

Cooperate to uphold dignity, status of Bangla: Hasina

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on Tuesday sought wholehearted cooperation from all to uphold the dignity and status of our mother tongue, Bangla, in every sphere of national life, reports UNB.

"Could we fulfill our commitments to the mother tongue even after 50 years of sacrifices in the language movement and two and a half decades of independence?" she said while inaugurating the month-long Ekushey Book Fair organised by Bangla Academy in Dhaka.

Hasina said, "Let us criticise ourselves on every Ekushey February, let us ask ourselves—how much we wanted, how much we got and how much is to be attained."

This year Bangla Academy has given permission to set up 540 stalls, including 14 food stalls, at the fair. About 250 stalls have been set up inside the academy premises and some 111 publishers are taking part in the fair.

Addressing the function amidst tight security, the Prime Minister

said the great language movement which was initiated in 1948 and reached its peak in 1952 was not only a political movement aiming to establish Bangla language in state affairs.

The history of Bangalees, their language, art, culture, tradition and existence were very much related with the movement and each and every Bangalee became uncompromising on the question of their language, she added.

"We, without any further delay, have to engage ourselves in writing our glorious history," the Prime Minister said.

She said on February 15, 1971, Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman announced that "the day from which we will get self-rule, we will take initiative to use Bangla in every sphere."

But, after the brutal killing of Bangabandhu on August 15, 1975, a deeprooted conspiracy was started against Bengalees and Bangla language to destroy the spirit of Liberation War and misinterpret nationalism, Hasina said.

As a result, she said, the steps taken by the Father of the Nation could not yield the desired result even after long 25 years.

See Page 12 Col. 7

Hasina

From Page 1 Col. 8

"We have to remember that we cannot succeed in human resource development lagging behind in education. If the rate of literacy does not increase, we cannot achieve economic growth," she said.

The Prime Minister urged every educated man to make one person literate for a successful struggle against illiteracy and poverty. "We have to build a poverty-free nation and eliminate illiteracy within next 10 years."

Seeking cooperation from voluntary and non-government organisations to achieve this goal, she said, "If we cannot raise our heads in the fields of education, art, culture and literature, the supreme sacrifice of the martyrs of language movement would go in vain."

Hasina said the government is eager to establish a "cultural circle" comprising Bangla Academy, Shilpakala Academy and a national theatre complex to make the cultural tradition more familiar to next generations.

The Prime Minister said a hanging bridge will be built to facilitate the viewers to go round the cultural complex to be set up around the Ramna and Suhrawardy parks.

To commemorate the Ekushey, there is a plan to build a 21-storied building at the Bangla Academy premises, she said.

Hasina said the Father of the Nation made a call at the Academy premises on February 15, 1974, to uphold the Bangla language, literature and culture in the comity of nations. "We should not forget that call."

Bangabandhu delivered his speech in Bengali in the United Nations on September 24, 1974, "which not only glorified our mother tongue but also earned fame and honour for the country, she said.

Hasina paid tributes to the martyrs of the language movement, including Salam, Jabbar, Rafiq, Shafiuddin and Salauddin.

She also recalled the role of Shaheed Direndra Nath Dutta, who raised the demand in the then Pakistan Gano Parishad for establishing Bangla as the state language and those who laid down their lives in independence movement, liberation war and other democratic movements of the country.

On February 15, 1971, Bangabandhu, the forerunner of Bengali nationalism, announced that "we will establish Bangla in every sphere as soon as we achieve the self-rule."

With that end, just after independence, steps were taken to introduce Bangla at every tier of society, she said adding, but deep rooted conspiracy was started against Bangalee and Bangla language after the August 15 tragedy.

Noted poet Abul Hossain presided over the function, also addressed by State Minister for Cultural Affairs Obaidul Kader, Secretary General of Book Publishers and Distributors Association Akhlakur Rahman, acting Cultural Affairs Secretary Syed Yusuf Hossain and Bangla Academy Director General Syed Anwar Hossain.