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International Book Fair Opens With Presents

By Kit Rees

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Partially sighted kids enjoying book-shaped cake at the event Wednesday.

Visually impaired children were the guests of honor on the first day of Moscow's International Book Fair on Wednesday as they were given specially illustrated book sets and were treated to cake.

"These books have been created upon the recommendations of teachers, taking into account the children's sight and tactile awareness," said Tatyana Degen, deputy chairman of the charity Illustrated Books for Small Blind Children at the event in Pavilion 75 at the VDNKh exhibition center.

"This is why there are lots of tactile moments, where different characters in the fairy tales have their own texture," Degen said of the books, intended for children aged 3 to 5.

The book set includes five brightly illustrated books with different fabrics to aid partially

sighted children. The book set normally costs 5,850 rubles ($160).

The books are created using different kinds of material so the children can feel the tales as they read them. There is also a "magic pen" that makes the book "speak" when the child points the pen at specific places.

"It can read the text to a small child, sing them a song, help them solve a riddle," explained charity official Lyudmila Shevtsova.

The campaign "Give Books to Children" to raise the money to pay for the books started in June in the Chitai-Gorod and Novy Knizhny bookstores, but the charity has run similar campaigns before. About 5,000 to 7,000 children have received such book sets in the last two decades, Degen said.

The charity has about 35,000 blind and partially sighted children in its database across the whole of Russia.

The Moscow International Book Fair runs till Sunday at VDNKh, 119 Prospekt Mira, Pavilion 75. Metro VDNKh. 495-544-3400. www.mibf.ru

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