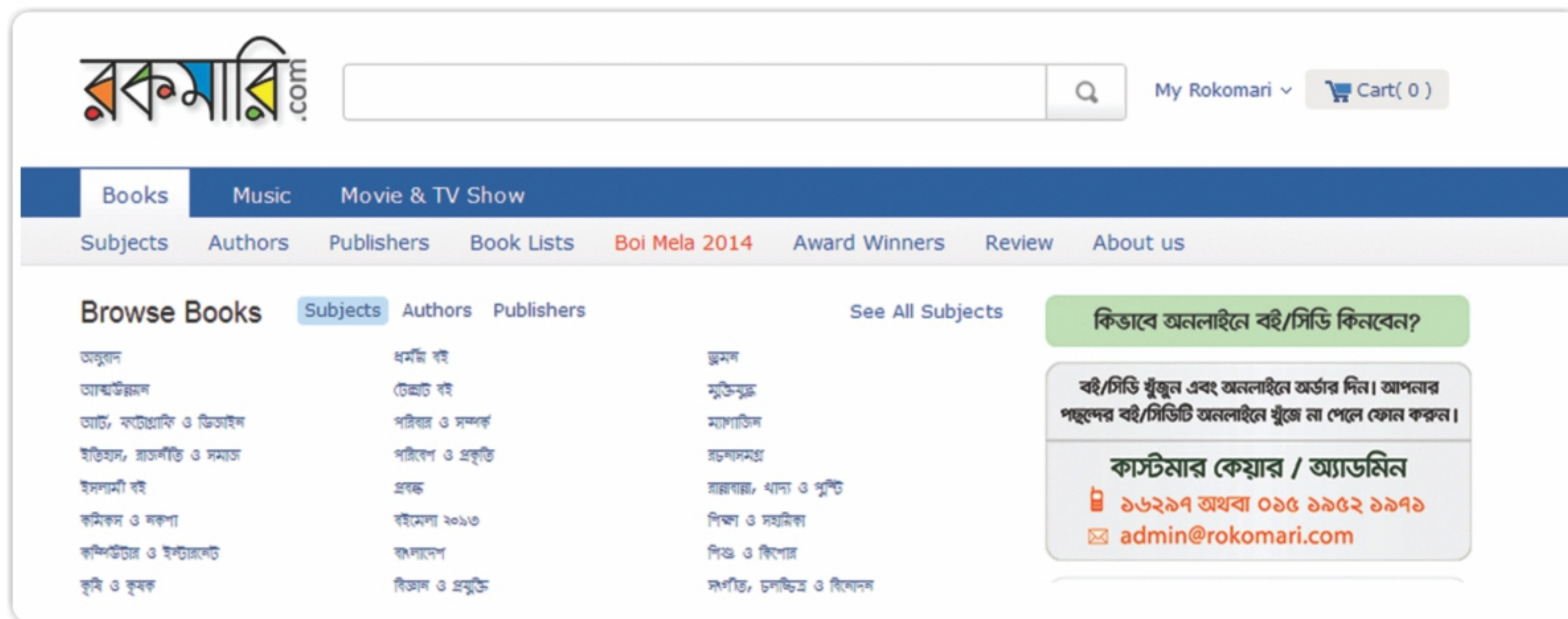


For the bookworms: Rokomari.com



FAUZIA SULTANA

Fiction, technology, translations of international books, plays, satires, beauty or programming--name a book genre and you will find it on Rokomari.com.

Rokomari.com, a Bangladeshi online shopping portal, is an e-commerce venture of Onnorokom Web Services Ltd, a sister concern of Onnorokom Group. It is an e-bookstore that sells mostly books, music albums, movies and TV series.

Why books? Mahmudul Hasan, Chairman, Onnorokom Group answered, "I feel as a nation we have low enthusiasm in reading. Besides, it is

difficult to find different genres of books all in one place, except during the Omor Ekushey Boimela." Mahmudul Hasan graduated from the Department of Electrical and Electronics Engineering, BUET. On asking why he chose entrepreneurship over engineering he shared, "Entrepreneurship gives me the liberty and space to explore; my educational background enabled me to pursue my passion as a profession."

The e-store is designed with a user-friendly shopping interface with features including multiple payment options like cash on delivery or through cards, book reviews, minimum shipping charge, discounts and a thirty-day replacement

policy.

Not just in Bangladesh, Rokomari.com has attracted readers overseas. Of late, e-books were launched on Rokomari.com. "In order to minimise the high shipping charges paid by readers overseas, we came up with the idea of developing the Rokomari.com application for smart phones. We have already developed one for iOS and are currently working on another for Android" said Mahmudul.

In the near future, Rokomari.com plans to include items like experiment kits for children, cycle accessories, computers, cameras, paintings, tickets, food, toys and many more.

Weather you order one book or many, Rokomari.com charges a minimal shipping charge of Taka 30 for every purchase. However, on many occasions this charge exceeds the minimum amount, especially when orders need to be shipped outside Dhaka. "In such situations instead of charging our clients the extra amount, we subsidise the shipping charges and at times also work in collaboration with other organisations that help us subsidise the shipping charges," said Mahmudul. "The only reason we do so is to make sure that people all over Bangladesh and abroad read more books and eventually strengthen their habit of reading."

Artist, craftsman and humanitarian



ANIKA HOSSAIN

A poet, an artist, a photographer, a musician and a craftsman, Asad Iqbal Sumon leads a full, interesting life. Always one to deviate from the norm, Sumon could never abide by the rules and regulations of a formal education in art. "I joined the art department of YODA, right after I got my Bachelor's degree at a university in Sylhet," says the talented young artist. "But their rules were not for me, so I dropped out soon after and pursued my own style of art."

Sumon's paintings are themed around different aspects of himself. They are self portraits of sorts, reflecting not only his outer self, but facets of himself from within. "I have a black side and a white side and a whole lot of grey, and I try to show this through my paintings, not in an abstract, but in a realistic style," he relates. The artist loves to experiment with colours and he is currently working with red and blue, which he finds have a startling effect when used together.

While his paintings are unique and eye catching, his list of talents doesn't end there. In the past seven years, Sumon has discovered and developed an interest in making hand crafted jewellery. "My designs are unisex so anyone can wear my creations," explains the artist. "What makes my work unique is that I make my jewellery with scraps-- things I pick up on the roads during my meanderings around the city, such as the bright pink strings used to tie boxes of sweets, locks, knots and bolts, broken pieces of a plate and such," he elaborates. The artist then makes jewellery, mostly necklaces and bracelets and sells them via exhibitions (he has had four group exhibitions so far), facebook and street stalls where his work is extremely popular with the current generation.

Sumon is also an occasional photographer and violinist, but poetry remains one of his constant passions. "I published a book called Jatra Birotir Por, in 2011 and continue to write poetry whenever I find inspiration," he says. Aside from his artistic ventures, he is also interested in social and political issues and has founded a group known as Sworong, comprising of 18 artists, who express their views on the current political turmoil in the country through murals and other artwork. This group is also a humanitarian one, which organises projects through which they aid the underprivileged.



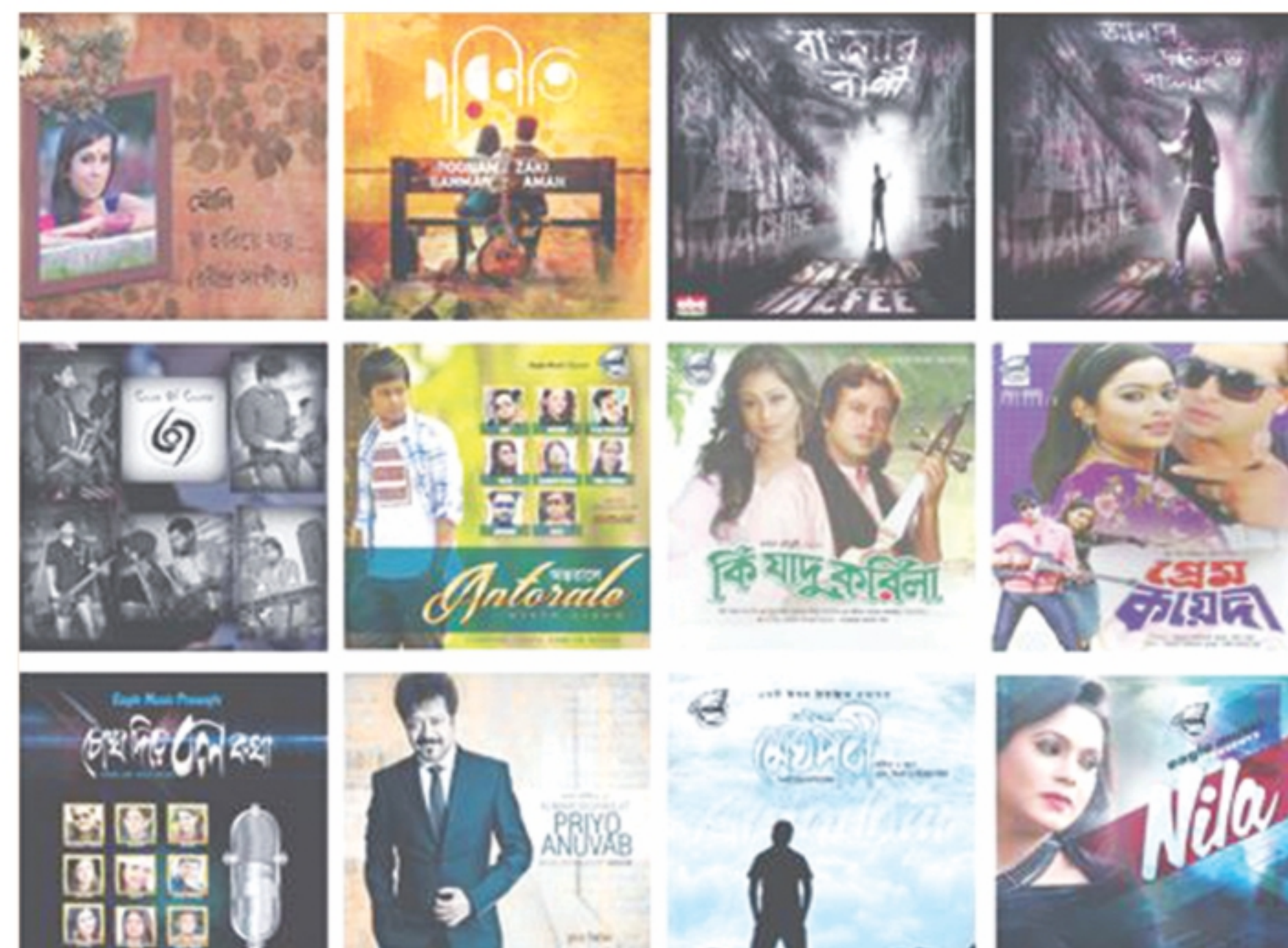
APURBA JAHANGIR

Piracy and illegal downloads has been the downfall of the music industry -- say the ever struggling musicians in Bangladesh. There were no initiatives taken by anyone to solve this problem and for that, the industry fell into a dark hole. Finally, Mushroom Entertainment came to save the day with their invention-- the M E Label.

This is a one stop solution for everybody involved in the music business. Artists, managers, labels, everybody can run their business using this platform. They mainly release singles or albums online, with a unique code attached. The codes are how the artists and labels track their songs on the website. If the songs get played or bought via YouTube or Spotify, the label will get paid and so will the artists.

M E Label keeps 15 percent of the revenue generated and the rest is divided among the bands, artists, lyricists and so on. They are currently operating in Bangladesh, the United States and Nepal. "The platform is getting bigger and better day by day, working with every major artist of the country. We are really excited to be working with our fellow musicians and hopefully we will finally make a change for the betterment of the industry" says Armeen Musa, vice president of Mushroom Entertainment.

Rescuing the Industry



More than two hundred artists are now signed with M E label which includes artists like James, Kumar Bishwajit, Shafin Ahmed, Tahsan and many more. In 2013 renowned singer Shafin Ahmed was appointed as M E Labels brand ambassador. They are also affiliated with over 10 local record labels including Bengal Music Company, Aajob Records, Music Media, and Eagle Music etc. They have more than 200 albums and 100 singles in their catalogue right

now which are already distributed online.

When asked about how the artistes and audiences feel about this, their country director Md Iftekharul Islam Rumon said, "As you know, Digital Distribution is a new era and also a new experience for both Bangladeshi artists and audience, but they have been amazing, we are getting good feedback from the audience and also artists who say they are very satisfied with our services as a start up."



PHOTOS: KAZI TAHSHIN AGAZ APURBO