

Dhaka Day by Day**Best-seller Binge at Boi Mela**

by Rashed Mahmud Titumir

We may not have world-class writers but we surely have popular ones. And there is no better place than the Ekushey book fair to measure their popularity. Once again, Humayun Ahmed, novelist and playwright is leading the race with a wide margin, though his triumph is not being confirmed by the Bangla Academy as it used to do. This year the academy has decided not to announce the best-seller.

However, Ahmed's novel, *Jakhon Giache Dube Panchamir Chand* is easily considered to be on top of the best sellers' list at the Boi Mela. It is learnt that his other two fictions, *Chhayabithi* and *Magarbhitu* are also in the race.

Most importantly, what he writes, his readers, without a few exceptions, are frantic about getting hold of. The university-professor-turned novelist has written a book on Quantum Chemistry, on which he did his doctoral thesis. It is known that his readers are crazy to be a proud possessor of one of its copies, without bothering if it is a novel or an academic work.

Imdadul Haq Milon and Taslima Nasreen are neck to neck in the competition. The publishers inform that one day he surpasses her and the other day she reverses the sale trend.

"Indeed, that kind of fair competition is what we are looking for," says Sumon, a student of Sociology. "Safiu Rahman should learn how the market operates from them," he adds jokingly.

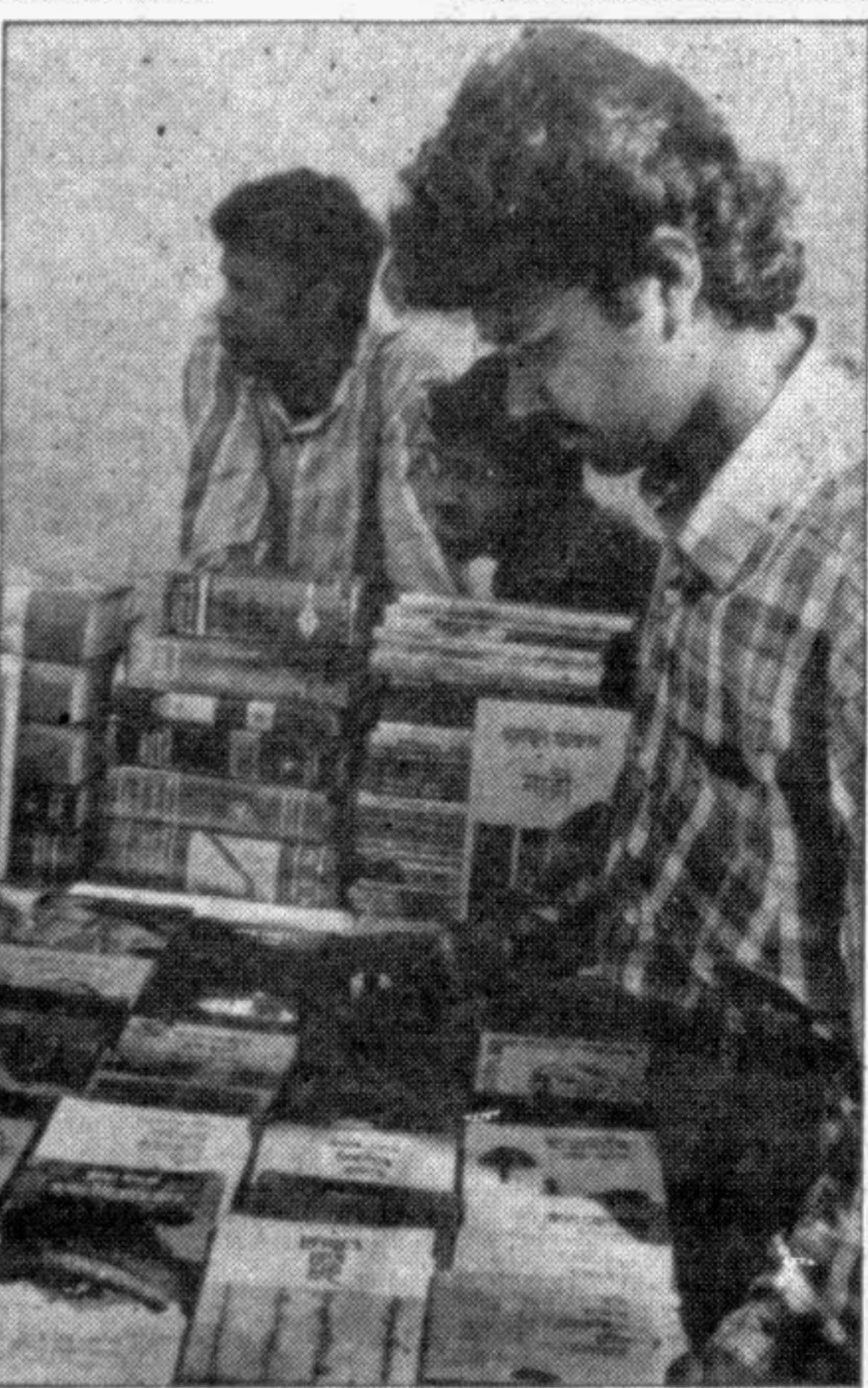
Hassan Jahidi Tapan, a publisher of Taslima informs that Taslima's *Chhoto Dukhkhola* is selling like hot dogs, while her two books — *Ei Kosto Zhenpe Jibon Debo Mepe* and *Dukhkhobati* are also very popular.

Asked to comment why her books get so favourable a response from the readers, the young publisher says: "There are two types of readers she is favourite with. The first type consists of women between 25 years to 30 years of age who want to see depicted in novels the cruel attitude of their male counterpart. The other one is the teenagers, whose adolescent impulses find a ready response to the sexual overtones with which her books are replete. Probably she keeps it in mind while writing her scripts."

"And recent controversies surrounding her also add winds into the sail of her popularity," adds the young owner of Perdi Publishers.

Imdadul Haq Milon, along with the actors in his recent BTV drama serial *Rupnagar* is signing autographs on books authored by him and bought by his fans at a stall named *Binodan*.

Three of his books have arrived at the fair this year. *Eto Je Arhar Bhalobasha*, on which the ongoing BTV drama serial is based upon is in high demand. His other best-sellers are — *Shei*



Those books are everywhere. — Star photo

Bideshtni and Lokti Rajakar Chhilo. Humayun Azad, a professor of the Department of Bangla at the University of Dhaka and a bit controversial essayist has appeared at the fair with a novel *chhappanno hajar borgomai*, which has created much enthusiasm among the readers.

"Don't forget he is controversial too," reminds Nazrul, a student of Dhaka University.

Asif Nazrul's — who is a journalist-turned-teacher at the Faculty of Law, DU — two arrivals in the fair are also near to the record sale. His two novels, *Pap* and *Composer Jubok* enjoy a high demand among the teens.

Unsurprisingly, following the trend of past years, the books of essay witness a slump. Badriddin Umar's two books: *Bangladesh Durmiti, Santrash O Norajya* and *Bangladesh Ganotantrik Shastratantra* are receiving some attention from a section of readers.

According to booksellers, professor Sirajul Islam Chowdhury's *Bangaleer Joy Parajoy* has a good market even in this recessionary trend.

If someone wants to talk about the heritage of book fair, the bottom-line is the crowd of poets. Like the world trend in poetry, the same is happening in Bangladesh.

However, a collection of poems by late poet Abul Hasan and Helal Hafiz's poetry card have been doing well, according to book stalls.

"There are always two trends in literature — popular and serious", says Moinul Ahsan Saber, a Philip's award recipient for literature.

"As elsewhere in the world, Saber says, there is no standard to measure the quality of literary works". However, he points out that there are some standards.

"I don't know whether the top best-sellers fit into it", continues Saber. "But I did not hear that literary critics had ever rated those very highly".

In response to a question, Saber terms the recent trend as "entertainment literature".

When asked to elaborate, he says, "the principal objective of the writers have now shifted in favour of satisfying the readers."

The authors start writing, keeping in mind the psychology of the readers and try to cater to their immediate need depending on the age groups they belong to".

"I don't consider it as a book fair. It's a wholesale market. Here we come to sell our products, forgetting our moral obligation and commitment to society," says Saleh Shams, a young publisher.

"This is an era of populism," says professor Harun Rashid of Philosophy Department, DU. "And so it happens in the case of the best-sellers", concludes professor Harun.



The Book Binding Owners Association staged a procession demanding a ban on import of Bengali books printed abroad in the city yesterday. — Star photo

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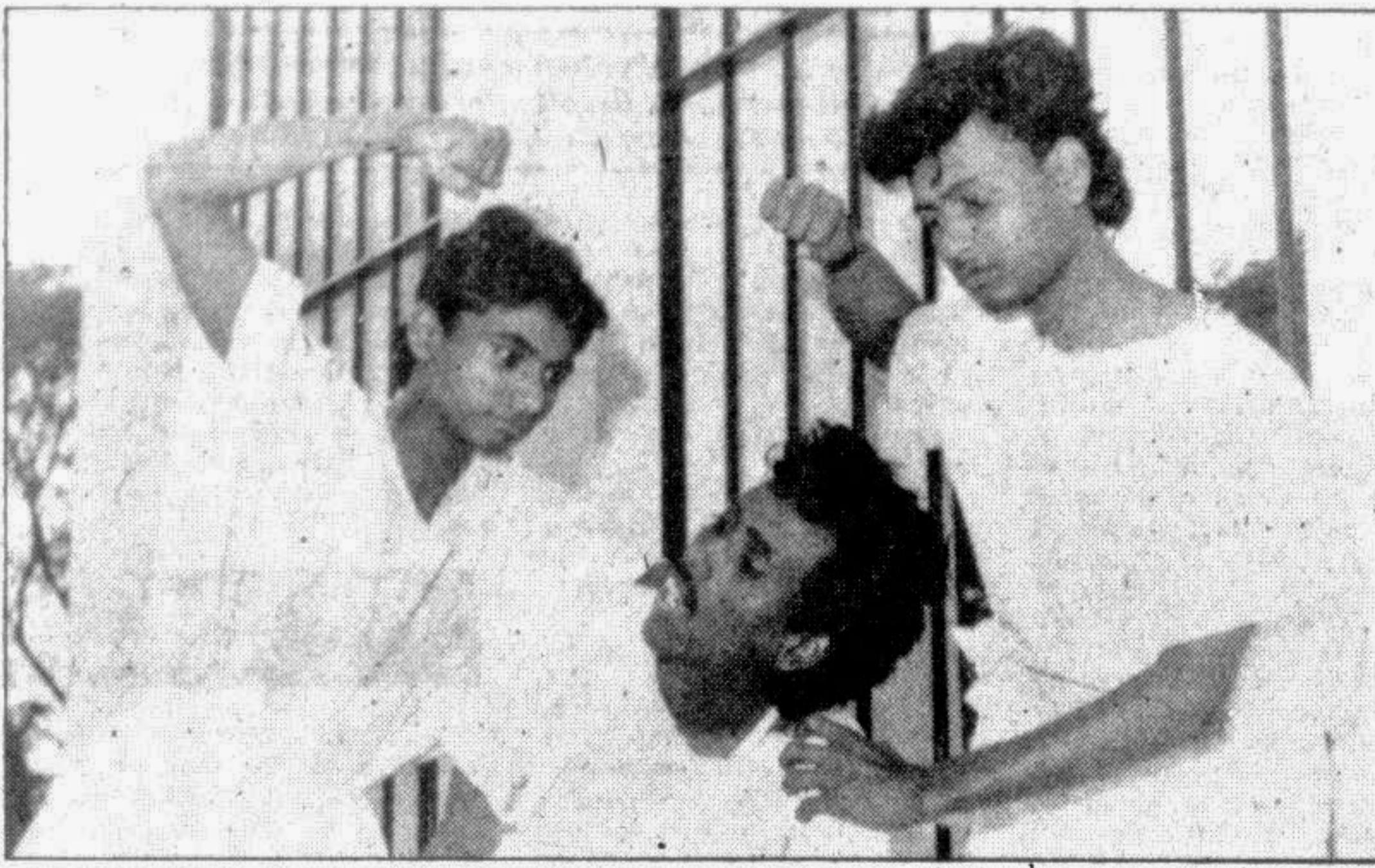
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A sequence of a play *Pretatta* staged at the Central Shaheed Minar in connection with Amar Ekushey programmes. The Sammilito Sangskritik Jote organised the staging. — Star photo**Tk 60cr sanctioned for Barind project**

RAJSHAHI, Feb 14: The government has sanctioned Tk 60 crore during the current financial year for smooth functioning of the on-going second phase of the project under Barind Multipurpose Development Authority, reports BSS.

Meanwhile, adequate irrigation facilities have been brought to over one lakh sixty one thousand acres of land in 25 thanas in the districts of Rajshahi, Naogaon and Chapainawabganj during the current season for increasing food production.

Under the project, a total of 1693 deep tubewells have been sunk, while 557 water distribution channels and forty kilometres pucca road constructed and 200 ponds have been re-excavated during the current fiscal year. Besides, over 12 lakh

saplings were planted in the project area during this period.

Crops worth Tk 160 crore are expected to be produced in the project area during the current year.

The second phase of the Barind project which began in 1991 with an estimated cost of Tk 350 crore is expected to be completed by next year.

Biswas takes

ifter with orphans

President Abdur Rahman Biswas joined an *ifter* party with the orphans, physically and mentally retarded persons at Bangabhaban yesterday, reports UNB.

During the party the President talked with them and enquired about their well-being.

Sircar tells Jatiya Sangsad**Taka 245.74 crore uplift plan for educational institutions**

of Awami League.

The Education Minister told Parliament that 1,68,97,783 children in the country are eligible to go to primary school.

Replies to a question from Tariqul Islam told in Parliament while replying to Kazi Abdur Rashid of Awami League.

Of the disabled, 26.90 per cent is blind, 28 per cent lame, 10.80 per cent mentally retarded, 15.90 per cent deaf and dumb, 3.60 per cent lepers and 14.80 per cent handicapped due to old age.

In reply to Abdul Awal Mia (AL), the Social Welfare Minister said some 1,778 vagabonds were rehabilitated during the period from July 1, 1991 to December 31, 1993.

Of them, 997 are males and 781 females, he added.

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Weather**No change in temperature**

By Staff Correspondent

Dry weather with a fair sky is likely to prevail over Bangladesh during the next 24 hours commencing from 6 am today (Tuesday).

The Met Office forecasts, night temperature may remain nearly unchanged across the country during the period.

The country's highest temperature of 30.5 degrees Celsius was recorded in Teknaf and the lowest of 7.8 degrees Celsius was recorded in Srimangal yesterday.

The sun sets today at 5.54 pm and rises tomorrow (Tuesday) at 6.31 am.

The maximum and the minimum temperatures and relative humidity recorded in some major cities and towns of the country yesterday were:

Cities/ Towns	Temperatures in degrees Celsius	Humidity in percentage
	Max	Min
Dhaka	27.5	52
Chittagong	28.8	57
Rajshahi	26.3	75
Khulna	28.3	77
Barisal	28.5	70
Sylhet	27.2	73
Dinajpur	25.5	10.7
Cox's Bazar	29.5	58
	9am	6pm

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