

Ekushey Boi Mela

FROM PAGE 16 seen paying tribute at the Central Shaheed Minar and with Bangla letters painted on their faces. The publishers' sale expectation was sky-high.

People of all ages waited in long queues to enter the fair. The road outside the Mela premises had a festive look with huge gathering of people and display of vivid colours.

Inside, the people were gathering in stalls either to browse the titles or to buy. Cultural programmes held in the fair compound added colour to the festivity.

However, there was a lack of quality books on music in the fair.

"I bought some books on music but none of these contain theoretical analysis. There is a lack of academic education on music or musicology. A great reason for this is the absence of analytical books on music in our country while music itself is an international language," said Sayem Rana, a music expert.

"There are lots of good books on music in the international arena but these are not quite available or being translated,"

said Rana. "I have been coming to the fair every day but I found almost no standard books on music other than those published by the Nazrul Academy," said Bibekanda Das, a singer and music expert.

"There are many maestros in our country but they shy away from publicity. The publishers should approach and encourage them to write good books on music," said Bibek.

It was the beginning of the last week of Amar Ekushey Boi Mela. So there was a rush among the young writers for publishing their new books. They were massing at the media centres to announce their upcoming titles.

The new books published in the last few weeks include Ek Chokhu Rakkhosh by Maruf Rehman, Ka-Mohila by Rashid Jamil, Rough Khata by Dhrubo Esh, Urbashi Shaaj by Mosharraf Khan, Duronto Pakhi (collection of poetry) by Prashanta Kumar Saha, Kathibiri Crossfire by Sontosh Barua, Jontronar Prokhor Rodey by Sonia Sayem.



A visitor holds aloft a child to save her from the rush at the Amar Ekushey Boi Mela in the capital on the International Mother Language Day yesterday.

BCL ransacks RU provost room

They act on rumour of hall takeover by JCD men

RU CORRESPONDENT

Several hundred activists of Bangladesh Chhatra League's Rajshahi University unit ransacked the room of Shaheed Habibur Rahman hall provost and damaged valuables, including the only portrait of Shaheed Habibur Rahman, early yesterday.

Sources said the unruly BCL activists entered the provost room around 12:45am and left everything of the room, including furniture, documents, books and telephones sets, in a mess.

BCL sources said Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD) activists held a secret meeting with Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) activists to occupy the hall on the night. BCL protested the secret meeting and

engaged in an altercation with JSD men over the matter.

But soon after placing wreaths at Shaheed Minar, several hundred BCL activists went to the hall with iron rods and hockey sticks and tried to flush out JSD activists.

The BCL men then ousted JSD activists from their rooms and requested hall provost Prof Saiful Islam Faruki over phone to come to the spot and seal off the rooms occupied by JSD and JCD activists.

As Prof Saiful's arrival was delayed, some BCL activists started ransacking the room of the hall provost in front of huge number of police. BCL men also set fire to the banners and placards of JSD.

Sayem Sabu, a journalist of local Sonali Sangband, and student Quaim were injured

during the melee.

At about 2:30am, hall provost along with additional police rushed to the hall and assured the BCL men that the authorities would take action against the JSD and JCD activists responsible for the incident.

Police later raided the hall, mainly the rooms occupied by JSD and JCD, following repeated demands from BCL.

During the raid, police recovered a sharp weapon, two hockey sticks and three iron rods. But none was arrested in this connection, police said.

A large number of policemen were deployed in and around the central Shaheed Minar to avert any untoward incident.

Hillary flies in China, calls for deeper ties

Both countries pledge joint effort on economy, climate change

AFP, Beijing

The United States and China glossed over differences on human rights as they pledged here yesterday to work more closely in tackling the global economic crisis and climate change.

Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and Chinese Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi set the stage for future joint action on

the two crises, as Chinese activists said police had sought to muzzle them during Clinton's high-profile visit.

Giving hope for a new era of cooperation between the world powers, the pair told a press conference they had already begun planning for the Group of 20 summit in London on April 2.

The pair were to meet again next month in the United

States to coordinate positions for the summit where Presidents Barack Obama and Hu Jintao were to hold their first meeting since Obama took office in January.

Hillary Clinton told Hu that she and Yang had "agreed in principle to a strategic and economic dialogue that we will work on with the hope of having you and president Obama personally announce it."

Bid to stop torture

FROM PAGE 1 member of regular law enforcement agencies or the armed forces, or of any other government office.

According to the bill, officials charged with the offences would not be able to justify their acts citing exceptional circumstances whatsoever including a state of war, internal political instability, a state of emergency, and an order of a superior officer or a public authority.

The bill was submitted by ruling Awami League (AL) lawmaker Saber Hossain Chowdhury, who is also the party's organising secretary, sources in the secretariat said.

The lawmaker drafted the bill in conformity with the UN convention against torture, and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, which was adopted on December 10, 1984.

Bangladesh signed on to the convention led by a previous AL-led government on October 5, 1998, promising to create effective legislation, and to take administrative, judicial or other measures to prevent acts of torture in its territory.

The country's constitution also provides safeguard against torture. Article 35 (5) of the constitution addresses it directly, saying, "No person shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman, or degrading punishment or treatment."

But no successive government, including all AL-led ones, made any move to enact any law to prevent such incidents.

Prior to the December 29, 2008 parliamentary election, there was a rather long period in the country, when a large number of extra judicial killings, torture and abuses of human rights were reported, mainly during the regimes of BNP-led alliance government and the successive immediate past military backed caretaker government.

AL President Sheikh Hasina, who assumed the office of the premier after her party won a landslide victory in the December election, was among the people who strongly opposed extra judicial killings and torture.

The premier on February 11 in the parliament also warned of stern actions against extra judicial killings, saying her government will form a committee to investigate the torture and injustices inflicted upon the people during BNP-led government's regime.

A number of senior leaders

of the ruling AL, who were detained by the joint forces during the immediate past caretaker government, also demanded formation of a parliamentary probe body for taking actions against officials who reportedly were involved in torturing politicians.

In a written statement about the bill, Saber stressed the need for such a law, given the ruthless wanton practices of illegal arrests, detentions, torture, and extra judicial killings in the country.

"The country must legislate urgently in order to criminalise custodial torture and deaths, and to avoid repetition of serious human rights violations -- a sad and unacceptable feature of our past," Saber added.

He is of the view that the legislation is imperative to ensure rule of law in the country.

The proposed legislation is expected to protect the people from abuses, and prevent recurrence of human rights violations.

The Parliament Secretariat officials said the AL lawmaker submitted two bills -- one is against torture, and the other is against eviction of slum dwellers, to protect them from whimsical eviction from public lands.

The officials said they will send the bills to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Private Members' Bills and Resolutions, which is likely to be formed this week.

"The committee will scrutinise the bills and recommend or disregard those for placement in the House," a senior official said. Passage of the bill against torture, depends on the government's will and the House's sentiment for enacting such a law, the official added.

THE ANTI-TORTURE BILL According to the bill, torture means any act or omission which causes physical or mental pain to any person, for obtaining from that person or some other person, information or a confession, or for punishing that person for any act or omission, for which that person or some other person is responsible, or is suspected of being responsible, or for intimidating or coercing that person or some other person.

"Any person who tortures any other person shall be guilty of an offence, and any person who attempts to commit, aids and abets in committing, and conspires to commit an offence shall also be guilty of an offence," the proposed bill stipulates.

It seeks to enact a provision to punish an offender with rigorous imprisonment for a term no less than five years, and also with a fine no less than Tk 25,000.

In an event of custodial death, if it is proven that the death occurred as a consequence of torture, the person who committed the offence, shall be sentenced to rigorous imprisonment for life, and shall be fined an amount no less than Tk 100,000, the proposed legislation adds.

"An offence under the bill shall be cognisable, non-compoundable, and non-bailable, within the meaning and for the purposes of the Code of Criminal Procedure 1898," the bill says.

If a person under investigation for an offence punishable under the bill, is a public servant, he or she shall be immediately placed on suspension, if the person under investigation for an offence under the bill is a member of any of the law enforcement agencies in Bangladesh, including the armed forces comprising the army, air force, and the navy, the accused officer shall be immediately relieved of all duties, the bill proposes.

"A person convicted of an offence under the bill shall be terminated from public service from the date of conviction. However, if the sentence is reversed through an appeal, the appellate court shall issue necessary orders to reinstate the person in the service," the bill says.

The bill proposes that the trial of an offence punishable under it, shall be completed within six months from the date of filing the charge sheet against the accused, while the investigation of an offence must be completed within seven months from the date of recording the first complaint.

An appeal against any verdict in a proceeding initiated under the provisions of the bill shall be concluded within 12 months from the date of filing the appeal, the bill adds.

CBA leaders

FROM PAGE 1 reception to the newly elected central CBA leaders.

The CBA leaders took up their new posts, in style, hoodwinking the risks involved.

The programme was held at the Key Point Installation (KPI)-1 area, which is a high risk zone of a gas field that is off limits to general people. The place was however left totally insecure when locals joined the area on Friday night to join the celebrations.

Locals said that the food for the programme was also cooked at that site which has inflammable deposits.

The event comes at a time when there is renewed threat of Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh activities in the country as well.

Many locals have raised questions how such a vulnerable and sensitive area of a state gas field, categorised as a KPI zone, could be rendered so insecure for such a public gathering of importance.

Deputy General Manager (DGM) Md Shahjahan of the field himself attended the programme as chief guest while Md Matiar Rahman, the DGM in charge of the security of the field was a special guest. Md Shahjahan said that he did not wish to attend the event but was forced to do so.

Other CBA leaders from Dhaka, Brahmanbaria Titas Gas Field, Habiganj Gas Field and Narsingdi Gas Field also joined the programme. Md Jahangir Alam Sarkar, general secretary of AL Comilla (North) district

committee and Md Toufiq Mir, Jahapur UP Chairman and local BNP leaders were other noted guests.

The newly elected President of BGF's central CBA Md Shah Alam and General Secretary Mamun Nazir said they were pleasantly surprised by the warmth of the reception accorded to them by local leaders.

Shah Alam claimed that the organisers had collected the money from amongst themselves for the event.

A BGF official, requesting anonymity, however claimed said that the Tk 10 lakh spent on the programme had been collected from among the 54 staff of the gas field as well as workers of other gas fields.

Though a staff earns a meagre monthly salary of around six to seven thousand taka only, they each had to pay Tk 5-10 thousand under pressure from CBA leaders, he claimed.

Md Nurul Islam, Managing Director of the BGF told this correspondent that the CBA leaders arranged the reception on their own and the two DGM's of the field, Md Shahjahan and Matiar Rahman participated in the programme to ensure the security.

The UNO Zakir Hossain of Muradnagar and Thana Additional Officer Md Mainuddin told this correspondent they could have arranged for security at the venue had they been asked for it.

They were not invited to the programme.

Advertisement for Mungla Bunder Kirtipoksha (Mungla Bunder Book Fair) featuring a list of books for sale, including titles like 'Mungla Bunder Kirtipoksha', 'Mungla Bunder Kirtipoksha', 'Mungla Bunder Kirtipoksha', etc. with prices and availability.

Advertisement for Municipal Services Project (Emergency 2007 Flood Restoration and Recovery Assistance Program) featuring an invitation for tender (IFT) for road rehabilitation work in Sylhet. Includes details on contract package, name of work, bid security, and contact information for Zakaria Ahmed (Paplu) Mayor.

Advertisement for Bivassini Merin and Ghose featuring a list of services and products offered, including 'Bivassini Merin and Ghose', 'Bivassini Merin and Ghose', 'Bivassini Merin and Ghose', etc. with contact details for Pooja Mohan Saha.