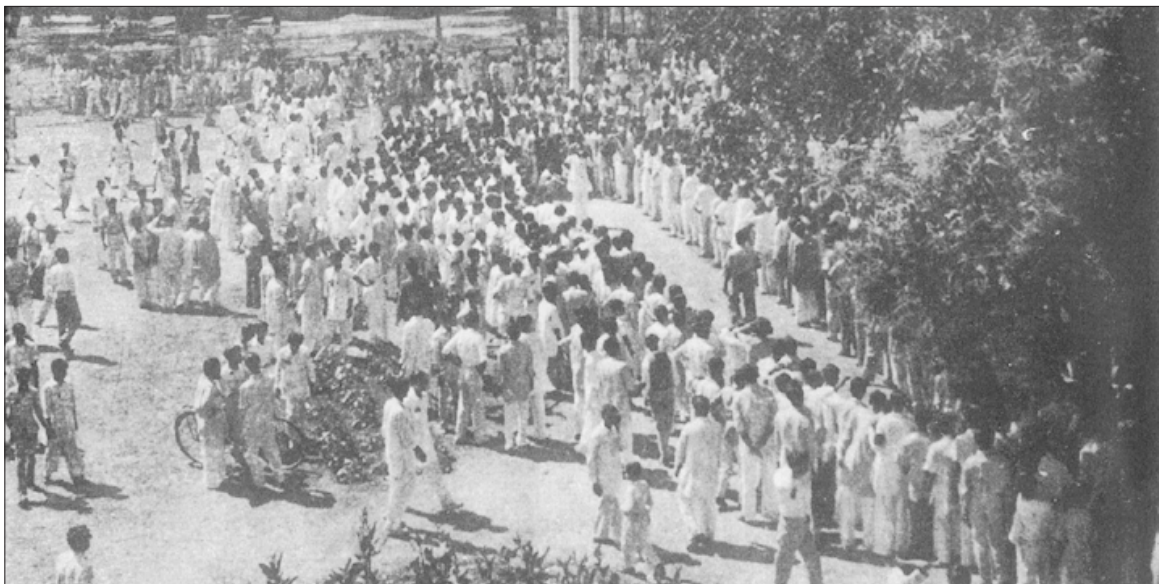


# TRIBUTE TO OUR Language Martyrs Timeless tears



Moments before the breaking of Section 144 leading to the popular upsurge demanding Bangla as the state language, 21st February 1952

SADYA AFREEN MALLICK

AS blood oozed from the bodies of Rafique, Jabbar, Barkat, Salaam and countless others, the Language Movement activists witnessed the brutality on their fellow brothers on the 21st of February 1952.

This year we observe the 52nd anniversary of our Language Movement Day. More than half a century later, the Language movement veterans Abdul Matin and Gaziul Huque recently spoke at the Spectra Center to reminisce those sad, yet glorious days. As a welcome move, organisers recorded the entire proceedings for preservation and free distribution among the interested organisations.

The audience listened with rapt attention and drifted back to the Dhaka University campus—exactly 52 years ago.

The Fuller road/Nilkhet area very near to the Dhaka University premises always bore a serene ambience. The sprouting greenery, the Devdaru trees the Jarul blossoms and the campus thriving with young and energetic students kept the area abuzz the year round.

But deep down, the sentiment was very much different from the apparent calm surrounding. The suffocation at not being able to speak freely in one's mother tongue was like a constant whip on strained spirits. There was pent up fury waiting to be unleashed, said Abdul Matin known also as 'Bhasha Matin'.

The root of this problem was the decision taken in Karachi at the Education Commission in 1947 a world away from Dhaka yet it affected the lives and custom of every Bangali citizen. In 1948 at the Suhrawardy Uddyan and Curzon Hall, Md Ali Jinnah declared the infamous statement that Urdu would be the state language of the newly independent Pakistan. Abdul Matin, along with a few spirited others immediately opposed the statement amidst the huge gathering at the

Curzon Hall.

The message was resoundingly clear. How could Urdu be the national language when there were three times as many people whose mother tongue was Bangla?

At the gathering, Abdul Matin spoke of the dominance of the English language in the sub-continent. From the times of colonialism to the partition of India, people had grown used to its prevalence from post cards to money order forms, which were still printed in English. The concerned authority paid no heed to change it; but by 1952 the time had surely come to change.

A good number of student leaders took up this charge head-on. They felt it necessary to make people aware of the impending trap of losing touch with one's mother tongue. Secret meetings gave way to bigger organisations. Gradually, the Bishwabiddalaya Sangram Committee (University Movement Committee) and the Sorbo Doloio Kendrio Rastrbhasha Sangram Parishad (All-Party Central Language

Movement Committee) was organised. Students met under the guidance of the student leaders. Meetings turned into crowds, crowds into massive gatherings.

As time went by, to voice their demands and create awareness amongst the people, students assembled at the university premises on the 21st of February, 1952. Prominent intellectuals, journalists, teachers, students from all walks of life declared their unity with the movement. In an attempt to break the much-hated section 144, the students rallied from the Dhaka University building towards the Medical College premises.

The carnage that followed remains one of the darkest chapters in the history of brutality on the innocent. In fact there are very few records of such a revolt being staged for ones' language.

Gaziul Huque, in a choked voice said, that the recognition and right of mother language was achieved after years of struggle, but the dream still remained unfulfilled. He called upon the

young generation to carry on the dreams of the martyrs of the Language Movement.

Shahadat Chowdhury, editor of the weekly *Shaptahik 2000* and special guest of the occasion said, that in all mass upsurges it is always the 'young and the spirited' who gave leadership. Going back to history he said that it was impossible to imagine a stand against the autocratic rulers of the newly independent state. But personalities like Kazi Motahar Hossain, Abul Monsur Ahmed along with young student leaders, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, Oli Ahad, Md. Toaha, Abdul Matin, Gaziul Huque and many more led the revolt against the Pakistani rulers without hesitance.

Mahfuz Anam, editor of *The Daily Star* and chief guest, said that victory and defeat are co-related. While people of other countries are aggressive and have great appreciation and love for their mother tongue, we as a nation still thrive on artificiality. It's like 'snatching defeat from the jaws of victory' rather than vice versa. To develop as a race, we need to develop self-esteem first. A nation thrives only when people learn to appreciate their roots and take pride in their history, he reiterated.

The martyrs were the activists who were re-shaping our culture, rekindling the sparks that had ebbed down after two centuries of colonial rule. They had inculcated a sense of pride in our mother tongue. Ekushey is now recognised as the International Mother Language day. And it was a small wonder that we were the lucky few to witness history once again...in the words of people who had lived through the era. An era that pitted innocence against brutality. An era that undeniably re-directed our destiny through countless lives lost and scarred.

Can the supreme sacrifice of our martyrs be ever forgotten?

Photos are from *Hajar Bochorer Bangladesh* by Dr. Mohammad Hannan



The violent reaction of the masses after the indiscriminate firing on the 21st February, 1952-w

## The people's singer

HARUN UR RASHID

'BANGLADESH is a nation that has emerged out of a series of struggles and movements against the tyranny and oppression of its rulers at different times. And having grown in those tumultuous times and been involved in these movements, I simply couldn't have become anything else but what I am now—a singer, singing songs of the people,' says Fakir Alamgir regarding his present identity. 'I believe I am a product of the '68-'69. I was among the crowd that brought out the procession in which student Asad was killed.' Today, on the memorable Martyrs' Day as well as the International Mother language Day, the veteran *Gono Sangeet* artiste turns 54.

It is interesting that Fakir has not had any background in music as such except that in his childhood he came in close contact with mystic folk songs like Baul, Majhi Bhandari, Kirtan and others. It was during his days at Jagannath College where he came in touch with cultural personalities like Kamal Lohani, Nizamul Haque, Sukhendu Chakraborty, Giasuddin and other activists of the renowned cultural group Kranti. At that time he sang some timeless songs like *Janatar shangram cholbe*, *Biplaber ei rokte rang*, *Banglar comrade bondhu*, *Shakto hatey dhor potaka*, *Ora*

*naki amader khet ar khamarer* that created an immense impact on the struggling Bangali mind. Many other renowned musical personalities including the legendary performer of the Language Movement of 1952 Abdul Latif, Altaf Mahmud and others also took part in these programmes.

Later when all mass movements coalesced into the historic Liberation War, Fakir Alamgir joined the Swadhin Bangla Betar Kendro. From that platform, he gave voice to many inspiring tunes along with Abdul Jabbar, Kaderi Kibria, Apel Mahmud, Altaf

founded his reputed *Gono Sangeet* group Wrishez Shilpi Gosthi. Today, Wrishez often organises concerts that tell of the ordinary oppressed poor people of not just the country but of the world too. Besides, it gives receptions and awards to the country's cultural activists for their excellence.

The most important aspect of Fakir Alamgir's career is that he has fused 'modernism' into the old tradition of *Gono Sangeet*. Anyone, who has heard the famous May Day song *Naam taar chhilo John Henry* by the legendary West Bengal singer Hemanga

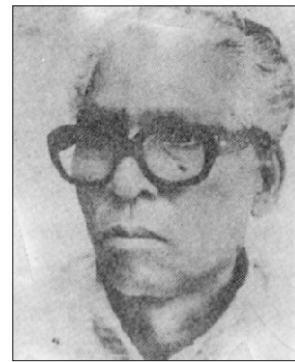


Legendary *Gono Sangeet* maestro Sheikh Lutful Rahman appreciating Fakir Alamgir's endeavour in carrying on the genre.

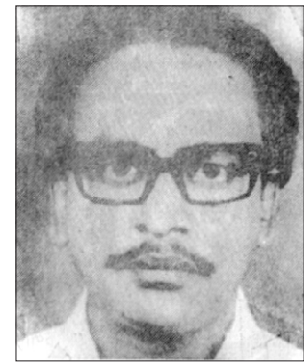
Sokhina. Apart from him, Altaf Ali Hashu and Nuruzzaman Sheikh have written the four songs of the series. *Daam diye kinechhi Bangla* is another wonderful track that stirs nostalgic patriotism in the listener.

Fakir Alamgir, however, sounds rather depressed when he talks of the present position of *Gono Sangeet* in the country. 'Everyone utilises *Gono Sangeet* as a useful tool for movements. But when they get power, it has become a common tendency among all political parties to avoid the strong musical genre.' Fakir reminds of the fact that there is no category for the *Gono Sangeet* in the Notun Kunri Competition for children, whereas Kawali, being a foreign musical trend, is one of the categories children compete in. 'There are no programmes for *Gono Sangeet* on the TV channels as there are for Modern Bangla songs and band songs,' he adds.

Fakir dreams of establishing an academy for *Gono Sangeet* in the country. 'It is the tragic legacy of the Language Movement through which we have earned the precious freedom. And this is the cultural orientation of all Bangalis all over the world. Of me too. And I crave to go on carrying this spirit in my songs till death,' he concludes.



Abdul Latif (L) first tuned the famous Ekushey song; Altaf Mahmud later changed it into the existing version.



Mahmud and others. *Mora ekti phulke banchabo bole juddho kori*, *Shono ekti Mujibborer kantho*, *Salam salam hajar salam*—the tarcks do still incite patriotic feeling in the Bangali mind.

In 1976, Fakir Alamgir

Biswas and that by Fakir Alamgir, would agree on this point. 'In fact, Hemanga Biswas himself admitted that mine was more inspirational as well as melodious,' says Fakir. It was during the mid-'70s to the early '80s, when a few youth took the initiative to infuse western music into the existing Bangla tradition. 'Firoz Shai, Azam Khan, Ferdous Wahid and I first experimented in this regard. Among the four, Azam and Ferdous later turned towards the Modern Bangla songs that ultimately gave birth to the band music trend, and Firoz and I continued with the folk-based music,' says Fakir. Among Fakir's other songs that have won the hearts of people are the famous *Sokhina* series is most remarkable for its depiction of the struggle between the 'Haves' and the 'Have-nots' through a romantic relationship of the singer and a village girl



L-R: Ferdous Wahid, Pilu Mamtaz, Fakir Alamgir, Azam Khan and late Firoz Shai—the trend setters of the modern pop music in the country.

## 'Patha Natok' on Ekushey

ERSHAD KAMOL

TO create awareness among the audience through some explicit message, *patha natok* is being practised in Bangladesh as well as the other parts of the world for many years. The main advantage of *patha natok* in comparison to stage play, is that, it is less expensive as no set or such requirements are needed to enrich the artistic values to stage a *patha natok*. Moreover, the uniqueness of the diction is such it can be easily communicated to all.

Through *patha natok*, the groups usually present the political scenario of the country. They are not like the traditional satirical stage plays. The duration of a street drama is not more than 40 minutes but it is very meaningful. The artists through their performance try to suggest the role of the common people in the present society.

Saiful Islam Mahmud, president of

Mahakal Theatre says, 'The respect we show to our mother tongue is not adequate. The whole year goes by without any remembrance of our glorious history. We only arrange some programmes in the month of February. Through our shows, we like to acknowledge that our mother tongue should be given its due importance in every sphere of life.'

Bangladesh Patha Natok Parishod (BNP) organizes the groups, which display street dramas. Mannan Hira is the President and Mizanur Rahman is the General Secretary of BNP. Out of 235 member-groups, 65 are taking part in the festival arranged by Bangladesh Group Theatre Federation (BGTF) from 24 to 29 February to observe the Ekushey. Some of the groups have already displayed *patha natok* in the 12-day long festival arranged by Shommitto Shakskriti Jote, which started in February 8.

'Pathe Ebar Namo Shathi, Pathei Hobe Ey Path Chena', the famous verse of Sail Chawdhury, is the slogan of BGTF's

festival. Renowned groups of the city including Dhaka Theatre and Aranyak and other groups from outside the city are taking part in the Ekushey celebration. The groups from the city will get taka 500 each while the groups from the other parts of the country will get taka 1000 per show. BGTF will provide accommodation for a night for the groups coming from outside Dhaka. Each evening the audience can enjoy *patha natok* at the Shaheed Minar premises and the open stage near the Dhanmondi Lake.

In February and March, to celebrate the Ekushey and the Independence Day, several groups take part in the festivals arranged by BGTF, Shommitto Shakskriti Jote (SSJ) and BNP. Since 1982, BGTF and SSJ arrange weeklong street drama festivals at the Shaheed Minar premises to commemorate the language martyrs from the first day of February while BNP usually arranges programme in March at the same venue.

## TV GUIDE

All programmes are in local time. The Daily Star will not be responsible for any change in

### News Bulletin

**BTV**  
News Headlines (Bangla) at 9:40 am. 12:10 pm. 2:00 pm. 3:10 pm. 4:00 pm. 7:00 pm.  
News (Bangla) at 8:00 am. 1:00 pm. 5:00 pm. 8:00 pm.  
News (English) at 3:00 pm. 10:00 pm.  
Late Night News (Bangla and English) 11:30 pm.  
**CHANNEL-i**  
Breakfast News 07:15 am. 9:00am  
News (Bangla) at 7:15 pm, 9:00, 10:30, 12:15 am.  
Telecast of BTV news (Bangla and English) at 11:30 pm.  
**ATN BANGLA**  
News (Bangla) at 8:00 am. 12:00 pm. 7:00 pm. 10:00 pm. 11:00 pm.  
Telecast of BTV News (Bangla and English) at 11:30 pm.  
Latest News (Bangla) at 09 a.m. 10:00 a.m. 11:00 a.m. 1pm. 2:00 pm. 3:00 pm. 4:00pm. 6:00 pm. and 8:00 pm.  
**n tv**  
News Headlines (Bangla) at 5:02 pm. 6:30 pm. 9:45 pm.  
News (Bangla) 7:30 pm. 10:30 pm.  
**TARA BANGLA**  
News Headlines (Bangla) at 5:30 pm. 7:30 pm.  
Tara News (Bangla) at 8:30 pm. 11:30 pm.  
Tara News Bangladesh (Bangla) at 9:30 pm.  
**BBC World**  
Every hour on the hour

**BTV**

05:00am Live Telecast from Central Shahid Minar  
12:15 Sangbad Potrer Pata Theke  
01:05 Drama of the Week  
02:05 Prio Manush  
03:05 Nibedini  
04:05 Moner Kotha  
05:30 Special Programme for Children on Ekushey  
06:10 Ekushey Special: Poetry Recitation  
07:00 Share Market, Weather Forecast  
07:05 Ekushey Special: Musical Programme  
08:30 Ekushey Special: Drama: *Upekhitio*  
10:30 Ekushey Special: *ATN BANGLA*  
10:15 Talk Show : *Annodristee*  
10:50 Drama Serial : *Baba*  
1:20 Bengali Feature Film : *Jibon Theke Naywa*  
4:20 Ekushey Special: : *Apurbh*



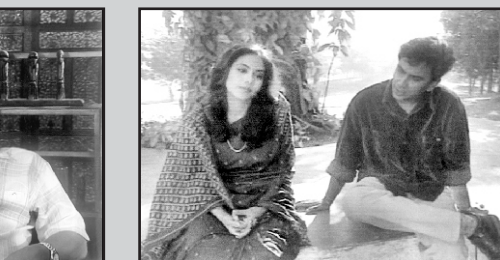
Asaduzzaman Noor and child artiste in Ekushey special

5:10

**Akhor**  
Ekushey Special: *Eakus Tomaka*  
5:45 *Bhulbona*  
Ekushey Special:  
6:20 Talk Show : *Annodristee*  
7:40 Ekushey Special  
8:50 Ekushey Special:  
10:30 Ekushey Special:  
12:20 Ekushey Special:  
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02:30 Ekushey Special:

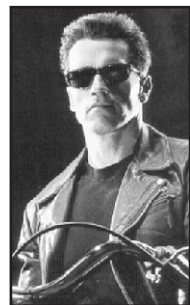
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12:30 Ekushey Special:  
02:30 Ekushey Special:



Somi Kaiser and Zahid Hasan perform in *Chokher Aloy* on ETV

### TODAY'S HIGHLIGHTS



Jibon Thekey

**STAR MOVIES:** 9:00 pm: *Predator 2*. Genre: Action /Sci-Fi /Thriller/Mystery. **Kevin Peter Hall, Danny Glover, Gary Busey.** The major drug lords have been killed off in a very brutal fashion. His superiors tell him to stay out of it. Harrigan discovers that the person behind the murders is none other than the Predator, the human-hunting alien who likes to make trophies out of his victims' skulls. But how can Harrigan stop the Predator when it can turn invisible and kill him without him knowing it?

**HBO:** 7:00 pm: *Terminator 2: Judgement Day*. Genre: Sci-Fi / Action / Thriller / Drama. **Arnold Schwarzenegger, Linda Hamilton, Edward Furlong.** Sequel to Terminator. Skynet, the 21st century computer waging a losing war on humans sends a second terminator back in time to destroy the leader of the human

05:10 **Naya**  
Ekushey Special: *Bhashar Gaan*  
06:50 Ekushey Special: *Dukha Joyer Gaan*  
08:00 Ekushey Special: *Ebong*  
09:10 Ekushey Special: *Aaj Ekushey*  
11:20 *Dindarpan*  
**CHANNEL-i**  
09:30am *Shangbad Potrey*  
09:45 *Tritiyo Matra*  
10:45 Talk Show: *Na*

### PICK OF THE DAY



### The Scorpion King

**On HBO at 9:30 pm**  
Genre: Action / Fantasy / Adventure  
The Rock, Steven Brand, Michael Clarke Duncan  
In an ancient time, predating the pyramids, the evil king Memnon is using the psychic powers of his sorceress Cassandra to fortell his great victories. In a last ditch effort to stop Memnon from taking over the world, the leaders of the remaining free tribes hire the assassin

12:30 **Bola Kotha**(LIVE)  
Ekushey Special:  
01:00 Desher Gaan  
02:00 Ekushey Special:  
05:10 Sa Re Ga Ma:  
05:45 Ekushey Special:  
06:10 *Amar Barnomala*  
06:45 Music Plus  
07:50 Ekushey Special:  
09:35 *Ridoey Mati O Manush*  
**HBO**  
10:30 Lost Souls

12:30 **Blade Squad**  
2:30 Risky Business  
4:30 The Perfect Storm  
7:00 Terminator 2 :  
9:30 Judgement Day  
11:30 The Scorpion King  
2:00 Twelve Monkeys  
Crime Spree  
**MGM**  
9:00 Lush Life  
11:30 Sweet Jersey  
2:00 Bandwagon  
4:30 Prophecy II  
7:00 Belphagor  
9:30 Hollywood Hotshots  
Lush Life (Jeff

11:30 Goldbulm)  
Homage ( Blythe Danner, Frank Whaley)

### STAR MOVIES

9:00 The Curse Of The Jade Scorpion  
10:45 The Ticket  
11:15 The Rookie  
1:30 Wall Street  
3:30 102 Dalmatia  
5:15 Joe Somebody  
7:00 Unfaithful  
9:00 Predator 2  
10:45 Less Than Zer  
12:15 First Blood

### STAR WORLD

9:30am. Journeys In Asian Cuisine  
10:00 Top Drive Getaway  
10:30 The Bold & The Beautiful  
12:30 Rendezvous With Simi Garewal  
1:30 Goosebumps  
2:00 Action Man  
2:30 Monster Farm  
3:00 X - Men  
3:30 The Kumars At No. 42  
4:00 Cops  
4:30 World's Wildest Police Videos  
5:30 Knight Rider  
6:30 The X Files  
7:30 Xena: Warrior Princess  
8:30 Tna Wrestling  
9:30 Mutant X  
10:30 Adventure Inc  
11:30 Baywatch Hawaii

### STAR GOLD

9:00am. Zor  
12:25 Kuch Hit Kuch  
12:30 Pyar Kiya To Darniya  
4:00 Gaane Bhi Do Yaar  
4:30 Ziddi  
8:00 Startoons

8:30 Countdown  
Sudden Death Hin Dubbed  
9:00 Jhooth Bole Kaww Kaate

### STAR SPORTS

10:00 South Africa Tour Of New Zealand  
National Bank Series Wellington  
New Zealand Vs South Africa 3rd Odi (R)  
5:00 Return To Athens (R)  
6:00 EPL Premiership Saturday Preview (L)  
6:25 English Premier Football League 2003/04 Chelsea Vs Arsenal (L)  
8:30 EPL Premiership Saturday Preview (L)  
8:55 English Premier Football League English Premier Football League 2003/04 (L)  
11:00 Epl Postshow Premiership Postgame (L)  
11:30 Royal Bank Of Scotland Six Nations 2004 Murrayfield Scotland Sco Tland Vs England (L)

### ESPN

7:30am. Bangladesh Tour Of Zimbabwe Zimsun Test Series Harare Zimbabwe Vs Bangladesh 1st Test Day 2 Highlights(R)  
9:30 Nba Basketball Los Angeles Ca Usa Philadelphia 76ers Vs Los Angeles

### RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Commemorating Ekushey

**Cultural Programme**  
*Podatik Natya Shangshad* has arranged a day long cultural programme on the occasion of the International Mother Language Day at the *Bakul Tala* of the Institute of Fine Arts, DU. Starting from 10 am, the programme will be inaugurated by artist Imdad Hossain.

**Drama**  
Somoy Sangskritik Gosthi will stage shows of drama titled *Bhager Manush* directed by Aly Zaker at the Shawkat Osman Memorial auditorium, Central Public Library at 4.00pm and 6.30pm.

**Art Competition**  
Benuka Lalit Kendra organises an art competition and exhibition at Lalmitia Housing Society High School premises at 9.30am.

A painting and recitation competition for children will be held at the Russian Cultural Centre at 10 am.

12:00 Lakers (L)  
English Premier League Preview (R)  
12:30 Bangladesh Tour Of Zimbabwe Zimsun Test Series Harare Zimbabwe Vs Bangladesh 1st Test Day 2 Highlights(R)  
1:50 Bangladesh Tour Of Zimbabwe Zimsun Test Series Harare Zimbabwe Vs Bangladesh 1st Test Day 2 Highlights(R)