



PHOTOS: PRANABESH DAS

PUJA'S

Durga Puja

ASHLEY SHOPTORSHI SAMADDAR

Puja Cherry enamoured the audience with her performance in blockbuster hits like *Dohon*, *Noorjahan* and *Poramon 2*. The diva's year began with her impressive performance in Bidula Bhattacharjee's *Prem Amar 2*, a sequel to the 2009 hit *Prem Amar*.

With Durga Puja knocking at the door, the diva shared her childhood memories of the celebration. "Back when I was a child, we used to visit my village in Gazirhaat, Khulna. It used to be a completely different experience," said the actor. "I have not visited the place in a while due to tight shooting schedules. However, I miss those days dearly."

This time, the star plans to spend this festive season in Dhaka. "I will probably go to Dhakeshwari Temple to celebrate Maa Durga's arrival this time," she said.

The star also talked about her upcoming films. "I am currently busy with Nader Chowdhury's upcoming horror-thriller, *Jinn*. My co-actor for this film is Shajal Noor," shared Puja. The film will be produced under the banner of Jaaz Multimedia.

"I am also working on M A Rahim's upcoming film *Shaan*," she adds. The star will be seen alongside Siam Ahmed in lead.

Puja Cherry wished happiness and good health to all her fans for the upcoming celebrations.

Hemendra Chowdhury:

The story of a storyteller

PRIYANKA CHOWDHURY

My first impression of Hemendra Chowdhury was of a man who defied age with sheer willpower. The 92-year-old thespian brought a revolution in the remote village of Muktarpur, Sunamgonj. He sowed the seed of *jatra* amidst the people in the village.

Opening an old steel *almira*, the Master brought out his handwritten scripts, carefully wrapped in old plastic with naphthalene in it. "The people of this village had very little activity during monsoon. I thought of involving them in cultural activities, which would not only entertain, but also educate them," he said. The playwright, actor and director has written over 25 unpublished plays.

"I was once sent a show-cause letter for missing 10 days of school as the head teacher," laughed Hemendra. He then rented a boat, and set up a solo

performance in response to the show cause letter. "I pretended to be ill, and the authority believed it! Later, when I revealed the truth, they were so surprised that they asked me to continue my theater work." Another round of laughter filled the room.

Hemendra Chowdhury began writing since he was a student. He recalled the difficulties he faced to gather people and perform during the pre-liberation period. "Sourcing books was difficult and conducting cultural activities were also restricted," he said.

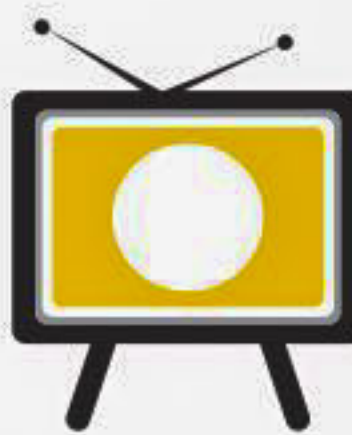
He approached the young people of the village and encouraged them to form a local theatre group. For over a decade, the group has been performing plays during Durga Puja and other occasions.

Although he denies being political, his writings, whether historical, social or religious -- is a unique interpretation of the original text. Of all his plays, *Swanalanka* remains a popular one. The play is his

interpretation of the Ramayan. Bidhan Chandra Chowdhury, the current Chairman of the village, played Ram in *Swanalanka* for more than a decade. "I was taken aback when elderly ladies fell at my feet. Later, I realised that they were showing devotion to Ram, which I represented," says Bidhan, who also plays the role of King Harishchandra in a different play.

"Sir has introduced us to this art form, and it has become a part of our life," says Nitesh Chandra Das, the current member of the village, who is also an actor. Encouraged by Hemendra *master*, the youngsters of the village have formed their own groups to keep the spirit alive.

Although Hemendra's books are yet unpublished, his plays are performed by people of different generations, retaining the ancient form of theater of this land.



TV WATCH

'Shohorali', directed by Ejaz Munna, will be broadcast on NTV at 8:15 pm today. It features Chanchal Chowdhury, Shazu Khadem, Tamim Mridha, Nadia Ahmed and Shahanaz Khushi, among others.

PHOTO: COURTESY



PHOTO: SHAHREAR KABIR HEEMEL

Jolsha: An evening of memorable melodies

TIASHA IDRAK

As an orange hue seeped into the blue sky, marking the arrival of dusk, there was an unusual scene at the poolside of Teacher-Student Centre (TSC), University of Dhaka (DU), on Wednesday. Hundreds of people swarmed around the now dried up swimming pool, waiting for an evening dedicated to music. The music wing of Faculty of Business Studies (FBS), DU, organised a programme titled, *Jolsha*, sponsored by Airtel. It was supported by Top View and Karunik.

The event included performances by members of the FBS music wing. It began with songs by artistes from home and abroad. From John Denver and The Beatles to Niaz Muhammad Chowdhury and Moushumi Bhoumik, the evening featured songs of different singers, genres and languages.

Performances in honour of musical icons Ayub Bacchu and James further enthralled the audience.

Popular singer-songwriter Arnob was scheduled as the special guest of the evening. When the registration for the event opened, all of the tickets for the gallery seats filled up in a matter of 15 minutes. Nevertheless, it did not deter people from attending the event. Many stood under the makeshift sheds near the stage, hours before the event even began. Some even opted for climbing up the TSC roof for a better view.

The audience chanted Arnob's name as he went on to the stage. They sang along to many of his popular songs such as, *Shey Je Boshe Ache*, *Hariye Giyechi* and *Ei Shohor*, among others. The atmosphere of the otherwise abandoned poolside turned rather colourful and lively that evening.



Arnob was the special guest at 'Jolsha'.

PHOTO: SHAMS ASIF

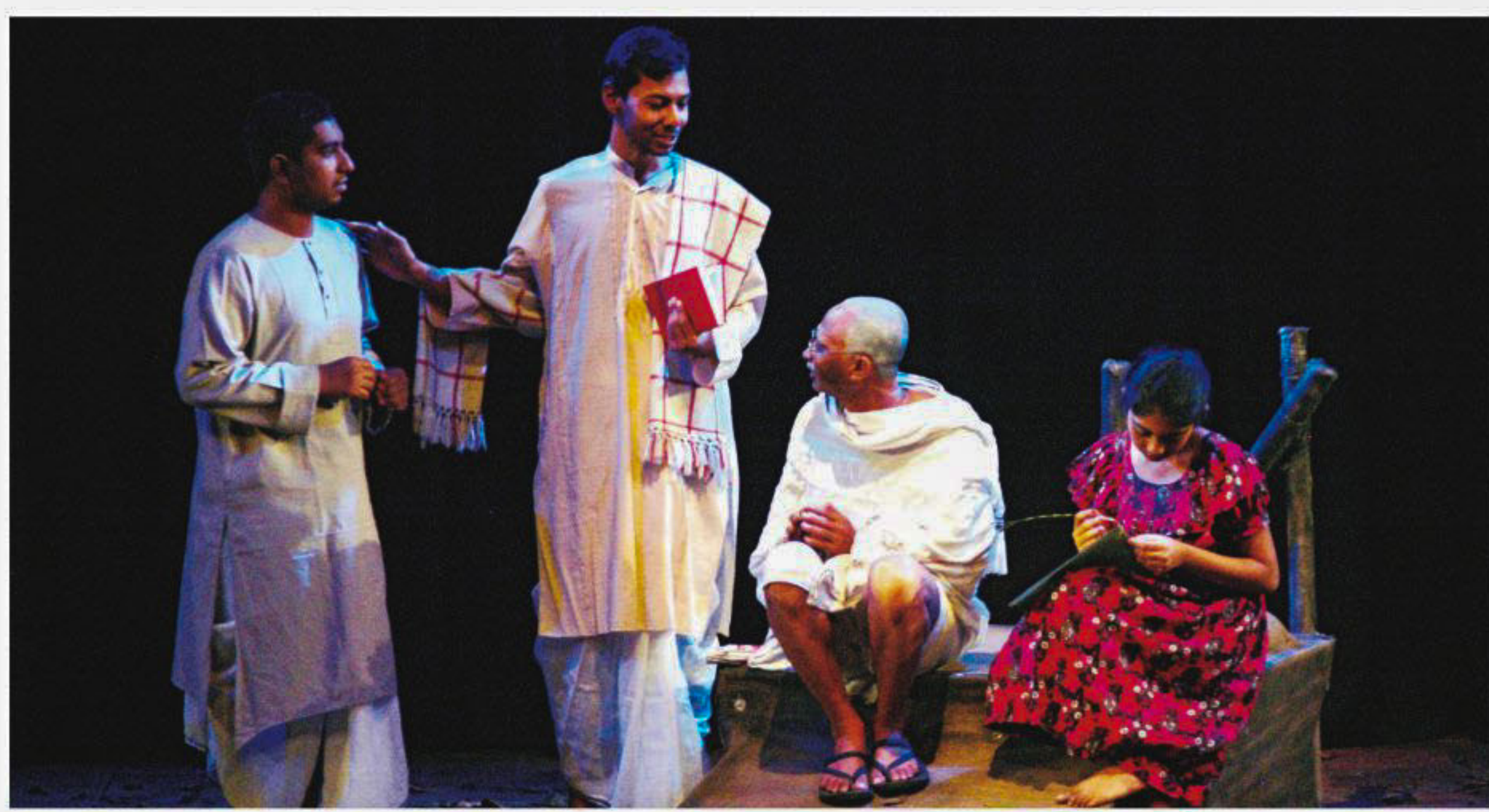


PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

Universal Theatre stages 'Mahatma' on Gandhi Jayanti

FARIJANA AHMED ANNAN

In celebration of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi's 150th birth anniversary and the International Day of Non-Violence, Universal Theatre staged their acclaimed play, *Mahatma*, at the Experimental Theatre Hall of Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy on October 2.

The celebration started with a discussion, featuring speeches by Former President of International Theatre Institute, Ramendu Majumdar, renowned theatre personality Aatur Rahman, noted thespian Enamul Haque and Director of Indira Gandhi Cultural Centre, Dr Nipa Choudhury. Secretary General of Bangladesh Group Theatre Federation, Kamal

Bayezid and Director of Gandhi Ashram Trust Bangladesh Raha Naba Kumar also spoke on the occasion. Pulak Raha, the chairperson of Universal Theatre, presided over the session.

Mahatma focuses on the communal riot which had begun in Noakhali in 1946. To destroy the communal harmony of the Indian Subcontinent, the British conspired to "divide and rule", and wage a conflict between Hindus and Muslims. In that riot, opportunists and religious extremists burned village after village, and massive loots, killings, kidnappings and persecutions of women took place. The event forced hundreds of Hindu families to relocate for safety. After learning about the riot in Noakhali,

Gandhi rushed to the place. He toured the genocide-stricken area, and played a significant role in calming the communal tension. The honorific 'Mahatma' first applied to him in 1914 in South Africa, and is now used throughout the world.

The play is written and directed by Mazharul Haque Pintu. Abul Kalam Azad plays the role of Gandhi. The other cast members include Abul Hossain Khokan, Mazharul Haque Pintu, Shawkat Ali Mansoor, Din Islam Shamol, Abdul Wadud, Sumee Islam, M Rassel, Awlad Hossain, Miraz Hasan, Falguni, Adhora and Rubel. Pulak Raha and Anwar Faridi are consultants for the play. Shamimur Rahman is behind the lighting and Subhasish Dutt Tonmoy is the make-up artist.