

## WHAT'S ON THIS WEEK

### Suchitra Sen Retrospective

**Organiser:** Suchiltra Sen Smrity Sanrakshan Parishad, Pabna  
**Venue:** Mukto Moncho, Pabna  
**Date:** November 26-December 3



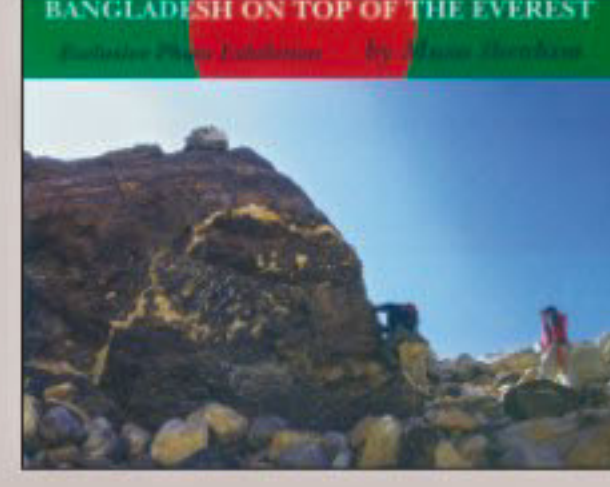
### Drawing Exhibition

**Artist:** Rafiqun Nabi  
**Venue:** Gallery Chitrah, H-21, R-4, Dhanmondi  
**Date:** December 3-20  
**Time:** 10am-8pm



### Solo Photography Exhibition

**Title:** Bangladesh on Top of the Everest  
**Photographer:** Musa Ibrahim  
**Venue:** Alliance Française de Dhaka, 26, Mirpur Road, Dhanmondi  
**Date:** November 26-December 9  
**Time:** 9am-8pm



### Group Art Exhibition

**Title:** Tree & Roots  
**Artists:** Mithu, Kanak Chanpa, Arjo and Shiropa  
**Venue:** Dhaka Art Centre, R-7/A, H-60, Dhanmondi  
**Date:** November 27-December 7  
**Time:** 11am-8pm



## Reading between the lines

“Ja Nei Bharatey” sees Mahabharat in a new light

KARIM WAHED

It's an epic familiar to South Asians. Narrated in the traditional style, it's a basic tale of 'good vs. evil' with generous helpings of divine and demonic miracles. The Bengali proverb 'Ja nei Bharatey ta nei Bharatey' means 'whatever is not in Mahabharat, does not exist in India' (or exist at all). But in this age of nanoscience, how does a rational individual grasp Mahabharat?

Veteran Indian playwright-director Manoj Mitra read between the lines and looked rationally at what led up to the great conflict. His play "Ja Nei Bharatey" sheds light on all that remains unsaid in Mahabharat.

The play was staged by Mitra's group Sundaram (of Kolkata) on November 28 at the National Theatre Stage, Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy (BSA). The show was part of 'Ananda Jagya', a cultural festival organised by Indira Gandhi Cultural Centre, High Commission of India in Dhaka, in association with BSA.

Prior to the play, noted theatre personality and President of ITI Worldwide, Ramendu Majumder, spoke briefly about the playwright-director.

Mitra was born in Khulna. He became the most tireless playwrighting machine in contemporary Bengali theatre and taught at the Department of Drama, Rabindra Bharati University. "Chakbhanga Madhu" (Honey Fresh from the Hive) in 1972 is considered his breakthrough work. According to Ramendu Majumder, the play was staged in

Bangladesh in 1974 to a full house. Among Mitra's other remarkable plays are "Shajano Bagan", "Rajdarshan", "Kinu Kaharer Thetar" and "Darpaney Sharatshashi". His plays often reflect a concern for human alienation and cruelty of the powerful.

"Ja Nei Bharatey" starts off with Kanchuki, the 130-year-old keeper of the inner chambers of Hastinapur palace, updating the audience about an impasse that has emerged. The adolescent king of Hastinapur has not yet produced an heir. His half brother Bhishma, a warrior hero, wants the queens Ambika and Ambalika to agree to let a noble man (of Bhishma's choice) father children with them. Ambika has always loved Bhishma but the latter, who has sworn to remain celibate, spurns her. Ambika and her sister Ambalika are prizes of war; what right do they have in the palace? So, the sage Vyas fathers children with the queens. As Ambika shut her eyes and refused to see Vyas during copulation, her son Dhritarashtra is born blind. Ambalika also produces a son, Pandu.

Patokini, an eccentric woman living in the woods, is employed by the palace to do away with the blind newborn. The palace has no place for what it considers weak or disabled. But the plan doesn't work out.

Dhritarashtra grows up to be an intelligent adult averse to violence and oppression. Bhishma doesn't approve of his ways. It becomes apparent that under Bhishma's altruistic mask hisses a power hungry control freak. He may have publicly renounced the throne but wants to mould the heir apparent in his image. Pandu conforms to Bhishma's

"values" and thus Dhritarashtra, despite being the elder son, is overlooked and Pandu becomes the king.

The cycle of aggression continues. Guided by Bhishma, Pandu emerges as a warmonger. He attacks the small kingdom of Gandhar and abducts the princess. Princess Gandhari is forced to marry Dhritarashtra in the name of politics. She voluntarily blindfolds herself. The world knows that Gandhari does not want to see a world her husband cannot see. But to her handmaiden she confides that she does not want to see the face of her husband whom she despises. As her form of revenge, she destroys her ovaries.

Pandu's uncontrollable thirst for power is seemingly overcompensation for his impotence. When he cannot cope with it any more, Pandu gives up the throne and Dhritarashtra becomes the king. Dhritarashtra is bullied by unscrupulous people around him to adopt war as a means to peace. Thus originates 'Kurukshetra'.

Manoj Mitra as Kanchuki remains the highlight of the play but then again, nothing less could be expected from the veteran actor. His Kanchuki and Patokini, played by Mayuri Ghosh, sort of serve as 'Bibek' (literally conscience) -- the voice of reason personified in indigenous Bengali theatre forms like jatra. Though these able actors deliver harsh truths encased in witty dialogues, in certain scenes, the comedy turns a little crass.

Among others, Subrata Chaudhury as Dhritarashtra shines. Particularly, in the scene where the blind prince is seemingly in



PHOTO: MUMIT M.

The play was staged by Sundaram on November 28 at the National Theatre Stage.

bliss when he experiences the wonders of nature, the actor is at his best.

Arpita Sen as Gandhari aptly conveys the anguish of a woman treated like a pawn in palace politics.

Set designed by Amit Sarkar deserves plaudits. Lights and music were by Joy Sen and Gautam Ghosh respectively. Costumes were by Ankhi Sarkar.

## Anticipating the winner

Lifetime Achievement Award of 6th Citycell-Channel i Music Awards

Citycell has worthy initial development the country. In this effort, Music Awards 2004 to promote music. And this resulted in great suc-



cess every year. always taken notes to further the of various fields of continuation of Citycell-Channel i was initiated in Bangladesh's endeavour has

Citycell, in association with Channel i is now all set to organise the 6th Citycell-Channel i Music Awards to honour the country's music artistes and talents. As in previous years, there will be Lifetime Achievement Award with other categories in the 6th Citycell-Channel i Music Awards. Reputed singer Abdur Rahman Bayati was awarded the 1st Citycell-Channel i Music Awards. Legendary baul artiste Shah Abdul Karim, renowned singer Sabina Yasmin, Nazrul exponent Sudhin Das, Tagore exponent Sanjida Khatun got this award respectively.

People are eagerly anticipating the winner of the Lifetime Achievement Award in the 6th Citycell-Channel i Music Awards this year. The recipient of this award gets a certificate, crest and cheque.

## Elton John to perform at William and Kate's wedding

Elton John has hinted he will likely have a role in Prince William and Kate Middleton's wedding celebration-- even if he has to set up his piano outside the gates of Westminster Abbey.

The British singer, 63, who famously performed at the 1997 funeral of William's mother, Princess Diana, and at her memorial concert a decade later, was asked about the wedding on BBC Radio.

He replied that he'll "probably" perform-- but quickly quipped, "I'll probably be outside busking."

Next Wednesday, December 1, for World AIDS Day, John will be guest-editing the British newspaper the Independent, but he told BBC Radio 2's Steve Wright not to expect too much royal-wedding coverage. "I think we've had enough of that for the time being," he said.

Meanwhile, William and Kate were at the Buckingham Palace together on Thursday holding meetings with their aids. Palace officials say invitations have yet to go out for the April 29 wedding, and they won't comment on possible big names on the guest list. "It is all speculation," a palace spokeswoman tells. "Nothing has been determined. We are still in discussions. They are only now sitting down and starting to think about things."

The guest list is likely to include ordinary people from charities associated with the couple and members of the armed forces.

A report in the Daily Mail suggests that Diana's brother, Earl Spencer, will have a key role at the wedding, perhaps even making a speech, but the palace rep would not confirm that.

Source: Internet

## MIMODRAMA

## “Jadur Pradip” to be staged by Swapnadal



A scene from "Jadur Pradip".

Theatre troupe Swapnadal will stage its latest production "Jadur Pradip" (The Magic Lamp) for the eleventh time at the Experimental Theatre Hall, Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy today at 7pm, says a press release.

A 'mimodrama', as the troupe calls it, "Jadur Pradip" is based on the overly familiar fairy tale "Aladdin and the Magic Lamp". The play has been adapted and directed by Zahid Ripon.

A complete theatrical presentation through pantomime, "Jadur Pradip", is being staged by Swapnadal since its premiere held on November 29, 2008. Later, the production took part at two festivals held in Sylhet and Chittagong. A Swedish cultural troupe highly praised the production. The staging of "Jadur Pradip" was on the halt for one and a half year due to Swapnadal's three new productions.

The central message of the production is the triumph of good over evil. Swapnadal wants to provide the audience an opportunity to enjoy pantomime -- a performing art form that is yet to catch on in our country and also explore the potential of mimodrama here. Through metaphors, the play addresses both negative and positive human characteristics and finally establishes the supremacy of love and righteousness.

The cast includes Sajida Islam Parul, Asif Istiar, Hasan Rezaul, Monir Hossain, Al Amin, Shonali Rahman Julie, Zahid Ripon and others.

## A tribute to a fighter

Film "Still standing"

KAVITA, New Delhi

Pankaj Johar was six and his sister Preeti three years, when their father Rajinder Johar was shot at by miscreants in 1986. A physiotherapist at the King George Medical College in Lucknow, the bullet injury damaged Rajinder's spine and resulted in quadriplegia.

However, the undefeated Rajinder chose not only to come to terms with his disability but even throw a lifeline to many others like him.

Now 30 years old, Pankaj has taken the camera to shoot the story of his father. The result is a moving film titled "Still Standing". The film which was screened recently in New Delhi, is Pankaj's tribute to Rajinder, both as a man of immense courage and as a father. "I consider myself lucky to have had the terrific opportunity of watching closely one of the most inspiring personalities I have ever come across. People have different celebrities as their role models. I had one right at home. This film is a dedication to the unbreakable spirit of this man," asserts Pankaj.



Painter Shiela at work, as seen in the film.

"Still standing" turns the camera on the everyday life of Rajinder -- from the many triumphs such as the CNN IBN Citizen Journalist Award 2008 to the frustrations of being bed-ridden, managing with great difficulty to write or brush his teeth or irately dealing with employees in no hurry to get things done.

Pankaj has used images of his father's family, people who know him well, the many people whose

lives Rajinder has touched to tell his story. One of the case studies that Pankaj presents is that of Sabina, who was four years old when she lost both her legs in a train accident. When she approached Rajinder, who had meanwhile launched his NGO Family of Disabled (FOD), he helped her set up a small shop and provided her with a mobility aid, a tricycle which she now uses to go to work and ferry the children from school.

A particularly successful endeavour by Johar and FOD has been the promotion of disabled artists. We get to see the talented painter Shiela at work. Though she lost both her hands in an accident at a very young age, she has trained herself to manage day to day activities with her feet, and this includes painting. "When she came to my father, she was looking for a platform to showcase her talent. My father helped her, but unfortunately she has not been able to find a buyer so far," says Pankaj. Others such as the speech and hearing impaired Imamuddin have been luckier.

"Still standing" has truly been a labour of love for Pankaj who had trouble finding producers for his script. That's when he decided to make this film with his own funds. After saving enough, he quit his job as an accountant and began shooting mid-2009. "I knew that this is a story that the world at large needed to know. My father turned a personal disaster into an opportunity to serve society and he is doing some fantastic work which is beyond even able bodied people."