

Research must for endangered languages from being lost: PM

February 22, 2023

Online Desk: Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on Tuesday stressed the need for research for endangered languages of the world from being lost. “Many languages in different countries are being lost. We want the endangered languages of the world to be preserved here and research to be conducted on these. We’re giving the utmost importance to research. I want the International Mother Language Institute to make a huge contribution to preserve the languages,” she said.

The prime minister was speaking while inaugurating a four-day programme of the International Mother Language Institute at Segunbagicha in Dhaka to mark the Martyrs’ Day and International Mother Language Day-2023. “I always put emphasis on research. The reason is that enrichment of anything is not possible without research,” she said. Sheikh Hasina said the government will take steps to provide fellowship for language research in the International Mother Language Institute.

“I think this institute has a responsibility to preserve all the languages of the world, conduct research on these and know the history of languages. I think it can be done,” she said. Hasina said she, if needed, will arrange funds to provide fellowship for language researchers. She said today Bangladesh has attained food autarky thanks to research. “Now research is extensively needed in different sectors including science and health,” she added.

In this context, the PM said the government provides fellowship and stipends to 24 million students in Bangladesh and free textbooks to the school students.

She said her government raised the literacy rate to 65.5 per cent from only 45 percent during the 1996-2001 tenure and got an award from UNESCO for this achievement at that time. Then her government formed a fund with the award money to provide stipend for higher education. “Coming in power in 2009, now we’ve raised the literacy rate to 75.2 per cent. So, we are advancing (in terms of education),” she said. Hasina recalled the contribution of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman to the Language Movement in 1952. In the event, Hasina, also chief patron of the institute, handed over the international mother language national medals and the international mother language international medals to four recipients.

Habibur Rahman and Ranjit Singha were awarded with the national medals, while Mahendra Kumar Mitra and Mother Language Lovers of World Society, Vancouver, Canada were conferred with the international medals in recognition of their extraordinary contribution for the preservation, revitalisation and development of mother languages.

President of the Mother Language Lovers of World Society Md Aminul Islam received the medal on behalf of the Society. Education Minister Dipu Moni, Deputy Minister for Education Mohibul Hasan Chowdhury (Nowfel) and Head of the Office and UNESCO Representative to Bangladesh Susan Maree Vize spoke on the occasion. Professor Dr Pabitra Sarkar, former Vice-Chancellor of Rabindra Bharati University, India, presented the keynote paper focusing on “The necessity of multilingual education in the multilingual world.”

Secretary of the Secondary and Higher Education Division Suleman Khan gave the welcome address and Director General of the International Mother Language Institute Professor Dr Hakim Arif delivered the vote of thanks. At the outset of the programme, a one-minute silence was observed to show respect to the language movement heroes for their sacrifice.

In the event, a video documentary titled “Bangabandhu and Language Movement” was screened. Children from different countries including Bangladesh, India, Australia, Algeria, Japan, China, Russia and France greeted the Prime Minister on their own mother languages on the occasion of the International Mother Language Day.