

**WHAT'S ON**

**Solo Art Exhibition**  
 Title: Self Depiction  
 Artist: Afrida Tanzim Mahi  
 Venue: Kalakendra, Mohammadpur  
 Date: October 21 - November 12  
 Time: 4 pm - 8 pm

**Architectural Exhibition**  
 Title: Nogorama: The Future of Our Habits  
 Venue: Bengal Shilpalay, Dhanmondi 27  
 Date: November 2 - 30  
 Time: 12 noon - 8 pm

**Theatre Festival**  
 Title: IDLC Theatre Festival  
 Venue: Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy  
 Date: November 19 - November 23  
 Time: 5 pm onwards

**Comedy Night**  
 Title: Comic's Crucible  
 Date: November 12  
 Time: 5 pm onwards  
 Venue: Counter Culture Club, Dhanmondi

**Concert**  
 Title: Rock4peace  
 Date: November 16  
 Time: 5 pm onwards  
 Venue: BICC



PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

# MONICA ALI

## on returning home

ASHLEY SHOPTORSHI SAMADDAR

Having left Bangladesh at the age of three, Monica Ali became a household name in the UK with her career-defining novel, *Brick Lane*, in 2003. Its popularity propelled it into becoming a feature film in 2007.

*Brick Lane* narrates the story of Nazneen, a young Bangladeshi girl who marries and migrates to Brick Lane in London. Her book was shortlisted for the Booker prize, as she won many accolades, among which were the prestigious British Book Awards Literary Fiction Award and British Book Awards Newcomer of the Year. She was also termed as "One of Britain's 20 best young novelists" by *Granta* magazine in the same year.

Ali was one of the honourable guests at this year's Dhaka Lit Fest, where she had quite a memorable experience. "It feels incredible. It should have happened long ago, and now that I am here, I know that I am definitely going to come back soon," said an emotional Monica Ali. "I did not know how I am going to feel - whether it would be just like a foreigner, or as a tourist. However, I feel strangely at home."

Following on to the success of her first novel, her next instalment *Alentejo Blue* (2006) was a shocker, as it was set Portugal, an entirely different context. Her stay in Portugal inspired her to take up this work. "I spent a lot of time in Portugal. We have had a house there since many years. All of these stories and characters in the village caught my attention," shares Ali. "The structural format was different, and I got to challenge myself as a writer. However, they were characters demanding to be written."

Speaking of her "upside down" fairy tale, *Untold Story* (2011), Monica carefully structured her protagonist Lydia around Princess Diana. Lydia runs away from her ivory tower to find a simple and peaceful life. "I was deadly serious about what I was writing, and who I was writing about. When you become a commodity, you are also dehumanised, and that was something I wanted to explore," mentions Monica.

One of major challenges for Ali, being a South Asian writer, has been people's expectations about what a writer represents. "I don't represent anything as a writer. I reflect on things that need reflecting." She believes that one does not have to represent a specific minority in order to write about their struggles. "That is not the way creative writing works," she adds.

Besides writing, Monica worked as a guest editor for BBC Radio 4's *Today* programme and has hosted several editions of the show *A Point of View*. Alongside spending time with her family, she teaches creative writing to aspiring writers, and is a trustee of the St Giles Trust Charity, that helps marginalised and disadvantaged people in the UK.

At the end of her interview, she advised young writers to write with honesty, courage and perseverance. Monica Ali also promised her upcoming novel. "I finished the first draft and am working on the second one. Hopefully, I will finish it by the end of January," she concluded.

# Vaseline Healing Project aims to serve the underprivileged

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK

Vaseline, a Unilever Bangladesh product, has been running an initiative for the past four years in an attempt to tackle skin-related problems of the underprivileged communities in the North, by donating jars of Vaseline petroleum jelly. Recently, a stall for the project was placed at Bashundhara City Shopping Complex for donations.

Eminent actor Bipasha Hayat, the brand ambassador of Vaseline Bangladesh, inaugurated the 'Vaseline Healing Project 2019', recently. "Being a part of this project, I have had the chance to closely look at the skin related problems that the underprivileged communities in the North suffer from," she said. "I take pride in being able to do something for the people of our country through the 'Vaseline Healing Project'."

Vaseline plans to locate booths in 40 other places, including Bashundhara City Shopping Complex in Dhaka, where people can donate jars of Vaseline. Moreover, donations can also be made online.



PHOTO: COURTESY



Despite the Fog

## Two Italian films at IFFI 2019

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA, from New Delhi

Two critically-acclaimed Italian films, *Despite the Fog* and *Marghe and her Mother*, will be screened at the 50th International Film Festival of India (IFFI), which begins in Goa on November 20.

*Despite the Fog* chronicles the story of a Muslim refugee child who loses his parents during his journey to Italy, and finds shelter in an Italian couple's home in a small province of Rome. The film, directed by renowned filmmaker Goran Paskaljevic, will open the festival. Paskaljevic is one of Europe's most respected independent directors. Born in Belgrade (Serbia), he studied at the Prague School of Cinema (FAMU). He has made 30 documentaries and 18 feature films, which were screened and praised at the most prestigious international festivals such as Cannes, Berlin, Venice, Toronto, San Sebastian, to name a few. He was awarded the title of Officier des Arts et des Lettres, the most important French title in the field of culture.

The nine-day festival will come to a close with the screening of *Marghe and her Mother*, directed by Iranian filmmaker Mohsen Makhmalbaf.

*Marghe and Her Mother* revolves around



Marghe and her Mother

*Marghe*, a six-year old girl who lives with her single mother Claudia. Her mother has been kicked out of her house because of payment difficulties, leaving Marghe to an old woman next door.

The film marks a remarkable shift from Makhmalbaf's previous works, which focused on effects of authoritarianism and revolution on the Middle East. Instead, it deals with issues of identity, social systems, moralities and other aspects of the younger generation.

The film festival will showcase around 200 films from 76 countries.

## IDLC Theatre Festival 2019 announced

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK

One of IDLC's flagship programmes, IDLC Theatre Fest 2019, has been announced by the organisation. The event, which looks to celebrate the best of theatre in a span of 5 days, will start from November 19 at Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy.

This is the second iteration of the event. "We are very happy to inform that the response after the announcement has been great", said Jane Alam Romel, Group Chief Marketing Officer of IDLC. "We want to encourage the audience to go and see the plays, and support the artists in the long run." The proceeds from the tickets will be contributed to the Theatre Federation's funds. IDLC will also acknowledge and honour veterans who work tirelessly behind the stage in the concluding ceremony.



## Jatra Pala 'Bangabandhur Dake' staged in Mymensingh

AMINUL ISLAM, From Mymensingh

A jatra pala (folk theatre play) based on the Liberation War was staged at Mymensingh Zila Shilpakala Academy auditorium Friday evening.

Bangladesh Jatrashilpo Unnayan Parishad, Mymensingh unit staged the play *Bangabandhur Dake* in collaboration with Mymensingh Zila Shilpakala Academy.

Written by Milon Kanti Dey, Central President of Bangladesh Jatrashilpo Unnayan Parishad, the play was directed by Abul Bashar Fakir.

Deputy Commissioner of Mymensingh, Md Mizanur Rahman inaugurated the event as the chief guest.

Among others, additional district commissioner (Education) Samakanti Basak, district cultural officer Arzu Parves, Shahadat Hossain Khan Hilu, Abdul Haque Shikder, SM Ali Azhar, advocate Abdul Motalab Lal and Dr H A Gulandaz Tara were present at the event.



PHOTO: STAR

**TV WATCH**

Tele-fiction 'Ghumonto Shohore', directed by Khairul Bashar, will air on NTV at 8:20 pm today. It stars FS Nayeem and Orsha as the leads.

PHOTO: COURTESY