

National Book Fair opens

Call to help develop publishing industry

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The Prime Minister, Begum Khaleda Zia, inaugurated the National Book Fair in Dhaka on Saturday with an appeal to all concerned to contribute to the development of the printing and publishing industry in the country, reports BSS.

"We ought to make books our constant companion", she said while opening the National Book Fair at Osmany Memorial Hall auditorium.

In festivities, she said, books could be the medium of conveying greetings.

The Prime Minister announced that from now on the first day of January would be observed as 'National Book Day' every year with the objective of building a nationwide movement for reading books.

'National Book Week' will be observed each year from January 1 to 7 and steps will be taken to arrange book fairs and related programmes at district headquarters, she added.

Organised by National Book Centre, the function was also addressed by State Minister for Cultural Affairs, Prof. Jahanara Begum, Secretary of the Ministry of Cultural Affairs, Mr Islamuddin Malik, and director of the National Book Centre K.M. Habibullah.

The Speaker, Shaikh Razzaque Ali, Ministers, MPs, writers, and publishers were present.

Prominent publishers as well as some of the foreign embassies are taking part in the fortnight long National Book Fair, who have set up 65 stalls.

Participating foreign missions are: Saudi Arabia, France, Indonesia, Iran and Turkey.

"Present books to your beloved ones," inscribed in one of the banners hung at the auditorium on the occasion.

The Prime Minister termed the books as the medium of healthy culture and added the more a nation reads books the more it is developed, cultured and creative.

The exercise of healthy culture, she said, could help stop inflow of alien culture and remove frustration and terrorism. Begum Zia began her speech with new years greetings to all and said "we have started our new year with an exceptional programme like the National Book Fair."

Our country, she said, could be poor but as a nation we possess a rich cultural heritage.

Describing books as the weapons of knowledge, education and poverty alleviation, the Prime Minister underlined the need for achieving the strategy of economic emancipation,

turning the huge manpower into human resources and removal of poverty through knowledge.

Quoting an intellectual, who said "three things are needed for the development and prosperity—these are: book, book and book," Begum Zia noted that books could help spread the spirits of democracy.

Referring to the introduction of food for education programme and compulsory primary education, the Prime Minister said her government had given importance to "education for all", the success of this programme, she said, would depend on the development of education. "We want a huge number of books. All kinds of books...we want flourishing of printing and publication," Begum Zia said, adding steps had been taken in this regard.

Library movement is being built throughout the country both at the government and private levels, book fairs are being held in the capital and elsewhere in the country, Bangladesh is participating in the book exhibitions abroad, Begum Zia said.

Later, the Prime Minister went round different stalls of the book fair.