

WHAT'S ON

Victory Festival
Title: Bijoy-e-Parbo-e
Organizer: Iib, Bangladesh Central Play Ground
Venue: Dhaka University Central Play Ground
Date: December 15-17
Time: 10am onwards



Photography Exhibition
Title: Bangladesh: The Price of Freedom
Photographer: Raghu Rai
Venue: Bengal Gallery of Fine Arts, Bengal Shilpyalaya, H-42, R-16, Dharmoddi



15th Asian Art Biennale
Venue: Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy, Segunbagicha
Date: December 1-31
Time: 11am-8pm



Int'l Short Film Fest
Organizer: Bangladesh Short Film Forum
Venue: Central Public Library, Shahbagh
Date: December 13-19



Weeklong Victory Festival
Organizer: Liberation War Museum
Venue: Liberation War Museum, Dhaka
Date: December 10-16
Time: 4pm onwards



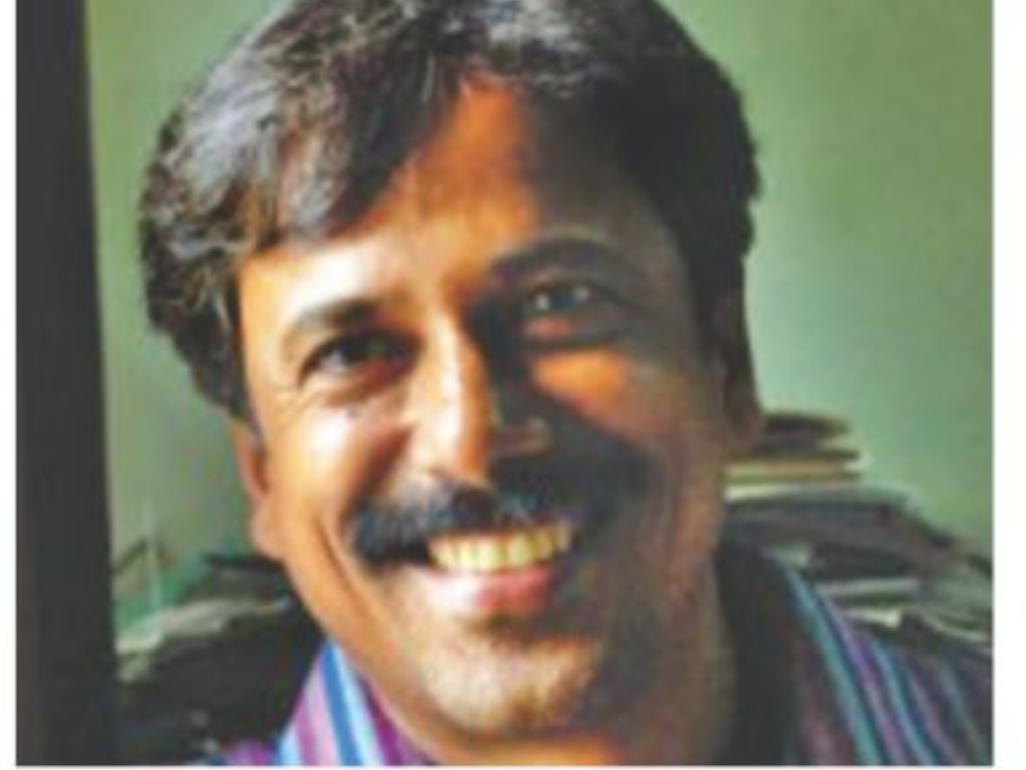
Victory Day Celebration
Organizer: Chayantrik
Venue: Chayantrik Auditorium, Dharmoddi
Date: December 16
Time: 4pm



Group Drawing Exhibition
Title: '100 Light, His Shadow
Venue: Bengal Gallery of Fine Arts, H-42, R-16 (new), Dharmoddi
Date: December 18-25



Brindabon Das Basking in popular appeal



A CORRESPONDENT

Brindabon Das is one of the top names among playwrights today. His works are always in demand, with directors keen on using his talents for their dramas.

Brindabon earned his fame by writing several one-hour plays and serials for director Salauddin Lavlu. "Goru Chor", "Potro Mitali", "Warrant", "Service Holder" are some of the one-hour plays that are still etched in the mind of the audience.

Although he began with a career as a stage actor, Brindabon has taken on the new role of a playwright.

In the four decades of independence, the country's TV plays have made large strides, Brindabon says. TV drama has become a large industry, with an increasing number of TV channels, actors and dramatists, he adds.

"People in Kolkata used to enjoy BTV dramas in the past. They were still the most popular programmes on television," Brindabon says.

Calling for better professionalism in the world of drama, Brindabon asserts that obstacles must be toppled to break free of the existing limitations in the field.

He adds: "We shouldn't ask what the country has given us, but think what we have given to the country. If we all make our individual contributions, only then will our liberation be successful."

Brindabon is in favour of including messages in his plays. "Dramas are my love, my profession. I want to keep doing my work with honesty and try to include messages in all my plays," he concludes.

41 YEARS AFTER 1971 In the revived glory of freedom...

Rooted in tradition

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Abdus Shakoor, Artist

Abdus Shakoor Shah is widely recognised for his folk motifs and ballads. Over a large span of his career, the artist has been working on folk motifs and ancient ballads. Folk ballads of Mymensingh—the famous Mahua and Malua love stories, Nakshi Kanthar Maath, Gazir Pata, Manasha Pata have found a prominent place in his works. The artist shares his experience, dreams and views on the Liberation War.

"During the Liberation War, I was a lecturer of Arts and Crafts Department of Sylhet Residential Model College. The college was in a rural area. I also lived in the college campus. During the night of massacre on March 25, I moved towards the main city of Sylhet. After reaching there, I found that the city was completely silent and people were rarely seen. I faced a terrifying situation. Then I crossed the Surma River. After that I reached a remote village where I found shelter. Though I did not know anybody in the village, they warmly greeted me," said Shakoor.

After 42 years of independence, Shakoor feels that we have not achieved our goals. "Most people in our country are still underprivileged. Corruption, hypocrisy, dishonesty, murders are still a regular feature in our daily life. Politicians have little respect for the country and they are not committed to the country and its people. They make no attempt to bring change to the country," the artist asserted.

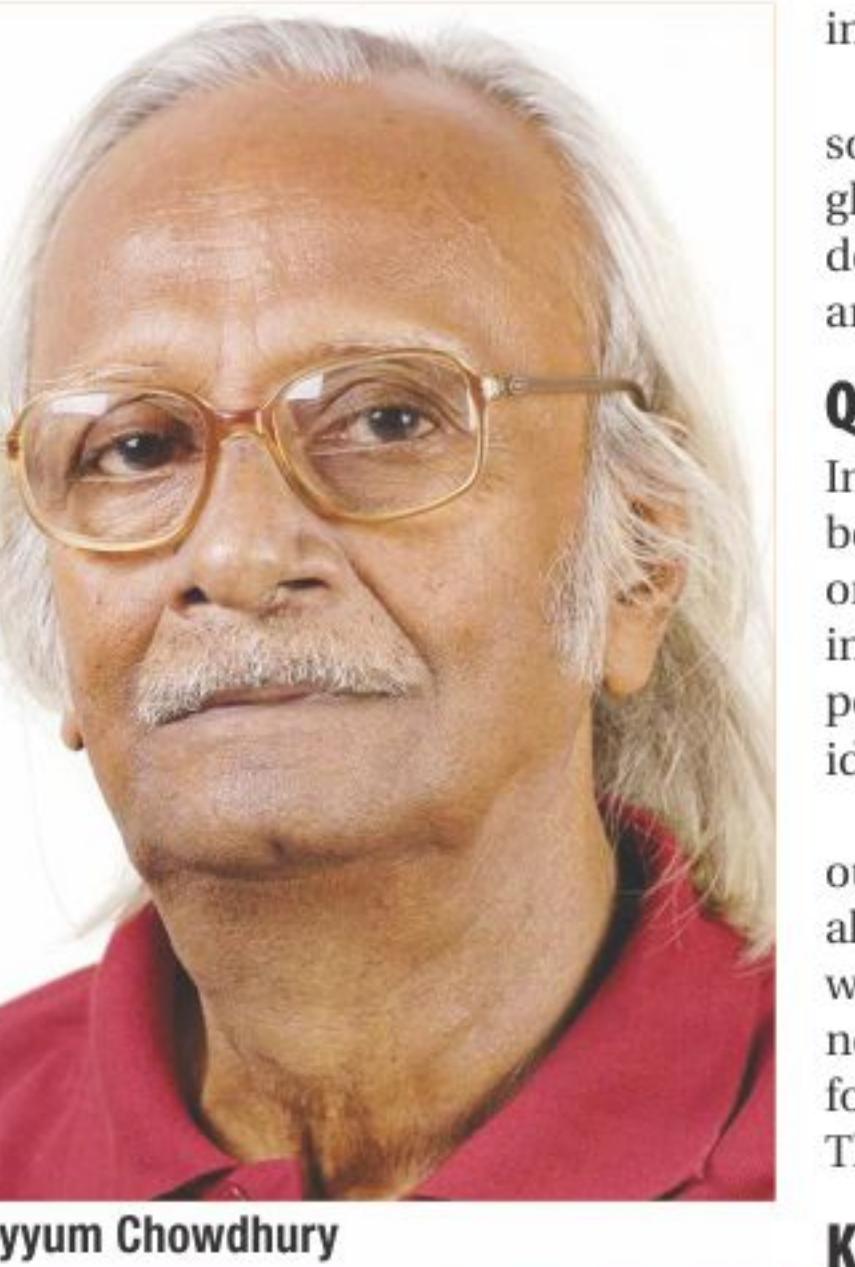
Shakoor added, "Zainul Abedin, Quamrul Hassan, Rashed Chowdhury—the three pioneering figures always focused on nationalism and patriotism through their works. I also try to present my country's culture and tradition in my works. I believe that all my work depicts a complete story that highlights the Bengali identity. My works are closely related to local myths, beliefs and visions. When my works are on display in different galleries in the outer world, any foreigner can easily make out that these paintings are from this region. My objective is to make sure that any viewer would be able to look at my work and would be able to detect instantly that these scenes are from Bangladesh."

The expectations when the country earned independence, have not been fulfilled. This is how I feel and that's why that song strikes a chord.

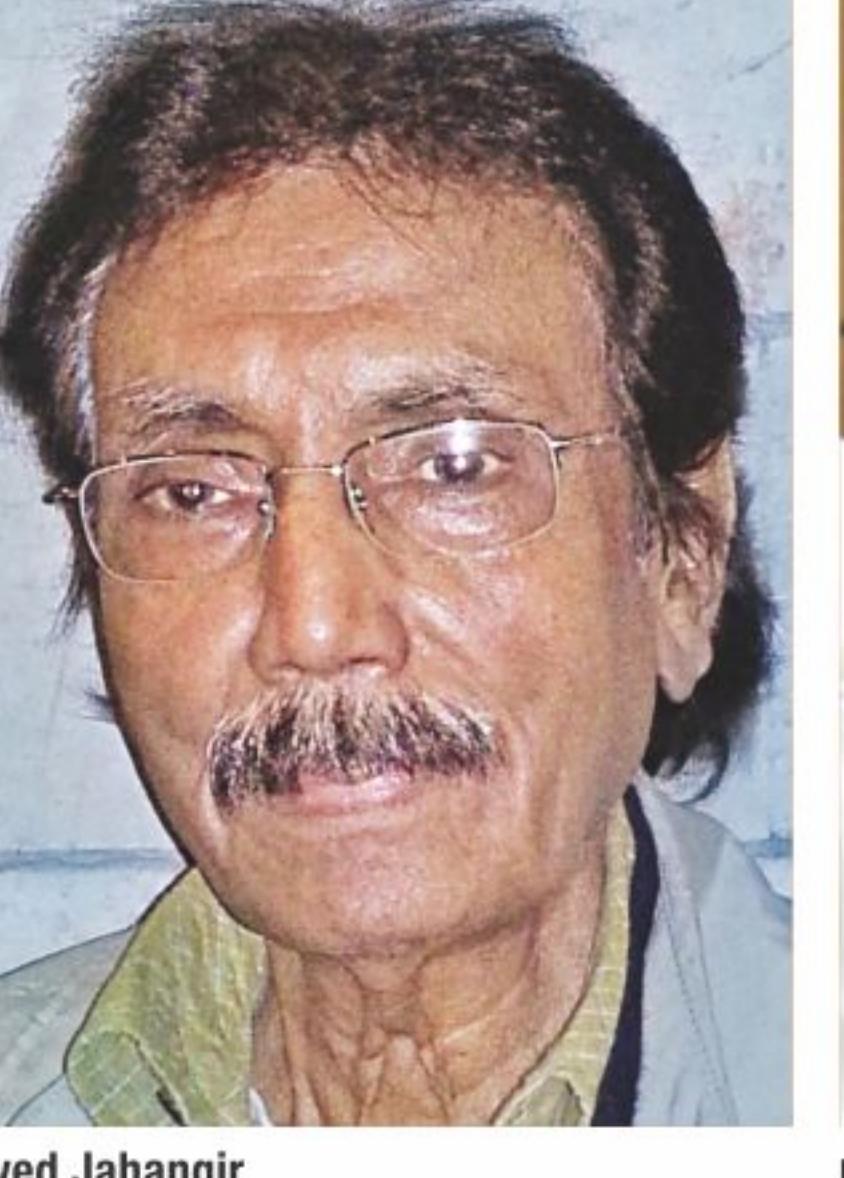
That freedom that we fought for, we



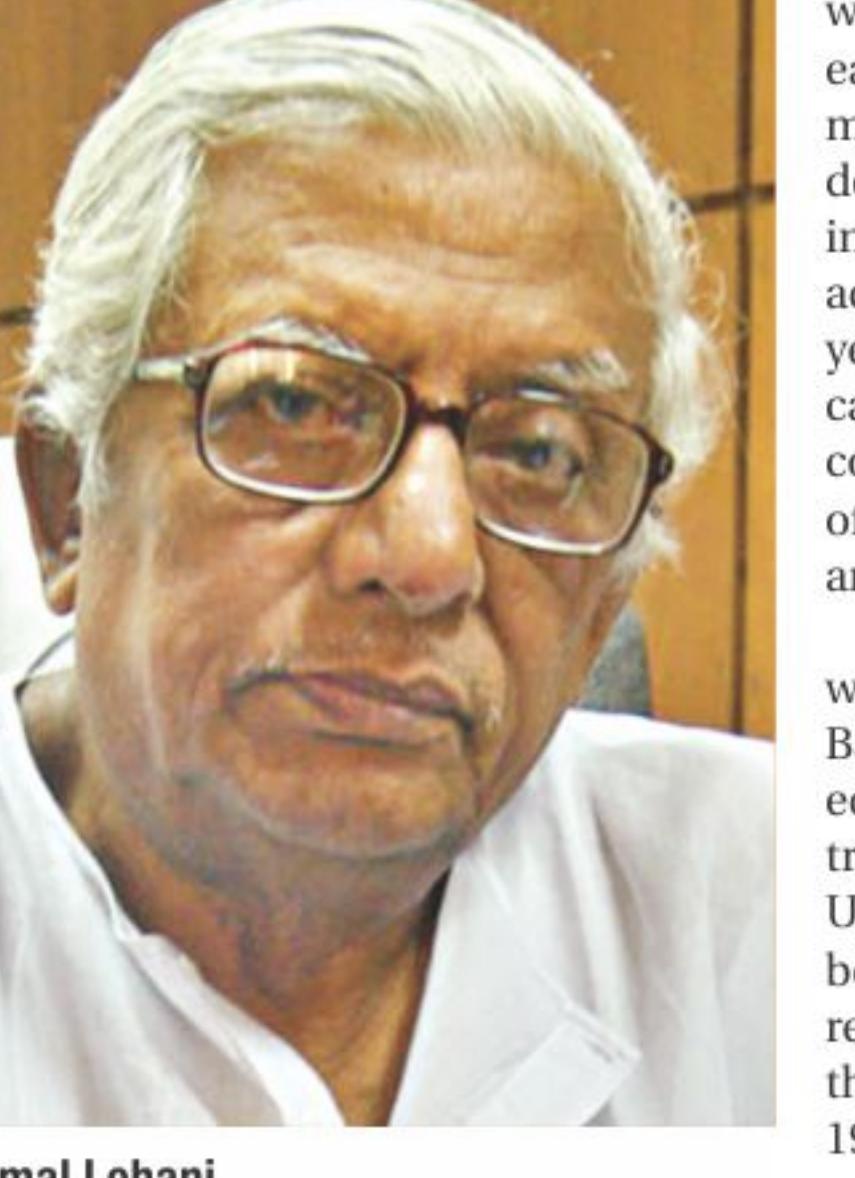
Abdus Shakoor



Qayum Chowdhury



Syed Jahangir



Kamal Lohani

My sentiments can be best conveyed through the lines from a song by Hyder Husyn: "...Ki bolar kotha ki bolchi, tirish bochor poreo ami shadhinota takey khujichi".

The expectations when the country earned independence, have not been fulfilled. This is how I feel and that's why that song strikes a chord.

That freedom that we fought for, we

sacrificed much for, can only be ensured through political stability. This is the only issue that's holding us back. The violent tendencies in our politics need to go. Unless this issue is resolved, we will remain an independent nation but not liberated.

However, as an artist, I can proudly say that in four decades our art has made tremendous advancement. We couldn't have gone this far if we didn't achieve

independence. The positive outcomes of attaining sovereignty are many but to excel on the global stage, we must give up on self-destructive politics. No other way around it.

Qayum Chowdhury, Artist

In Bangladeshi art and culture there have been significant progress. Without doubt one can say that had we not attained independence, it wouldn't have been possible to establish a unique cultural identity on the global level.

I am an optimist. I strongly feel that our cultural presence -- not just art but also theatre, music and other fields -- will become stronger. Whatever we have not achieved, with perseverance and love for our country, we will get there. The future belongs to us.

Kamal Lohani, Cultural Activist

We have to hope anew; the hopes with which we fought against Pakistanis to earn freedom remain unrealised. In this month, when we achieved victory four decades ago, we have to place our hopes in the people again. We have to accomplish what we couldn't in all these years. Fundamentalists and bigots, who carried out war crimes in 1971 and continue to work against the sovereignty of Bangladesh, have to be confronted and punished.

When we were fighting for freedom, we hoped that we would have a Bangladesh where popular culture, education and life would reflect our traditional Bengali identity.

Unfortunately, those goals have not been fully realised. There are many reasons behind that: the biggest being the assassination of Bangabandhu in 1975. After that the country went into a regressive state and traditional cultural practices degenerated as well.

Cultural elements that we consider "negative" had been introduced to the masses in our country and the impact had been demolishing. We have stopped taking pride in our own heritage and are blindly aping others.

Each of us has to take a mental oath that we will continue working to ensure a Bangladesh that upholds and projects our traditions, culture and literature.

Hitting the big league Bangladesh and its women filmmakers

AFSANA TAZBIR

Bangladesh has just entered the ripe age of 41 years. Over the last four decades the country has witnessed change in the form of progress in various areas. There have been a rising number of women working in various fields ranging from medicine to architecture, from education to journalism. Simultaneously, the country has taken up the work of making a documentary on rescuing rivers from pollution and encroachment with a special focus on the risks of ship breaking industry.

"Society acts as a barrier in women's progress, as it discourages and sometimes even forbids women from moving their focus from the conventional role of a homemaker and a mother," she said.

Mother of a 22-year-old engineering student, Nargis says unconditional support from her family is what made her who she is today.

"My family, especially my son gives me immense support. If a woman's family does not accept her job then it becomes

required level of hard work and commitment necessary for making a film.

An artist at heart, Nargis has a natural flair for film making. On top of that education and technical know-how has helped her launch successful movies all carrying a social message. Recently, she has taken up the work of making a documentary on rescuing rivers from pollution and encroachment with a special focus on the risks of ship breaking industry.

However, how many women are actually involved in the decision-making aspect of that industry? Can we really see as many women filmmakers, as we would have liked? The Daily Star had a candid talk with the precious few female film directors in an attempt to dig deeper into issue.

Kohinoor Akhter Suchanda

"What do women know about directing films? And who is going to watch a movie made out of such old and mundane story?"

These were the very responses Suchanda got when she applied for a government grant for the movie based on Zahir Raihan's Adameji Award-winning novel, "Hajar Bochhor Dhoray". The movie, which was her second, bagged six National Awards in 2005.

Suchanda, one of the leading actors of the film industry in the '60s, made her debut as an actor with the movie "Kagojer Nokta" (1966), directed by Subhash Dutt. In 1968, she married Zahir Raihan, a noted film director and intellectual who was to lose his life soon after the Liberation War of 1971 while looking for his missing brother Shahidullah Kaiser in Mirpur in January 1972. It is suspected he was killed by Biharis who had been armed by the Pakistan army in 1971 to resist the Mukti Bahini.

"When I felt I was ready, I made my debut as a director in 1998 with the film 'Bidesh Jatra,'" she said. Her production house, Suchanda Chalchitra enabled her to grasp the technical aspects of filmmaking, as she used to work very closely with the crew.

"However, it was a rough time for quality movie makers, as the market was rampant with substandard vulgar movies. Even my movie had to be renamed to 'Sabuj Coat Kalo Chashma' upon the insistence of cinema owners," she said sadly.

When asked about the inspiration behind her surfacing as a film director, Suchanda said, her husband Zahir Raihan had always inspired her to direct films.

"Whenever he worked in the editing room, I sat right by his side watching him work, while pouring him cups of tea," she added with a laugh.

"He always asked for my opinions and valued my judgments. I guess that was where I got my confidence."

On the subject of the presence of fewer women as film directors than men, Suchanda said the male-dominated film industry need to broaden their perspective.

"Why does she want a grant again when she got it once already?", was the reaction when I submitted the screenplay of Zahir Raihan's "Borof Gola Nodi", almost five years ago," she said.

"What hurts is that even after you accomplish success perceptions don't change that easily," she said.

Afsana Mimi

"I don't think we should limit ourselves to Bangladesh only. The scenario is similar all over the world. Don't you think?"

questioned actor turned director Afsana Mimi when asked why there are so few female film directors in our country.

Mimi has garnered much praise for directing TV plays like "Sharey Tin Tola", "Doll's House" and "Poush Pather". Her movie "Run" based on the Liberation War of 1971 is expected to be released in mid-2013.

"Most women take up film making as a hobby. She directs a film or two and disappears. Women need to be serious in their profession in order for society to take them seriously," she said, smilingly.

Mimi stressed the importance of film institutes in enriching the motion pictures sector.

She worked for a year as an executive

producer before a window of opportunity opened up for her. There was a need for a director in the play "Bondhon".

"I was never unsure of myself. But when my mentor Nawazish Ali Khan told me that he had no doubts about my directorial abilities, my self-confidence spiked," she said.

When asked whether she had faced any obstacles at the beginning of her career as a director Mimi gave a surprising answer, "Not at all. On the contrary, it is the cooperation of my friends and colleagues that has kept me going."

"I believe that as long as you are sincere, committed, have leadership qualities and have the willingness to work hard, it doesn't matter whether you are a man or a woman, anymore."

Mimi says her character was shaped by celebrated women like Aparna Sen, Saro Zaker, Sharmily Ahmed and Luva Nahid Chowdhury and women like her grandmother and mother and even her

Also a painter, Cacoly admitted to being influenced by Bengali film director Ritwik Ghatak. "Growing up I watched heaps of movies by Satyajit Ray and Ghatak which inspired me. In fact, film critics at the Goafilm Festival compared my film to Ritwik Ghatak, a compliment I shall treasure forever," she said.

According to her, women should thrive in the film making business because not only are they more sincere and committed than men but they are programmed by nature to nurture.

"Only mothers have the strength and willpower to wake up at three o'clock in the morning to tend to their baby," she added with a smile.

Cacoly foresees a brighter future where society will evolve and minds will broaden. She hopes someday society will not hesitate to recognise talent and will come forward with their appreciation for women. She hopes that she in her own way will inspire another young woman to pursue her dreams of materialising her vision on the celluloid.

Faria Hossain

"There is no alternative to learning," said Faria Hossain, one of the torchbearers of female directors of our country.

In a society where her profession was considered somewhat unconventional, playwright-director Faria Hossain had to encounter obstacles in various shapes and forms. "I might have fallen victim to backstabbing and gossip but I had retained my self-confidence and my

utmost faith in myself and my work. Unexpectedly, I did not face much resistance in fieldwork," she added.

Her career began in February 1995, at the impressionable age of 22. During her teen years, when her peers used to watch Hollywood or Bollywood flicks, Faria used to take a deep interest in the works of maestros like Satyajit Ray and Ritwik Ghatak, which was quite unusual for someone of her age.

Faria Hossain has settled in the USA with her husband and five-year-old daughter. However, she has been in Dhaka for the last three years, to take care of her parents.

Her production house "Drishiti Deep Audio Vision" has developed another talk show "Khola Akash" that will air shortly on Channel 1, after celebrity talk show "Shopno Orin" just wrapped up at 45 episodes. She has written a script for another television play which will go on air in the next three months.

"The perception of women has altered significantly and acceptance has increased. Society has recognised that women can work just as well as men," she observed, adding, "The scenario has changed dramatically in the last five years or so."

An optimist at heart, Faria believes the country will see more female film directors in the near future. "Nothing is wrong in being a woman. Women can be very hard-working and committed. On top of that they have an eye for detail, which is a vital quality in directing films."

According to Faria, women in Bangladesh are not yet ready to put in the

big screens with the film "Uttor Shur" which has been screened in various international film festivals like Gox International Film Festival; Kolkata International Film Festival (2012) and Third Eye Mumbai Film Festival (in Mumbai). Another movie by Cacoly, "Jal Rang" will be released shortly.

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Reminiscence Ahmed Imtiaz Bulbul talks about his Liberation War days

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Popular music director Ahmed Imtiaz Bulbul is renowned for his evergreen compositions. In his illustrious career, Bulbul has directed music for over 350 movies. He is the lyricist of most of these songs. He has composed and written many remarkable adhunik and patriotic songs. His contribution to the music industry has earned him several honours including the National Film Award, the President's Award and the Shikha Anir