

WHAT'S ON

Syed Shamsul Haq Natya Utsab
Venue: National Theatre Hall, BSA
Date: Apr 19-27
Time: 6pm

Solo Art Exposition
Title: Existence... The End
Organiser: Samdani Art Foundation
Artist: Khaleel Hsuan
Date: Apr 12-19
Time: 3-8pm

Mask Exhibition
Title: Masks of Bangladesh
Venue: Gallery Jollong, Niketan
Date: Apr 12-25
Time: 10am-8pm

Tagore Song, Sarod Recital & Recitation
Organiser: Deboussa Foundation
Venue: Music and Dance Centre, Shilpakala
Date: April 19

Solo Painting Exhibition
Artist: Rafiqun Nabi
Venue: Dhaka Art Center, H-60, Rd-7/A, Dharmamandi
Date: April 12-22
Time: 3pm-8pm

Solo Painting Exhibition
Title: Primitive Periphery
Artist: Musawwer Mehedi
Venue: Shikhanagar Art Gallery
H-7, R-13 Dharmamandi
Date: April 13-19
Time: 10am-8pm

Group Art Exhibition & Inauguration of the Gallery
Gallery 21
Venue: Satmasjid Road, Dharmamandi
Date: April 5-30



KARIM WAHEED

Although to a layman (such as I), for a few fleeting seconds it might seem to resemble Manipuri dance, which is familiar to Bengalis, it shouldn't take long to distinguish the uniqueness and magnificence of Sattriya, dance of the Assamese monks.

For me, what immediately established the dance form's individuality was the basic foot position, or "ora": the feet are turned out and the knees are bent sideways directly over toes.

The introduction to Sattriya, one of the eight principal classical Indian dance forms, happened at Shadhona's dance studio in Banani, Dhaka on April 16. The occasion was a workshop conducted by "bhakat" (Vaishnavite monks) of Uttar Komolabari Satra (monastery) of Majuli, Assam, in India. The workshop was facilitated by Artes Nomades.

Dance exponent and researcher Lubna Marium, who is also the general secretary and artistic director of Shadhona, briefed the participants on the history of the dance form prior to the arrival of the monks.

Sattriya has remained a living tradition since its creation by the founder of Vaishnavism in Assam, Srimanta Sankardev, in 15th century.

Sattriya is derived from the word "satra" or monastery, as the dance was exclusively practised and performed by the monks.

Sankardev employed the dance form as a tool of storytelling in "Ankia Naat" -- drama primarily centred on Krishna.

Sattriya dance has some distinctive footwork patterns. The basic stance, ora, involves both feet and hands. There are two types of ora: "purush" (masculine) and "prakriti" (feminine).

The team of bhakat arrived and were greeted by Lubna Marium and dancers of Shadhona.

The demonstration by the monks, led by Bhabananda Barbayan, began. To the beats of *khul* (two-sided drum) and *taal* (big cymbals), the monks clad in white showed young dancers how to execute the ora, and the stretches they do to stay flexible. Shadhona dancers also learned about "alapadma" or "lotus hand gesture" and "dhwaja", the raised open-palm stance.

Sattriya: Dance of the Assamese Monks

Workshop by Shadhona



PHOTO: KIDWAN ADID RUPON

The workshop was conducted by monks of Uttar Komolabari Satra of Majuli, Assam.

Life of a dancer monk

Before lunch break, I had the opportunity to talk to Bhabananda, who provided a glimpse into the lives of the dancer monks.

The bhakat are celibate monks, sent to the satra by their parents. They join the monasteries as children. Bhabananda joined the Uttar Komolabari Satra when he was a little over four. There have been monks in his family for five generations. His uncle was a musician at the satra.

The children go through a disciplined upbringing: waking up very early, studying in the satra, doing chores, practising dance, praying, going to public school, doing homework, going through more lessons etc. The "Burha Bhakat" or head of the "boha" (each

house within the boundaries of a satra) takes care of the children. The head of a satra is called a "Satradhikar".

The satras are self-sustaining; they accept but don't solely depend on donations. Though traditionally the main occupation has been farming, bhakats can choose to be teachers or entrepreneurs. If a bhakat chooses to marry, he leaves the satra.

Bhabananda studied at Gauhati University and taught for a year. He did a PhD in "Rhythmic Pattern of Sattriya Dance" from Rabindra Bharati University (under dance exponent and researcher Dr. Mahua Mukherjee). He is a visiting faculty at Université Paris 8.

Bhabananda is the artistic director of Satraranga, a troupe of bhakats. The troupe has 25 regular artistes (dancers, actors and musicians).

Hashem Khan turns 72

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Hashem Khan is a prolific painter, who has made an immense contribution to the enrichment of Bangladesh art. On his 72nd birthday, Gallery 21 held a celebration on April 16 at the gallery premises in Dhanmondi, Dhaka.

Khan's friends, well-wishers, admirers and art enthusiasts greeted him with flowers, gifts and sweets.

Sculptor Ferdousi Priyabhashini; war crimes researcher and author Shahriar Kabir; historian Muntasar Mamun; economist K.A.S. Murshid; artists Kanak Champa Chakma, Khalid Mahmud Mithu, Mohammad Iqbal, Maksuda Iqbal Nipa; architect Rabiul Husain; Shameem Subrana, founder director of Gallery 21; teachers of Faculty of Fine

Arts, University of Dhaka; senior artists and students were present at the programme.

Khan was born in 1941 in Chandpur. He graduated from Govt. Institute of Arts (now Faculty of Fine Arts, University of Dhaka) in 1961. He has held seven solo exhibitions and has participated in many group exhibitions at home and abroad. He taught at the Faculty of Fine Arts for 44 years and retired as professor in 2007.

He actively participated in the Liberation War and during the early and mid '70s, made the war the subject of his works. Most of his paintings highlight rural panorama and life in the villages. He has made a major attempt to connect contemporary themes with the Liberation War. He is very cautious in his use of colours and creating texture.



Hashem Khan (C) cuts the cake.

Bhawaiya artiste Raja to perform in Australia

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Accomplished Bhawaiya singer Shafiqul Alam Raja left for Sydney, Australia on April 17 to perform at a Baishakhi Mela. Organised by Bangabandhu Council, Australia, the daylong fair will be held at Athletic Olympic Park, Sydney on April 20.

Raja will perform popular Bhawaiya songs composed by legendary singer Abbasuddin Ahmed, Mahesh Chandra Roy, Md. Kasim Uddin, his music guru Nurul Islam Zahid and more.

According to Nurul Islam Zahid, "Thought and contemplation are the key factors of Bhawaiya. Music symbolises peace, love and spirituality. The music is mostly popular in the northern region of Bangladesh and some parts of India."

Shafiqul Alam Raja was born in Chilmari, Kurigram district. His singing talent surfaced in his childhood. Raja has founded a music troupe



called 'Bhawaiya'. He also runs a Bhawaiya Music School in Dhaka. The artiste won 'Shresthaman' in a nationwide talent hunt organised by Bengal Foundation in 2006. His solo Bhawaiya album 'Kobor Dekhiya Jaan' was released three years back.

BEHIND THE SCENES

Shooting at UTC Bhaban

SHAH ALAM SHAZU

UTC Bhaban is a building on Panthapath in Dhaka, the tenth floor of which has been used as a shooting venue for a while. Going there on a Friday, we ran into actor Sajal as soon as we stepped out of the elevator.

Sajal was busy talking on the phone, but he stepped forward to shake hands. Soon we entered the shooting space.

Unfortunately, there was a power cut, but the crew was busy arranging

returning before that." Selim said, "What's the problem? We are having a good time." Shokal Ahmed jokingly replied, "Sure, all the losses are going out of the director's pocket."

As the adda continued, it started to rain. Everyone seemed to enjoy watching the much-awaited rain outside. Ten/fifteen minutes of rain refreshed the whole ambiance.

Meanwhile, as the electricity returned, the director hurried everyone to get ready for a scene. Sajal and Bindu prepared themselves for the



(From left) Director Shokal Ahmed with actors Sajal and Bindu.

for the scenes: the production boy and light-man were chatting away, two assistant directors were taking a break, while director Shokal Ahmed reclined on a sofa -- busy reading the script.

We moved on to the makeup room, where we found Bindu in front of a mirror. Sajal also entered the room, and the actors struck up a conversation in which Shokal Ahmed also joined in.

An adda session followed on the sofa of the makeup room, with actor Selim joining in.

Sajal wondered whether there would be any shooting if electricity was not back. Bindu replied, "Count down an hour on your watch. There is little possibility of the power

shot, while the unit readied all the equipments. The director gave instructions for the scene.

The reel started to roll and the scene was okayed without any glitch. Then the next shot was delayed as Sajal's phone rang.

A brief break was called, as Sajal and Bindu needed a change of wardrobe. Selim joined the duo for the next scene, which required two

takes before getting a nod from the director.

It was time to rearrange the set for the next scene. The director informed us that the drama was called "Chena Chena Laage". One shot after the other was captured on the reel, as we left the shooting spot around 9pm.

PHOTO: ATU AAKASH

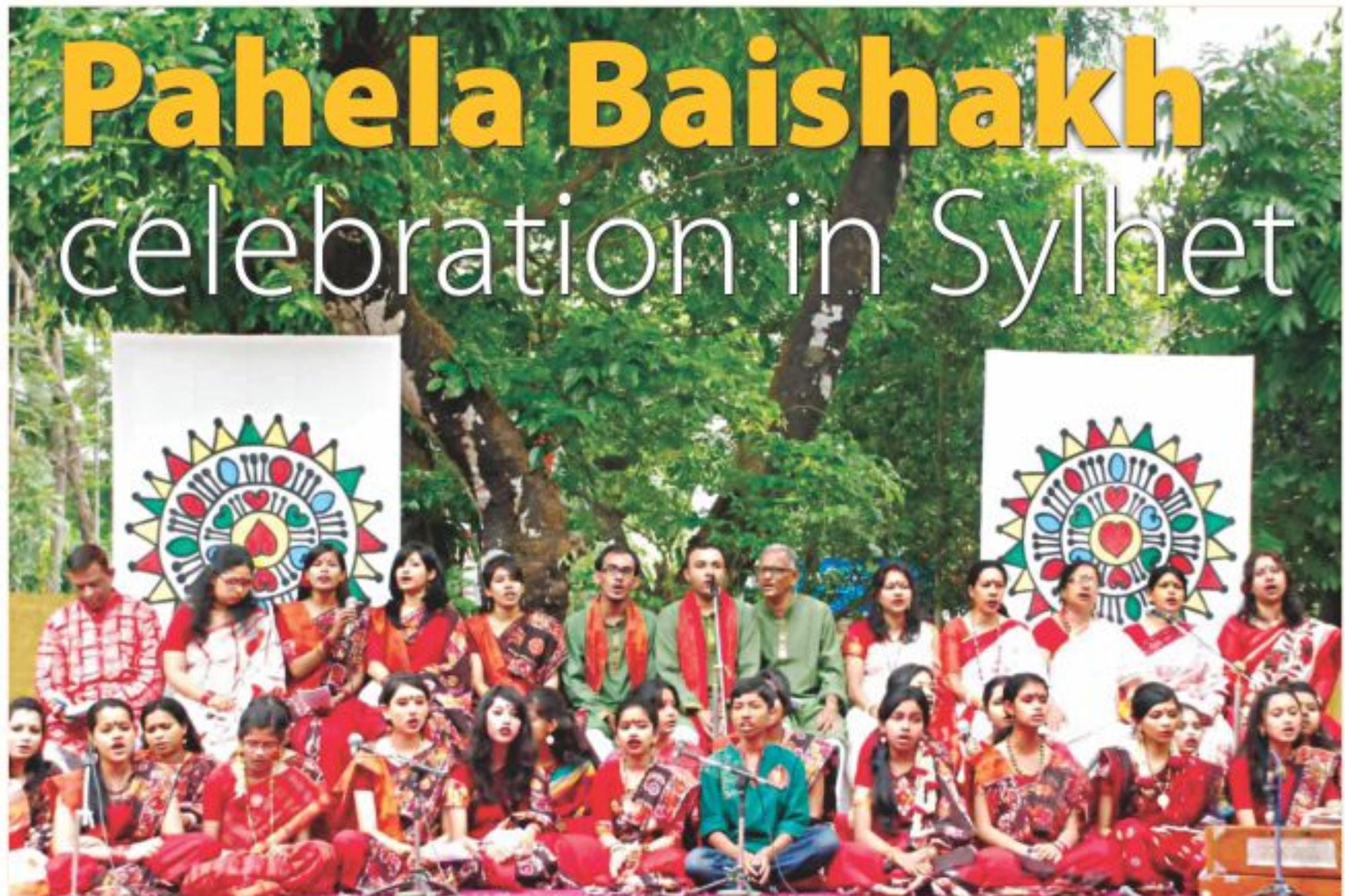


PHOTO: STAR

IQBAL SIDDIQUEE, Sylhet

People from all walks of life thronged at the venues of Pahela Baishakh celebration programmes in the divisional city of Sylhet on Sunday. A festive mood prevailed as the young crowd wearing traditional Bengali attire moved about the city. The city experienced a huge traffic till midnight.

Sylhet City Corporation organised weeklong celebrations to welcome the Bengali New Year. It began through a procession in the morning followed by a drawing contest for children, cultural function, and a weeklong fair at the city's Surma riverbank.

The Sylhet district administration also organised a daylong programme. Cultural organisation Sruti arranged a

cultural event at the Bluebird School & College premises. Beginning through chorus of Tagore songs and patriotic numbers, the artistes also rendered baul songs, Radharaman songs and Shah Abdul Karim songs in addition to poetry recitation and dance.

Tagore institution Anandalok organised a separate programme at the Sylhet Sangskritik College playground. Veteran cultural activist Nizamuddin Lashkar formally inaugurated the event.

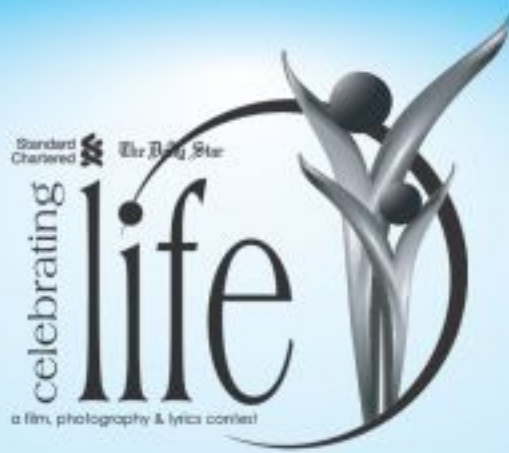
Sammitita Natya Parishad Sylhet, Udichi Shilpi Goshthi and Shahjalal University's Architecture Department brought out a procession in addition to cultural functions.

The city wore a festive look with attractive motifs and alpona.



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