

Curtain lifts on Boi Mela

DIPAN NANDY

The month-long festival of books, begins today.

More than just a book fair, Amar Ekushey Boi Mela is a festival of the written word, a month-long homage to language, culture, and the undying spirit of resistance.

This year's fair carries even greater significance, coming in the wake of the July uprising that led to the fall of the Awami League government. The echoes of that movement will be reflected in the fair's atmosphere, making it not only a celebration of books but also a reminder of the power of people's voices. Literature and protest have long been intertwined in Bangladesh's history, and this year's Boi Mela embraces that legacy, ensuring that the spirit of change and resilience is at its heart.

The book fair will be inaugurated at 3:00pm by Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus. At the same event, the prestigious Bangla Academy Sahitya Puraskar will be

awarded.

The theme of this year's book fair is "July Gono-Obbhutthan: Natun Bangladesh Binirman".

GROWTH AND EXPANSION

This year, the fair has expanded



PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

significantly, with 1,084 units allocated to 708 publishing houses, an increase from last year's 642 institutions and 946 units.

Among these, 99 units are within the Bangla Academy

premises, while 609 units are in Suhrawardy Udyan. The number of pavilions remains at 37, with one inside Bangla Academy and 36 in Suhrawardy Udyan.

The colours chosen for this year's fair – red, black, and white – carry profound symbolism. Red represents revolution, black signifies mourning, and white stands as the eternal lamp of hope. The influence of the July uprising will be strongly felt throughout the fair, particularly in the newly introduced "July Corner", dedicated to showcasing literature and narratives from that movement.

LAYOUT AND ACCESSIBILITY
The layout of the fair remains largely unchanged, though some adjustments have been made due to the location of the Metro rail station, said Sarkar Amin, member-secretary of the book fair organising committee.

The outer path has been shifted closer to the Ramna Kali Mandir gate to accommodate the changes.

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Reforms must start from within political parties

Speakers tell roundtable

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

No reform can be permanent without internal changes in the country's major political parties, said speakers at a roundtable yesterday. They emphasised that political party reform is a prerequisite for meaningful state reform.

The event, titled "What Path for Bangladesh's Democratic Progress?", was organised by the weekly "Ekota" at the Jatiya Press Club. Leaders from political parties, civic bodies, and socio-cultural organisations participated in the discussion.

Speaking at the event, noted economist Anu Muhammad said, "There should be a retirement age for political leaders. A leader should not hold the position permanently. Democracy should exist at every level, and the party's main leaders should not decide on the future leadership. A national political party must represent all religions, nations, and genders. At least one-third of the representation in a political party should be women."

The discussion included a presentation titled "Social and Economic Reforms and Democracy" by Dr MM Akash, former professor at Dhaka University and chairman



Anu Muhammad

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of the university's Bureau of Economic Research.

Akash said, "There have been many good suggestions for state reform in the past, but neither the BNP nor the Awami League government took the initiative to implement them. Therefore, the question remains: how far will the current reform journey progress? Will it falter halfway?"

Speakers also criticised the constitutional reform commission's proposal to replace the state principles in the constitution, terming it "immature".

They argued that the proposed principles lacked logical and historical context and

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Sabina Yasmin collapses on stage mid-performance

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Legendary singer Sabina Yasmin, who was performing at a corporate tribute event at a 5-star hotel in Dhaka, collapsed in the middle of her set around 8:15pm yesterday.

Sabina, a cancer survivor, was supposed to make her return to music through the tribute show, "Ami Achi Thakbo," in the capital.

After singing the titular song, she suddenly blacked out and fell on the stage.

The singer was taken to a hospital where she is receiving treatment.

According to the doctor, she is stable now.

With over five decades in the music industry, Sabina Yasmin has cemented her status as one of Bangladesh's most distinguished vocalists. Her career spans various musical genres, including patriotic songs, classical, folk, and modern Bangla music. Her illustrious career has been recognised with 14 National Film Awards.

The government has honoured her with Ekushey Padak, the country's second-highest civilian award, and the Independence Award.



Make your stance clear on indigenous identity

Speakers urge interim govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The interim government should clarify its position on recognising the identity and rights of indigenous communities, said rights activists and indigenous leaders yesterday.

The call was made at a rally titled "Strengthen the Indigenous People's Movement for Dignity and Recognition of Identity", organised by the Bangladesh Adivasi Forum at the Central Shaheed Minar.

Addressing the event, Transparency International Bangladesh Executive Director Iftekharuzzaman said many members of the interim government's advisory council had previously expressed solidarity with indigenous identity.

"I believe they still hold this in their hearts. Then why won't they say this publicly? Why won't they clearly state the position of the interim government regarding indigenous people?" he asked.

Referring to recent attacks on indigenous communities, he questioned why the chief adviser, who had mentioned indigenous rights in his inaugural speech, remains silent.

"Is the force behind this interim government so powerful that they must submit to a false and baseless theory?"

Shaheen Anam, executive Director of Manusher Jonno Foundation, criticised the government's inaction over the recent attack on a rally of indigenous students.



PHOTO: STAR

Rights activists and indigenous leaders at a rally at the Central Shaheed Minar yesterday. The rally titled "Strengthen the Indigenous People's Movement for Dignity and Recognition of Identity" was organised by Bangladesh Adivasi Forum.

"How can such heinous incidents happen openly? Pictures of the attackers have been published, yet they remain unpunished – how is this possible?" she questioned.

She also expressed disappointment over the continuation of past policies prohibiting the term "indigenous" and the lack of accountability for perpetrators.

Bazlur Rashid Firoz, general secretary of Bangladesh Samajtantrik Dal, said, "Despite hopes that the unfulfilled aspirations of the Liberation War would be realised, the interim government is following the same

pattern as its predecessors."

Firoz criticised the absence of a dedicated reform commission for indigenous communities and questioned how their voices could be reflected without proper representation. "Building an inclusive Bangladesh is impossible without resolving the problems and ensuring the rights of indigenous people," he added.

Ruhin Hossain Prince, general secretary of Communist Party of Bangladesh, alleged that new forms of oppression have emerged in the hill tracts under the current government.

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TK 50CR GRAFT ACC sues former MP Shambhu, wife

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

The Anti-Corruption Commission has filed two cases against Awami League leader and former Barguna-1 lawmaker Dharendra Debnath Shambhu, and his wife, Madhabi Debnath, for allegedly amassing illegal wealth and making suspicious transactions worth nearly Tk 50 crore through 23 bank accounts.

ACC Assistant Director Md Ruhul Haque filed the cases.

According to the case details, Shambhu accumulated Tk 5.41 crore beyond known sources of income and conducted suspicious transactions of Tk 41.93 crore through 16 bank accounts.

His wife allegedly amassed Tk 2.02 crore illegally and made dubious transactions worth Tk 8.45 crore through seven accounts.

The ACC has also sought wealth statements from their son, Sunam Debnath, his wife Kaspia Talukdar, and daughters Shukla Debnath and Monisha Munmun.

ACC official Ruhul Haque said the cases were filed under the Money Laundering Act and Anti-Corruption Act.

Local Awami League leaders claim Shambhu dominated Barguna's party unit for 30 years, placing his family members in key positions.

REVISED BUILDING CODE, DAP Proposed changes disregard public interest: speakers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The modification of Dhaka's Building Construction Rules and Detailed Area Plan (DAP) should prioritise the city's liveability, public health, and environmental concerns, said urban planners at a programme yesterday.

However, under the influence of real estate developers, design professionals, and vested interest groups, the Ministry of Housing and Public Works, along with Rajuk, is proceeding with amendments that completely disregard public interest and Dhaka's already deteriorating liveability, they observed.

Urban planners' recommendations are being blatantly ignored, as the authorities arbitrarily

The current amendments – proposed under the guise of revisions following the July political shift – appear to be another attempt by business groups to protect their financial interests at the cost of public well-being.

Adil Mohammad Khan, IPD Director

push changes that will significantly increase Floor Area Ratio (FAR) and population density in various areas. This reckless initiative could be the final nail in the coffin for a city already crippled by severe traffic congestion and air pollution, they said.

These concerns were raised at an online event organised by the Institute for Planning and Development (IPD). The discussion, titled "Revising Dhaka's Building Regulations and DAP: Process, Intentions, and Conflicts of Interest – IPD's Observations", highlighted the alarming implications of the ongoing modifications.

In the keynote presentation, IPD Director Prof Adil Mohammad Khan expressed deep concern over Rajuk's proposed amendments to the

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Withdraw false cases against workers, activists

Demands labour rights group

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

False cases against activists and workers involved in wage-related movements must be withdrawn, said labour rights activists yesterday.

They condemned layoffs, particularly at the Beximco garments factory, and called for workers to receive their rightful dues.

These demands were made at a rally in front of Jatiya Press Club around 11:00am, organised by Bangladesh Garment Workers Solidarity.

They demanded uniform democratic labour laws, six months of paid maternity leave, an anti-sexual harassment policy, and the right to genuine trade unions, said a press release.

Bangladesh Garment Workers Solidarity President Taslima Akhtar said a new labour law ordinance is being

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Students of Government Titumir College once again blocked the Mohakhali-Gulshan Road yesterday afternoon over several demands, including the transformation of the institution into a university. Earlier, students blocked the road for around 17 hours before leaving the spot around 4:00am.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Avoid blocking roads during protests

PHQ calls on dismissed cops

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Police Headquarters has urged the protesting police personnel, who were dismissed during the previous government, to refrain from blocking roads and causing public suffering while protesting for reinstatement.

The PHQ is working sincerely so that the sacked policemen get justice, said a press release yesterday.

A group of former police personnel, dismissed during the previous government's tenure for various reasons, has been demanding their jobs back.

So far, the PHQ has received 1,522 applications for reinstatement – including 1,025 constables, 79 nayeeks, 180 assistant sub-inspectors, 200 sub-inspectors or sergeants, 10 inspectors, and 28 non-police personnel, the release read.

A committee, led by a deputy inspector general (DIG), is currently reviewing the applications to determine if the dismissals were politically motivated, it said.

Some of them were removed due to criminal offences, financial irregularities, ethical breaches, misconduct, or violations of departmental discipline. Some cases are still pending with the tribunals, added the release.