

RECOMMENDATIONS

Drama Festival

Natty Utsav 2002, the national festival of drama will begin from February 1 and will continue for the next three weeks till February 21. To be organised by Bangladesh Group Theatre Federation, the drama festival will feature 'Natty Jalsa' after the staging of the theatrical productions, each evening. Each Jalsa will include cultural events to be performed by members of the theatre groups. Coinciding with the drama festival will begin the 'Street Drama Festival 2002' that will continue till February 7, 2002.

Exhibition by Russian artists

Organised by the Russian Cultural Centre, Dhaka a show of contemporary art by Russian artists Poliakov Vasily and Persidskiy Konstantin is being held at the Exhibition Hall of the Russian Cultural Centre, House #510, Road#7, Dhanmondi R/A. The show ends on February 8, 2002.

Art show of three Bengali pioneers

An exhibition showcasing works of pioneer artists Zainul Abedin, Qamrul Hassan and S.M. Sultan-of Bangladesh art movement is being held at the Bengal Gallery of Fine Arts at Dhanmondi. This show is the second of a series presented from the collection of Abul Khair, chairman of Bengal Foundation. The exhibition will be open from January 12 to February 7, 2002 from 12 p.m. till 8 p.m. everyday

Group Art Show

The 45th Grand Group Art Exhibition of leading Bangladeshi artists organised by Saju Art Gallery is now being held at its gallery space at Gulshan, North Super Market 2nd circle. The month-long show, open to all, will run until February 7 from 10 am to 8:30 pm barring Fridays.

Greece agrees to big antiquity loan to Berlin museum

AFP, Athens

GREECE is to make one of its biggest ever loans of antiquities, sending 113 relics to a Berlin exhibition over protests from some local archaeologists, the culture ministry said Thursday.

The relics, from 12 museums, will be flown from Greece to Berlin in the next few days and will be displayed at the Martin Gropius Bau museum from March, along with numerous other masterpieces from other European collections.

The loan was agreed Tuesday by the Upper Council of Archaeology after a lively debate in which several archaeologists opposed the move on the grounds that the antiquities could be damaged during transport.

Other archaeologists denounced what they described as the "arrogance" of the German museum in demanding so many relics, the local media reported.

The council already reduced the loan to 113 exhibits out of a list of 158 which had been approved by the Culture Ministry from a catalogue of 600 items -- some of them major works -- requested by the German museum, the reports said.

The final selection included part of a Doric frieze from the Parthenon, a statue of the healing god Asclepius as an infant, a bronze helmet of a Persian warrior and a torso of Zeus in marble figure among the antiquities included in the final selection.

The German exhibition has been integrated into the Cultural Olympics programme in view of the Athens Games in 2004, the ministry said.

Publication

Autobiography of an artist-poet

Autobiography, Murtaja Baseer: Murta O Bimurta, launched at Biswa Sahityakendra

TAWFIQUE ALI

AN ambidextrous painter-author, Murtaja Baseer got his autobiographical work *Murta O Bimurta* launched at a ceremony held by Sraban—an outlet of locally published books. On one hand, Baseer is mostly a realistic painter, and on the other, a poet, short story writer, essayist and film script writer.

His autobiography named above, is a compilation of essays covering a wide range of areas related to the author as a poet-painter which *Pruba* Publication has published from Chittagong.

Discussants, comprising of poet, art critic and intellectuals, highlighted Baseer's life and works both as a fine artist and poet.

Poet Asad Chowdhury opened the discussion evening terming the author as a "multi faceted talent." He said that though multi faceted is an often-heard epithet, example of such talent is rare. "Murtaja Baseer is a such immediate instance," he commented. Murtaja may have several identities but first of all, he is an artist. He writes scripts for films and Asad Chowdhury thinks that our film industry could be much benefited if creative people like Murtaja would adhere to serve it. Fate of our commercial film would have



remained rid of bankruptcy and vulgarity it has degraded to. "Baseer's vigorous creativity charms me. His creative arts of painting and

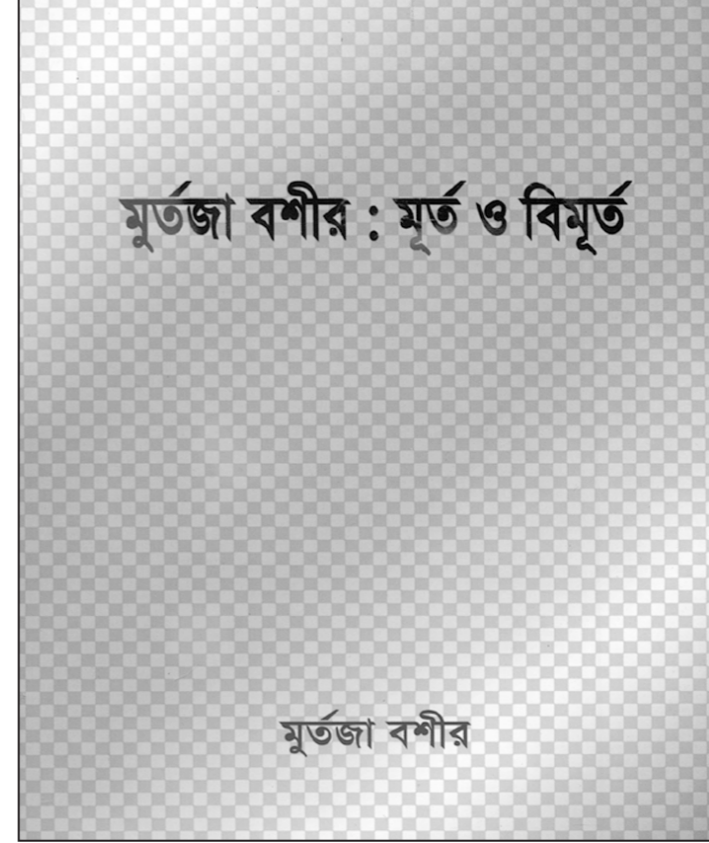
poetry possess a force to stir one's inner self. This shows a touch of a great artist. He is creative, bold and compassionate in his artistic pursuit. As a poet he endeavours to create beauty," Asad Chowdhury said in a complimentary note reciting two pieces of Murtaja's poetry rich in imagery written in 1978.

Art critic Moynuddin Khalid analytically viewed art works of Murtaja whose narration is analytical, figurative and mostly free of illusion. Khaled said, "as an artist, Murtaja is confessional and his works show an inclination to reality instead of creating illusion. He shows an inclination to Byzantine trend in his paintings."

Murtaja conducts research work in ancient coins, Islamic calligraphy and pottery. He had to face unjust criticism for his interest in Islamic culture.

"Murtaja's tendency to draw self-portrait should be critically analysed. Unless aesthetics of his art work is determined, we can not speak of our artists in the international platform," Khalid remarked. He further said that country's Fine Arts movement is now around years old, but so far there has been no documentary book on this subject. To realize modernism of Zainul and Sultan in the 50s there should have been an exhibition of his works.

While putting a note on himself



and his book, Murtaja said that he did not want to be identified as a poet nor as a painter but he wanted to go far beyond that by just being

known as Murtaja Baseer. "When I look at myself and do a self-scrutiny, it seems that whatever I have accomplished, has produced nothing. It's my realization," Murtaja said.

Prof Anisuzzaman, who chaired the programme, said. "Though a student of Zainul Abedin, Murtaja is ambitious to be a greater artist than him. His contact with leftist politics inspired him to be a student of fine arts. Murtaja's series work gives rise to our serious thought. His literary works contain compassion."

A collection of selected works by Murtaja Baseer, the volume contains six short stories, four anthologies of poetry, reminiscent essays, film script, essays on fine arts and interviews. The last part of the book contains photographs of a number of his artworks.

Youngest son of Dr. Muhammad Shahidullah great scholar of Bangla language, Murtaja was born in 1932 in Dhaka. In 1956 his father sent him to Florence to study fine arts and wall painting. He has lived and worked in Karachi, Lahore, Rawalpindi and Paris. He joined Fine Arts Institute of Chittagong University in 1973 and retired in 1998. He earned fellowship and went to England and United States of America to visit famous museums.

Review

New book on national issues hits the stalls

Asiatic Society of Bangladesh publishes new book to help the common society move ahead while tackling in ease, the issues and problems of national interest

CULTURAL CORRESPONDENT

BANGLADESH on the Threshold of the Twenty-first Century, a single volume book published by Asiatic Society of Bangladesh has reached the market for the serious readers.

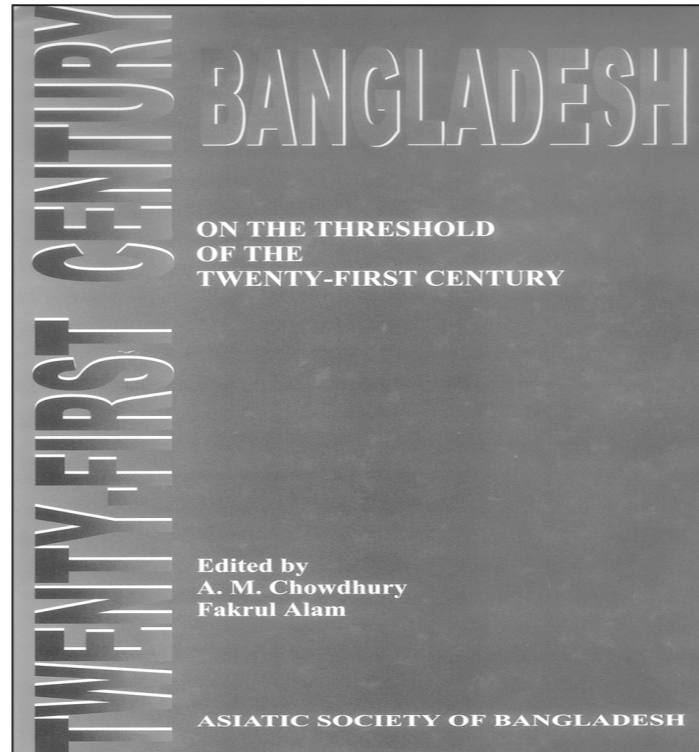
The book, edited by Professor Abdul Momin Chowdhury and Professor Fakrul Alam, is in fact, a compiled version of research papers and thesis written by eminent intellectuals, economists and scientific researchers of the country.

Professor Chowdhury, a renowned sports organiser and a fine sportsman of the former times, is currently the Vice-Chancellor of National University, Bangladesh who also teaches the subject of history in Dhaka University. Author of *Dynastic History of Bengal, 750-1200 A.D.* and numerous research articles, Professor A.M. Chowdhury is also the co-editor of *Gawr-Lakhnauti, Mainamati-Davaparvata and Sonargaon-Panam*. The three publications are monographs based on archaeological surveys of the three historic sites of Bangladesh.

The history professor is too, engaged in editing the *Banglapaedia* (National Encyclopaedia of Bangladesh) and is the consulting editor for the History & Heritage section of the project. He is the President of the Asiatic Society of Bangladesh.

Fakrul Alam, a co-editor of the newly published tome, is a Professor of English at the Dhaka University. He is the author of *Daniel Defoe: Colonial Propagandist, Bharati Mukherjee, Jibananda Das, and Imperial Entanglements and Literature in English* (forthcoming). Professor Alam is the editor of *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bangladesh* and is one of the language editors of the *Banglapaedia*.

The book contains 26 papers on a wide range of topics written by reputed personalities including Enayetur Rahim, Rounaq Jahan, S. Aminul Islam, Wahiduddin Mahmud, M.M. Akash, Zaid Bakht, Hafiz G.A. Siddiqi, Binayak Sen, A.K.M. Nurunnabi, Serajul Islam Chowdhury, Shawkat Ara Husain, Khondakar Ashraf Hossain, Syed Manzoorul Islam, Syed Jamil



Ahmed, Taj Hashmi, Syed Giasuddin Ahmed, A.M.M. Shawkat Ali, Niaz Ahmed Khan, Tasneem Siddiqui, Shahdeen Malik, Sharifa Khatun, Amirul Islam Chowdhury, Jamilur Reza Chowdhury, K.B. Sajjadur Rasheed, Nazrul Islam and Md. Abdul Halim.

The fields those have been considered as categorical chapters for the different papers include *History and Politics, Economy and Demography, Society and Culture, Governance / Administration and Development, Education / Science and Technology, Environment and lastly, Foreign Affairs.*

The book starts with a keynote paper from Professor Rehman Sobhan. He looks into the democratic scenario of Bangladesh with related issues and concerns involving political assets, democratic crisis, transformation of political culture, reformation of political finances, role of the civil society and a broad perspective on the complex issue of nationalism.

Bangladesh on the Threshold of the Twenty-first Century contributes significantly to the revalua-

tion of the country's past. Anyone interested in the future of the country will find its clear-eyed assessment of the past and vision of the future thought provoking and noteworthy.

As Bangladesh entered the new century, as well as the new millennium, having completed thirty years of its life, the Asiatic Society invited eminent scholars to take stock of the country's situation in a two-day seminar held in the society's premises on April 27 & 28, 2001. Participants were requested to appraise Bangladesh's performance in key areas and to come up with appropriate recommendations for the future. The idea was to look at the last three decades of national life to detect significant trends and to establish signposts for the future.

Specifically, the Asiatic Society invited fifty-two leading intellectuals of the country to deliberate on some questions, such as:

What had Bangladesh achieved nationally and internationally or failed to achieve?

Was the country prepared for the challenges ahead of it?

Had Bangladesh put in enough effort in the right direction?

Was it on the threshold of a better future?

What could Bangladesh learn from the last thirty years?

After the completion of the seminar, scholars, who had read papers in it, rewrote them, taking into insight the comments that their papers provoked, and with an eye to their publication in a volume that would be a permanent record of the deliberations of the seminar. The result is the volume, **Bangladesh on the Threshold of the Twenty-first Century**.

The book is of enduring value for the reader who is interested in the past performance and present condition of Bangladesh, and whether future paths to be taken or not to be taken by the country in the new century. It is a book that should be an indispensable source of reference for all students of Bangladesh.

The book is available in leading bookstalls of the city at a price of Taka 700/- only.

International

French book publishers try to smooth frayed Franco-Italian ties

AFP, Paris

FRENCH book publishers preparing for an Italy-themed book fair in Paris said Tuesday they would be happy to have Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi attend, thus publicly disavowing comments by the French culture minister, who said he was not welcome.

"We are ready to receive

senior Italian authorities and especially Mr Berlusconi," the president of the National Publishers Union, Serge Eyrolles, told a media conference.

"Our publishing colleagues and the Italian government have invested quite a lot in this trade show," he said.

The invitation appeared to be an attempt to paper over grumbling from French Culture Minister Catherine Tasca, who told

France-Culture radio last week: "Personally I am very worried by the policies he (Berlusconi) has in his country and I would prefer someone else to help with the opening of the book fair."

That drew a sharp intake of breath in Rome, where the Italian undersecretary of state for foreign affairs, Margherita Boniver, called Tasca's statement "grotesque". She said it showed "the degree of hostility and prejudice which

exists in some sectors of the (centre-left) French government" towards Italy's centre-right administration.

Berlusconi, who has caused concern for his Euro-sceptic views, fraud scandals and firm grip on most of Italy's media, has not indicated whether he will attend the book fair, which will be held in March.

Festival

23 films in contest for Golden Bear at Berlin Film Festival

AFP, Berlin

A total Of 23 Films, Including Some American Blockbusters, Will Be Competing For The Top Prize, The Golden Bear, At The Berlin Film Festival Next Month, Organizers Said Thursday.

The Competition Will Be Opened On February 6 By A Us-German Co-production, "heaven" Directed By German Tom Tykwer, Whose Previous Film "run Lola Run" Was An International Success.

The Berlin Film Festival, Or Berlinale, Organizers Describe "heaven," Which Stars Cate Blanchett And Giovanni Ribisi, As A "concentrated Fusion Of Thriller, Love Story And Moral Drama".

Other Films In Competition Include Three American, Three German, And Four French Productions As Well As Australian, Japanese And Greek Works.

Lasse Hallstrom's Us Competition Entry "the Shipping News" Is A Screen Adaptation Of Annie Proulx's Prize-winning Novel Of The Same Name.

Kevin Spacey, Judi Dench, Julianne Moore And Cate Blanchett Play The Main Roles In This Story Of A Widower Who Returns With His Young Daughter To Newfoundland, The Country Of His Ancestors.

The Main Part Of The Berlinale

Is The Competition For The Golden Bear For Best Film But There Is Also A Panorama Program, Which Showcases A Wide Variety Of Films That Are Not In Competition As Well As An International Forum Of New Cinema.

The Competition Segment Is To Be Accompanied By Nine Commercially Oriented Films Which Are To Be Screened But Will Not Be In The Running For The Golden Bear.

Golden Globe Winner "a Beautiful Mind" Directed By Ron Howard Will Be Running Out Of Competition.

Russell Crowe Stars In This Drama About The Mathematical Genius And Later Nobel Prizewinner Forbes Nash, Who Was Diagnosed With Paranoid Schizophrenia.

The Australian Film "beneath the Clouds" Is Screening In Competition. Ivan Sen's Directing Debut Will Have Its World Premiere In Berlin. It Tells Of A Young Girl Who Discovers Her Sense Of Belonging To Two Cultures, And Features Danielle Hall And Damien Pitt.

A German Work In Competition Is "baader" Directed By Christopher Roth.

Roth Depicts The Development Of Raf Terrorist Andreas Baader From 1967 To 1972. Frank Giering Plays The Main Character, While Laura Tonke

And Vadim Glowna Can Be Seen In The Other Leading Roles.

Another Competition Entry "iris" Is Based On A True Story. British Director Richard Eyre Recounts The Dramatic Fate Of Famous Writer Iris Murdoch, Who Is Diagnosed With Alzheimer's Disease.

Academy Award Winner Judi Dench Plays Iris In Her Later Years, While Kate Winslet Plays Her In Her Youth. Jim Broadbent Has Just Received A Golden Globe For His Supporting Role In Iris.

From Japan, The Animated Film "sen To Chihiro No Kamikakushi" (spirited Away) By Hayao Miyazaki Has Been Selected For The Competition.

In A Gala Screening, Milos Forman's "amadeus - Director's Cut" Will Be Presented. The Director Has Added Scenes To This Revised Version Of His Successful Film From 1984. It Now Gives An Even More Comprehensive Picture Of Musical Genius Mozart's Life.

Ten Short Films Are Also Running In The Competition Program.

The Berlinale Closes On February 17 With The Presentation Of A New Print Of Charles Chapin's Film Classic "the Great Dictator".

The Screening Will Be Attended By Members Of The Chaplin Family.

Pioneering actor Poitier to receive honorary Oscar

REUTERS, Los Angeles

HOLLYWOOD veteran Sidney Poitier -- the only black performer to win an Oscar for best actor -- will receive an honorary statuette during the Academy Awards ceremony in March, organisers said on Wednesday.

Poitier will be given the special Oscar "for his extraordinary performances and unique presence on the screen, and for representing the motion picture industry with dignity, style and intelligence throughout the world," said Frank

Pierson, president of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts & Sciences.

Poitier, who turns 75 next month, won his best actor Oscar in 1964 for director Ralph Nelson's "Lilies of the Field." In 1959, he was nominated for his lead role in "The Defiant Ones." His other feature credits include "A Raisin in the Sun," "To Sir, With Love," "In the Heat of the Night" and "Guess Who's Coming to Dinner."

The 74th annual Academy Awards will be presented at the Kodak Theater in Hollywood on March 24.

