

WHAT'S ON THIS WEEK

Dhaka Int'l Film Festival
 Organiser: Rainbow Film Society
 Venue: National Museum & Central Public Library premises
 Date: January 14-22
 Time: 10:30am onwards



Theatre
 Play: Punarjanmo
 Troupe: Prachyanat
 Venue: National Theatre Hall, Shilpakala Academy
 Date: January 24
 Time: 6:30pm



Solo Art Exhibition
 Title: Staring Women
 Artist: Nazia Andaleeb Preema
 Venue: Bengal Gallery of Fine Arts, H 275/F, Rd 27 (old), Dhanmondi
 Date: January 15-26
 Time: 12pm-8pm



Classical Music and Dance
 Organiser: Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy (BSA)
 Venue: National Music and Dance Centre, BSA
 Date: January 20-21
 Time: 6pm



Groundbreaking

Shohag: A Bangladeshi narrative painter finds a foothold in Paris

TAKIR HOSSAIN

Bangladeshi expatriate painter Intiaj Islam Shohag has been working with determination to carve a niche in the Paris art scene. He has developed styles, which are mainly technique-based. Well-drawn figures also define his images. An interesting aspect of his works is

that they often highlight natural disasters and catastrophes. Though the artist now lives abroad, his umbilical cord with Bangladesh is still seemingly intact. Most of the themes of his paintings are derived from Bangladesh. Shohag's solo painting exhibition is now on at a cultural centre called GMBA Baker Tilly in Paris. Shohag's images pas-

sionately capture fragmented visions. The paintings are contemplative. He is keen on shapes and compositions, and the colours are vibrant. The painter works in encaustic medium, which uses heated wax -- coloured pigments are added to that. The paste is then applied to a surface, like wood or canvas. In ancient times this medium gained popularity

among the painters for its promptness. After a hiatus, the medium has seen a resurgence in popularity since the 1990s. Shohag's works usually depict natural catastrophes and manmade disasters in our surroundings. He is particularly concerned about the chaotic aspects of calamities such as cyclone, flood, earthquake and accidents. His works highlight the suffering of flood-affected people, sinking ships, damaged cars etc.

seem time consuming as well. Use of broken glass is another noticeable feature. Shards of glass are placed on the canvas as they give greater significance to his themes. The artist believes life is impacted by numerous incidents. Fragments indicate these incidents in our surroundings. In this sense, Shohag is a skilful storyteller. He is also a sensitive artist as he draws attention to the possibilities of extinction. Shohag's works also highlight a combination of contemporary geometric shapes and various abstract forms. The artist has used figures and motifs derived from his whimsical visions.



Clockwise (from top-left): *The Sleeping Boat, Royal Bengal Tiger in Heat Wave* and an untitled work by Shohag.

Theatre festival by Pabna Drama Circle



Actors of Pabna Drama Circle in a scene from "Agunmukha".

AHMED HUMAYUN KABIR TOPU, Pabna
 Pabna Drama Circle, a leading theatre organisation staged its 34th production in the district on Monday and Tuesday (January 18 and 19). The play "Agunmukha" was staged at Pabna Doel Community Centre Auditorium. The two-day long drama festival was inaugurated on Monday evening.

A discussion was held on the occasion. President of Pabna Drama Circle Pradip Shannal Gopal chaired the discussion. Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC) Md. Saidur Rahman inaugurated the festival. Among others, Assistant Superintendent of Police (ASP) Nizam Uddin, Assistant Commissioner Shafiqul Alam and social activist Binoy Jyoti Kundu spoke on the occasion. The speakers stressed the role of theatre in

generating awareness amongst the masses. Theatre movement enlightens the society. Drama is reflection of life. The bigger social picture, reality and injustice are all addressed in plays. Dramatists hope to bring about change in the society -- speakers were of the view. The play "Agunmukha" was staged at Pabna Doel Community Centre on Monday and Tuesday. Written by Mannan Hira, the play was jointly directed by Dolon Aziz and Firoz Khandaker. The play highlighted the impact of revolutionists in the society. "Agunmukha" narrates how revolutionists use to fight for the people. But differences in opinions often derail some of them. The cast included Firoz Khandaker, Wahidul Kawsar, Shadhin Majumdar, Cynthia Rahman, Mostafizur Rahman Russell, Sirajul Haque, Tarun Das and others. The performance enjoyed a full house.

"Avatar" unlikely to match "Titanic" Oscar haul

"Avatar" is no "Titanic" -- at least, not yet. At the box office, the Fox release is powering away. Having topped \$1.6 billion in worldwide grosses, it's within hailing distance of "Titanic's" record of \$1.84 billion, long considered unassailable. On the awards circuit, though, it's another story. James Cameron's visit to another planet didn't begin screening until early December (2009) and was ignored by the first wave of awards.

Although the movie received plenty of enthusiastic reviews, Hollywood's top critics' groups -- Los Angeles, New York, the National Society of Film Critics -- unanimously bestowed their top movie prizes on Kathryn's Bigelow's war-torn "The Hurt Locker." Even when the Hollywood Foreign Press Association unveiled its nominations December 15, the four nominations for "Avatar" were fewer than "Up in the Air" (six) and "Nine" (five). Since then, though, "Avatar" has been building momentum steadily. As guild nominations have been unveiled in recent weeks, it has picked up mentions from the groups representing producers, directors, writers, art directors, cinematographers, cinema editors and visual effects artists. On Sunday, "Avatar" walked off with two key prizes at the 67th annual Golden Globes: best motion picture drama and best director. That doesn't guarantee Oscar gold, though. During the past 10 years, the Globe winner has gone on to win the best picture Academy Award 60% of the time. On the other hand, winners of the Critics' Choice Award, which went to "Locker" on Friday, have been crowned with the best picture Oscar 80% of the time. Still, Cameron's first narrative feature since "Titanic" triumphantly set sail in 1997 seems to be following in the wake of that blockbuster-turned-awards juggernaut. Except that it isn't quite. When Oscar nomi-

nations are announced February 2, "Avatar" isn't on track to collect the 14 nominations that put "Titanic" at the top of the heap, tied with 1950's "All About Eve" for the most Oscar nominations ever. (It ended up with a record 11 Oscars, tying with "Ben-Hur" and later joined by "The Lord of the Rings: Return of the King.") Cameron's grand experiment with digital filmmaking certainly resulted in unique sights onscreen, but it makes it impossible for the movie to stake a claim in as many categories as "Titanic." For starters, "Avatar" was not on the recently released shortlist for the Academy's makeup award, a category in which "Titanic" earned a nomination. And while "Titanic" earned nominations for best actress (Kate Winslet) and supporting actress (Gloria Stuart), "Avatar" isn't considered a contender in the acting categories. Fox and the filmmakers are trying to change that, arguing that performance-capture acting is every bit as legitimate and demanding as a live-action turn. To that end, the studio has taken out ads picturing Zoe Saldana emoting in her performance-capture gear placed side-by-side with onscreen images of her character, Neytiri. At the Critics' Choice Awards, producer Jon Landau took a moment to insist that the "Avatar" actors turned in more than voice performances. "The reason the movie works is because we had a tremendous cast," he said. "They trained and they performed, and what you see on the screen is their performances." Cameron underscored that point when he thanked his actors during his Globes speech, calling them "artists that give us the emotional reaction to this story." Still, "Avatar" could emerge with nine or 10 Oscar nominations February 2. That wouldn't set any records, but it could turn the sci-fi epic into leader of the pack. Source: ABC News



"Avatar" walked off with two key prizes at the 67th annual Golden Globes.

In Focus

Hard times for traditional artisans

KONGKON KARMAKER, Dinajpur

Craftsmen, idol makers, blacksmiths and goldsmiths in the northern districts seemingly face a bleak future. Rampant commercialisation and the absence of government and marketing support have virtually brought them to their knees.

For starters, state support is needed to preserve arts that have been passed down generations. As some artisans said, no training workshops are held to equip them to make value added handicrafts so that they can compete with more state of the art products.

The artisans also complained that while in the past they used to get free stalls to sell their goods at mela (fair), now they have to shell out exorbitant sums to fair organisers to rent stalls. Worsening their plight is that they have no lobby or organisation to voice their concerns as they are scattered in remote pockets of the region. Dhiren Das, a producer of musical instruments,



What's worsening the artisans' plight is that they have no lobby or organisation to voice their concerns.

said that sales of his products are on the decline as people show more interest in electronic instruments now. Though silversmiths in most of the district have abandoned their traditional profession, some of them continue to work at

various places in Saidpur upazila of Nilphamari district. Niranjan Das, an artisan from Dinajpur, who makes musical instruments, lamented, "I learnt the art from my father. However, our very survival is in question as few buyers turn up

here and it is a seasonal business. Moreover we get no government support." Blacksmiths in the region face the same problems. Take the instance of Narayan Karmakar, a blacksmith from Azimpur village under Biral upazila of Dinajpur, who runs a

shop of agricultural equipment including scythes, plough and sickles. Travelling vendors, he said, have put traditional handicrafts in the region in jeopardy as they go to villages and sell standard products at cheaper prices. Moreover, the price of iron has shot up and raw materials such as coal are not easily available in the villages. The fate of artisans working with bamboo and cane is no different. Plastic ware has wrought havoc on their traditional crafts. "We get bamboo from various places at the rate of Taka 180 for each 12 ft-long stick. It takes a day to make a big basket and grain pots. I cannot afford to run the house, let alone send my children to school," rued Rajesh Roy, a craftsman from Dinajpur Sadar Upazila. "Every month I earn between Taka 1,500 and 2,000. We also want to sell our products at mela but cannot afford to pay the rent the organisers demand for stalls," he added. The craftsmen said in one voice that the government should devise a policy for their welfare, as most of them are dirt poor.