

VENTURE



MIB SPIRIT CREATED WITH LOVE, AFFECTION AND UTTER DEXTERITY

RASMIA RAHMAN AMREEN
PHOTOS COURTESY: MIB



MIB Spirit is a line of lifestyle products unlike the rest. What makes MIB Spirit stand out amongst all other brands is their open declaration of using industrial waste products and up-cycle them to create magic. A wide range of environment friendly products such as bags, wallets, scarves, natural soap bars, key-rings, etc. are made to help give the users their identity. Khaled Mahmud, the originator of MIB Spirit, feels that through his work, honesty and truth are delivered.

Initially for the first three years, MIB Spirit was run as a test model. Now, it is in full bloom. The MIB Spirit Studio, located in Dhanmondi 10/A, is described to be "a physical store" where the products are not only put on display, but the whole process leading up to their creation takes place. "Because of intimacy and love, our interior looks classy," says Mahmud.

Mahmud expresses his wish to help the young generation deliver. "MIB Spirit is an initiative to help bring forth the changes this generation is looking for. We are trying to present an alternative and create opportunities for new entrepreneurs. Our highly-skilled generation should not only be busy consuming and they need to break free of the virtual-reality."

Mahmud likes to term the people working with him as "The Real People". He even disagrees to call them "employees" and finds comfortable acknowledging these six members as his "team". Mahmud and his army fashions MIB Spirit products through a complex designing system depending on the current trends, needs, and prices. He believes that the ability to foresee future and predict ahead of time is very important when it comes to running a business.

When the keen and observant Mahmud

was asked about his goal, he replied "I want to help create a Bengali identity."

From 5th January up to the 14th, MIB Spirit arranged The Winter Meet-Up at their studio where the works of different entrepreneurs, bloggers, bands and celebrities were highlighted and presented in front of the public. Through this event, Mahmud hopes to create a challenging and competitive environment that would help enhance the quality of products. "Mela is not enough. Through a mela, the functional value system is not created. By selling the same range of products over and over again, there is no innovation but trading. Small entrepreneurs cannot sustain in such an environment," he says. He further adds, "Through the Winter Meet-Up, we have tried to create opportunities for small or new entrepreneurs and help them promote their products. Instead of complaining, we want to create scopes so that changes can happen, innovation can happen. It did not take a rocket scientist to create this event and we want people to realise that anybody can do it, anywhere they want to. If each of us ensures using our spaces effectively, then the delivery must come."

Stalls from Organic Essentials, Karkhana, Golpo and many more were showcased throughout the event. These entrepreneurs sold items ranging from baked products, handicrafts, organic skin and hair products, clothes, shoes, artwork and etc. One could even receive his or her own black-and-white vintage photograph by Live Box Camera Photography. On the opening day, a musical show by the very famous and talented Armeen Musa and her band was arranged. Anik Rahman's solo photography exhibition titled "Minors of Human" was also on display throughout the event. ■

HERITAGE

MUKTODHARA PROKASHONI THE PIONEER BEHIND EKUSHEY BOOK FAIR

RASMIA RAHMAN AMREEN

PHOTOS: PRABIR DAS

Muktodhara Prokashoni is the very first reason for us to be able to take part in and celebrate today's Ekushey Boi Mela. On 21st February, 1972, Chittaranjan Saha, an avid lover of books and a graduate from Chaumohani College, laid a mat under a mango tree of the Bangla Academy and put on display 33 publications of his publishing house called Muktodhara Prokashoni to pay homage to the 1952 Language movement martyrs. Needless to say, the rest is history.

But the journey has not been an easy one.

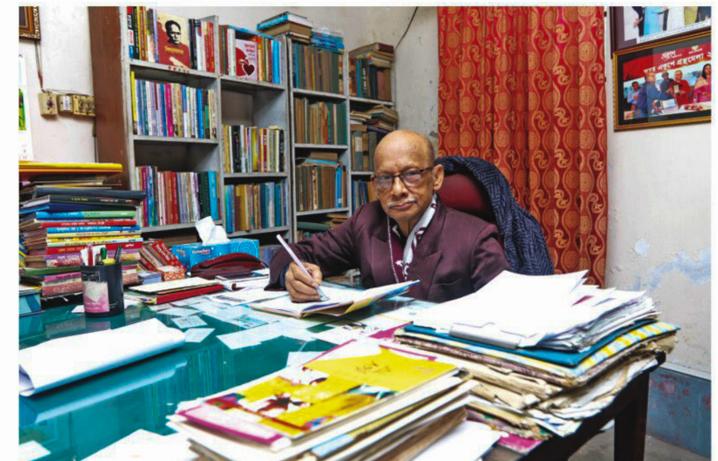
"Chittaranjan Saha was born in 1927 in the Noakhali district. Although his family business revolved around trading of clothing materials, Chittaranjan had other aspirations," says Jahar Lal Saha, the current director of Muktodhara Prokashoni and brother-in-law of Chittaranjan Saha.

Initially, a publishing house named Punthighar Prokashoni was established by Chittaranjan in his home district which became popular for printing notebooks and test papers. Later in the year 1956, he moved to Dhaka along with his business. The publication house was first setup in Patuatuli and later in Banglabazar. In 1967, Punthighar Private Ltd. was established which sold textbooks, notebooks and reference books as well.

"When the war started in 1971, the publishing house was completely burnt down," says Jahar Lal Saha. After 26th of March, Chittaranjan Saha left Dhaka and initially took shelter in Agartala and later crossed over to Calcutta. On 28th May, 1971, Chittaranjan arranged a meeting with the top literature heads residing in Calcutta. They decided on writing and publishing about the injustice and war that was raging in East Pakistan (now Bangladesh). And that was the birth of Muktodhara Prokashoni. The very first book published under this publishing house was *Roktakto Bangla* which included writings by various writers such as Late Jahir Raihan, Late Ahmed Sofa and more and was edited by Anisuzzaman.

"After the war ended, all the publications under Muktodhara Prokashoni were brought to Dhaka and put on display on 21st February, 1972," says Jahar Lal Saha. "There were 33 in total."

In 1974, books were no more displayed over mats. Rather, the very first stall was established by Muktodhara, which measured 8 by 8 feet. "In 1975, four to five stalls were built by different publishers and books were being sold, although unofficially. The number of book lovers



year by year," added Jahar Lal Saha. In 1979, with the collaboration of Bangladesh Pustok Porokasok O Bikreta Somiti and the Bangla Academy authority in the Bangla academy courtyard, a book fair was held. In the year 1984, a guideline was made and the first ever *Amar Ekushe Grantha Mela* was held. "This one time, Maitreyi Devi had come and visited our stall and even praised us for our work," expressed the smiling Jahar Lal Saha.

Chittaranjan Saha is recognised nationally for his initiative and has even

been awarded with the Ekushey Padak and the Vidyasagar Puraskar in 2005, a gold medal for being the best publisher in 1997 and also with the Natyasabha Puraskar in 1988.

Jahar Lal Saha expressed the need of building an adequate library and a research center accompanied by food stalls or a cafeteria near the Bangla Academy premise. "It would help enhance people's love and experience of reading books," he says.

Till this date, Muktodhara Prokashoni

has published over 2,000 books. They have even taken an initiative to publish books written especially for young minds and have succeeded in publishing 300 of the like. By arranging book fairs throughout the country, Muktodhara Prokashoni has taken a healthy initiative of encouraging children and youth into developing the habit of reading. It also encourages authorities to establish libraries throughout the country. Since 1974, the publishing house exports books overseas as well. ■