

## Hard life of a struggling writer

A bit of background – Ikhtisad Ahmed is a writer, playwright and poet. He is the author of Cryptic Verses and Requiem, two poetry collections, The Deliverance of Sanctuary, an absurdist play and Yours, Etcetera, a collection of short stories. Zubier Abdullah is a writer living in Bangladesh, who is just at the beginning of his writing career. He has been published in a number of leading magazines and newspapers in the country.

Both Zubier and Ikhtishad have been published in Wasafiri magazine, one of the leading literary magazines in the world, in an issue celebrating the Bengali voices in writing.

We asked them what the primary obsta-

cles that a young writer growing up in Bangladesh will face. Ikhtishad said "The toughest thing you will have to overcome if you want to be a writer is being taken seriously. A lot of the times you cannot tell people that you are a writer, since in our culture, being a writer is not considered a proper job. You will face a lot of stigma from your parents and your loved ones and there will be a constant pressure on you to get a real job."

"Another issue that you will face quite early on, if you decide to be a writer, is how much work it is. It's not all fun and games. Each story and each article has to be worked on meticulously so that it can be the best it

can be. It's very easy to write a story or an article once in a while, when you are motivated and call yourself a writer but to be able to work every day, day in and day out, is where the real difficulty lies. Going from an idea to a fully finished story can take weeks or even months of dedicated work and it is not for the faint of heart" says Zubier.

We asked them about publication avenues for young writers in Bangladesh. "Nowadays there are a lot of publication options opening up. Online magazines such as Glyph, UNAB magazine and others, as well as publications like Shout of The Daily Star all offer places for someone to send their

work in" Zubier says. "Aside from that, there are numerous international magazines like Wasafiri, which are looking for new writers."

"My own book, Yours Etcetera, was published by Bengal Lights. They are doing great work, giving new voices a place to be heard. Aside from that, if you want to get published, UPL as well as The Daily Star Books are all some of the major publishers in the country."

When asked about the one piece of advice they would give, they said "Don't treat it lightly. Being a writer is a lot of hard work. Also don't quit your day job."

**By Mormee Mahtab**

### REVIEW

## Dedicated to the people of Korail

Labyrinth is a book that features life in Korail slum. Brought out by Bengal Publications, the coffee table book is the product of the teamwork of Munize Manzur and Arif Hafiz. Together, they have provided an intimate glimpse of this fascinating world.

In fact, earlier this year, a photography exhibition was also held, at the gallery of Red Shift Coffee Lounge.

Hafiz, a veteran photographer, had ventured into the slum, capturing the essence of the locality - its people, their lives and their interesting ways of doing things. Meanwhile, Manzur, a writer - who was also Literary

Editor of The Daily Star - drew inspiration from the pictures and wrote monologues and musings and stories based on them, depicting the lives of the people through her eyes.

"Munize was the one who picked the photographs for the book," Hafiz informed while he flipped through it. "Korail slum is a city within a city," he continued. "They have everything that one needs, almost as if you do not need to go outside for anything."

Indeed, the pictures show bazaars and kitchen markets and butchery shops and jewellery shops - a wide array of things that make up a locality. Who would have thought

that a jewellery shop can be situated at the heart of a slum? From the hardships of life to the perks it provides, Labyrinth is a document of the lifestyle of a people often less talked about.

Labyrinth is therefore a bundle of surprises. But perhaps the best thing about the book is that it makes the audience see the slum and its dwellers with more empathy, allowing private glimpses into a world less known - perhaps a bridge over that lake?

**By M H Haider**

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