

For Better Books

Presiding over the Book Fair at the Bangla Academy Professor Mohammad Ibrahim exhorted publishers and booksellers to make their publications more available to the general public. This is, in theory, excellent advice, but how practicable in purpose remains to be seen. The greater availability and access to books depends first on the prices being lowered and being in more conformity with the purchasing capacity of the public. At present, all books, including technical and school text books, are well beyond the means of the middle classes. Perhaps, as has been suggested, less foreign exchange might be spent in acquiring copyright of books published abroad but in this case it must be seen that students are not deprived of modern technological knowledge and advanced scientific studies that they may need.

The present picture is most depressing. Books are poorly produced, often inexact in information and factual content, badly printed, with the quality of paper and cover design leaving much to be desired. Writers are often expected to defray costs, or part costs, of publication themselves

which may well prevent good work from ever reaching the reading public, and encourage work of an inferior quality.

The best way to encourage local writers is to see that their work is well advertised in the media of newspapers, radio and television. The wider reception that is given to writers the greater the reading public will be, which will not only benefit both publisher and writer by the sales, but help at the same time to lower prices. Our publishers need to be more competitive as well as co-operative.

It may be a long remove before computerised books are used in this country and therefore, until such time, a transfusion of fresh blood is necessary in all publishing concerns. To increase the reading habit of our people and enlarge their mental horizon, books need to be reasonably priced, well-written and well-produced. There are always readers waiting to improve their minds and be instructed. The supply of such books should meet their demands. Only books can give that pleasure of gaining insight into a world of imagination and speculative thought.