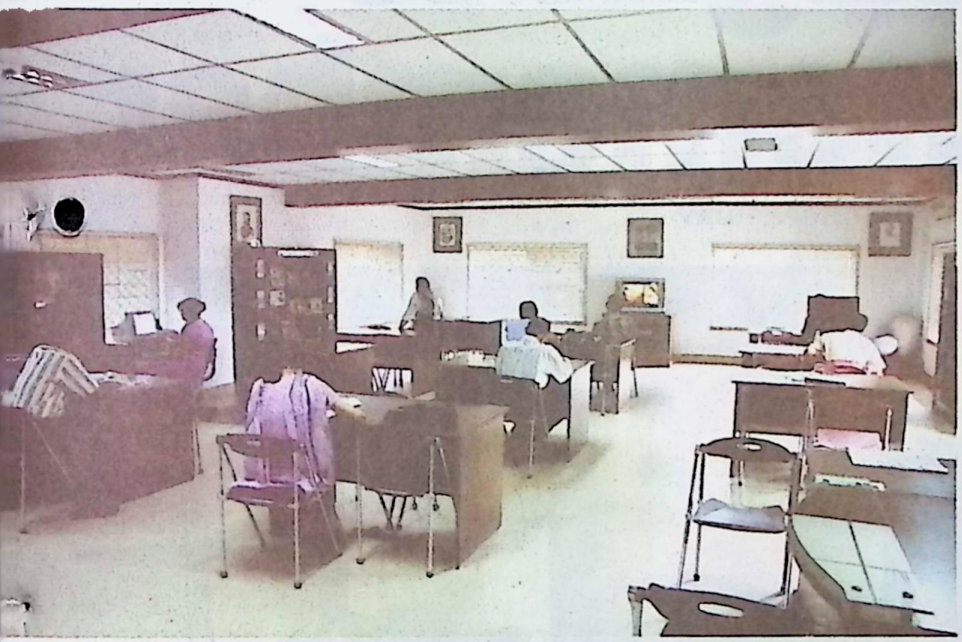
life and their poignant moments are repeatedly presented before the spellbound audience. Just as Moliere, Ibsen and Tagore are revered by local theatre goers, so also Anton Chekhov's presentations of the ironies of life are lapped up by drama enthusiasts who visit the centre.

Yes, there are other stage halls in the city, but here the thespians get room to practice regularly, and are provided the auditorium at a minimum cost, explains by Abdullah Al Rashed, says Chekov Theatre Group's spokesperson. Students, home-makers and professionals -- with fascination for the footlights ---- make time to put on costumes, and display their talent to present dialogues with poise and spontaneity.



Ishtiaq Bin Quashem, touching on the visual arts presentations at the cultural centre explains how student ranging from school children to the thirty -something women come to the Centre here to get training and guidance in sketching and painting. The visual art classes are held on the week-ends, from 3 pm to 5 pm. For some there are morning schedules too, on Friday and Saturday.

The Russian course is held for three months. Later, crash courses take place in Russia. Here the teaching leaves an indelible mark on the enthusiastic students, as some remember the language even after decades of having done the course.

Yuri I Makarov, the Director of the Russian Centre for Science and Culture for five years, says," I'm fully satisfied with the rapport of the Bangladeshis in their acceptance of the Russian contributions to enrich their lives. However, I feel that we are not doing enough to strengthen cultural ties between Bangladeshis and Russian people. We should work harder and better.

"As far as visitors are concerned, 50,000 people have witnessed our programmes this year. This includes politicians, scholars, students and cultural activists, people from all walks of life. We organise several interesting seminars, in Bengali and Russian languages to facilitate the flow and exchange of ideas, opinions and experiences, such as the Seminar on World War II on May 9 this year."

Asked if he was satisfied with the turn -out , for instance on the screening of Russian films, Makarov says," Generally, I've noticed that Bangladeshi people are enthusiastic film-goers. Normally the turn-out is good, except for local facts like bad weather, religious holidays, and developments in the city etc."

Natasha Niogi, who is the librarian , with an MS in Library Science from Russia, has been in Bangladesh for 29 years, says ," We have at least 50 expatriate families like mine in Dhaka, and these are mostly in districts outlying Dhaka -- many of the women work as health or education advisors. They make it a point to always take part in cultural programmes here -- whether they are dance, drama, music or simple poetry recitation. Nigomi, librarian for 14 years says classes from class one to ten are offered to Russian children who reside here so that they can learn their mother tongue, which will allow them to continue their education in Russian. "For Bangladeshis who come here to expand their experience there are translated books, in Russian, English and Bangla of Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, Pushkin and Chekhov. There are tapes and TV with set programmes on five channels. The new students can use the library free of charge, as do old students.'

Photo exhibitions, film shows, dancing -- ranging from folk dance to modern-- both western and eastern, are the normal routines at the centre. These take place through fluctuating rain and sunshine. It is in presenting art and popular films -- both local and Russian -- recitations and pianoforte that the quintessence of Russian cultural life is sampled.

The Russian Language teacher, Yasmine Sultana, after completing her studies from Moscow in 1982, and having worked in the Russian International Airlines for 15 years as an interpreter and in other posts, has joined the Centre three years back. Sultana says that three batches of students --- containing ten students each --- do a course of three months. "They are students and businessmen, or those aspiring for higher studies in Science; and others going in for joint-ventures; or being interpreters for delegations from Moscow."