

WHAT'S ON THIS WEEK

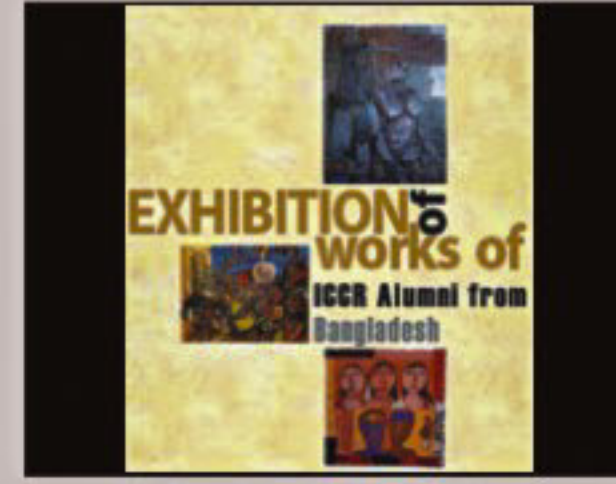
Human Rights Theatre Festival
Organiser: Bangladesh Manobadhikar Natya Parishad
Venue: Rabindra Sharobar
Date: March 12-14
Time: 4pm onwards



Solo Painting Exhibition
Title: Not Here
Artist: Ali Akbar
Venue: Alliance Francaise de Dhaka, 26, Mirpur Road, Dhanmondi
Date: March 13-27
Time: 3-9pm (except Fridays and Saturdays)



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



Theatre
Play: Raarang
Troupe: Aranyak Natyadal
Venue: Experimental Theatre Hall, Shilpakala Academy
Date: March 14
Time: 7pm



Never too late to change

“Valmiki Pratibha” staged at Shilpakala Academy



Shibli Muhammad (right) as Ratnakar/Valmiki.

KARIM WAHEED

Rabindranath Tagore wrote “Valmiki Pratibha” when he was twenty. Though it’s often labelled as an opera, the play is more of a musical (combining music and dance). It was first staged in 1881 and Tagore played the protagonist. The play narrates the metamorphosis of Ratnakar, a formidable bandit king to Valmiki, legendary poet-sage who wrote the Indian epic “Ramayan”.

Cultural organisations Shurolok and Nriyanchal staged the play on March 12 at National Theatre Hall, Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy. City Bank and American Express presented the production. Minister for Foreign Affairs, Dr. Dipu Moni, was the chief guest at the programme.

Chanchal Khan, who conceptualised the production, said, “It is not what Europeans would call an opera, but a play set to music. Very few of the songs [from the play] attained popularity; they all serve as musical text. It took us seven months, immense patience and test of skills to bring this production to the stage.” Khan is the music director of the play and lent his voice to Valmiki.

The story begins with Ratnakar and his gang unleashing a reign of terror. Ratnakar is a worshipper of Kali (the Goddess of destruction). His deputy and lackeys abduct a young orphan and bring her to the den. They intend to sacrifice her at the altar of Kali. The girl pleads, begs for mercy; forest nymphs join in the wailing. The bandit king has a change of heart. He releases the captive and earns the scorn of his mates.

The transformation begins. Ratnakar has visions: Lakshmi (Goddess of wealth) offers him endless riches. The former outlaw, how-

ever, chooses Saraswati (Goddess of wisdom) as his muse. With her blessing, Ratnakar, now christened “Valmiki”, would become the *Adi Kavi* (the first poet) for he discovered the first *celoka* or verse that set the base and defined the form of Sanskrit poetry.

Several songs in the play are set to English, Scottish and Irish melodies. Contrasting that western influence, most of the solos are *tappa* and *kheyal*-based melodies.

One complaint from the audience was that the texts of the songs (a major aspect of a musical) were not comprehensible. Perhaps the set-up of the sound system was to blame.

Shibli Muhammad as Valmiki delivered a performance that cannot be flawed. Shamim Ara Nipa’s role (Saraswati) was too brief for the danseuse to adequately demonstrate her craft. Two other dancers deserve mention.

Sukalyan Bhattacharya as Ratnakar’s deputy made the audience laugh and gaze in amazement through his display of remarkable energy and expertise. At times the vertically challenged artiste danced like he was eight feet tall. Bhattacharya is the choreographer of the play as well.

Saheli Mahapatra was, for lack of better words, lightning on stage. In a pool of forest nymphs, she stood out, unintentionally outshining others.

On the whole, it was a mammoth production. However, razzle-dazzle seemed to weigh down the ethos at times.

Relevance of “Valmiki Pratibha”: The protagonist epitomises the universal search for identity, questioning the direction he is headed. The play refers to corruption and violence of our times. Pleading of the forest nymphs could symbolise the merciless plunder of our environment. But it’s never too late to change, and change is of the essence.



Shamim Ara Nipa as the Goddess Saraswati.



Sukalyan Bhattacharya (left) as Ratnakar’s deputy.

PHOTO: MUMIT M.

‘Celebrating Life’ the musical way

AMINUL ISLAM, Mymensingh

overwhelming response from the audience.

Singers Fahmida Nabi, Sarah Naz Billah, Biman Chandra Biswas and Bijon Mistri performed for over an hour, giving the audience a total flavour of the event’s slogan “Desher Gaaner Concert”.

Artistes of Shammilito Shangkritik Jote, BAU unit came on the dais with chorus and poetry recitation that also went down well with the audience.

Fahinur Rahman Shatil, Sudev Karmakar, Proshenjith Saha, Suchi Saha, Zinat-binte-Mustari, Saifa-binte-Sanwar, Joy Sen Shuvra, Shariful Hasan, Harun-ur-Rashid, Sonali Bhakta and Mukta Mondal sang and recited poems.

Mehdi Hasan, a student of Agriculture Faculty of BAU, told The Daily Star that through such programmes



Fahmida Nabi sings at the programme.

PHOTO: STAR

the young learn about the traditional musical instruments.

Earlier, at the inaugural session, BAU Vice Chancellor Professor M.A. Sattar Mandal termed the event “very meaningful” as it conjures up the vision of a prosperous Bangladesh.

In his welcome speech, The Daily Star Editor and Publisher Mahfuz Anam explained the significance of the ‘Celebrating Life’ show. “As a nation we have a lot of achievements that deserve celebration. It is an occasion to hold our heads high among all the nations of the world, Mahfuz Anam said. Bitopi Das Chowdhury, head of Corporate Affairs, Standard Chartered Bank also spoke on the occasion.

‘Celebrating Life’ coordinator Rafi Hossain and Nauha Munir Dihan hosted the event.

School-campaign against eve teasing held

ABDUL WAHED, Kurigram

A school campaign was organised in Kurigram with a theme of eve teasing. A rally of about 200 students, teachers and NGO activists on Thursday paraded the thoroughfares of Kurigram town and concluded at the local central Shaheed Minar premises.

A discussion presided over by executive direc-

tor of NGO Solidarity, Harun Ar Rashid was held in which District Education Officer Laila Khanom; director of Jibika, Manik Chowdhury; executive director of AFAD, Syeda Yasmin; Fayeze Ahmed; Shahanaaj Naju and a student Auditia took part.

Debates and cultural programmes were held in several schools of four upazilas of the district focusing on anti-eve teasing activities organised by AFAD, Jibika and KDS.

LRB to perform in London

Popular band LRB is scheduled to perform at a cultural festival arranged by the Bangladeshi community living in London, says a press release. The festival will be held from March 19 to 21. Ayub Bachchu with Swapan, Masud and Romel [of LRB] will perform on March 21 at the festival. Renowned singers, actors, dancers and magicians from India will also take part in the festival.

The festival will be inaugurated at Alexandra Palace (Great Hall) of North London.

Dance performances by Dona Ganguly, wife of Saurav Ganguly, will be held on the opening day, followed by a play titled “Tritiyo Onko Otoeb” [by veteran actor Soumitra Chatterjee and his troupe] and renditions by Babul Supriya.

On the second day of the festival, performances by Usha Uthup will be followed by a musical drama “Bhalobashar Nandini” [by Anjan Dutt], a dance drama “Rabi O Radha” [by Sharmila Tagore and Soha Ali Khan], renditions by Arati Mukherjee and magic performance by PC Sarkar Jr.



Members of the band.

Mystic Pagla Kanai’s 200th birth anniversary observed

AZIBOR RAHMAN, Jhenidah

On the occasion of the 200th birth anniversary of mystic bard Pagla Kanai, a three-day *lokoj utshab* (folk festival) and *mela* (fair) were held at the Pagla Kanai complex in Jhenidah. The programme was arranged by Pagla Kanai Smriti Shangrakhan Shangshad of Berbari village, Jhenidah. The anniversary programme began from March 9.

Promod Mankin, State Minister for Culture, was present as chief guest at the opening programme. The programme was presided over by Roma Rani Roy, DC of Jhenidah.

Several stalls were set up around the shrine complex of Pagla Kanai. A good number of devotees of Pagla Kanai showed up to pay tribute to the legendary mystic.

Kanai became renowned for his devotional folk songs, many of which have not been preserved. An auditorium and library named after him now stands near the shrine.

Pagla Kanai’s passion and intense spirituality was evident at an early age, hence the locals started calling him “pagla” (crazy).

Kanai left his village to evade the oppression of the British rulers who forced the farmers to cultivate indigo. Dirt-poor Kanai became a drifter after his father’s death and ended up as a cowherd. Many were taken aback by his eclectic spiritual songs and *dhua jari*. His spiritual inclination put him in touch with the Bauls and fakirs of the area.

People from all walks of life used to throng his ‘ashor’ (performance) and listened to his songs for hours. Gradually his fame extended throughout the country.

Pagla Kanai’s songs can be classified into *jari*, *dhua*, *palagaan*, *kobigaan*, *murshidi*, *marfati*, Islamic and more.

Scholars such as Mohammad Mansur Uddin, Dr. Mazharul Islam, Abu Talib, Amin Uddin Shah, Durga Das Lahiri and Uppendranath Bhattacharya collected Pagla Kanai’s songs and conducted researches on the bard.

The legendary *baul* passed away in July 1889.

Aulad Hossain, a descendant of Pagla Kanai, said, “We are elated that the local administration celebrates his birth anniversary on a large scale.”

কিশকি বিবেক দিয়ে ৪টি স্তির জোরতের মাঝে। প্রতিটি মাঝেই অব্যব উৎপাদন।

আপনাকে অভিজ্ঞ করবেই, আপনাদের ভালো লাগবেই।

ডেসিমি
স্বাক্ষরিত বাথ সোপ

লেবেল
এককম্পাউন্ড এবং বিশেষ বাথ সোপ

স্যাভেলিড
নারিশি এবং সফটমিথ বাথ সোপ

লিট
ন্যাচারাল আর্টিসিপিটিক বাথ সোপ