



Left, the reverence and fervour surrounding International Mother Language Day is a great way to pass the Ekushey spirit down to younger generations. A youngster stands in front of the Central Shaheed Minar, proudly wearing a painted version of the monument on her face. Top right, like each year, the Shaheed Minar was showered with flowers, petals, and wreaths, as tributes to the martyrs of the Language Movement. Bottom, people from all walks of life stand in line for their turn to pay respects.

PHOTO: STAR



ABUL BARKAT MEMORIAL MUSEUM

Of pride and inspiration

HASAN MEER

"Did you know, like me Abul Barkat was a graduate of Dhaka University?"

"The educated youth had ambitions and dreams; he also got enrolled in the master's programme at DU. But what made him stand out was an uncompromising love for his mother tongue," said Shahana Rahman.

Standing in front of a wall on the ground floor of a two-storey memorial complex, showcasing photographs and documents from 1947 to 1952 -- a complete, contextual history of the Language Movement -- the Bangla teacher spoke slowly and solemnly while her daughter, 14-year-old Saima Rahman, listened carefully.

Barkat could not accept the then Pakistan government's refusal to recognise Bangla as one of the state languages, and imposition of Urdu as the only official language of Pakistan.

It was the '50s -- a testing time. On February 21, 1952, Barkat, fellow students and people from all walks of life took to the streets for establishing Bangla as the state language.

Police swung into action, firing teargas shells and beating up protesters. The battle between them and law enforcers spilled out on to the streets. As they kept marching, shooting began and Barkat got shot.

He passed away that night at Dhaka Medical College. He was buried at Azimpur graveyard.

"How old was he?" asked Saima.

"He would have turned 25 in June that year," Shahana told her. Salam, Rafique, Jabbar, Shafiur and others also laid down their lives for mother tongue that day.

Pakistan government was ultimately compelled to include an article in its constitution on February 29, 1956 that declared, "The state languages of Pakistan shall be Urdu and Bengali."

However, Shahana proudly told her daughter, Ekushey did not just end there; it rather planted the seed of freedom in the hearts of Bangalis and 19 years after the Language Movement, an independent country named Bangladesh was born.

Shahana and Saima -- the mother and daughter duo -- were visiting the Abul Barkat Memorial

Museum at Palashi intersection on Dhaka University campus on February 20.

The memorial opened on March 25, 2012 in honour of the language martyrs.

Right at the entrance of the memorial is a picture of Barkat, framed on a mosaic wall along with his short biography.

It mentions, in recognition of his sacrifice, Barkat was awarded the Ekushey Padak (posthumously) in 2000.

Inside, photographs -- collected over the years -- adorn much of the wall space, transporting visitors back to the days of the Language Movement when young souls fought for the right to speak in Bangla.

There is also a copy of the February 22, 1952, edition of newspaper The Azad, describing the incident.

To the right are photos of Abul Barkat and his family.

Copies of his certificates and personal letters; a photograph of Barkat's mother Hasina Begum inaugurating the Shaheed Minar; three tea cups used by Barkat; and

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Abul Barkat memorial complex showcases photographs and documents ranging from 1947 to 1952 -- a complete, contextual history of the Language Movement. Inset, picture of Barkat, framed on a mosaic wall, at the entrance.

PHOTO: STAR

Govt trying to make Bangla UN's official language

Says info minister

AGENCIES

The government is working to register Bangla as one of the official languages of the United Nations (UN), said Information Minister Hasan Mahmud yesterday.

He made the statement while paying homage to the Language Movement martyrs at the Central Shaheed Minar on the occasion of International Mother Language Day, reports UNB.

"Today, our commitment is to turn the country into 'Sonar Bangla' as dreamt by Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman," said Mahmud, also the joint general secretary of Awami League.

Meanwhile, talking to reporters at another event, Foreign Minister Dr AK Abdul Momen also said efforts are going on to make Bangla an official language of the UN.

There are six official languages of the UN -- Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish.

The correct interpretation and translation of these six languages, in both spoken and written form, is very important to the work of the organisation because this enables clear and concise communication on issues of global importance, according to the UN.

Yesterday, the information minister in reply to BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul

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The spirit carries on



Children leaf through books at a stall on Suhrawardy Udyan premises yesterday. With an array of selections, the Ekushey book fair continues to attract bookworms of all ages.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

As scores of people placed floral wreaths on the pedestal of Central Shaheed Minar yesterday, they also thronged the nearby month-long Ekushey book fair, which commemorates the sacrifice made in 1952 through literature.

Many tagged along with their family and friends, adorned in black and white clothes with Bangla alphabets printed on top. Faces of little ones were seen covered in the alphabets too.

Marking Ekushey, the fair's gates opened at 8am, starting off with poetry recitation at the main stage on Bangla Academy premises. More than 100 young and renowned poets set the mood for the rest of the day.

Children were scampering about, buying books of their choice, while their parents showed them around the fair.

Parents said they brought their children to get them familiar with the language

martyrs and develop an understanding of the day's significance.

"My daughter is in third-grade, so she doesn't understand a lot of things about the Language Movement," said Jamilur Rahman, a private jobholder.

"However, after growing up, she will realise the cultural and historic importance of the day, and will be inspired with the movement's spirit," he said while roaming around with his daughter Bonnya.

The crowd grew as the day went on.

As it was a Friday, many more joined in during the evening, transforming Suhrawardy Udyan into a place of union for those who love the language.

Along with buying books on Liberation War, people of different ages were looking through books on the Language Movement to know more about its history.

"I know about the movement, but I'm not that well-aware of the personal lives of

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Apollo Hospitals Dhaka welcomes DR. NAZMUL ISLAM
Senior Consultant-- Endocrinology & Diabetology

• Obtained his MBBS from Dhaka Medical College in 1988.
• Worked at NHS, UK in Halton General Hospital Cheshire, Kingston General Hospital, London, Sandwell District General Hospital, Birmingham.
• Worked at Hull Royal Infirmary, Hull, United Kingdom.
• Medical Resident at Rochester, New York, USA.
• Fellow at University of Rochester, New York.
• Only US Board Certified Endocrinologist in Bangladesh.
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APOLLO HOSPITALS

UNDP launches Bangla font

UNB, Dhaka

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Bangladesh yesterday launched the UN Bangla font and Bangla version of the Human Development Report 2019.

Foreign Minister Dr AK Abdul Momen formally launched the Bangla font.

Kanni Wignaraja, assistant secretary general, assistant administrator and director of the regional bureau for Asia and the Pacific, was present as special guest.

Dr Selim Jahan, who wrote the summary of the Human Development Report 2019 Bangla version, also spoke at the programme.

সুস্থিশীল আধুনিক ইসলামী ব্যাংকিংয়ের পথিকৃৎ
এক্সিম ব্যাংকের

১০০ তম
শাখা

ধানমণ্ডি মহিলা শাখার
শুভ উদ্বোধন

আজ ২২ ফেব্রুয়ারি ২০২০ শনিবার
লেনদেন শুরু: ২৩ ফেব্রুয়ারি ২০২০ রবিবার

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