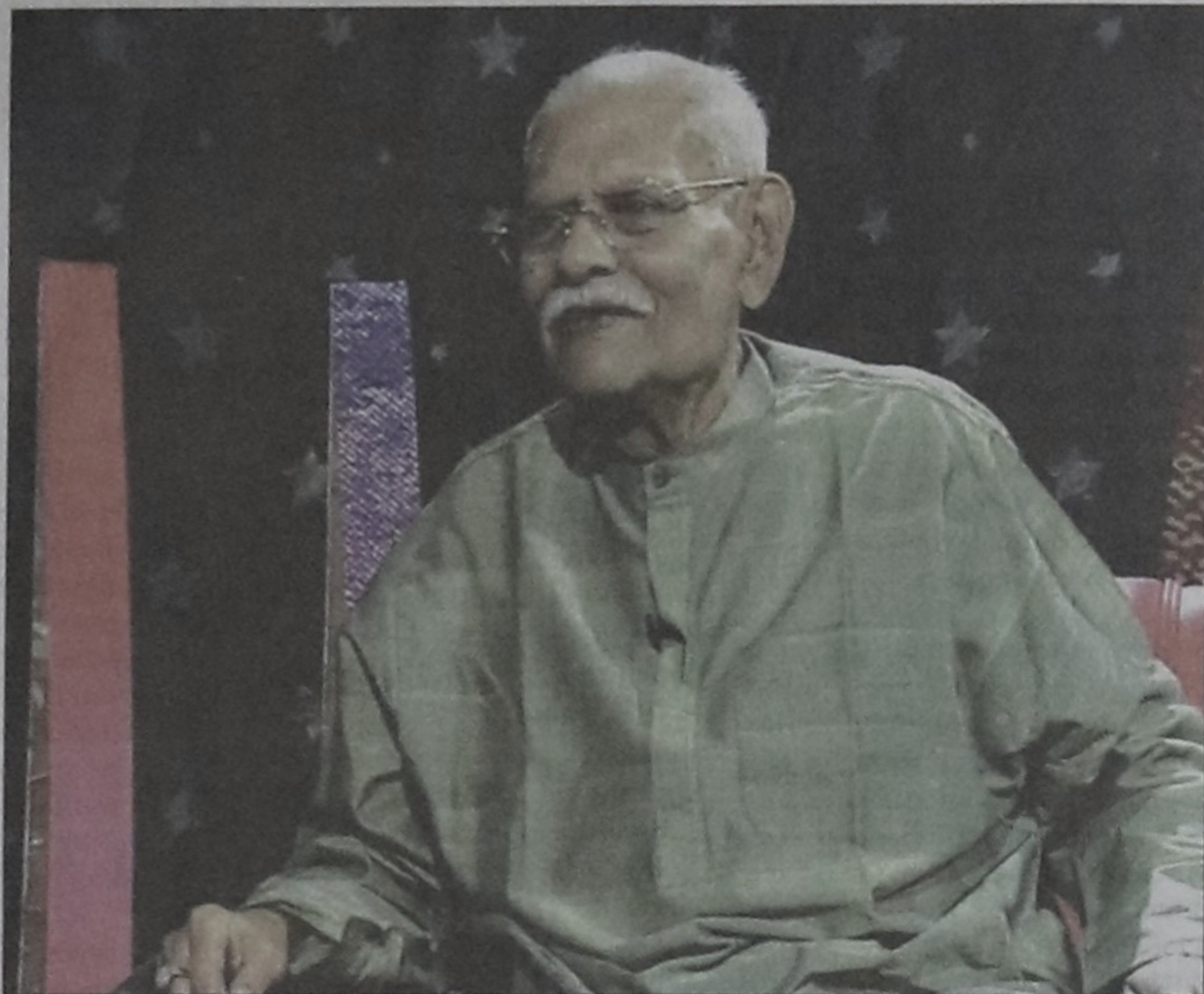
In conversation with Sirajul Islam

SADYA AFREEN MALICK

The present environment in the country's film industry has left Sirajul Islam, a veteran actor-director, with little option but to quit films. In the year 2000 he acted in the film *Ami Bou Hobo*, directed by Hasmat, after which he has not set foot at the FDC Film Development Corporation (FDC). "Possibly this is one of the very few countries without a film institute, although there is no lack of potential," says a flustered Siraj.

Khan Ataur Rahman, Zahir Raihan, Subash Dutta and others have tried at different times to develop an institute with the help of the producers association, but all in vain. Siraj's journey started way back in the mid-1940s. He talks of a time when the entertainment world centred on the radio and theatre and the film world was in its infancy. "It was the time right after Partition when many crossed the border, creating a vacuum in the cultural field. The radio station was the stepping stone for many theatre professionals," he adds.

Theatre in Bangladesh took root in the 60s and progressed in leaps and bounds during the 70s. According to him, there was a spontaneous inspiration to develop theatre in every community, in Dhaka. This was mostly arranged by collecting funds from affluent community members. It was a time when it was unimaginable to think about women practising songs and dance numbers even in the confines of one's



Sirajul Islam

household. However, gradually, women took active roles in the cultural field, asserts Siraj.

"The railway institute, then known as Mehboob Ali Institute, situated right beside the present National Medical Hospital, was the hub of cultural activities," reminisces Siraj.

"A raised platform at the Natmondir served as an ideal stage. Despite the humble settings, eminent theatre artists from Kolkata such as Tripti Mitra, Shambhu Mitra, Sattya Banerjee and others would often come to perform in Dhaka.

"There were no designated rehearsal locations and so

rehearsals were often held in different households. Even though the locations were different there was one commonality -- the scrumptious *khichuri* at the end of the final rehearsal!" continues the veteran actor with a wry smile.

He points out that the theatre groups of the country were divided into main four main groups. The one led by Kazi Khaleq originated at Aga Sadek Road. The second belonged to the secretariat group, comprising government officials. Pathak Mujibur Rahman, Kafi Khan, Enam Ahmed belonged to this group, which originated in the Plassey Barrack.

The third group comprised Al Mansur, Rahima Khala, Abdul Jabbar Khan, Mehruz and others of Kamalapur. The fourth group originated in the old town, where Narayan Ghosh Mitra, Purunima Das and others assembled. Theatre trend was still quite insignificant. Later, initiators in this field Abdul Jabbar Khan, Nurul Momen, Ashkar Ibne Shaikh and Munier Chowdhury fortified this art form.

Among the 300 or more films in which he starred, *Raja Elo Shohore*, (his first feature film) and *Sheet Bikel* are two of Siraj's noteworthy films. *Kena Bechar Pala* and *Fa(n)sh* are his memorable stage

plays.

Alongside theatre, there was the Film Development Corporation, better known as FDC. The film industry developed with the efforts of Ehtesham, Mashiuddin Shaker, Salauddin and Fateh Lohani, the torchbearers in this field.

There was little question of idolising any actor. As he says, "We had an original style. However, people would often call me Biswas *da*, referring to eminent actor Chhobi Biswas. Dr. Rowshan Ara, Nasima Khan, Joharat Ara, Lilly Khan and others were my co-stars. In the film *Mishore Konnya* I starred with Shameem Ara of Pakistan. That was the only time I had to shave off my moustache and when I returned home late at night after shooting, my wife almost fainted, taking me as a stranger knocking at the door at such unearthly hours."

Having worked in his heyday, Siraj is naturally critical of the current state of affairs -- lack of theatre space, unplanned settings, innovation, development of young playwrights and most importantly the lack of initiatives to train and nourish professionals.

Siraj has won the prestigious National Award for the film "Chandranath" in 1985. As he has retired as the director of Department of Films and Publication (DFP), his one dream that remains unfulfilled is to witness the revival of his beloved film-

The article was published earlier.

Lux-Channel i Super Star '09 launched

CULTURAL CORRESPONDENT

This year's "Lux-Channel i Super Star" pageant was launched yesterday. This instalment of the pageant offers more opportunities for the contestants, as the winner will earn an exclusive chance to take acting classes at an internationally recognised institute.

At a press conference held yesterday at the Winter Garden, Dhaka Sheraton Hotel, the organisers informed about the new campaign. Faridur Reza Sagar, managing director, Impress Telefilm Ltd; Naushad Chowdhury, brands and development director, Unilever Bangladesh Ltd and Aly Zaker, noted media personality and chief executive officer of Asiatic MCL spoke at the event on different aspects of the campaign.

Aly Zaker sees the campaign as a part of female empowerment, as through the pageant numerous young women from across the country will get a chance of a lifetime to realise their individual dreams.

Winners and participants of the pageant in

previous years have gone on to become successful in the media. Former winner Momo received a National Film Award for her debut work in "Daruchini Dwip" (directed by Tauquir Ahmed). Another winner Mim won a Meril-Prothom Alo Critics' Award.

The first "Lux-Channel i Super Star" was held in 2005. Shanarei Debi Shanu emerged as the lucky winner that year.

The registration for this year's campaign will run till August 20. The grooming session and preliminary round will start after the coming Eid-ul-Fitr. To register, interested individuals can call at 01841111111, or log on to www.luxchannelisuperstar.com.

Along with the international scholarship, the winner will also get a brand new car and a chance to play the lead role in a feature film. Noted author Syed Shamsul Huq will write the script of the film.

Radio Foorti is the media partner of the pageant. Bangladeshinfo and Aktel are the web and registration partners.



PHOTO: MUMIT M

Former Lux-Channel i Super Star contestants with the organisers.

Shaheed Kabir: An emerging Nazrul artiste

MAINUL HASSAN

Shaheed Kabir Polash belongs to a next generation of Nazrul singers. His first album "Pordeshi Badhua" was released in April, 2009 under the banner of Laser Vision. The album features 12 Nazrul songs.

Recently the singer spoke to The Daily Star (TDS) about his initiation to the world of music, challenges facing new artistes and other related subjects.

The Daily Star (TDS): How did you develop an interest in music?

Polash: I've had an affinity for music since childhood. Whenever I heard a song, I used to memorise it. I've always preferred Bengali songs. Because of my ardent interest, my family encouraged me to pick up the ropes of music.

TDS: Who were your gurus?

Polash: My first teacher was Ashwini Kumar, a seasoned Nazrul artiste. He is the who inspired me to turn my focus to Nazrul Sangeet. I was largely attracted by the diversity of Nazrul songs which embrace classical and folk-based music, Kirtan, Shyama Sangeet, Islamic songs (Hamd and Naat), and also the raagas created by Nazrul. In 1998 I sought admission to Nazrul Institute. There I trained under Nazrul exponents Sudhin Das and Sohrab Hossain.

TDS: What were the milestones in your musical career?

Polash: One of the turning points in my life was when I was a student of Class VII. My father took me to a inter-district musical contest organised by the Shishu Academy in Jamalpur. To my



PHOTO: MUMIT M

Shaheed Kabir

surprise, I emerged a winner. It was at that point that I decided to pursue a musical career.

TDS: What do you consider as your achievements?

Polash: I graduated with a first class first from the Bulbul Academy of Fine Arts (BAFA) in the Nazrul certificate course. After graduation I participated in an inter-country Nazrul Sangeet contest organised by the Nazrul Institute to celebrate the birth centenary of our National Poet. I came second in the contest.

I also took part in a talent hunt (in 2006) organised by Bengal Foundation. I won "Shreshtho Maan" in the 'Adhunik' category and

"Uttom Maan" in the 'Nazrul' category.

TDS: What challenges do emerging singers face in our country?

Polash: Every new artiste faces the challenge of getting necessary exposure. Sometimes even the most dedicated singer fails to get recognition, as production companies and recording studios are often reluctant to work with new singers. Often talented singers are forced to move away from their choice of genres and pursue the track of popular, mainstream music. The media can and should play a decisive, positive role in promoting upcoming artistes.

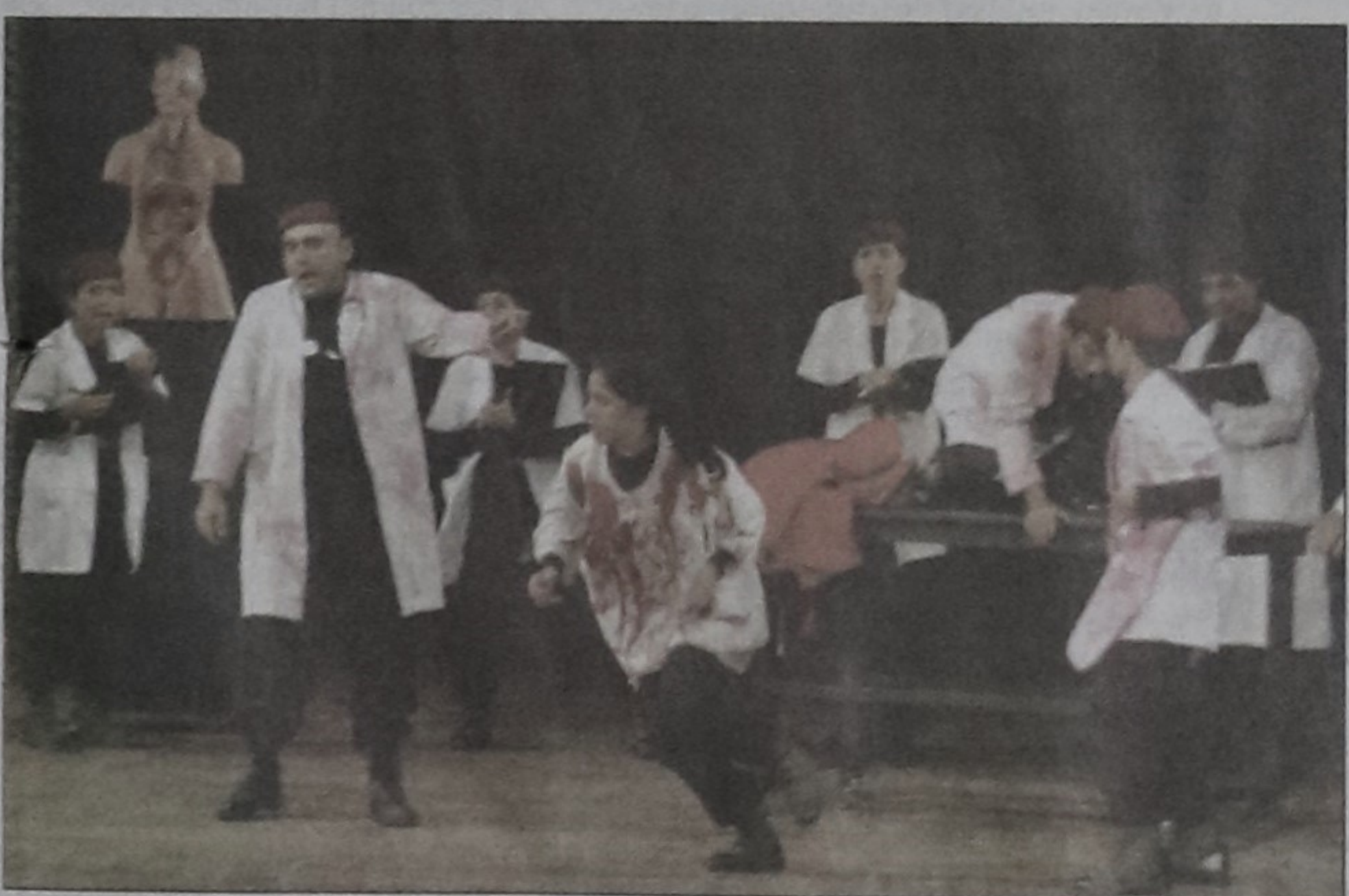


PHOTO COURTESY: BANGLARCHOKH.COM

Centre for Asian Theatre staged "Amputation" at the National Theatre Stage, Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy on August 2. The adaptation of Norwegian painter-dramatist-essayist-novelist Jens Bjørneboe's play, "Amputation" addresses the level of freedom an individual enjoys in a state under dictatorship. Kamaluddin Nilu directs the play.

Drama serial Johur Ali Jahuri on Ekushey TV

CULTURAL CORRESPONDENT

TV serial "Johur Ali Jahuri" will be aired on Ekushey TV tonight at 9:30 pm. The serial

is aired every Tuesday and Wednesday.

The story follows four families living in Old Dhaka. Jahur Ali Jahuri, a jeweller, is the patriarch of one of the

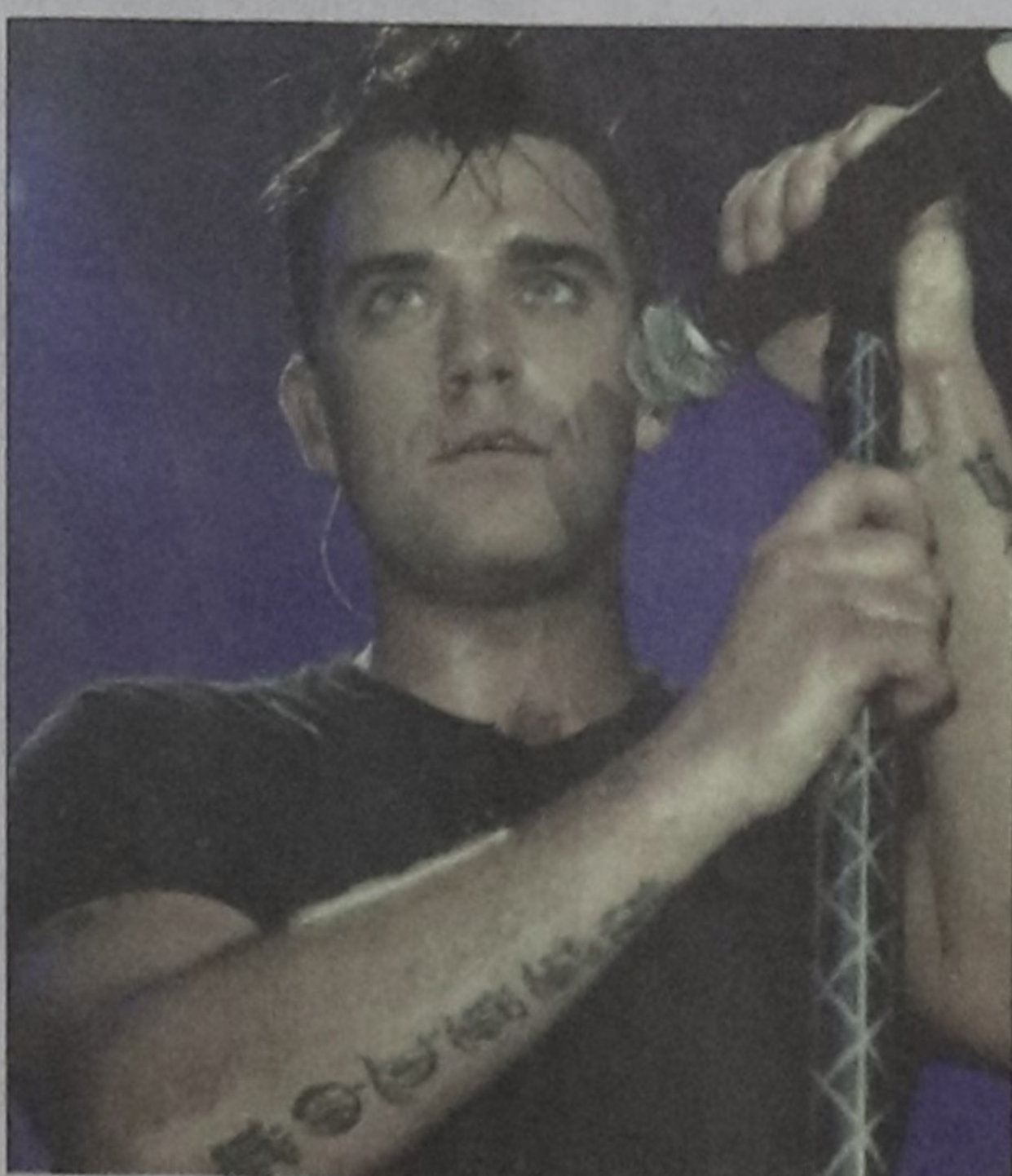
families. He is an expert in jewellery, also a palmist on the side.

Hira, Chuni and Panna are Ali's three daughters. Like Hira and Chuni, Panna, an educated young girl, does not believe palmistry and fortune telling.

Other three families are closely related to Ali's family. Old Dhaka lifestyle, heritage and everyday bliss, woes are depicted in the serial. Written by Khalilur Rahman, the serial is directed by Kaiser Ahmed. The cast includes Abul Hayat, Dolly Zahur, Anisur Rahman Milon, Litu Anam, Azizul Hakim, Kusum Sikdar and others.



Kusum Sikdar and Anisur Rahman Milon in the serial.



Robbie Williams to take over Jackson tour dates

Pop star Robbie Williams is set to make a comeback by filling up slots at the O2 early next year, left vacant by pop icon Michael Jackson's sudden death.

It is touted to be a dream comeback gig for the former member of boy band Take That. Williams has been out of the charts for three years after his last album flopped, Dailymail online reported.

Since then, the 35-year-old star has seen Take That return to the top of the charts, sell millions of albums and have the fastest-selling UK tour of all time. But with a new album out later this year, he is expected to take some of the dates that Jackson would have performed, with Whitney Houston and others.

"Robbie's eagerly-awaited album will be out soon and he is likely to be touring Europe next year. It will be perfect for him to start with shows at the O2," the Evening Standard quoted a source at O2's owner AEG as saying.

"Whitney Houston has been on the O2 arena wish for a while -- she has the voice and hits to sell the arena out several times over," the source added.

Williams is releasing a new album "Reality Killed the Video Star" in October, which would be his first since the 2006 flop "Rudebox."

Source: Internet