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Visitors flip through books on the opening day of the Ekushey Grantha Mela (Book Fair). — Star photo

Book fair opens Hasina alerts against 'evil move' to change power

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has sought cooperation from the people in continuing the democratic and constitutional process, reports UNB.

Calling for the people to remain alert about any evil move to change power through extra-constitutional means, she said, "through a long struggle we've stopped the trend of change in power through unconstitutional, undemocratic way".

"Now you will have to remain alert and extend help for the continuity of democracy and constitutional process," she said inaugurating Amar Ekushey Grantha Mela (book fair) at Bangla Academy yesterday afternoon.

The prime minister formally inaugurated the book fair amidst tight security as the stu-

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PM opens book fair

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dent wing of BNP staged demonstrations on the Dhaka University campus during her visit.

This year, with the UNESCO declaration of the 21st February as International Mother Language Day, the Ekushey Book Fair took a new dimension and dignity.

Organisers said some 319 big, small and medium-sized stalls have been set up in the Mela, the biggest fair of books in the country that is annually held commemorating the martyrs of 1952 language movement.

For the first time a separate square has been earmarked for children and three others have been named as Rabindra Chattar, Nazrul Chattar and Rafiq Chattar. The fair will continue till February 29.

State Minister for Cultural Affairs Obaidul Qader, Bangladesh Book Publishers and Sellers Association additional secretary general Nasim Ali Chowdhury, Bangla Academy director general Syedur Rahman and Ekushey Granthamela member secretary Anisur Rahman also addressed the inaugural function presided

over by educationist Prof Anisuzzaman.

The prime minister said people want to have a peaceful life and environment. For flourishing knowledge and science, for economic development and political stability, peaceful environment is a must.

"We need cooperation from all in creating such an environment in the country in which people can return home from their workplaces in peace and security.

The prime minister called upon people of all strata, including teachers, students and political leaders, to give lessons in the mother tongue and uphold prestige of the language at all levels.

"We want that every language of the world flourish with its own glory. By shedding our blood for language, we've taught the world how to love mother tongue."

Hasina said the government has decided to set up a Mother Tongue Practice and Research Centre in the country to help flourish Bengali language and culture as well as protect minority languages of the world from decaying.

The centre, she said, will preserve specimens of all mother tongues of the world and have arrangements for learning and researching in all those languages.

Hasina thanked UNESCO for endorsing February 21 International Mother Language Day last November following Bangladesh's formal proposal.

She also recalled the role of Mother Language Lovers of the World, an organisation of expatriates based in Canada, for raising the issue first to the UN.

Recognition of International Mother Language Day was an imperative to protect some 4000 languages so far acknowledged, many of which have got lost in the gorge of time, she felt.