

DOWN TO EARTH

Tardy Old Books Trade In The City

By A S M Nurunnabi

Old books trade in Dhaka city does not appear to have any organised cohesive entity. Our country's existence dating back to the pre-liberation days has been pretty long. Yet during this long period, sustained lines of growth and tradition do not seem to mark the old books trade. In neighbouring Calcutta, for instance, this does not seem to be the case. In the legendary College Street area of that city, a mammoth market in old books exists. The variety of books available in that area is fairly extensive, and, by and large, prices asked for these books are reasonable with fair scope for bargaining.

In Dhaka city, old books trade is mainly concentrated in the Banglabazar area and the Nilkhet-Babupura area near New Market. In this trade, most of the available books comprise magazines, journals and a haphazard variety of books on different subjects. No system or order is followed in the display of the books and magazines. This is understandable, because the sellers in most cases use pavements unauthorisedly for displaying their miscellany of wares. Since the law-enforcing agencies launch their raids off and on to clear the pavements, the sellers need to be alert and should have the alacrity to bundle up their stock in trade as soon as they see that the raid is imminent. When they find the coast clear, they re-assemble and set about their business. The cat-and-mouse strategy underlying this business leaves unstable effect on the whole business line. Of course, there are some regular shops but they are comparatively few in number. They deal in text books of universities, colleges and schools. Limited variety of books on general interest are available at these shops.

One of the characteristics of the old books trade, according to observers, is that the traders initially demand a comparatively high price for their old books. Even after protracted haggling, the price they stick to, may seem to be high. That is why some observers believe the turn-over in sales in old books seems to be low. The staple of the sales consist of back issues of popular Bengali and English magazines and journals. Their clientele are mainly the student community. Because of the proximity of the university and other educational institutions, these locales of old

books draw large crowds of students in the afternoons and evenings.

Although most of the crowd just gather there to browse through the books, the number of serious buyers is reportedly not so large. A large part of the buyers are, however, fans of popular national and international news and film magazines. The more current the issue, the higher is the price demanded. Of course, if you have the right bargaining capacity, often collections of

get a fair price. Normally they get less than half of the printed price even if there is demand for the books offered. When anybody goes to buy the same books, he will be asked to pay more than two thirds of the printed price. Because of the small price difference with new books, many students prefer new books to old books when they need to buy them.

Since the old books trade in the city is a disorganised and tardy one, its full potentialities, according to observers,



back issues of popular English and Bengali magazines can be bought for a small amount. A friend reported that he got full collections of back numbers of Time and Newsweek Magazines for a full year at a price of Taka 200/- for each set.

The students in general have a grievance. They complain that when at the end of their final examinations they go to the old books shops to dispose of their text books which will no longer be needed, they do not generally

have not yet been realised. A regular site for this trade may help a great deal in organising the market. According to book lovers, the traders should pay greater attention to proper classification of the available books along with appropriate display arrangement. A more reasonable price structure is also essential. These factors may go a long way to generate greater interest among book lovers thereby helping in promoting old books trade in the city.

Khaleda meets Pope

ROME, Oct 16: Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia called on Pope John Paul II at the Vatican Holy See yesterday, reports BSS.

On her arrival at the Vatican City the Prime Minister walked through the guard of honour presented by the traditional Swedish guards at the Vatican City. The Prime Minister then ascended the third floor of the Vatican where she was received by Bishop Dine Moudazzil, Precept of the Papal household.

The Prime Minister was then conducted to the inner chamber of the Pope where she had an exclusive meeting with the Pontiff. Later Foreign Minister Mostafizur Rahman, Agriculture Minister Majidul Haq and member of parliament Khaleda Rabbani joined her in the meeting with the Pope.

During the meeting the Pope had enquired about the health of the Prime Minister and wished her every success.

The Prime Minister extended her greetings on the Vatican National Day to be observed on October 22.

She also invited the Pope to visit Bangladesh.

Later, all the members of the delegation were introduced to the Pope. There was exchange of gifts. The delegation had group photographs with the Pope.

Politburo men

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Among those reported to be resigning are President Yang Shangkun and Wan Li, chairman of the Chinese legislature, who would retain their government posts at least for the near future.

China's official Xinhua News Agency on Friday quoted Yang as saying the party congress "is a meeting for the new to replace the old. It's a pressing and important task to select a large number of outstanding young cadres to leading bodies at different levels."

The party newspaper, the People's Daily (Renmin Ribao), echoed Yang with a lengthy front-page article titled, "A New Generation is Growing Up to Leap Into the Next Century."

Wen Wei Po identified the other officials who reportedly resigned as Yao Yilin, a vice premier; Song Ping, the party's chief of organization and personnel; Wu Xueqian, a vice premier; Qin Jiwei, defense minister; Li Ximing, Beijing's party chief; and Yang Rudai, party secretary of Sichuan province.



Begum Zia called on Pope John Paul II (right) Thursday during a special audience in the Vatican. — AFP photo

Rome, Dhaka to work for peace, progress

ROME, Oct 16: Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia called on Italian President Oscar Luigi Scalfaro at his Palazzo Quirinale here yesterday, reports BSS.

The Italian President warmly welcomed the Prime Minister and wished her happy and fruitful visit to Italy.

The Italian President said his government and people would help Bangladesh in its endeavours to develop and work together not only for the promotion of economic progress but also for the maintenance of international peace and cooperation.

The Italian President also

expressed the wish that Bangladesh and Italy — two ancient civilizations and cultures — should work together for further deepening the relations.

Reciprocating the sentiments of President Scalfaro, Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia thanked the Italian President for his kind words of welcome and said that she was very happy to be in Italy, a country having democratic values and principles. Bangladesh and Italy shared similar views on different international issues which have helped the two countries to forge closer and friendly relationship, the Prime Minister added.

ALWC talk strategy

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bill, the meeting also attempted to evaluate the party's national council sessions, pin down government's failures in socio-political and economic fields and identify political friends in a possible movement against the government.

Sources said that the leaders observed that the ruling party would once again fail to decide its stance on the indemnity issue and the AL would be left with no other alternative but to go for an immediate movement to press the demand. The leaders were, however, divided on the question of incorporating other opposition forces in the movement.

A section of the ALWC members observed that the party should try to accommodate political forces outside the AL in the anti-government movement while another section felt that the forces unwilling to struggle for passage of the Indemnity Ordinance

(Repeal) Bill should be kept out of the movement.

The moderate elements maintained that the party should approach all the democratic forces in the opposition including the Five-party Alliance and the Patriotic Democratic Front (PDF) for launching an effective movement against government. Even if any party or alliance refuses to take part in movement for the indemnity issue, unity with them is still possible on other issues such as campus terrorism, price hike etc, the leaders added.

The Working Committee is, however, yet to take a resolution on the strategy of dealing with the forces outside the party.

On the question of combating the anti-terrorism bill, the leaders addressing the meeting unanimously felt that the issue should be fought both inside and outside Parliament.

The AL chief Sheikh Hasina presided over the meeting.

The Midnight File

Clinton files: Senate body to hear charges

WASHINGTON, Oct 16: The Senate Foreign Relations Committee said today it would hold a hearing on charges that the State Department used improper procedures trying to get files about Democratic Presidential nominee Bill Clinton, reports Reuter.

Talks to resolve Ayodhya dispute to continue

NEW DELHI, Oct 16: The Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) and the All India Babri Masjid Action Committee (AIBMAC) today decided to continue the dialogue to resolve the Ayodhya dispute, authorising the government to fix the date for the third round of negotiations later, reports PTI.

Bush again fails

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setting to repeat Vice President Dan Quayle's energetic debate performance of two nights ago when Quayle and Democratic rival Al Gore slugged it out.

As a result, Bush did not appear to land the heavy blows analysts said he needed to reverse Clinton's large lead in the polls with only 19 days left until the November 3 election.

The debate did include a detailed discussion of a variety of issues that an angry electorate wants to hear about, including exploding health care costs, rising crime, deteriorating education and the US role in the post-Cold War world.

The curiously passive Bush and the confident Clinton tried to appear presidential, while independent Ross Perot enlivened the 90-minute encounter with his now-common place folksy one-liners about America's exploding debt crisis.

"While we sit here tonight, we will go into an additional debt of 50 million dollars," said Perot. He added that since neither Republicans nor Democrats wanted to take the blame for the deficit, "somewhere out there is an extraterrestrial who's doing it to us, I guess."

Later cut off by moderator Carole Simpson while discussing the country's deficit, Perot snapped: "Do you want to fix the problem or sound-bite it?" Bush said he wanted to cut taxes and government spending and said Clinton's plans for tax increases would exacerbate the recession.

He was reduced to defending himself against a charge Clinton made from their first debate last Sunday.

Citing what he called Clinton's shift in position on issues like the free-trade agreement with Mexico and Canada, Bush said: "I do think you can't turn the White House into the waffle house."

Clinton responded by citing a Washington Post editorial calling Bush the "ultimate chameleon in all his years in national politics —" a remark that prompted Bush to reply "The Washington Post? God."

The Democrat continued, "I'm not interested in his character. I want to change the character of the presidency."

A questioner seemed to play to Clinton's strong suit of emphasising the economy over character charges by calling on all three candidates to pledge to use the rest of the campaign to address only policy.

Bush refused while Clinton and Perot gladly embraced the pledge. Both have faced much criticism this year on character issues.

The question of trust, which Bush has pressed throughout his campaign, surfaced in the president's final statement.

BSF move

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Indian nationals. BDR commanders of the district and the Indian Border Security Force (BSF) at a flag meeting Thursday decided to take steps towards reducing tension along the border.

Our Jessore Correspondent reports that BSF men Friday attempted three to deport 32 Bangla-speaking Indian citizens through the bordering hamlets of Jhenidah and Jessore districts.

BDR personnel foiled all the attempts, the sources said.

Jamaat activist

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deceased will be held in front of the North Gate of Baitul Mukarram Mosque today (Saturday) after Zohr prayers.

Acting Ameer of Jamaat-e-Islami Abbas Al Khan and Secretary General Moulana Motiur Rahman Nizami in a joint statement condemned the incident and demanded punishment for those responsible for the killing.

City unit of Jamaat held a protest rally at the North Gate of Baitul Mukarram Mosque Friday afternoon. It was presided by City Ameer ATM Azharul Islam.

Jamaat will hold protest rallies throughout the country tomorrow. The central rally will be held at the North Gate of Baitul Mukarram Mosque.

"If in the next five minutes, a television announcer came on and said, there is a major international crisis... or in this country a major threat... who would you choose?"

"Who has the perseverance, the character, the integrity, the maturity to get the job done? I hope I'm that person," Bush said in closing.

Arkansas Governor Clinton, whose manner throughout the debate was professional rather than combative, said he was the candidate of change, the only one of the three "who's ever balanced a government budget."

"But you cannot just get there by balancing the budget," Clinton said in his final remarks.

"You have to decide whether you want to change or not," he told the audience. "We do not need four more years of an economic theory that does not work."

Perot acknowledged there would be tussles in Washington if he is elected.

"Sure you'll have arguments, sure you'll have fights — we have them all day every day — but we get the job done," Perot said of his team.

He told voters to choose him only if they want a "results-oriented" president.

"If they just want to keep slow dancing, talks about it and not do it I'm not your man," Perot said.

Answering the only question on foreign policy, Bush said the United States had a continuing responsibility to the world as the only surviving superpower after the Cold War.

Perot took a businessman's pragmatic tack, saying simply, "You can't be a superpower without being an economic superpower. If we're not an economic superpower, we're a used-to-be and we will no longer be a force for good throughout the world."

Clinton said he would maintain continuity and keep up the "world's strongest defence," but took up Perot's economic cry, bringing up Bush's disastrous economic mission to Japan last January.

"We can't have any more instances like what happened when Mr Bush went to Japan and the Japanese Prime Minister said he felt sympathy for our country," Clinton said. "We have to be the strongest economic power in the world."

FBCCI suggestion

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To compensate the withdrawal of traditional fiscal incentives like XPB, the Federation asked for export premium of Tk 2 per US dollar over the existing exchange rate to exporters at the time of negotiating export bills.

It suggested re-introduction of the Secondary Exchange Market (SEM) and allow exporters to sell 50 per cent of foreign exchange of their export bills in line with the facilities in neighbouring India, the major competitor of Bangladesh in export markets.

The FBCCI strongly recommended for establishing an Export Bank with its chief executive to be recruited from the private sector.

It also called for an immediate export credit line for export to CIS (Commonwealth of Independent States).

Establishment of an exclusive wing in the Customs House for export related imports and despatch of export cargo was also suggested.

To impart knowledge of export markets and train exporters in the intricacies and techniques of break through and export to newer destinations, the Federation pleaded for setting up a Foreign Trade Training Institute.

The FBCCI suggested greater autonomy for the Export Promotion Bureau and appointment of EPB officials having adequate expertise on export trade.

The Federation also stressed on raising the ability of the chambers and trade associations, simultaneously with the EPB, in providing service to the exporters. It suggested that the chambers and export associations be allocated a portion of funds, earmarked for structural and managerial improvements of EPB and other export related government agencies.

Independent University

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Initially around 80 students would be admitted in the four-year Bachelor of Science (BSC) degree course in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Science and the Faculty of Business and Applied Technology, Khan said.

The IUB president said recruitment of teaching staff was in the process and other preliminaries including curriculum development and logistics procurement were being firming up. In reply to a question on academic disciplines at IUB he said this was chosen on the basis of expert assessment and a market survey of nearly 300 enterprises in the country.

Referring to relationship with other universities around the world, he said this would be maintained through exchange of academic personnel under fellowships programme offered by IUB or other sources, opportunity of the students to study in overseas universities and through a global forum for professional development by way of consultation.

According to Dr Majeed Khan the estimated capital outlay contained in IUB's physical planning budget for expenditure on different heads, amounts for Taka 600 million while the annual revenue is estimated at Taka 22.4 million during the first year steadily rising to Taka 56 million at the end of the fourth year.

Of the annual revenues, 25 per cent is stipulated to come as contributions and donations from ethnic Bangladeshi industrialists and businessmen at home and abroad, 15 per cent from IUB's consultancy works and 60 per cent from tuition fees.

Dr Khan said IUB would charge Taka 80,000 per student annually as tuition fees against Taka 30,000 spent by

the state-run universities now. He said already parents were paying tuition fee in foreign exchange amounting to Taka 1,25,000 to Taka 1,50,000 in India, Taka 2,50,000 to Taka 3,00,000 in Thailand, US dollar 25,000 in the United Kingdom and US dollar 13,000 to 15,000 in the USA per student per year. This was accompanied with two important considerations (i) exposure of the students to an altogether different socio-cultural scenario and (ii) loss of contacts with the family which had long-term impact on the students' minds.

In regard to residential facilities within the campus, he mentioned that strict supervision would be exercised on each resident student and no student would be allowed to stay in unsupervised accommodation under any circumstances. The students from accessible places would be allowed to stay with their parents or guardians designated as such, by the parents, he added.

Meghalaya

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local tribes people were not worried because they had no understanding of Uranium.

"Our simple tribals have been misled," said Lyngdoh. He charged that water used to wash the ore was being dumped in the hills without adequate safeguards. "As a result the land around has been scorched and fish in nearby ponds and streams have died," he alleged.

Lyngdoh also said villagers had complained of chest pains, diarrhoea and malarial and rheumatic fevers they attribute to the mining.

A Kiev report says: Talks between Ukraine and India on defence contracts have reached deadlock over New Delhi's refusal to pay in dollars.

Hasina

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Hasina, also the Leader of the Opposition in Parliament, said the people had been losing trust in the BNP government because of its undemocratic and anti-people steps.

Congratulating the people in Rajbari and Gouripur for electing Awami League candidates in the just ended by-elections, she said democracy-loving people had voted her party candidates by felling conspiracy and temptation of the ruling party.

Despite distribution of wheat, CI Sheet, clothes, money and naked misuse of administration, Hasina said conscious people did not vote for the government party in the by-elections.

The by-election results once again proved that Awami League will win any election, if electorates are allowed to exercise their rights freely and independently.

Nobel Prize

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country, on the American continent and in the world," the committee said in awarding the 6.5 million Swedish kronor (dhs 1.2 million) prize.

The award came on the 500th anniversary of the arrival of Columbus in the Americas, and the committee indicated this played a role in its selection.

Menchu (men-CHU) was overcome with emotion. "I only wish my parents could have been present," she said in Guatemala, where her family was killed by security forces more than a decade ago.

Francis Sejersted, the chairman of the awards committee, said the panel would be very interested in the reaction to its selection. "We are aware that this is a somewhat controversial prize," he said.

Menchu, 33, fled her homeland in 1981 after her father, mother and brother were killed by security forces. She lives in Mexico, but was in Guatemala to coordinate a commemoration of the resistance by Indians in her country, in response to Columbus celebrations.

"The people of Guatemala are going to be very happy with the news," Menchu said



Kendrio Kanchi-Kanchar Mela brought out a procession in the city yesterday in celebration of its 30th founding day. — Star photo

Fight hunger, close gap: PM

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trade in food or such exports from developing countries should not be disrupted by any unilateral measures.

Dwelling at length on privatisation, liberalisation and deregulation, the Bangladesh Prime Minister said, most developing countries are intellectually persuaded that these would ensure for them a better future. Developing countries are often required to introduce structural adjustments in economic management in pursuing this policy of privatisation, she said. She further said, sometimes such measures and consequent budgetary deficit have eroded critical food distribution programmes for vulnerable groups.

Begum Zia said, public support in crucial areas affecting daily lives of the poor is still essential in many developing countries and need not to be stopped in the name of promoting market economy.

Describing Bangladesh situation, the Prime Minister said, our babies at birth have less than normal weight and half of those that survive suffer acutely from malnutrition. She said, each year nearly 60 thousand become sightless due to vitamin 'A' deficiency while 70 per cent of women and children suffer from anaemia.

Describing such a situation as silent calamities Begum Zia

said, our people have braved calamities with courage, resilience and fortitude. She said, food production in Bangladesh has increased to 20 million tons per year in the early nineties from 11 million tons in the early seventies. The per capita calorie availability has increased dramatically, she mentioned.

The Prime Minister further said, access to food for the disadvantaged has improved and Bangladesh maintains today a buffer stock of one million tons. Begum Zia said, within SAARC framework, Bangladesh hopes to set up a food security reserve of 200,000 tons of grains.

She said, integration of women in the development process of Bangladesh is a major pillar of her government's social policy. She described woman as central to the family. She lauded the role of Gramen Bank, an NGO which extends credit and capital to near destitute women.

Begum Zia said, schooling for the girl for eight years has been made free and nutrition education has been included in the school curricula. Safety Net programmes have brought most destitute rural women groups into the economic mainstream, she mentioned.

Begum Zia said, the peasants resort to the age-old survival tactic when land becomes scarce. As a result, urban slums in Asia, Africa and Latin America are proliferating, she mentioned.

She agreed to the suggestions of the FAO Director General Edouardo Saouma for strategies to integrate agricultural growth, off-farm employment and rural industrialisation.

She said, our knowledge constraint is also a restricting factor. The only proven method most of us have for vertical increase in production is the seed-nutrient-water technology, she said. She said, the intensive farming on irrigated land destroys soil nutrients that plants require. She said, available technology is unable to help increase productivity in rain-fed areas and there is paucity of funds for research in poor men's crops like tuber and root crops or their major crop-protein source like pulses. Multi-national corporations who hold the key to biotechnology tend to invest only where economic returns are most assured, she said. Begum Zia said, the needs of poor countries, like Bangladesh, are often ignored.

She said, one should think of the hungry child in Bosnia, or of the starving infant in Somalia. Much horrors are a sad comment on our times.

Referring to rural urban migration in developing countries in the contemporary world

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