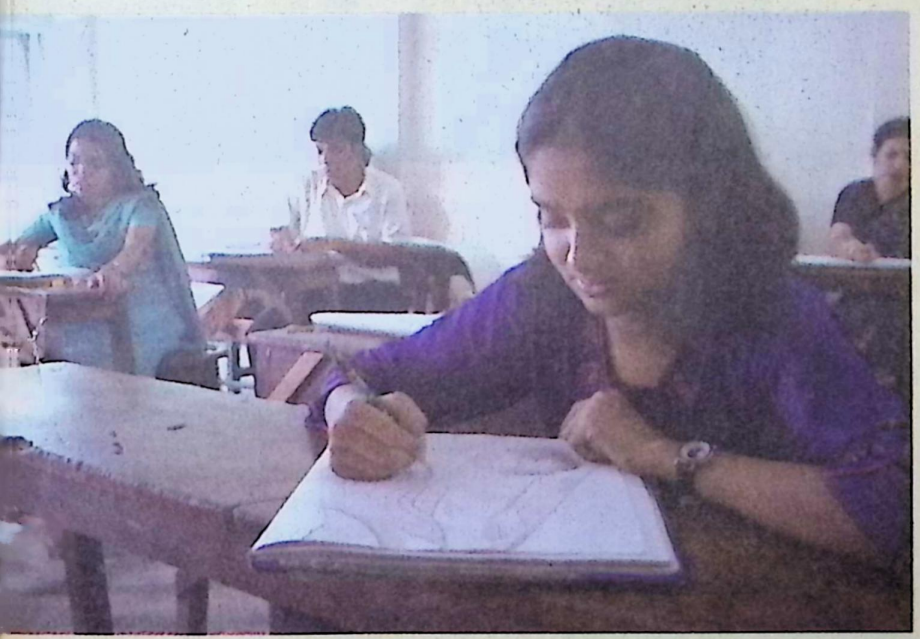
was the only organisation that the government used to resort to when it came to staging state-level functions. After the inception of Shilpakala Academy, it is through the academy that artists are being selected. However, as Shilpakala does not have their own artists it is from organisations like BAFA that they make their selections. As far as participation in the state-level functions are concerned, BAFA's artists have remained at the forefront," says Chowdhury.

BAFA was the result of a concerted effort by Mahmud Nurul Huda and his friends. It was to commemorate the ace dancer of the country Bulbul Chowdhury, who died an untimely death in 1954, that the academy's name was chosen. The present Secretary Amanullah Chowdhury was elected to the executive committee of BAFA as its treasurer in 1967. Chowdhury took over the responsibility at a critical juncture when BAFA's very existence was under threat. And on top of that, right after the liberation war government donation, which stood at one lakh fifty thousand taka before the independence of Bangladesh, dwindled to a mere twenty five thousand following independence. When in 1974 Chowdhury was elected as the secretary of BAFA, the institution had already incurred a huge debt and was nearing closure. Chowdhury with the help of the executive committee members, late Principal Bedar Uddin Ahmed, and late Head of the Department of Music and Direction Atikul Islam, former Head of the Department of Dance and the present Principal and the wife of the secretary Rahija Khanam Jhunu and the dedicated teachers made efforts to save BAFA.

As the secretary, Chowdhury's first step was to buy the building that houses the main branch at Wiseghat. "We contacted the owner and made several payments over the years, but still the premises doesn't belong to BAFA because of legal complications," says Chowdhury who even met with the then president Ziaur Rahman regarding the matter. "The untimely death of Ziaur Rahman dashed our hope of acquiring the land and the building that houses the main branch," says Chowdhury. "If only we had a building of our own, we could've expanded our activities without much hesitation," adds Chowdhury.



Ustad Sabbir Mokammel giving lessons to his students. .



BAFA has a four-year long course in Fine Art that facilitates students of different age group.

Chowdury's preferred slogan for BAFA is, "To keep your children away from terrorism and addiction, nurture them as art aficionados." This view is shared by the teaching staff. Ustad Sabbir Mokammel, who teaches tabla at BAFA, feels that the organisation has immense potential in diverting a generation from drug addiction to culture. "All BAFA needs is government support," he adds. And as a final exclamation Chowdhury says that to uphold the national culture there is no other way but to nurture the talents of the children. BAFA has successfully completed its fifty years; and has maintained its reputation as an organisation that brought to light a myriad of artists is only soaring. After considering its past record one can sense that BAFA has a lot more to offer in the years to come. ■