

Bengali Cultural Society of South Jersey

(A Non-Profit Organization)

সংস্কৃতি

Volume 23, Issue 3

July—September, 2008

From the Editor

SUBHO BIJOYA and HAPPY DEEWALI

On behalf of the committee, I would like to thank you for your participation in the 2008 Durga Puja. The 3 day event was received enthusiastically by our members who turned out in great numbers on Friday night for an extra day of puja and celebrations. Our new Durga protima received praises from all. As always, donations from many of our members made this possible. We economized wherever possible and worked hard to minimize membership dues and donations, against ever increasing cost pressures. Thanks to our volunteers who worked tirelessly to make the Puja enjoyable for all. Our artists turned in exceptional performances and won the hearts of the audience. To make next years Puja even more enjoyable, please provide your feedback to the committee.

I hope that you are enjoying the last few warm days of fall. Soon it will be time for BCS' next big celebration, the Saraswati Puja scheduled for 24th January, 2009. We are planning children's group performances. If interested, please contact Aparajita Mitra (856-489-6434) before Thanksgiving for available slots. For those who have not yet found the time to send in donations or make pledges for the ICC, please contact any committee member.

By the time this newsletter reaches you, the United States will have a new President and, hopefully, a sustainable solution for the many challenges facing us today. Looking forward to the future and wishing you the very best.



Artist Paritosh Sen dead

Paritosh Sen, one of the founders of the contemporary Indian art movement, died at a private hospital on Oct 22nd 2008. He was 90. The artist, who was admitted to hospital one-and-a-half months ago, is survived by his wife. The couple did not have any children. Born on September 24, 1918, in Dhaka, Sen was a founder member of the Calcutta Group, an art movement established in 1942 that played a significant role in the birth of Indian modern art.

Maradona to visit Kolkata

Kolkata, Nov 5 (PTI) Having played host to Pele and Oliver Kahn, the city is now gearing up to receive Argentine legend Diego Maradona who will be here on a two-day trip in the first week of December. During his stay, the newly appointed Argentina coach will inaugurate a venture, named Indian Football School at Maheshtala and will also visit the Mother House, the headquarters of the Missionaries of Charity.

Retail woes

Total Mall Supply in India will double in 2010.

The retail party seems to be over, with rentals witnessing a major dip across the country. But what's adding to the negative sentiment is the over supply waiting to come up in the next couple of years. It is estimated that the total mall supply in the country will double in 2010 as compared to the supply slated to come up this year.

To The Editor

I really enjoyed reading the Volume 23 Issue 2 of Sanskriti. There are many interesting articles ranging from popular culture to current event. Thank you for putting things together.

Waiting for next one.

*Jayati Mukherjee
Voorhees, NJ*

I received the BCS newsletter in the mail recently and I wanted to let you know that it looks great! I used to post them on the website and never have they looked this good. It is clutter free, easy to read and surprisingly very informative. I actually enjoy reading about the new Bengali movies, and other content. The positioning of the pictures are great. Layout is included as a part of my full time

job and this is a great looking, well thought out and professional looking plan. So great job to the editor and great job to the whole committee for a great looking newsletter!

*Jayasree Shah
Cordova, TN*

Following names were not included in our edition Vol 23, Issue 2:

- Graduate—Anik Das, son of Ashoke & Jhuma Das
- Graduate—Bookie Benegal, son of Mita Benegal

Please do send an e-mail to The Editor at editor@bcssj.org with your comments, suggestions, announcements, and articles to be published in our future editions.

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SPEECH BY HER EXCELLENCY THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA, SHRIMATI PRATIBHA DEVISINGH PATIL, AT THE INAUGURATION OF THE BIRTH CENTENARY CELEBRATIONS OF SMT. ARUNA ASAF ALI

New Delhi, 16th July, 2008

It gives me immense pleasure to participate in this function to inaugurate the Birth Centenary celebrations of Aruna Asaf Ali, the respected "Heroine of the Quit India Movement". I would like to congratulate the National Federation of Indian Women for organizing this function. A committed and a courageous freedom fighter, Aruna Asaf Ali, symbolized the very important contribution of women to our Freedom Movement. Uncompromising in her struggle against British rule, she participated in the Civil Disobedience Movement in the 1930s as well as the individual Satyagraha called by Gandhiji in 1941. It was an historical moment, when she hoisted the tricolour at the August Kranti Maidan in Mumbai on 9th August 1942 from where Mahatma Gandhi gave a call for the British to leave the country. Immediately after the Quit India Resolution was passed, she went underground but continued to organize numerous activities of

the freedom struggle. She remained undetected for about four years and the British finally had to withdraw the arrest warrant against her. She earned admiration and respect as a courageous and an ardent freedom fighter. Aruna Asaf Ali had the opportunity to work with the great leaders of the freedom struggle. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru referred to her as "one of India's brave women."

Aruna Asaf Ali was a strong advocate of the need to provide education to women as a way of empowering them in their lives. Till the very end of her life, she strongly advocated the need for women's education, when she said at a meeting in 1990:-

"... education is the key to enlightenment and to participation in equal terms in decision making in the home and in public life."

These words reflect her conviction that, women must be educated to enable them to effectively

participate in the affairs of the country and indeed, in their own family.

I am sure that the Aruna Asaf Ali Birth Centenary celebrations will be an opportunity for our younger generation, especially our girls and young women, to become acquainted with the lifelong dedicated work of this strong personality, who symbolized our composite culture and is an inspiration for our young women.

In conclusion, I once again thank the National Federation of Indian Women for organizing this event.

Thank you.

JAI HIND

(Smt. Aruna Asaf Ali is an aunt (পিসীমা) of one of our community members, Amit Gangulee.

Follow this link:

<http://presidentofindia.nic.in/sp160708-2.html> to read the full length of speech.)

My Last moments in India, Paulomi Banerjee (Tani)

The seconds ticked by. Tick...Tock...Tick...Tock. I wished I could stop time. I wished I could stay here forever. No one could make me leave. It was as if my mouth had been locked into a frown and the key was missing. I looked at the bed I was sitting on. I tried to absorb it all in. I wanted it to all stay in my mind forever. The quilt on the bed was white and soft. I laid my hand over the stitches trying to memorize the pattern. I looked down at the cold, mud-colored floor. There was dust scattered all over it. Even though I had once thought that the floor was too hard and too cold, I knew, it would take me a while to get used to the carpet. There was a huge brown armoire next to my bed. It had black bolts all around it. Memories of my cousins playfully pushing each other onto the armoire flashed into my mind. The walls were a soft, white color, like vanilla ice cream. Everything was so quiet that you could hear a pin drop. The humid wind from

outside was blowing the curtains in, as if they were reaching out to me, telling me not to go. There were many shelves randomly sticking out from the wall, about a foot apart, as if there were shelves missing in between. I looked across the room at the fluorescent light. It made me want to fall asleep. I stuck my head out the huge window behind me at the green meadow laid out beneath me. The smell of rain rushed into my nose and the smell of boiled rice was so strong, that I could almost taste it. The sky was splashed with orange, blue, and black, like a painting. You could barely tell that it was almost midnight. The huge coconut trees were towering over the few people who were still outside like giants compared to ants. The grass was sprinkled with dew and I could hear the soft croaking of a frog somewhere in the distance. Just beyond the trees, I could see the sparkling lights coming from the big buildings. "It's time to go," my Dad

called solemnly. I quickly glanced around the room, knowing it would be the last time I saw it. I felt tears coming to my eyes. I could hear soft sobbing coming from downstairs. "Must be Grandma," I thought to myself. I slowly stepped down the stairs, trying to cherish each moment. The tears slowly came rolling down into my mouth. I could taste salt water. I hugged everyone while the tears were steadily coming out of my eyes. We all walked out but only my Mom, my Dad, my brother and I got into the yellow taxi. Suddenly the realization of it all hit me. I was leaving everyone I knew and loved to go to a place where I had no family - America. Once again, I snapped back to reality and realized I couldn't prevent it. The tears just burst out of my eyes like a water balloon suddenly popping. I couldn't breathe. I cried and cried. " Bye India, Bye," I barely managed to say, as we rode off into the dark night.

INDIAN CULTURAL CENTER

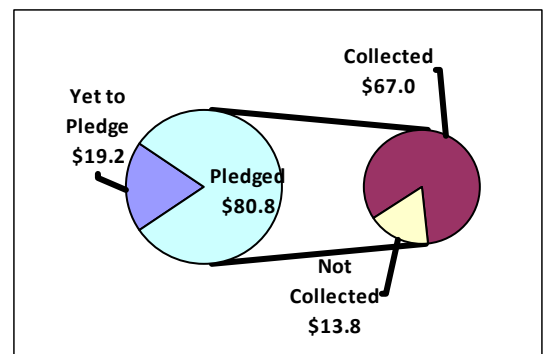
All plans and permits have been approved by the respective authorities. Finalizing on the structural design and the interior floor plan. The budget for building the ICC is approximately \$3.5 million, out of which \$2.25 million donation pledges have been received.

BCS has pledged \$100 thousand for the ICC. Till date, we have received donation pledges for an amount of \$80.3 thousand. We need to fulfill our commitment of \$100 thousand, by the end of

2008.

We are grateful to all those who have pledged and donated. And to those who have not pledged, request you to send in your pledges and / or donations by the end of November 2008.

You can download the pledge form from our website www.bcssj.org.



Puja Fact—KOLABOU

Popularly known as Lord Ganesh's wife, Kolabou in reality has no relationship with Ganesh. Our scriptures call her Nabapatrika. Nabapatrika was actually a popular ritual performed by the peasant folks for prosperous harvest. It was during the autumn (Sharat), the time for reaping crops ("Amondhan"), peasants worshipped Goddess Nabapatrika for good harvest. Later when Durga Puja became a popular festival of "Sharat", all the nine holy rituals of the Nabapatrika, were added to the ceremonies of Durga Puja. Nabapatrika represented the primitive form of Durga Puja and is worshipped during Bodhon.

The nine plants comprising Nabapatrika are :

- Banana plant - "Kola Gaachh" (represents Goddess **Brahmani**)
- Colocassia plant - "Kochu Gaachh" (represents Goddess **Kalika**)
- Turmeric plant - "Halud Gaachh" (symbolises Devi **Durga**)
- Jayanti tree - "Jayanti Gaachh" (denotes Devi **Koumari**)
- Wood apple tree - "Bel Ghaachh" (denotes Goddess **Shivaa**)
- Pomegranate tree - "Daalim Gaachh" (represents Devi **Raktadantika**)
- Arum plant - "Maankochu Gaachh" (represents **Chamunda**)
- Rice plant - "Dhaan Gaachh" (for Goddess **Lakshmi**)
- Ashoka tree - "Ashoka Gaachh" (symbolises **Shokrahita**)

Tata pulls out NANO car project from West Bengal—Singer residents threaten to hold satyagraha

Residents of Singur have threatened that they would hold a 'satyagraha' outside the Parliament if their demand is not acceded to. They are demanding that the Tata Motors small car project would be set up in Singur as had been planned before its relocation.

West Bengal's ruling Left Front (LF) described the Tata Motors' decision to "hurriedly" move its Nano car project out of West Bengal as "unfortunate". "It's very unfortunate that Tata Motors has hurriedly taken a decision to shift its Nano plant from West Bengal," state LF chairman Biman Bose said in a press statement here. Blaming the Trinamool Congress for its "irresponsible" movement against industrialisation, Biman Bose said: "The entire state will be deprived of the huge economic activity that was supposed to take place at Singur."

The personal secretary of Mamata Banerjee on Monday received calls from anonymous callers

who threatened to kill the Trinamool Congress chief. The calls were made from booths near her residence in south Kolkata's Kalighat. Mamata was in Delhi when the calls were received. Police are investigating.

In the Works

Raima Sen will come face to face with sister Riya in Rituparno Ghosh's adaptation of Rabindranath Tagore's novel 'Nauka Dubi', going against the original literary work. Although in the novel, the characters played by the two sisters don't come together, the director has redefined the novel for commercial reasons.

"There's no way the audience will accept me and my sister in the same movie without having scenes together. In the original story, our characters don't come together at all. But Riya and I have to come face to face in our first film together," Raima said.

Announcements:

We sympathize with the following members on the loss of their loved ones:

- *Munmun Saha's mother, Dipa Mukherjee*
- *Anamitra & Nita Basu's mother, Dipty Dutta*
- *Sheila Ghose's mother, Sabita Basu*
- *Jayati Mukherjee's mother, Binota Chakravarty*

- *Sophia Mukherjee's mother, Gita Rani Banerjee*
- *Urmila Chandra's father, Shanti Bhusan Majumdar*
- *Debu Saha's Mother, Jyotshna Saha*

Congratulations to Mitra Tarafder on the birth of her grandson Caden Thomas to Sandip and Carly.

Funds drag on student flow to the US

30 Oct, 2008, The Telegraph, Charu Sudan Kasturi

New Delhi, Oct. 27: Indian students queuing up for a passage to the US have almost doubled over the past three years of this country's booming economy, but the ongoing financial crisis may slow down the flow, consultants and counselors have said.

The number of US student visas issued to Indians has leapt from 16,891 in 2004 to 32,652 in 2007, the latest data available with the United States-India Educational Foundation (USIEF) reveals.

But the fuel propelling this rapid hike may be running out, and the possibility of a climb-down as steep as the rise cannot be ruled out, counselors warned.

Traditionally dependent on fellowships and scholarships for their studies abroad, Indians are now increasingly riding the country's economic growth to finance their academic pursuits in the US, senior educational advisers said.

"Due to India's booming economy, the affordability has increased. We see a significant num-

ber of students opting for US education, irrespective of scholarships or fellowships," Sevanti Narayan, the national educational adviser at the USIEF, said.

The affordability for individual candidates apart, the increasing willingness of banks to offer student loans has contributed to the growing queues for student visas, Narayan said.

But liberal bank loans and greater affordability have both taken a hit in the financial slump, education counselors said. "Banks were willing to give student loans more than ever before because they were earning returns from the stock markets, too. As losses from the markets pile up, students are already finding it harder to obtain study loans," education counselor Amit Raghav said.

Raghav said at least 12 students, who approached him since the start of October, have complained that they were denied student loans by banks that cited the economic slowdown as the reason.

The jump in student visas issued by the US to Indians from 2004 to 2007 coincided with the sharpest climb in growth parameters of the Indian economy.

The sensex ended 2004 at just over 6600 points, but had crossed 9000 by the end of 2005. By February 2006, the five-digit mark — 10000 points — was breached, and by the end of the year, the sensex had covered another 4000 points. The index crashed through the 20000 barrier by the end of 2007, and reached 21000 last January.

But if the hike was steep, the fall has been steeper, with the sensex now struggling to stay above 9000 points.

"The rise in students seeking visas to the US followed the fortunes on Dalal Street as the markets surged. The fear is that as the markets collapse, this trend will reverse," Shruti Seth, a Pune-based counselor, said. A rising rupee-to-dollar ratio will also hurt students, she said.

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Upcoming Events

- Planning for a **New Year's Eve Party** on Wednesday, December 31, 2008—A fund-raising event for CRY (<http://america.cry.org/site/>). Will keep you posted. For details, contact

Anamitra Basu (856-216-1236), Agomoni Mukherjee (856-802-1890), Debashis Kushary (856-489-6533), Rita Basak (856-429-4730) or any committee member. (Limited seats—children allowed)

- Mark your calendar **Saraswati Puja** on Saturday, January 24, 2009—Venue and Program Details will follow.

কপোতাক্ষ নদ
মাইকেল মধুসূদন

সতত, হে নদ, তুমি পড় মোর মনে।
সতত তোমার কথা ভাবি এ বিরলে;
সতত যেমতি লোক নিশার স্বপনে
শোনে মায়ী মন্ত্রধ্বনি তব কলকলে
জুড়াই এ কান আমি ভ্রান্তির ছলনে!--

বহু দেশে দেখিয়াছি বহু নদ-দলে,
কিন্তু এ স্নেহের তৃষ্ণা মিটে কার জলে?
দুগ্ধ সোতোরূপী তুমি জন্মভূমি-জনে।

আর কি হে হবে দেখা? --যত দিন যাবে,
প্রজারূপে রাজরূপ সাগরে রে দিতে
বারি-রূপ কর তুমি; এ মিনতি, গাবে
বঙ্গজ জনের কানে, সখে সখা-রীতে
নাম তার, এ প্রবাসে মজি প্রেমভাবে
লইছে যে নাম তব বঙ্গের সঙ্গীতে।

Forget NANO—Chinese car maker eyes Bengal

Nano may have veered off Singur, but there's a sliver of hope for the troubled land yet. Representatives of a Chinese automobile major met chief minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee on Tuesday, seeking 600 acres — about the same amount that is 'undisputed' in Singur — to set up a small car factory in Bengal.

While the government hopes the company would slip into the Nano site vacated by Tata Motors, it will also showcase other locations at Kalyani, Kharagpur and Haldia.

China's First Automobile Works (FAW), in collaboration with Ural India, an Indo-Russian joint venture, wants to set up a Rs 1,500-crore automobile manufacturing unit in Bengal. And, the first vehicle to roll out of the plant in 2010 will most likely be a small car priced at a cool Rs 1.6 lakh.

Green Power Plants

At a time when the city and adjoining areas are reeling under frequent power cuts, there's some good news. The West Bengal Green Energy Development Corporation (WBGEDC) will set up two green energy power plants in Kolkata and Howrah to ease the power crisis to some extent. The corporation is also in touch with a US firm to develop solar cells using nano-technology .

The MoU has been signed .Some land has already been acquired. The Howrah plant would be the first of its kind in the eastern region of the country. The projects, to be implemented on the public-private partnership model, are to be completed in the next two years. A few firms have already shown interest in the Kolkata plant.