

Joi Bangla

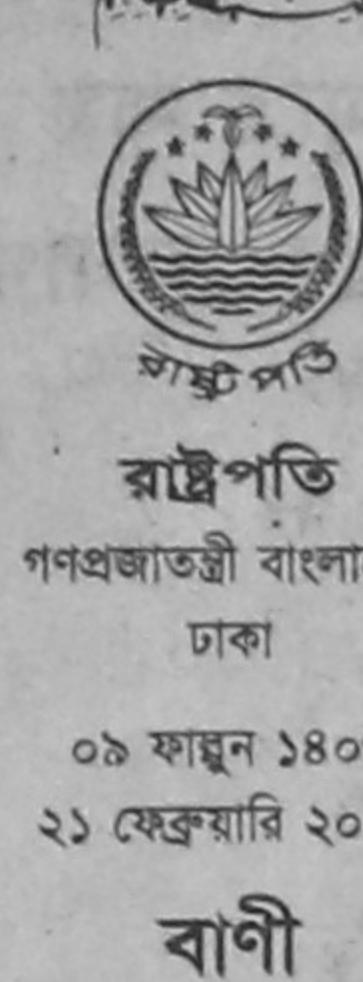
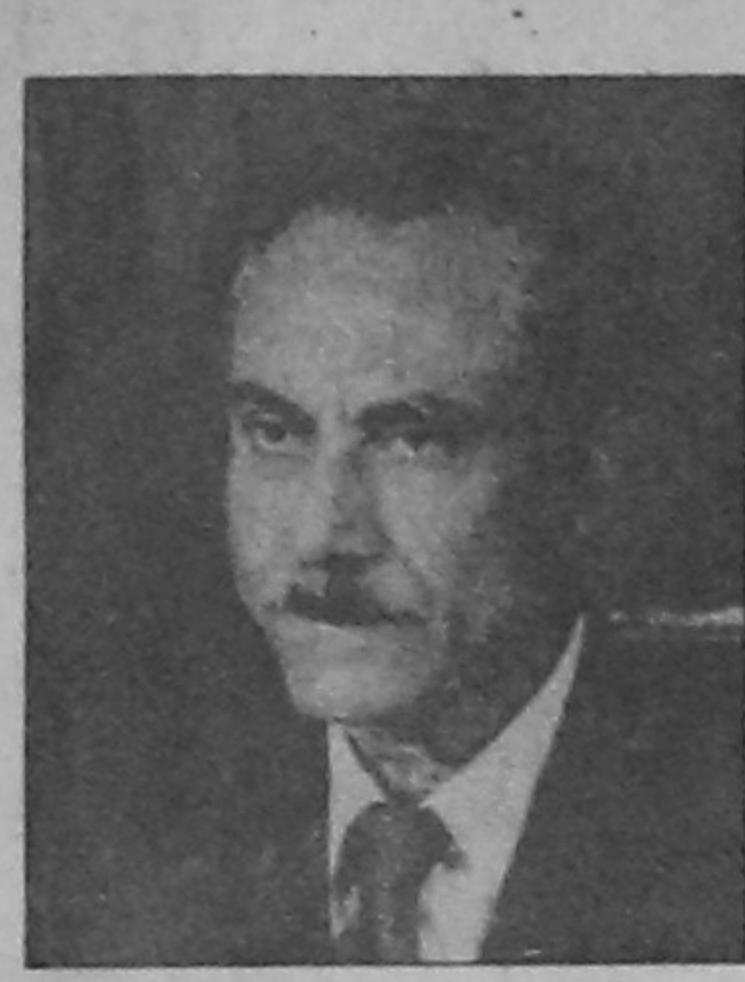
Joi Bangabandhu

# THE IMMORTAL 21ST FEBRUARY INTERNATIONAL MOTHER LANGUAGE DAY

21 February 2000

Planned &amp; Designed by : Triune (Pte) Ltd.

Special Supplement



## 21ST FEBRUARY, THE INTERNATIONAL MOTHER LANGUAGE DAY

**U**NESCO's declaration of 21st February as the International Mother Language Day has brought fresh glory and prestige to Bangladesh which is taking significant strides towards peace, progress and prosperity at home and towards discharging its international obligations abroad. After 1952 the people of Bangladesh have been observing every year the 21st

day of February as their glorious and unforgettable Language Martyrs Day. What happened on 21st February 1952 is widely known. Still let me very briefly recount

### Kabir Chowdhury

the fateful happenings of that day and the circumstances that led to and followed them.

In August 1947 a new state called Pakistan, comprising

two far-flung wings in the west and in the east, separated by 1600 kilometers of foreign territory, emerged on the world map. The ideological

culture and considered religion as a bond strong and sufficient enough to transform a people into a nation.

The language of the people of the east wing of Pakistan, and they were the majority, was Bangla. It had a rich tradition of literature of over a thousand years. The Bangalees also had a highly developed culture that had little in common with the culture of the people of the western wing of Pakistan.

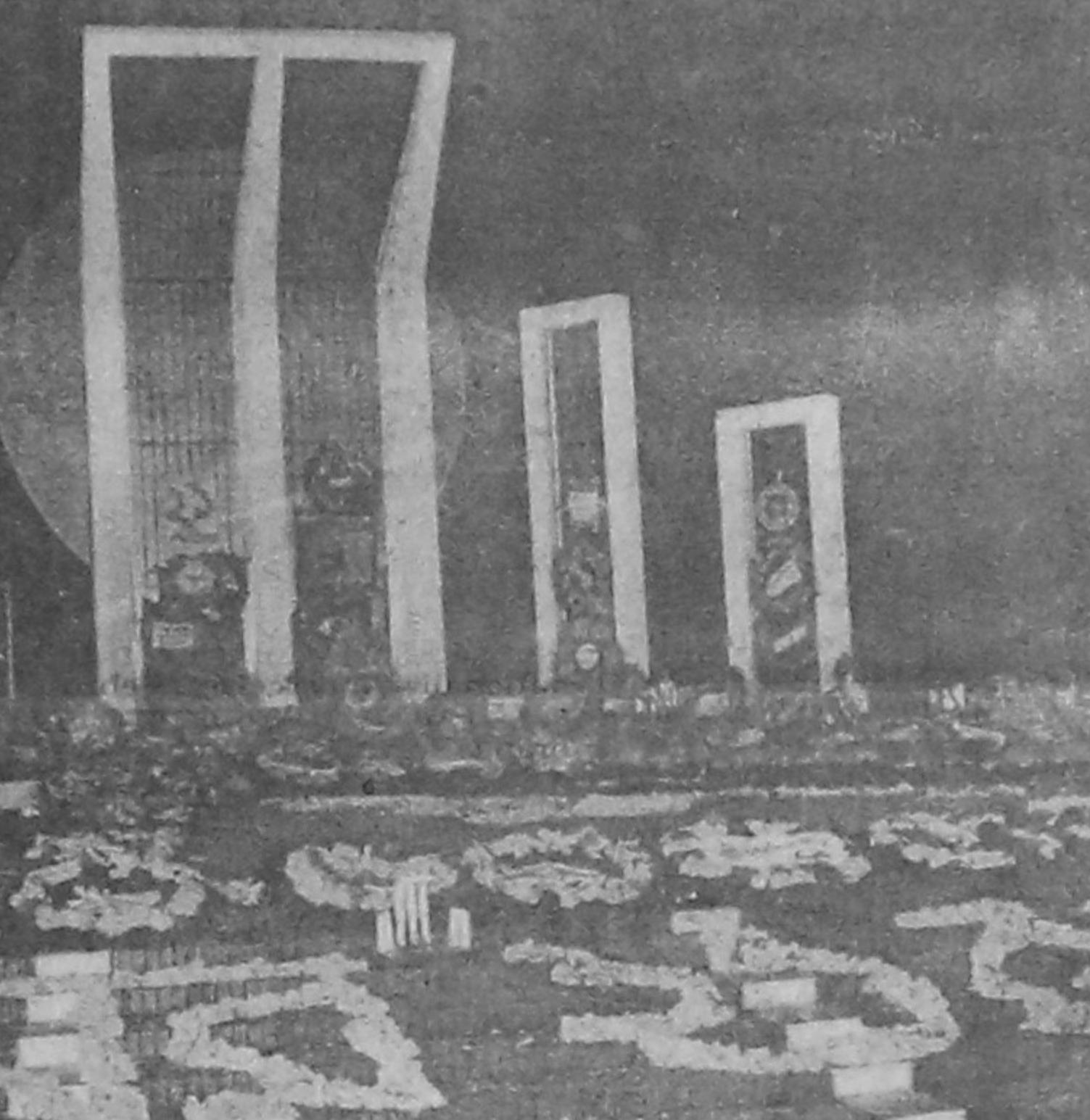
The Bangalees love for and attachment to their language and culture were great and when in 1952 the neo-colonial, power-hungry, arrogant rulers of Pakistan declared that Urdu and Urdu alone would be the state language of Pakistan they sowed the seeds of its future disintegration.

The people of the then East Pakistan, particularly the students, rose in angry protest against the vicious undemocratic designs of the government. Those designs really amounted to the destruction of Bangla language and culture and imposition of the language and culture of the people of the western wing on the people of the eastern wing. The reaction was strong and spontaneous.

The government decided to quell the protests by brute force. The police opened fire on 21st February 1952 on unarmed peaceful protesters, most of whom were students, resulting in the death, among others, of Rafiq, Barkat, Jabbar and Salam. As the news of those deaths spread the entire people of the eastern wing felt greatly emotionally involved. Those who lost their lives to uphold the prestige and to defend the rights of their mother-language became hallowed martyrs.

Their sacrifice at once tragic and glorious and the indignation of the people against an autocratic government had far-reaching effects. 21st February became a symbol and attained mythic properties. It nourished the concepts of democracy and secularism. It also contributed significantly to the flowering of Bangla nationalism. It led to the dawning of the realization

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Shaheed Minar—flowers placed from the hearts of the people

### International Mother Language Day

## A BEFITTING TRIBUTE TO OUR SHAHEEDS: AN ACHIEVEMENT FOR THE NATION

**B**angladesh enjoys a very high profile at the UNESCO. In early April 1999, an international jury nominated our Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina for the prestigious Felix Hophouet-Boigny Peace Prize for her contributions in the peaceful resolution of the decades-old conflict in the Chittagong Hill Tracts. In early November Bangladesh was re-elected to the Executive Board, and in mid-November Bangladesh's draft resolution for the proclamation of International Mother Language Day, on the 21st of February every year, was unanimously adopted by the UNESCO General Conference.

The Felix Hophouet-Boigny Peace Prize, instituted in 1989 by Ivory Coast in the name of the country's First President and awarded by UNESCO annually, is highly respected. It "honours people

### Syed Muazzem Ali

ple, organisations and institutions which have contributed significantly to the promotion, research, safeguarding or maintaining of peace, mindful of the Charter of the United Nations and the Constitution of UNESCO. Its previous winners include South African Nelson Mandela, President of Palestine, Yasser Arafat,

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The Dawn of 21st February leads all to Shaheed Minar



UNITED NATIONS  
NATIONS UNIES  
The Secretary-General

Message on International  
Mother Language Day

21 February 2000

I am delighted to convey my greetings on the occasion of the launch of the first International Mother Language Day. This day will help to raise awareness among all peoples of the distinct and enduring value of their languages. In an age of globalization and international cooperation where a few languages have become global languages, it is imperative that we uphold the diversity of local languages.

Along with nation and community, language is an essential component of identity and a means by which we find our place in the world. The very essence of belonging in an increasingly rootless world is to hear a language of one's own, to understand and be understood with ease. While differing languages have in the past separated peoples and groups, it is my hope that all peoples can unite in celebrating the full diversity of languages.

The United Nations and UNESCO have long worked to promote the dissemination of mother tongues and to advance multilingual education and linguistic diversity. Given the danger that many of the 6,000 languages spoken today may disappear in the next 20 years, it is critical that the international community redouble its efforts to protect this common heritage of mankind.

Above all, the lesson of our age is that languages are not mutually exclusive, but that human beings and humanity itself are enriched by communicating in more than one language. Languages no less than the peoples to whom they belong can and must coexist in the new century, and it is my hope that International Mother Language Day will contribute to this noble aim.

K. Alauddin

## THE APOTHEOSIS OF A MOVEMENT

**T**he recognition of February 21 as the International Mother Language Day by UNESCO is an important event in the history of Bangladesh. It is an important event for the language lovers around the world. The 'Romance of language' is tantalising from Cursive to the present day. It is a good news from the promoters of ESPERANTO to PIDGIN English spoken in large part of the Pacific Islands, Papua New Guinea taking the lead. Naturally, there

fore, the day will be celebrated for generations to come in every nook and corner of the globe.

It is a co-incidence but a significant one that the year which brought this

### Walidur Rahman

important recognition of the value of the Mother Tongue also witnessed the Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina MP, having been awarded the UNESCO Peace Prize for the historic

Chittagong Hill Tract Accord signed on December 2, 1997.

In history, we have seen that imposing one's language on a subjugated people is one of the most powerful tools in the process of colonization. Suppressing one's mother tongue works at once to suppress the vanquished, its tradition, its culture, its heritage and pride.

In pre-14th century England, after the Norman

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Prime Minister

Government of the People's  
Republic of Bangladesh

28 Magh 1406

10 February 2000

### Message

The immortal 'Ekushey (21 February)' imbued with the memory of great Language Movement in 1952 and 'International Mother Language Day' mark an endless inspiring source and vitality to the Bangla-speaking people. The great sacrifice of the Bangalee in the struggle for establishment of the rights and dignity of mother tongue is a rare event in the history of the world. The day has been glorified into a unique epic of grief and prestige in the national life of the Bangalee. I pay my profound respect to the memory of those brave martyrs of the great Language Movement Rafiq, Shafiq, Jabbar, Barkat, Salam and innumerable unknown martyrs whose self-sacrifices helped achieve a glowing status to the Bangalee in the world arena.

At the dawn of the 21st century of the new millennium, the immortal Ekushey, the sanguinary history of the Bangalee as well as pride of cultural heritage, has been recognised as 'International Mother Language Day'. The character and history of the Bangalee conquered the whole world through this acknowledgment. The spirit of our Ekushey has been crowned with the perception of Mother Language Day all over the world. So the Ekushey this year has appeared before us with multidimensional spectrum. The 'Ekushey (21 February)', the glory of the Bangalee is being celebrated worldwide as 'International Mother Language Day'.

On 21 February in 1952, Bangladesh's indomitable sons shed their blood on the streets of Dhaka for establishment of Bangla as the state language. At the end of the British colonial rule, Pakistani autocratic, military, colonial and communal rulers started an evil design to take away the right of mother tongue of the Bangalee. But the people of this country roared against the motive and thus commenced the Language Movement. Our great leader Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Rahman was arrested for taking leadership in the movement. He played a bold role in the Language Movement staying in the jail and expressed his solidarity with it.

The march towards attaining the separate entity of the Bangalee Nationalism commenced through the path of the Ekushey. The elections of 1954, movement against the military autocratic ruler of Pakistan, the self-rule movement through 6 and 11 points, mass upsurge of 1969, the achievement of national victory against the occupation forces in the Liberation War of 1971 and the worldwide recognition of the glorious Language Movement of the Bangalee are the history of progress crowned with success and pride. The abstract spirit of the great Language Movement made the emergence of independent Bangladesh into a reality as the only language-based state in the South Asia.

On the occasion of great 'Ekushey (21 February)' and 'International Mother Language Day' I call upon my countrymen as well as the people of the world for paying the highest respect to the language-martyrs through practising mother language in all spheres of life including higher education, research, art, literature and culture and making effort to enrich it.

Joi Bangla, Joi Bangabandhu  
May Bangladesh Live Forever

Sheikh Hasina