

# VAT for singing!

ABID ANWAR

While expressing deep sympathy and condolences to the bereaved family members at the recent demise of veteran singer, composer and music director Ajit Roy, the cabinet decided to create funds for the artistes, said a UNB report published in The Daily Star on September 6, 2011. The decision of the cabinet was taken at the initiative of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. She deserves special thanks for this generous move.

We are not sure if the PM is aware of the fact that prominent and countable artistes have taken another decision: if the recently-imposed value added tax (VAT) be not exempted for their meagre honoraria, they will boycott singing and composing songs for the government-owned media -- the Bangladesh Betar and BTV! Many artistes by now have termed this taxation policy as a 'ridiculous farce' with the artistes who receive an unbelievably low amount as honoraria for their productions. General readers outside the community of artistes may go farther to add the term 'humiliating' if exposed to the real scenario of how much money a renowned singer or a composer gets for production of a song aired on the government media. After this imposition of VAT, many artistes, except the newcomers and the mediocre ones, have already stopped their productions in the government media.

To know about the legitimacy of imposing VAT on artistes' earnings from the government media one doesn't need

to be an economist. Songs, as saleable products, may also be taxable for a business firm that produces and sells CDs or VCDs for their own earnings, with whatever honoraria and royalty they pay to the singers, composers, lyricists, and the instrument-players. Earnings by the singers and composers, even from the government media, may also be taxable if they have Omni Royalty Contract (ORC), a system that exists in our neighbouring country India. The ORC warrants accumulation of a defined amount to the account of an artiste every time a song is aired. On the contrary, a singer or a composer in Bangladesh gets a one-time payment from the government media, with the exception of some lyricists who receive royalty under ORC. Repeated appeals from the artistes during the last several decades for ORC remained a cry in the wilderness due to negligence of the bureaucrats, if not the concerned political leaders.

A singer or a composer of the highest (special) grade receives a fixed amount of Tk 1279 for production of a song in any unit of the Bangladesh Betar. There are altogether three major units in Dhaka: the Transcription Service, the Home Service, and the Commercial Service that produce songs for broadcast by the Bangladesh Betar. A singer or a composer can hardly have more than one schedule per month in a unit for production. This implies that the maximum amount that a Dhaka-based artiste can earn from the Betar would hardly exceed Taka 4000 a month! From BTV, a special-grade artiste gets Tk 2,800 for



singing and production of a piece, and he/she can hardly have more than one schedule every three months. This is true, albeit very hard to believe! Moreover, the recently-imposed VAT for singers and composers can be seen in the metaphor of a malignant boil or carbuncle on elephantiasis.

We must welcome the decision of the cabinet to create special funds for disbursement among the artistes in need, including the unfortunate family members after the death of an artiste. If the above information is correct, is it not reasonable to think about the lifetime earnings by artistes who entertain the people at the expense of their dedication and perseverance that remarkably hinder their other wage-earning activities? In a country with so many defaulters in the payment of debt or taxes, is it essential that these poorly-paid artistes will have to deduct a portion as VAT of their

little earning from the government media? The official form that an artiste has to sign before taking on the assignment is sent by a signatory who is shown to be doing this "on behalf of the President of Bangladesh." This is virtually an invitation from the President for a song to be broadcast for the people of the country. After imposition of VAT on singing, many artistes have felt discouraged. It is also seen by many artistes as a humiliation of the term 'honorarium' which should not be taxable.

In line with the PM's move, it's time to put an end to our tradition of showing post-death respect to artistes by placing floral wreaths on their lifeless bodies or graves, and we should come forward to ensure their financial health in their lifetime.

THE WRITER IS A POET, ESSAYIST, LYRICIST, AND FREEDOM FIGHTER.

<b>BTV</b>	10:05 Bitarko	04:30 Durpath
03:05 Cartoon	07:45 Drama Serial: Gohiney	09:45 Ke Hote Chay Kotipoti
05:05 Jatiya Television School	12:30 Total Sports	
08:40 Bitarko	<b>Boishakhi TV</b>	
09:35 Krishi Dibanishi	10:30 Bangla Feature Film	
Drama Serial: Antar	04:15 Shorashori Doctor	
Mahal	08:10 Drama Serial: Ecanuser Dana	
	10:50 Reporters Dairy	
	11:30 Boishakhi Sanskriti O Binodon Sangbad	
<b>ATN BANGLA</b>		
01:25 Chalchitra-er Galpo	<b>Diganta TV</b>	
04:20 Matir Subash	03:30 World Round Up	
05:15 Aaynar Shamney	06:30 Suphala Bangladesh	
09:20 Drama Serial: Parapar	08:00 Drama Serial: Quick Marriage	
10:55 Drama Serial: Uttaradhikar	09:25 Chitra Bichitra	
	11:05 Shorol Poth	
<b>Rtv</b>		
12:10 Bangla Feature Film	<b>Maasranga Television</b>	
05:00 Cinema R Gaan	10:02 Bangla Feature Film	
08:20 Drama Serial: Shaat Purusher Dhaka	06:30 Shoili	
09:50 Bridal Show		

<b>RADIO</b>		
abc radio FM 89.2	12:00 My Time	
09:00 Mukhorito Jiboney	01:00 No Tension	
12:00 Durant Dupurey	04:00 Dhaka Calling	
03:00 Durant Bikelley	09:00 Night Rider	
05:00 Shondhata	01:00 Back to Back music	
07:00 Shajer Maya	<b>RADIO TODAY FM 89.6</b>	
09:00 Raat-er Akashy	08:00 Good Morning Dhaka	
11:00 Golper Shesh Nei	12:00 Today's Adda	
<b>Radio Foorti</b>	04:00 U Turn	
10:00 Morning Express	07:00 Tobey Tai Hok	

**Front Line**  
On Banglavision at 06:25pm  
Talk Show  
Host: Matur Rahman Chowdhury

**Kiss of the Dragon**  
On Z Studio at 09:30pm  
Genre: Action/Drama  
Cast: Jet Li, Bridget Fonda

**Shorol Poth**  
On Diganta TV at 11:05pm  
Q-A Session On Islam  
Host: Mawlana Rafiq Bin Sayeedi

11:30 Drama Serial: Ronger Shongshar	07:30 Prime Issue
	09:02 Mayeder Pathshala
	11:00 Maasranga Unplugged
<b>CHANNEL i</b>	<b>Z Studio</b>
09:45 Tritio Matra	01:30 American Beauty
01:05 Ebong Cinemar Gaan	04:00 Loins of Punjab Presents
06:00 Jibon Jekhane Jemon	06:10 The Firm
09:35 Drama Serial: Jogajog	09:30 Kiss of the Dragon
11:30 Travel On	11:30 Birthday Girl
<b>ntv</b>	<b>Star Movies</b>
08:45 Bangla Feature Film	03:15 In The Line of Fire
04:10 Janar Achhey Bolaar Achhey	05:25 National Security
05:30 Aponar Jiggasha	07:00 Hard Corps
09:00 Maggi Test an Balance	08:55 District 13 Ultimatum
11:00 Drama Serial: Terminal	10:40 Sniper 3
<b>BANGLAVISION</b>	<b>HBO</b>
01:05 Bangla Feature Film	01:40 The Lost Future
05:20 BCS Prostuti	03:35 The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers
07:00 Style File	07:15 The Time Traveler's Wife
11:25 Prabashi Mukh	09:30 Smokin' Aces 2: Assassins' Ball
12:25 Cinemar Gaan	11:20 Supernova
<b>ETV</b>	<b>Star World</b>
04:30 Probashe Bangladesh	03:30 Cops
07:50 O Bandhu Amar	07:30 India's Most Desirable
08:20 Drama Serial: Ohongkar	09:30 Master Chef Australia
10:10 Cine Hits	10:30 Bones
12:05 Ekushey-er Raat	
<b>Desh TV</b>	
04:00 Desh Janopod	

<b>DRAMA SERIAL</b>		
<b>ATN BANGLA</b>	08:15pm Dur Paharer Batashera	
08:00pm Adorsho Mess Bari	09:45pm Akasher Niche Manush	
<b>Rtv</b>	<b>BANGLAVISION</b>	
09:05pm Boyra Paribar	09:05pm Long March	
<b>CHANNEL i</b>	<b>Desh TV</b>	
07:50pm Shokal Shondha Raat	08:15pm Sat Kahon	
<b>ETV</b>	<b>Boishakhi TV</b>	
09:30pm Lolita	08:45pm Tokhon Hemanta	
<b>ntv</b>		

<b>NEWS BULLETIN</b>		
<b>BTV</b>	<b>BANGLAVISION</b>	
News (Bangla) at 8:00 am	News (Bangla) at 7:30am	
2:00 pm, 5:00 pm, 8:00 pm.	1:30pm, 5:00pm, 7:15pm.	
News (English) at 10:00am, 4:00 pm, 10:00 pm.	10:30pm.	
Late Night News (Bangla and English) 11:30 pm. (To be telecast on all Bangla channels).	News Headlines (Bangla) at 10:00am, 12:00am, 4:00pm, 8:00pm	
<b>CHANNEL-i</b>	<b>Rtv</b>	
News (Bangla): 7:00 am, 9:00 am, 2:00 pm, 9:00 pm, 10:30 pm, 12:30 am	News (Bangla): 2:30 pm, 4:30 pm, 6:30 pm, 8:30 pm, 10:30 pm, 12:30 am	
<b>ATN BANGLA</b>	<b>ntv</b>	
NEWS (Bangla): 7:00 pm, 10:00 pm, 11:00 pm, 1:00 am, 4:00 am	News (Bangla): 7:30am, 12:02pm, 2:00pm, 7:30pm, 10:30pm, 1:00am	
01:00pm, 3:00pm, 04:00pm	News (Bangla): 9:00am, 11:00 am, 1:00pm, 3:00pm, 5:00pm, 7:00pm, 9:00pm, 11:00pm	
News (English): 9:00 am, 6:00 pm.		

<b>TALK SHOW</b>		
<b>BTV</b>	12:30pm Taroka Kothon	
10:25pm Digital Bangladesh	<b>ntv</b>	
<b>ATN BANGLA</b>	12:10pm Ei Shomoy	
11:30pm Je Kotha Keu Boleni	<b>BANGLAVISION</b>	
12:30am Lead News	06:25pm Front Line	
<b>Rtv</b>	<b>Desh TV</b>	
10:40am Tarokalap	11:45pm Shoja Kotha	
07:40pm Our Democracy	<b>Boishakhi TV</b>	
<b>CHANNEL i</b>	12:00am Zero Hour	

## THEATRE FESTIVAL AT MAHILA SHAMITI

# Curtains come down on a landmark



PHOTO: MUMIT M.

Scenes from "Phona" (top) and "Jol Balika".

JAMIL MAHMUD

Just before entering the Neelima Ibrahim Auditorium of Mahila Shamiti, one just can't help but notice a series of black and white portraits hanging on the front wall of the auditorium. While all those individuals are no more with us, theatre lovers will recall their contributions for many days to come.

The series includes names such as Munier Chowdhury,

Selim Al Deen, Sayeed Ahmed, Mohammad Zakaria, SM Solaiman, Abdullah Al Mamun, Zia Haider, ASM Arju Rahman and Najma Anwar.

Except for Munier Chowdhury, who was killed by the collaborators during the Liberation War, all of the other notable personalities had a great span of time to organise theatre activities at the old building of the Mahila Samity, where a theatre festival is being

held for the last time. Chowdhury's contribution was the primary inspiration for the then theatre activists to initiate the "Neo-theatre Movement" in the country in 1973.

At such a memorable festival, recalling the masters is an appropriate step by the organisers, Bangladesh Group Theatre Federation, said theatre lovers and activists.

The portraits are part of an exhibition that also features a

number of photos and posters. The exhibition was inaugurated on the first day of the festival and will continue till today, the last day of the festival.

On the third day of the festival (September 10) sequences from eight plays were staged at the venue. Activists also recalled their old days. Among them were ITI Worldwide president Ramendu Majumdar, Syed Dulal (chief of Shabdabali, Barisal) and Mizanur Rahman, general secretary of Patho Natok Parishad.

The festival featured notable plays such as "Jol Balika", "Phona", "Rother Roshi", "Nripati" and "Bela Shesher Galpo" respectively by Padatik Natya Sangshad Bangladesh, Shabdaboli (Barisal),



Natyadhara, Nandanik and Nandimukh.

Each play has a different context. "Jol Balika" relates the story of a fishermen's community, while "Phona" is a saga set in a military camp. "Rother Roshi" is a play about class distinction. However, the troupes only got a chance to stage excerpts for 20minutes.

The festival ends today (September 12). On the day, popular troupes such as Theatre (Bailey Road), Aranyak, Theatre Art Unit, Prachyanat and Dhaka Theatre will stage sequences from their plays "Ekhono Kritodash", "Mayur Singhashan", "Birth Fantasy", "Koinna" and "Muntasir". A total of 11 troupes will perform today.

# Children's drama festival ends in Barisal

SUSHANTA GHOSH, Barisal

The two-day divisional children's drama festival and competition ended in the city on Friday night.

A total of 18 children theatre groups from six districts of the division took part in the festival titled 'Barisal Bibhagio Shishu Natya Utsab-2011'.

Bangladesh Shishu Academy of Barisal branch organised the programme in collaboration with the Ministry of Cultural Affairs at Aswini Kumar Hall in the city with the theme 'Oder Swapno Akash Jurey Bhasey'.

Deputy Commissioner of Barisal SM Arifur Rahman distributed prizes among the



A scene from "Ala Bhola".

winner of the drama competition at the closing of the festival on Friday night.

Barisal Shishu Theatre, a unit of Shabdaboli Group Theatre, bagged the first prize with

"Bolta". Kalapara Morning Star of Patuakhali's "Phiriy Dao" and Bhola Theatre's "Ala Bhola" won the second and third prizes of the festival competition. Additional Deputy Commis-

sioner Palash Kanti Bala as special guest attended the closing ceremony of the festival presided over by Pankaj Roy Chowdhury, district Children's Affairs Officer.

The programme was addressed among others by Jibon Krishna Dey, Children's Rights activist and Freedom Fighter Akkas Hossein. Participants and speakers at the festival observed that economic insolvency, river erosion, engaging children in domestic tasks are major obstacles to their intellectual and physical development.

They laid emphasis on developing a positive attitude towards children and involving social elites with children's rights and cultural activities for

the overall development of the children.

Barisal Shishu Theatre of Shabdaboli Group Theatre, Barisal Govt Girl's School, Bakal Niranjan Boiragi High School of Agoiljhara of Barisal, Kishor Theatre, Swaralipi Sangeet Academy, Udichi Shilpi Gosthi of Jhalakathi, Bhola Theatre, Daulatkhan Natyangan, Borholo Shishu Theatre, Lakurtola School of Bhola, Little Theatre, Khelaghar of Barguna, Morning Star Cadet School, Kathaltola School, Dashmina Model School of Patuakhali, Borholo Gram Theatre, Bhandaria Model School and KM Latif Institution of Pirojpur participated in the festival.