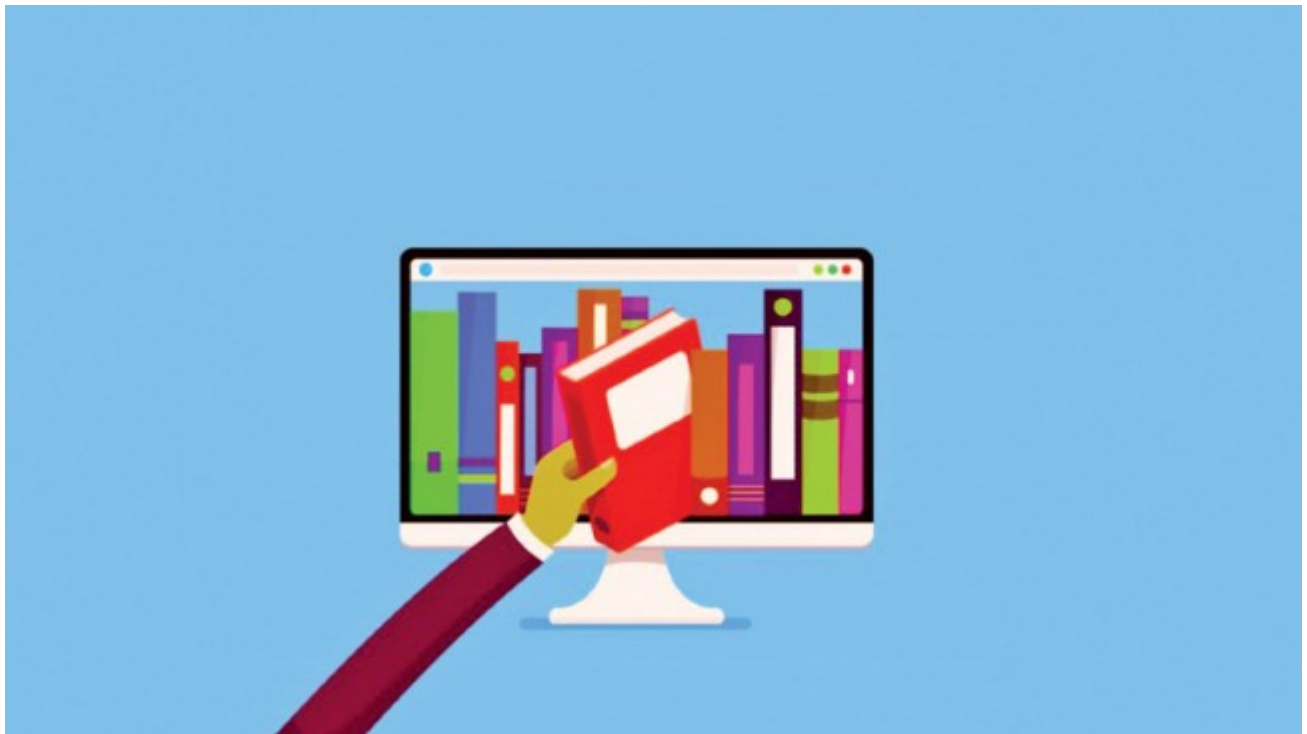


Virtual Book Fairs elate booklovers in the month of February



Shahriar Rahman

Due to the pandemic, Amar Ekushey Book Fair, one of the most sought-after events got halt this year. This book fair, which is largest of its kind in this region, was paused after much deliberation by the decision of the Ministry of Cultural Affairs. Though there were initial talks about officially hosting the book fair online, that plan was scrapped after the decision was made in a meeting between Bangla Academy, the Academic and Creative Publishers' Association of Bangladesh, and the Bangladesh Publishers and Booksellers' Association. Although the official book fair is not happening, local e-commerce ventures have come forward, to appease the booklovers in the month of February.

Rokomari, the largest specialised e-commerce for books, has started their online book fair. According to Mahmudul Hasan Sohag, founder of the venture, the uncertainty of Ekushey Boi Mela due to pandemic compelled Rokomari to arrange the fair online. "Publishing industry is under threat due to pandemic. As book fair is very close to our heart and part of our heritage, we wanted to support our book publishers with this virtual fair." During the online book fair, Rokomari is offering a minimum 25% discount on all books,

10% cashback on bKash payments, and free shipping is available on bKash payment for the orders of Tk. 700/-.

Alibaba backed e-commerce Daraz is also arranging, for the first time on their platform, a virtual book fair. The fair started from February 1 and is going to continue till February 20. According to Daraz, 3000+ book collections are currently available in their platform. "We are also providing free delivery till February 14 so that our customers can happily skip the hassles of going to real-time book fairs in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic", said Category lead of Daraz Books & Stationeries Minhaz Uddin. Daraz is also enticing customers by providing up to 70% off on selective books of different genre, plus 10% cashback or discount on selective cards and mobile financial services.

Up and coming e-commerce, Dhamaka Shopping has also hosted a book fair on its platform. According to Sirajul Islam Rana, Chief Operating Officer of Dhamaka Shopping, Dhamaka has several thousand books on its platform and hopes to deliver customers smoothly within the stipulated time. "We have added the most recent and best seller books on our platform. To encourage our customers, even more, we are offering up to 40% discount on purchase", he said. On their platform, Dhamaka will continue to keep on selling books from now on.

Aadi.com.bd, the e-commerce specialising in cross-border product delivery, is also offering local books for anyone intending to purchase books abroad. Fatima Begum, Chief Executive Officer of Aadi informed that this is the first time any local venture has formally initiated cross-border bookselling. "Currently, Aadi offers over 7,000 books both for local and global customers. We will deliver books up to 2 KGs in any part of the world for just USD 9.99", she said.