



The play, held at Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy over the weekend, portrayed a complex narrative crafted by Tauquir Ahmed.

PHOTOS: THABIT AL BASHAR

TAUQUIR AHMED’S ‘Tirthojatri’ is a stellar theatrical comeback

After a substantial hiatus, Tauquir Ahmed made his theatrical comeback with the play ‘Tirthojatri’ in New York. Over the weekend, the esteemed artiste enthralled theatre lovers of Dhaka with his directorial rendition of the play, at the Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy (BSA).

DOYEL BISWAS

The play is adapted from popular writer Humayun Kabir’s philosophical fiction *Tirthojatri Tinjon Tarkik*. It is co-written by the fiction’s original author, and Tauquir himself.

The plot of the play revolves around three former soldiers who, after a brutal war, find out they have nowhere to go. The brutality of the war took their loved ones away and destroyed their homes. Thus, appalled by the horror of their newly found reality, they together begin a journey towards introspection and wisdom.

In the play, we see these three sceptic explorers roam around the depths and peaks of the world to find answers and a home. However, to much of their astonishment and dismay, they find out that although the military wars have ended, the internal battles that human beings engage in with others and themselves never end or will.

As the play proceeds, the explorers portrayed by three sets of different actors, indicating three different ages– encounter people engaging in internal and external conflicts that are not related to any greater good but differentiated perspectives. Self-

conceitedness, righteousness, and pride, unsettles their previous convictions, bewildering them.

Tauquir gives the audience at least ten different morally conflicting and discomfoting scenarios, where they experience the same confusion and dilemma these explorers deal with.

It was pretty clear from the start that the explorers were set at a premonition of being alie the audiences and humans overall, with such casualty, ease, and no special characterisation or treatment, that the side stories and mid-scenes become more prominent and take centre-stage almost every time.

As their journey reaches the end of the play, these explorers start to doubt each other’s morality, judgement, convictions, and perspectives on core humane philosophical stances, and the play never even tries to present comfortable answers.

“It was actually intended. I picked this novel for the play for its philosophical dimensions. Life is sad and perplexing

like this play indeed; one could never make sense of what is happening around and to them, and there is no solution to anything,” explained Tauquir Ahmed to the Daily Star.

“What we tried to do with this rendition is to present the same questions we ask ourselves at every instance and pretty much go by our day nonetheless. My intention was to take that same element of our lives and remind ourselves how important self-introspection is,” he concluded.

As a director, Tauquir Ahmed did a tremendous job in the theatrical representation of his tenet. His confidence in his craft was traversing throughout the 105 minute-long play, yet it did not feel lengthy at all.

The masterful placement of over 15 actors in extravagant battle dresses in front of the main hall of BSA (even before the play has begun), their entry to an awfully minimalistic yet subtly powerful set design, created a confusing and tense atmosphere for the audiences. Thus they never actually could settle or relax in their

seats to get the full sense of the splendour that was going on stage.

The sound design and the playful-yet-bold presence of over six songs, played skillfully by the musicians, were exquisite, thanks to the sound designer of the play, Pintu Ghosh. The costume design was so articulate yet simple, and it blended in with every character.

Tauquir somehow achieved the perfect coherence between the actors, dialogues, music, light, and set design, and it served him well. However, the one thing that seemed a little out of place was a few comical scenes; they might have been handled better. Also, the dialogue of its three main protagonists seemed a little archaic, as it fell short of meeting the flow of the previous scenes.

This is the 16th instalment of the play from Tauquir’s theatre troupe, Natyakendra. Tauquir has dazzled audiences with his directorial masterpieces throughout his career, including *Ichchhamrittyu*, *Hoybodon*, and *Pratisaran*.

Prior to this, Tauquir presented the play to the expatriate audience at the Queens Theater in New York, USA, on March 18. *Tirthojatri* was showcased at BSA till August 4.

‘Breaking Bad’ and ‘Better Call Saul’ star Mark Margolis dies at 83



Breaking Bad and *Better Call Saul* actor Mark Margolis breathed his last on Friday at Sinai Hospital in New York City. The 83-year-old artiste was known for playing Hector Salamanca, the meth cartel don nicknamed Tio, associated with the Mexican drug cartel boss Don Eladio Vuente and Don Juan Bolsa.

The actor was suffering from a short illness leading to his demise. The news was announced by Margolis’s son, Morgan Margolis.

USA’s Richardson city will celebrate August 5 as ‘Babita’ Day

Bob Dubey, Mayor of Richardson city in USA’s Texas has declared August 5 as ‘Babita’ Day at an award-giving ceremony yesterday, where the iconic actress Babita received a lifetime honour in recognition of her illustrious cinematic career. The award ceremony took place during the Dallas Bangla Film Festival, which kicked off with a screening of Babita’s acclaimed film, *Noyonmoni*.

The sixth season of the Dallas Bengali Film Festival was inaugurated Friday at the Angelica Film Centre in Dallas, Texas, USA. Over the course of three days, six films, including the timeless classics *Golapi Ekhon Train E* and *Ashani Sanket*, both starring Babita, will be screened at the festival.



NEWS

Govt gives in to transport

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Within a few hours, social media was flooded with pictures and videos of the incident.

A top BRTA official requesting anonymity, said, “Different quarters were opposing the decision, saying that if it was implemented, there would be a scarcity of vehicles.

“They [transport associations] have contacted higher authorities. The authorities accepted their demand.”

Prof Hadiuzzman, former director of the Accident Research Institute at the Buet, said setting a limit to the economic life of commercial vehicles was key to reducing crashes, bringing discipline on roads and curbing pollution.

“Changing the decision will raise indiscipline on the roads... Crashes will not reduce as long as the old and unfit vehicles are on the road,” he told this newspaper yesterday.

Contacted, RTHD Secretary Nuri said the order was put on hold because the “goods-laden vehicles” were not clearly defined in the previous order. “We might not have checked it properly at the time.”

A committee led by the BRTA chairman was formed to review the previous order and set economic life for different vehicles soon.

Asked about the transport associations’ pressure, he said, “Can’t we make mistakes and fix it? It has nothing to do with pressure here.”

This is not the first time the government changed its decision regarding the road transport sector. The authorities suspended implementation of several sections of the Road Transport Act 2018 for months following a strike by transport associations in late 2019.

Following the transport associations’ demand, the RTHD prepared a draft to amend the Road Transport Act, reducing fines mentioned in 11 sections and punishment under four sections.

The authorities on multiple occasions waived the fines for vehicle owners who failed to update documents of vehicles on time.

Global food prices rise

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WHEAT PRICES RISE

The Cereal Price Index declined by 0.5 percent in June. This was largely the result of two factors: a nearly five percent drop in coarse grain quotations due to increased seasonal supplies of maize from Argentina and Brazil, and potentially higher-than-anticipated production in the United States.

However, wheat prices rose for the first time in nine months due to uncertainty over exports from Ukraine and continued dry conditions in North America.

Meanwhile, rice prices increased

by 2.8 percent in July and by almost 20 percent over the past year after India prohibited exports. FAO warned that the move “raises substantial food security concerns for a large swathe of the world population, especially those that are most poor and who dedicate a larger share of their incomes to purchase food”.

The Sugar Price Index declined by nearly four percent, the result of good progress in Brazil’s sugarcane harvest, improved rains across most growing areas in India, and subdued demand from Indonesia and China, the world’s top importers.

A miraculous escape

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Within a few hours, social media was flooded with pictures and videos of the incident.

Musa Ahmed, his Dubai expatriate son-in-law Abu Bakkar, granddaughters – Adila Akhter, 6, and Adina Akhter, 3 – and their driver were inside the flattened car for nearly 35 minutes before they were able to return from the jaws of death.

Speaking to reporters at the Chittagong Medical College Hospital (CMCH), Musa said, “We thought our time had come. The children were crying for help, while the rest of us were yelling out to the pedestrians to help us. It was Allah who saved us with his own hands.

“Fire service officials arrived after around 30-35 minutes and began their operation to pull us out of the wreckage.”

Belal Uddin Jahangir, officer-in-charge of Baro Awlia Highway Police Station, told The Daily Star, “The heavy-weight but empty container was heading towards KDS factory in the port city’s Nasirabad Industrial Area. The trailer carrying the container got detached from the lorry and fell onto the car, smashing it completely.

“When our police team rushed to the spot, we thought everyone was dead as the car was badly smashed. But the moment we heard the cries of children, we didn’t wait for a second to begin our operation to rescue them.”

Firefighters from Kumira Fire Station, nearly 20km from the accident spot, arrived around 11:00am. Before that, locals tried

placing logs, stones, and iron rods under the container so that it was slightly lifted from the car.

Sultan Mahmud, the fire station officer, said, “When we saw the situation, we never imagined they could be alive. We thought our plan of action was to remove the trailer and pull out the car with dead bodies inside. But then we heard the voices and changed our plan.

“Using police wreckers and then a crane, we lifted a corner of the container and dragged the car out from underneath it. We then proceeded to pull out the survivors one by one. The two children were scared but unscathed.”

They were all taken to CMCH for observation, he added.

Police took the car and the lorry into custody for legal action, OC Belal said.

On May 10, in a similar accident, a father and son were killed after a container fell from a running lorry on their rickshaw in Patenga.

Tagore

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Jorasanko mansion in Kolkata.

The “Bard of Bengal” composed over 2,000 songs which created a separate genre, known as “Tagore songs”.

He also wrote eight novels, 84 short stories and numerous poems in his prolific literary career spanned over almost seven decades. Gitanjali, Gora and Ghare-Baire are his best-known works.

Rabindranath became the first non-European to win the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1913.

His compositions were chosen by two nations as national anthems: Bangladesh’s “Amar Shonar Bangla” and India’s “Jana Gana Mana”.

Port city suffers on 2nd day of inundation

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them to take shelter in local schools but they preferred to go to their relatives’ houses.”

Visiting the low-lying areas in the city, this correspondent found that Chawkbazar, Bahaddarhat, Muradpur, Sholashahar Gate No 2, Badurtola, Bakalia DC Road, KB Aman Ali Road, Agrabad, Halishahar, Chandgaon, Katalganj, Shulakbahar and Dewan Bazar areas went under knee-to-waist-deep water.

People’s suffering increased as the shops and houses in those areas were flooded. Most of the roadside shops in Badurtola area remained shut in the morning. The shop owners said rainwater made it impossible for them to stay inside.

Talking to this correspondent, Shafiqul Alam, a shop owner in Badurtola area, said, “Following heavy rain, my shop was flooded on Thursday night. I bailed out all the water the next afternoon only to find out that it was flooded again at night.”

“If we bail the water today, it will be flooded again as the rain continues to pour. That’s why most of the owners did not open their shops today,” he added.

The ground floor of Chawk Super Market in Chawkbazar area has remained submerged since Friday. Murky water, smelling of filth, entered the ground-floor shops and damaged goods and products.

The road from Telipatti to Chawkbazar Kitchen Market went under knee-deep water. People were seen to wade through filthy water spilling from roadside drains.

Next two years crucial

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1,000 crore a year. We will supply fuel from Patenga to Dhaka through another pipeline which is also almost complete,” Nasrul said.

He said the government has increased fuel storage depots in Moheshkhali, Patenga, Khulna and Baghabari.

About import of LNG, the state minister said this will not increase dependency on imports. “It will be a short-term solution until we have more gas from local sources.”

He said the government target now is to provide uninterrupted electricity at an affordable price.

Presenting the keynote paper,

Taposi Ghosh, a resident of West Bakalia DC Road area, was plodding through filthy water on a stretch of the road. She said she was going to the hospital to attend to her mother-in-law.

“There are no vehicles to ply the road. I just found two rickshaws but the pullers demanded a high fare that I cannot afford,” she said.

PASSING THE BUCK

Although Chattogram Development Authority (CDA) has been implementing a mega project worth Tk 5,617 crore to address waterlogging in the city, the city dwellers alleged that the project did not benefit them in any way even five years after the project was initiated.

Many pointed their fingers at the Chattogram City Corporation for not cleaning up the canals and drains regularly.

Contacted, Mayor of Chattogram City Corporation Rezaul Karim Chowdhury told The Daily Star that there are two canals in Bahaddarhat area – Chaktai Khal and Birja Khal.

“The CDA has been working with the canals under the mega project but no earth has been dredged from them,” he said, adding, “That’s why the canals cannot carry the rainwater and so waterlogging occurs in the area whenever it rains.”

“The CDA authorities are seen to build protection walls along the canals but they do not dredge the canals,” the CCC mayor pointed out.

When this correspondent reached out to CDA project director Lt Col Shah Ali, he said they dredged some canals but had to leave some others out as they had to build retaining

walls first.

“If we go to dredge the canals before building retaining walls, the buildings and establishments on the banks of those canals will be damaged,” he explained.

Asked why they did not build retaining walls along all the canals in five years, Shah Ali said, “We could not move vehicles along the banks of many of the canals as those are too narrow. So, we asked the district administration to acquire land and go for evicting illegal occupations from the banks.”

Blaming the waterlogging on the CCC’s failure to clean up the drains regularly, the CDA project director also said, “Dredging of canals was not the reason for waterlogging. Another reason for waterlogging was that the drains were clogged. The CCC workers did not clean those regularly.”

LANDSLIDE WARNING AND EVACUATION IN RANGAMATI

The Rangamati district administration also issued a directive about evacuating people from their homes on hill slopes.

Residents in Shimultoli, Rupnagar, Loknath Temple and Bhedbhedi Muslim Para areas in Rangamati were asked to move to shelters. The local administration has opened 19 shelters in nine wards of Rangamati town in this connection.

“There is a risk of landslides in the district due to torrential rain over the last several days and that’s why the local administration asked the residents to take shelter in safer places,” said Rangamati District Commissioner Mohammad Mosharraf Hossain Khan.

LNG will not be the main source of gas in the country. He suggested that entrepreneurs establish their industries in planned areas to get uninterrupted energy supply.

Senior Secretary at Energy Division Md Khairuzzaman Majumder said there will be no gas crisis for industries from 2026.

“We have already signed long term contracts with Qatar and Oman for import of LNG. Efforts are on to sign three more long term deals,” he said, adding that signing of contracts was in the final stage to set up more LNG terminals to increase storage and unloading capacities.