

## Shraban, four publishers banned

EKUSHEY BOOK FAIR

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EKUSHEY Book Fair authorities banned five publishing houses from the fair for the next two years and reduced the stall size for 15 others for alleged breach of guidelines in the past event.

Shraban Prakashani was  
Continued on page 2 Col. 5

Continued from page 1

banned from the fair for protesting against closure of Ba-Dwip Prakashan stall and arrest of Ba-Dwip proprietor Shamsuzoha Manik during the 2016 book fair for selling a book that allegedly hurt Islam religious sentiment.

Four other publishing houses – Rangin Phool, Oikya Prakashani, Neel Pari Prakashani, and Ba-Dwip Prakashan – were banned from the fair on charge of selling pirated books.

A group of writers, and cultural and rights activists held a sit-in in front of Bangla Academy on Tuesday demanding cancellation of the ban on Shraban Prakashani.

They said that Bangla Academy had no legal right to ban any publishing house from the fair as the institute only assisted in the holding of the fair on its premises.

Jatiya Mukti Council leader Faizul Hakim Lala, Nijera Kori coordinator Khushi Kabir, cultural activists Kafil Ahmed, among

others, spoke at the sit-in.

Bangla Academy director Jalal Ahmed, also the fair committee member secretary, said that the academy's council in its recent meeting decided to ban Shraban Prakashani from the fair for the next two years as its owner Robin Ahsan had protested against the banning of a book, closure of the publishing house's stall at the 2016 book fair and the arrest of the publisher.

The council considered such activities of the owner of the publishing house was against interest of the book fair,' he said.

The fair committee closed down the Ba-Dwip Prakashan stall at Suhrawardy Udyan in the fair on February 15 for selling and displaying a title, Islam Bitarka (debate on Islam) that allegedly contained derogatory remarks on Islam and its prophet. Police also arrested the publisher and editor of the book, Shamsuzoha Manik.

Robin Ahsan said that the decision of the academy was extremely discriminatory and a clear infringement of the right to freedom of expression.

'Standing up for a publisher cannot be a crime...I had protested the arrest of a publisher,' he said.

Jalal Ahmed said that the four publishing houses – Rangin Phool, Oikya Prakashani, Neel Pari Prakashani, and Ba-Dwip Prakashan – were banned for selling pirated books.

A Bangla Academy director said that fair authorities decided to allocate no stall to six publishing houses – Platform, Rear Books, Chittra Prakashani, Charcha Granthakendra, Riya Prakashani and Ma Prakashani – for the 2017 book fair scheduled to begin on February 1 for changing their stall positions violating the fair guideline.

The director, also a fair committee member, said that the authorities reduced

the stall size for 15 publishing houses including the six.

As the six publishing houses had got one unit each in the 2016 book fair, they would get no unit of stall in the 2017 fair, the director said.

The director said that the stall size was also reduced for Mauli Publications, Jatiya Grantha Prakashan, Salauddin Boi Ghar, Gadya Padya and Shabdashilpa, but they would get one-unit stalls in the next fair as they had got two-unit stalls in the previous fair.

The stall size was reduced to two-unit from three-unit for Subarna, to three-unit from four-unit for Adorn Publications and Tamralipi, to four-unit from five-unit for Kakoli.

Jalal Ahmed said, 'We would send letters to the publishers in a day or two.'

Bangla Academy with the help of others arranges the month-long Ekushey Book Fair at its complex in February each year.