

# Ekushey book fair begins today

9 HOUR(S) AGO BANGLADESH

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*Sellers busy arranging books and other items at a stall on the Suhrawardy Udyan premises yesterday, ahead of the Amar Ekushey Book Fair that begins today. Photo: Prabir Das*

The Amar Ekushey Book Fair begins today, marking the shortest edition in its history. Organisers, however, say it is not the length but the breadth of ideas that will define this year's fair, themed "Multidimensional Bangladesh".

Rooted in the spirit of the Language Movement, the fair will continue until March 15, making its duration 19 days. It will remain open daily from 2:00pm to 9:00pm, while on weekends and holidays it will run from 11:00am to 9:00pm.



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This year's fair also comes after tension over its schedule. Until Sunday evening, "Prokashok Oikya", a platform representing leading publishers, had announced it would not participate, objecting to holding the fair during Ramadan. More than 300 publishing houses initially took a boycott stance. Following mediation by the government and discussions among the Ministry of Cultural Affairs, Bangla Academy and publisher organisations, a consensus was reached.

Under the agreement, stalls will be allocated free of cost and no pavilions will be allowed other than those of the organising authority. Publishers withdrew their boycott on Sunday and confirmed participation. The lottery for stall allocation was held the same night.

**549 publishing houses are participating this year, with 1,018 units set up across the Bangla Academy and Suhrawardy Udyan. Last year, 708 publishing houses participated with 1,084 units.**

The fair will be inaugurated today at 2:00pm, with Prime Minister Tarique Rahman attending as chief guest.

Dr Selim Reza, member secretary of the fair's organising committee, told The Daily Star, "Despite the shorter duration, there will be no compromise on the quality and diversity of the fair. Rather, through this year's theme, we will try to present the multidimensional reality of Bangladesh through books, discussions, and cultural events."

A total of 549 publishing houses are participating this year, with 1,018 units set up across the Bangla Academy premises and Suhrawardy Udyan. Last year, 708 publishing houses participated with 1,084 units.

There will be no pavilions for publishers this year. A total of 29 publishers have been allocated the maximum of five units each, while others have received four, three, two or single-unit stalls. Bangla Academy will have four pavilions across the two sections of the fair.

The Little Magazine Corner will host 87 stalls, while the Shisu Chattar will cater to younger readers. On Fridays and Saturdays, there will be a special "Shishu Prohor" from 11:00am to 1:00pm.

Although the overall layout remains similar to previous years, some changes have been made to entry and exit points due to the metro rail station. Visitors will be able to enter through four points, including TSC and Doel Chattar. Food stalls have also been arranged in a more organised manner.

In consideration of Ramadan, arrangements have been made for Taraweeh prayers at the Suhrawardy Udyan section. Prayer spaces and washrooms will be available. The Shisu Chattar has been placed to allow children to move freely and access books easily.

Discussions will be held daily from 3:00pm, covering history, language, society, politics and culture, followed by cultural programmes.

Security and environmental measures have been strengthened. The entire fairground will be under CCTV surveillance. Initiatives have also been taken to keep the fair polythene-free and smoke-free, with plans to turn it into a "zero-waste book fair," organisers said.

