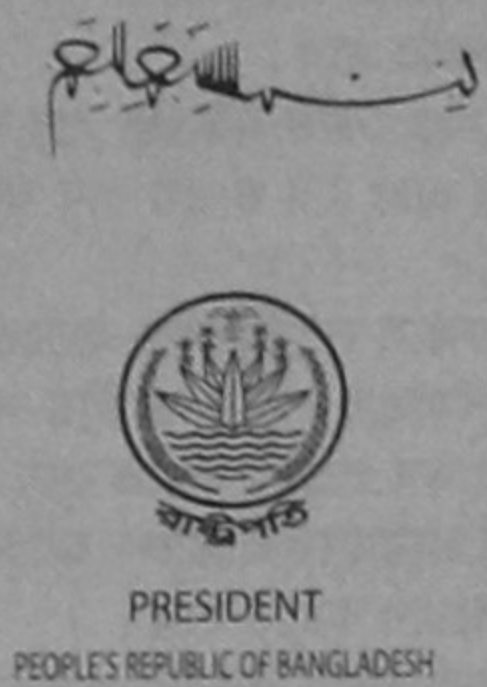
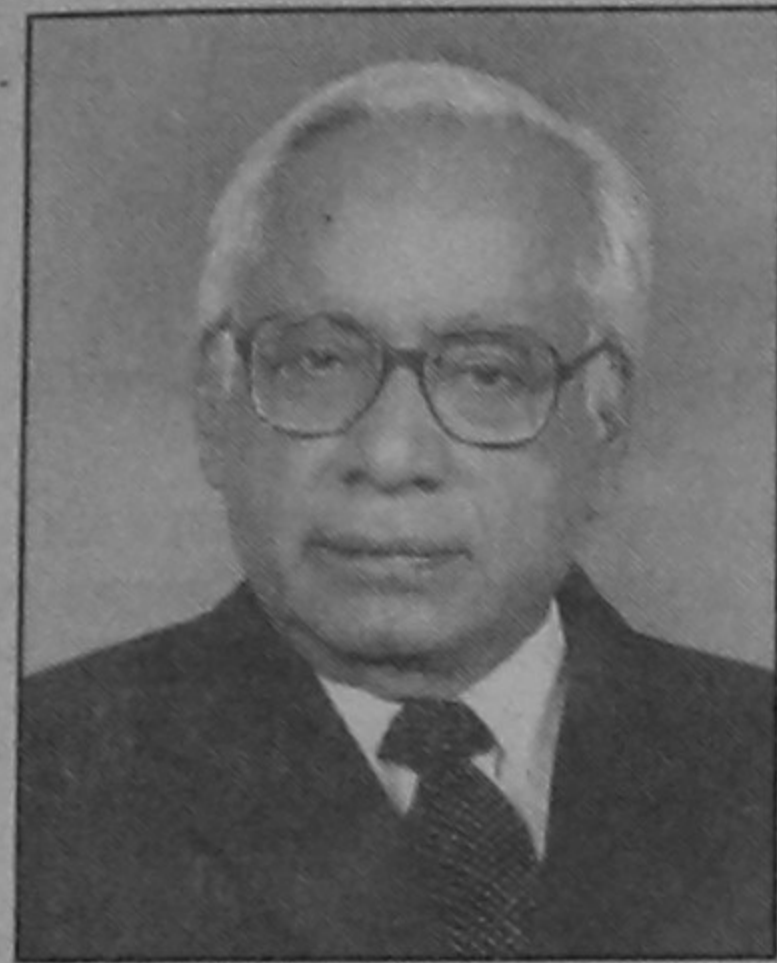


# IMMORTAL EKUSHEY

# GLORIOUS MARTYRS' DAY & INTERNATIONAL MOTHER LANGUAGE DAY 2008

Special Supplement

Art & Design : Department of Films & Publications ■ Assistance : Press Information Department, Ministry of Information



## Message

The 21st February is a historical and significant day in our national life. I pay my deep homage to the unfading memory of the language martyrs who made supreme sacrifices on this day in 1952 to achieve the right of mother tongue. I pray for the salvation of the departed souls.

The great Language Movement is the prime source of awakening the sense of nationalism among the people of Bangladesh. The spirit of nationalism that emanated from the historical Language Movement inspired us to the War of Liberation and thus we achieved our long-cherished independence in 1971. The glaring spirit of the Language Movement arouses us to stand against all injustices and unfairness and helps to attain overall progress of the country. The fortitude of Language Movement is now inspiring not only for the advancement of our own language, literature, culture and heritage but also for the preservation and promotion of languages and cultures of other nations around the world. Therefore, the '21st February' is being observed as the 'International Mother Language Day' all over the world resounded with the spirit of upholding mother tongue of diverse nations. I hope the observance of the 'International Mother Language Day' would strengthen the bridge of unity and amity among the people of the world.

I hope, imbued with the spirit of 'Ekushey', every citizen of our country would be committed to build up a happy and prosperous country and would contribute towards development process from their respective fields. I wish the great 'Ekush' would consolidate our democratic advancement along with the achievement of overall development at all levels of our national life.

Allah Hafez, Bangladesh Zindabad.

Professor Dr. Iajuddin Ahmed

## Islamic Perspective of the Language Movement

Professor Syed Anwar Hossain

According to the prevailing notion, two opposing social forces were at work during the language movement. The first force, which worked in its favour included the non-communal and progressive segments of society. The other force was an antagonistic one. In its view, the language movement was unwanted for more than one reason. The principal reason was that it was destructive for the solidarity of Pakistan. Besides, Bangla was not suitable as the state language of a so-called Muslim state named Pakistan, as it was historically the language of Hindus. On the other hand, Urdu was the language of Muslims; and because of that, only Urdu could become the lone state language of Pakistan.

Some comments based on logic are pertinent here regarding these divergent social divisions during the language movement. Firstly, the stance and outlook of the supportive force were secular and democratic. This group of people had no doubt that Bangla, which was the mother tongue of a majority of Pakistan's population, deserved to be the lone state language of Pakistan. This faction was conscious of the fact that the demand for Urdu, which was the language of only 6 percent

citizens, was farcical and illogical. Despite that, they demonstrated their openness for democratic compromise by demanding Bangla as the principal state language side by side with Urdu, instead of discarding Urdu altogether; but the Pakistani ruling class could not absorb its real meaning. But they were forced to come to this realization through successful culmination of the language movement.

The basis of the spirit and outlook of the antagonistic force was so-called Islamic values and an infatuation for the Muslim country of Pakistan. But by becoming submerged in blind religious emotion instead of sincere religious motive, they failed to realize that the essential spirit of the language movement was not against Islam. There was also no Islamic or historical proofs or evidences in support of



What future lies for Bangla in the twenty-first century? It is only natural that whenever we open up a discussion on the future of Bangla in the new century and the millennium, the glorious legacy of the past millennium naturally comes to our mind. But the world of the first millennium is so vastly different from the second that it is hard to reassure the past glory and the possibilities of the future. It is true that in this twentieth century, the Bengali-speaking people have spread out in different continents of the globe, settled in their new-found homes permanently or temporarily, remained earnestly engaged in cultivating their Bangla culture and literature through various media. Globally, in terms of numerical linguistic population, Bangla stands fourth, and Ekushey February is now acknowledged as International Mother Language Day. Past achievements are not always a deciding factor for a radiant future. The future of many acknowledged or less known languages are now on the verge of extinction due to disastrous impact of globalisation that had gripped the world so fiercely. Bangla too is not free from its impact. Bangla is the state language of Bangladesh, and also recognised as the only or as one of the important languages in Indian states like West Bengal, Tripura and Assam. Again, Bengalees wherever they live, they invariably bring out Bangla journals and books, broadcast Bangla programmes world-wide regularly through airwaves, and also can read Bangla papers of both Dhaka and Kolkata without any hassle. All these have become possible due to the emergence of Bangladesh, which obviously owed its birth to the great language movement of 1952. The overseas Bangalees, majority of whom hail from Bangladesh, have always remained in the forefront promoting their language, literature and culture much beyond their shores. Inspired by the ideals of the Ekushey and the Liberation War of 1971, they have ungrudgingly been doing this laudable job inspite of great odds. If this spirit remains alive, and the nation is run accordingly, these ideals shall never get snapped. Contrarily, the expatriate Bengalees shall automatically be detached from their cultural moorings of their homeland if the source at its root is dried up. In an all-India context, the expatriate Bengalees of West Bengal shall not be able to sustain the Bengali culture in the outside world although the past glory of Bangla literature and culture was Kolkata-centric. The future of Bangla culture is now essentially dependent on Dhaka. In the event, the future of Bangla worsens in Dhaka, the fabric of Bangla culture shall become no less fragile in Kolkata, Agartala, Silchar and Karimganj. In the twenty-first century, the future of Bangla shall obviously depend on the future of Bangla in Bangladesh.

In this age of globalisation, free international trade and international information highway, how many countries shall be able to maintain their political, economic and cultural identity or independence is a question that looms large to-day in world arena. Chinese and Spanish

ridiculing Bangla and accepting Urdu as a language of Muslims. When emotion becomes blind, then facts and logic are not visible. When emotions forge relationship with religion or religious spirit, then religious fanaticism becomes bigger than religiosity. But the difference between religious fanaticism and genuine religiosity is not apparent to these people. Their opposition to the liberation war of 1971 is a big proof that the success of the language movement had failed to generate any such realization among them as well as their descendants.

If the language movement is reviewed from the perspective of Islam, then it becomes clear that it was a just protest and robust resistance against injustices with an appropriate victory in the final stage. The success of language movement represented a shining example of the inevitable triumph of justice against injustice. The liberation war of 1971 was something similar. According to Holy Qur'an and Hadith, injustice, torture, repression and oppressor are not acceptable to Allah. They are abhorred. Holy Hadith had clearly spelt out "If somebody does any unjust act before you, then you shall first resist it with force, if you cannot

do that then resist it with words, if you cannot do that either then you will have to hate it with all sincerity". Needless to say, the Bengalee Muslims (and people belonging to other communities) had applied all these three methods against the injustices of Pakistan in 1952 and 1971. However, the application of force was chosen as the last and final means in both the instances, and that too after being attacked. But the final display of force during the language movement was a democratic struggle; and in 1971, it took the shape of an armed struggle. In the language of Islam, these two episodes of 1952 and 1971 were successful protests and resistance of the oppressed against the oppressor; and in both the cases, the Islamic (and humanitarian) ideals had emerged victorious.

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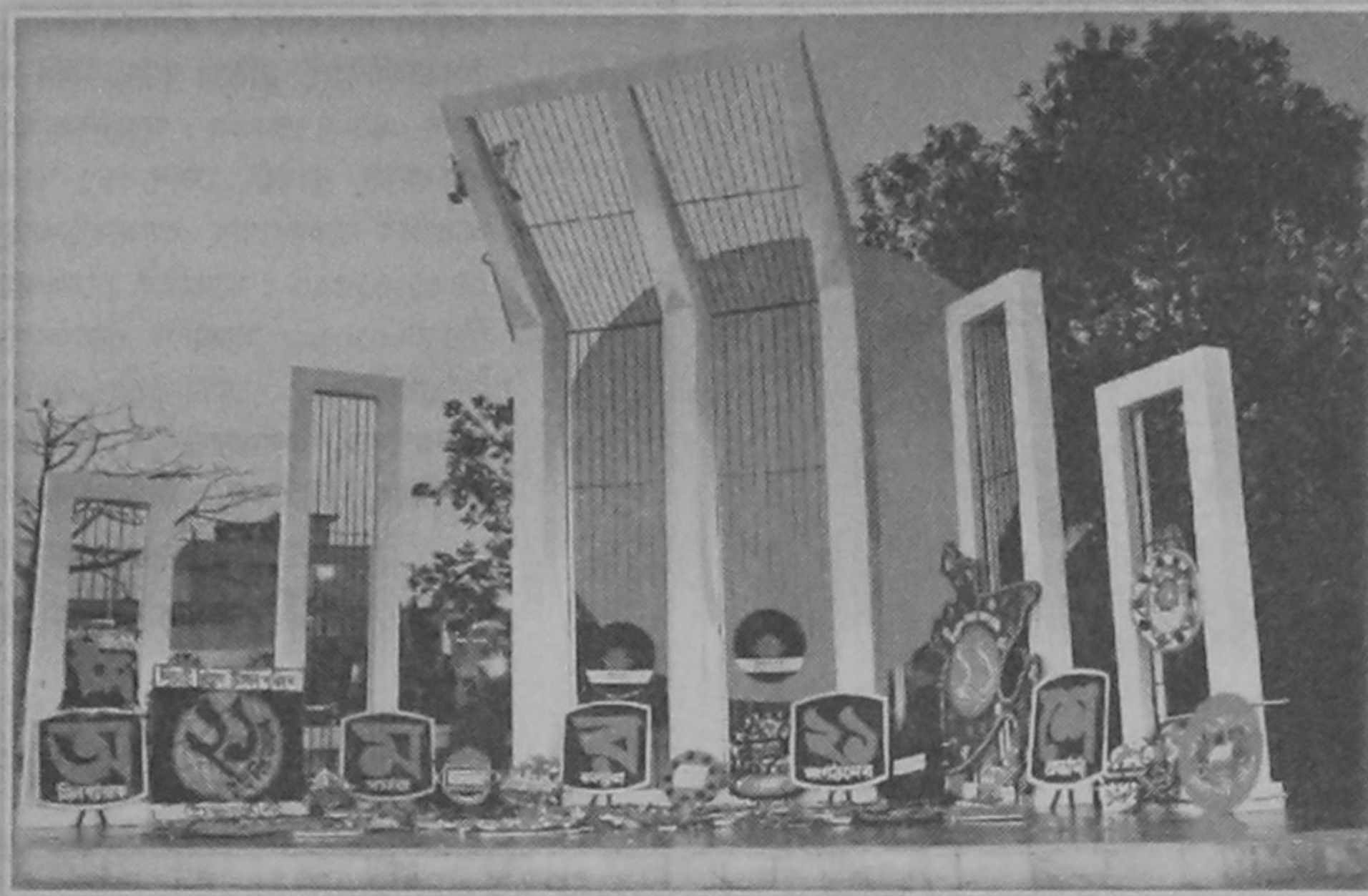
## Bangla in twenty-first century

Professor Rafiqul Islam

languages may survive primarily due to their super abundant ethnic population. In Europe, French, German, Italian and Russian languages and in middle-east Arabic, Persian, and Hebrew languages can escape extinction due to uncompromising love of their fellow countrymen for their mother tongue. Japanese language shall however be protected by her economic shield. English is the language of the only super-power of the present-day world, America, and again there having no other option, English has been

accepted as the lingua franca or the language of world communication. During the heydays of British rule, English was the language of the rulers, and in the twenty-first century, it has emerged as the 'sovereign of languages'. In to-day's world many languages are being sacrificed at the altar of the all-powerful English language.

These days one has to learn English for his very survival, and in many cases as an alternative language to mother-tongue. In countries where



English has been introduced as a second language as medium of instruction or as compulsory subject, it has been done as an alternative to mother-tongue. If through the medium of mother-tongue, some foreign languages can be acquired while performing state or social duties that obviously translates into a capital. Contrarily, if that has to be acquired at the expense of mother-tongue then it surely becomes a curse. Many of the sub-continental countries were now the victims of this curse. India and Pakistan are multi-lingual countries. Consequently, in spite of state patronage neither Hindi in India nor Urdu in Pakistan could become a single state-language country. English is virtually the lingua franca of India. Indian English is now recognised internationally. Though not in British India, a notable number of books written in Indian English during the last fifty years of Indian independence have won international prizes for their literary merit.

In Pakistan, neither English or Urdu literature could make any appreciable headway. Punjabi, Sindhi and Poshtu are the three principal languages of Pakistan while Urdu is the language of the mega-city Karachi, the home of the Indian refugees, Muhajerees. The advancement of Urdu literature has been comparatively more pronounced in India since India has a large hinterland for Urdu language, which Pakistan does not.

The citizens of different countries of Europe where many nationalities live comprise mainly of Christians. Europe is not only divided politically but also linguistically. Europe is striving for achieving European security, political and economic unity via NATO, European Union, common currency, but Europe is yet to achieve unity-elements like Euro-dollar, Euro-phone or an all-European language. The principal languages of Europe are French, German, Spanish, Italian, but none of them alone is the only language of the European Union. After a long time, English language has of late been trying to penetrate the citadels of different languages of Europe.

Presently, it is no longer the Scandinavian countries such as Sweden, Norway, Denmark and Finland but also the French, Germans, Italians and Spaniards who are also learning English language of their own. It however does not signify that those countries are switching over to English replacing their mother-tongue, as has been the case with India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. They are running their country-affairs in their own languages and learning English only for conducting international relations. The number of students from Asia and African continents who are now learning English in countries such as China, Japan, Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Vietnam, Singapore, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, South Africa, Kenya, Zambia, Ghana, Nigeria, Tanzania, Uganda far exceeds the number of students studying in the first decade of twenty-first century in English medium in English-speaking countries like England, America, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. In Asia, only three countries have accepted English as the alternative language to their mother-tongue. Similar situation also prevails in some countries of the African continent. Saudi Arabia and Iran are two exceptions, who have refused to learn English to replace their mother-tongue. In India, English has been the main tool of various states in the south and north-eastern region against Hindi hegemony. In Pakistan however there is not much resistance against Urdu as the Punjabis who are in majority do not cherish a well-meaning attitude towards their own mother-tongue, Punjabi, and they are more fascinated with Urdu. The languages of the aboriginals of the sub-continent today are critically endangered. Some western NGOs and priests convert the aboriginals to a new faith, introduce them to a new language and new alphabets using the indigenous neighbour-language and the foreign language, English.

In such ways, many indigenous aboriginal communities embraced Christianity forsaking their original faith, language and alphabets. English language amidst the hard realities of the Roman twenty-first century has emerged as the main medium of international communication, information-exchange and trade and commerce. Of the world's total knowledge-share, it is in the region between sixty to eighty that is preserved in English. However much it might seem unpleasant or undesirable, if one has to survive in the twenty-first century learning of English language along with its use is as important as computer. Computer these days are not merely a technical tool, rather an instant device in the same way the English language is. English is obviously indispensable in this age of international competition, but at what cost? Are we to sacrifice our mother-tongue for such reason or accept English, as a complementary language to our mother-tongue is a question to answer? So long English is

complementary to mother-tongue it is welcome, but when it is an alternative, it is ruinous. Likewise in China and Japan, foreign language can also be learnt while running country's administration, judicial system, education system, trade and commerce in mother-tongue. Since mother-tongue represents a nation's culture, it clearly would be suicidal to run the country in a language which is foreign. This tendency is however quite manifest among nations obtaining freedom newly in post-second world war period and also among former colonies. The inspiration and awareness that was perceivable in the twentieth century to make the national language as state language appear to have been abandoned in the twenty-first century. The endeavour to unite the world into one cultural and same-language universe in the twenty-first century seems to have been moving in concert with the process of globalisation, free-world economy and sky-culture beamed through various satellite channels. As is apparent with the onset of the new century and millennium, the blue prints are being executed skillfully to destroy the environment, live-varieties, ethnic minorities, languages, culture and different religions of the world. Many sages have dreamt of one world, but their main focus was to find unity in diversity. Contrarily, the globalisation process now set in motion seeks to demolish the different nationalities, religion, and culture and bring the universe under one hegemony. In the twenty-first century, the nations who do not suffer from any inferiority complex about their own culture, respectful to their own national identity, national independence, language, literature, legacy and also conservative, only they shall be able to preserve their own language and culture. Political independence is meaningless without economic independence, but without cultural independence both political and economic independence are without any substance. Language virtually is the mouthpiece of a community's culture and a pre-condition to civilization. The process of founding hegemony of one language over others and destroying innumerable mother-tongues of nations all over the world shall bring disaster to many cultures, and as a result, national independence shall become inconsequential. In the event, Bangladesh loses its linguistic sovereignty, her hard-earned independence shall become insignificant.



CHIEF ADVISER  
GOVERNMENT OF THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF  
BANGLADESH

## Message

I extend my warm felicitations and sincere good wishes to my fellow citizens and all the Bengali-speaking people around the world on the occasion of our glorious Language Martyrs' Day, now known all over the world as International Mother Language Day.

Many valiant sons of our soil sacrificed their lives during the heroic struggle to establish Bangla as the state language. I recall their extraordinary contributions with gratitude and pay deep respect to their unfading memory. I convey my sincere appreciation and gratitude to all those who made significant contributions to uphold the honour of Bangla language and promote its growth.

Immortal Ekushey is our greatest achievement as a nation. It is the symbol of our national ethos and unity. We achieved an independent and sovereign motherland by following its glorious path. We shall have to make our freedom more meaningful by drawing on the spirit of Ekushey. We shall have to work hard for flourishing our language, literature, culture and education.

I would like to call on all citizens of this great nation irrespective of religion, class or political party affiliation to forge a national unity to unleash the infinite potentials of our land, improve the lot of our people and establish a democratic state. Let us pledge ourselves to the grand effort of building a prosperous and enlightened Bangladesh.

Dr. Fakhruddin Ahmed

The future of Bangla shall largely depend on the impact the language may create in the outside world through its development following the spirit of the Ekushey and Liberation War of 1971. If Bangladesh, fourth in numerical terms among Bangla-speaking population worldwide can create a positive impact of its own, Bangla shall obviously earn an enviable place in the comity of nations. Contrarily, if Bangla is gobbled up by globalisation that certainly would be a sad day for Bangladesh. What could be more tragic for Bangladesh than this?

Translation: Syed Badrul Haque