

A thousand books to bloom

Publishers hold high hopes though Ekushey book fair may see a drop in new publications this year

MIZANUR KHAN

Amar Ekushey Book Fair that opened yesterday will introduce about 900 new books to readers, a drop of about 300 from last year, officials and publishers said.

The annual fair organised by the Bangla Academy in honour of Language Movement martyrs came up with 1,200 new publications last year, according to Bangladesh Book Publishers and Sellers Association.

It earned almost Tk 5 crore last

new books on subjects ranging from literature to technology to this year's fair.

MOTHER LANGUAGE DAY

Dhaka University (DU) laid out a draft of programmes and formed a "Ekushey Udjapan Committee" to observe International Mother Language Day with the maiden event beginning at 12.01am on February 21.

President Iajuddin Ahmed, Prime Minister Khaleda Zia, Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina, cabinet members and

inaugurate the festival with the theme – *poetry will bring good days*.

"Poets from home and abroad will take part in the festival," said Rabul Hussain, president of the organising committee, adding Sunil Gangopadhyay, Samarendra Sengupta, Surajit Ghosh of West Bengal and Rahul Devbarman and Akbar Ahmed of Tripura in India feature on the list of participating poets and writers.

This time, the festival will be dedicated to poets Mazharul Islam, Sikder Aminul Haque and Bashira Islam who have recently passed away.

Every year, the Parishad schedules the festival for February 1-2, but the event has been deferred this year as the Eid-ul-Azha coincided with it.

Sammilita Sangskritik Jote, a forum of different cultural organisations, also announced a 15-day cultural programme to be inaugurated today at the Shaheed Minar.

"More than 2,000 artists and cultural activists from 150 organisations will take part in the programme which will be held at the Shaheed Minar from February 8-19 and Rabindra Mancha in Dhamman from 15-21," said Golam Kuddus, general secretary of the Jote.

Children's national drama festival will be held at Bangladesh Shilpkala Academy from February 11 to 18, with Information Minister Tariful Islam attending it as the chief guest and State Minister for Cultural Affairs Selima Rahman as the special guest.

About 22 children's drama organisations will join the festival, organised by Zia Kishore Sangathan under the patronisation of the Shilpkala Academy.



The book fair has opened, but when will be the stalls?

SYED ZAKIR HOSSAIN

Language Movement veterans will place wreaths at the Central Shaheed Minar, that will hold the centrepiece event.

The DU requested all not to display portraits of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and late president Ziaur Rahman at the venue to keep the event apolitical.

A two-day poetry festival organised by Jatiya Kabita Parishad will begin at Shufia Kamal Public Library and TSC (Teacher-Student Centre) square on the DU campus on February 18 for the 18th year.

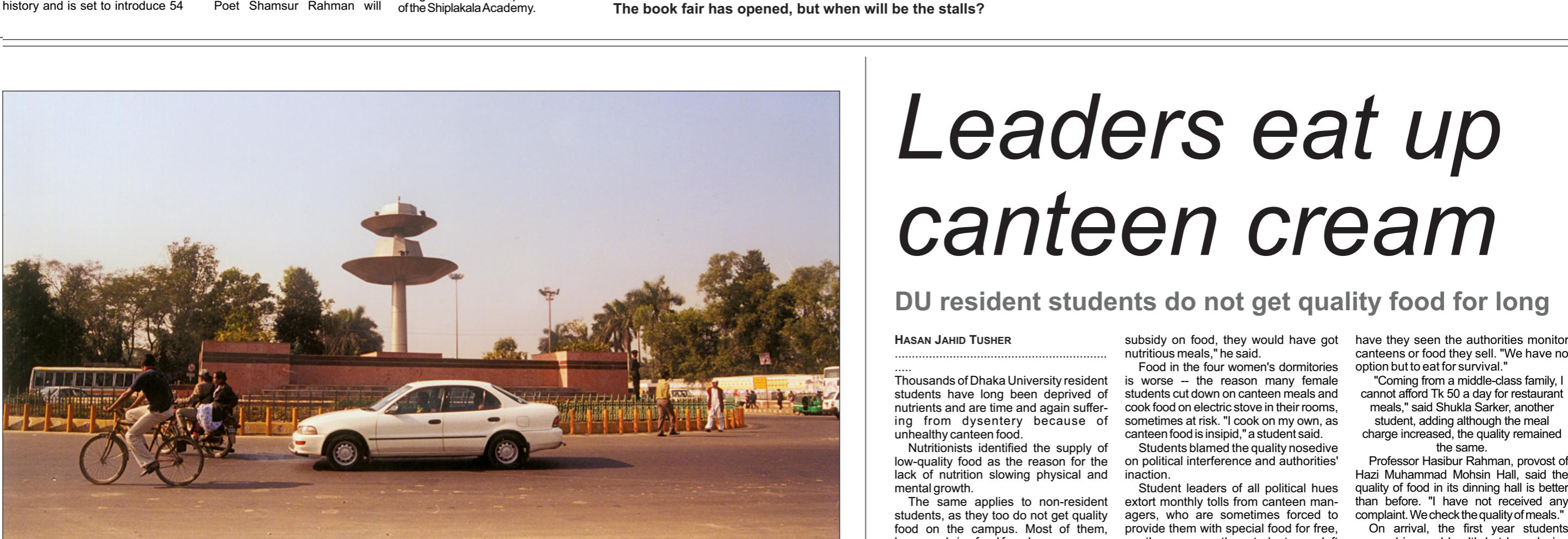
Poet Shamsur Rahman will

year and publishers hope for an increase in sales this year with more visitors to the fair, inaugurated by Prime Minister Khaleda Zia at the academy.

Bangla Academy Director General Mansur Musa said Tk 23 lakh was allocated for the 2004 fair, up from Tk 21 lakh last year.

As many as 312 publishers are taking part in the fair that will continue until February 29 with 457 stalls on 12 acres divided into four zones.

The academy published more than 4,000 books in its 48-year history and is set to introduce 54



Costly blunder: The ZIA roundabout will be demolished by year-end.

A fountain of waste

SULTANA RAHMAN

Lack of coordination between two government bodies is putting about Tk 2.5 crore of public money to complete waste as the DTCB (Dhaka Transport Coordination Board) has decided to demolish the newly constructed fountain in front of the Zia International Airport.

CAAB (Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh) took up the project of building the fountain at a cost of about Tk 2.5 crore in an attempt to enhance the city's aesthetic quality last year and the work was completed by a foreign company named IPCO recently on the basis of BOT (Build Operate and Transfer) agreement.

The planning division of CAAB said that the construction of the fountain was not in IPCO's original plan but Civil Aviation and Tourism ministry proposed the fountain on the roundabout in front of the airport.

found to be technically incorrect as it was not situated at the centre of the road and was causing traffic congestion at the busy gateway to the city.

However, the DTCB in December 2003 came to the conclusion that the fountain had to be demolished as it was built on a "technically faulty" roundabout.

structured the fountain on it without any plan or technical survey. This was simply a misuse of state funds," said a senior official of DTCB.

As per the DTCB Act 2001, any new construction on roads requires DTCB's approval. It is mandatory for public or private construction.

Tk 2.5 crore 'faulty' roundabout in front of Zia International Airport to be demolished, finally

The decision to demolish the fountain will be implemented towards the end of this year, sources said.

Sources claim that the CAAB constructed the fountain in haste without taking permission of DTCB as per the law.

"When we were thinking of removing the roundabout, the CAAB con-

structed the fountain on it without any plan or technical survey. This was simply a misuse of state funds," said a senior official of DTCB.

Experts of the DTCB visited the roundabout as well as the fountain in October last year and found that the fountain was more like a monument and might increase the traffic jam in the area.

DTCB reportedly sent a letter to the CAAB mentioning the legal aspects of the construction on the

roundabout. But the ministry replied requesting the construction of speed breakers around the island to protect the fountain, said a source.

According to the Ministry of Communications, CAAB was expected to obtain approval for design drawing by the DTCB, Dhaka City Corporation (DCC), Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) and other concerned departments. Unaware of this requirement, CAAB authorities obtained permission from the Roads and Highways Department (RHD) thinking it to be sufficient.

"We did not know about the function of DTCB in this matter. None of the organisations involved directed us to seek approval from DTCB," said Air Commodore Zahed Kuddus, Chairman of CAAB.

"As far as I know, the company that constructed the fountain sought permission from the concerned authorities before building the fountain," he said.

Despite repeated attempts acting executive director DTCB Abdul Batin was not available for comments.

Leaders eat up canteen cream

DU resident students do not get quality food for long

HASAN JAHID TUSHER

subsidy on food, they would have got nutritious meals," he said.

Food in the four women's dormitories is worse – the reason many female students cut down on canteen meals and cook food on electric stove in their rooms, sometimes at risk. "I cook on my own, as canteen food is insipid," a student said.

Nutritionists identified the supply of low-quality food as the reason for the lack of nutrition slowing physical and mental growth.

The same applies to non-resident students, as they too do not get quality food on the campus. Most of them, however, bring food from home.

Professor Kazi Salamatullah, former director of the Institute of Nutrition and Food Science, told Star City the quality of canteen meals went down and recommended immediate measures under the oversight of house tutors to ensure balanced diet for students.

"If the government had increased

have they seen the authorities monitor canteens or food they sell. "We have no option but to eat for survival."

"Coming from a middle-class family, I cannot afford Tk 50 a day for restaurant meals," said Shukla Sarker, another student, adding although the meal charge increased, the quality remained the same.

Professor Hasibur Rahman, provost of Hazi Muhammad Mohsin Hall, said the quality of food in its dining hall is better than before. "I have not received any complaint. We check the quality of meals."

Student leaders of all political hues extort monthly tolls from canteen managers, who are sometimes forced to provide them with special food for free, another reason other students are left out of good meals.

"If the university authorities control dining rooms, canteens and grocery shops, we will get good food," says Mahfuz Akram, a student of Sergeant Jahurul Haque Hall.

Mohammed Hasan, a journalism student, complained that in no instance



A DU dining room... Gulping down anything and everything.

SYED ZAKIR HOSSAIN