

WHAT'S ON THIS WEEK

Ekushey Book Fair
Venue: Bangla Academy
Date: February 1-28
Time: 3pm-9pm



Cultural Programme
To mark Amar Ekushey
Organiser: Shammito Sangskritik Jote
Venue: Central Shaheed Minar premises
Date: February 8-21
Time: 4pm onwards



Solo Art Exhibition

Artist: Rashid Amin
Venue: Shilpakala Gallery, H-26, R-3, Dhanmondi
Date: February 18-March 1
Time: 12pm-8pm



Solo Photography Exhibition

Photographer: Andera Kunzig
Title: Urban Changes
Venue: Goethe Institut Bangladesh
Date: February 8-25
Time: 10am-7pm



Boi Mela thoughts



"Ekushey Book Fair is more than just an event, it's a place for cultural mingling" Professor Rafiqul Islam

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Noted Nazrul researcher and scholar Professor Rafiqul Islam termed the Ekushey Book Fair as "something more than just a book fair." He is of the view that it is an ideal place for "cultural mingling".

This year 356 institutions have set up 505 stalls at the fair. Aside from publication houses, several voluntary organisations, government and non-government organisations and media houses are also participating in the fair. There are stalls that do not publish books regularly. When asked about whether such institutions should be allotted stalls at the fair, Professor Islam said that they are as important as the major publishing houses.

"Though it is a common view that a book fair should only feature publishing houses, I think everyone has the right to participate at the Ekushey Book Fair," said Professor Islam. "After Chittaranjan Saha [of the publishing house Muktohdhara] started the book fair on his own, Bangla Academy gave it a shape. But the pro-democratic movement during the General Ershad regime" played a vital role in



popularising the fair among the masses. At that time books on the Liberation War started being published comprehensively. Besides, month-long cultural programmes at the Central Shaheed Minar were also significant in popularising the event," recalled Professor Islam. The scholar, however, expressed concern about security at this year's fair. "Although the fair is now halfway through without any hindrance, the security should have been tighter," he said.

Gautam Ghosh on Lalon, and his latest project on the bard

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA, New Delhi

That the 19th century mystic bard Lalon Fakir continues to inspire filmmakers of India and Bangladesh is once again evident as Indian helmer Gautam Ghosh's latest project is near completion.

A few years ago, leading Bangladeshi director Tanvir Mokammel did a feature film on Lalon with Raisul Islam Asad in title role. Ghosh's movie, "Moner Manush" has Tollywood (mainstream film industry of Kolkata) star Prosenjit as the bard.

Ghosh has just completed the Bangladesh part of shooting for his period film at Tangua Haor, and Kusthia where Lalon, who espoused Hindu-Muslim unity, was born.

Ghosh said that he is fascinated by the Sufi philosophy of Lalon.

Fakir and has been meaning to make a film on him. "When communal riots broke out in India after the Babri Mosque demolition, I finally decided to make the film," he

said. But still the film did not happen till he came across author Sunil Gangopadhyay's piece on Lalon.

The director said "Moner Manush", which is expected to be released in May this year, with its strong message of secularism would appeal to people who reject religious obscurantism and caste-class divides.

Ghosh was very particular on shooting in Bangladesh because he could never have been satisfied had the location been elsewhere for the feel of the place would have been missing.

Ghosh was all in praise of Prosenjit who, he said, got into the skin of the wandering minstrel. "He (Prosenjit) withdrew into a shell for days to understand the character, restricting his diet and growing long hair and beard to live the role," the director said.

Ghosh also said Bollywood art director Samir Chanda has done a "fantastic job" by recreating the period of Lalon Fakir and had constructed a whole colony made of bam-



Prosenjit and Sudeshna Swayamprabha in a scene from "Moner Manush".

boo and straw on the marshland at the village dotted by bamboo groves.

"I hope the setting will literally transport viewers to those days," Ghosh said.

Bangladeshi producer Habibur Rahman Khan and

Kolkata producer Goutam Kundu are jointly making the bi-lingual film whose post-production work would begin soon.

This is the second time Ghosh is shooting a film with co-production of India and

Bangladesh after his "Padma Nadir Majhi" in the 1990s. That film, starring Champa and Raisul Islam Asad of Bangladesh and Rupa Ganguly, Utpal Dutt, Robi Ghosh of India among others, was shot in Chandpur district.

Berlin salutes "My Name is Khan"

Shah Rukh shines at Berlinale 2010

NAZMUN NESA PIARI, Berlin

On the opening day of the 60th International Berlinale Film Festival, Germany's biggest newspaper Bild introduced Shah Rukh Khan the superstar of the festival to its readers -- 10 million everyday. They don't call him "King of Bollywood" for nothing!

Bild says Shah Rukh Khan is the most famous man in the world with 3 billion fans -- that's more than the number of George Clooney, Tom Cruise and Brad Pitt's fans combined.

Shah Rukh Khan received a rapturous reception by his fans while his film "My Name is Khan" was screened before packed audiences at the Berlin International Film Festival.

The star was honoured with a grand reception as he arrived at the Berlinale Pal-



Berlinale director Dieter Kosslick, Karan Johar, Kajol and Shah Rukh Khan.

ace, the main festival venue, on Friday night to attend the German premiere of "My

Name is Khan" in the festival's highest slot ever given to a mainstream Indian cinema.

Film festival organisers said public demands for tickets for Friday's opening

screening and three more shows scheduled in the coming days have been overwhelming.

"Germany and the Berlin Film Festival have given a unique window to the outside world for the Indian cinema. I feel like a big international star when I come to Berlin," he said.

The reception given to Shah Rukh by the Berlinale crowd was reported to be much bigger than in 2008 when he made his debut at the festival to present "Om Shanti Om".

Berlinale started in 1951 in a poor, destroyed and divided city of Berlin. After the reunification of Germany in 1990 and the inspired work of the festival director Dieter Kosslick, in recent years it is in the same league as the famous French festival in Cannes.

Workshop on classical jazz dance

A three-day workshop on classical jazz dance, will be held at the Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy, starting from today according to a press release. World Dance Alliance Bangladesh will arrange the workshop.

Classical jazz dance is highly influenced by the Asian, European and Mediterranean cultures and surprisingly it is highly complimented by classical forms like Kathak and the Uday Shankar style. Unlike other jazz dance forms it is not very funky. The philosophy of this form is -- up above the torso it is European and Asian and down below, it is African.

The workshop will be conducted by dance duo Ronie Shambhik Ghose and Mitul Sengupta. Ronie has trained at the Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts, while Mitul is a disciple of Kathak maestro Pandit Birju Maharaj.

A group recital will be held following the workshop on February 18 at 7:30 pm at the Shilpakala Academy.



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The launching ceremony of "Pothey Bipothey", a book by Indian cultural personality Shanu Banerjee, was held at the auditorium of National Music and Dance Centre, Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy recently. Noted author Syed Shamsul Haq, Kamal Lohani, director general of BSA; lawmaker and media personality Asaduzzaman Noor and theatre personality Nasiruddin Yousuff, among others, were present at the programme. Swapnorang in association with Bonhishikha arranged the programme. Golam Kuddus presided over the programme.

Movie Watch

"Valentine's Day": A mushy date with a bevy of stars

For fans of chocolate and Hallmark sentiment who wish Valentine's Day lasted forever, Garry Marshall's 123-minute movie arrives like the answer to a prayer.

Taking its name from cupid's holiday with all the inspired creativity of a filing label, "Valentine's Day" criss-crosses endlessly among a Whitman's sampler of cutouts passing as characters.

Drawn by the starry cast and the film's built-in date-movie cachet, moviegoers might send box office love notes to the New Line release. But the affair is likely to be short-lived as the reality sets in that "Valentine's Day" is yet another Hollywood romantic comedy that's all but devoid of romance and laughs.

For the latter, audiences will have to wait for the obligatory end-credit outtakes. Until then, they've got the antics of a bunch of witless, good-looking characters variously chasing or avoiding l'amour. At the centre of the multistrand story are Reed (Ashton Kutcher) and his best friend, Julia (Jennifer Garner). She's madly in love with a doctor (Patrick Dempsey) and more than a little surprised that florist Reed's career-oriented girlfriend (Jessica Alba) has accepted his wedding proposal.

Popping the question on Valentine's Day, he believes, has given him license to be a "sappy cheeseball" for the next 24 hours. That seems to be the guiding principle of Katherine Fugate's script as well, which subs clunking punchlines for froth and snap and which spares almost no one in the ensemble from mouthing banalities about the ways of the heart.

A couple of first kisses and a reunion that cap the film

are sweet but hardly worth the long road through scuffles, realignments and rapprochements that precedes them. A local sportscaster (Jamie Foxx) bristles at the Valentine's Day fluff piece assigned to him by his producer (Kathy Bates, barely there); he'd rather be chasing down a story about a football star (Eric Dane) whose career is in question. The athlete's publicist (Jessica Biel) prepares for her annual I Hate Valentine's Day party, and his high-powered agent (Queen Latifah) puts up with a new receptionist (Anne Hathaway) who's off to a good romantic start with a fellow employee (Topher Grace) -- except for the secret she's keeping about her.

Julia Roberts' Army captain finding a simpatico seatmate (Bradley Cooper) on her flight home does not ring true except as a movie contrivance.

Music-biz It girl Taylor Swift makes her big-screen debut hamming it up as a ditz who's gushing with adoration for her jock boyfriend (Taylor Lautner), and a subplot involving Shirley MacLaine and Hector Elizondo offers a bit of movie love, if little else, with fevered close-ups from MacLaine's 1958 "Hot Spell."

Foxx and Grace survive with their comic timing intact, and Garner's inherent geniality lends her role some charm. But this travogue of Los Angeles landmarks, in which low-riders and Indian restaurants serve as "colourful" symbols of multiculturalism, is more valentine to the flower industry than a true love connection.

