

# Courage under fire

## Remembering poet Sikander Abu Zafar

SYED JAHANGIR



Sikander Abu Zafar died on August 5, 1975, just 10 days before his close friend -- father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was assassinated on August 15. Sikander Abu Zafar wrote the unforgettable poem "Bangla Chharo", addressing to the-then military junta of Pakistan. He wrote... "Rokto chokher agun mekhe jholshe jaowa amar bochor-gulo/ Ajke jokhon haater muthoy konthonali'r khun piashi churi/ Kaj ki tobeagle rekhe buker kache keute shap-er jhapi /Amar haatei nilam amar nirbhorotar chabi /Tumi amar akash theke sharao tomar chaya / Tumi Bangla chharo."

This poem was published in the then Dainik Pakistan on March 7, 1971. It was the day when Bangabandhu was to deliver his historic address at the Race Course (now Suhrawardy Udyan). Bangabandhu read the poem on that morning and highly commended the poet's courage on writing such a bold composition, while talking to Agha Yusuf, a common friend. Agha Yusuf later narrated this anecdote in a memorial speech on Sikander Abu Zafar's death anniversary in Dhaka.

Sikander Abu Zafar was a poet, novelist, playwright, songwriter, journalist and, above all, an editor. He will be remembered for bringing out and editing the landmark monthly magazine Samakal which ran through the 1950s and 1960s, until the Pakistani military crackdown in 1971. Sikander Abu Zafar brought out a leaflet condemning the unprecedented atrocities of Yahya Khan and his armed cohorts in August 1971. In his writings, he also asked the youths of the country to join the liberation forces to take revenge for the murder of their lost near and dear ones. This booklet was distributed to the freedom fighters on many fronts of the Liberation War. This leaflet was translated by the government-in-exile of Bangladesh and was sent to many foreign countries.

Sikander Abu Zafar will also be remembered for his song "Jonota'r Sangram Cholbei". It is said by many that after Kazi Nazrul Islam no one has been as courageous and rebellious a poet as Sikander Abu Zafar. We will remember him forever.

The writer is a prominent artist and younger brother of Sikander Abu Zafar.



## IT'S TRUE!

M.A. Jalil Ananta is known for producing and starring in flamboyant, expansive films, and his plans get bigger with every film. The latest in line of his on-screen endeavours, "Nishwartho Bhalobasha", has seen its premiere in London, and screening at the open film village at this year's Cannes. Alongside state-of-the-art film technologies, three popular Indian singers – Kailash Kher, Shaan and Zubeen Garg have sung in the film, while Ananta – who goes by the nickname AJ -- has also written songs for the film himself.

# REJOICING ON Eid

SHAH ALAM SHAZI

Nancy, Singer

"This was the first time I celebrated Eid at my in-laws in Mymensingh town. I enjoyed it thoroughly. During Eid, I had quite a few engagements with different TV channels as well as performances.

"I also went to Netrokona, my native town. It was really great to spend a relaxed time during festivities. I thoroughly enjoyed the carefree chitchats, along with special dishes. It was a time when everyone was relaxed and in a mood to meet relatives and friends.

"But this Eid, I missed Amma; this was the first time I celebrated the festival without her. Last year she was with us, but now she is no more, and I missed her all the more."

Zahid Hasan, Director/Actor

"I am busy up to my neck all year round, and at Eid, I look forward to an undiluted time with my old friends at my native home in Sirajganj. I spent

the entire day with my friends, who gathered at our house and we engaged in non-stop adda. I really enjoyed it all.

"Even during breaks from shooting, I make trips to Sirajganj and feel rested. We roam around the town and go to the banks of Jamuna; something we did during Eid as well. Another thing that I enjoyed was watching TV plays with my friends and family."

Ferdous, Actor

"The first thing people usually ask me is how long I will be staying in Dhaka, since I am occupied in shooting either in Kolkata or elsewhere. I celebrated Eid with my family in Dhaka this year, though. As my wife is a pilot, she has to travel a lot too. So we both needed to spend some quality time with our family. We spent time with our two children and relaxed during Eid. I enjoyed the delicacies that my wife prepared and took time off to watch TV as well. The kids enjoyed visiting their friends. I enjoyed entertaining guests who came over during Eid. So with my family around, Eid was just great."



## Plunging into folk motifs

### Abdus Shakoor's solo exhibition in Tokyo

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Celebrated painter Abdus Shakoor Shah's solo painting exhibition titled "Bangladesh" was held recently at a local gallery in Tokyo. The exhibition inaugurated on July 12, ended yesterday. A number of Japanese painters, senior officials of the Bangladesh Embassy in Tokyo and art enthusiasts attended the inaugural session. With 30 drawings on display this was Shakoor's second solo exhibition in Japan.

Shakoor is widely recognised for his folk motifs and ballads. A large span of his career (from 1996), he

has been working on folk motifs. The ballads of "Mymensingh Geetika" -- the famous Mahua and Malua love stories, "Nakshi Kanthar Maath", "Gazir Pat" and "Manasha Pat" are recurring themes in his works. Shakoor uses human visages, both male and female, varied decorative motifs and animal figures such as elephants, bulls, dogs, cats, tigers, parrots, peacocks, birds and serpents.

About the exhibition and the exhibition's theme, Shakoor said, "I try to present my country in my works. I want to symbolise the country, its traditions, and carnivals as my subjects." Blue, black, yellow,

white and crimson are used predominantly, giving a meditative approach to Shakoor's characters. The intense backgrounds give the viewers a romantic and imposing view. At the exhibition, his ink drawings are done in contour, with a feeling of space on the background, which gives the composition a certain likeness to portraits.

Shakoor has won many awards. He has participated in over 100 group exhibitions in places like USA, England, Poland, Argentina, Japan, France, China, Iran, Panama, Italy and India. He has also held several solo exhibitions in the country and abroad.



Folk motifs are a signature of Abdus Shakoor's works.

# Tribute to a stalwart

## Swapnadal to celebrate Selim Al Deen's birthday

A CORRESPONDENT

Theatre troupe Swapnadal will celebrate the 64th birth anniversary of *Natyacharya* Selim Al Deen through two-day programmes from August 17. The tentative agenda of the festival includes discussion on the life, works and principles of the playwright, presentation of music and choreography, placing wreaths at Selim Al Deen's grave, a seminar on "Selim Al Deen: In the eyes of the young director" and staging of his plays "Festoon-e Lekha Sriti" and "Hargaz".

Swapnadal is one of the few theatre troupes that regularly stages plays by Selim Al Deen. They have staged "Festoon-e Lekha Sriti" and "Hargaz" on numerous occasions, while also

staging pieces of the plays "Swornobowal", "Haddahaddi" and "Nimojjon". This will be the troupe's eighth Selim Al Deen Festival (six of

them organised individually), while they will also bring a complete production of Selim Al Deen's "Swornobowal" in the future.



A scene from Swapnadal's production of "Hargaz".



## IMPOSSIBLE 5 on ntv today

### Seventh tele-film from Airtel

A CORRESPONDENT

After "Bhalobashi Tai", "Bhalobashi Tai Bhalobeshe Jai", "Arundoyer Torun Dol", "Amader Golpo", "Kick Off", and "@18", the seventh tele-film of Airtel, "Impossible 5" will be telecast on the fourth day of Eid-ul-Fitr at 11.30pm on ntv.

Directed by Tanim Rahman Anshu, the tele-film will feature a fresh cast including Shuvro, Orchita Sporshia, Priota Iftekhar, Jadid Turjo and Tarif Rahman, alongside familiar faces Iresh Zaker and Shampa Reza.

The tele-film revolves around the life of four youngsters who possess supernatural powers. When the powers of Neela, Mysha, Ryan and

Samir become exposed to the world, an ordinary boy Akash steps forward to protect the four and secure the bonds of friendship. The eccentric, entertaining and often dangerous deeds of these five colourful characters forms the heart of this tele-film.

The songs in "Impossible 5" have been composed by Habib and Minar.



## An artist in his own league

S M SULTAN'S

### 90th birth anniversary observed in Narail

PONUEL S BOSE, Narail

The 90th birth anniversary of world famous artist SM Sultan was observed at Sultan Complex premises in Masimdia village under Narail Sadar upazila of Narail district with great enthusiasm on August 10. The event was jointly organised by Sultan Foundation and District administration.

Sultan Foundation undertook several programmes including placing wreaths on the grave of the artist, reciting the Holy Quran, and discussion. Presided over by Hawlader Mohammad Rokibul Bari ADC, the programme was attended by Ashiqur Rahman Miku, member secretary of Sultan Foundation; Adv. Iqbal Hossain Sikder, ex-member secretary; Asok Kumar Shil, Principal, Bengal Sultan Art College and journalists.

Due to Eid-ul-Fitr, the four-day celebrations were rescheduled for August 29.

SM Sultan was born on August 10 in 1923 at Masimdia village of the district. Widely known as SM Sultan, his real name was Sheikh Mohammad Sultan. His father, Sheikh Messer was a mason by profession.

Sultan's formal schooling started at the Narail Victoria Collegiate School in 1928 where he studied for only five years. Being greatly influenced by his father's works in building houses, he started drawing and painting during his leisure time. Sultan drew a pencil sketch of Dr. Shyama Prasad Mukherjee, illustrious son of Sir Ashutosh Mukherjee, renowned Bengali scholar and thinker, at the age of ten while Dr. Mukherjee was visiting Narail Victoria Collegiate School. This pencil sketch impressed Dr. Mukherjee and others.

Sultan wanted to go to Kolkata to study art, but his family was not able to afford it. Finally, Dharendra Nath Roy, an art-aficionado zamindar, became the patron of Sultan's works and brought him to Kolkata in 1938. Sultan stayed at his residence for three years.

Soon, he began his career as a freelance painter of portraits and landscapes in Kolkata. He also joined the Khaksar Movement in 1943. It was a voluntary organisation to help people who called themselves 'Khedmat-e-khalk' (serving the people). He was highly influenced by the movement and developed his life-long sympathy and affection for all living beings from this place.

In 1950 Sultan went to USA - exhibiting his work in New York, Washington, Chicago, and Boston, and later in London.

The noted artist joined the international conference of painters in USA in 1950 as the representative of the erstwhile Pakistan government. In 1951, he left for Karachi, where he taught as an art teacher in the Parsee School for two years. Painters Nagi, Chugtai, Shaker Ali, Shaikh Ahmad and others were his friends during the time.

In 1953 he returned to Narail. A confirmed bachelor, Sultan settled down in an abandoned building in Narail overlooking the river Chitra, where he lived ever since with an adopted family and pets of his own -- including dogs, mongoose and monkeys. Sultan would later build a mini-zoo near his home. There he built a school for children and a menagerie.

SM Sultan was conferred with the Ekushey Padak, and the Cambridge University declared him as the "Man of Asia" in the same year in 1984. The Bangladesh government accepted him as the resident artist. He was honoured with "Charushilpi Sangshad Sanmanana" in 1986 and "Swadhinata Padak" in 1993.

SM Sultan died on October 10, 1994, at Jessore Combined Military Hospital (CMH) after suffering from prolonged illness.