

Celebrity book releases to watch for this EKUSHEY BOI MELA



ILLUSTRATION: SALMAN SAKIB SHAHRYAR

With only a few days left before the month-long Amar Ekushey Boi Mela (Amar Ekushey Book Fair) kicks off, many stars are preparing to release their new books.

SHAH ALAM SHAZU

As is tradition, the fair will see a range of exciting new titles from some of Bangladesh's beloved celebrities.

Here is a look at which stars are releasing their latest works this year:

Renowned singer Sajia Sultana Putul has been an author for 10 years and has published several novels. This year, she's bringing a new novel, titled *Shilpissattar Byabachhed*, set to be released by the esteemed publishing house Anannya Prokashoni.

Speaking about her passion for writing, Putul said, "Writing is something I love, and it's also a hobby. For the past decade, I've been working on books, and I've written a new novel for this year's book fair. I'm looking forward to holding it in my hands.

Like before, I hope readers will love it."

Ekushey Padak-winning actor Abul Hayat has also been a seasoned writer for many years, with numerous books already published. His collection includes short stories, novels, and more. This year, his autobiography *Robi Poth* will be available from the first day of the Ekushey Book Fair.

"*Robi Poth* is my autobiography. I've tried to reflect on the many incidents of my life. How many events can one even remember over a lifetime? Yet, I've made an effort to share as many stories as I could in this book. I hope everyone will enjoy it," said Abul Hayat.

Ekushey Padak-winning actor and cultural activist Mamunur Rashid, who has been awarded the Bangla Academy Award for his writing, has been on the literary scene for more than 50 years. This year, he is releasing

another fan-favourite actor, who also became a household name for his witty performances in Humayun Ahmed's television dramas, Faruque Ahmed, has been consistently publishing books over the past few years, and this year will be no different. He's releasing two new books at the fair, namely, *Amar Na Bola Kotha*, an autobiography published by Kingbodhoy Publication, and *Hau Mau Kha*, a collection of plays published by Mizan Publishers.

"It feels as though time does fly since the book fair is upon us once again. I used to attend the fair as a reader, and now I go there as an author. Readers buy my books, ask for autographs, take pictures with me and it all feels amazing. I'm sure this year will be no different," said Faruque Ahmed.

Celebrated actress Shanarei Devi Shantu, who has been consistently writing for several years, will also be releasing a new book this year. Her novel *Bagh Manush*, published by Aajoh Prokash, will be available from the first day of the fair.

Speaking about her latest release, Shantu said, "*Bagh Manush* is a unique story. I'm confident readers will love it."

a new book titled *Ghotona Shotyo Shotyo Noy* as a collection of columns. Eminent illustrator Dhruba Esh designed the covering of the book which is set to be published by Shobdoshilpo.

"I've been writing columns for newspapers for many years, focusing on contemporary issues. These columns resonate with readers. My book is a collection of many of those columns. Readers who enjoyed them in the newspapers will now be able to read them in the form of a book," said Mamunur Rashid.

Popular actor Dr Ejajul Islam made headlines last year as a writer when he published a book about Humayun Ahmed. This year, he's back with not one, but two books, both of which are centred around the legendary author-director. Published by Somoy Prokashon, the two books are titled *Humayun Sir-er Chokhe Jol* and *Humayun Sir-er Shooting*.

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Imran's 'Mon Bujhli Na' set for Valentine's Day release



Singer Imran Mahmudul is all set to release his latest track *Mon Bujhli Na* this Valentine's Day. The song has been composed by Fuad Almuqtadir, with lyrics penned by Abdur Rahman.

Fuad collaborated with Sanjoy on the composition. Saikat Reza reportedly directed the music video, which features Suman Suman as the model. The track will be released on Imran's official YouTube channel.

Speaking to The Daily Star, Imran shared, "*Mon Bujhli Na* is a song that holds a special place in my heart. After a long time, I had the chance to collaborate with Fuad bhai. This is our second project together after *Dhoa*, which was a popular hit among listeners."

Film Artistes' Association suspends Nipun's membership

Nipun Akter's membership in the Bangladesh Film Artistes' Association has been suspended, however, it has not been completely revoked.

Yesterday, the organisational secretary of the Artistes' Association, actor Joy Chowdhury, confirmed this information to The Daily Star.

On January 19, the executive council of the Film Artistes' Association unanimously decided to suspend actress Nipun's membership after an official meeting.

Joy Chowdhury stated, "Nipun's membership has been suspended. If she can prove the allegations against her are false, her membership will be reinstated."

On July 16, 2024, Nipun Akter reportedly released a statement on the Artistes' Association's letterhead, identifying herself as the former general secretary. She later shared the address on her Facebook page on July 17.

The actress was also accused of making demeaning comments in the media about the committee's current general secretary, Monowar Hossain Dipjol.

As a result, Nipun's membership in the Artistes' Association has been suspended.

NEWS

Mexican president urges 'cool heads' in face of Trump threats

AFP, Mexico City

Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum yesterday called for "cool heads" to prevail in the face of US President Donald Trump's announcement of severe new restrictions on migration, among other policy changes.

"It's important to always keep a cool head and refer to signed agreements, beyond actual speeches," Sheinbaum told

her regular morning conference, a day after Trump announced he was sending troops to the border with Mexico to halt illegal migration and again threatened major tariffs on Mexican imports.

On his first day back in office Trump declared a national emergency at the southern border "to repel the disastrous invasion of our country."

His administration said it would also reinstate a "Remain in Mexico" policy

that prevailed under Trump's first presidency, under which people who apply to enter the United States from Mexico must remain there until their application has been decided.

The White House also halted an asylum program for people fleeing authoritarian regimes in Central and South America, leaving thousands of people stranded on the Mexican side of the border.

who are clearly visible in the footage, remain free.

"Indigenous students were supposed to meet some advisers today to place our demands. But we have not got an appointment with them. If our demands are not met, we will go for tough programmes."

Alik Mree went on to say that it was the police inaction that enabled the men to launch the assault in the first place.

Contacted, Mesbah Uddin, the officer-in-charge of Motijheel Police Station, said the police were trying to apprehend the remaining suspects.

The BNP leader added that no visible efforts have been made to improve the standard of education or resolve the problems in the sector.

He also opposed the lottery system for admissions to educational institutions and said that it should be abolished soon for establishing a merit-based education system.

2 men stabbed

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Speaking to the newspaper, Rimon's aunt, Mutka Akter said, "Rimon was my sister's son. He had been living with me since childhood after his mother passed away. His grandmother owned a two-storey building in Mugda. After her death, Rimon and my brother Rajib began fighting over the property. As part of that dispute, Rajib stabbed Rimon around 1:00pm [yesterday]."

Govt plans to withdraw all false cases

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politically motivated cases by February."

The fabricated cases are being identified using specific criteria.

Only cases with a reasonable amount of suspicion of being fabricated are being prioritised for withdrawal. Cases with valid grounds for doubt will not be considered under the initiative, Nazrul said.

The cases were not immediately withdrawn after the fall of the Sheikh Hasina government on August 5 last year as 4,000 to 4,500 public prosecutors appointed by the past regime fled from their workplaces following the mass uprising.

"Without public prosecutors, we cannot withdraw the cases as the government or the law ministry has to work through public prosecutors. Immediately after the appointment of public prosecutors, we started to work to identify and make a list of ghost cases."

The government also hopes to withdraw cases involving speech offences under the Cyber Security Act (CSA) filed due to the expression of opinions within two weeks, Nazrul said.

There are currently 322 such cases under trial, all filed during the previous government's tenure.

The law ministry has the capacity to intervene and withdraw the cases, Nazrul said, adding that the public prosecutor's office has dismissed 113

of the 322 cases.

"All related cases will be withdrawn within two weeks."

He also addressed concerns regarding the CSA stating that the ministry of information and communication technology is actively working on the withdrawal or amendment of the law.

"Whenever they seek our advice, we provide it. Various suggestions have been raised regarding the CSA. Some support amendments, others oppose them."

The ICT ministry is considering more in-depth discussions on the issue.

"We decided we could not sit idle. We have begun the process of withdrawing cases filed under the CSA. Through ongoing discussions, the ICT ministry will determine whether to amend or repeal the law."

As of August last year, at least 5,818 cases filed under the CSA and its predecessors – the ICT Act and the Digital Security Act – were pending across the country's eight cyber tribunals, according to a press release issued by the law ministry on September 30 last year.

Since the fall of the AI government, demands to repeal or amend controversial laws, particularly those curbing freedom of expression, have intensified.

On November 4 last year, Nahid Islam, adviser to the information

ministry, announced that the CSA would be repealed within a week and pending cases under the act would be dismissed.

However, as the act was not repealed and cases were not dropped, rights activists, journalists and victims of the cases have demanded the government dismiss the pending cases.

Earlier on December 28 last year, Nazrul at a dialogue said his ministry had received estimates of ghost cases from 51 districts and is awaiting data from the remaining 13.

"We have asked all public prosecutors from all districts to investigate and estimate the number of such cases filed for political reasons," he said then.

Nazrul also talked about Hasina's extradition from India during yesterday's press conference.

"We have written a letter for her extradition. If India does not extradite Sheikh Hasina, it will be a clear violation of the extradition treaty between Bangladesh and India. Regarding what steps we will take in the international community, that will be decided through the ministry of foreign affairs."

In this regard, a red alert has been issued through the Interpol.

"We are doing everything we can. If there is anything else to be done, we will think about it and proceed accordingly."

Most attackers at large

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members of "Students for Sovereignty".

A case was later filed against 16 named and 200-300 unidentified attackers.

Indigenous student bodies and several other organisations have demanded that the photo of the graffiti be brought back to school books.

The attack, broadcast live by various media outlets and Facebook pages, sparked widespread condemnation.

After police arrested two suspects, Law Adviser Prof Asif Nazrul wrote on Facebook that there will be a trial. "Two individuals have already been arrested

in connection with the incident."

Advisee Mahfuj Alam also wrote on Facebook, "The others involved in the incident will also be arrested. The entire incident will be investigated. No act of terrorism and extortion will be allowed on the streets."

Alik Mree, an organiser of the "aggrieved indigenous students, masses", said, "It is frustrating how some of the assailants are making Facebook posts and speaking on Facebook Live, but the law enforcers apparently cannot find them. The two arrests were nothing more than a show... The other perpetrators,

who are clearly visible in the footage, remain free.

"Indigenous students were supposed to meet some advisers today to place our demands. But we have not got an appointment with them. If our demands are not met, we will go for tough programmes."

Alik Mree went on to say that it was the police inaction that enabled the men to launch the assault in the first place.

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Election should be held

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come to power with the people's mandate.

"Those who are currently in power have not yet been able to take everything under their control, as they lack the confidence to understand the language of the people. I believe an elected government understands the people's language better," said Fakhrul.

He thanked the students for raising their voices for change in society and the governance system.

At the same time, he urged all not to take any reckless steps that would only create anarchy in the country.

"We must keep it in mind that we will not do anything that will lead to anarchy," the BNP leader said.

"If we want to contain the instability prevailing here, we must move forward with patience. We must be careful not to do anything that will

'That's not our war'

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"Gaza is like a massive demolition site," Trump said as he signed a flurry of executive orders following his inauguration.

Asked whether he believed the two sides would maintain the truce, Trump said: "That's not our war; it's their war. But I'm not confident."

Trump had claimed credit for the three-phase ceasefire agreement announced ahead of his return to the White House by Qatar and the United States, following months of fruitless negotiations under his predecessor Joe Biden.

Trump has made clear he would support Israel, and in one of his first acts as president, he revoked sanctions on Israeli settlers in the

West Bank imposed by the Biden administration over attacks against Palestinians.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Palestinian President Mahmud Abbas both congratulated Trump on his return.

Displaced Gazan Ghadeer Abdul Rabbo, 30, told AFP she hopes that "with or without Trump", the ceasefire will hold and world governments will help "maintain this calm, because we are afraid".

In Rafah, in southern Gaza, Ismail Madi said that "we have endured immense hardships, but we will stay here. We will rebuild this place."

There was anxiety in Israel over the next phases of the truce, with

columnist Sima Kadmon warning in the Yedioth Ahronoth daily that the coming hostage releases may be more painful than the first.

In southern Gaza, Ammar Barakbakh, 35, spent the truce's first night in a tent on the rubble of his home. "This is the first time I sleep comfortably and I'm not afraid," he said. "It's a beautiful feeling, and I hope the ceasefire continues."

The offensive has devastated much of the Gaza Strip and displaced the vast majority of its population of 2.4 million.

More than 900 trucks carrying humanitarian aid entered Gaza on Monday, the United Nations said. The day the deal came into force, 630 trucks entered Gaza.