

WHAT'S ON THIS WEEK

Nazrul Anniversary
Discussions and cultural programme
Organiser: Bangla Academy
Venue: Seminar Room, Bangla Academy
Date: May 25
Time: 4:30pm



An Evening of Poetry

Poet: Syed Shamsul Haq
Organiser: Kali O Kolom
Venue: Bengal Café, H 275/F, Rd 27 (old), Dhanmondi
Date: May 26
Time: 7pm



Nazrul Mela

Organiser: Channel i and Robi
Venue: Channel i Tejgaon Office, Dhaka
Date: May 25
Time: 10am onwards



Group Art Exhibition

Title: Rooted Creativity-2
Venue: Bengal Gallery of Fine Arts, R-16, H-275/F Dhanmondi
Date: May 18-29
Time: 12 pm-8 pm



Feroza Begum to receive lifetime achievement award

A CORRESPONDENT
Channel i will be honouring veteran Nazrul singer and exponent Feroza Begum with a lifetime achievement award on the occasion of the National Poet's 111th birth anniversary. The announcement was made at a press conference at the channel's Tejgaon office yesterday.



Feroza Begum

and Bidyut Kumar Basu, CMO, Robi, were present at the conference. The artiste will be presented the award at the 'Robi Channel i Nazrul Mela' -- a daylong event to be held at the Channel's Tejgaon office premises on May 25. This is the fifth 'Nazrul Mela' by channel i. Mobile phone operator Robi is the sponsor of the event. 'Robi Channel i Nazrul Mela' will start from 11:10 am on May 25 and will continue till 4 pm. The mela will be aired live on channel i.

Society for Promotion of Bangladesh Art honours artist Monirul Islam

A CORRESPONDENT
Society for Promotion of Bangladesh Art (SPBA) held a reception on May 22 at the Westin Hotel, Dhaka to honour veteran painter Monirul Islam on being conferred the Cross of Officer of the Order of Queen Isabella. Arturo Manuel Perez Martinez, Spanish Ambassador to Bangladesh, was the chief guest of the programme.

SPBA was formed in 2002 with the objective of promoting Bangladeshi art to the world. The organisation has sponsored several exhibitions of Bangladeshi artists. The Spanish Ambassador said in his speech, "I was introduced to Monirul Islam in Madrid in the early '70s. Islam was studying there on a scholarship and I was busy with my degree. Eventually he carved a niche for himself in the Spanish art scene. For his outstanding contribution to the field of art, he received the prestigious National Award of Spain in 1997." Eltham Kabir, chairman of SPBA said, "Monirul Islam is one of Bangladesh's most renowned artists who has created an identity internationally. It's remarkable that



(From left): Rafi Haque, Nasim Manzur, Syed Fahim Munaim, Eltham Kabir, Monirul Islam, Arturo Manuel Perez Martinez, Anjan Chowdhury, Intekhab Mahmud and Shahab Sattar.

though he has been living in Madrid for the last 40 years, Monirul Islam's love and fascination with the Bengali culture and traditions continue to manifest in his works. SPBA will shortly publish a book on the artist, which will feature works from his early days to his current style. Previously, SPBA published two books on contemporary art of Bangladesh, titled "Bangladesh Art: A Collection of Contemporary Paintings" where 65 painters' works were documented, and a book on Mohammad Kibria, one of the senior-most artists in Bangladesh." Anjan Chowdhury, managing director of Square Toiletries Ltd, handed over a crest to Monirul Islam at the programme. The board of governors of SPBA -- Syed Fahim Munaim, Shahab Sattar, Anjan Chowdhury, Syed Nasim Manzur, Intekhab Mahmud -- and Rafi Haque, general secretary of the society, attended the event. Among others, Abur Khair Litu, chairman of Bengal Group; Subir Chowdhury, director of Bengal Gallery of Fine Arts; K Anis Moquit, publisher of the art magazine Depart; painters Mohammad Kibria, Syed Jahangir, Hashem Khan, Ranjit Das, Shamsuddoha, Mohammad Iqbal, Anisuzzaman Anis, art critic Moinuddin Khaled and architect Shamsul Wares, were present at the programme.

63rd Cannes Film Festival

Cannes finale: Festival readies for awards night



Director Tim Burton and his jury will decide who takes home the Palme d'Or.

AP, Cannes
Three past winners of the top prize at the Cannes Film Festival -- Ken Loach, Mike Leigh and Abbas Kiarostami -- are in the running for the same award again as 19 films compete at the world's premier cinema showcase. Critics have been generally unimpressed with the line-up Cannes presented at the 12-day festival along the French Riviera, with a handful of films

stirring some buzz but most of the entries premiering to lukewarm receptions. The festival was ending Sunday night (local time) with the awards ceremony and a screening of the closing film, French director Julie Bertuccelli's "The Tree," a family drama starring Charlotte Gainsbourg, who won the best-actress award at Cannes last year for "Antichrist." Kristin Scott Thomas, who presided over the festival's opening ceremonies, is handling the same duties for awards night.

British director Leigh's ensemble drama "Another Year," featuring Jim Broadbent and Imelda Staunton, received favourable reviews, particularly for co-star Lesley Manville as a lonely middle-aged woman desperate for companionship. Leigh's "Secrets and Lies" won the festival's top honour, the Palme d'Or, in 1996.

Fellow British director Loach, whose "The Wind that Shakes the Barley" won that prize at Cannes in 2006, competes again with his Iraq War thriller "Route Irish." Iranian director Kiarostami, who earned the Palme d'Or in 1997 with "Taste of Cherry," is entered this year with his cryptic love story "Certified Copy," starring Juliette Binoche.

Other solid contenders include Mexican director Alejandro Gonzalez Inarritu's "Biutiful," starring Javier Bardem as a father on the edge of the law; Frenchman Xavier Beauvois' "Of Gods and Men," centred on a group of martyred monks in North Africa; and South Korean filmmaker Lee Chang-dong's "Poetry," about a grandmother who finds solace writing poems amid the onset of Alzheimer's and troubles with her broody grandson.

"Alice in Wonderland" director Tim Burton heads the jury that will decide on Cannes award winners. The nine-member jury also includes actors Kate Beckinsale and Benicio Del Toro and director Shekhar Kapur.



The official Palme d'Or designed by Jeweller Chopard.

A whitewash for "Prince of Persia" and "The Last Airbender"

Since its release, the video game franchise Prince of Persia has become notable for the acrobatic grace of its dagger-wielding, balloon pants-wearing hero as well as for what the games didn't do: affront gamers of Middle Eastern and Muslim descent with stereotypical depictions of people from the region as terrorists or religious zealots. Independent filmmaker and blogger Jehanzeb Dar, to name one such player, remembers his favourable first reaction to the swashbuckling action game, which is set amid the sands and ancient cities of Persia (as ancient Iran is known) and follows a hero with a magic sword caught between forces of good and evil. "You could see clearly the protagonist had distinct Middle Eastern features and dark skin," said Dar, 26, who pens the blog Muslim Reverie. "People could develop some respect for that culture instead of seeing it vilified."

So when Disney studios announced plans for a live-action adaptation of Prince, Dar held out hope it would be a "serious story that would dispel a lot of stereotypes and misconceptions." Then came the bad news regarding "Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time". None of its principle cast members are of Iranian, Middle Eastern or Muslim descent. And playing Dastan, the hero and titular heir to the Persian throne in the \$200-million film, is none other than Swedish-Jewish-American prince, Jake Gyllenhaal. "My first reaction was, 'Really?!'" said Dar. "It's insulting that people of colour -- especially Middle Easterners or South Asians -- are not allowed to portray ourselves in these roles. That's a big problem a lot of people in the community are having with this film."

Of course, Hollywood, has a rich history with this kind of thing. Think: John Wayne playing Genghis Khan in "The Conqueror," Peter Sellers' bumbling Indian character in "The Party" or even more notoriously, Mickey Rooney's buck-toothed Mr. Yunioshi character from "Breakfast at Tiffany's," the grandfather of all "Yellowface" stereotypes.

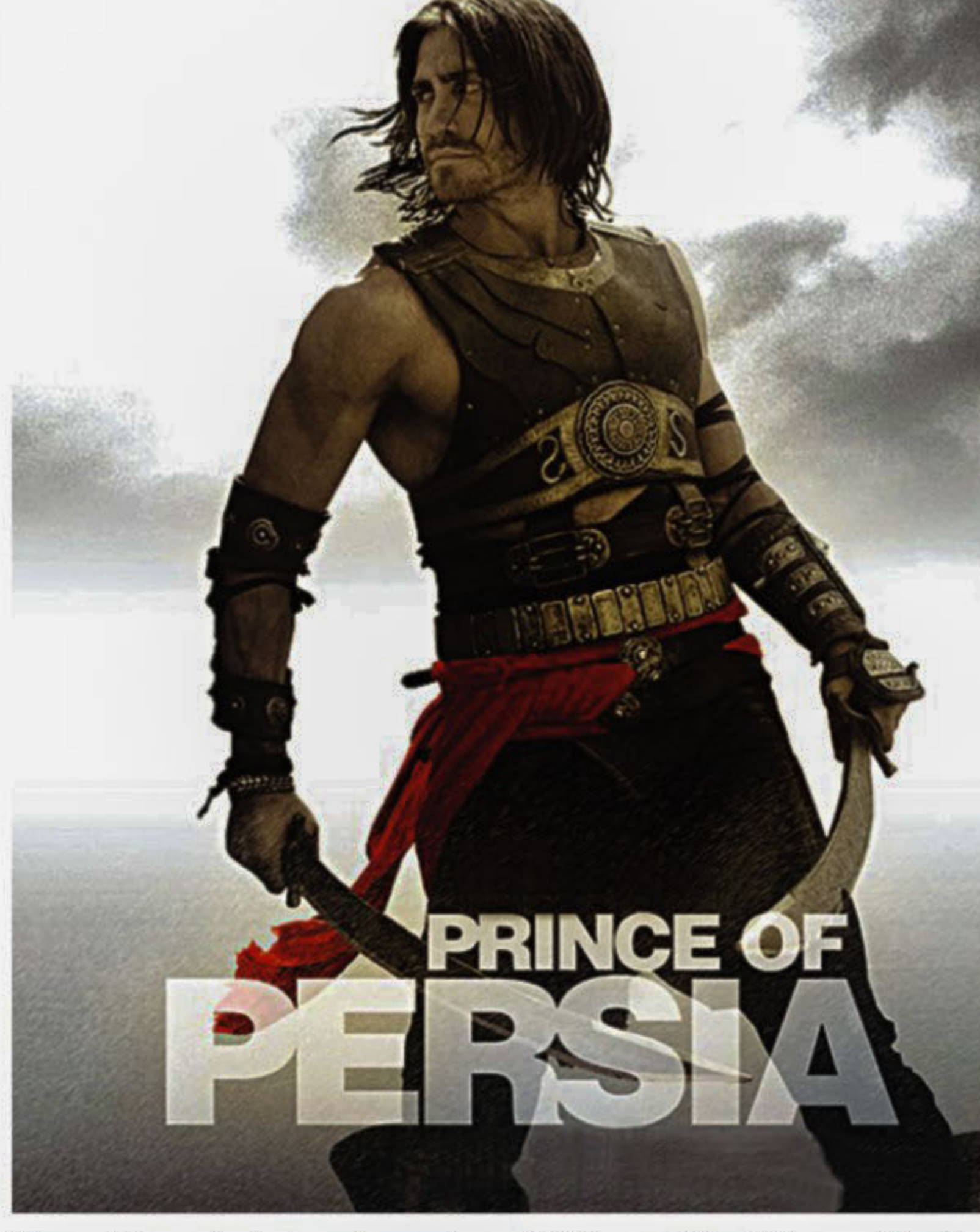
Although these portrayals took place decades ago, their legacy lives on. Even now, in the age of Obama -- when the newly installed Miss USA Rima Fakih is Lebanese American, Will Smith is the biggest movie star in the world and Sonia Sotomayor became the first Latina to sit on the Supreme Court -- the movie industry can still seem woefully behind the times when it comes to matters of race.

This summer, two of the season's biggest budgeted films have sparked controversy by installing white actors in decidedly "ethnic" parts. And some early fan reactions have varied from indignation to righteous fury to organ-

ised revolt over a perceived "whitewashing" of ethnic characters, a practice that has come to be known as "racebending." In addition to Gyllenhaal and British actress Gemma Arterton's portrayal of Iranian characters in the swords-and-sandals action epic "Prince of Persia," Paramount has come under attack for its live-action adaptation of the Nickelodeon animated series "Avatar: The Last Airbender." Directed by "Sixth Sense" auteur M. Night Shyamalan, "The Last Airbender" (as the movie is called to

President Adam Goodman to underscore the importance of casting Asian actors in designated Asian roles -- members of the Media Action Network for Asian Americans and an organisation called <http://www.racebending.com> are urging fans to boycott "Airbender."

For the uninitiated, the cartoon series "Avatar: The Last Airbender" was aimed at children but enjoyed broad crossover to all ages -- earning a zealous Asian American following -- during its 2005-08 TV run. Set in a Pan-Asian universe, identifiably Asian and Native American, anime-



None of the principal cast members of "Prince of Persia" are of Iranian, Middle Eastern or Muslim descent.

distinguish it from a certain James Cameron-directed 3-D blockbuster) has enraged some of the show's aficionados by casting white actors in three of four principal roles -- characters that fans of the original property insist are Asian and Native American.

After a year-and-a-half-long letter-writing campaign to the film's producers and a correspondence with Paramount inspired characters battle one another using martial arts manipulation of the four elements. The series follows a 12-year-old named Aang (played by non-Asian actor Noah Ringer in the movie) and his band of youthful cohorts who must save the world by toppling the evil Fire Lord and ending war with the Fire Nation.