

THIRTYNINTH ANNIVERSARY OF FOUNDING

Bangla Academy: What it Means to the Nation

by Professor M Harunur Rashid

B ANGLA Academy is symbol of the intellect and ethos of the nation. If intellectual tradition and heritage of the nation could be compared with a planet, Bangla Academy occupies a place in the very centre of that planet. The centre of an orb gives it its desired strength and unity. The orb balances the impact of the forces within and without interacting on each other and thus moves along its orbit. In our contemporary experience, we see the Academy in its multi-faceted reality given the point from which we view it. There is an illusion in that contemporary

vision. Hence what we see we view only in its fractions not in its entirety.

The intellectual tradition of a nation comprises its past and present — the present which is rooted in the distant past, and the past that enlightens the present with its richness. Bangla Academy was born out of the love of our native tongue and if that is the truth, we have to admit that Bangla Academy is not born out of a momentary whim, is not gotten out of the void. Our love of the language has been sung

throughout the middle ages by both Hindu and Muslim poets and does still enthuses us with its melody and Bangla Academy is the expression of that love in material terms.

During the Language Movement of 1952, our love of the language suddenly blazed like a molten star and the lovely anger thus generated took the form of a concrete structure which we chose to call the Shaheed Minar (the Martyrs' Monument). The love that lay in the heart of that anger came to be designated the Bangla Academy. Great love and great anger are complementary emotions. That is why a thousand year old love could so quickly turn into great anger. Bangla Academy and the Shaheed Minar therefore cannot be conceived of in material terms only — they are concrete representations of two basic emotions dormant in the Bengalee ethos. You could destroy the material structure, the emotions are eternal. You can hardly kill the emotions. The Pakistanis indeed did try once during the Liberation War and dynamited the Shaheed Minar. The result was that every Bengalee heart became a veritable Shaheed Minar. That erased the geographical entity of a Country created in 1947 and out of the ashes was born Bangladesh. If the body of that great emotion of the Bengalees could be called the Shaheed Minar, Bangla Academy would be deemed its soul, its throbbing centre of gravity.

This little introduction to the Academy was considered essential, for we do not really know what the Academy is nor do we realize what it means to our national heritage and culture are some of the important features of the secondary phase. Renowned scholars, writers, literary personalities and intellectuals of the country take part in these seminars and discussions. Besides, aimed at developing the talent and creativity of the young community, the Academy arranges every year recitation and music competition for the juvenile. Famous artists of the country take part in these cultural functions.

This immortal Ekushey celebration of Bangla Academy has become almost of a National Festival which was a long-cherished desire of the people. This celebration has already heralded a new epoch in the history of our language, literature and in our national culture. Bangla Academy, now a sacred precinct for all, irrespective of colour, creed and religion, may be treated as the emblem of the intellect of the nation as a whole.

us. Just as in human love, men and women seldom get to know the person they are in love with, in the case of love of the Academy too, we cannot really claim that we really understand the true nature of the Academy. Dr Muhammad Shahidullah understood because he was a seer, a rare individual endowed with a prophetic vision. Some seven years before the founding of the Academy he wrote:

We shall have to develop this Golden Bengal not only in terms of man-power and food production, but in science and technology and in knowledge and scholarly achievement. That's why we must not confine Bangla only in the sphere of poetry and fiction. Bangla has to be developed for Philosophy, History, Geography, Mathematics, Chemistry, Physics, Geology, Zoology, Linguistics, Psychology, Archaeology, in fact in all the spheres of human attainment. We have to have Bangla as the medium of instruction for schools, madrasahs, colleges and universities. We will have to establish an Academy, which will translate all the available books on science and literature from other languages.

This was Dr Muhammad Shahidullah at the East Pakistan Literary Conference in 1948. It was he who used the word Academy for the first time. But he had dreamed of such an academy long before. In his address given at the Bangla Shahitya Parisat Student Conference in 1925 he made a clarion call to the students to go back to the root of their tradition and literary history. The speech embodied

his vision of an academy which later he helped build.

Since its inception the Bangla Academy has been trying to organize the intellectual map of the Nation. Its main thrust lay in harnessing the Bangla language for offices and for science and technology along with other branches of knowledge. Developing technical terms in Bangla was not an easy task. The Academy's Paribhasha series came in handy for the users trying to adapt Bangla for the different disciplines. After the Liberation War the Academy's role expanded enormously. The Ekushey celebrations assumed a gigantic proportion and the Amar Ekushey Granthamela came to be organized from the mid 70s. Along with such cultural activities the Academy has developed over three thousand titles endowing it the honour of being deemed the biggest publishing house in the Country. Its lexicons in particular have been very popular.

The role of the Academy in shaping the course of our struggle for Independence cannot be overemphasized. The unity that was forged to go ahead with our heroic struggle came to receive tremendous impetus at successive Ekushey celebrations. Indeed it lies in the very heart of our nationalism. If the Language Movement was a little sapling that we planted in 1952, it came to grow larger as the time passed and finally became a large tree that could sustain itself in 1971.

Bangla Academy's role in the years to come would be that of a seed-store. As the seed provided by the Academy sprouts we will experience a new lease of life that awaits us.

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Catering to the cause of language for four decades.

Three Tradition-conscious Litterateurs and Bangla Academy

Mir Mosharraf Hossain (1847-1911):

He is the pioneering among our tradition-conscious writers. His writings and philosophy have infused into the Bengalees a momentum and broadened their mental horizon. His 'Bishad Sindhu' is an immortal creation in modern Bengali literature.

Bangla Academy's publications on Mir Mosharraf Hossain:

- 1) Kabya Shamkalan: Kaikobad — Edited by Abul Fazal, Baighar on behalf of Bangla Academy, Chittagong, Sravan 1374.
- 2) Kaikobad (Autobiography) — Fatima Kausar, February, 1993.
- 3) Kaikobad Rachanaboli, Part I, Edited by Abdul Mannan Syed, June, 1994. Kaikobad Rachanaboli, Part II, Edited by Abdul Mannan Syed, June, 1994.
- 4) Kaikobad Geetika (song cassette) — Tuned by Khan Ataur Rahman, 1994.

Abdul Karim Shahitya Bisharad (1871-1953): He was one of the most secular minded writers who deeply loved his own country. He had collected some rare manuscripts (punctis) written by both Hindu and Muslim writers. This collection of his has immensely enriched our literature.

Bangla Academy publications on Abdul Karim Shahitya Bisharad:

- 1) Abdul Karim Shahitya Bisharad Sma. Grantha — Edited by Muhammad Enamul Haq and Kabir Chowdhury, September 1969.
- 2) Abdul Karim Shahitya Bisharad (Autobiography) — Ahmed Sharif, February 1987.
- 3) Nirbachita Rachana: Abdul Karim Shahitya Bisharad — Edited by Bhuiyan Iqbal, February, 1994.
- 4) Selected Essays on Abdul Karim Shahitya Bisharad — Edited by Farhad Khan and Syedur Rahman, June 1994.
- 5) Abdul Karim Shahitya Bisharad: Life and Works — Edited by Dr Abdul Karim, 1994.

Futuré Plans of Bangla Academy: 1) Publishing the life-sketch of Abdul Karim Shahitya Bisharad in an expanded form; 2) Abdul Karim Shahitya Bisharad: Collection of Essays.



Celebrating the Bengali New Year

Bangla Academy Transcends National Limits

Now Bangla Academy extended its activities also to foreign lands. The Academy recently signed a bilateral agreement with Indiana University, USA to exchange scholars on folklore. Under this agreement Bangla Academy will work alongside Indiana University on folklore research and practice.

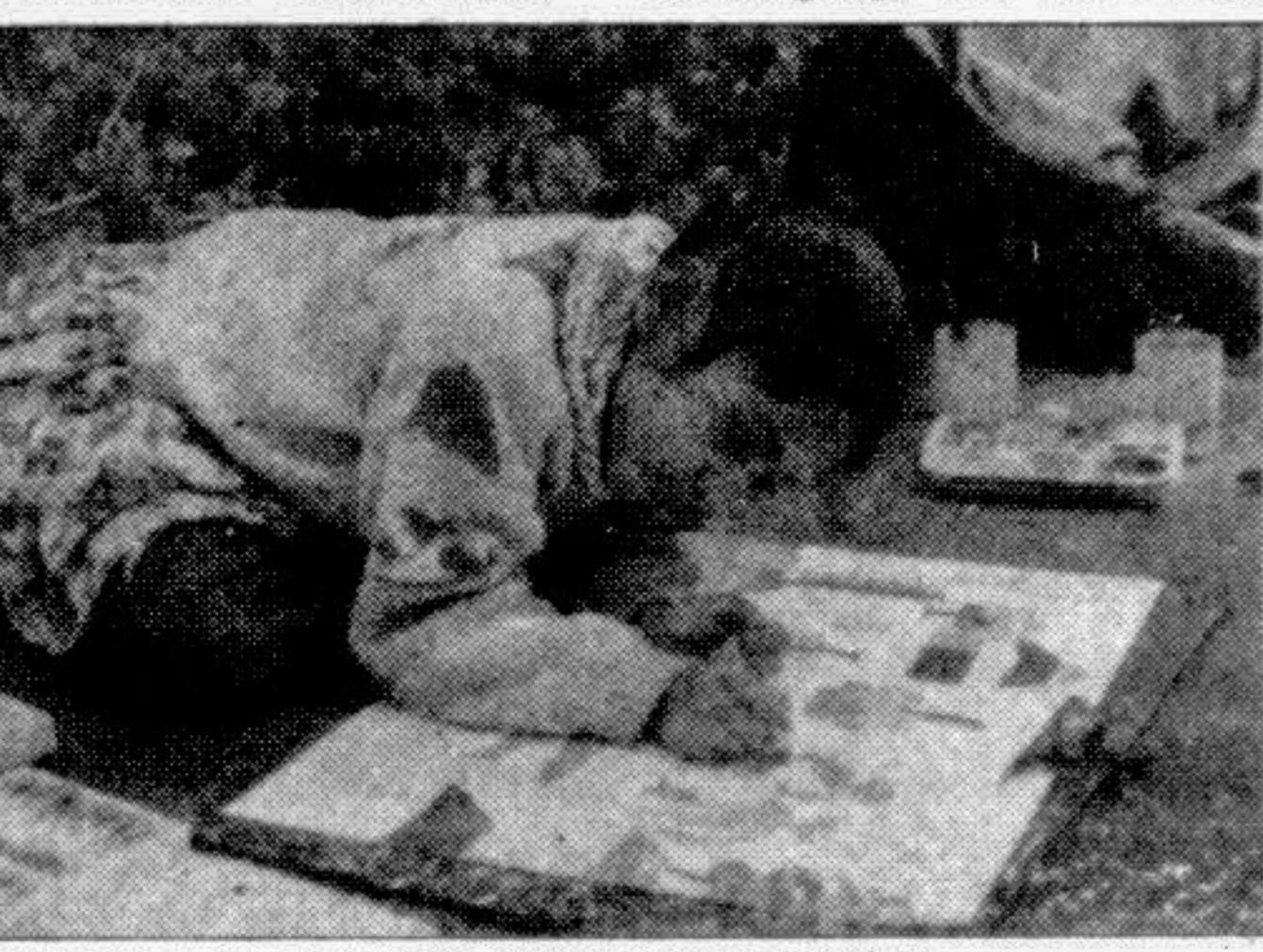
A national level agreement has been signed with the Dewan Bahasa Pustaka of Malaysia during Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia's recent visit to that country. Meanwhile a novel of the Malaysian author Anwar Ridwan has been translated into Bengali and a collection of short stories in Bangla is being translated into Malay.

In joint collaboration with the Turkish Embassy in Dhaka, Bangla Academy has published

city Folklore Summer School to jointly carry out research works in folklore.

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Bangla Academy has established its ties with the Shahitya Academy in Delhi, India. The later has agreed, meanwhile, to translate three Bengali books into various Indian languages.



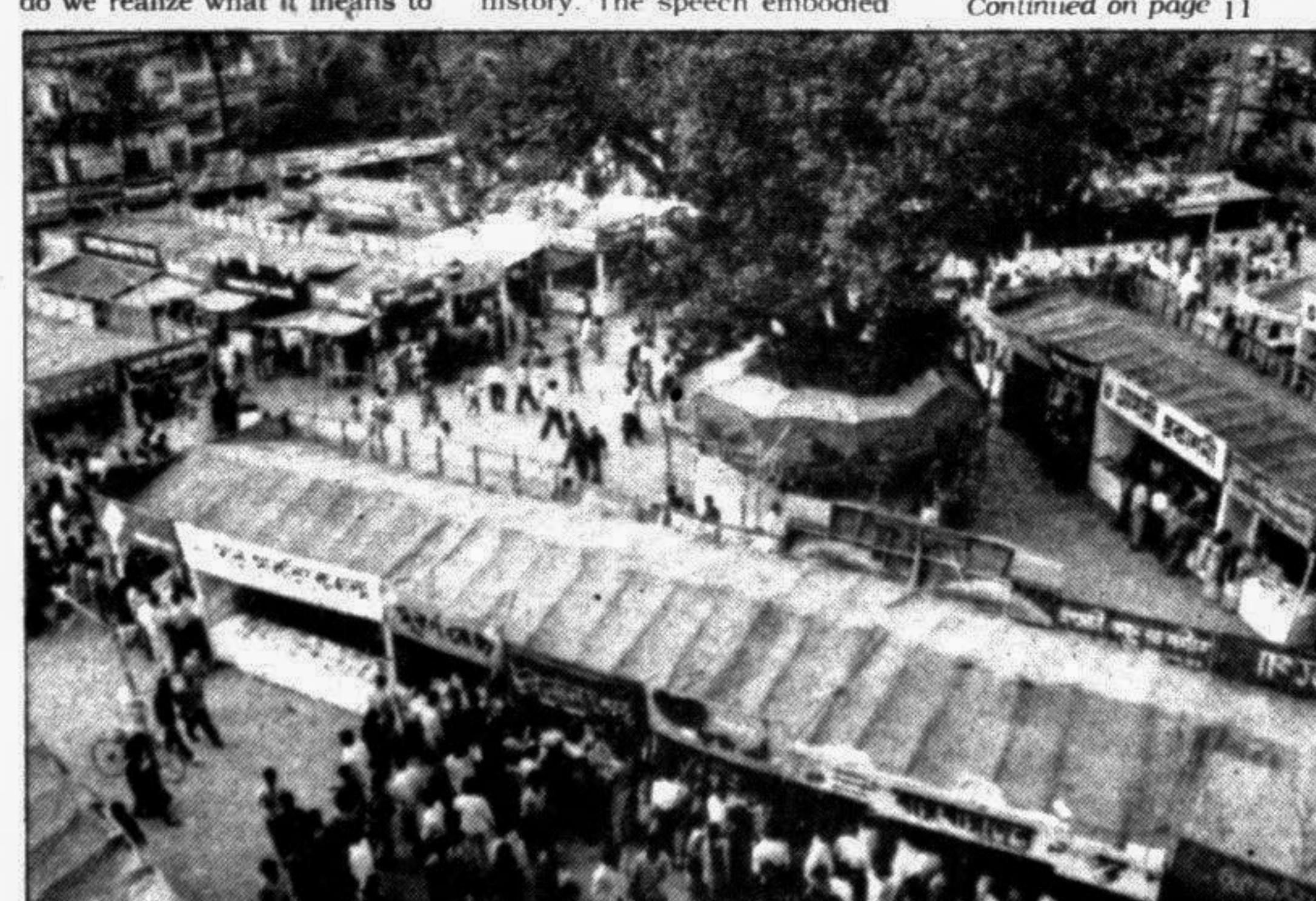
Participating in children's painting competition.

Ekushey Celebration

STARTED in 1948, the historic Language Movement reached its climax in 1952, when on February 21, police opened fire on the students killing many of them. This movement hardly has a parallel in our history. Bangla Academy, established on December 3, 1955, is the direct result of this historic movement. Inspired with this spirit of Ekushey, Bangla Academy for the last four decades has been working relentlessly to develop our language, literature and culture with its immortal Ekushey celebrations being pivotal of all its activities.

Bangla Academy chalked out a day-long programme to celebrate 21st February as Martyr's Day each year from 1961 to 1970. From 1971 to 1983 Bangla Academy organised a week-long Programme for Ekushey celebration. In 1984 and 1985 the Ekushey programme was expanded into two weeks. From 1986 to 1991 Bangla Academy's Ekushey celebration ran to three weeks. In 1992 and 1993 Bangla Academy organised month-long programmes including the bookfair.

Academy's Ekushey celebration is divided into two phases — primary phase and secondary phase. Juvenile painting competition, opening of



The Book Fair

Ekushey Book Fair

THE years following the independence of Bangladesh were marked by a kind of rare cultural awakening among the conscious citizens of the country. The Amar Ekushey Granthamela (The Ekushey Book Fair) is one of the most noticeable expressions of this awakening. This fair was first organized in Bangla Academy in 1972.

The Academy started selling its publications at a special discount in 1972, as part of its Ekushey activities. In 1974 an International Literary Conference was organized by Bangla Academy. Academy books were again exhibited and sold at a concessional price at that time.

In February 1975 some private organizations started selling their books at concessional price near the Academy Gate. In the next three years the number of such book-sellers increased considerably. In 1978, book selling by a number of publishers became an attractive feature of Ekushey activities in the Academy ground. The entire ground wore a festive look rendering the arena into a small book fair. The Academy authority formally declared the exhibition as a Book Fair and sponsored it.

The next year saw the Bangladesh Pustak Prakashak and Bikrati Samiti (Bangladesh Booksellers and Publishers Association) as the co-sponsor of this fair. In 1984, the fair was named as Amar Ekushey Granthamela (Immortal Ekushey Book Fair) and guide-

Some Outstanding Publications from Bangla Academy

Itirityo
Original: Herodotus
English Translation: Aubre de Selincourt
Bengali Translation: Shahed Ali
Cover: Mamun Kaiser
Date of Publication: June, 1994
No of Pages: 324+598
Price: Tk 225.00

Hasan Bayatir Sukh Dukhno
Original: Anwar Ridwan
Bengali Translation: Mohammad Harunur-Rashid
Cover: Qayum Chowdhury
Date of Publication: June, 1994
No of Pages: 6+130
Price: Tk 100.00

Maulana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhasani
by Syed Abul Maksud
Date of Publication: May, 1994
Cover and Illustration: Mamun Kaiser
No of Pages: 16+816
Price: Tk 350.00

Dhaka: Smriti Bismritir Nogoree
by Muntasir Mamun
Date of Publication: June, 1993
Cover and Illustration: Hashem Khan
No of Pages: 16+350+16 (colour photographs)
Price: Tk 400.00

Dhaka: 1971
Edited by: Abul Hasnat and Muntasir Mamun
Cover and Illustration: Hashem Khan
Second Edition: Paus, 1396 (BS)

No of Pages: 80
Price: Tk 120.00

Shahname (Part I-VI)
Original: Ferdousi
Bengali Translation: Moniruddin Yusuf
No of Pages: (Part I-VI) 3,956
Price: Tk 2,700.00 (offset)
Tk 2,100.00 (white print)

Shilpakalar Itthas
by Kamal Ahmed
Date of Publication: May, 1994
Cover Design: Mahmudur Rahman
No of Pages: 166-34
Price: Tk 100.00

Jamdani

by Mohammad Saidur
Cover and Illustration: Qayum Chowdhury
Jamdani Design: Kamal Akhund
Date of Publication: June, 1993
No of Pages: 72+64 (photos)
Price: Tk 200.00

Bangladesh Chalachitra Shilpa
by Mirza Tarequl Quader
Date of Publication: June, 1993
Cover Design: Qayum Chowdhury
No of Pages: 738
Price: Tk 500.00

Shatborshor Natak (Part I&II)
Edited by: Syed Shamsul Haque and Rashid Haider
Date of Publication: Part I, 1st Baishakhi, 1401 (BS) Part II, Jaishtha, 1401 (BS)
Price: Part I, Tk 400.00
Part II, Tk 400.00

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Bengali Translation of a collection of poems by Yunus Emre, the great Turkish poet.

There is the possibility of Bangla Academy's jointly working with Sowash of UK. Recently, discussions have been made to bring out a collection of Bengali poems in a bi-lingual (Bengali and English) form.

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