

**WHAT'S ON THIS WEEK**

**Ekushey Boi Mela '09**  
Organiser: Bangla Academy  
Venue: Bangla Academy premises  
Date: February 01-28



**Chobi Mela V**  
Int'l Festival of Photography, Bangladesh '09  
Theme: Freedom  
Venues: National Museum, BSA, Drik Gallery, Bengal Gallery, AF, GIB, British Council, Asiatic Gallery, Kalpana Boarding and Karwan Bazar underpass  
Date: Jan 30-Feb 20



**Solo Flute Evening**  
Flutist: Usaid Azad Islam  
Organiser: Rotary Club of Dhaka Premier  
Venue: Shahid Zia Auditorium, National Museum, Shahbag  
Date: February 6  
Time: 6:30pm



**Theatre**  
Play: Roshadhar Shudhaharer Rajjo  
Troupe: Bangorango Natyadal  
Venue: Experimental Theatre Hall, BSA  
Date: February 1  
Time: 6:30pm



## Muktadhara: Pioneering the Ekushey Book Fair

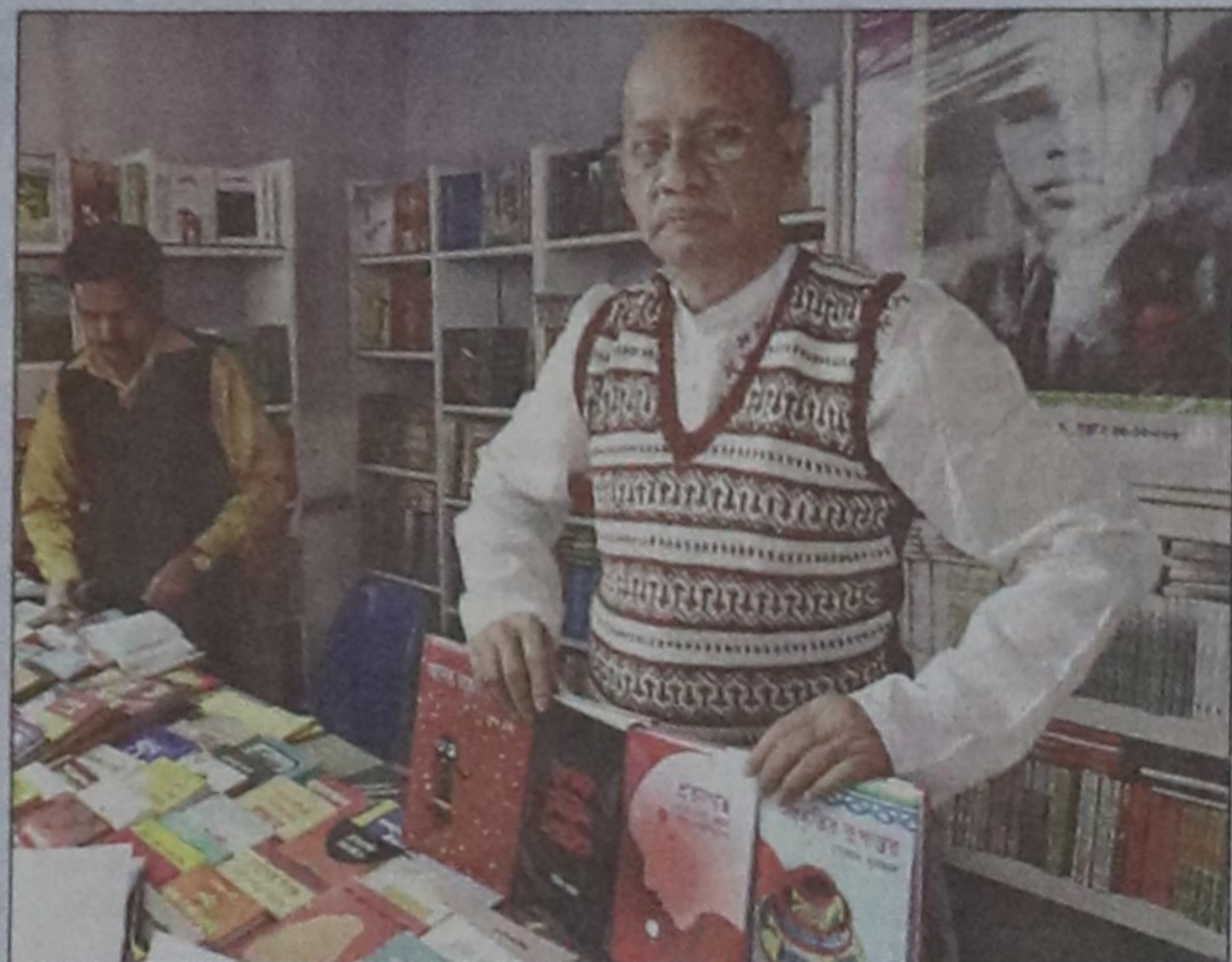
CULTURAL CORRESPONDENT

The month-long 'Amar Ekushey Granthamela' is perhaps the most eagerly awaited book fair in our country. Particularly enthused are the authors, publishers and readers.

However, the mela has had a chequered history. The book fair was the brainchild of the late Chittaranjan Saha, founder of the publishing house Muktadhara. He embarked on this front with a small sale in front of the Bangla Academy on February 21, 1972. Later, other book publishers joined in unofficially. Bangla Academy took over as the fair authority in 1978. In 1984 it was named 'Amar Ekushey Granthamela'. Gradually it became the official and hugely popular book fair in Bangladesh.

Recently, The Daily Star spoke to Jawhar Lal Shaha, the current director of Muktadhara. The conversation covered Muktadhara's history and involvement with the 'Amar Ekushey Granthamela'.

"Muktadhara embarked on its journey in the course of the Liberation War. In those days, eminent authors and journalists, who were being forced to take shelter in Kolkata from Bangladesh, regularly gathered at Syed Ali Ahsan's (National Professor) temporary residence in Kolkata. All of them were fired with the zeal to do something for the country. Chittaranjan Shaha regularly met and encouraged them to write for the country and took upon himself the respon-



Jawhar Lal Shaha at the Muktadhara stall, Amar Ekushey Granthamela '08



sibility to publish their writing." "After that, the artistes established the Swadhin Bangla Shalita Parishad and Chittaranjan established Muktadhara in Kolkata," said Jawhar Lal Shaha,

who is also the brother-in-law of the late Chittaranjan. Jawhar also pointed out that throughout the nine months of the Liberation War, Muktadhara published 32 books on the war.

Talking about his role in the establishment of Muktadhara, Jawhar said, "I used to assist Chittaranjan Shaha in publishing." After the Liberation War, Chittaranjan returned to Bangladesh and continued his mission by publishing creative works of noted and upcoming authors under the aegis of Muktadhara.

About Muktadhara's involvement with the Amar Ekushey Granthamela, Jawhar Lal said that initially (in the early 70s) the Bangla Academy used to arrange only weekly programmes to mark Language Day. In the course of such an event, in 1972 Chittaranjan Shaha began to sell books at the Bangla Academy premises, seated on the ground.

In 1974, Bangla Academy arranged a collection of literary books. In the same year, Chittaranjan further developed his idea and built a stall.

Gradually some other publishing houses, including Khan Brothers, Chalantika, Boighor and Chittagong Boighor, joined hands with Muktadhara. In 1978, Bangla Academy, in collaboration with Bangladesh Pustak Prokashok O Bikreta Samiti, arranged a full-fledged book fair for the first time.

Aptly, last year (2008), Bangla Academy dedicated the book fair to the late Chittaranjan Shaha and placed a portrait of him at the fair. However, Jawhar urged the authorities to pay a fitting tribute to the pioneer by setting up a permanent stall or place for Muktadhara.

The article is a reprint of an earlier version

### 2nd Int'l Children's Film Festival ends

## Five children bag awards



PHOTO COURTESY: F. K. MORSHED

Triumphant children with their awards.

JAMIL MAHMUD

The week-long 2nd International Children's Film Festival '09 ended on January 30. The closing ceremony was held at the Shawkat Osman Auditorium, Central Public Library, Shahbag. Five among 15 children received awards at the closing ceremony for their films that were screened at the festival.

Children's Film Society, Bangladesh (CFSB) arranged the festival in association with Unicef.

In his welcome speech, festival director and noted filmmaker Morshedul Islam said that the 3rd International Children's Film Festival would be held from January 23-29 next year. He went on to add that the next festival would feature more films, venues and foreign delegates. An international competitive segment would also be the high point at next year's festival, stated Islam.

This year's festival featured 156 films from 40 countries and were screened at six venues.

Child delegate Purnata read out a seven-point festival declaration, to voice children's demand for a more conducive environment for children's films, and more patronage such as government grants, development of infrastructure and tax-free children's films.

Mustafa Monwar, noted media personality and chairman of the advisory committee of the festival; Muhammad Zafar Iqbal, noted writer and president of CFSB; Farah Kabir, festival adviser and country director, ActionAid Bangladesh; Shaheen Anam, festival adviser and executive director, Manusher Jonno Foundation and Christine Jones, head of Information and Communication, Unicef Bangladesh spoke at the programme.

Along with Unicef and several other organisations, ActionAid and Manusher Jonno Foundation were the sponsors of the festival.

Throughout the festival, 15 films made by Bangladeshi children were screened in a competitive segment. The organisers selected five for the awards. "Ora", directed by Masud Al Kawsar from Dhaka, received the first prize while Sadia Tabassum Prity from Joypurhat and S. M Sazid Sami from Dhaka received second and third prize for their films "Obochetan" and "Swapno Shiri" respectively.

"The 12th Hour" by Fahim Hasin Sahan from Chittagong and "Abutmantra", jointly by Mehedi Hasan and Abu Sayeed Nishan, received special prizes. The rest of the children received complimentary prizes.

## Gearing up for Ekushey

"Amar Ekushey Boi Mela Pratidin" goes on air

CULTURAL CORRESPONDENT

ATN Bangla will telecast a special programme on Ekushey Book Fair '09. The first episode of the daily programme titled "Amar Ekushey Boi Mela Pratidin" will be aired today at 11:15 am.

The programme will go on air through the month of February at 11:15 am from Saturdays to Thursdays. On Fridays, the programme will be aired at 9:10 am.

The programme will feature information such as the introduction of new books as well as writers. Feedback from the visitors will also be aired subsequently.

Directed by Selim Daula Khan, Bonnya hosts the programme.



A glimpse from last year's fair.

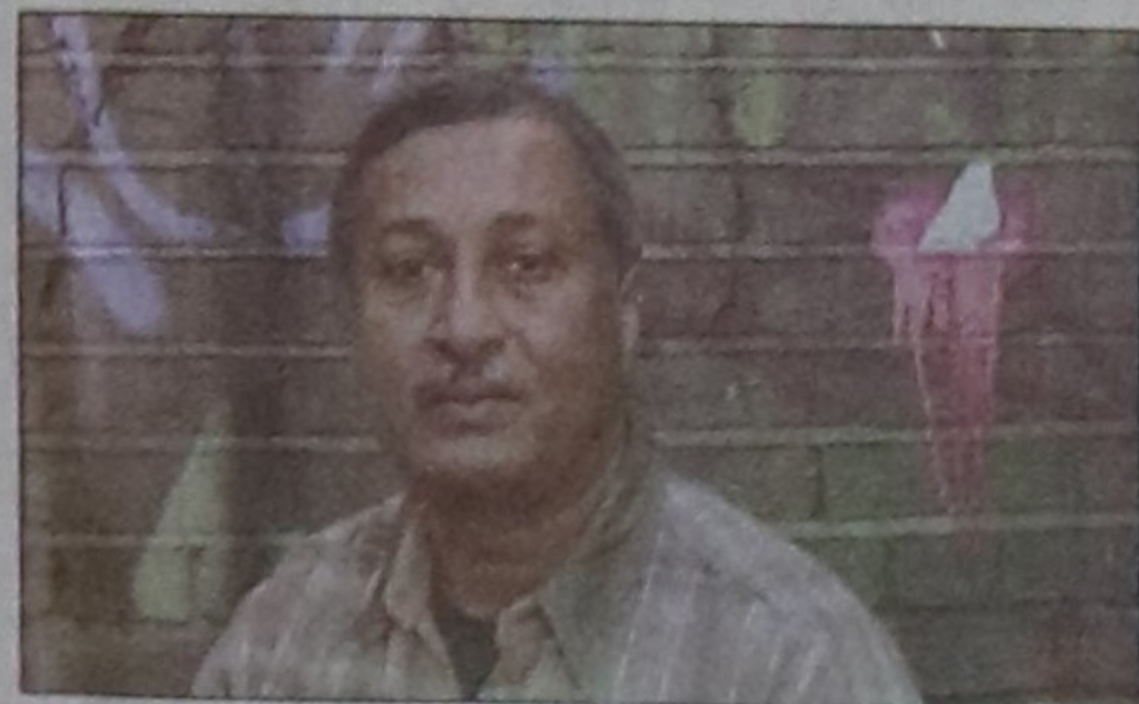
## Documentary on Nasir Ali Mamun

TAKIR HOSSAIN

"In 1972, I introduced portrait photography in Bangladesh. I work with famous people from different backgrounds. I try to capture their mood, personality, characteristics and feelings in my camera," said Nasir Ali Mamun in an interview following a documentary titled "Poet of Camera". The documentary's director, photographer and interviewer is Monjurul Azim Palash, a London-based Bangladeshi filmmaker. The documentary was screened at Short Film Forum Auditorium, Aziz Super Market, recently. The DVD was unveiled by noted Professor Kabir Chowdhury. The documentary was shot in different locations of East London, especially the bustling Brick Lane.

"In the first six years of my career, I did not have a personal camera. I couldn't muster even Taka 500 to buy a camera. My work is the combination of my subject's chemistry with my own chemistry. My pain, agony, longing, yearning got mixed up with the pain of my subjects. That's why my work is so dark and so painful. It all came spontaneously. I didn't do it intentionally," said Nasir Ali Mamun.

An interesting part of the documentary is a short conversation between poet Stephen Watts with Nasir Ali Mamun. At one stage the duo exchanged notes on SM Sultan and some other global personalities.



Nasir Ali Mamun was born in Dhaka in 1953. He embarked on his journey just after the Liberation War. "I became close to the key members of the 1952 Language Movement. At that time, most of them were alive, like Abdul Hamid Khan Bhashani, Comrade Moni Singh, K.M. Ilias, Abdur Rashid Tarkabagish, Ataur Rahman Khan, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and Tajuddin Ahmed," he said.

Mamun has to his credit a number of publications on poet Jasimuddin, artist SM Sultan, poet Shamsur Rahman, essayist Ahmed Sofa and German Nobel Laureate Gunter Grass. "Jasimuddin is not only a folk poet, but also an urban poet," said Mamun. In the documentary, he focuses on Dr. Yunus and his current venture on him. "I met Yunus in 1978 at Chittagong University. I am currently working on an album on him as well. I am hoping to publish this by 2009."

Nasir talked about his museum - he calls it "Photoseum" - in the 20-minute documentary. "I don't know of any museum in the subcontinent which is dedicated to portrait photography. Photoseum is a combination of photography and a museum. While shooting portraits, I kept collecting paraphernalia relating to famous people. I hope that the museum will be ready by 2010."

## Celebrating 400 years of Dhaka



## Mouth watering treat of winter cakes!

CULTURAL CORRESPONDENT

As part of the special programmes celebrating 400 years of Dhaka, "Dhaka Charsho Bochori Purti Utshob Nagorik Committee" organised a Pitha Mela (winter cake festival) at Bengal Shilpalaya, Dhaka on January 30.

The event, "Dhakaia Pitha Utshob", featured traditional Dhakaia dishes and a large turnout of Dhakaiaites (residents of old Dhaka).

The event began on a mild winter evening with a short inaugural ceremony. Eminent playwright Sayeed Ahmed inaugurated the festival. Abul Mal Abdul Muhit, Minister, Ministry of Finance was present as the chief guest at the event.

Apart from traditional Dhakaia delicacies such as Bhapa Pitha, Puli Pitha, Chittoi Pitha and Pati Shapta, around 70 non-traditional culinary delights were prepared with a Dhakaia touch to tantalise the taste buds of the visitors.

The hot and crispy Bhapa Pitha was the basic ingredient for several other varieties of Boro Bhapa Pitha, Mithsi Bhapa Pitha and Jhaal Bhapa Pitha.

Patishapta Pitha was available in three varieties such as Patishapta (Khirsha), prepared from Kheer (condensed milk); Jhaal Patishapta, a special item Malai Patishapta, immersed in curd.

Among the traditional Dhakaia items the most popular were Bibikhana Pitha, a traditional cake filled with



PHOTO: MUMIT M

Heritage at work: visitors crowd the Pitha Utsab.



sweets and fruits; Chapri Pitha, hot and crispy, about the size of parantha was a mouth-watering treat. Daalpuri, another traditional item, was delicious.

Jamai Pitha, especially made to whet the appetite of the bridegroom, captured the interest of the viewers. Rezala Pitha, Buter daal-Kolija pitha, Shobji pitha and other improvised winter delicacies were also on display.

Other items at the festival were the carefully crafted Golaap Phul Pitha, Kamranga Pitha, Jibi Pitha, Lotani pitha, Phul Pitha, Taaler Pitha, Kola Pitha, Chit Pitha, Picnic Pitha, Chini Jhuni Pitha, Shamuk Pitha, Donut, Jasmin Pitha and more.

All the cakes at the festival were prepared by Dhakaia families. The visitors were offered free treats at the event.

Sagar Lohani, coordinator Dhaka Charsho Bochori Purti Utshob Nagorik Committee, said "Pitha-puli occupies a very important place in our culture. Our aim is to give a boost to our traditional winter cakes and also take us back to our roots."

"The event is also a part of our campaign to celebrate 400 years of Dhaka as a capital. The programme was launched in July 2008. The campaign also aims at addressing social issues, raising public awareness about environmental issues and saving the Buriganga River from pollution. As part of our campaign we will hold special programmes at every ward in the city," added Lohani.