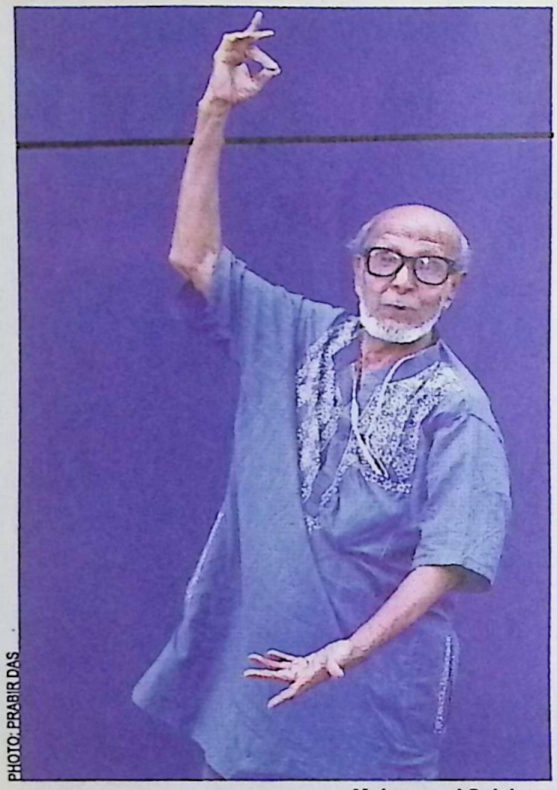


PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Muhammed Solaiman

> "You cannot release a film with only the protagonists. Just like stars, we too are an important part of the film."

journalists, and are there to interview 'extras' about their lives and livelihood, Sulaiman corrects us, asserting with pride that they are "not extras but junior artistes." On further prodding, he adds, "You cannot release a film with only the protagonists. Just like stars, we too are an important part of the film."

Sulaiman has been working at the BFDC for the last 40 years and has witnessed many ups and downs in the film industry. At times, discouraged by the poor pay, he has thought about quitting, but in the end, he keeps going because of his deep attraction towards this art form. "I started acting when I was only fifteen. At that time I used to work for Jatra-Pala as a female artist." He believes his voice still sounds like a woman's, "I first acted in Bhawal Sannyasir Pala', playing the role of queen Bibhabati, the second wife of Bhawal Sannyasi." He grew such an attachment to the stage that he went on to do female roles for Jatra till his late thirties. The pay at Jatra pala was relatively poor, as Sulaiman was paid an average of Tk 2 to 3 for a day's work in the early fifties. Moreover, it was a seasonal job and performances were only held during the winter.

"There is no written employment contract for 'Jatra' and everything is fixed verbally." That's the reason why in the sixties he decided to fulfill his passion by acting in films. "At that time, I would get Tk 10 for a shift of eight hours. Now we get a wage of Tk 1,000 for eight hours' work. But I am old now, and so I get fewer roles in movies," he says.

Junior artistes working at the BFDC usually have another job apart from acting. Nasir, a middle aged junior artiste, has been working in BFDC for the last 25 years. Apart from acting, he sells tea at the shooting spot. "I came here when I was only 10 years old. At that time the space was not as developed as you see today. I lived in the Karwan Bazar slum and grew up there."

Actor Ripon Shikdar was recently elected as member of the Union Parishad from the Islampur union under the Shariatpur district. He has been in at



PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Rowshanara

> "I can cry at will."