

**BOI MELA CORNER**

# "Our publishing industry is yet to reach international standards"

-- Farid Ahmed

SHAH ALAM SHAZU

Farid Ahmed is the proprietor of Somoy Prokashoni and executive director of 'Bangladesh Gyan O Srijonshil Prokashok Shomiti', an organisation of publishers. One of the key figures in the country's publishing industry, Ahmed recently spoke to The Daily Star.



PHOTO: ATIL AAKASH

How did you get involved in the publishing business?  
 Farid Ahmed: I started my work in the publishing industry in 1988, by bringing out children's books on the Liberation War. I was inspired to bring out books of this genre, after I realised that there were not many books for children on this topic. I first got a stall at the Ekushey Boi Mela (book fair) in 1989. That year I published books by writers like Syed Shamsul Haq, Humayun Ahmed and Imdadul Haq Milon. That was the start of my career.

What are your preferences when considering publishing something new?  
 Farid Ahmed: I focus on writings that are creative and thought provoking -- including novels, poems, fiction, children's stories etc. The rest include memoirs, travelogues and books on the Liberation War.

You also used to publish a magazine?  
 Farid Ahmed: In the beginning, I was part of a children's organisation. Later some of my friends and I decided to publish a magazine called 'Odhuna'. I was the publisher, while the late poet Shamsur Rahman was the editor. To meet its costs, I also did some translation work at the time. This work eventually brought me closer to the publishing business.

What are your preparations for this year's Ekushey Boi Mela?  
 Farid Ahmed: I believe that each book fair offers new possibilities to publishers. Like every year, we also plan to bring something different to the fair. Selina

Hossain has written a historical novel, titled "August-er Ek Raat", for this year's fair. Other noted authors that we will publish include Muhammad Zafar Iqbal, Anisul Hoque etc. The biggest project however is an encyclopedia on the Liberation War -- "Muktijuddho Kosh" -- which will come out in 12 volumes. A collection of 10 Anisul Hoque novels, titled "Shera Dosh", will also be launched at the fair. Besides, we will also publish a book of poems by Justice Muhammad Habibur Rahman.

What are the biggest issues that confront the publishing industry in Bangladesh?  
 Farid Ahmed: Our publishing industry is

yet to reach international standards. The main reason is the language barrier. All of our readers only read books written in Bangla. We cannot climb over that fence. We have a small readership in West Bengal, but there is no market for our books in the rest of the world. Another problem that we face is that we cannot bring down the book prices. Modernisation is only lifting the cost of publishing. Piracy has also become a headache in recent years.

What is your opinion of the idea that almost anyone can publish nowadays?  
 Farid Ahmed: This has resulted from a lack of professionalism. Publishing is the job of a publisher, not a writer. Why should authors spend their own money to publish their works? They are forced to do so when no publisher is interested in bringing out their books. This is causing a drop in quality, as there is hardly any scope for assessment. So the "self-published" books become a burden on the publishing industry.

Which prominent writers did you publish during the previous Ekushey book fairs?  
 Farid Ahmed: So far, Somoy Prokashoni has published over a thousand books. Each year we publish works by the top writers. Last year, we brought out poet Hasan Azizul Haq's "Bongo Theke Bangladesh", and books by Muntasir Mamun, Abdullah Abu Sayeed, Abed Khan and Anisul Hoque. We also published works of young writers whose writings are very promising.

## Unseen layers and striking portraits

Middle-Eastern photography and Norwegian portrait artist's works at Chobi Mela



A photo from Tanya Habjouqa's 'Bedouin Resolution'.

PHOTO COURTESY: tanyahabjouqa.com

A CORRESPONDENT

Chobi Mela brings the eyes of the world to Dhaka every two years, and the seventh edition of the photography festival is reaching out further and deeper this year. A fascinating slideshow on Middle Eastern photography at the festival showed how the medium is vibrant in that region of the world. Curator Hester Keijser, in her presentation at the Goethe-Institut, Dhaka on January 30, focused on various facets of life in the Arabian Gulf. The presentation was not about the typical war-torn and politically violent depictions of the Mid-East, rather it upheld some previously unfocused layers -- ranging from social and cultural aspects to the gradually changing sentiments of people of the region.

The slideshow opened with photographer Tanya Habjouqa's "Bedouin Resolution" and "Occupied Pleasure" -- collections of photographs that focused on the lifestyle and culture of the Bedouins, living in parts of Jordan and Palestine, under constant threats of demolition of their shelters.

Ali and Ramyar's project, "Iran: We live in a paradoxical society", looked into a dually politicised atmosphere of the Iran that led Iranians to choose a self-censorship path, in consistency with the governmental point of view that led to the split of lives and thoughts.

Fredric Lezmi's project, "Arabian Prospects II and III", looked deep into a level of reality in the Mid-East that lies beyond war and political insecurity.

The work of artist Isak Berbic, meanwhile, dealt with history, tragedy, exile

and the limits of representation.

Rania Matar's project highlighted young women at a transitional time of their lives, while Wasma Mansour depicted Saudi women's suppressed efforts in reconciling with their identities and asserting their sense of individualism.

Photographer Selim Sume's photo diary read the feelings of alienation and missing life, and his sentiments towards the army.

Society, culture, identity and individualism were recurring themes of the photos, as well as the psychological consequences of political instability and revolution. However, it is the ambitious efforts and challenging ways photographers have responded to those subjects that have made Middle-Eastern photography so exciting, complex and multi-layered.

Following the slideshow, noted Norwegian portrait photographer Morten Krogvold made an enlightening presentation of his works.

Krogvold's slides featured some striking portraits of people from different strata of life -- ranging from Nelson Mandela to anonymous people and often the portraits of the dead, taken from museums. Krogvold also displayed some of his 'long exposure' works, which were taken with up to six hours of exposure time.

Krogvold is among those photographers who prefer using a film in their cameras, and said he has not yet been seduced by the convenience of digital photography. He said people often lose originality and start following other photographers' works, and insisted on originality rather than just cloning.

## Barbra Streisand to sing at Oscars

Singer, actress and double Oscar-winner Barbra Streisand is to perform at the Academy Awards for the first time in 36 years, organisers have announced.

The 70-year-old last sang at the Oscars in 1977 when she performed "Evergreen" from "A Star is Born", recipient of that year's award for best original song.

Telecast producers Craig Zadan and Neil Meron said they were "honoured" she had agreed



Source: BBC

to do a "special" performance.

Adele and Norah Jones are also lined up to sing at the event on 24 February.

Streisand received her first Oscar in 1969 for her debut acting role in the musical "Funny Girl". She shared the award with Katharine Hepburn, recognised that year for "The Lion in Winter".

## Aranyak stages Iblish after two decades



PHOTO: JAMIL MAHMUD

A scene from the play.

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Theatre troupe Aranyak staged one of its early plays, "Iblish", after nearly two decades. The play was staged on January 31 at the National Theatre Hall of Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy, as part of the festival celebrating the troupe's 40th anniversary.

Written and directed by Mamunur Rashid, the play featured some of the troupe's former members, including Tushar Khan, Fazlur Rahman Babu, Harun-ar-Rashid and Azizul Hakim. The cast also included current members such as Mamunur Rashid, Mannan Heera, Shah Alam Dulal, Faiz Zahir and Momena Chowdhury.

"Iblish" premiered in 1981. It narrates the struggles of people living in a rural

area.

As part of the festival, the troupe also staged another old and popular play "Shankranti" after nearly two years. The play was staged on January 30 at the National Theatre Hall.

Written and directed by Mamunur Rashid, the play tells the story of a group of indigenous performers from the greater Tangail region. Known as 'Shong', the performers generate laughter through their acts but ironically, real-life hardships remain concealed in their laughter.

The cast of the play included AKM Hasan, Shamim Zaman, Momena Chowdhury, Arif Hossain and Chanchal Chowdhury.

The weeklong festival ended on February 1 with the staging of the resurrected version of its first play "Kabor".

<b>BTV</b>	10:05 Bangla Feature Film	<b>Desh TV</b>	03:00 Bangla Feature Film
	02:30 BPL 2013 (Live)		06:30 Nupur Bejey Jai
	06:30 BPL 2013 (Live)		07:45 Music Dot Net
	09:40 Unnayan Bangladesh		08:15 Pothey Jetye Jetye
<b>ATN BANGLA</b>		<b>Maasranga Television</b>	
	11:10 Promito Bangla		02:30 Bangla Feature Film
	12:30 Prosango		06:30 Puppet Show
	03:05 Bangla Feature Film		06:55 Shuddho Shobdo
	08:40 Drama Serial: Shongshar Shukher Hoy Bedonar Gun-e		09:00 Bengal-ITC SRA Classical Music Fest
<b>CHANNEL i</b>		<b>CHANNEL 9</b>	
	12:30 Taroka Kothan		08:30 Bangla Feature Film
	01:30 Bangla Feature Film		02:30 BPL 2013 (Live)
	06:20 The Traffic Signal		06:30 BPL 2013 (Live)
	09:35 Hridoye Mati O Manush		11:15 Daily Sports
<b>ntv</b>		<b>Gtv</b>	
	08:45 Bangla Feature Film		

<b>RADIO</b>	
abc radio FM 89.2	02:00 Foorti Unlimited
12:20 Campus Campus	06:00 Bumper to Bumper
05:30 Kacha Lanka	10:00 Back to Back Music
07:20 GP Lounch	<b>RADIO TODAY FM 89.6</b>
07:45 Megh Barata	06:00 Green FM
08:10 Adda	08:00 Good Morning Dhaka
09:30 Love Hour	11:00 World Music
11:10 Premrog	04:00 U Turn
<b>RADIO FOORTI</b>	07:00 Tobe Tai Hok
08:00 Aaddabazi	10:00 Raat Bhor Gaan

**Amar Ami On BANGLAVISION at 09:05pm**  
 Celebrity Talk Show  
 Guests: Anisul Hoque & Selina Hossain

**Crazy, Stupid, Love. On HBO at 07:15pm**  
 Genre: Drama/Romance  
 Cast: Steve Carell, Ryan Gosling &

**Shudhui Adda On Boishakhi TV at 09:20pm**  
 Celebrity Talk Show  
 Guest: Mostafa

06:40 Biz Time	04:45 Mohajagatik
09:00 Drama: Lens	08:30 Drama Serial: Poimonta
11:30 Ha-show	11:00 Gano Phone
<b>ETV</b>	<b>Fox Movies</b>
10:02 Dehaghari	03:00 Black Swan
01:30 Bangla Feature Film	04:45 X-Men: First Class
12:05 Ekushey-er Raat	07:00 Drive
	08:40 Warrior
	11:00 Undefeated
<b>Boishakhi TV</b>	<b>HBO</b>
10:45 Bangla Feature Film	02:2 The Matrix
05:30 Battle of Cricket	05:05 Revolutions
06:20 Amar Chokhe Ami	07:15 Blade II
08:00 Drama	07:15 Crazy, Stupid, Love
	09:30 Cowboys & Aliens
<b>BANGLAVISION</b>	<b>Star World</b>
11:05 Ami Ekhon Ki Karbo	03:00 Packed to the Rafters
01:05 Bangla Feature Film	08:30 Teacher's Achiever's Club
06:25 Front Line	09:30 Last Resort
09:45 Drama Serial: Gulshan Avenue	10:30 50 First Dates
	<b>Discovery Channel</b>
	02:30 Dino World
	08:30 Man vs. Wild
	09:30 World's Top 5

<b>DRAMA SERIAL</b>	
ATN BANGLA	09:30pm Dhol
08:00pm Nirbikar Manush	<b>BANGLAVISION</b>
09:20pm DB	08:15pm Dui Takar Bahaduri
<b>CHANNEL i</b>	<b>Rtv</b>
07:50pm Noorjahan	09:05pm Alohshpur
11:30pm Roshni	09:50pm Eti Dulabhai
<b>ntv</b>	<b>CHANNEL 9</b>
08:15pm Oghoton Ghoton Potiyoshi	00:30pm Nagarik
	11:00pm Idiots
<b>ETV</b>	<b>Gtv</b>

<b>NEWS BULLETIN</b>	
<b>BTV</b>	<b>Boishakhi TV</b>
News (Bangla) at 12pm, 2pm, 5pm, 8pm.	News (Bangla) at 10am, 2pm, 7pm.
News (English) at 10am, 4pm, 10pm.	News (English) at 9am, 6pm.
<b>ATN BANGLA</b>	<b>BANGLAVISION</b>
News (Bangla) at 11am, 12pm, 2pm, 7pm, 10pm.	News (Bangla) at 10am, 2pm, 7:30pm, 10:30pm.
News (English) at 9am, 6pm.	News (English) at 1pm, 3pm, 6pm, 9pm.
<b>CHANNEL i</b>	<b>Rtv</b>
News (Bangla) at 2pm, 9pm, 10:30pm.	News (Bangla) at 1:45pm, 6:45pm, 10:45pm.
<b>ntv</b>	<b>Desh TV</b>
News (Bangla) at 2pm, 7:30pm, 10:30pm.	News (Bangla) at 2pm, 7pm, 9pm, 11pm.
<b>ETV</b>	<b>Maasranga Television</b>
News (Bangla) at 1pm, 3pm, 5pm, 7pm, 9pm, 11pm.	News (Bangla) at 7pm, 1am.

<b>TALK SHOW</b>	
<b>ATN BANGLA</b>	09:05pm Amar Ami
12:30am Lead News	11:25pm Lal Golap
<b>CHANNEL i</b>	<b>Rtv</b>
09:45am Tritio Matra	10:40am Tarokalap
<b>ETV</b>	11:30pm Our Democracy
10:10pm Golpo Sholpo Gaan	<b>Desh TV</b>
<b>Boishakhi TV</b>	09:45pm Bele Obela Sharabela
09:20pm Shudhui Adda	11:45pm Shoja Kotha
11:00pm Nirapad Sarak Chai	<b>Maasranga Television</b>
<b>BANGLAVISION</b>	12:02am Shamprotik