



Month-long Ekushey Book Fair opens

PM calls for united efforts to preserve cultural heritage

Staff Correspondent

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia on Saturday emphasised the need for learning international language English alongside Bangla in the context of changed and competitive global situation.

Addressing as the chief guest the inaugural function of the month-long Ekushey Book Fair at Bangla Academy premises, she stressed that for overseas employment other languages should be learnt if necessary.

"After the establishment of Bangla as the state language and the consequent establishment of independent Bangladesh the spirit of the language movement has taken a new dimension," she said.

The Prime Minister said: "We have to adopt new outlook and determine the new action with regards to language. Our young generation must learn international language alongside Bangla in the context of changed realities and demand of the time."

Terming the Ekushey February an unprecedented event in the national life, she said "Ekushey February has now become International Mother Language Day today and we are proud of this", she added.

Begum Zia observed that

Bangla has become a source of inspiration to other endangered languages of the world to survive. She congratulated the Bangladeshi youth group for whom Bangla won the world recognition and the Ekushey February became International Mother Language Day.

The Prime Minister thanked the people and government of Sierra Leone for recognising Bangla as one the official language of that country. She also thanked the Bangladeshi peacekeepers working in Sierra Leone.

Paying rich tribute to the martyrs of the language movement and martyrs of the Liberation War, she said that Bangla and Bangladesh had become known to the world for their great sacrifices.

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia called upon the writers, literary personalities, scientists, educationists and publishers to come forward to meet the demand for necessary textbooks and other technical books in Bangla. She asked Bangla Academy to take measures in this regard.

She also directed Bangla Academy to translate books of Bengali writers into English for reading abroad.

Begum Zia urged the poets,

writers and other literary personalities to use their creative talent to
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A call for

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remove frustration, division, narrowness and instability from the society. She called upon them to lead the nation towards creativity.

The Prime Minister emphasised the need for making united efforts, irrespective of party affiliation for the advancement of the country.

"We may be poor in resources, but we are rich in culture, arts and literature. There is no alternative to united efforts to preserve our own arts and culture", she observed.

Terming book beacon light of knowledge, she said that Ekushey Book Fair had a great contribution to the publication of different books in the country.

The Prime Minister said that the government had earlier observed "Book Day" and Book Week". The year 2002 had been declared as the "National Book Year", she added.

She added that her government had declared this year as "the national library year" and would launch "library movement" across the country to encourage people to read books.

The Prime Minister asserted that her government would do everything possible for the development of Bangla Academy. She said that the government would consider allocation of fund for the construction of proposed "Ekushey Bhaban" in Bangla Academy premises.

Presided over by Chairman of Bangla Academy Prof. Wakil Ahmed, the inaugural function was also addressed by State Minister for Cultural Affairs Begum Selima Rahman, Cultural Secretary Nazmul Ahsan Siddiqui and President of Bangladesh Book Publishers and Sellers Association Abu Taher.

At the beginning of the function one minute silence was observed in memory of the martyrs of the language movement and prayer was offered for them.

At the end of the inaugural function, Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia visited different stalls at the book fair.