

WHAT'S ON THIS WEEK

Street Theatre Festival
Organiser: Bangladesh Patha Natok Parishad
Venue: Central Shaheed Minar
Date: March 1-7
Time: 4pm



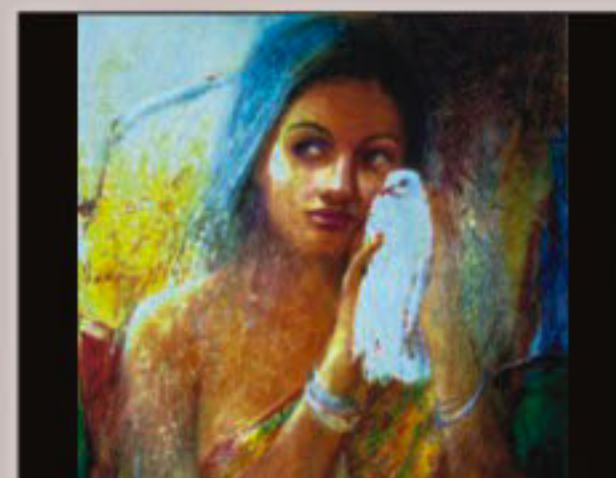
Solo Art Exhibition

Artist: Rashid Amin
Venue: Shilpangan Gallery, H-26, R-3, Dhanmondi
Date: February 18-March 5
Time: 12pm-8pm



Group Art Exhibition

Venue: Haq Gallery, DCC Market, Gulshan-2
Date: March 15-28
Time: 10am-8pm



Solo Painting Exhibition

Title: Call of Eternity
Artist: Nurul Islam
Venue: Art Gallery, Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy
Date: March 1-6
Time: 11am-8pm



Lalon looms large

'Dol Utshab' at Chheuria ends



Lalon devotees through the venue.

PHOTO: MUMIT M.

JAMIL MAHMUD, back from Kushtia

The five-day celebration of 'Dol Purnima Utshab' at the akhra (den) of Fakir Lalon Shai at Chheuria, Kushtia ended yesterday. The festival featured renditions of Lalon songs by hundreds of folk singers and Lalon devotees.

Lalon Academy -- the organisation consisting of elected members who oversee the bard's shrine -- in association with the Ministry of Cultural Affairs, was the organiser of the festival. Kushtia district administration also assisted in arranging the event. The events included a 'Lalon Mela' (fair), discussion and renditions of Lalon songs by baul musicians from all over the country. Musicians and devotees came from different parts of the country.

Renowned folk exponents discussed on Lalon's life and works at the main stage throughout the days. Everyday nearly one hundred folk singers rendered Lalon songs.

The festival is held annually on the occasion of 'Dol Purnima'. According to Lalon researchers, the bard himself used to arrange this festival to get together with his followers. Nowadays, apart from 'Dol Utshab', a commemorative programme on Lalon's death anniversary takes place in mid-October at the akhra.

This year, the organisers extended the festival to five days instead of three. Taizal Ali

Khan, secretary, Lalon Academy informed that the decision was made during an executive meeting of the organising committee prior to the festival. He also said that from now on both festivals at the akhra would get five-day celebrations.

Many Lalon enthusiasts, who came from different corners of the country, claimed that this year the turnout was not impressive, considering the extension of the festival. Many of them believe that the reason behind a smaller attendance is the absence of popular Lalon singers such as Farida Parveen, on the stage. However, Taizal Ali Khan denied that the attendance was unsatisfactory and said that the turnout was bigger than past festivals.

The 'mela' at the open space in front of Lalon's shrine was quite vibrant. It was the main attraction for those who were less interested in the spiritual aspects of the festival. Almost everything that is found at a village fair was available at the mela. But the sale was not as expected due to a smaller turnout, claimed many vendors.

Locally made sweets, reputed handloom products from Kumarkhali and other areas of the district, musical instruments like ektara, dotara, dhol, khol and flute were available at the mela.

The festival began on February 28. Grameenphone was the sponsor of the programme.



The events included renditions of Lalon songs by baul musicians from all over the country and a 'Lalon Mela' (fair).

International Women's Day

South Asian women's theatre festival

Leela, the first South Asian women's theatre festival, begins in Delhi on March 8, International Women's Day, says a press release.

The festival brings together theatre groups from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and India. The festival organisers are the Indian Council for Cultural Relations along with the prestigious National School for Drama (NSD) and Jamia Millia Islamia University.

"The South Asian Women's Theatre Festival is part of a dialogue through theatre with our neighbours. The Festival of Women's theatre is not by or for women but issues about women that connect with everyday life," Anuradha Kapoor, director of NSD is quoted as saying.

Likewise, Veena Sikri, former Indian High Commissioner to Bangladesh and a professor at Jamia Millia, adds, "The idea is to

continue a dialogue through meeting of minds through theatre and foster peace and friendship. The play from Afghanistan by an all women's group dealing with the destruction of the Buddhas is a story of courage. "Jang ab nahi hoga" (There will be no more war) from Pakistan speaks against the war."

The festival begins with the Indian play "Nati Binodini", directed by Amal Allana, the well-known chairman of NSD. The other notable Indian productions are "Draupadi" by Kanhai Lal from Imphal, North East India and "Nag Mandala" by Neelam Mansingh.

Bangladesh is not left far behind. The country brings Syed Jamil Ahmed's "Behular Bhashan" to Delhi.

Look forward to a festival where women from the region finally get to be heard.



A scene from Syed Jamil Ahmed's "Behular Bhashan" to be staged in Delhi.

Kirtan rendition concludes



A group of musicians perform at the programme.

PHOTO: STAR

QUAMRUL ISLAM RUBAIYAT, Thakurgaon

A three-day continuous chanting kirtan rendition concluded on Thursday at Art Gallery Mahanamjagga Bhumi premises in Thakurgaon municipality area.

President of District Mahila Awami League inaugurated the event on February 28 while local public representatives and Hindu religious leaders were present at the inaugural ceremony.

The five groups that performed are Atwary Senpara Samprodai (Panchagarh), Gopalpur Samprodai (Dinajpur), Mothurapur Samprodai (Thakurgaon), Ranibandor Samprodai (Dinajpur) and Mondaldham Shamprodai (Thakurgaon).

A 15-member committee organised the programme.

Up-close and personal with Balam

NUSRAT JAHAN PRITOM

On the March 1, Balam's third solo album, unimaginatively titled "Balam-3", came out. In 2007, when Balam's mushy crooning first disseminated in the music scene, fans rushed to the music stores. Since then there has been no looking back.

The artiste recently spoke to The Daily Star about his latest album and much more.

According to the singer, "Balam 3" features some songs titled 'Chokher Arale', 'Ektu Darao', 'Ki Nisha' and more that I'm in love with. You can say I am my biggest fan."

His initiation and journey into the music scene:

Balam: "I grew up listening to my parents sing. I started playing guitar in class 8. I used to play for six/ seven hours everyday. I remember bunking classes just to do that."

"In class 10, I along with some friends formed the band Renegade. We also cut an album. That was in 1991. After that album everyone got busy with his own life. Habib, who was in the band, went to London. I stayed back in Bangladesh. We are still good friends.



Tit bits:

Personality type: Sometimes quiet, sometimes thoughtful, sometimes impatient and sometimes crazy. I guess I try to understand people and try to be patient.

Source of inspiration: My family and friends, but it also came from within.

Favourite pastime: Watching movies, hanging out with friends, play sports like badminton or tennis once in a while.

Favourite food: Anything spicy.

Passion: Designing.

"In 1997 I joined Warfaze - mainly because of the passion I had for guitar. I was in the band for seven/eight years. I attained recognition as a member of Warfaze.

"Later, however, I had a change of heart. I thought about doing something different, going solo. In 2005 I was featured in this mixed album called 'Prem Shikari'. I had two songs in the album and my sister Julie had two. It was more like an experiment, but it inspired me to go solo. Then in 2007 came my first solo that had 'Luko Churi' and some more hits. That I suppose was my breakthrough work.

"I became more serious about music, about how I can improve myself. In 2008, my second solo album was out."

Is he ever going back to rock?

Balam: "Well, I think I will incorporate rock but not in the way I used to. May be it would be a blend.

"I don't want to be known as 'Balam the rockstar', or 'popstar'. I just want to be known as an artiste.

Incidentally, Balam performed last night at a concert along with Habib, Nancy and Julie to raise funds for Afra, a cancer patient.

"Hurt Locker" producer barred from Oscars

A producer for Oscar-nominated war film "The Hurt Locker" will not be allowed to attend the awards ceremony after breaking Academy rules.

Nicolas Chartier has been barred from the event after sending an e-mail to voters urging them to name his movie as best film over rival Avatar.

Academy rules prohibit the mailing of members to promote or disparage a film.

But should "The Hurt Locker" win best picture, Chartier will still receive his Oscar statuette at a later date.

In his e-mail, which was sent to members of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences in late February, Chartier asked



The Hurt Locker has been nominated for nine awards.

members to choose "The Hurt Locker" over what he described as "a \$500 million film" - a clear reference to fellow best picture con-

tender "Avatar". Subsequent emails, posted by the Los Angeles Times, showed Chartier asking Oscar voters to rank his film at

number one and "Avatar" at number 10 among the list of nominated films.

Source: BBC