

No Shaheed Minar in 77pc

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for schools not having a language memorial. For schools located in cities space is the main constraint, they said.

All public and private schools in the country remain open on February 21, the International Mother Language Day to mark the historic Language Movement of 1952. People from all walks of life commemorate the day by placing wreaths at their local language memorials.

However, students of the schools without Shaheed Minar only perform cultural activities and sometimes build makeshift monuments to pay homage to the martyrs of the Language Movement, informed students, teachers and education officers.

Students of Champa Parul Government Primary School in the capital's Mirpur area told this correspondent that there is no Shaheed Minar at their school for observing the Language Martyrs' Day.

Mohammad Rahim, a 4th-grader of Champa Parul, said they come to school on February 21 and take part in some cultural activities but cannot pay homage to language martyrs.

Suraiya Majumdar, a teacher of the school, which has 283 students, said there is no available space on their school compound to set up a Shaheed Minar.

Champa Parul is not an isolated case; 71 percent of the 10,930 government primary schools in Dhaka division do not have a Shaheed Minar.

Chatogram has the highest number of public primary schools without a Shaheed Minar, which accounts for 86 percent of all state-run elementary institutions in the region.

Of the eight divisions, Mymensingh has the lowest percentage of schools without a replica of the iconic monument.

Among the districts, 96 percent of the 999 government primary schools of Thakurgaon do not have any Shaheed Minar.

In Bhola and Meherpur, 95 percent out of a total of 1,048 and 92 percent out of 309 public primary schools, respectively, are without a language monument.

However, Bhola district Primary Education Officer Nikhil Chandra Haldar and Meherpur district Primary Education Officer Fozleh Rahman opined that setting up a Shaheed Minar at schools should be mandatory.

"If a Shaheed Minar is set up inside a school, students can see it daily and acquire knowledge about the language movement besides learning about it from their textbook," Fozleh said.

"But there is no allocation from the government to build such memorials," he added.

WHY WE NEED SHAHEED MINAR AT SCHOOLS

Activists of the Language Movement and educationists emphasised the need for Shaheed Minars in schools to encourage students to learn about the history of the movement and obtain a clear understanding about its significance.

Educational institutions across the country were the breeding grounds for the Language Movement, said Language Movement veteran Ahmad Rafiq.

There should be a Shaheed Minar at all educational institutions, he stressed.

"Children will come to know the

history of the Language Movement and the memorial will instil patriotism among them from their childhood," he added.

Blaming the apathy of authorities, he said people in the education sector think that there is no need to remember the Language Movement's history as Bangla has already earned the status of a state language.

Dhaka University Professor Emeritus Serajul Islam Choudhury said, "It is unfortunate that so many schools do not have a Shaheed Minar. The Language Movement is an event that is a symbol and source of inspiration for all nationalistic and democratic struggle and the Liberation War of Bangladesh.

"People are gradually forgetting the dignity and significance of the Language Movement. As there is hardly any learning of history, they no longer consider the Shaheed Minar as a symbol of pride. This is not an isolated incident. Rather, it is a manifestation of their attitude towards it," he added.

Meanwhile, DPE officials told The Daily Star that they are thinking of establishing Shaheed Minar at all government primary schools.

"We will set up Shaheed Minars at all schools and school authorities can spend money from the grants they get under the School Level Improvement Plan given by the DPE," said DPE Director General Md Fashiullah.

The language movement began in 1948 and reached its climax on February 21, 1952, when police firing killed several protesters, who were demanding that Bangla be one of the state languages of Pakistan. Bangla was later adopted as a state language of Pakistan.

In 2000, Unesco declared February 21 as the International Mother Language Day to celebrate the ethno-linguistic rights of people around the world and pay tribute to the martyrs of the Language Movement.

Malaysia 1MDB fugitive spotted in virus-hit Chinese city

AFP, Kuala Lumpur

A fugitive Malaysian financier wanted over a massive graft scandal has been spotted in the city at the centre of the coronavirus outbreak, police said, although it was unclear if he had left before Chinese authorities imposed a lockdown.

Low Taek Jho -- commonly known as Jho Low -- is accused of playing a major role in plundering billions of dollars from sovereign wealth fund 1Malaysia Development Berhad.

Looted money was used to buy everything from a super-yacht to art, in a fraud that allegedly involved former leader Najib Razak and contributed to his government's downfall in 2018.

Low, who denies any wrongdoing, has long been on the run and is often rumoured to be in China.

"Previously, we received intelligence that he was active in Wuhan," national police chief Abdul Hamid Bador told a press conference late Wednesday, referring to the city at the centre of the outbreak.

Buet, CU won't adopt

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on Wednesday decided that Buet will enrol students through admission tests like it has done over the years."

Without giving a direct answer for the reasons, Mizanur, also the director of Directorate of Students' Welfare at Buet, said they were not against the uniform entrance test system which was introduced by the University Grants Commission (UGC) recently. "But we will follow our own rules for the tests."

According to the current system, Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (Buet) seeks applications from admission seekers, draws up a shortlist of eligible candidates, holds admission tests and enrol students on the basis of their results.

Meanwhile, the CU authorities said they would observe how the new system styled "Central Admission Test (CAT)" goes on this year before making a decision on whether to adopt it.

At a meeting of the CU academic council yesterday, most of its members agreed on not to go for the CAT after discussing the pros and cons of the new system, an academic council member told this newspaper on condition of anonymity.

Earlier on January 23, the UGC, the statutory apex body for higher education, announced that it would go for a uniform admission test for the 2020-2021 academic year to reduce hassles of the admission seekers.

On February 12, the commission held a meeting with the vice-chancellors of 12 public universities to discuss the new admission system.

At the meeting, UGC Chairman Prof Kazi Shahidullah said the commission would start the work in full swing next month to set the procedures and methods of the admission system.

But, the VCs of Buet, CU, Dhaka

University and Jahangirnagar University had said they would inform the UGC about their decisions after discussing the issue at their respective academic councils.

They mentioned that none of the VCs of the four universities, run under the 1973 ordinance, can make a final decision on their own and that's why they wanted to sit with the academic councils.

The UGC asked them to come up with their decisions by February 26.

Dhaka University and Jahangirnagar University are yet to hold the meetings.

There are 39 public universities, which enrol around 65,000 students every year through separate admission tests. Last year, some 9.88 lakh students passed the HSC and its equivalent examinations under the 10 education boards.

For higher education, public universities remain students' top choice. But the number of seats is quite less than the number of admission seekers.

The idea of a centralised entrance test has long been in discussion as admission seekers and their guardians face hassles every year when they prepare for admission tests at multiple universities in different parts of the country.

President Abdul Hamid on several occasions asked the VCs of all public universities to introduce a unified admission system to reduce such hassles.

But some top public universities had opposed the idea after it was floated around a decade ago.

One of the reasons behind their opposition was that the implementation of the system would cut the income of the universities and also teachers from the sale of admission forms, invigilation, and checking of answer scripts.

Rape victim dies taking poison

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Meanwhile, a man was arrested yesterday for allegedly raping a speech-impaired woman in Nilphamari.

Police said the girl, who was a 10th grader of a school in Rajshahi's Charghat upazila, knew Jamiul Islam Joy, aged around 23, a student of Rajshahi College and resident of Baneshwar area in Puthia upazila.

On Sunday, Joy, promising to marry her, took the girl to an isolated place in Baneshwar area and raped her, said Iftekhair Alam, additional superintendent and spokesperson for Rajshahi police.

Family wants judicial probe

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law enforcement agencies, is a must to investigate deaths in custody.

Talking to this newspaper yesterday, Jahangir alleged that police personnel charged batons on their relatives when they asked law enforcers the reason for beating her sister to death.

Police, however, denied the allegation of charging batons.

Victim's son Yasin Arafat Jisan yesterday said, "There is no case against my mother who used to run a poultry farm...To protect themselves,

Joy refused to marry the girl. Failing to convince Joy, the girl took poison on Monday, the police official claimed quoting the victim's family.

She was rushed to the RMCH where she died on Wednesday night, said Iftekhair.

He added that police would take action against Joy if the girl's family filed a case.

In Nilphamari, police yesterday arrested a man on charges of raping a speech-impaired woman in a village of Saidpur upazila.

Accused Sekandar Ali, 45, is a

neighbour of the victim.

Police said the woman, aged around 40, was alone at home on February 11. At that time, Sekandar entered the house and forcibly took her to a nearby field and raped her.

After returning home, the victim disclosed the incident to her family.

Her brother filed a rape case against Sekandar yesterday morning. Police later arrested him from his home, said Abul Hasnat, officer-in-charge of Saidpur Police Station.

Our Rajshahi University and Nilphamari correspondents contributed to this report.

of drug dealing against him.

When he and his mother told them that Abdul was not at home, they started beating her up and took her in custody, he said.

Around 11:00pm, Jisan received a phone call from someone who told him that his mother had fallen ill and had been taken to Gazipur Shaheed Tajuddin Ahmad Medical College Hospital.

Going there around 1:00am on Wednesday, he found his mother dead.

"I thought I could be infected during the four days. I thought 'Is it really OK?'"

A specialist in infectious diseases at Kobe University slammed as "completely chaotic" the quarantine procedures on board in rare criticism from a Japanese academic.

"The cruise ship was completely inadequate in terms of infection control," said Kentaro Iwata in videos he has since deleted.

South Korea, meanwhile, announced 51 new cases, with more than 40 in a cluster centred on the Shincheonji Church of Jesus, an entity often accused of being a cult.

The infections apparently came from a 61-year-old woman who first developed a fever on February 10 and attended at least four services before being diagnosed.

Local media said she had twice refused to be tested for the coronavirus on the grounds she had not recently travelled abroad.

Authorities were investigating whether she might have visited the hospital where a long-term patient contracted the virus and later died. Some 15 other patients have now been found to have the virus.

Shincheonji claims its founder, Lee Man-hee, has donned the mantle of Jesus Christ and will take 144,000 people with him to heaven on the day of judgement.

A man in his 60s tested positive for the coronavirus after dying Wednesday following symptoms of pneumonia, South Korean authorities said.

Spread Bangla culture, literature across world

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"Following his proposal, the Sorbodolio Rashtrabhasha Bangla Sangram Parishad [All Party State Language Bangla Action Council]

was formed at the Fazlul Huq Hall of Dhaka University, comprising Chhatra League, Tamuddin Majlish and several other progressive student organisations on March 2 [1948] for the movement to get the recognition of Bangla as a state language."

Hasina said March 11 was declared as the Bangla State Language Demand Day and the day was initially observed as the Language Day.

She said one can learn about the role of Bangabandhu in the Language Movement from the Unfinished Memoirs of Bangabandhu where the Father of the Nation wrote how he waged the movement.

"But unfortunately once attempts were made to completely erase his name from the Language Movement."

The PM said "Secret Documents of Intelligence Branch on Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur

Rahman" is being published in 14 volumes with reports of Pakistani intelligence over Bangabandhu submitted from 1948 to 1971.

The book would be a great source of history of Bangladesh. Four volumes of this book have already been published, she added.

No country in the world published intelligence reports given against their leader, Hasina said, adding that she was publishing the full reports so that people could know the truth as an ill-attempt continued for long to distort the history.

The premier said after assuming power in 1996, the then Awami League government had placed a proposal before the United Nations and sent necessary papers to the UN members to get the international recognition of February 21. The move was made in support of an initiative taken by late Rafiqul Islam, Abdus Salam and some other expatriate Bangladeshis.

"As a result, Unesco on November 17, 1999, unanimously recognised February 21 as the International

Mother Language Day."

Hasina distributed the prestigious Ekushey Padak-2020 among 20 eminent personalities and an organisation in recognition of their contributions to different fields.

Aminul Islam Badsha (posthumous) was given the award for his role in the Language Movement.

Begum Dalia Nowshin, Shankar Roy and Mita Haque were handed the award for their contributions to music while Golam Mostafa Khan, SM Mohsin and Prof Farida Zaman for contributions to dance, performing arts and fine arts respectively.

Hazi Akhter Sarder (posthumous), Abdul Jabbar (posthumous) and AAM Mesbahul Haque (posthumous) were given the award for their role in the Liberation War.

Journalist Zafar Wazed was chosen for the award for his contribution to journalism, while Jahangir Alam, Hafez Qvari Syed Saifur Rahman Nizami Shah and Bangladesh Fisheries Research Institute for their role in research, and Prof Bikiran

The state

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for Land Reform and Development (ALRD) were also present at the event held at Dhaka Reporters' Unity.

"Even though the government promised that the chemical warehouses of Old Dhaka would be removed [and relocated] to Shyampur and Tongi, the Bangladesh Chemical Industries Corporation has only just established the foundation stone of the proposed warehouses on January 9," said Syeda Rizwana Hasan, chief executive of Bela, reading out a statement on behalf of those present.

The proposed warehouses are to be spread across six acres of land and will be built using a budget of Tk 79 crores 42 lakhs.

The statement further said that even though the government was supposed to finish this project by 2020, its future is in question because a few days into operation, the government found a large crater on spot, thus increasing the budget of the project by another Tk 1.5 crore.

Furthermore, the project lacks any guidelines on chemical storage, worker safety and environmental impacts in spite of being located beside the Buriganga.

Families of those who lost their loved ones to the fire incident attended the event and all conveyed their need for financial assistance. They said they have not received anything since the incident.

"We have come to know from media reports that private banks donated Tk 30 crore to the Prime Minister's relief and welfare fund for the Chawkbazar victims. This money belongs to them and a guideline needs to be created on how to disburse the money," said Shamsul Huda, chief executive of ALRD.

Dr Iftekharuzzaman, executive director of TIB, said, "The victims are not in want of anybody's sympathy. They only want what is their right."

The civil society members demanded transparency from the related quarters.

Sultana Kamal pointed out that after the Nimtoli fire incident of 2012 that killed 124 people, the High Court had given certain directives, none of which has been implemented.

These include the removal of warehouses and factories from residential neighbourhoods, increasing surveillance on agencies seeking licenses for this trade and undertaking legal action against factories without fire licences.

The organisers demanded that strict action be taken against those in Old Dhaka who rent out their residential buildings as warehouses.

"A Chemical Safety Committee comprising experts in the field must be formed nationally to prevent such chemical disasters in the future," said the statement distributed by the organisers.

Prasad Barua for his contribution to education.

Prof Shamsul Alam and Sufi Mohammad Mizanur Rahman got the award for their contribution to economy and social service respectively, while Nurun Nabi, Sikder Aminul Haque (posthumous) and Nazmun Nesa Piar for their contribution to language and literature, and Dr Sayeba Akhter for contribution to medical science.

Each recipient was given a gold medal, a certificate, and a cheque of Tk 2 lakh.

State Minister for Cultural Affairs KM Khalid presided over the programme, organised by his ministry.

Cabinet members, PM's advisers, judges, lawmakers, foreign diplomats, litterateurs, poets, academics, writers, journalists, Ekushey Padak winners of previous years and top civil and military officials were present.

On February 5, the cultural affairs ministry announced the names of this year's Ekushey Padak winners.

'Build a society free from exploitation'

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In 1952. That day our boys gave blood, became Shaheed to establish the Bengali language. But was that merely a language movement?

That was never just a language movement. Our children shed their blood not just for language. They struggled for establishing their cultural identity, they struggled to live as human beings. Many a person did not want to realise that the people of Bangladesh had risen to a man, that it was a futile attempt to suppress the people of Bengal. And it was from that very day that the preparation for a real struggle had started.

Our brothers and sisters of the country have observed this day every year as Shaheed Day. But even if they observed Shaheed Day, repeated blows were dealt on the observance of the day. In the real sense of the term we could never observe this day. Because the ruling clique used to snipe at the observance of this day and so went all the way out to crush this sentiment. Even the conspirators and the ruling junta had attacked the Shaheed Minar

on several occasions.

After that many a year rolled on and innumerable brothers and sisters of Bangladesh laid down their lives. They gave their lives for establishing the rights of the people, for the liberation struggle of Bangladesh. They wanted to lead a life as human beings. They wanted their rights, they wanted to lead a life as the citizens of an independent country. But the brutal forces did not accept those facts. So, they killed my brothers and sisters. They had struck at our very culture, at our very economic backbone.

They oppressed our mothers and sisters. They turned the people of Bangladesh into mere paupers. But the Bengalees are such a nation that knows how to shed blood. There is no power on earth to suppress those people which have learnt how to die. The ruling junta could not appreciate this reality. So, they jumped on us with all their might.

It is true that today we have achieved freedom. But if we fail to establish a society free from exploitation, we will

not be able to enjoy the fruits of our freedom.

We have become independent. But it was achieved at the cost of much blood. No country, no nation gave so much blood for independence. But this shedding of blood will be futile if we fail to make the people happy, if we fail to free the people of the country from exploitation, if we fail to establish a society free from exploitation and if that has to be done, the people would then have to build Bangladesh on the foundations of nationalism, democracy, socialism and secularism. I hope the seven and a half crores of people of Bangladesh will take a vow in this regard.

So, irrespective of caste, creed, religion, party and opinion, the students, youth, farmer and workers -- all have to advance -- this is what we hope. The vow which we have to take today is we have earned freedom, and if necessary, we shall give more blood to preserve our independence. We shall, if necessary, give more blood to build up our country. Today we have

to take a resolution keeping in mind the blood of the martyrs, keeping in memory the dedication of those who died, laid their lives as Shaheeds, of those mothers who lost their children, of those sisters who became widows, and of those innumerable others who became destitute.

This determination will be to establish on the soil of Bengal a society free from exploitation and to introduce a socialistic pattern of economy. We have to proceed to work to ensure that the people suffer no longer, they are not oppressed and tyrannised anymore. So, I appeal to you especially to the youth, students, farmers and labourers to come forward unitedly.

We are in great danger. We have practically nothing. So, we have to build up everything anew. Let us come forward unitedly to build up the nation, establish a society free from exploitation. Long live Shaheed Smriti, Joy Bangla.

SOURCE: February 22, 1972 issue of Morning News.