

A perfect platform

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But, most of the new writers have to struggle hard and walk door to door to get the blessing of the publishers.

"It was too difficult for me to persuade a publisher. Some of them even did not bother to show any interest in reading my script," said Mahbubur Rahman, whose first novel titled-'Prem O Anuvab' was published from Bidya Prakash Publications this year at the fair.

He thinks those who want to make their appearance as writers like him have very little scope because of the domination of the established and popular writers.

"Popular and reputed writers publish, on an average, eight to ten books at this Ekushey Book Fair each year. Fresh writers like us are always lost in the clamour for books by readers of well-known writers," he said.

However, he thinks only this fair brings rays of some hopes for them to familiarise their works with the readers.

Another new writer Nousher Hira, whose first book on student politics was published from Shikha Prakashana thinks the government should take steps with the help of Bangla Academy to patronise fresh ones.

Hira also said publishers should be more cooperative with new writers and open up windows of opportunity for them so that they can present their works before common people.

Yet new writers are spending their times at the fair everyday with renewed energy and enthusiasm hoping for the fortune to smile upon them.

Meanwhile, a total of 105 new titles arrived at the fair yesterday on its 15th day. The new books include-'Priyo Shakha Hey Bhandhu Amar' by Kamrun Haque, 'Dangshan' by Hasnat Abdul Hai, 'Jibon Nagar' by Salma Sultan, 'Shabak Mrittur Guarantee Chai' by Nirmal Sen, 'Chhito Kala of Baskarjo' by Kabir Chowdhury, 'Amar Satar Jibon' by Arun Nandi, 'Misir Ali Apni Kothay' by Humayun Ahmed.

The fair, unlike weekends, was less crowded yesterday but the crowd, much to their irritation, had to make their way through the cloud of dust at the fair premise.

Killer brother

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Tuhina, 11, and Sharmin, 8.

Laily and Selina, two elder sisters of the killed girls, demanded capital punishment to their brother Yunus. They said hanging of their drug-addict brother would help in reducing such crimes.

Meanwhile, teachers of the minor girls and students of Surjpur Government Primary School yesterday vowed to say no to drugs, drug-addicted persons, dowry and child marriage.

The girls were buried at their family graveyard after completion of their autopsy at Comilla Medical College Hospital. Several hundred men, women and children who attended the burial of the girls broke into their tears.

Shahena Begum, 42, mother of the victims, earlier took shelter at her father's house at Madhumura village under Debidwar upazila due to a family dispute. She did not come to see the bodies of her girls fearing for her safety.

Tuhina's neighbour Armena Begum, 60, who witnessed the killing, and uncle Abu Musa Bhuiyan, who filed a murder case in this connection, were unable to speak following the gruesome incident.

Some classmates of the murdered girls said everybody loved them as the girls lost their father and behaved well.

They said Tuhina and Sharmin came to school on Thursday without eating anything, as there was no food in their house.

At one stage, the teachers of the school could not hold back their tears.

The girls were killed early Friday when they were asleep. After the killing, the killers started shouting "gaoi" (dacoit).

Hearing their scream, the locals rushed to the spot and handed over the youths to the police suspecting their involvement with the murder.

Tuhina's two elder sisters Laily and Selina came to their father's house Saturday midnight after getting news of the killing.

Debidwar thana officer-in-charge Zahedul Islam said Yunus and Shafulia confessed to the crime before the magistrate court.

JCD men

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General Abdullah Al Noman told reporters that 2009 will be observed as organisational year for BNP. All opinions of grassroots-level leaders will be placed before party high-ups for taking necessary steps to make the party stronger.

About the suggestions that they made about JCD, Noman said the BNP chairperson already asked for reconstituting JCD bodies to keep regular students in the leadership level.

Many grassroots leaders said BNP should not depend on Jamaat-e-Islami and identified the party's alliance with Jamaat as a major reason for losing votes in December 29 polls.

When asked about the issue, Noman said they were evaluating the pros and cons of being in alliance with Jamaat.

The field-level leaders also said the dilly dallying attitude towards participating in the elections, delay in announcing candidates and the short time for campaigning contributed to the BNP's debacle in the elections.

BNP Organisational Secretary Amanullah Aman, who was convicted for corruption, told reporters that the common opinion of field-level leaders was that the election was stage-managed and the results were predetermined.

The interview with presidents, general secretaries and organising secretaries or conveners and joint conveners of upazila and municipal units will continue till the end of this month.

By-polls

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on Thursday. Prime minister Sheikh Hasina, opposition leader Khaleda Zia and Jatiya Party chairman HM Ershad vacated two seats each as per the rules after they won from three constituencies each in the December 29 parliamentary elections.

Hasina vacated Bagerhat-1 and Rangpur-6 seats keeping Gopalganj-3 for herself, Khaleda vacated Bogra-6 and 7 seats keeping Feni-1 for herself and Ershad vacated Rangpur-3 and Kurigram-2 seats retaining Dhaka-17 for himself.

Announcing the election schedule, Election Commissioner Muhammed Sohul Hussain yesterday said members of law enforcement agencies excepting the armed forces will be deployed to maintain law and order situation during the by-elections.

He said adequate number of judicial magistrates will also be deployed to prevent irregularities and corrupt practices in the polls.

Sohul also said the schedule for elections to the seats reserved for women in the parliament will be announced on Monday.

It will be the first ever by-election to be held under the newly formed AL-led government. Questions arose in the past over the credibility of by-elections held under different political governments because of unwanted interference.

There is simply no example, not one -- in print, online, in television -- of quality content offered for free ever resulting in a viable business," he said.

Noting that the Times website averages 20 million unique visitors a month, Brill proposed a 10-cent fee for each article, a 40-cent "day pass," a one-month fee of 7.50 dollars and a yearly subscription of 55 dollars.

Journalist Steve Outing was among those taking issue with micropayments, saying the idea would just "hasten news papers' death spiral."

"This approach hasn't worked. It won't work. Is completely counter to the nature of the Internet," Outing wrote on his blog, steveouting.com.

Putting content behind a pay barrier prevents it from being found and shared by search engines such as Google, he added. "If Google can't point people to your content, you may as well not be on the Web. And you're out of business."

Outing instead pointed to a California start-up venture called Kachingle and a voluntary system under which readers would "agree to pay a monthly fee to support valuable online content from publishers and bloggers you like."

T.J. Sullivan, a Los Angeles blogger, is calling for drastic measures.

Sullivan is circulating an online petition calling for US newspapers to shut down their websites to non-paying subscribers for a week in July and to publish only in print.

"Now is the time for newspapers to do something proactive; time for them to demonstrate what life would be like without them," he wrote on the website LA Observed.

In his Time cover story, Isaacson said "the key to attracting online revenue, I think, is to come up with an

Much ado about

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"But as the offences were committed during the Liberation War and Razakars were involved in the killings of 15 martyrs so we cannot absolutely rule out the possibility of war crime. But there is no such law to investigate the offence as war crime and so we're investigating it as a murder case," he elaborated.

Home Minister Sahara Khatun has earlier expressed satisfaction following the arrests of the two alleged Razakars, members of an auxiliary armed force constituted by civilians under the leadership of Jamaat-e-Islami to help Pakistani occupation forces commit genocide.

The arrest and the home minister's remarks have pinned the people's hopes on the trial of war criminals, which is also an election pledge of the ruling Awami League.

State Minister of Liberation War affairs ABM Tajul Islam told The Daily Star he thinks the police considered it as war crime just because the offence was committed during the Liberation War.

"It's just the reflection of public perception about the trial of war criminals," Tajul added.

Lt Gen (retd) Harun-ur Rashid, chief coordinator of the Sector Commanders Forum, told The Daily Star, "We cannot say right now that the process of trying war criminals has started."

"Police arrested two persons in Rajshahi in a case under the existing penal code for trying criminal offences, but war crime is a special kind of offences which should be tried under a special tribunal," he said.

Harun added, "Though the offences of the case in Rajshahi were committed during the Liberation War the case was filed last year as a civil murder case."

"As long as a special tribunal is not formed to try the war criminals where the state

would be complainant, we cannot say the trial process has started," Harun observed.

Trying the war criminals is one of the top five election pledges of the present government. Even after winning the elections and forming the government Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and many of her cabinet colleagues reiterated the government's stance on the issue.

Home Minister Sahara Khatun even said last month the government has taken steps so that the war criminals cannot escape the country.

A resolution has also been passed unanimously in parliament for trying the war criminals following a proposal placed before the House by a ruling party lawmaker.

Despite all these, no major progress has been made to start the process of trial, say sources concerned in the government.

Police sources also say there is no official list of war criminals with which they can stop them from fleeing the country.

Meanwhile, sources say in different cabinet meetings the issue of trying war criminals has been discussed informally without having it on the agenda.

It has been made in the cabinet, the sources say, adding the issue is likely to come up at today's cabinet meeting. But the discussions are mainly limited to the possible options of starting the process.

The ministers concerned and legal experts on different occasions informally discussed whether the trial should be held under the International Crimes Tribunals Act, 1973 or whether the law should be amended or new law should be formulated, sources say.

They also discussed whether an enquiry commission should be set up first and a tribunal constituted on completion of enquiry, the sources add.

Ordinances chosen

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Ordinance, 2006, The Code of Criminal Procedure (amendment) Ordinance, 2007, The Code of Criminal Procedure (second amendment), 2007, Speedy Trial Act (amendment) Ordinance, 2007, Criminal Law (amendment) Ordinance, 2007, Finance Ordinance, 2007, Consolidated Fund (supplementary) Ordinance, 2007, Consolidated Fund (advanced) Ordinance, 2007, Bangladesh Biman Corporation (amendment) Ordinance, 2007, Public Procurement (amendment) Ordinance, 2007, Padma Multi-purpose Bridge Project (and accusation) Ordinance, 2007, Money Laundering Prevention (amendment) Ordinance, 2007, Electoral Roll Ordinance, 2007, Bangladesh Flag Vessels Protection (amendment) Ordinance, 2007, The President's (remuneration and privileges) (amendment) Ordinance, 2007, The Pesticides (amendment) Ordinance, 2007, Income Tax (amendment) Ordinance, 2007, Padma Multi-purpose Bridge Project (and accusation) Ordinance, 2007, The President's (remuneration and privileges) (amendment) Ordinance, 2007, The Pesticides (amendment) Ordinance, 2007, Income Tax (amendment) Ordinance, 2007, Islamic University (amendment) Ordinance, 2007, Islamic University (amendment) (amendment) Ordinance, 2007, Islamic University (amendment) Ordinance, 2007, Human Rights Commission Ordinance, 2007, Income Tax (second amendment) Ordinance, 2007, Income Tax (amendment) Ordinance, 2007, Election Commission Secretariat Ordinance, 2008, Bangladesh University of Professionals Ordinance, 2008, Anti-terrorism Ordinance, 2008, Finance Ordinance, 2008, Appropriation Ordinance, 2008, Appropriation (supplementary) Ordinance, 2008, Rangpur University Ordinance, 2008, Representation of the People Order (amendment) Ordinance, 2007, The Pesticides (amendment) Ordinance, 2007, Income Tax (amendment) Ordinance, 2007, Islamic University (amendment) (amendment) Ordinance, 2007, Islamic University (amendment) Ordinance, 2007, Human Rights Commission Ordinance, 2007, Income Tax (second amendment) Ordinance, 2007, Income Tax (amendment) Ordinance, 2007, Election Commission Secretariat Ordinance, 2008, Bangladesh University of Professionals Ordinance, 2008, Anti-terrorism Ordinance, 2008, Finance Ordinance, 2008, Appropriation Ordinance, 2008, Appropriation (supplementary) Ordinance, 2008, Rangpur University Ordinance, 2008, and Bangladesh Shilpa Bank (amendment) Ordinance, 2008.

BNP to skip

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to return to parliament.

"We (two BNP members of the special committee) were not present at today's special committee meeting as they (treasury bench) have turned down our request for including Salauddin Quader Chowdhury in the special committee," opposition Chief Whip Joyal Abedin Faruq told reporters at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban complex.

The BNP parliamentary party proposed the names of MK Anwar and Salauddin Quader Chowdhury as members of the special committee of parliament. Of the two, MK Anwar was included in the committee.

The immediate past speaker, Jamiruddin Sircar, unilaterally allocated 10 seats in the front row and 12 seats in the second row for the opposition lawmakers.

The treasury bench, however, included him (Faruq) instead of Salauddin without having any discussion with the opposition, said the opposition chief whip.

"We shall wait for the authorities concerned to make the changes to the special committee," Faruq said.

He said the whole nation is worried about the 'non-cooperation' and 'autocratic attitude' of the treasury bench.

Faruq said they wrote to the chief whip for including

Foreign aid

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\$2.08 billion, which is 25 per cent higher than the previous year.

The country received the highest amount of foreign aid in the last fiscal year after 1971-72, ERD sources said.

It was a staggering figure that Bangladesh has received in foreign aid so far compared to that of the last fiscal year given the absence of any kind of natural calamity like Sidr and flood.

The period of political transition is also to be taken into consideration as donors at this stage are in the dark about the new regime to come and they have to look into the policy taken by the new government before any aid disbursement, sources added.

The Asian Development Bank will provide \$453 million, the World Bank \$280 million, Department of International Development \$49 million, Germany \$25 million, Japan \$20 million, EU \$10 million and Canada \$12 million.

The donors in the 2008-09 fiscal year pledged to disburse \$3.21 billion for 62 projects under the lending programme. In the last six months projects involving \$1.76 billion have already been signed which is 55 percent of the total aid.

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