



Narayan Debnath's creations will live forever



Timeless creations like “Handa-Bhonda”, “Nonte-Phonte” and “Batul The Great” served as India’s answer to superheroes like Batman, Superman and Spiderman – and behind it all was earnest and creative legend, Narayan Debnath.

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK

The eminent artist passed away in Kolkata yesterday (January 18), in the morning. He was 97 years old at the time of passing. He was suffering from prolonged illness, while receiving treatment at a private hospital. The veteran



cartoonist was admitted on December 24, and was immediately put on ventilator support. For more than 50 years, Debnath entertained Bengali youth with his simplistic, fun and relatable characters, with “Handa Bhonda” running for a record 53 years – it was the longest running comic series by an individual artist. The artist’s fascination with visual arts began very early in life. He came from a family of gold retailers, and designed patterns for gold jewellery. Later, he decided to take up his interest in design seriously, and joined the Indian Art College to study fine arts. However, he dropped out, and freelanced for advertising agencies for some years. His first break came in 1950 when he joined Dev Sahitya Kuthir, a renowned publishing house. “Handa Bhonda” was born with the encouragement of editors Dev Sahitya Kuthir, who encouraged Debnath to work in comics in Bengali. Batul, another of his iconic characters, was based on his friend and famous bodybuilder, Manohar Aich. Bantul, which started off as a human character, went on to have

superpowers at the insistence of the editors to add ‘an aura of invincibility’ to the character during Bangladesh’s Liberation War in 1971. Some more of Narayan Debnath’s iconic characters are Black Diamond Indrajit Roy, Potolchand the Magician, Koushik Roy, Bahadur Beral, Daanpita Khandu Ar Tar Chemical Dadu, Petuk Master Batuklal and Sutki Mutki. For all of Narayan Debnath’s fame and longevity – his recognitions came relatively late – the Executive Board of the Sahitya Akademi awarded Debnath’s Comics Samagra the ‘Bal Sahitya Puraskar’ in 2013. He received Bengal’s highest honour, the Banga Bibhusan, in the same year. When Debnath won the Padma Shri in 2021, he was 95 years old, and he had to be explained multiple times that he had won the award. His response was, “Why so late?” For readers, however, Narayan Debnath would always be a part of their childhood, as future generations can either read the timeless comics, or see the numerous cartoon adaptations that follow their spirit.

PARINEETI CHOPRA ready to turn producer

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Bollywood actress Parineeti Chopra is all set to take up a new role as a film producer. In an interview, the Bollywood star spoke to Indian media about taking up production, similar to her famous cousin Priyanka Chopra Jonas. She called it the next step in the film industry, in a bid to promote more female-centric stories. “I do want to produce, and I want to do that because I feel that many times there is a struggle for actresses to get the kind of budgets, stories or casting that they sometimes need for their project,” Chopra said in the interview.



Benedict Cumberbatch seen ripped in ‘Doctor Strange’ set, says movie requires ‘massive transformation’

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Benedict Cumberbatch was seen flaunting his chiseled body in an allegedly leaked photo from the sets of Doctor Strange in the Multiverse of Madness. In an image shared by various fan pages on Twitter, fans can spot the Sherlock star shirtless displaying his abs and muscles. “A leaked photo of Benedict Cumberbatch’s behind the scenes trainings for Doctor Strange in the Multiverse of Madness!” It shows Benedict shirtless curling dumbbells, showing off his bulked-up physique,” the post read. Earlier, Benedict admitted that his role in the Marvel movie requires massive physical transformation.



COUNTRYWIDE

2 held for raping 5th grader

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Nilphamari

Police yesterday arrested two youths in connection with the gang-rape of a fifth-grader in Dimla upazila on Monday night. OC of Dimla Police Station Sirazul Islam said they arrested Sujon Islam, 25, and Bulbul Badsha, 26., after victim’s father filed a case. According to the case statement, parents of the 11-year-old victim went to funeral of one of their relatives at a neighbouring village on Monday afternoon, leaving the girl alone at home. Taking the opportunity, neighbouring youths Sujon and Bulbul entered the girl’s room forcibly and gang-raped her before leaving the place. After returning home, victim’s parents found their daughter, also a Class V student, lying in a pool of blood on the floor. Hearing cry for help, neighbours took her to Dimla Upazila Health Complex, from where she was shifted to Nilphamari General Hospital the same night. Meanwhile, the arrestees were produced before a court yesterday noon that sent them to jail, rejecting their bail prayer, the OC said.

AL council held, defying govt directive

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

Amid the alarming rise in the number of Covid-19 cases, the triannual council of Bhangura upazila Awami League (AL) was held yesterday, defying the government directive on avoiding large gathering. Although most of the guests and AL central committee leaders did not attended the programme, over 3,000 ruling party men were seen gathering at the Bhangura Union School premises, defying the health guidelines. Lawmaker from Pabna-3 constituency Mohammad Mokbul Hossain took the initiative to hold the council as his son Golam Hasnayan Russel was the secretary candidate,” secretary of now-dissolved committee Abdur Rahman said. On January 8, the district unit AL organizing committee directed the party leaders to organize the council on January 18, Rahman said. Despite repeated attempts, this correspondent could not reach Lawmaker Mokbul Hossain over phone for his comment.

An epitome of success

A female entrepreneur in Pabna has achieved phenomenal success in handicraft, creating employment opportunities for underprivileged women

AHMED HUMAYUN KABIR TOPU

At one stage of life, she did not have money to pay the tuition fees for her college exams following marriage. She married against the will of her family which alienated her from the family in 2002. Her husband had a volatile career being a newly-appointed entry-level officer at a bank. When everything seemed to be going in the wrong direction, however, her tenacity and willpower to excel brought her to the place where she is today. Shomana Sulatana Shathi, a successful entrepreneur of Pabna, now supplies embroidered dresses, cushion covers, window screens and other designed clothes to super shops including ‘Aarong’. She has created work opportunities for underprivileged women. After completing her Masters in Geology, she started her embroidery business in full swing. Shathi, who hails from Patulipara village in Pabna’s Vangura upazila, said she did not enough money to pay tuition fees when she followed a few of her relatives who had been producing handmade products for Aarong. “Since my early life, I had a creative bent of mind always trying to create something new. I designed two samples of clothes and took them to Aarong centre one day. They selected one of my designs and gave an order for 80 pieces of cushion covers and that was the beginning of the journey,” she said. Borrowing money from relatives and taking clothes and thread on credit from a shop, she delivered those in 20 days burning the midnight oil. “The first payment inspired me to go ahead,” she said. “After the successful delivery of the first order, I got more orders and I had to take support from my relatives and neighbours who had no job,” she said. “Living in a small tin-shed room of Patulipara, I along with my husband started our embroidery business; half of the room was used as a factory. I single-handedly did everything including the

design,” she added. “As orders increased, I involved more women of my village and outside. My husband left his job to join my business and we both worked together and thus SR Handicraft was launched in 2008,” she said. “Within few years, my business expanded and we built a two-storey

country at present,” she said. “Over four hundred underprivileged village women from Vangura, Chatmohar and Sadar upazila in Pabna and Faridpur, Satkhira, Jashore and Chapainawabganj are working with me,” she said. After completing all necessary works, they supply products to Aarong,

Monwar Hossain Rana, husband of Shathi, said, “My wife was struggling alone so I left my job and joined hands with her. Now, we both are working together to make a difference.” Shathi epitomises success as an entrepreneur and in recognition of her work, she has received several awards including ‘Joyeeta’ award in Rajshahi



What began as a solo journey some two decades ago has now turned to be a successful endeavour involving more than 400 underprivileged women working under the guidance of Shomana Sulatana Shathi. The entrepreneur is seen guiding her employees in Pabna’s Vangura upazila.

PHOTO: STAR

building in which we used to live on the first floor and the factory work ran in the ground floor,” she further said. “Now, I have shifted my factory to Pabna town where 25 to 30 employees are working while over 400 female workers are working remotely across the

one of the biggest shopping chains in Bangladesh while few unique products are being sold online, she added. “Around 20 varieties of handicraft products are manufactured in SR Handicraft,” Lipi Khatun, factory manager, said.

division and Bangabandhu Industrial award. Vangura municipality Mayor Golam Hasnayan Russel said the journey of Shathi may be inspiring for other women who can make a difference in the society.