

PM opens book fair Feb 7

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'Amar Ekushey Book Fair' begins Saturday at Bangla Academy premises with a festive mood and showing respect to the sons of the soil who sacrificed their lives to protect and uphold the glory of "Bangla Bhasha", the mother tongue of the people of Bangladesh.

The biggest annual event in memory of the martyrs of the language movement, the month-long book fair usually takes place at Bangla Academy premises every year from February 1. But, this year the book fair was deferred for seven days due to Ramzan and Eid.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will inaugurate the book fair on Saturday morning. Professor Nileema Ibrahim and State Minister for Youth, Sports and Cultural Affairs Obaidul Kader

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will be the special guests while Bangla Academy Chairman Poet Shamsur Rahman will preside over the inaugural function.

Some 190 publishers with 300 book stalls will participate in this year book fair. The important feature of this year's book fair is that Bangla Academy has not allowed any other organisations to set up stalls other than book publishers.

"This year it will be an ideal book fair", Bangla Academy Director General (DG) Professor Syed Anwar Hussain said when he was talking to the Bangladesh Observer at his office on Wednesday.

"We are trying our level best to hold a clean and tidy book fair strictly upholding the spirit of Amar (eternal) Ekushey, Bangla Academy DG who is the head of the 27-member standing committee for the "Amar Ekushey Book Fair" said. He has sought cooperation from all quarters in holding a successful book fair with the spirit of "Amar Ekushey".

Bangla Academy Public Relation Officer Sarker Amin told this correspondent that only the publishers with at least 10 publications were allowed to participate in the book fair. He said cassette players and loud speakers would not be allowed in the fair venue to keep the book fair free from noise.

A special squad comprising plain-clothed police has been constituted to maintain the law and order situation and to ensure security during the fair, he informed.

According to him, the budget for the fair is estimated at Taka 16 lakh of which 40 per cent will come from the rent of book stalls and the rest will be subsidised by the Academy.

The fair will remain open for the general public from 2 p.m. to 8 p.m. during weekdays and 12:30 p.m. to 8 p.m. on the holidays with a 90-minute break on Friday.

Similar to the previous years, Bangla Academy will hold discussion meetings on art, language and literature and organise cultural programme every day in the evening during

the fair. Prominent poets, writers, critics, artists and cultural activists of the country will participate in the discussion meetings and cultural events.

On behalf of Bangladesh Book Publishers' Association, Milon Kanti Nath and Hamidul Islam in a joint statement on Wednesday said that all preparations have been taken to hold the book fair. But, a section was trying to create misunderstanding about the great fair which should be stopped to uphold the spirit of Amar Ekushey, the added.

Besides the book fair, Bangla Academy has planned to construct a high rise building at the Academy premises in memory of language martyrs. The building to be named "Ekushey Bhaban" is likely to be 52-storied. The construction cost for the building is estimated about Taka 52 crore, which will be provided by the Government. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will lay the foundation stone on February 7 after the inauguration of the Ekushey Book Fair.