



The Ekushey Boi Mela witnesses one of the largest gatherings of language and literature enthusiasts in Dhaka. Every year, young authors launch books of different genres at the fair.

PHOTOS: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED & NONON MUNTAKA

STAR YOUTH MEETS: EPISODE 2

Rendezvous with young authors at the Ekushey Boi Mela

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One of the biggest attractions of February is undoubtedly the Ekushey Boi Mela. Each year, bookworms and literary enthusiasts wait eagerly for this celebration of Bengali language, literature and culture, in remembrance of the 1952 Language Movement martyrs.

The history of the book fair goes back to 1972, when Chittaranjan Saha of Muktaadhara, laid a mat under a mango tree of Bangla Academy and put on display 33 publications of his publishing house to pay homage to the Language Movement martyrs. Since then, the grounds of Bangla Academy and Suhrawardy Udyan has arranged the fair. Thanks to the growing acceptability of readers, more and more young writers have gained popularity at the Ekushey Boi Mela in recent years.

For the second episode of our monthly initiative, 'Star Youth Meets', the *Star Youth* team visited the fair and talked to a number of publishers, young authors and illustrators about their journeys.

Young writer Mahmudur Rahman is an Electrical Engineering student, who wrote two volumes in the Mughal history series, *Mughalnama*. It took him years of research and hard work to write these books. "New writers are getting more opportunities now. Books on history and research are garnering more popularity and the writers are trying their best," shares Mahmudur.

Bushnara Siddique, another young author, is currently studying at Sher-e-Ban-



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gla Agriculture University. Her new book, *Bigyan Tigyani*, is a collection of many short stories about scientific concepts. Designed for school students, the book is a big hit at the Ekushey Boi Mela. Bushnara embarked

on her journey as an author in 2018 with her book, *Jibbiganer Mojar Proshno O Uttor*. After that, she released two books, *Encyclopedia of Science Experiment* and *Prani Jogoter Golpo*, in 2019. "Reading books is essential for learning to write," she says, adding that good reviews from her readers inspire her to keep moving forward.

Ratul Khan released his first book, *Opodarthbigyan*, for school students. "I am surprised by the fact that older readers are also liking my book," he said. According to him, math and science are great genres for young authors to explore. "I think we can flourish in writing if we have the passion and dedication," he adds.

Adarsha Publications has been backing promising and young writers for the past couple of years. Many books by young authors from this publishing house have been well received by readers. "Young

writers, who can easily adapt to technological changes, are more capable of creating relatable content," shares Mahabubur Rahman, the publisher of Adarsha. "The readers' choices have also changed - They are more open to different genres and writers today - which is great." On the other hand, Sajib Saha, Chief Executive Officer of Muktaadhara Publications, had different views. "The young generation is getting more and more dependent on technology. Subsequently, the number of readers are decreasing over the years," he adds.

Mitia Osman, CEO of Mayurpankhi, a publication house dedicated to children's books, is delighted to work with young and upcoming illustrators this year. While strolling across the children's zone, we stumbled upon *Gultu* by Mahhfuz Rahmaan. Published by Mayurpankhi, the

book contains seventeen short poems for kids. Mahhfuz, currently a sub-editor at *Prothom Alo*, has also illustrated the book. "I try to relive my childhood through my books," he says. Illustrator Kazi Tabassum Ahmed has worked on seven books so far and has released five books this year. "Initially, I had to overcome certain challenges, as many people still do not view illustration as a proper career," she says. She added that her publishers and authors are very supportive.

Many authors regarded Tamralipi to be welcoming to newcomers. "Tamralipi continues to motivate us with their endeavours," adds Tashfik Sami, who has released *Bijonpure Jete Mana*, a collection of short stories that addresses paranormal activities and evils of the society, at the fair this year. The Ekushey Boi Mela concludes tomorrow.

