

## WHAT'S ON THIS WEEK

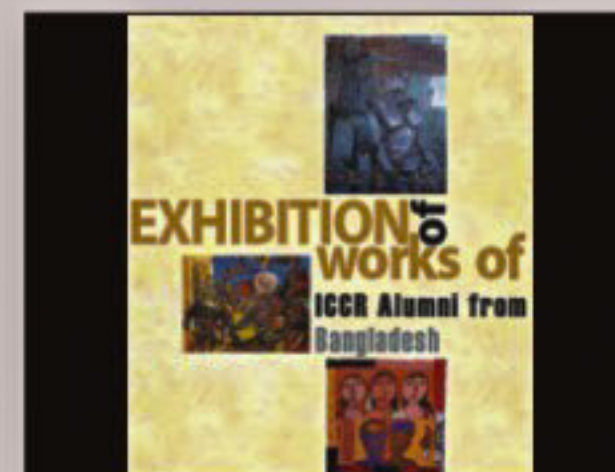
**Dance Programme**  
 Title: Sufi Kathak  
 Artist: Manjari Chaturvedi (India)  
 Organisers: Indian High Commission & ICCR  
 Venue: National Theatre Hall  
 Date: March 11, Time: 7pm



**11th Int'l Short & Independent Film Festival**  
 Organiser: Bangladesh Short Film Forum  
 Venue: Central Public Library, Shahbagh  
 Date: March 4-12  
 Time: 11am onwards



**Group Art Exhibition**  
 Organiser: High Commission of India, Dhaka and ICCR  
 Venue: Indira Gandhi Cultural Centre, H-35, R-24, Gulshan-1  
 Date: March 10-23  
 Time: 10am-6pm



**Solo Art Exhibition**  
 Artist: Anukul Majumdar  
 Venue: Shilpangan Gallery, H-26, R-3, Dhanmondi  
 Date: March 19-April 3  
 Time: 12pm-8pm



The festival was held at Karim's home village, Ujan Dhol, in Sunamganj district.

## 'Radhuni Keertimoti Shommanona'

### A tribute to remarkable women

NUSRAT JAHAN PRITOM

'Radhuni Keertimoti Shommanona 2009' was announced on the occasion of International Women's Day on March 8, at Celebrity Hall, Bangabandhu International Conference Centre. Writer Rabeya Khatun; singer Runa Laila; Faridur Reza Sagor, managing director of Channel-i, Rokeya Kader Khan, chairman, Desh Garments and Anjan Chowdhury, managing director of Square Consumer Products Ltd were present at the award-giving ceremony.

A lifetime achievement honour was added to this year's award. The award went to the first female editor of the country, Nurjahan Begum, for her contribution to media. "Today, women have come a long way in various fields," said Runa Laila. "But there are still some odds and ignorance. We still have a long way to go," she added.

received the award in 'Keertimoti Shangbadik' (journalist) category.

Jharna Dhara Chowdhury won in the 'Keertimoti Hitoishi' (social benefactor) category for women's development: training in handicrafts, food processing, agriculture, and poultry etc. She has changed the lives of many orphans through education. Around 70,000 women are involved in her projects. During the Liberation War she provided shelter for 500 children in Agartala (India). Chowdhury said, "I mostly work in the villages. I'm elated by this honour and hope that my endeavours encourage many."

Rashida Begum received the award in 'Keertimoti Uddokta' (entrepreneur) category for her success in developing a nursery. Rashida said, "Initially we used to get only Tk 15 for working on a field. We decided to take the initiative of buying a small piece of land and set up a nursery. My life started changing since then. Many wondered why a woman was work-

## Treading the enlightened path

Music festival in honour of Shah Abdul Karim



JONATHAN RICHMOND

They start slowly, circling round and round. And then, gracefully, naturally, the speed picks up and the Dervishes are caught entranced in a transfixing otherworldly whirl. It is their form or worship, and it is powerful.

The Baul singers of rural Bangladesh are connected to the Whirling Dervishes of Turkey through Sufi tradition, a practice of mysticism through which adherents worship and purify their souls. Sufi Muslims are joined by Vaishnava Hindus in Baul music, which focuses on themes of devotion to both God and humanity through love. Such is the universal power of Baul to use harmony to promote love that in 2005 Baul tradition was added to the list of UNESCO "Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity."

Shah Abdul Karim, who died last year, composed some 5000 songs and

was one of the greatest masters of Baul music. This past weekend a two-day festival was held in his honour at his home village, Ujan Dhol, in Sunamganj district.

Just driving to one of the most remote locations in Bangladesh, several hours from Sylhet down narrow winding roads, is a mystical experience. At the end of the track lies the small village with its serene riverside setting, and the house where the remains of Abdul Karim and his wife are honoured. A walk beside the river is a necessary prelude to the music: moments of relaxation and beauty to prepare for the elevation of the soul that is to ensue.

And what astonishing music making this was! In Dervish style, the event began on a relatively low key, but then spun itself up to heights of ecstasy. The performances were of an extraordinarily high standard, but the way the event as a whole was choreographed -- leading the audience to

states of ever deepening involvement -- was even more remarkable.

The *dhol* -- a colourful, playful drum -- seemed to be ever centre-stage. Its player, driven by the song, in turn carries the song along with ever more frenetic beats of joy as, caught up by the beat, he dances round the stage. The bamboo flute -- *bashi* -- adds a raw earthiness to the sound mix, its message exultant as it joins the *dhol* in urging the singer to take the path to enlightened love.

The singers were superb. Baul Bashiruddin Sarkar gave us rhythmically powerful moral messages. "Abdul Karim is saying be helpful to people. Oh my crazy soul, why do you misbehave? Why not understand the heart of people? Without the heart, we are nothing!" The message penetrated deeply, the piquant flute shooting the singer's plaint right at the audience's heart.

Rubel Sarker played the violin as he sang, his dramatic voice heightened

by fiery *dhol* playing as he lamented that "If I don't get my love I will burn to death."

Billal Udash brought a change of atmosphere, his rhetorical singing very involved, the flute accompaniment seductive. Then we heard Jamaluddin

Hasan Banna, the fragrance of love caught up in his intense tones; Hari Podo singing with clarity underlined by an abrasive *dhol* beat; and a boy, Mobin, of perhaps fifteen, who sang with innocent honesty but also stunning power as his voice was driving to heights of whirling ecstasy by an intimate, insistent, all-conquering *dhol* beat of love.

Things were to get even more unbelievably intense. Singer Koncoz sent out his words of song with a display of musical acrobatics, the *dhol* gone crazy with its adrenal beat. Was this mind-blowing experience taking us to madness or revelation, I wondered? Or is the seeming madness (and I note that the word Baul comes from the Sanskrit "Vatul" which means 'mad') a path to revelation? A taking away from the ordinary world to teach the meaning of love and leave its listeners as well as performers transformed?

And then Fakir Shahabuddin came on stage. Now everything was whirling! Fakir had complete vocal control and with all transcendent power took us beyond even ecstasy to sustained rapture. The stage was alive with sound of impossible power; the soul of the huge crowd was alive with the message of love. There was no escape from the brilliance of artistry, the depth of meaning, the spirituality and the humanity of the event.

The programme was sponsored by Banglalink.

The writer is a freelance contributor, and a consultant in Bangladesh.



Dance performance by Nadia, Likhon and their troupe.



Kanak Chapa (left) and Akhi Alamgir sing at the programme.

PHOTO: MUMIT M.

Three women who stood out for their endeavours were awarded. One was photojournalist Bilkis Akhter Shumi. She has been recognised for her outstanding role in both the electronic and print media. Shumi said, "We [women photographers] don't get acceptance at first, have to endure negativity a lot and struggle, but at the end of the day it's worth it. I had my apprehensions when I started working in Sylhet." Shumi's editor and colleagues say that she had never refused any assignment. Once a terrorist was caught at 2 am, Shumi was called and she instantly went to the spot. Shumi's photographs have made it to the front pages of several national newspapers. She

ing on the field, but no one was helping me to repay my loans or feed my family," Rashida broke into tears on stage while narrating her struggles. "But my dream has finally come true," she added.

All three women received crests along with a cheque for Tk 50,000 each.

As part of her lifetime achievement award, Nurjahan Begum received a cheque worth Tk 1,00,000. The elderly editor could not attend the event due to her illness.

Artistes Nadia, Likhon and their group presented a dance at the programme. Singer Kanak Chapa rendered patriotic songs. Artistes Akhi Alamgir and S.I. Tutul also sang at the event.

## Solo musical performance by Shama Rahman

A CORRESPONDENT

Shama Rahman, one of the leading Tagore artists of the country, performed in a solo musical programme titled "Bashanta Din-er Gaan" at Bengal Gallery, on March 7, says a press release.

With flowers blooming all around, sprouting greenery from the tender branches; unbridled waves of wind from the south and

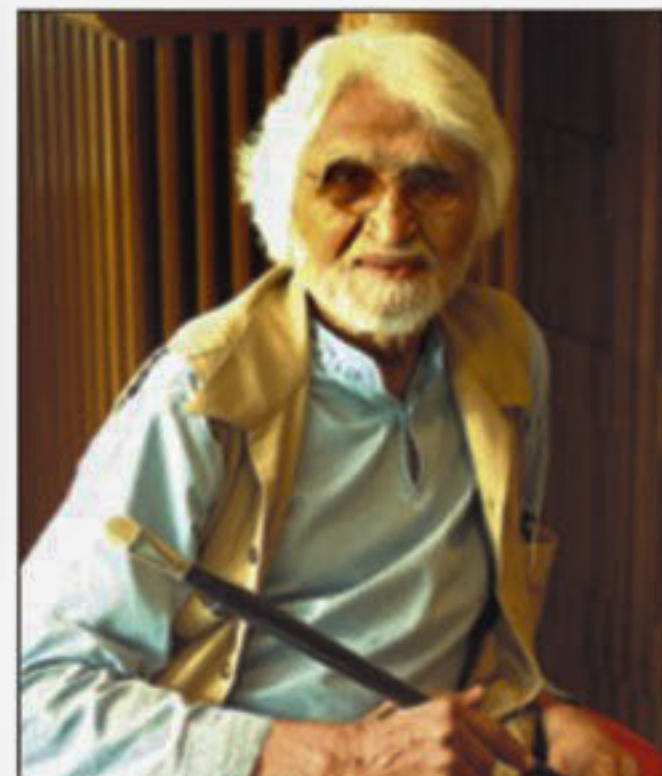
impatient sweet songs of cuckoos, Shama rendered selective songs on spring of Tagore on the occasion.

"Ei udashi haowar", "Pothey jetye jetye", "Boney jadi phutlo kushum", "Amar bha(n)ga pother", "Tumi ektu kebol", "Keno sharadin dhirey", "Pushpa boney pushpa nahi", "Kal rater bela", "Oi janalar kachhey", "Dhirey dhirey praney" and "Esho esho amar" were amongst her 20 songs that she rendered.



Shama Rahman sings at the programme.

## Artist MF Husain surrenders Indian passport



MF Husain

Times reported.

Husain, who has been living in self-imposed exile for nearly four years following a spate of cases in India over his controversial paintings of Hindu goddesses, had accepted Qatar's offer and would no longer be an Indian, his son Owais Husain told PTI recently.

India does not recognise dual citizenship. So, "in such a situation, surrendering passport by the person concerned is mandatory and Husain has only done that," an Indian Embassy official was quoted as saying by the paper.

Source: Internet

Legendary painter MF Husain, who was recently granted Qatari citizenship, has surrendered his Indian passport to the country's mission in Doha, a media report said today.

Husain, 95, revered by many as India's Picasso, went to the country's mission in Doha on March 7 and surrendered his Indian passport, the Gulf

## "Alice in Wonderland" beats the opening of "Avatar"

Disney ended up picking just the right moment to jump down the 3-D rabbit hole.

As "Avatar" comes to the end of a historic three-month run, Walt Disney Studios' "Alice in Wonderland" took most of the 3-D screens and opened to an eye-popping \$210.3 million worldwide.

Much like director James Cameron's megahit, Tim Burton's adaptation of the classic tale, starring Johnny Depp, generated about 70 percent of its opening weekend business from theatres with 3-D screens. It easily beat the premiere of "Avatar" and set a record for the biggest winter opening.

"Alice" played at about 220 more 3-D theatres

than "Avatar," since exhibitors have added more capacity recently. As returns came in, it became clear that audiences generally preferred to see Disney's movie with the advanced technology, despite higher ticket prices.

"In theatres with multiple formats, we saw that the Imax 3-D sold out first, then regular 3-D, and then 2-D," said Disney distribution President Chuck Viane.

3-D has accounted for an increasingly large percentage of ticket sales over the last three months for "Avatar" as it has marched past \$2.6 billion.

Source: Internet



A scene from "Alice in Wonderland".