

<p>WHAT'S ON</p>	<p>Live Performance Title: Black at Jatra Biroti Venue: Jatra Biroti, Banani Date: Today Time: 7 pm onwards Tickets: BDT 300</p>	<p>Group Art Exhibition Title: Prologue 1 Venue: Dhaka Gallery, Banani Date: July 13 - August 9 Time: 3 pm - 8 pm</p>	<p>Photography & Poetry Exhibition Title: ProjectDebi: Revolutionary Photography And Poetry Exhibition Venue: EMK Center, Dhanmondi Date: August 26 - 28 Time: 10 am - 7 pm</p>	<p>Concert Title: 3 for 1 Date: Today Time: 6:30 pm onwards Venue: 3rd Space, Dhanmondi</p>	<p>Art Exhibition Title: Muhurtama solo art exhibition by Shamsat Tabrejee Venue: Dwp Gallery, Lalmaita Date: July 27 - August 22 (except Mondays) Time: 5 pm - 9 pm</p>
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INTERNATIONAL DAY OF THE WORLD'S INDIGENOUS PEOPLES 2019

Today marks International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples. On the occasion, we bring you stories of individuals from the indigenous community of Bangladesh, who are making a mark in their respective fields.



PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

Aang Rakhine: A mind without fear

PRIYANKA CHOWDHURY

Aung Rakhine flaunts his identity as an indigenous filmmaker. The cinematographer turned director made his breakthrough with a full length film in Chakma language, *Mvor Theng Gaari* or *My Bicycle* in 2015. The indomitable director took the film to global platforms, and received Best Screenplay at the Silver Azkubat Ethnic Cinema Festival 2016 in Ufa, Russia. It also received an honourable mention in the Cine Kurumin - International Indigenous Film Festival 2016, Brazil.

"No one else has the reason to come and tell my story, but me. It is my responsibility and commitment to my community to showcase these stories," says Aung Rakhine. His unconventional approach in storytelling sets him apart from his fellow filmmakers. Harboring a keen interest on telling indigenous

stories, Aung says, "You don't get to see or hear these stories that much. I intend to bring them out with my works. My next story is based on the Mro community, and the rivers."

Aung's 17 minute short film *The Last Post Office* was premiered at the Locarno Film Festival's Open Doors section, and participated at the Clermont-Ferrand International Short Film Festival in France. It continues to receive invitation from prestigious global competitions.

When Aung began working on indigenous stories, he did think there would be more filmmakers from the indigenous community; however, the number is not significant. "Without rugged determination, it is very easy to get baffled and lost in this medium. But I also believe if you can strive and withstand the first blow, you can make it to the top," says a hopeful Aung.



PHOTO: STAR

"Dance is a form of prayer to me" - Fifa Chakma

ZAHANGIR ALOM

Hailing from Rangamati, talented dancer Fifa Chakma is a specialised researcher in Bangladeshi tribal folk dances and a distinguished academic in the field of Kathak. With an ICCR scholarship, the dancer completed her BA and MA in Kathak from Rabindra Bharati University in Kolkata.

Fifa started learning dance at the age of four. She took lessons on folk and creative dance under the tutelage of Guru Sanchana Chakma and Guru Humayun Kabir in Rangamati. Later, she was trained at Nriyanchal and took personal lessons on Kathak from Shibli Mohammad. She was also trained under the tutelage of Guru Smt Nandini Chakraborty in Kolkata.

"Dance is form of prayer to me. I find immense peace and pleasure in my practice and perseverance of dance," said Fifa Chakma, the only classically trained dancer among the indigenous communities of Bangladesh. "I dream of depicting the different shades and the essence of dance through my performances."

Aside from being a fantastic performer, choreographer and dance director, Fifa is currently working as a dance instructor at Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy. She is also a guest lecturer at the Department of Dance, University of Dhaka. She has also worked as a dance instructor at Khudra Nri-gosthi Cultural Institute, Khagrachhari and Jum Aesthetics Council, Rangamati. The dedicated artiste is also the founder and director of Tapassya Dance Academy, which is based in both Dhaka and Rangamati.

Fifa participated as a dance director in London this year on behalf of the Ministry of Cultural Affairs to celebrate the occasion of the Independence Day of Bangladesh. She also took part as a dance director in Philippines on behalf of the same ministry at Philippine International Indigenous Peoples Festival 2018. As a part of the cultural exchange programme between Bangladesh and Bhutan, Fifa participated as a dance artiste in Bhutan twice in 2017 and 2018. She represented the Ministry of Cultural Affairs, Bangladesh, as a dance ambassador in India during the cultural exchange programme between the two countries.

Furthermore, Fifa has participated in a number of dance workshops and seminars, held in Bangladesh and abroad. In 2008, she took part in a contemporary dance workshop, conducted by renowned Indian dancer Sukalyan Bhattacharya, at Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy. In 2013, she participated in a Kathak workshop at Padatik Dance Centre, Kolkata. Legendary dance maestro Pt Birju Maharaj and his disciple Saswati Sen conducted the workshop.

She was also granted a scholarship from All India Children Music Conference as a young dance artiste in 2014, and she was simultaneously placed first in Folk, Rabindra Dance and Kathak at the conference. She also secured the first position at the pre-summer dance competition held at the Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda, as a part of the National Education Summit 2014.

Among many other festivals, Fifa has performed in the Dhaka International Folk Festival 2018, Classical Music and Dance Festival 2017 at Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy, Indigenous Cultural Festivals at Rangamati and Khagrachhari, Sufi Festival 2014 at Nalanda and Maha Utshav 2014 at Guwahati.

Musical virtuoso Ranjit Dewan

Ranjit Dewan is a renowned Chakma singer, lyricist and composer. He is considered one of the most successful Chakma musicians of all time. His songs 'O Mor Sonar Dechsan', 'O Lokkobi O Chittibi', 'Mo Nangan Nonyeram', 'O Hala Hogil', 'Nosang Jebari Jagaan Sari' and 'Jodi Honodin Eedot Udhe' are evergreen, heart touching tunes.

ZAHANGIR ALOM

The melodious and rhythmic song *Chenge Meyoni Hajolong Karnaphuli, Shankha Matamuhuri* is an all-time popular Ranjit Dewan composition. Legendary singer-musician Lucky Akhand recorded the Bangla version of the song, while Ranjit Dewan rendered the original Chakma song. Renowned artist-filmmaker Khalid Mahmood Mithu created the music video for the song that was aired on Bangladesh Television many times.

In a recent conversation with *The Daily Star*, the extremely humble artiste shared many things with the correspondent. Ranjit Dewan's passion for music dates back to his early childhood days. When he was a student in third grade, little Ranjit was barred from entering a cultural programme that was held at the Kotwali Thana of Rangamati. The incident left a permanent trauma on his psyche. He promised himself that he will sing someday once he grows up.

The God-gifted artiste has kept his words with writing, composing and singing hundreds of Chakma songs that evoke patriotism, nostalgia, romance, melancholy, bliss of the harvesting time of Jum, love for untainted hilly landscapes and nature, vibrant indigenous cultures and diverse socio-religious aspects.

He took musical lessons from Surendra Laal Tripura, Kalyan Mitra Barua, Himangshu Dutta and Suniti Bikash Barua. "I have just tried to take a few sips of melody from the vast ocean



PHOTO: ANTAR CHAKMA

of music. Many of my songs have been lost due to toiling curfews in the hill tracts years ago," said Ranjit Dewan, who earnestly seeks everyone's assistance in preserving his songs. "In the Chakma language, there are certain complexities that have to be gauged while writing and composing songs. I hope that the younger generation of Chakma singers will work in this regard to nourish our own language and culture."

Contemporary singers Tripti Talukdar, Shahana Dewan, Nilufa Dewan, Kalayan Chakma, Subrata Chakma, Bachchu Chakma, Ananya Chakma, Jinuka Chakma, Jayanti Chakma, Saurav Dewan, Anamika Dey, Ripon Ghosh, Bidyut Shankar Tripura amongst others are performing the songwriter's tracks far and wide. "I sincerely hope that the upcoming generation of Chakma singers will excel in musical practice and perseverance. They will glorify our distinctive culture in front of the world. If I had financial support, I would nurture their talents personally," said Ranjit Dewan.

Ranjit Dewan has two solo audio albums and a solo music video album to his credit. He has also lent his voice for recording six other albums featuring religious songs. Bangladeshi Adivasi Forum has recently taken initiative of publishing a compilation of Ranjit Dewan's compositions. The artiste has shared his best wishes on World Indigenous Day with hopes to build a harmonious society full of life and colours.

Jyoti Sinha the light of Manipuri theatre

PRIYANKA CHOWDHURY

"I believe I am universal, and with that belief, I want to work in my own land," Jyoti Sinha said with beaming confidence during our interview session. Despite luring opportunities of joining mainstream theatre groups during her time at Jahangirnagar University, Jyoti Sinha, along with her peers, embarked on a mission to build a group for Manipuri theatre in Kamalganj's Ghoramara village. "Besides Manipuri dance, we wanted to explore the Manipuri *Pala-Krityas*, which are powerful theatrical performances," said Jyoti. She mentioned *Srikrishna Kirtan* by Bau Chandidas, *Kohe Birangana* by Michael Madhusudan Dutt, *Debotar Grash* by Rabindranath Tagore, *Leima* by Federico Garcia Lorca, and *Ingal Adhar Pala* by Shuvashis Sinha as notable productions which linked local literature with world literature.

"I was only 12 when I was ushered into the world of Manipuri theatre. Now, it is a long-term relationship. I enjoy translating world literature for the stage because it takes on a completely new avatar" Jyoti explained. Her last two works were based on world literature. Mia Couto's *The Birds of God* will be her next translated work, titled *O Mon Pahiya* in Manipuri language.

Jyoti is known for her impeccable solo performances which never fail to mesmerise the audience. When asked how she practices for her roles, she laughed and said, "I try to take notice of real people in my surroundings who possess similar characteristics to those of the character I'm playing and follow their gestures and postures. Then comes practicing in front of the mirror. I only show my performance to the director when I feel it is in shape. I work on the characterization further under the guidance from the director to make the role more credible."



PHOTO: COURTESY

Australian High Commission in Bangladesh celebrates International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples



ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK

Today marks the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples. To commemorate the day, Julia Niblett, the Australian High Commissioner to Bangladesh, hosted a screening of the documentary film, *The Song Keepers*. Members from the Bangladeshi indigenous community representatives, human rights activists, local media representatives, diplomats and others were present at the occasion. Themed 'Indigenous Languages', the event recognised the United Nations' observance of 2019 as the International Year of Indigenous Languages.

The Song Keepers revolves around the churches of remote Central Australia, which nurtures a musical legacy of ancient

Aboriginal languages, sacred poetry and a baroque music, being preserved by four generations of Aboriginal women who encompass the Central Australian Aboriginal Women's Choir. Against all odds and with the help of their choir conductor, they travel to Germany, to take back the hymns that were presented to their great grandparents by German missionaries, now sung in their own Aboriginal languages.

Advancing indigenous peoples' rights globally is a pillar of Australia's Human Rights Council (HRC) membership. Australia has supported the Kapaeng Foundation, a human rights organisation for indigenous Peoples in Bangladesh, to strengthen the unity amongst the indigenous communities and assist them in various other manners.