

Amar Ekushe Book Fair inaugurated

# Help maintain continuity of democratic process: Khaleda

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia inaugurated the Amar Ekushey Book Fair in Dhaka on Thursday and said the teachings of Ekushey February should be reflected in all spheres of our national life to lead the country towards progress, reports BSS.

"Ekushey teaches us the flourishing of democratic values, peaceful co-existence and tolerance to other's opinions," she said at the opening function of the book fair at Bangla Academy premises.

The Prime Minister said the basic spirit of Ekushey is actually the spirit of our national unity and urged all to be imbued with the spirit for the nation's uplift.

On her arrival at the Bangla Academy, the Prime Minister was received by State Minister for Cultural Affairs Prof. Jahanara Begum and Director General of Bangla Academy Prof. Mansur Musa.

Thousands of students of Dhaka University and a large number of people from the Academy premises and adjoining roads gathered to witness the opening ceremony.

Zia.

They chanted slogans and clapped welcoming the Prime Minister at the Bangla Academy Book Fair.

Presided over by State Minister for Cultural Affairs Prof. Jahanara Begum, the function was addressed also by Director General of Bangla Academy Prof. Mansur Musa and Secretary General of Bangladesh Book Sellers and Publishers Association Akhlakur Rahman.

One-minute silence was observed as a mark of respect to

the martyrs of the historic Language Movement.

Ministers, academicians, writers, poets, litterateurs and cultural activists were present at the function.

The Prime Minister said the Bangla Academy was one of those achievements which were earned through the sacrifices of the martyrs of the great Language Movement.

She paid deep respects to the martyrs of the Language Movement, Liberation War and the democratic struggle.

The Prime Minister said the

Bangla Academy Book Fair was being held since after the country's independence and added the fair has now turned into a meeting place for writers, publishers, academicians and learners.

The people of all shades of opinions, she said come to the book fair and exchange views.

Begum Zia expressed the hope that the atmosphere of tolerance would be further widened through such union and exchange of views.

She said her government has been pursuing the policy of tolerance for the last five years to maintain the continuity of the democratic process.

The freedom of speech, she said, is now unrestricted in the country.

The Prime Minister said flourishing of education is essential to ensure the practice of science and knowledge.

Referring to the introduction of compulsory primary education, programmes on women education, adult education, food for education and the expansion of facilities for higher education, she said these

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steps show that the government had given utmost importance to education.

Reading books, she said, is also a part of our religious faith.

The first message sent by the almighty Allah to Hazrat Muhammad (SM) carried the call for reading, Begum Zia pointed out.

Describing book as the main medium of acquiring knowledge, the Prime Minister said Prophet Muhammad (SM) had urged all to acquire knowl-

edge from cradle to grave.

She underscored the need for more books and standard publications to help the new generation get knowledge of the country's a thousand-year old history and heritage.

The Prime Minister said the government had formulated a national Book Policy with the aim of publishing books of international standard, exporting books and upholding the Bangladesh's identity and its independent culture in the outside world.

Begum Zia urged the men of qualities to come forward in implementing the book policy.

She also called upon the intellectuals to help flourish the thousand-year old independent identity of the people of Bangladesh.

The Prime Minister cut the ribbon, marking the inauguration of the book fair, and visited different stalls.

Organisers said a total of 474 stalls have been set up in the book fair.