

NO ONE KNOWS OUR CITY BETTER

The Telegraph

metro



CALCUTTA WEDNESDAY 23 APRIL 2008

Book store boom in the offing

SUBHRO SAHA

The city is set to have close to 20 book outlets in the next couple of years. Almost all established names in the business have readied their expansion road maps.

"Books retail as part of the lifestyle basket is always gaining ground in Calcutta, which has a special affinity with reading. Consequently, the size of the organised pie is set to increase and everybody is bullish on expansion right now," says Gautam Jatia, the CEO of Starmark.

The books-music-toys-stationery chain from Emami, which took off with its Lord Sinha Road outlet in 1999 with Landmark of Chennai, will unveil its Mani Square stop later this month and is scouting for space to open a 20,000-sq ft store in Salt Lake.

"The response to our City Centre store opened last year was encouraging," says Jatia.

Crossword, which gave the city an "international store" on Elgin Road four years ago, has since opened another express outlet in Technopolis in Sector V, and is set to spread its racks further.

"We will open a 2,500-sq ft standalone store in Kankurgachhi in the next three-four months and another corner store in City Centre II in Ra-



A modern outlet of books in the city. A Telegraph picture

jarhat by early next year," says Sidharth Pansari of Crossword, which has reported a 15-20 per cent year-on-year growth since its launch.

The national book store chain is also planning a string of smaller stores in Calcutta. Shoppers' Stop is keen to replicate its shop-in-shop Crossword model of South City in its other large-format stores.

Books & Beyond, the bookstore chain from the RPG Group, which commenced city operations with the 8,000-sq-ft store-in-store format in the South City Spencer's Hyper, is readying for expansion.

"We are hopeful of opening our 9,000-sq ft Rashbehari out-

let later this month and one more in north Calcutta soon. Books & Beyond should add another 10,000 sq ft in the next 12 months," says S.K. Chowdhury, who heads the group's books and music business.

Oxford Bookstore has ventured out of Park Street with a store on Sarat Bose Road, besides a book corner in Fame, Hiland Park. The Apeejay Group chain, which has been expanding across India, has plans to penetrate other areas of the city, building around its Park Street flagship. Adding to the bookstore buoyancy will be Landmark, expected to come back to Calcutta on its own in 2010, and the Odyssey chain.