

WHAT'S ON THIS WEEK

Solo Art Exhibition
Artist: Masuda Kazi
Title: Small is Beautiful
Venue: Gallery Kaya, H-20, R-16, Sector-4, Uttara
Date: June 4-15
Time: 11am-8pm



Group Art Exhibition
Venue: Saju Art Gallery, D.C.C Market, Gulshan-2
Date: May 7-June 6
Time: 10am-8pm



Solo Photography Exhibition
Title: Soulscapes- Ontor Bhumi
Photographer: GMB Akash
Venue: Bengal Gallery of Fine Arts, H 275/F, Rd 27 (old), Dhanmondi
Date: June 1-10
Time: 12-8pm



Installation Exhibition
Title: Khachar Bhor Ochin Wrishi
Venue: National Art Gallery, Shilpakala Academy
Date: May 26-June 8
Time: 11am-7pm (Fridays 3-8pm)



GMB Akash's solo photo exhibition at Bengal Gallery

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Internationally renowned Bangladeshi photographer GMB Akash's solo exhibition "Soulsapes" begins today at the Bengal Gallery of Fine Arts, Dhanmondi in Dhaka.

Ambassador of Switzerland to Bangladesh Dr. Urs Herren is expected to inaugurate the ten-day exhibition as chief guest. Litterateur Hasnat Abdul Hai will attend the opening as special guest.

The exhibition will feature 42 recent photographs -- divided into six stories -- by Akash. The photographs were taken between 2007 and

2010. The exhibition will continue till June 10 and will remain everyday from 12 to 8 pm.

GMB Akash was born in 1977. He graduated in photography from Pathshala -- the South Asian Media Academy (then Photography Institute). In 2002, he was the first Bangladeshi to be selected for the World Press Photo Joop Swart Masterclass. Akash received the prestigious World Press Photo Award in 2006. He has bagged 40 international awards.

So far, Akash's photographs were published in over 50 international newspapers and magazines including Time, Sunday Times, Newsweek, The Economist, The Guardian and Sunday Telegraph.



Akash (2nd from left) at a press conference held at Bengal Gallery yesterday.

Movie Watch

Reliving Clinton and Blair's "Special Relationship"

Screenwriter Peter Morgan is having a great career in politics. With "The Queen," "The Deal," "The Last King of Scotland," "Frost/Nixon," and, now, "The Special Relationship," Morgan brings us into the living rooms and kitchens of larger-than-life figures such as Queen Elizabeth II, former British Prime Minister Tony Blair, and former US President Richard Nixon. He imagines their lonely moments, their tangled relationships, and their darkest fears, and then shows how those personal issues factor into world events as we know them. He writes small movies set in grand circumstances.

Obviously, Morgan has to impose storytelling methods onto non-fiction -- plot arcs, overarching themes, dialogue. For "The Special Relationship," about the rapport between Blair (played by Michael Sheen) and President Clinton (Dennis Quaid) during their years in office, he has imposed the notion of "bromance" onto the US-UK connection. This new HBO movie turns Blair and Clinton into long-distance pals who meet in 1996 and quickly bond over a game of squash -- squashing right-wing politics, that is. "Progressive centre-left politics is the future," Clinton says to Blair (long before the Bush presidency proved him wrong). It's a pat view of history, of course, as Morgan leaves out copious factual detail to stay focused on his heroes.

But "The Special Relationship" works well enough despite having been reduced and shaped. It's a miniature portrait of how political bonds can be created, and tested, and broken. Named after Winston Churchill's 1946 phrase for the US-UK relationship, the movie tracks Blair and Clinton through a number of important tests of their friendship, including the Monica Lewinsky scandal. Blair is morally offended by Clinton's adulterous behaviour and his lying, yet he's willing to stand by the man. "He's hardly bloody Milosevic," he says to

his advisors. Clinton was there for him when he needed help with upheaval in Northern Ireland.

The problems presented by stopping Yugoslavian President Slobodan Milosevic and his racial genocide are a much more difficult stumbling block for the pair. Blair pushes Clinton to agree to put US ground troops in Kosovo, and later takes his plea to the US media when Clinton resists. Clinton, already scarred by the Lewinsky scandal, never quite trusts Blair again, even while they and their wives, Hillary (Hope Davis) and Cherie (Helen McCrory), continue to socialise. Once Clinton spots the opportunistic and predatory streak hidden behind Blair's polite mien, he never takes his eye off it.

As Clinton, Quaid does a nice job of evoking the president without quite caricaturing him. He presents Clinton as a man of great appetite -- he always seems to be eating in the movie -- and as a broad, eccentric American who looks like a cartoon beside the reserved Brits. Hope Davis, too, manages to bring the former first lady to life without triggering "Saturday Night Live" flashbacks. She delivers Hillary Clinton's cackle without pushing it into parody, and she makes Hillary's cool tolerance of her husband's weakness appealing.

Sheen has played Blair twice before, and he does it well. The script, however, fails him early on by making Blair into too much of an innocent looking to President Clinton for mentoring. This makes sense on a dramatic level, as the audience sees Blair evolve across the movie and gain confidence and independence, but it challenges believability. The guy became prime minister, after all; surely he had some cynicism about politics before he met Clinton. No one gets to the top without it.

Source: Internet



"The Special Relationship" looks at the bond formed between former US President Clinton (Dennis Quaid, left) and former British Prime Minister Tony Blair (Michael Sheen).

Yet more Tagore memorabilia lie neglected

HASIBUR RAHMAN BILU, Bogra

More Tagore memorabilia, including a bank ledger, are lying neglected in Naogaon, Sirajgonj, Kushtia and Khulna districts because of the lackadaisical attitude of the Department of Archeology.

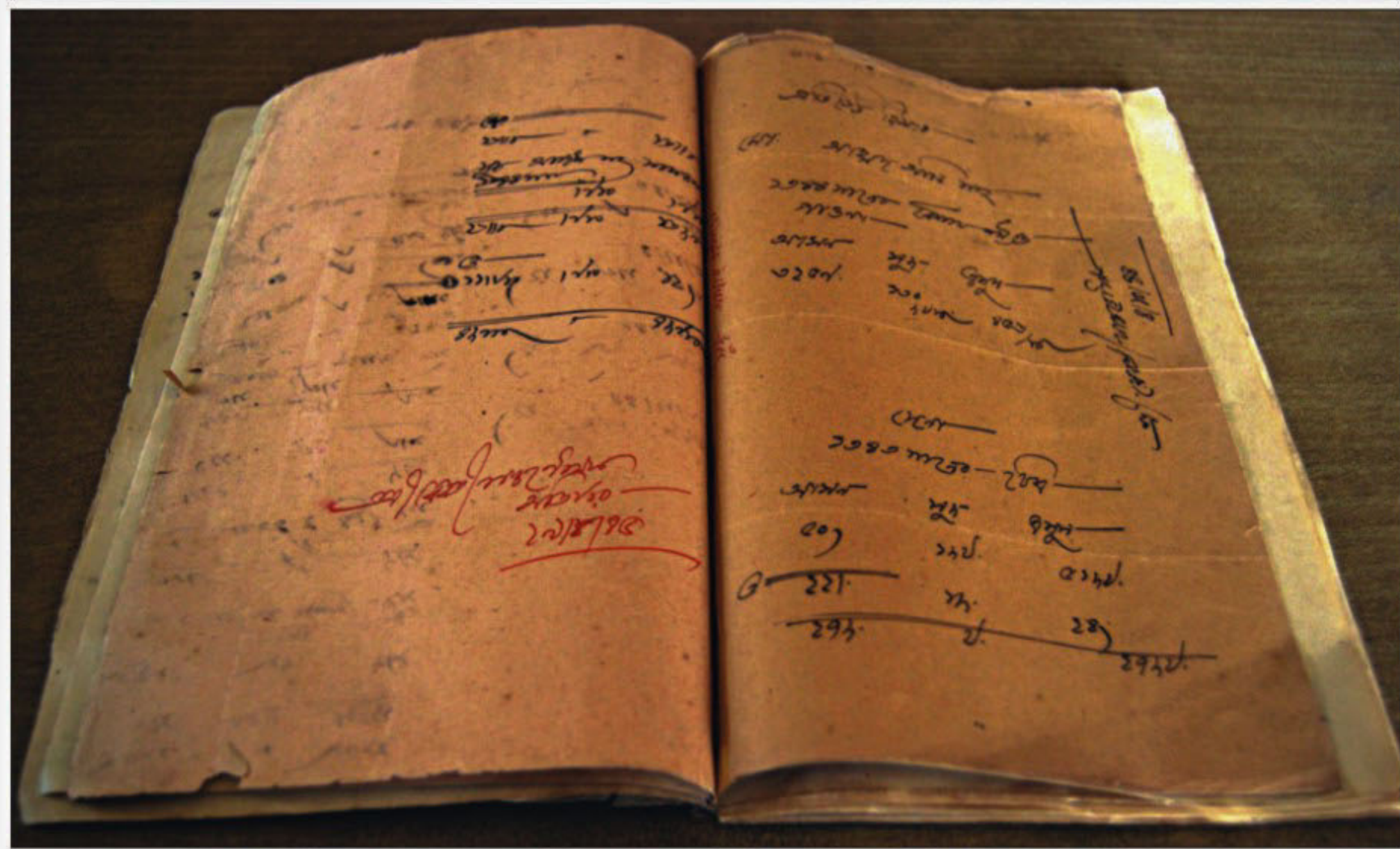
A senior official of the Department attributed this to a shortage of manpower and funds. He said that the Department had failed to collect Tagore memorabilia and protect the Nobel laureate's-in-law's house at Fultola in Khulna district along with a charitable dispensary at Shilaidaha village in Kumarkhali upazila of Kushtia district.

Tagore enthusiast M. Matiar Rahman Mamun of Patisar village in Atri upazila of Naogaon collected a rare bank ledger of Rabindranath Tagore from a college teacher Abdul Hamid on March 2009 and handed it over to the Deputy Commissioner (DC) of Naogaon on May 8, 2009.

Rathindranath Institute management at Patisar had also kept some letters of Tagore's son Rathindranath for long to hand over to the Department of Archeology but the Department was unresponsive.

Field Officer and Regional Director (RD), in-charge of the Department for Rajshahi Division, Mohammad Badrul Alam said that he would send a letter soon to the DC of Naogaon to hand over the bank ledger, which was used to maintain the accounts of Patisar Agriculture Bank and Shilaidaha Kuthibari estate. The bank was founded by the poet with his Nobel Prize money in the year 1905.

"Much Tagore memorabilia is lying uncared for in several upazilas in Naogaon and adjacent districts," said



This rare bank ledger of Rabindranath Tagore has been handed over to the DC of Naogaon on May 8, 2009.

M. Matiar Rahman Mamun, who had been assigned to collect missing Tagore memorabilia by the Department of Archeology about one-and-half year ago.

A Tagore manuscript has been left uncared for in Shahzadpur Pilot High School since pre-Liberation War era, said local journalist Bimal Kundu. The poet commented during his visit to the school on January 20, 1890.

"I have sent an official letter to the headmaster of the school to hand over the manuscript to the Department of Archeology for preservation," said Naheed Sultana, custodian, Shahzadpur Kacharibari Museum. The headmaster had received the letter a few weeks ago but had not yet handed over the manuscript, said sources.

Locals from Shilaidaha Kuthibari and adjacent areas of Kumarkhali upazila in Kushtia destroyed many structures, including a chari-



The facade of Tagore's father-in-law's residence at Dakkhindihi in Fultola upazila of Khulna district.

table dispensary built by the Nobel laureate poet.

Shihabuddin Mohammad Akbar, regional director, Department of Archeology, Khulna Division said that the government had undertaken a project worth Taka 23.80 lakh for the conservation of Tagore's father-in-law's residence at Dakkhindihi in Fultola upazila of Khulna district. Meanwhile the Department spent Taka 9.50 lakh for the construction work and maintenance of the protected site. The building was constructed in 1890 and the Department declared the site as protected in 2005.

Shihabuddin Mohammad Akbar confirmed that Rabindranath's great-grandfather lived at Pitabhoge village under Rupshaha upazila in Khulna. "Most of the structure has been ruined due to the lack of awareness of the locals but there is still a chance to dig out the ground plan," said Shihabuddin.

Indian Panorama Film Festival

Food for thought

KAVITA writes from Shimla, India

The otherwise culturally sleepy hill station of Shimla in North India came alive with the Indian Panorama Film Festival. Two films "Haat: The Weekly Bazaar" (directed by Seema Kapoor) and "Ijjodu" (directed by the well-known M.S. Sathyu) though separated in terms of language and locale had much in common. Both dealt with the exploitation of women, fallen victim to regressive custom and superstition.

In "Haat", based in Rajasthan (North India) we have a film which could have degenerated into tragic denouement. Instead, the heroine Sanja chooses to stand up for herself and fight against the horrific custom of 'Natha Pratha', whereby if a woman wants to leave a male figure in her life, she has to dole out a hefty compensation. If she is not able to do so, she faces complete degradation by having her face blackened and being paraded naked in front of the whole village. This humiliation does not extend to her husband

who can leave her at his whim and fancy. At the end of the film we have a heroine who has been through a trial of fire but refuses to go under. In the process she teaches the men of the village a lesson, helped by women elders who strip themselves to expose the cruelty and senselessness of a custom imposed by a patriarchal and exploitative society.

Would village women really be in a position to mobilise others? Divya Dutta, the actor who plays protagonist Sanja, believes so. And we really need to look at the powerful women's movements all round the world. In India, we have the Chipko (literally "to stick" in Hindi) where women from Uttar Pradesh were able to save forest wealth by the simple act of hugging trees to prevent them from being felled. Closer to Bangladesh, we have a number of women's groups that have enabled women to organise themselves and fight for their rights.

Chennai, the heroine of "Ijjodu" (made in Kannada, the language of Karnataka, located in South India) is less



A scene from the film "Ijjodu".

fortunate. She is a Devadasi, a woman who was "married" off and dedicated to a deity to save her village from being wiped out by a devastating epidemic. Her plight is made worse as Devadasis often end up becoming sex workers. A brief encounter with a high minded photo journalist changes her life as he advises her to start afresh. When despite his moralising, he

rejects her, she is driven to suicide.

At the end of the film, Sathyu took on questions from the audience. He pointed out that despite being banned in India, the Devadasi custom is still widely prevalent in Indian states such as Maharashtra, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Orissa.

On a somewhat startling

note, Sathyu asserted, "Lata Mangeshkar was made a Devadasi and therefore was not allowed to marry." A member of the audience gave him the benefit of the doubt by pointing out, "Lataji always said that she was married to her saangeet."

Whatever the controversies surrounding the two films, they certainly gave food for thought.