

PM for raising

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Ekush not come in the Bangladeshi's life, the history would have been different."

Describing Ekush as the nation's permanent platform as well as ever memorable event for self identity, the Prime Minister said the Central Shaheed Minar becomes a safe shelter for the people when they face any danger.

"Shaheed Minar is not a mere structure made of bricks, but a symbol of protest against injustice in language," she added.

She said, "once our enemy destroyed the Shaheed Minar and thought that we would no more uphold the spirit of Ekush but their all efforts have gone in vain as the Minar made of earth, brick and wood could be broken but the Minar in heart is indestructible."

"We have faced scores of odds and difficulties from time to time but never broken down as Ekush has always cared for us," she said.

Expressing her heartfelt gratitude to the nation for giving an overwhelming victory during the last general election, Sheikh Hasina said the people had voted our party to power in view of its commitment to ensure maximum welfare in the country.

"Production and culture are related with each other because anything, if isolated from the people, does not sustain in society," she said.

Earlier on her arrival at the auditorium, Minister for Information and Cultural Affairs Abul Kalam Azad received the Prime Minister. The function started with the National Anthem followed by recitation from of holy books of four religious faiths.

Later, Cabinet Secretary M Abdul Aziz read out the summarized life sketch of 13 eminent personalities who got the Ekush Padak 2009 in recognition to their outstanding contribution in the respective fields.

Each award carries Taka 40,000 in cash, a gold medal weighing three tolas and a citation.

This year's Ekush Padak awardees are: Dr Borhan Uddin Khan Bahangir (education), Prof Dr Syed Anwar Hossain (research), Mahbub-Ul Alam Chowdhury (language

and Telecommunications Minister Itazi Uddin Ahmed Razu was present on the occasion.

The Prime Minister urged the writers to create such literatures, which could turn the feelings of mass people into creative activities to help them become conscious citizen of the country. The government will always stand by them, she said.

Paying her profound tribute to the martyrs of language movement, she said the supreme sacrifices of those immortal heroes including Salam, Barkat, Rafiq and Jabbar had given all of us the opportunity to call our mothers 'Ma'.

Sheikh Hasina recalled with deep gratitude the memory of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and four national leaders for their lifelong contributions for the country's long cherished independence through the great War of Liberation.

She also recalled the contributions of those who made supreme sacrifices and were seriously wounded in different movements to establish peoples' rights to vote and food.

The Prime Minister said February 21 is no more a day to be observed in Bangladesh alone but also a world event being observed around the globe, allowing the people to know how and why the valiant sons of the soil shed their fresh blood in 1952 for the cause of mother tongue.

Sheikh Hasina called for practicing a second language side by side with Bangla to keep pace with the ongoing trend in the present competitive world.

Criticising a section of the people for their shyness in learning Bangla, the Prime Minister said people in many advanced countries are pursuing their studies in own languages, already reaching themselves to the height of development.

"We have laid the foundation stone of the International Mother Language Institute in presence of former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan during our previous tenure but the subsequent government has stopped the work," she said.

She also said that those, who had stopped the work,

ment/posthumous) - Zahirul-uz Zaman Khan (journalist/posthumous), Begum Billas Nash Uddin (artist), Manik Chandra Saha (journalist/posthumous), Humayun Kabir Bala (journalist/posthumous), Begum Selina Hossain (literature), Shamsuzzaman Khan (research), Dr Quazi Kholliquzzaman Ahmad (poverty alleviation), Mohammad Rafi Khan (MR Khan) (social service), Mansur-Ul Karim (fine arts), and Ramendu Majumdar (theatre).

The recipients and the family members of those got the award posthumously received the medal and the citation one after another in the patriotic and the Ekushy songs were on air inside the hall.

Marking the Ekushy February, the Prime Minister released a 'souvenir sheet' of Taka 50 denomination with some rare photographs of the Language Movement along with a special cancelor. Post

would have to be accountable to the people. "They have not even cared for taking an initiative to uphold this international achievement that Bangladesh has got during our time," she said.

Sheikh Hasina said her government would do its best to strengthen the International Mother Language Institute and the Bangla Academy to create world opinion for practicing the mother tongues. "We will also take steps to preserve the languages of indigenous people in the country," she said.

In this respect, she sought active cooperation of all to implement the commitment of present government for bringing a change in all spheres of national life.

Information Minister Abul Kalam Azad said the government would take steps to formulate a guideline to preserve the honour and prestige of the Ekushy Award for removing any controversy about it.