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Immortal Ekushey Language Martyrs Day & International Mother Language Day 2010

Supplement on the occasion of the inauguration of international mother Language Institute, Ministry of Education, Bangladesh

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People's Republic of Bangladesh

Message

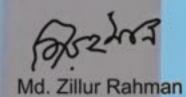
The 21st February is our great 'Shaheed Day' (Language Martyrs' Day) as well as the 'International Mother Language Day'. On this very significant day, I recall with deep respect the valiant language martyrs Jabbar, Barkat, Rafiq, Salam along with other language martyrs who laid down their lives in Language Movement in 1952. I pray for the salvation of those departed souls. I welcome the initiative of inaugurating the International Mother Language Institute on this

The great Language Movement is a very significant and historic day in our national history. The spirit of nationalism that emanated from the historical Language Movement inspired the Bangalee nation towards attaining selfsovereignty and thus we achieved our long-cherished Independence in 1971. On this day, I recall with deep respect the father of the nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, erstwhile member of Legislative Mr. Dhirendra Nath Dutta, Editor Moulana Akram Khan, multi-linguist Dr. Muhammad Shahidullah, student leader Kazi Golam Mahbub, language hero Gaziul Haque along other veteran language leaders who contributed immensely to materialize the Language Movement a success. The glaring spirit of the Language Movement arouses us to stand against all sorts of injustice and unfairness. It is provides us endless inspirations to go ahead along with fostering our own language, literature and culture.

Today, we feel proud that the International Mother Language Day is observing all over the world in connection with the Language Movement Day. The fortitude of Language Movement is now inspiring not only the advancement of our language, literature, culture and heritage but also the preservation and promotion of languages and cultures of other nations too. The observance of the 'International Mother Language Day' makes the people closer and strengthens the bonds of unity and amity among the people of the world.

I am confident the International Mother Language Institute would be to play a very significant role in protecting and developing languages and culture of different races around the world. I wish the International Mother Language Institute a continued success.

Khoda Hafez, May Bangladesh Live Forever.







Ministry of Education Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Message

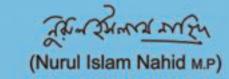
It was on November 17, 1999, that UNESCO declared the day of our glorious Language Moevment -21st February, as the International Mother Language Day. It represents a landmark of pride in Bengali history. With deep respect, sorrow and pride we commemorate the brave self-sacrifice made for our mother language on 21st February 1952. Through this declaration the United Nations has stirred the deepest human emotions regarding the preservation, maintenance, development and enrichment of mother languages and has served as a catalyst for humanity's struggle for cultural rights.

The then Honourable Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina had played a significant role in the initiative of UNESCO's declaration of 21st February as the International Mother Language Day. Under her direction the government submitted the proposal to the UNESCO head quarters. She sent a 7 member group of representatives led by the then Education Minister A.S.H.K. Sadeq, and provided apropos guidance and supervision. The Honourable Prime Minister's brave and timely steps will be etched in gold in the history of the Bengali language.

The team of representatives sent by the Honourable Prime Minister as well the then permanent representative at the UNESCO head quarters Syed Moazzem Ali were able to achieve success with the strength of their merit and experience. The role of the multilingual and multiethnic community of Canada in the intiative to declare the International Mother Language Day was invaluable. I extend my heartiest felicitations to this community including Rafiqul Islam, Absus Salam and the 10 member team comprising members from seven races and seven languages and everyone involved therein. As the chair of the then Parliamentary Standing committee on the Ministry of Education I had the good fortune of being involved in this historical effort. For this I feel very fortunate.

With the aim of the development and enrichment of the Bengali language as well as study, research, development and preservation of all world languages, on December 7, 1999, in the Paltan festival-meeting the then Honourable Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina declared the establishment of the International Mother Language Institute. She laid the foundation stone on March 15, 2001. As a representative of all the people in the world, the then General Secretary to the United Nations Kofi Anan was present on the occasion. Having overcome many hurdles and obstacles, today we are inaugurating this Institute.

The International Mother Language Institute should become a center point for the study, research and development of not only Bengali but all languages of the world. The International Mother Language Institute should become the place inspiration for all hopes and aspirations of the people of the world - this is what I hope for.



Bangla language situation in the World Shourav Sikder

As a race we have a heritage of a thousand years. Our mother language and our national language is Bangla. This language is also more than a thousand years old. After much evolution Bangla is in the form we find today. In the coming future Bangla will probably continue changing.

Bangla is amongst the most dynamic languages of today's world. The place of a language in the world is indicative of how many speakers speak the language. It does not refer to which language came first or the structure of any particular language. This article is an endeavour to determine the place of Bangla amongst the languages of the world through an approximation of the number of speakers.

Geographically, Bangladesh and the Indian State of West Bengal are considered to be Bangla speaking areas. In the map of the world these two pieces of land comprise Bangla speakers.

According to the eighth record (1997) of the Indian constitution Bangla is placed second amongst eighteen languages. The first place in this respect is occupied by Hindi with 34 crore speakers, and Bangla is spoken by almost 7 crores. At present this number can be considered to be 8 crore. We also have to remember that there are Bangla speakers in Assam and Tripura as well.

In Bangladesh 98 percent of the population is Bangla speaking. Therefore the number of Bangla speakers in Bangladesh will be approximately 14 crore. Apart from this there are almost one crore expatriate Bangla speakers spread out over the Middle East, Europe and America, as well as other countries in Asia such as Japan, Malaysia, Indonesia, Korea and Singapore.

Those have gone to London, Australia, Canada or America as migrant workers or immigrants are also considered to be expatriates. Hence the total number of Bangla speakers in the world is - 9 crore in West Bengal and other states of India, 14 crore in Bangladesh, and about 1 crore of expatriates - a total of 24 crore.

International Mother Language Day Kabir Chowdhury

21st February has been declared International Mother Language Day by the world body giving due recognition to the struggle of the Bengalees of the then Pakistan, waged in 1952, for establishing their legitimate right of having Bengali as one of the State languages of the country. However, the autocratic rules of Pakistan ignored the legitimate demand of the Bengalees. When the latter protested it was crashed by brute force. The police opened fire on February 21, 1952 on unarmed protesters, most of whom were student, killing, among other, Fafiq, Jabbar, Barkat and Salam.

Since then the Language Movement of February 1952 has acquired symbolic and mythic properties. Now it has become a symbol of democracy, secularism, Bengali nationalism and socialistic values.

With 21st February becoming he International Mother Language Day certain responsibilities have devolved on us. We have to help develop the languages of our 'adivashis', while enriching our main stream Bengali by translating world classics into our mother language. Simultaneously we have to make our literary classics, both ancient and modern, accessible to the outside world by translating them not only into English but also into various other western and oriental languages. This calls for creative imagination, hard labour and adequate financial support which hopefully, will be forthcoming.

> Long live Ekushey February! Long live International Mother Language Day!

The Bengali Language Movement and Emergence of Bangladesh Rafigul Islam

It has been suggested that the freedom struggle of Bangladesh originated from the Bengali language movement. In a way this is correct, as the basic inspiration of the freedom struggle of the Bengali-speaking people of Pakistan came mainly form linguistic

Statistically Bengalis were the majority community of Pakistan- about fifty-five percent of the total population. The Urdu-speaking Pakistanis were mostly immigrants from India. They were mainly concentrated in the city of Karachi, the newly-formed capital city of Pakistan. The Urdu-speaking people of Pakistan were not more than three percent of the total population, though Urdu was widely understood and used in West Pakistan. The West Pakistani languages, such as Panjabi, Sindhi, and Pashtu were written in Urdu or Arabic script like that of Persian. On the contrary, the Bengali (Bangla) language had its own script different from that of Arabic or The Language Controversy

The language controversy of Pakistan started even before the creation of Pakistan. Dr. Ziauddin Ahmed, a former Vice-Chancellor of the Aligarh University of India had suggested that Urdu should be the state or official language of the future state of Pakistan. Simultaneously Dr. Md. Shahidullah, a noted Bengali linguist from Dacca University, opposed the suggestion and put forth arguments in favour of Bengali as the future state language of Pakistan.

Unfortunately, the Central Government of Pakistan failed to appreciate the depth of feelings of the majority community of Pakistan and to allot the rightful place for the Bengali language in state affairs. As a consequence, the "Rashtra Bhasa Sangram Parishad" (the state language committee of action) was formed by different students and cultural organizations of Dacca in the month of October 1947. The committee vehemently protested the exclusion of the Bengali language from the newly issued money, postal stamps, coins, and office forms of the Government of Pakistan. On the 5th of December, 1947 the teachers and the students of Dacca University had their first street demonstration in favour of Bengali. On the following day, another protest meeting was held in Dacca University against the governmentsponsored Education Conference, held in Karachi, which recommended that Urdu should be the only state language of Pakistan.

In the second session of the Constitutional Assembly of Pakistan, held on the 25th of February, 1948, Mr. Dhirendra Nath Datta, a member from East Pakistan moved an amendment on the rules of procedures of the Assembly. This amendment sought to give Bengali equal status along with Urdu and English as the state language of Pakistan. Speaking on the amendment.

Prime Minister Liaqut Ali Khan's argument was emotional and fallacious in that the hundred million Muslims of the undivided India were never a mono-lingual or Urdu-speaking community. Indian Muslims are historically multi-lingual and the Bengali-speaking Muslims have always outnumbered the Muslims of other language groups of united India.

Indeed Mr. Dutta's arguments were of no avail in the Constitutional Assembly. The language policy of the Pakistan government was resented by the people of East Pakistan. The students of Dacca reacted sharply and a protest strike was observed in Dacca on the 26th of February, 1948. An "All Party State Language Committee of Action" was formed. Under the auspices of this committee a general strike was observed as a protest day throughout East Pakistan on the 11th of March, 1948. The party in power, the Muslim League took recourse to force. As a result hundreds of people were injured as the police used tear gas and lathis. Nearly a thousand people were thrown into prison. In fact, the student community bore the main brunt of the government onslaught. Despite police action the protests and demonstrations continued with unabated fury until Mr. Khawaja Nazimuddin, the chief minister of East Bengal, signed an eight-point agreement with the leaders of Committee of Action on the 15th of March. Two most important clauses of the agreement

1. In the April (1948) session of the East Bengal legislative assembly a special resolution will be moved to propose to the constituent assembly of Pakistan to make Bengali one of the state language of Pakistan and to give Bengali the same status with Urdu in the competitive

examinations of the central services of Pakistan.

In the month of April another resolution will be moved in the East Bengal legislative assembly to make Bengali the official language of the province of East Bengal in place of English. Besides that, Bengali will be the medium of instruction (Omar 1970: 81).

Immediately after the signing of the agreement, Mr. Mohamed Ali Jinnah, the Governor General of Pakistan came to visit Dacca. While addressing a mammoth gathering of the 21st of March, 1948, he pontifically issued the following

Let me make it very clear to you that the state language of Pakistan is going to be Urdu and no other language. Anyone who tries to mislead you is really the enemy of Pakistan. Without one state language, no nation can remain tied up solidly together and function. Look at the history of other countries. Therefore, so far as the state language is concerned,

Pakistan's shall be Urdu (Jinnah 1948: 89). In fact what Dr. Shahidullah metaphorically emphasized was the distinct ethnic and cultural entities of the Bengali-speaking people of

Pakistan. But the rulers of Pakistan did not accept the reality that Pakistan was a multilingual and multi-national state. Language Planning: 1949-50 On the 27th of December 1948, the education minister of Pakistan, Mr.Fazlur Rahman, suggested to the All Pakistan Education

Conference that for the sake of Islamic ideology, the old and traditional scripts or writing systems should be changed in lieu of Arabic or Urdu script which should be adopted. As a result the Central Pakistan education advisory board, also at it meeting of7th February, 1949 strongly recommended the Arabic script for all Pakistani languages. It should be mention that had this recommendation been put into motion, the Bengali languages literature would have been adversely affected. The other west Pakistani languages had already been using the Arabic script. Such a move again promoted sharp reaction among the students of the Dacca University A plethora of political, ideological, constitutional, and economic problems had been progressively burgeoning since Pakistan emerged.

The two wings of Pakistan were virtually plagued with the quoted controversies. As the year 1951 were on, the problems multiplied further. Against this background as the new year 1952 rang in, the Prime Minister of Pakistan Mr. Khawaja Nazimuddin again declared at the Dacca session of the ruling Muslim League party on the 26th of January, 1952 that "Urdu will be the state language of Pakistan." This announcement triggered off the language controversy and a n ew phase of the Bengali language movement was inaugurated. A new all-party (excepting the ruling Muslim League) state language committee of action was formed, and the 21st February 1952 was declared as State Language Day. The government promulgated prohibitory orders banning all sorts of meetings, processions, and demonstrations. Dacca University students defied government bans, held protest meetings, brought out massive demonstrations. This brought them into direct clash with the government. The police and para-military forces resorted to wide-spread tear gas shelling, clubbing, and finally shooting. As a result, several students were killed, hundreds were injured, and thousands were arrested. A reign of terror was let loose by the government but the language movement did not stop. The students killed were declared martyrs as they had laid down their lives for their beloved mother tongue.

Martyr's column was immediately raised on the spot where the first student was slain. "Ekushe February" or 21st February" became the red letter day to the Bengalis.

The General Election of 1954 and the Language Issue That the magic figure of 21 became a symbol of struggle, national unity, and emancipation, became clear when the major opposition

political parties of East Pakistan formed a united front on the basis of a 21 point program to fight the ruling Muslim League Party in the first general election of East Pakistan held in March 1954. The United Front pledged that in the event it won the election and formed a government one of the following steps would be taken which is-: 1. Bengali shall be made one of the state language of Pakistan

The Pakistan Constitution of 1956 and Bengali

As a result of the victory of the United Front in East Pakistan the voice of Bengal could now be heard in the Constitutional Assembly of Pakistan in Bengali. What's more in the First Constitution of Pakistan in 1956, Bengali was made one of the state languages of Pakistan. The Constitutional stipulation was interesting in that the implementation clause was kept in abeyance for twenty years. The Bengalis were not particularly happy about this. However, the United Front Government in the East Pakistan took the necessary initiative to set up a "Bengali Academy" at Burdwan House (the former chief minister's residence). The Bengali Academy was set up on the 12th of June 1957 with the Departments of Research, Translation, Complication, Publication and Sales, Culture, Folk, and Library. The Bengali Academy Act was passed by the East Pakistan Legislative Assembly on the 3rd of April 1957 to "promote the culture and development of the Bengali language and literature in East Pakistan." Language Planning in East Pakistan

The Bengali Academy in Dacca appointed a committee in April 1963 to reform Bengali grammar and the writing system. The recommendations made by this committee, if implemented, would have drastically changed the nature of the language that would not only have severed ties with the past traditions of the Bengali literature, but also with that of West Bengal. Responsibility for implementation of the Bengali Academy's recommendations was entrusted to Dacca University. Despite opposition from Bengali experts and linguists, the Academic Council of the Dacca University in its meeting of August 3rd, 1968 decided to implement it with minor modifications. In the meantime, Field Marshal Ayub Khan the President of Pakistan, in a meeting at Dacca on September 25th, 1968, suggested the creation of a "common" or "National" Language from Bengali and Urdu for Pakistan. But all these moves of reform and creation of a Pakistani language ended in a fiasco, due to the mass anti-Ayub political upsurge in 1969 which brought the downfall of Ayub Khan.

Mass Movement of 1969 and the Bengali Language The vanguard of the Anti-Ayub Mass Movement was an "All Party Student committee of Action" which, on the basis of an 11-point program, successfully directed the mass upsurge and brought about Ayub's fall. One of the points of the program was "Education at all

levels must be given through the mother tongue; Bengali language must be introduced in the law courts and government offices." It was during the mass movement of 1969 that Bengali nationalism reached its highest point. In the first All-Pakistan General Election of December 1970, the Bengali nationalists contested the election. The Awami League, champion of the cause of Bengali nationalism, fought the election on the basis of a "Six-Point Program" which envisaged full provincial autonomy for East Pakistan in administrative, economic and cultural affairs. The Awami League, won all but two East Pakistani seats of the National Assembly. Mr. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the Awami League leader, became the majority party leader of the Pakistan National Assembly. The legal logical thing would have been to invite the Awami League Party to form the Central Pakistan Government and transfer power to civilian rule. But the rulers of Pakistan totally disregarded the verdict of the people and instead of transferring power to the elected representatives of the people, unleashed a war of genocide on the Bengalis of East Pakistan from March 25, 1971

Bengali nationalists declared East Pakistan as the Independent State of Bangladesh and fought back. A bloody war of liberation continued until the 16th December, 1971 when the Pakistan Army conceded a total defeat and surrendered and "The Peoples' Republic of Bangladesh" come into being.

The Constitution of Bangladesh and the Bengali Language In the "Preamble" of "The Constitution of the Peoples' Republic of Bangladesh" adopted on the 4th of November, 1972 it had been declared that:

"The state language of the Republic is Bengali" Since liberation, the stress has been on the introduction of Bengali language at all levels of national life in Bangladesh. Bengali is now widely used as a language of office, court, and higher educational affairs. Now the language planners of Bangladesh find themselves not adequately prepared for this situation. In the process of rapid changeover, numerous problems are cropping up everywhere and these problems are being solved by the actual users and not by the planners. It has been discovered that in an office the officers and

the clerks are the best language planners, as in a classroom the teachers and the students are the best translators. In Bangladesh, the language problems are being solved through a variety of public and private initiatives rather than through an administrative framework. From these experiences in Bangladesh, it can be said that the best language planning is possible when the language is in action.

In the 1998 'World Almanac', the number of speakers indicated for each language indicates that the number of Bangla speakers stands at 20 crore 7 lakhs. In other words it is 4 crore less than our estimation. We also need to take into account that there's a disparity of twelves years in the two calculations. Whatever the most accurate count may be, we can state that at present the number of Bangla speakers in the world stands close to 24 crore. If the total human population of the world is 525 crore then Bangla speakers comprise 4.4 percentage of that mass. There are twice as many Hindi speakers and half as many Urdu speakers. Hence in South Asia Bangla is second to Hindi. On the other hand in terms of population count Bangla is placed 6th in the world. According to Ethnologue the languages that place before Bangla are Arabic, Spanish, Hindi, English and Chinese. On the other hand languages that place after Bangla are Portuguese (18 crore), Malayalam (17 crore), Russian, (13crore) French (12 crore), Japanese, German and Urdu.

Prime Minister Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

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Message

I am happy to learn that the International Mother Language Institute is going to be inaugurated on the greatest Martyrs Day. On this occasion, I pay my deep homage to the language martyrs as well as the language veterans.

The glorious achievement of the Language Movement of 1952 is no longer limited within the boundary of Bangladesh. In 1999, UNESCO declared the 21st February as the International Mother Language Day at the initiatives of the then Awami League government and a group of expatriate youths. The declaration has brought universal recognition to the 21st February.

To uphold the recognition, we took steps to establish International Mother Language Institute in 2001. But the 4-party government stopped the work of the institute.

We again resumed the work of the institute after assuming office last year and the Institute is going to attain its full-fledged shape today. I believe, the Institute dedicated to the memories of the language martyrs will be

turned into one of the main mementos of the Language Movement of 1952.

The International Mother Language Institute, I hope, will not only work on carrying out research, preservation of languages and language training, but also contribute in building international bridge in the field of languages.

I wish the International Mother Language Institute all out success.

Bangla, Joi Bangabandhu May Bangladesh Live Forever









Message

21st February is the first step towards our Liberation Movement. Following the path of our language martyrs, the valiant freedom fighters liberated Bangladesh in 1971 through their supreme sacrifice. That is why 21st February is one of the most memorable days of our national history.

On November 17, 1999, UNESCO declared 21st February as the International Mother Language Day. This day is commemorated for the preservation and development of linguistic diversity and multilingual cultures as well as the enhancement of linguistic and cultural heritage on the basis of understanding, tolerance and dialogue. This declaration of UNESCO has made Bengalis proud and has subsequently placed a momentous responsibility upon Bangladesh. On March 15, 2001, Honourable Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina laid the

foundation stone of the International Mother Language Institute. On the 11th International Mother Language Day another milestone is being celebrated. Centered on the aim of preservation and research of all mother languages of the world, the International Mother Language Institute is inaugurated by the Honourable Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

I believe that this Institute will be known to the people of the world as the center for research on world languages and culture. On this auspicious occasion I pay respect to the martyrs of 21st February. May the International Mother Language Institute achieve the goals it has set forth. My heartfelt felicitations to everyone involved in this endeavor.





As West Bengal is multilingual and Hindi has unilateral dominance socially and culturally, therefore it is only natural that the rate of increase of Bangla speakers in India will be diminutive. In our country, despite the sky-culture (?) and the increase of English medium schools with poor Bangla programmes, foreign languages are studied by a small number in the city. Thus the Bangla of the general masses is in no risk of becoming endangered even though, according to the natural law of languages. No other language in the world has the power to quench our thirst in the same way. Only our mother language Bangla will encompass the infinite possibilities in the hearts and lives of the masses and live on forever. We have our 21st February and the golden names of martyrs etched in blood. The heritage and pride of our mother language has illuminated all mother languages of the world.