# Role of Bangla Academy in Ekushey

Tazmia Islam Nion

CAN you guess from which building the order of firing on the Language Movement procession on February 21, 1952 was declared? Surprisingly it is the building of Bangla Academy, known as Burdwan House, which has now become the venue for Ekushey Book fair, the most glorious event for Bangalis.

Bangla Academy was established on 3 December 1955. The main office of the organisation is located at the Burdwan House in the campus of the University of Dhaka, besides Ramna Park.

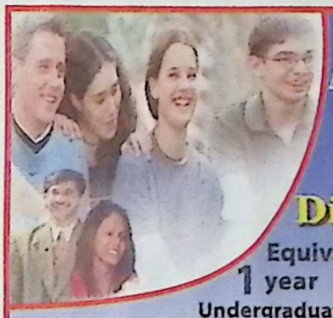
Dr. Muhammad Shahidullah first felt the importance of establishing an organization from which all the Bangla language research and activities would be maintained. Following the Language movement, on April 27, 1952, the All Party National Language Committee decided to demand establishment of an organization for the promotion of Bengali language.

In their 21 points manifesto during the 1954 parliamentary elections, the United Front stated that, "The prime minister from the United Front will dedicate the Bardhaman House for establishing a research centre for Bengali language". This resulted in the establishment of Bangla Academy.

In 1955, the Government formed a committee to speed up the process. The committee comprised of leading intellectuals like Dr. Muhammad Shahidullah, Dr. Quazi Motahar Hossain, Dr. S.M. Bhattacharya, Dr. W. H. Shadani, and Muhammad Barkatullah. On December 3, 1955, the Prime Minister, Abu Hossain, inaugurated Bangla Academy. The first book published by the academy was 'Laili Maznu', an epic by the medieval poet Daulat Ujir Bahram Khan and the first fellow of the academy was the poet Farrukh Ahmed.

Bangla Academy has played a major role in the Bangla cultural scene attempting to uphold Bangla literature, folklore and research right from the start. Currently the Bangla Academy is an autonomous body operating with four major departments: (1) Research, Compilation and Folklore, (2) Language, Literature, Culture and Journal, (3) Textbooks and (4) Establishment, Planning and Training. Each year all through the month of February Bangla Academy becomes the centre of all cultural activities in Bangladesh, because of the month-long Ekushey Book Fair, organised to commemorate the martyrs of the Language Movement.

Ekushey Book Fair is the most prominent book fair in Bangladesh, held in February and dedicated to the martyrs for Bangla language. In Bangla, the name of the fair is 'Omor Ekushey Grontho Mela'. Usually, the fair continues from 1st February till the 28th. It is limited within the boundaries of Bangla Academy. The Ministry of Culture is in control of the fair, with help from the Academy. Around 400 publishing houses take part every year in the fair. Only the Bangladeshi booksellers who have at least 25 books of their own can join, due to space constraints.

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