

Dhaka Day by Day



It Was People's Revolution

By Nurul Kabir

The language movement of 1952, contrary to today's belief that it was only a students' struggle, was actually a revolt that was participated by people from different strata. Abdul Matin, convener of the Dhaka University State Language Action Committee, told The Daily Star. On February 22, streams of people, numbering over 20 thousand, came out of their homes, defying the curfew in the city, to converge at the spot where the students laid their life just the day before.

The police opened fire again on the sea of the people who were mourning the deaths of their brothers, claiming some more lives. This turned the people's anger into a mass upsurge that shook the people in power who fled their official residences to take shelter in the cantonment areas.

Thus the movement spread by the students became a peoples' movement, recalls Matin saying, "without the active participation of the general people the language movement could not have succeeded. People could not stand by the students to ensure their right to their mother tongue as they realised that the men in power were out to deprive them of the right only three months after the emergence of the country they had fought for."

They started to feel that actually they did not have the freedom as they found that Urdu, only Urdu, along with English, was being used in bank notes, postal tickets, envelopes, money order forms etc. of Pakistan while Bangla, the mother tongue of the majority population of Pakistan living in its eastern part was being totally ignored.

The discrimination naturally hurt the hearts of the 'Bangladeshs' and jolted their sense of belonging to Pakistan, says Matin. The bid to suppress Bangla moved the minds of the whole Bengali people so strongly that the students, intellectuals even the government employees especially those in the lower tiers spontaneously voiced their protest against the move, explains Matin.

The hero of the language movement went on to say, the impact was so enormous that the agitation began to spread to rural areas. However, it was not a story of a consistent and unbroken act. Matin said with sadness, adding, there were compromises as well. In 1948, a province wide strike was observed in demand of recognition for Bangla as a state language.

The first act of compromise we saw was when the then leaders of the movement met Khajia Nazimuddin, the erstwhile chief minister of Pakistan, on January 27, 1949 and virtually abandoned the issue. Analysing the cause of the compromise the leaders made, Abdul Matin said, "Still obsessed with the two nation theory that acted as the basic premise of the partition of India, the then leadership did not have courage enough to cope with the growing idea of Bengali nationalism based on mother tongue."

On the claim that Golam Azam took part in the language movement, Abdul Matin said, "he had nothing to do with it".

Coming back to the common peoples' atti-

tude towards the struggle for language in 1950, Abdul Matin said, "even I myself got the inspiration to be actively involved in the language movement from a conversation between some lower class government employees in a tea stall near the old museum building only a few days before the formation of the Dhaka University State Language Action Committee on March 11, 1950."

Shocked at the halt in the students movement for Bangla as a state language, one of the employees told the others, "if the students refused the struggle for the language, we could also join them," Matin recalls.

Matin went on, "another person supporting the view said that the fate of the nation depended on the victory of the movement". The spirit of the conversation moved me so much that I described the story in a student rally held in observance of the anniversary of Language Day on March 11, 1950, at the Dhaka University campus.

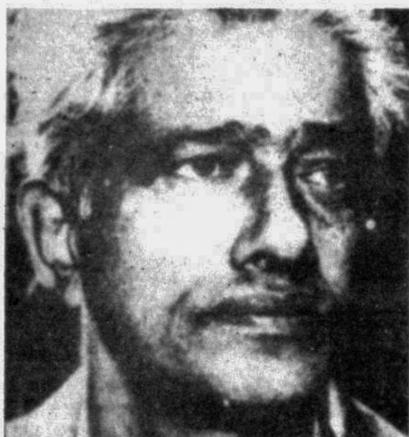
Fed up with the rhetoric of the speakers at the meeting I stood up and said, "we should stop observing the language day like a mere ritual rather we should form students action committees through out the country to launch the movement for Bangla," Matin said. "With the tea stall conversation stirring in my mind, I asserted," the common people expect us to organise an indomitable movement in which they could also participate in the struggle for the cause of a nation in the making."

The students understood the proposal and decided to form an action committee then and there to organise a countrywide student movement, he says. "I, with no prior political involvement, was made the convener of the organisation," Matin recalled. According to him, the Dhaka University State Language Action Committee played the determining role in the language movement of 1952.

When asked about the contribution of the all party state language action committee in the movement he said, "two incidents virtually decided the fate of language movement— one was the defying of curfew to bring out procession on February 21, 1952 and the other was the decision of observing 'gabana janaza' next day at the spot where the students were killed the day before, but the all party committee opposed both the decisions. When I moved the proposal for observing janaza on February 22 with the view of especially involving the common people in the movement, Shamsul Haque who represented Awami League in the all party action committee started rebuking me."

The leaflet announcing the time and place of the janaza was distributed in the city only with my signature printed there. But people from different strata actively responded to the call and streams of people gathered around the place to show their protest against disparity shown by the ruling circle of the then Pakistan and thus made it incumbent to concede to the students' demand for Bangla be a state language, Abdul Matin concluded.

Abdul Matin is now a politburo member of a political party — United Communist League.



Abdul Matin

Malaysia gives fund to GB for cyclone victims

Malaysian High Commissioner to Bangladesh handed over a sum of Tk 2,93,705 to the Managing Director of the Grameen Bank (GB) Prof Mohammed Yunus for use in its rehabilitation and development programmes at a simple ceremony in the capital Tuesday, reports UNB.

The money was donated by Malaysians for the Bangladesh's Cyclone Fund.

The High Commissioner Tunku Dato' Nazhah Mohammed Rus lauded the role of the Grameen Bank for its efforts to build an economically self-reliant society in Bangladesh, says a press release.

Last year the government and people of Malaysia provided assistance to the cyclone victims in the form of food, medicines and clothing.

The High Commissioner so far handed over a sum of Tk 4,36,705 to the Grameen Bank authorities.

Basanta Mela in Khulna Feb 23

The week-long Basanta Mela (Spring Fair) organised by Bangladesh Small and Cottage Industries Corporation (BSCIC) will begin at Khulna Zila School premises on February 23, says a press release.



Primary school teachers observed mass hunger strike in front of the National Press Club Tuesday to press their demands. —Star photo

Pry school teachers to go on strike from May 18

Primary school teachers throughout the country will go for an indefinite strike from May 18 to press home their 7-point demand for raising wages and other benefits, reports UNB.

The Primary School Teachers Association (PSTA) which Tuesday called for a programme of "Dhaka siege" on May 19 when a massive demonstration will be staged.

Hundreds of primary school teachers yesterday observed a "mass hunger strike" in the capital, blocking the Topkhana road from Topkhana crossing, campaigning for realisation of their demands and release of PSTA President Abul Kalam Azad, who was arrested recently.

According to programme announced from a rally in front of the National Press Club today, the primary school teachers will also abstain from their work on February 24, April 20 and May 12 when they will hold demonstration at upazila and district headquarters.

There are about two lakh teachers working for the country's nearly 37,000 primary schools across the country and PSTA said the strike programmes was supported by all the teachers.

As the teachers staged the mass hunger strike and squatted in front of the Press Club, traffic on the Topkhana Road got logged for hours together, witnesses said.

PSTA has been spearheading agitation for realising a 7-point demand which includes payment of months arrear salary to 8,500 teachers who were appointed in 1990, nationalisation of the private primary schools, promotion of teachers on seniority basis and setting up of a school in every village.

The programme was announced by PSTA General Secretary Kazi Abul Kasem Fazul Huq.

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Tk 181 cr smuggled goods seized since independence

By Staff Correspondent

Smuggled goods valued over Taka 181 crore were seized in the 20 years since independence.

This was stated by Home Minister Abdul Matin Choudhury in the Jatiya Sangsad Monday.

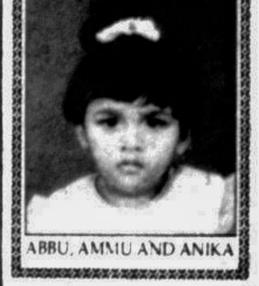
Replying to a question by Mostafizur Rahman (Dinajpur-5), the Home Minister told the House that the smuggled goods include: gold, drugs, cigarettes, cloth, electronics gadgets, cattlehead and wine.

According to the minister, the quantity and value of the goods seized during the period were as follows: 1,08,327 cows and buffaloes valued at Taka 64,80,11,967; 1,225.55 kg of gold worth Taka 52,40,57,521; 48,175 cartons of cigarette valued at Taka 3,44,63,280; 1,18,107 electronic gadgets valued at Taka 1,44,31,186; 24,33,892 pieces of sarees worth Taka 44,61,79,943; 15,72,024 metre of cloth priced at Taka 8,86,01,236; 84,906 kg of heroin worth Taka

4,24,53,000; 4,135,772 kg of marijuana (ganja) valued at Taka 62,03,658; 146,820 kg of opium (aphim) worth Taka 18,51,940; 1,722,225 kg of hashish (Charash) worth Taka 35,000; 4,250 kg of bharg valued at Taka 8,500 and 2,363 bottles of alcohol worth Taka 14,17,800.

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY TO KAMAL AND FATTY FROM FRIENDS

A VERY HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO LOVING EKA



ABRU, AMMU AND ANIKA

3 DCC officers suspended

Dhaka City Corporation Monday placed three officers and an employee under suspension for negligence of duty, misconduct, and corruption charges. They are: Executive Engineer A.K.M. Lutfur Rahman, Assistant Engineer Sumullah, Sub-Assistant Engineer Zayed Pasha and Work Assistant Habiburrahman BSS.

It's new just for you

The Daily Star is pleased to introduce a new column where individuals and organisations can publish Birthday and Anniversary Greetings, Congratulatory and Condolence Messages, Get-Well/Good-Luck Wishes, Birth/Death Announcements, In Memoriam, etc. at nominal charges.

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'Anti-terrorism bill aimed at curbing democratic rights'

By Staff Correspondent

Different political parties and organisations on Tuesday condemned the anti-terrorism bill as a black law and urged all to resist its passage.

The President of Bangladesh National Awami Party (NAP), Prof Mozaffar Ahmed and General Secretary, Pankaj Bhatyacharya in a joint statement said the bill if passed would take away the democratic rights of the citizen. They said terrorism could be stopped with the existing laws of the country.

The President of Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB) Saifuddin Manik and General Secretary Nurul Islam Nahid in a statement urged the government to be sincere in curbing terrorism through the

cooperation of all parties and the societal force.

They said the anti-terrorism bill will give excessive power to the law enforcing agency.

They said willingness and sincerity rather than a harsh law any needed to curb terrorism. They viewed that this law would take away the democratic rights of the people.

The President of Bangladesh Trade Union Centre, Md Nurul Islam and General Secretary Abdus Salam Khan in another statement said the bill is anti-democratic and aimed at crushing democracy.

The President of Ganatantrik Juba Parishad, Reza-e-Karim Khan and General Secretary, Prof Abdul Motalab

Masum urged all to resist the bill.

The President of Combined Jute Mill Workers Federation, Shariat Ullah and General Secretary Shaheeb Ullah in a statement said the bill is aimed at curbing the present workers movement and termed it as a black law.

The President of Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD), Nur Alam Ziku and General Secretary, Prof Humayun Kabir in a statement said the present government, believed in autocracy. They said the bill was aimed at establishing party autocracy in the country.

Bank holiday tomorrow

The Bangladesh Bank and all other schedule banks will remain closed Thursday on occasion of the holy Shab-e-Barat, said a press release.

Wednesday

- 5-00 Opening announcement, Al-Quran, programme summary
- 5-10 News in Bangla
- 5-30 'Alokito Ei Din'—Children's programme
- 6-00 Significance of Shab-e-Barat
- 6-30 Amor Ekushey
- 7-00 Balin Dekhi
- 8-00 News in Bangla
- 8-30 Haamd-O-Naat
- 9-00 Programme on Shab-e-Barat
- 10-00 News in English
- 10-30 Milad Mahfil
- 11-30 Khabar/The news
- 11-40 Thursday's programme summary verses for the Holy Quran
- 11-45 Closing.

Weather

Thundershower likely

By Staff Correspondent

Rain or thundershower accompanied by temporary gusty wind is likely to occur at one or two places over Khulna, Chittagong and Dhaka Divisions and weather will remain mainly dry elsewhere over the country till 6 pm today (Wednesday) according to Met office.

Night temperature likely to remain unchanged over the country.

The maximum temperature 27.5 degree Celsius, in the country was recorded at Kutubdia while the country's minimum 12.2 degree Celsius was reported in Dinajpur Tuesday.

The sun sets today (Wednesday) at 5:56 pm and rises tomorrow (Thursday) at 6:29 am.

The temperature and the percentage of humidity recorded in some major cities/towns Tuesday were:

| Cities/Towns | Temperature | | Humidity | |
|--------------|-------------|------|----------|-----|
| | max | min | 9am | 6pm |
| Dhaka | 25.2 | 16.7 | 64 | 42 |
| Chittagong | 26.3 | 20 | 89 | 74 |
| Rajshahi | 26.2 | 14.3 | 62 | 42 |
| Khulna | 26 | 17.1 | 86 | 66 |
| Sylhet | 25.4 | 12.8 | 78 | 48 |
| Cox's Bazar | 26.3 | 22 | 83 | 82 |
| Jessore | 27 | 16.4 | 73 | 82 |
| Barisal | 26 | 18.5 | 82 | 63 |

Plea to take Rohingya issue to world bodies

Awami League member Abul Hasan Choudhury Monday urged the government to take the Rohingya refugee issue to different international and regional forums, including the SAARC, for its solution, reports BSS.

Rising on a point of information, the Awami League member drew the attention of the Speaker to UNHCR representatives statement that he had not seen such malnutrition and shelter problem forced by thousands of Rohingya minority Muslim refugees in Bangladesh.

He said, the government should immediately take the issue to the UN Security Council and other international

bodies. Choudhury claimed that by now at least 200,000 refugees had taken shelter in Bangladesh creating huge problems for the country.

Regarding the involvement of the SAARC, Choudhury pointed out that there was no provision to bring any bilateral issue on this forum but since Myanmar is not a SAARC member country, the Rohingya issue could be raised there for finding a solution.

Choudhury said since the current session of the Jatiya Sangsad is going to be prorogued shortly, the Foreign Minister should make a statement on the issue.

The next step was to send out applications for the research fellowship. And believe me it took some doing. Hunting for addresses. Electric-typing each application. Photocopying all the certificates. And stamps, stamps, stamps. Posted each envelope personally. Settled down to a long wait. The postman became Man of the Year. But every evening found an empty mailbox. Until a moment ago. "It's Harvard, no less!" I think I deserve a Gold Leaf now.

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