

WHAT'S ON

Documentary Screening
Documentary: The Speech
Venue: SUST Auditorium, Sylhet
Date: April 26
Time: 5:30pm

Solo Art Exhibition
Title: Symphony of Colours
Artist: Syed Abdullah Khalid
Venue: Galleria Kaya, H-20, R-16, S-4, Uttara
Date: April 12-29

Grand Group Art Exhibition
Venue: Sajju Art Gallery, DCC Market, Gulshan-2
Date: April 1-30
Time: 10am-8pm

Solo Photo Exhibition
Title: A Dream of Venice
Photographer: Stephan Rabold
Venue: Goethe-Institut, H 10, Rd 9, Dhammondi
Date: April 15-May10

Dhaka Street Theatre Fest
Organiser: Patho Natok
Venue: Central Shaheed Minar
Date: April 19-25
Time: 4pm onwards

Baishakhi Mela
Organiser: BSCIC
Venue: Bangla Academy
Date: April 14-24
Time: 10am-8pm

Group Art Exhibition
Title: Present Perfect Continuous
Venue: Shilpangan Gallery, R-3, H-26, Dhammondi
Date: April 22-30
Time: 12pm-8pm

Solo Musical Soiree
Artist: Laiba Ahmed Lisa
Venue: IGCC, H-24, R-2, Dhammondi
Date: April 22
Time: 6:30pm

Movie Review

Guerrilla

Narrating a cruel yet tragically inspiring history

Although the random acts of intolerable violence might seem unreal to post-war generations, the filmmaker wants them to know this was the price the nation had to pay for freedom.

OSAMA RAHMAN

The nationwide release of the movie "Guerrilla" coincided with the Bengali New Year and this was done rightfully so. "Guerrilla" narrates the tale of Bilkis (played by Joya Ahsan), a freedom fighter, who actively participates in the Liberation War while searching for her lost husband. Based on Syed Shamsul Haque's novel "Nishiddho Loban", the movie also adds elements from its director Nasiruddin Yusuf's personal experiences during the war.

Initially, the premise seems simple enough; Bilkis' husband, Hasan Ahmed (played by Ferdous), who is a journalist by profession, goes missing as the war breaks out. Holding onto the belief that her husband is still alive, Bilkis scours every place for him while actively taking part in the armed resistance and continuing the

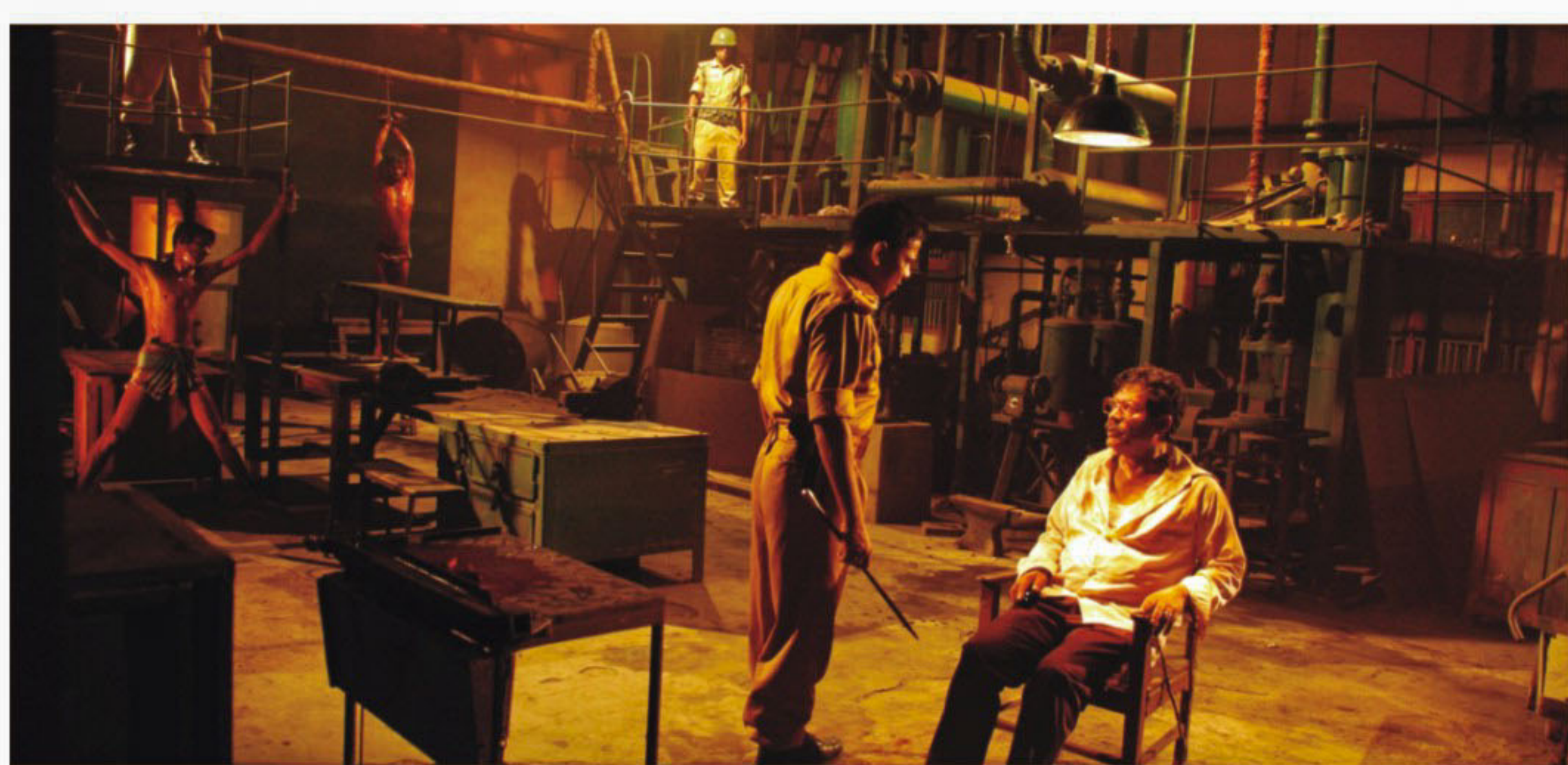
publication of the magazine Guerrilla that speaks for the freedom fighters. It isn't a one-woman struggle however, as Bilkis is surrounded by a cast of powerful supporting characters -- all with the same agenda of finally ridding the country of the Pakistani occupation forces. As the movie progresses these characters are introduced and seamlessly blended into the storyline.

Where quite a few movies based on the Liberation War have not worked, "Guerrilla" succeeds, as it remarkably infuses fiction with reality. This is most evident by Ahmed Rubel's portrayal of Shaheed Altaf Mahmud, composer of "Amar Bhai-er Rokte Rangano Ekushey February". Although the role is brief, it strikes a chord with the audience, who witness Altaf's dedication to his country as he continues to unearth gems of Bengali literature in a bid to preserve them and warily refuses to compose Urdu songs despite pressure.

While Bilkis plans with Altaf, the hauntingly beautiful tunes created by the composer plays in the background, moving the audience to a contradictory reverie of calm and despair.

There are other characters as well who form an integral part of the movie. Shatabdi Wadud, ATM Shamsuzzaman, and Pijush Bandyopadhyaya, among others, carry out their roles convincingly, engaging the audience in this gripping narrative. Wadud deserves special praise for his portrayal of a Pakistani Major. Having almost perfected the accent, the actor presents a cardboard figure of the merciless, hard-drinking and womanising Pakistani Major. He evolves from an actor into a persona we all love to hate.

In the movie, we see Bilkis getting wrapped up in the movement, while keeping on the lookout for any news of her husband and taking care of her mother-in-law who blames Bilkis for the disap-



pearance of Hasan till her last breath. As the two forces, the Pakistani army and the freedom fighters, attack each other and retaliate, the pressure increases to curb further damages. Matlub Sardar, essayed by ATM Shamsuzzaman, at one point becomes Bilkis' sole protector, helping her to escape as the occupation forces are alerted of her involvement. A massive man-hunt ensues and Bilkis somehow manages to escape, opting for her hometown as sanctuary.

Her brother, also a freedom fighter, is her last hope for refuge. She abandons the search for her husband temporarily and begins looking for her brother. But with a price on her head it isn't easy. As Bilkis discreetly moves towards possibly the last relative she has left, an impending sense of disaster builds up. The Pakistani army vows to hunt down Bilkis' brother and his comrades. Bilkis' return home is littered with memories of a happy yesterday, yet the familiar streets of her hometown seem alien to her. Death welcomes her; she resists and continues to move forth, determined, disgusted, disturbed yet undeterred.

The film shows the brutalities unleashed by the Pakistani army and their collaborators rather explicitly, thus does not hold back on gore and blood. Slaughter of men, rapes, torture and extreme humiliation all surface continuously. Although the random acts of intoler-

able violence might seem unreal to post-war generations, the filmmaker wants them to know this was the price the nation had to pay for freedom. At one point the story seems to be lost as the protagonist loses her way, but then another side of the war is revealed, that which was being fought outside the cities. The true nature of the razakar (collaborators of the Pakistani army) is also exposed but a further dimension is added in the shape of religious extremism. As a Hindu woman is thrown off the train just because of her creed, Bilkis urges the men to oppose but no one dares. In an act of defiance Bilkis then removes her burqa, despite warnings from the passengers. This defining moment serves as a testament to the courage of not only Bilkis but the many women who sacrificed their lives for the cause.

This movie should appeal to a younger demographic, those who have not seen the war, as they get to see just how deep-rooted the movement for freedom was -- people from all walks of life uniting to free the country.

Joya's performance holds the movie together, even when the plot falters. This is yet another feather in the cap for the accomplished actor. "Guerrilla" is indeed a must-see, especially for those who are yet to face the grave realities of a period that defines our history; a history that is cruel yet tragically inspiring.

DHAKA STREET THEATRE FEST '11

opens at Shaheed Minar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

With the theme "Natok Hobey Raajpothe Jibon Juddha Ek-i Sathey", the weeklong Dhaka Street Theatre Festival 2011 opened at Central Shaheed Minar on April 19. State Minister for Cultural Affairs, Advocate Promode Mankin, inaugurated the festival as chief guest. Bangladesh Patho Natok Parishad (BPNP) in collaboration with Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy (BSA) arranged the festival.

Noted cultural personality Asaduzzaman Noor MP; President of International Theatre Institute (World-wide) Ramendu Majumdar; Director General of BSA Liakat Ali Lucky; Vice President and General Secretary of Shammilito Shangskritik Jote Hasan Arif and Golam Kuddus; Secretary General of Bangladesh Group Theatre Federation Jhuna Chowdhury, chief of Padatik Natya Sangsad (Bangladesh) Selim SH Chowdhury and Vice President and General Secretary of BPNP Mafizur Rahman and Mizanur Rahman respectively spoke on the occasion.

Vice President of BPNP, Khandakar Shah Alam, presided over the discussion. Praising government's budget allocation for the first time to support cultural activism throughout the year in the country, the speakers emphasised on the need for trial of the war criminals. They also denounced the recent attack on Bauls at Pangsha, Rajbari.

Prior to the inaugural, several instrumentalists played popular folk tunes. National anthem, followed by renditions of "Baan Eshechhey Mora Gang-e" and "Jibon Dilam Moron Dilam" were presented by the artistes of Uidichi Shilpi Goshthi.

Six plays -- "Jiyonto Kaal" (written by Rubaiyat Ahmed and jointly directed by



PHOTO: MUMIT M.

Wasim Ahmed and Samiun Jahani); "Notun Projonmo" (written and directed by Rafiqul Alam); "Aar Khoma Nai" (written and directed by Mirza Abdur Razzak); "Joar", (written and directed by Rashidul Islam Raja and Kamal Bari); "Jolo Chita Bagh" (written and directed by Hamidur Rahman Sujon and Gazi Mahbub Hasan) and "Shakkhi" (written and directed by Faruk Prodhan and Tosaddek Hussain Manna) -- were staged on the opening day by Dhaka Theatre, Sanglap Group Theatre, Bobubachan Theatre, Dyash Bangla Theatre, Natyaroth and Padatik Natya Sangsad (Bangladesh) respectively. The story of the play "Shakkhi" zooms in on the trial of war criminals. The protagonist of the play, posing as an insane man, unites freedom fighters, Birangona and other pro-Liberation War forces of the society to identify the war criminals and bring them to justice. Kamal Hossain donned the protagonist.

Poetic Images Inspired by Tagore

Bishu Nandi's photo exhibition

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

On the occasion of the approaching 150th birth anniversary of Rabindranath Tagore, Shanto-Marium Foundation has organised a photo exhibition featuring the works of noted Indian photographer Bishu Nandi. Titled "Chhobir Antore Tumi Kobi", the exhibition was inaugurated by Sanjoy Bhattacharjee, Deputy High Commissioner of the Indian High Commission, on April 16 at Creative Destination of Shanto-Marium University.

Enamul Kabir Shanto, chairman of Shanto-Marium Foundation; Tahmina Chowdhury Kabir Marium, vice-chairman of Shanto-Marium Foundation; noted cultural personality Kamal Lohani, among others, spoke on the occasion. Dr. Shamsul Haque, vice chancellor of Shanto-Marium University of Creative Technology delivered the welcome speech.

Noted Rabindra Sangeet artistes Papia Sarwar and Himadri Shekhar performed at the inaugural session, while reciter Bhaswar Banerjee gave a recitation at the programme.

Nandi said, "When I was eight (in 1938), I got a chance to pay tribute to the great bard Rabindranath Tagore. He was an inspiration. When I was 20, the camera



Bishu Nandi plays with a squirrel.

was my only friend. I travelled to many countries where I saw rivers, forests, people and diverse cultural dimensions. I snapped them with my camera.

"Ten years ago, I had a plan to work on the poetry of Rabindranath Tagore. I tried to visualise his poetry through my lens. At the same time, I started to read some of the significant literary works of Tagore and mingle them with my images. The exhibition is the outcome of that attempt.

"When I read his poems, I visualise the many aspects of nature. I see the images as the summary of his poems. Most of the negatives have been damaged because of my negligence. At that time, digital cameras were not available."

Pandit Ravi Shankar wrote about Nandi's works, "Bishu plays different ragas through his photographs." Magician P.C. Sorcar (Jr) expressed his appreciation with the following words, "Bishu is in fact a magician. I am proud to have a friend like him."

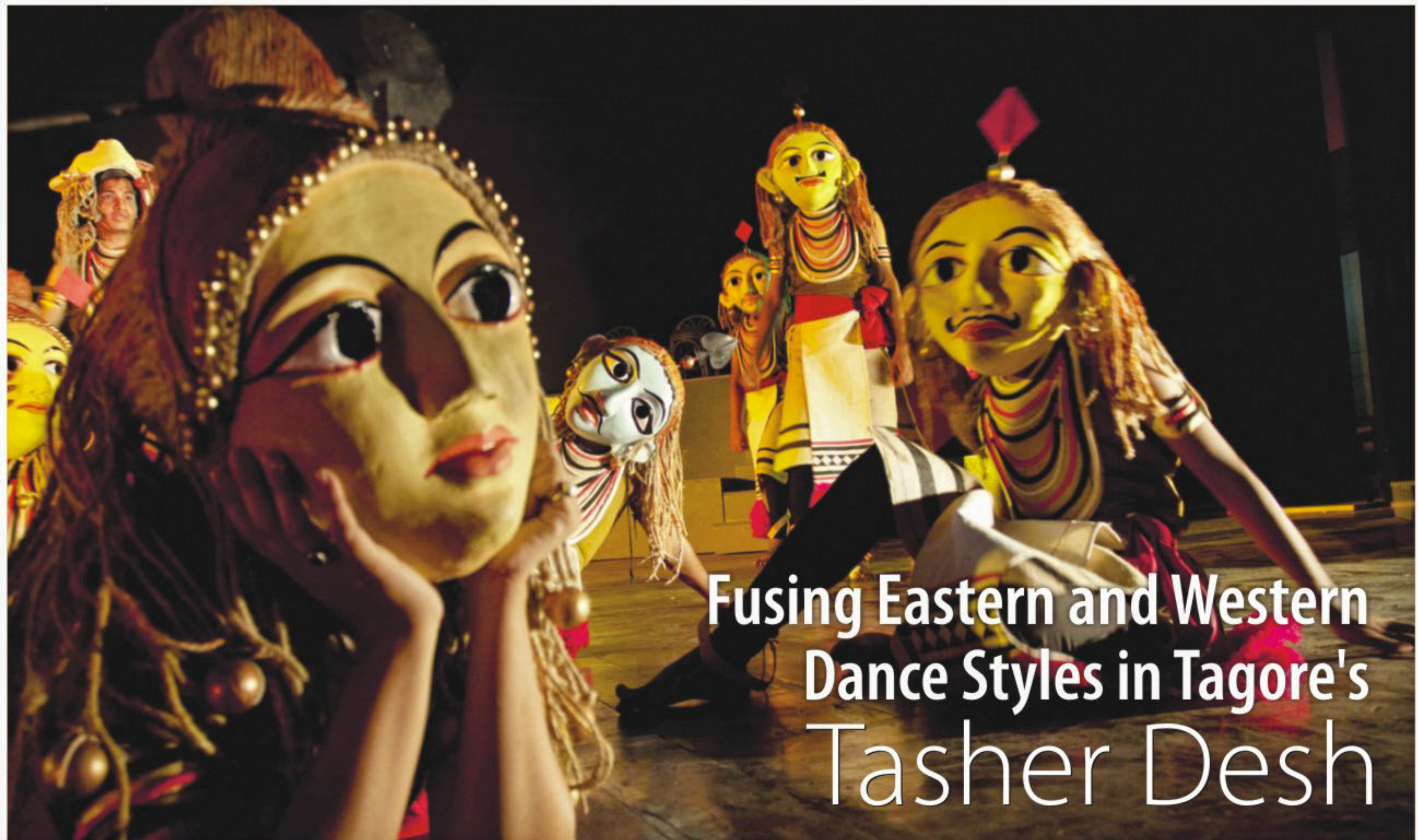
"A sophisticated camera is not as important as a sharp brain in order to take a good photograph. I do not think there is any harm in using technology in art. But I am against manipulation in the picture. A photographer should have good observation. He should devote time while taking a picture. But the original nature of the subject should be reflected in the photograph. This gives it life and makes it immortal and eternal," said Nandi.

At the exhibition, his images highlight pure nature, pastoral beauty, children, foliage, birds, dew drops on emerald stalks of grass, blooming mustard fields, golden paddy field, late afternoon scenes and many legendary figures like Mother Teresa, Jamini Roy, Suchitra Mitra and Soumitra Chatterjee.

The exhibition ends today.



Bishu Nandi (right), Sanjoy Bhattacharjee (middle) and other dignitaries at the opening of the exhibition.



Fusing Eastern and Western Dance Styles in Tagore's Tasher Desh

AKRAM HOSEN MAMUN

As part of British Council's four-month long festival, titled 'Rediscovering Tagore', a contemporary performance of Tagore's famed dance-drama "Tasher Desh" will be staged at National Auditorium, Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy on April 22.

This adaptation of "Tasher Desh" (a Shadhona production) will present a fusion of classical Indian and contemporary British dance forms. Accomplished Bangladeshi dancer Warda Rihab (who specialises in Manipuri dance) and Rachel Kriesche, head of Dance at Leeds Metropolitan University, UK (known for her expertise on contemporary British dance forms) are jointly choreographing the dance drama.

Sharing her experience of working with Bangladeshi dancers, Rachel said, "My visit to Dhaka and

work with Shadhona (a centre for advancement of South Asian music and dance) marked the beginning of a wonderful opportunity to share ideas. This festival is the perfect occasion for this to happen, given Tagore's advocacy of cultural collaboration and exchange."

Commenting on the ways in which their staging of "Tasher Desh" will be different from other performances of "Rabindrik Dance", Warda Rihab said, "Rabindrik dance-dramas are substantially different from other dance forms. That's why they are called Rabindra Nritya [Rabindrik Dance]. Rabindrik Dance usually comprises of classical dance forms. For the first time in Bangladesh, we're trying to mingle western contemporary dance with classical Chhau and Manipuri. This approach to 'Tasher Desh' is completely new and I believe the audience will like it. I admire Rachel's enthusiasm."

"The trickiest part, for Rachel, was to find those movements of

contemporary western dance that do not clash with Manipuri and Chhau. And I think Rachel has been good at it. The blend has been so seamless that I think the audience will have a hard time telling which movements are contemporary and which are Manipuri," Rihab added.

When asked why no one has tried to fuse these dance forms until now, the artiste said, "In Bangladesh we are pretty rigid about Rabindrik Dance. That is probably the reason why a fusion has not been tried before." She added, "Rather than just rehearsing the usual stuff, these past few weeks had been a period of rigorous research for us. Visualise bold Purulia Chhau movements by dancers wearing huge masks and then suddenly breaking into a contemporary move the next moment!"

The Daily Star is the communication partner of the 'Rediscovering Tagore' festival.

