



thecitythatwas

On the banks of the Buriganga in Dhaka stands the pink majestic Ahsan Manzil, an example of the nation's rich cultural heritage. It was the home of the Nawab of Dhaka and a silent spectator to many events. It has 31 rooms with a huge dome atop which can be seen from miles around. Ahsan Manzil has been renovated and turned into a museum recently which has now 23 galleries displaying portraits, furniture and household articles and utensils used by the Nawab.

e-mail: starcity@thedailystar.net

Curtain falls on Ekushey Book Fair today

KAUSAR ISLAM AYON

The month-long Ekushey Book Fair 2005 ends today with book lovers and publishers showing huge response despite fear of bomb blast against the backdrop of recent attacks on cultural functions across the country.

This year's 'Boi Mela' saw the tightest-ever security and the publication of increased number of books compared to that of last year. Around 1,200 books were published last year while the number increased to 1,349 this year (as of February 27).

Another significant aspect of this year's fair was a new rule that barred the participant publishers from displaying and selling books published by other publishers, although most of the participants did not follow the rule.

Like previous years, the participants displayed and sold their own publications along with books published by others, ignoring the restriction. The fair organisers did not take any action against the violation of the rules.

"We introduced the rule to encourage the genuine publishers and discourage the seasonal publishing houses at the same time. This was appreciated by all the participants," said Jalal Ahmed, deputy director of Bangla Academy.

He said the rule will be strictly enforced from the next year.

The participants feared that they would lose customers as



Ekushey Book Fair 2005 drew large crowds especially towards the close on the final day.

the tight security might discourage the regular visitors. But every day they saw hundreds of visitors waited in queues for checking in metal detectors before entering the fair.

Although it was annoying for the visitors and disrupted the

fair's free environment, they responded positively to the security arrangements. Except the Valentine's Day bomb blasts at TSC near the fair venue, nothing untoward happened.

"This year the sale was better. But the number of customers

was less than we expected on holidays and of course on the Ekushey February, the day we sell almost half of the whole month," said Mohammad Tanveer of Pearl Publications.

"Still we are happy with the total arrangement," Tanveer added. Undoubtedly, Humayun Ahmed was the best selling writer in this year's book fair, according to most of the participating publishers. They however hold differing views on the best selling publishing house.

Officials of Bangla Academy claimed that they are the best selling house in this year's fair. But a few other publishing houses also claimed to be the best, although they would not make their sales figures public.

"We have sold 10 times of the sale of Bangla Academy," said Sanaul Kabir Chowdhury of Anya Prokash. Bangla Academy published 54 new books ahead of this fair.

This year Bangla Academy is celebrating its 50th founding anniversary. To celebrate the golden jubilee, Bangla Academy arranged a number of special discussions apart from the regular discussion programmes of the Ekushey.

The academy has also celebrated the birth centenary of seven prominent writers -- Syed Mujtaba Ali, Muhammad Monsuruddin, Maulana Akram Kha, Ismail Hossain Sirajee, Kaliprosanno Ghosh, Hari Prasad Shastri and Nabinchan Sen.

Four organisations arranged voluntary blood donation programmes at the fair.

"We have collected 1,649 bags of blood so far from this fair with three more days in hand. The total collection of last year was 1,400 bags," said Sheikh Mohammad Faisal, coordinator of Quantum Foundation, a voluntary organisation.

At the closing ceremony of the 28th version of the Bangla Academy Book Fair, three best stalls will be awarded. This year the number of stalls was 304.

city express

The latest crop of quotes from the city's press -- words worth repeating, we feel, for their humour, insight or sheer outrageousness. Star City does not necessarily support the opinions expressed in this column.



"Those who have been creating an anarchy in the name of religion are enemies of the nation and the country. All of them will be punished"

-- Khaleda Zia

Prime Minister
Said at a meeting of police officials at the International Conference Centre at the Prime Minister's Office on February 24.
Source: The Daily Star

"They don't say fish that was earlier sold at Tk 500 has now come down to Tk 250. But they only speak of the price hike of rice"

-- M Saifur Rahman

Finance Minister
Told a party meeting in Sylhet on February 23.
Source: Prothom Alo

"On the one hand, the government does not find him, on the other he (Bangla Bhai), along with his cadres, is killing people"



-- Sheikh Hasina

Awami League President and leader of the opposition
Told the family of AL leader Yasin Ali, killed allegedly by the cadres of Bangla Bhai, when they met her at Sudha Sadan on February 21.
Source: The Daily Star

"Bangladesh now has nothing but regrets"

-- Abul Barakat

Economist
Told journalists commenting on the Washington Meeting where representatives from Bangladesh were not included.
Source: Bhorer Kagoj

"We want to know what conditions the FBI has put forward that the government is unable to comply with"



-- Asma Kibria

Wife of slain Awami League leader and former finance minister SAMS Kibria
Told a press conference commenting on the delay in having an FBI investigation into the Habiganj carnage, on February 22.
Source: The Daily Star

RICKSHAWS CORDONED OFF ROAD NO 3

More privileges for a privileged

SULTANA RAHMAN

A road in Dhanmondi in the city has been made off-limits to rickshaws allegedly at the directive of a high government official who lives in the area.

Rickshaws can move in the entire residential area, but not on an around quarter kilometre stretch of road number 3, from the Mirpur Road up to the link with road number 2 and 4.

Two Ansars have been deployed to prevent rickshaws from entering the part of road no 3 where Home Secretary Muhammad Omar Farooq resides.

"The (traffic) sergeant has asked us to perform our duty carefully as our secretary lives here," said an Ansar. "I heard that he has ordered to make this road

rickshaw-free."

The Ansar said they have been on this special duty since the last two weeks to ensure that rickshaws cannot move on the road from morning to 10 at night.

"A secretary has allegedly ordered the deployment of Ansars to stop movement of rickshaws along this road, where he lives," said an official in the Rajarbagh Police Lines requesting not to be named.

However, several high officials of the Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) claimed that Ansars have been posted there for the sake of disciplined traffic system.

The secretary concerned could not be reached on the telephone despite repeated attempts.

But DMP Commissioner SM Mizanur Rahman told this correspondent: "He (secretary) has

asked me to talk to you on the issue as you wanted to have a comment from him."

"The road is not off-limits to rickshaws but I don't know why Ansars are there," he said.

Residents of road number 3 have expressed resentment over the high official's alleged order to make the road rickshaw-free.

"It is simply unjustified that the road is made off-limits to rickshaws only for a secretary of the government," said a resident in the area.

Interestingly, the government has failed to meet the deadlines of making the city's eight major roads off-limits to rickshaw under a World Bank-funded project.

Only Mirpur road was made rickshaw-free three months ago while the government is delaying the plan for other roads showing the cause of public inconvenience."



Ansars and police wait in watch to stop rickshaws plying road no 3 in Dhanmondi.

Education Fair with a difference ends successfully



Consultations for admissions to various universities and colleges underway at the Education Fair that concluded in the city on Saturday.

FAIZUL KHAN TANIM

The 3-day Australian Education exhibition saw over a thousands students along with their parents through the exhibition grounds each day.

The fair organised by the International Development Programme (IDP) and Australian Trade Commission at a city hotel, which ended Saturday, was a complete success, organisers claimed.

Twenty-two institutions from of Australian Centre for Education (ACE) and International Development Programme's (IDP) 300 member institutions participated in the fair.

The significant and positive side of the fair, said some of the visiting students, was that about

95 percent of the participating institutions were well known.

Ahmed Raffi, a North South University (NSU) student said that this was the first time that a fair had representations of reputed universities and colleges participating. "At a certain stage, I thought these education fairs were a farce, just an eye-wash, yet gaining a high source of income in a short time, but the one that just concluded proved me wrong," he added.

Topping the list of participants were the famous Melbourne Institute of Technology (MIT), University of Southern Queensland, University of Western Sydney, University of Queensland's foundation year programme, Technical and Further Education (TAFE) programme of the University of

New South Wales (NSW), University of Canberra.

Most university representatives said that their participation in such fairs was to judge for themselves the standard of students before enrolling them into the various university or college programmes.

Commenting on the usefulness of such exhibitions and fairs, University of Canberra's International and Community Relations Manager Janet Mountseer said: "Such fairs give us as well as the prospective candidates the opportunity to interact better with each other before registering with any of the programmes our institution offers."

Representatives of other institutions echoed the same sentiments adding that platform

of this nature give them the chance to understand the levels of students who apply through local representatives. On the other hand, students are aware of the wide range of courses offered by each institution, said another representative.

"It is amazing how the student interest varies. In fairs held earlier candidates inquired only about undergraduate programmes. But with these fairs coming into existence frequently, many have been inquiring about postgraduate and PhD programmes as well," the representative added.

Students agree they learn much about application procedures to foreign universities as well as embassy regulations as

Taher Rahman, himself a student said: "There should be seminars and presentations where we are given ideas of the entire admission process, and we will also be aware if local representatives are fair on our pockets."

IDP's Student counsellor Afruza Sultana said that the fair was a success admitting that though almost 50 percent of visitors to the previous fairs came in just to while away their time, the percentage of such visitors had reduced to five percent at this fair.

She added that 350 students actually submitted forms and many got spot admissions to these universities. The numbers are much higher this time, she said.