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Culture

'Come on Bangladesh, just do it!' staged in Denmark  
Azad Abul Kalam on his latest play  
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TALENTED theatre actor-director Azad Abul Kalam along with four actors has performed in a play titled *Come on Bangladesh, just do it!* in Denmark recently. The work is a production of Royal Danish Theatre, the national theatre of Denmark. Azad and Tue Biering of Denmark are the directors of the trilingual production.

In the ranks of Bangladeshi actors in the joint production are Shamina Shawkat, Shahnaz Zarin Sattar, Mohammad Abul Wadud, Azad and Mohammad Akbar Reza.

Tracing the genesis of the play, Azad said, "The concept of *Come on Bangladesh...* is innovative in the sense that it's a satire on 'cheap labour'. The rich nations, using the cheap labour of the Third World, have successfully set up a garment business. Similarly in the play, a rich nation (Denmark) using the cheap Bangladeshi labourers (actors) 'orders' the latter to create a theatre performance titled *Come on Bangladesh...* which is based on a Danish fable."

Danish fable *The Elf Hill* was written in 1828 for a festival performance at the Royal Theatre in Copenhagen. The play has remained popular in Denmark ever since its first performance. "We made the first two acts of the five-act play in Bangla. The third act was done in English and the other acts were done in Danish," informed Azad Abul Kalam.

On the selection process of the actors and directors for the play, Azad asserted, "Danish delegate Hanne Thornager took interviews for the selection. Later, they appointed a language expert to teach the Bangladeshi actors Danish language.

Using multimedia in the play *Come on Bangladesh, just do it!*, the whole process of 'cheap labour' business -- order, manufacturing and export-- has been portrayed on the stage. "A narrator unfolds the whole process on the stage. To portray 'the export process', a huge container was used on the stage in which the actors performed. This scene was displayed live through four cameras," said Azad.

Danish designer Nicolaj Spangaa made the huge and innovative set, using the whole auditorium. Ulrik Gad was the light designer of the production.

The production had a far reaching impact on Azad and the other Bangladeshi actors. And returning to Bangladesh from Denmark, Azad



Azad Abul Kalam (L) and co-actors in the play

is directing a new production for his troupe Prachyanat. Azad said "I'm directing Rabindranath Tagore's popular play *Raja*."

Azad has his own interpretation of Tagore's play. Azad informed, "We see so much corruption around us. To make the play easily understandable to the present audience, I'm using contemporary replicas of leaders such as Bush and Blair."

Azad Abul Kalam further added that Prachyanat will stage *Raja* on Christmas Day.