



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina with litterateurs of eight South Asian countries at the inaugural ceremony of SAARC Literary Festival Dhaka 2014 in the capital's National Museum auditorium yesterday. She inaugurated the two-day event as chief guest.

PHOTO: BSS

Gone are the days of being subservient

State Minister Shahriar tells Rajshahi journals about foreign pressure

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

State Minister for Foreign Affairs Shahriar Alam has said Bangladesh will not bow to foreign pressure anymore in any domestic affairs.

There was a time when Bangladesh would face famine for not succumbing to foreign pressure, but the days are long gone, he told an opinion sharing meeting with local journalists at Zafar Imam Tennis Complex in Rajshahi city Wednesday night.

In a reply, the minister asserted that farmers, labourers, expatriates, and the general people would now dominate the framing of the country's foreign policy. Shahriar Alam went to visit his constituency (Bagha-Charghat upazila) in Rajshahi for the first time after he took up the current role.

Replying to another question, the minister said the present government did not have any plan of holding mid-term elections to parliament.

"The government is planning to ensure participation of all political parties in the next general election. There is no international pressure for holding the mid-term election, and even if there is any, Bangladesh would never accept that."

Shahriar Alam assured that the

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SAARC LITERARY FESTIVAL Litterateurs, connoisseurs gather to melt borders

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Aiming to melt borders through intellectual interactions, writers, poets and academicians of the eight South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (Saarc) countries met at SAARC Literary Festival Dhaka 2014 yesterday.

Inaugurated by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in the capital's Bangladesh National Museum, the two-day festival on paper presentations, discussions and poetry recitations seeks to build on its theme, "Trust and Reconciliation Beyond Borders".

Litterateurs and literature connoisseurs numbering 29 are participating in the festival organised by Writers Readers Illustrators Translators and Educators (WRITE) Foundation, the Bangladesh chapter of the Foundation of SAARC Writers and Literature (Foswal).

About 50 Bangladeshi writers, poets, researchers, academicians and publishers joined the foreign delegates in yesterday's five sessions and are expected to attend five more today.

Yesterday's sessions focused on how literature at many times revealed historical truths and bridged gaps created through traumatic events such as the partition of the Indian subcontinent in 1947.

Presenting his academic paper, "Bridging trans-border historical trauma: problems and prospects of reconciliation" in the first session, Nepali essayist, critic, playwright and poet Abhi Subedi discussed the historical trauma created by the rise of borders in South Asia.

In Maldivian cultural personality and former policymaker Ibrahim Waheed's speech, the anguish of the current divide borders impose on free movement within South Asia came up.

Sri Lankan educationist Kamala Wijeratne in her presentation proposed launching an e-journal for

publishing and sharing Saarc literature.

She also called to create a youth forum within Saarc and start giving away a literary award to young writers so that they can share experiences and rebuild trust.

Indian novelist Ravishankar Bal and academican Sukrita Paul Kumar also spoke at the session chaired by Bangladeshi writer Syed Manzoorul Islam.

The second session, "Partition Literature", had interesting deliberations by Bangladeshi writer Selina Hossain, Liberation War Museum Trustee and researcher Mofidul Hoque and Indian academican Refaqaat Ali Khan.

Mofidul explained why there was a dearth of literature on the partition in the then East Pakistan, currently known as Bangladesh.

"It was difficult to write about the partition when you have arrived in a land of Muslims and you cannot lament for the land you have left behind, the land of the Hindus," he said on the situation of Muslims migrating from India to Pakistan after the partition.

Mofidul also pointed out how war trauma passed on to future generations who were later found to have carried out the same kind of violence their ancestors were once subjected to.

To this end, he cited examples of the Punjabi men, comprising the majority in the then Pakistan occupation forces, who tortured Bangalees during the 1971 Liberation War and whose ancestors had to shift from India during the partition.

He also cited the torture on Palestinians by Israelis whose Jewish ancestors had been victims of the Holocaust during World War II.

The session ended with several beautiful poetry renditions on the partition by Indian poet Hoshang Merchant.

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HRW CONTEMPT PLEA Prosecutors miss attendance at ICT

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

None of around 22 war crimes prosecutors appeared at International Crimes Tribunal-1, which was to hear yesterday a New York-based rights body's reply on a contempt petition over the verdict against former Jamaat-e-Islami chief Ghulam Azam.

Talking to The Daily Star, two prosecutors expressed surprise at the absence, while one said the date was not fixed beforehand, a claim refuted by the tribunal's registrar, AKM Nasiruddin Mahmud, who said if not fixed earlier, it would not come up on the day's cause list.

Senior prosecutor Syed Haider Ali said he was in the Supreme Court and so did not know the reason of the absence. "Are you sure none attended the tribunal?" he asked. "It should not happen. At least one person should have been present. I'm looking into the matter."

The prosecution filed the contempt petition after Human Rights Watch (HRW) posted an article on its website on August 16 last year, claiming that the trial of Ghulam Azam

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SAYEDEE'S DEATH PENALTY

PWs' statements authentic

Attorney general tells SC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Attorney General Mahbubey Alam yesterday told Supreme Court that prosecution witnesses' statements on Delwar Hossain Sayedee actively taking part in attacks and lootings in Pirojpur's Parerhat in 1971 are authentic.

Moreover, freedom fighter Maj (ret'd) Ziauddin Ahmed's book "Sundarbaner Sei Unmatal Dinguli" corroborates the witnesses' statements over other crime against humanity committed during the Liberation War, he said.

Mahbubey was placing arguments on the appeal

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