

The Goethe Institut

Treasure Trove of Cultural Riches

by Fayza Haq

A popular haunt of the studious and the young at heart in the city is the German Cultural Centre, the Goethe Institut, situated at Dhanmandi, Rd No 2. One of the main attractions of this place is the library with its magazines and newspapers. This small but highly frequented library has magazines in Bangla, English and German, all related to German life. There are about ten different magazines. In addition there are 3,000 books, which comprise novels and books on philosophy, travel, science, politics, art and photography.

The Goethe Institut was originally set up in Munich in 1951 for the sake of international cultural cooperation. A decade later the Goethe Institut was established at Dhaka too. Today, in 1991 the German Cultural Centre has become a centre for cultural cooperation between German and Bangladeshi filmmakers, scholars, writers, artists, and a vast stream of people who are keen in the sector of cultural and social development.

The Goethe Institut helps all types of academic institutions to use amenities and fa-

cilities in order to help them carry on their respective activities. There are arrangements for exchange of ideas and information for useful exchange of thoughts between German guests and those who frequent the Institut, and who are often invited to discuss, talk and listen in workshops.

There is a large number of young people who come to the Institut to learn German. Some do this as it is an essential factor in their academic studies as in the International Relations Department. But many are here just because they are keen to master the language. German is not easy to perfect yet it gives introductions to studies in sciences, arts and literature. The dedicated work of the language teachers, who use German as the only teaching medium, has helped the students to reach advanced level for the centrally organised certificate "Zentrale Mittelstufenprüfung". From 1991 a course oriented to business "Wirtschaftsdeutsch" has also started.

The Language Department holds classes at elementary, intermediary and advanced levels. There are two

semesters of six months each year, which draws in all 300 students. Classes are held in the morning, afternoon and evening. The teachers are all Bangladeshi nationals, but who have been trained in Poona and Germany. "It is amazing how the Subcontinental teachers acquire a good accent," comments Madame Lechner, the Director. It costs Tk. 350 for beginners, and Tk. 200 for advanced level students. A set of books are for Tk 240. The books and tuitions are heavily subsidised to encourage people. There are ten teachers. "The students come here for leisure interest, and to get in touch with the intellectual crowds" Madame Lechner adds. Hopes and prospects for scholarship, however are limited.

I was talking to Dr. Quazi Adbus Samad, from the Jhangirnagar University, who is a part-time teacher at the Goethe Institut, like all the others, except Mr. Sheikh who heads the Language Department. He has been teaching here for two years and lectures twice a week for two and a quarter hours. "In my six months course I initially had 28 students but this has already dropped to 20. We use cassettes, slides and films. The method of teaching is definitely modern. Some of the students are very regular. Some are seeking opportunity to go to Germany. Their biggest problem is that they do not have the chance to practice, and without practice you cannot speak well. We give them a lot of homework but that is not enough". Dr. Samad learnt his German at the Goethe Institut at Lunenburg when he was there to study Economics.

Mr. Mamun Haq, another teacher reports, "My students are keen to enjoy and compare and contrast Bengali with German. Usually they are young, at the intermediate or graduation stage. They are youthful and full of energy. As long as I am friendly and as long as I can convince them that this is a challenge, they feel encouraged." Yet he confesses that his student shave

dropped from 27 to 14. "They all have the hidden desire to leave the country as there is no hope of progressing much in Bangladesh. They specially expect to go Switzerland and Austria. Here there is only one scholarship for the best student and that is not enough," he comments.

Mr. Haq has worked as a translator from Bengali to German for two years in Germany. He has also had a job at the American army base, where the knowledge of English was enough. He studied German thoroughly for two years in Germany, apart from preliminary six months of studies.

Mr Maifuzuddin Sheikh, who heads the Language Department, explained how the students must study for three years before they can sit for the examination, the papers for, which are sent from Munich. "In the final year there are only about eight students. There are intensive courses too apart from the extensive one, but there the cost is doubled. The boys are more eager to learn this language, but the number of girls are growing."

Apart from the academic teaching of German there is a special Language Club for those who have returned from Germany after academic studies, and wish to simply practice their efficiency in a friendly atmosphere. The themes of discussion stretch from current politics in Bangladesh and Germany to impact of cultural exchange. The Club is organised by a German and invites any German national, who happens to be in the city, to take part as a guest speaker.

There are special organisations for those who have been to Germany to acquire skills. There is the Alexander von Humboldt Club, Carl Dulsberg Samity and Alumni of German Universities in Bangladesh. These clubs consist of previous scholarship holders, but can be joined by the others. The activities of the members is to socially awaken and impart de-

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Conquest: Berliners Breach the Wall at Brandenburg Gate last November.

Benefits of Economic Cooperation

By Rahat Fahmida

GERMANY'S financial assistance to Bangladesh is on an outright grant basis. Bangladesh is one of the nineteen countries where the aid is of this nature. The Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation (BMZ) of the German government takes the major decision on development, which is followed by evaluations and studies by the bank—KIW. Once the Bangladesh government receives the grant, it then allocates money to the concerned authorities/projects on a nominal rate of interest. The projects which have been already completed under German assistance are Ashuganj thermal power station, and 230 KV substations at

Tongi and Ishurdi. One of the major areas of German assistance is power.

Regarding priorities of co-operation, both German government and its Bangladesh counterpart agreed on poverty alleviation as the overall objective of their cooperation and the priority sectors for bilateral projects are:— promotion of self-help, basic education and vocational training, health care, including family planning, promotion of private-sector development, flood protection, physical infrastructure, particularly power sector, rural road construction and the establishment of market places, agriculture, including fisheries and animal husbandry. The other potential

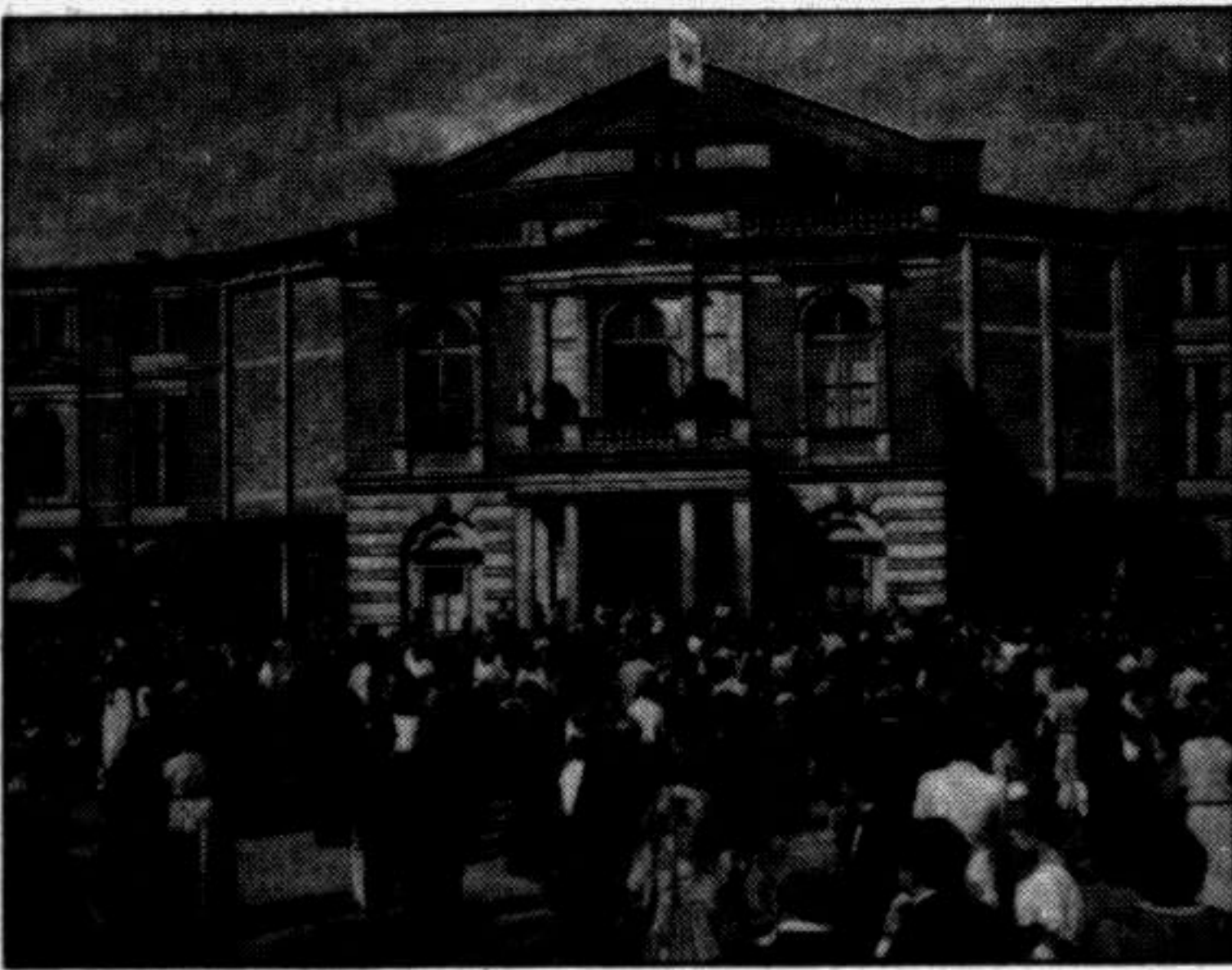
projects which are likely to be considered for future financial cooperation are:— primary education programme, female secondary school assistance project, Comilla-Chittagong 230 KV transmission line, flood protection, North-East rural development project.

The major area which interests the FRG financial assistance (KIW) programme is the power sector. Under this preference the projects working since 1987 has been— Reactive power compensation amounting to DM 20 million, Ashuganj-Comilla 230 kV-transmission line involving DM 87 million, Tongi-Ishurdi 230 kV-station project of DM 31 million. The 1991 German budget with two other areas of

interest includes Comilla-Chittagong transmission line estimating DM 51 million. The other two areas in their 1991 budget are population and health programme IV of DM 27 million and reconditioning of railway coaches estimating to DM 7 million. The Comilla-Chittagong transmission line is their reserve project to be dealt with in the next available possibility.

Amongst the on-going energy and mineral resource projects with German assistance is the extension of Ashuganj Power Station 3rd and 4th unit with an estimate of DM 125 million, and is a co-financed project with IDA, ADB and Kuwait. The project is at

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Cultural heritage: The famous festival hall at Beyrouth.

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