

Ekushey Book fair opens

Books were my only support in prison: Hasina

Prime minister Sheikh Hasina said on Sunday that books had sustained her during the "lonely" days of her detention between 2007 and 2008, reports bdnews24.com.

"Books were my only companions in my lonely life in prison," said the PM as she opened the month-long Ekushey Boi Mela at the Bangla Academy.

"My time in jail was a great opportunity for me to read, and I realised once again the importance of books," Hasina said of the 11 months she spent in special

jail, from July 2007 to June 2008, facing graft charges.

The habit of reading books can be useful in everyone's daily life, she said.

The PM, inaugurating the national book fair, also announced the adoption of sign language at state level.

"Based on long time demands, I am formally making the announcement today," she said.

"This mode of communication will begin in BTV news and certain other programmes and, gradually, sign language will be adopted by

the other media outlets," said the PM.

She hoped that private TV channels would welcome the move and come forward in its support.

Hasina, arriving at the Boi Mela at 4pm, was welcomed by director general of the Bangla Academy Syed Mohammad Shahed.

As visiting Indian activist and writer Mahasweta Devi arrived at the venue, the prime minister asked for her to be brought to the dais. Devi, seated beside the prime

(See Page 11 Col. 4)

Hasina

(From Page 1 Col. 4)

minister, thanked the latter.

Academy head Shahed, head of UPL Mohiuddin Ahmed, national professor Kabir Chowdhury and state minister for culture Abul Kalam Azad also spoke at the inaugural ceremony.

The annual book fair, showcasing a significant chunk of the country's publications and celebrating the mother tongue, was opened to public from 5pm.

The number of participating organisations has risen this year to 297 from last year's 236, with a total of 436 stalls, a significant rise from last year's 362.

Stalls have been allotted on both sides of the road at Bangla Academy for the first time, so the main gate has been built on the road in front of the Atomic Energy Commission on the Dhaka University campus.

Children's hour at this year's Mela will be between 11am and 3pm on Feb 6, 7 and 27. Only adults accompanying children will be allowed to enter the fair during

fair remains open to the public everyday from 3pm till 9pm and on weekends from 11am till 9pm through the month of February.