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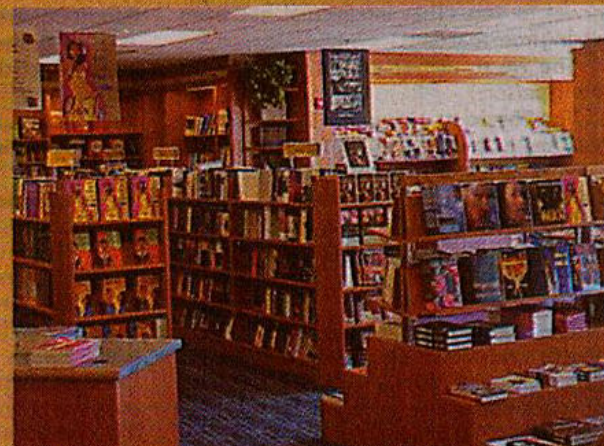
Rising Stars



A publication of The Daily Star

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Thursday, September 16, 2004 Price-Tk.3



Readers an endangered species

By Nusrat Khandker

EVEN a few years back, children used to spend their leisure time reading books. After a long day of school and homework, they would seek refuge in the pages of a book. Through the book they would escape to another world from the humdrum of their busy lives. They would allow their minds to be carried away into a different world of fantasy. In this way they would not only gain pleasure but also acquire a lot of knowledge. Sadly enough, the number of children who actually sit and read are becoming fewer day by day.

Nowadays it is very hard to find a child,

who, in his/her leisure time sits with a book to read. You could blame it on the rapid advancements of technology, which have introduced us to many beneficial gadgets that have become essentials for many. One of the main devices that falls into this category is the television. This electronic gadget, while giving us the latest information and news, educating and entertaining us, also produces a bunch of inactive, lazy children to whom the definition of leisure time is just two letters: TV. This is obviously affecting the reading habit. The other influence is of course, the Internet. Kids today sit all day in front of the computer

talking to their e-friends and browsing. And of course one of the opportunity costs of this is reading.

Besides all these there are many other factors that are responsible for the rapid decrease in the number of children reading books. First of all, there are not many libraries in the country from which the children could borrow the books they want to read. The Public Library and the Biswa Shahitya Kendro are two famous libraries, which have a good collection of Bengali books. The British Council library keeps some English books. But on the whole the number of libraries are very few in our

country. There are many shops, though, which sell these books and some of them even order books from abroad, but it is neither possible nor feasible for people to buy books every time they want to read.

The habit of reading books is nearly becoming extinct among the younger generation. Computers and televisions have invaded into our world and have successfully conquered the place that books occupied in our lives.

We should try our best to revive this habit and not waste our precious time in front of the electronic gadgets.

New market

By Aes

LETS face it, almost everyone has heard of New Market and it's rare to find a person who hasn't been there at least once in his/her lifetime. The name 'New market' itself is quite paradoxical to say the least, as it is anything but 'new'. In fact, this is one of the few places in Dhaka which has been there for generations, without any sign of transience so let's not waste any ink giving directions on how to get there.

There are some really stellar bookstores in New market and I recommend any avid reader of books to visit those and as contradictory as it may sound, it is not at all difficult to locate the bookstores in new markets despite popular notions that it is very easy to get lost and almost impossible to locate a particular store amidst the labyrinth of almost an infinite number of shops situated there. Probably, the easiest way to reach the chain of bookstores is to enter New Market through the south gate and go left. The bookstores are just after a chain of stationary stores.

The bookstores sell a wide variety of books, ranging from standard O level and A level text books, Bengali novels by renowned authors, English novels, Encyclopedias etc. Stores like Zeenat Book supply, Book Mart etc mainly specialises in

the selling of fictional novels and Encyclopaedias while Mukarram is probably the best place to buy O and A level textbooks. Bear in mind, though, most of the books sold there are photocopied, therefore New Market is not an ideal place if you want to shop around for expensive, original books.

A prospective book buyer in New Market must always remember the fact in the back of his/her mind that there are very few fixed price bookstores there and therefore, haggling and bargaining is allowed. In fact, after Nilkhet, it is the premiere podium to practice your prowess in bargaining. The shopkeepers may charge exorbitant and sometimes-preposterous prices, so always try to have some idea on the prices of the books you intend to buy beforehand. Still compared to other bookstores, the ones on New Market offer books at a cheaper price and good quality is almost guaranteed, therefore don't expect to find missing pages and awful prints. A wide variety of books are also sold so you can expect to find lots of rare books (I was particularly fascinated to find some rare J.R.R. Tolkien novels) and sometimes even illegal, banned books. Therefore, to sum it up, the bookstores in New Market are literally a reader's paradise!

Bishake and I

By Durdana Ghias

BISHAKE as we used to call the Bishwo Shahitto Kendro in our school days gave us the chance to taste a wide range of great books from both Bengali and World Literature. Every week I would wait patiently for the day when the representatives from Bishake would pay visit to our school to deliver the coveted books. Personally I would be very annoyed with Bishake because only one book was rationed for a week and that was far too little for a voracious reader like me.

I wanted to avenge this system of Bishake in favour of the good students, but my tragic struggle against this "bias" used to end in an inexorable thirst over the last few days of the week and in being trounced by the surging desire of getting a new book.

The Bishwo Shahitto Kendro was founded with the noble aim of enlightening the young minds in the light of the great books of Bengali and World Literature. The core programme of Bishake is the nation-wide enrichment programme under which more than one hundred thousand students from five hundred branches are included. Professor Abdullah Abu Sayeed, the man at the helm of Bishake has recently received the Ramon Magasaysay Award 2004 for his unparalleled contributions in the field of journalism, literature and creative communication arts.

Bishake started its journey in the late seventies with the theme 'alokito manush chai' (we want enlightened individuals). Starting from a small-scale the centre has had around 1,25,000 members engaged with its various educational and cultural programmes to date. For university-level students and those done with university studies, Bishake has the 'study circle' programme. Its nation-wide mobile library programme is a new innovative step for the citizens in general. This service is engaged with twenty thousand readers in four metropolitan cities. Ashonno, the children's magazine published ten times a year from Bishake is usually given as gifts to the prize-winners.

One more grudge that I have against Bishake is about its prize giving ceremony. When we were at school our prizes were given out by our librarian. Now the new kids of Bishake receive their prizes in the Bokultola at Charukola from the likes of Md. Zafar Iqbal, screaming to their hearts content. It feels unfair.

In the end I want to say that Bishake has to think not only for the "good" students but also for the "bad" students like me who had to suffer a whole week with one measly book. I think Bishake should start a new programme for students like me, allowing them two or three books a week. In spite of this discrimination against my clan, I absolve Bishake, and I want to say 'I love you Bishake!'