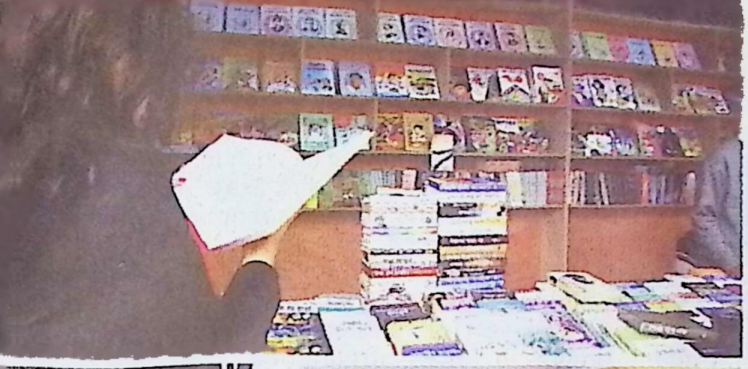






exhibition is to introduce the publishers to the readers, even the organisers announced that publishing houses with the highest number of new books and the bookstall selling the highest number of books would be rewarded. Most of the books on display for sale at the fair had been released earlier at the Ekushey Book Fair.

On the reluctance of publishing new books for the fair Farid Ahmed, owner of Samay Prokashoni says, "We don't find it worthy enough compared to the Ekushey Book Fair, though we always want a grand book fair to be held regularly in Bangladesh with international dimension. But, Dhaka International Book Fair is yet to achieve that target."

"Let alone being popular, Dhaka Book Fair has not been introduced properly. We don't see many advertisements for the book fair to attract the public. Arranging the book fair just after the Eid vacations is another reason of fewer visitors", he adds.

The main reason behind this failure is that it has no permanent venue and schedule. Over the years the fair has switched from one place to another. The publishers, readers and writers lost interest when Dhaka Book Fair was organised at unconventional venues such as Physical Health Training College at Muhammadpur and Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy premises. Which is why the publishers cannot take it as seriously as they do in the case of the Ekushey Book Fair that has been regularly arranged by Bangla Academy premises in February.

"Just ahead of February it's quite impossible for the publishers to come up with new book releases for another fair. Dhaka International Book Fair must have a permanent venue and a fixed schedule. And it should be fixed many days before the Ekushey Book Fair. And to draw the attention of the publishers, writers and readers, NBC should advertise the fair effectively", suggests Farid Ahmed to make the book fair a popular one.

Admitting the flaws, M Mahmudur Rahman, director of NBC, says, "Actually venue is a major problem that we face while arranging the book fair, since we don't have any premises that Bangla Academy does. Dhaka University playground has been selected as the new venue, which would be more convenient for the book-lovers to visit. If this new venue succeeds in attracting the visitors, we'll try to continue to be there for next time as well."

"From the next time the Dhaka International Book Fair will always start from the first of December. And we've already enlisted the fair schedule at the international book fair calendar so that the foreigners can know about it", he adds.

An attraction of the fair this year are the seminars, discussions on Liberation War and cultural programmes have that been included at the fair premises, continues Rahmen, "And this is for the first time an international seminar has been included with the fair."

The director of NBC informs that the leading publishers of the foreign countries have shown reluctance about participating hence the poor turnout of foreign publishing houses. "Because of some unwanted circumstances during the Dhaka Book Fair in 2003, many foreign publishers have shown their back to the fair and these publishers discouraged the others", Rahman says.

However, NBC hopes after this year's success many publishers will show interest in the fair.

Like the organisers, everybody expects that an international standard book fair is organised on a regular basis participated by leading publishers all over the world, which will offer new releases for the interested readers in Bangladesh. To achieve that goal, it is expected that the government allots a permanent venue for the fair and makes the NBC more effective with a reasonable budget for holding such a book fair. ■