

# Ekushey Book Fair concludes

## *Publishers incur huge losses for COVID-19*

**Tanzil Rahaman**

CURTAIN fell on the month-long Amar Ekushey Book Fair on Monday with publishers facing huge losses due to lack of visitors amid COVID-19 outbreak.

The fair ended two days before its scheduled closure on April 14 on a government instruction ahead of further restrictions on public movement and overall activities from April 14 to contain the surge in the COVID-19 cases.

Bangladesh Book Sellers and Publishers Association disclosed the figure of this year's sale at a press conference on Lekhak Balchhi Mancha of Suhrawardy Udyan on Monday afternoon.

They said that the sales amount was TK 3,11,91,928 in

the fair. The sale was calculated based on a survey of the 413 publishing houses, including 30 pavilions. The 30 pavilions bagged TK 89,30,230 and rest of the stalls sold books worth TK 2,22,61,698.

'We invested around TK 90 crore at the fair along with Tk 10 crore unproductive investment. We urged the government to give TK 10 crore compensation and procure books for the ministries, divisions and government and autonomous institutions. We also urged the government to create a TK 1000 crore loan fund with low interest and easy terms and conditions,' said Bangladesh Book Sellers and Publishers Association vice-president Shyamol Paul.

Bangla Academy director general Habibullah Siraji said

that the academy is not in a position to disclose the figure of sales at the entire fair.

'We have not received the figure from the publishing houses yet,' said Habibullah Siraji.

Books worth Tk 82 crore were sold in 2020 Ekushey Book Fair and the Bangla academy itself sold books worth Tk 2.28 crore, according to the organiser.

Academic and Creative Publishers Association of Bangladesh president Farid Ahmed said, 'The fair is a bad one in terms of sales. It is difficult to bounce back as the publication industry has been hit hard since March, 2020'.

As many as 2,640 new titles, including 64 on the last day, hit the stalls this year. Books of poems led the tally

with 898 titles, followed by 405 novels, 339 stories, 158 essays and over 100 books on the country's founding president Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in various genres.

In 2020, a total of 4,919 books were launched in the month-long fair.

The fair that began on March 18 instead of February 1 due to coronavirus outbreak did not get momentum due to hot weather, changing fair hours and the seven-day restrictions on public movements and business operations from April 5.

This year, 834 units were allocated to 540 publishing houses and organisations to facilitate sale of books and other publications at the Suhrawardy Udyan and on the Bangla Academy premises.