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Bangladesh Theme Country

Calcutta book fair opens today

From Hafiz Imam Inam and Mahmud Alam

CALCUTTA, Jan. 26:—The 12-day Calcutta International Book Fair will begin here at Calcutta Maidan on Cutram Road today (Wednesday). Eminent Poet Shamsur Rahman will inaugurate the book fair while Prime Minister of Bangladesh Sheikh Hasina will be the chief guest of honour in the inaugural function.

Chief Minister of Indian state of West Bengal Jyoti Basu and eminent novelist Annada Sankar Roy will be among the guests of honour in the inaugural function.

Bangladesh is the "Theme Country" in the 12-day international book fair this year. Five thousand square feet stall paces has also been allocated for this year's Theme Country.

Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will inaugurate the Bangladesh Pavillion in the fair and go around the stalls of Bangladeshi publishers.

Strict security measures have been undertaken by the government of West Bengal to ensure a peaceful and successful inauguration of the fair. West Bengal police along with officials of the other organisations visited the fair venue — Calcutta Maidan — on Tuesday. A number of security rehearsals were also done by the police and other security agencies in this connection.

Organisers of the International Book Fair book Sellers and Publishers Guild formally invited only 500 guests in the inaugural function, of whom 200 intellectuals are from Bangladesh. 250 important personalities including ministers and bureaucrats from the host country and 50 journalists

from India and Bangladesh.

General visitors are not allowed in the inaugural function of the book fair. The fair will, however, remain open for visitors for an hour beyond schedule in the night on the inaugural day.

Organisers of the book fair expressed their hope that the intellectuals of Bangladesh and India would come closer and share their thoughts through participating in this fair. "Many of us here in India are not aware of the latest publications taking place in Bangladesh. This fair will take the writers of both Bangals to a large number of new-generation readers and intellectuals," secretary of Book Sellers and Publishers Guild Anil Bhattacharjee told the reporters on Tuesday.

A total of 18 Bangladeshi publishers along with their 2004 new publications are participating in the fair. The publishing houses are: Bangladesh Book Publishers and Sellers Association, Annanya Prakashani, Annya Prakash, Absar Prakashana, Ankur Prakashani, Agami Prakashani, Ahmed Publishing House, University Press Ltd., Khosroje Kitab Mahal, Kakali Prakashani, Biddaya Prakashani, Desh Prakashani, Madina Publications, Raman Publishers, Samoy Prakashani, Shahittya Prakashan and Shuchipatra.

Proprietor of Kakali Prakashani AK Nasir Ahmed Selim told The Bangladesh Observer that they joined the book fair with big expectation. He, however, alleged that the organisers did not live up

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Book fair

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to their promise. A 100 square feet stall was earlier allocated for each participant of the Theme Country. But later the size of the stall was shrunk without prior consent of the participants.

More than 620 publishing houses from India and five other countries are participating in the fair. Organisers of the Book Fair fixed January 30 to celebrate Bangladesh Day in the fair. Necessary measures have been undertaken to observe the day highlighting Bangladeshi culture and tradition.

Eminent writer Selina Hossain, historian Muntasir Mamoon and Borhanuddin Khan Jahangir will deliver lectures on different topics during the 12-day fair.

Meanwhile, on Monday Home Minister of the State B. Das Gupta, some other Ministers, Police Commissioner of Calcutta and other high officials of Police Department visited the venue of the Book Fair to see for themselves the security measures taken for the Prime Minister of Bangladesh. Similar strong security arrangements have been made in Shantiniketan and Bangladesh National Poet Nazrul Islam's home t Churulia of Asansole where Sheikh Hasina will visit.

The organiser of the Fair — the Publishers and Book Sellers Guild also held a Press conference on Monday at the fair ground. Addressing the conference General Secretary of the Organising Committee Anil Acharya said that all preparations were completed to open this Book Fair as per schedule. He said the main attraction of this Fair is the Prime Minister of Bangladesh. For the first time in the history of Calcutta Book Fair, a Prime Minister is coming to attend the inaugural function as chief guest, he said.

He said this is the 24th Book Fair and it will last for 12 days. Over 665 book stalls will be housed in the fair, he pointed out.

An Executive of Book Fair Organising Committee Ramian Guha told the Bangladesh Observer Correspondent that all book lovers of Calcutta and the people of all walks of life here were eagerly awaiting for the presence of Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.