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## National book policy soon: Khaleda

Prime Minister Begum, Khaleda Zia on Sunday announced that the government would introduce a national book policy soon, reports BSS.

She sought the assistance of litterateurs, journalists, teachers, intellectuals, cultural workers, guardians, publishers and all concerned in introducing the policy.

Addressing the inaugural ceremony of the national book fair organised by National Book Centre at Osmany Memorial Hall, the Prime Minister said "we have to put in our united efforts to help our children grow up in a healthy cultural environment as they are the future of the nation".

The Prime Minister said the educated and conscious citizenry was the biggest safeguard of democracy. Reading habit helps in creating awareness and increasing knowledge of the people, she said.

Underscoring the need for eliminating illiteracy from society to consolidate democracy and give it a permanent shape, Begum Zia said creating reading habit among the people would be one of the major initiatives in removing illiteracy. There is no alternative to a reading society for social development, she said.

The Prime Minister said "our language is our pride." People of our country had sacrificed lives for their mother tongue, she said adding but it's very unfortunate that majority of the people of the country have not acquired the ability to read and write in their own language.

Begum Zia recalled that the step to remove illiteracy from society was first taken in the country by Shaheed President Ziaur Rahman. She said other programmes were taken during his time which included the setting up of sixty auditorium-cum-public libraries. But this was abandoned by the past autocratic regime, she regretted.

The Prime Minister said at one time district-level libraries had been set up by individual initiatives as well as united efforts of people. Once simple living and high thoughts were the ideals of middle class people of our society, she said.

She said "in our society there is no dearth of affluent men but the number of social workers dedicated to people's welfare is not large". But she said she still believed that higher values of life had not totally vanished

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### Book policy

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from society.

The function was also addressed by State Minister for Cultural Affairs Jahanara Begum, Cultural Secretary in charge Islamuddin Malek and Director of National Book Centre Dr. Fazle Rabbi.

Later, the Prime Minister formally inaugurated the book fair being participated by more than fifty publishing houses. She went round different book stalls of the fair. Iranian Cultural Centre, Alliance Francaise, Chinese Embassy and Indonesian Embassy are also taking part in book fair.