

WHAT'S ON THIS WEEK

Music Festival
Organiser: Department of Music, University of Dhaka
Venue: TSC Auditorium, Dhaka University
Date: July 30-31
Time: 5pm



Art Competition 2010
Organiser: Zainul Abedin Art School, Tongi
Venue: Bangladesh Shishu Academy
Date: July 29



Solo Sculpture Exhibition
Title: Sylvan Forms
Sculptor: Ferdousi Priyabhashini
Venue: Bengal Gallery of Fine Arts
Date: July 19-28
Time: 12 pm-8 pm

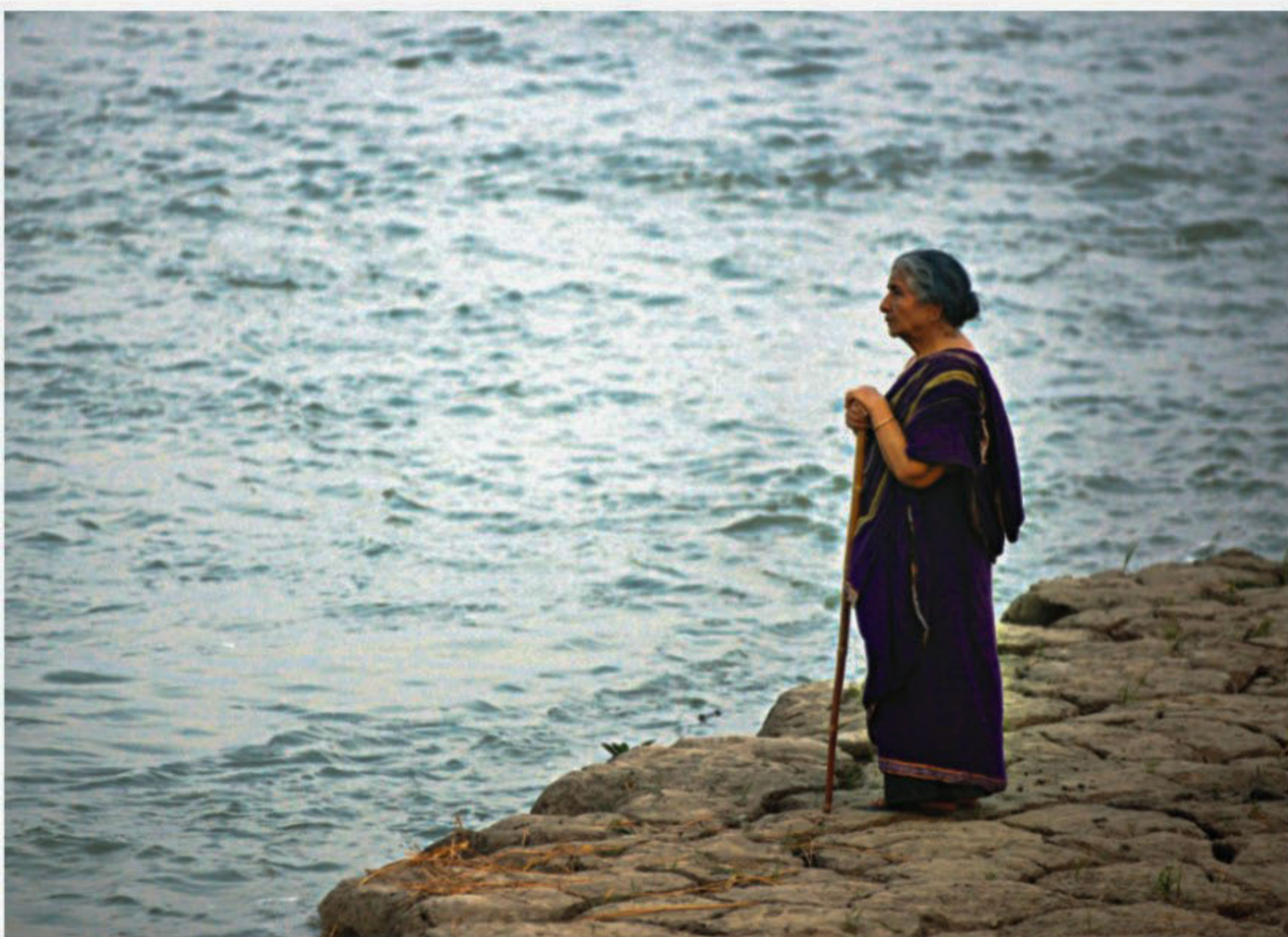


Art Camp
Organiser: Bengal Gallery of Fine Arts
Venue: Bengal Centre, Airport Road, Dhaka
Date: July 29-Aug 1



Waiting to be free of religious militancy

Abu Sayeed's latest film "Opekkha" tackles a burning issue



The film shows how violence in the name of religion can destroy individuals and families.

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA

After dealing with socio-economic and moral issues in his previous two award-winning movies "Nironitor" and "Rupantor," Bangladeshi independent filmmaker Abu Sayeed is back with his next feature film -- this time dealing with the subject of the threat of terrorism.

The film, starring veteran actors Jayanto Chattopadhyay and Mirana Zaman, among others, is aptly titled "Opekkha" (Waiting).

The story of "Opekkha" revolves round Rabiul and Ranju, two young men belonging to families living in different districts of Bangladesh. Rabiul, 28, lives in Dhaka pursuing his education and enjoying his passion for singing. He lost his parents at an early age and has his grandmother as his only close relative who lives in their village home. His grandmother has a problem of forgetting things easily.

On the other hand, Ranju, 23, studies science at a government college in a district town. Ranju gets involved with 'Harkatul Jihad,' a terrorist group and at the instance of his outfit carries out a bomb blast in Dhaka in which

several people are killed including Rabiul who was passing by at that time.

A few days after the attack, the police raid Ranju's house where his parents are shocked to learn that their son is a member of the terrorist group. Ranju's father goes to the college in search of his son but fails to locate him.

Rabiul's grandmother forgets his grandson's death and begins writing letters to him. As she receives no answer, she becomes restless waiting for him and even goes to the bus stop hoping to meet him.

The 48-year-old Sayeed told The Daily Star over phone, "The families of the two main characters, Ranju and Rabiul, are victims of religious militancy. They share the same crisis. Waiting shows how violence in the name of religion can destroy individuals and families, bringing nothing but suffering and death to the innocent. People want an end to such violence.

"Waiting is thus not only about a grandmother waiting for her grandson or parents waiting for their son's return but on a larger canvas is also about the long wait of the people for an end to religious militancy."

To make a film with terrorism as the subject was perhaps on the cards for Sayeed, who says he has seen a "spurt in religious militancy" in Bangladesh ever since an attack on cultural group Udichi Shilpi Goshthi left several people dead in Jessore in 1999.

"The majority of Bangladeshis do



not support such terrorist activities. The current political leadership and the civil society are all against any form of religious militancy. Still, militant groups continue to gain strength and organise themselves. Their covert operations still continue," said Sayeed adding, "Opekkha" has been set against the background of this worrisome reality.

What is more worrisome for Sayeed is that Ranju the extremist is not a product of *madrasa* (religious school) system but is a science student drawn into religious militancy by otherworldly promises. On the other hand, Rabiul is an average Bangladeshi youth who represents all those innocent victims of bomb attacks and other forms of violence.

Sayeed believes "the mindless terror attacks by the militant groups are politically motivated."

"Religious militancy that Bangladesh is facing now is not only masterminded by a few religious parties but is also linked with international politics. It does not reflect Islamic values but is solely used to gain a political base," said the director.

Barring Chattopadhyay and Mirana Zaman, the rest of the cast of "Opekkha" comprises young theatre and television actors.

"I have done this keeping in mind the subject of the film and not the budget," said Sayeed, who has produced "Opekkha" under the banner of his production house Aangik.

The auteur said that "Opekkha" is set for commercial release in Bangladesh in September this year.

Celebrating monsoon

Barsha Mangal Utshab in Thakurgaon



Artistes perform at the programme. PHOTO: STAR

QUAMRUL ISLAM RUBAIYAT, Thakurgaon

'Barsha Mangal Utshab' was held last Sunday evening at Rabindra Moncho at Lokayan Museum premises, Akcha village, under Thakurgaon sadar upazila.

Additional Commissioner of Rangpur Division, Miah Abdullah Mamun, attended the event as chief guest. Superintendent of Police, BM Harun-ur-Rashid and Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC), Abdul Mannan, attended the programme as special guests. Muhammad Shahid Uz Zaman, chairman of Lokayan and also executive director of Eco Social Development Organisation (ESDO), was in the chair.

The programme included renditions of monsoon themed Tagore, modern and folk songs.

The soiree began with Jasmin rendering a folk song. Then cultural team of ESDO rendered "Barisho dhara majhe shantiro bari," "Mono mor meghero shongi," "Esho nipo bone" and more. Young artiste Shashota Zaman; eminent cultural personality Professor Montosh Kumer De; Muhammad Shahid Uz Zaman; Touhidul Islam and Rikta Rani Bhattacharya recited poems at the programme.

Following the Barsha Mangal Utshab, a discussion was held. The discussants were of

the view that writers and poets have written on different seasons. But Rabindranath presented nature competently in his songs and submitted a true picture of the country's six seasons, especially the monsoon.

The speakers appreciated the organisers for taking such initiative to help promote our heritage and culture to the younger generation.

Lokayan Chairman Muhammad Shahid Uz Zaman said in his speech, "Usually museums preserve objects and memorabilia related to civilisations, rulers and other renowned persons. We have taken a different initiative to preserve objects that represent the lifestyle of our common people, like farmer's hat, fishing materials, different types of plough, indigenous weapons used for hunting, local musical instruments, documents of agreements between landowners and farmers, rural wear etc."

He also informed that the museum has received a good response from people across the country and several items have been donated to the organisation.

Among others, Additional Deputy Commissioner (Revenue) Shah Alam; Additional District Magistrate Enaetullah Khan Yusuf; Professor Montosh Kumer De and Principal of Eco Pathshala Selima Akhter spoke at the discussion.

The piper calls the tune

Mesmerising tunes of Nikhil Chandra Sarker

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

Nikhil Chandra Sarker can deeply involve an audience with the mesmerising tunes of his flute. Recently Nikhil had a few words with this correspondent about his passion for the flute.

Nikhil, son of late Horalal Chandra Sarker was born at Homna, under Comilla district.

Following in the footsteps of his father who had made the flute his profession, Nikhil took to the instrument as a young boy. Now the flute has become a source of income. "I earn my bread making and selling flutes of different kinds on various occasions round the year," said the 50-year-old Nikhil.

Nikhil says that with his monthly income of Taka 8,000-10,000, he can support his five-member family. "At the same time I enjoy this profession as I get the chance to wander through different districts of the country on various occasions," he said.

For the first time, Nikhil visited Trishal in Mymensingh this year to attend a three-day fair marking the birth anniversary of National Poet Kazi Nazrul Islam. "The sales were satisfactory and I hope to return next year with more flutes," said an optimistic Nikhil.

"I also attend many other national festivals including *Pahela Baishakh* in Dhaka with my flutes and enjoy myself thoroughly," said Nikhil.

"This profession is different from others as one can enjoy oneself as an artiste while drawing respect and honour from different quarters," asserted Nikhil.



Nikhil Chandra Sarker

Sean Penn deeply inspired by Tagore

Graffiti in an Omaha, Nebraska, alleyway in the US quoting Nobel laureate poet Rabindranath Tagore left such a deep impression on Sean Penn that it was instrumental in his humanitarian and philanthropic activities.



The mercurial two-time Oscar-winning actor, one of the keynote speakers at the American Association of Physicians of Indian Origin convention, acknowledged: "I would never have thought six months ago that I would be addressing 2,000 physicians of Indian origin."

But he said, "There is a connection between my presence and all of you. I am not a religious person, but in 1989, I was working in Omaha, Nebraska, and everyday I would take the main road back and forth to the production offices of mine in a house that I rented by the University [of Nebraska]. And there was an alleyway, and in that alleyway there was some graffiti and the graffiti said, 'Every new child born is proof that God is not yet discouraged of men.' That was the poet laureate of India, Tagore, who'd written it (the original line)."

To laughter, Penn noted that it had taken "some time to track down, but it made a very strong impression on me because it's a kind of fuel every time something like Haiti happens."

In January, Penn flew to earthquake-ravaged Haiti and has been spending millions of his money and directing private relief operations there.

Source: Internet

Jolie takes Moscow by storm at "Salt" premiere

Angelina Jolie, dressed in an appropriately red evening gown, took Moscow by storm last Sunday night at the Russian premiere of her summer spy flick, "Salt."

"Angelina, Angelina" chants and clapping filled the air as Jolie, who plays a CIA officer accused of being a Russian sleeper-spy, signed autographs, posed for the cameras and kissed one little girl on the cheek at the Otkyabrskiy theatre.

"It's been my dream to see her since I was 10 years old. My room is covered with her pictures," gushed Dasha Vorontzova, 21, who bares a striking resemblance to Jolie and travelled nearly 1,400 miles from Siberia to Moscow for the premiere.

"When I saw this woman I started shaking! She came to Russia for the first time in this [95 degree] heat. She said a Russian word and she signed autographs for so long."

Jolie had the Russians cheering at "Spasibo," charming the audience with her Russian during the film's introduction.

Her "Dobriy Vecher!" -- Russian for Good Evening -- greeting was met with screams and whistles.

"This is my first premiere in Moscow and I'm so excited to be here," she said switching into

English. "I hope you enjoy the film. I tried to speak a bit of Russian. I hope I did okay."

Once the projectors started rolling, the audience cheered and clapped for any references to Russia and with particular zest for a scene where a fur hat clad Jolie rides the Staten Island Ferry.

One real Russian spy was notably absent from the festivities. Despite the hyped-up speculations of an appearance, flame-haired Anna Chapman, who was at the heart of this summer's real-life US-Russian espionage drama, was a no-show at the premiere.

"If [Chapman] came on stage it would be funny," said Vorontzova's sister Katya, 27, "Angelina looks more like a spy than Anna. They say that she's a stunner but her facial features are very plain. Maybe this whole case was a promo for the movie. It's all so strange -- I don't think the people will know the whole truth."

Jolie did not bring up the spy scandal on stage, and told reporters "you don't want to focus on the negative behind this issue of the spy swap because I think that what is happening between our countries is wonderful these days, so many positive movements forward."



Angelina Jolie kisses a young fan who greeted her at the Moscow premiere of her new movie "Salt."

Source: Internet