

IMMORTAL EKUSHEY GLORIOUS MARTYRS' DAY & INTERNATIONAL MOTHER LANGUAGE DAY



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بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

PRESIDENT
PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF
BANGLADESH

Message

February 21 is the great 'Shaheed Day' as well as 'International Mother Language Day'. I recall, with profound reverence, the unfolding memories of the language martyrs who made supreme sacrifices on this day in 1952. I pray to the Almighty for the salvation of those departed souls.

The great Language Movement is a historical and significant event in our national history. In the 21st February of 1952, language martyrs named Jabbar, Barkat, Rafique, Shafique, Salam and many others sacrificed their lives in the street of Dhaka with a view to achieving the right of mother tongue. The spirit of Bangalee Nationalism emanated from the bloodstained 21st and gained tremendous momentum gradually, and subsequently the long-cherished independence was achieved in 1971. It is only the Bangalee who laid down lives for protecting the right of mother tongue in the globe.

The great architect of our Independence and Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in 1974 addressed the General Assembly of the United Nations Organization (UNO) in Bangla and created a new horizon. His able heirsch and daughter of Bangabandhu Sheikh Hasina, the Prime Minister of Bangladesh, echoed the same in 2010 and honoured the Bangla speaking people. It was also proposed to recognise Bangla as the official language of the UN.

We feel proud that the 21st February is being observed all over the world as International Mother Language Day in a befitting manner. The International Mother Language Day has made a bridge of unity and amity among the people of the world as well as inspired for the preservation and promotion of languages and cultures of various nations around the world.

Today, February 21 is not only the symbol of upholding the dignity of our own language and culture but also the inspiration of protecting the language and heritage of all the ethnic groups of the globe, I hope the observance of International Mother Language Day would revive the world's almost defunct languages and put forward the human civilization as well.

I wish all the programmes in respect of the great 'Shaheed Day' and 'International Mother Language Day' a grand success.

Khoda Hafez, May Bangladesh Live Forever.


Md. Zillur Rahman

Freedom for Motherland with the Right of Mother-tongue

Muhammad Habibur Rahman

There is a joy in the mother-tongue. The name of the language and the country is the same. Although the people of Bangladesh were not free for a long time, they continued to label their land as a country instead of a 'Suba' or province. And the linguists of foreign origin had the notion that the ethos of an independent state lay at the core of this Bengali language.

A prominent feature of the language movement of Bangladesh was its liberality and sense of proportion. Those of us who were involved in the language movement spoke not only of Bangla, but about all other languages. We did not demand that Bangla should be made the lone state language of the then Pakistan, despite being a majority in terms of population. However, those who were intensely loyal towards Pakistan at that juncture tried to raise the slogan: 'We seek Bangla as a state-language, not a Bangla which immerses the state'. That land of loyal Pakistanis was swept away by the flood of a bloody liberation war. These people belonged to the group who are frightened by the sound of 'Joy Bangla'. But they are also inhabitants of this country, Bangladeshi by birth and claimant of equal rights alongside all others.

The question of reforming the languages or alphabets arose in various countries following attainment of freedom from direct or indirect influence of colonial powers. Kamal Atatürk had reformed the Turkish language. The neo-Turks wanted to throw away the Arabic language from the Turkish. The survival or extinction of a language depends on its usage. The Indonesian parliament tried to bolster Bahasa Indonesia with a modern outlook by incorporating 37,795 expressions during a parliamentary session.

After the fall of Shanghai, the Chinese Communist Party adopted *putonghua* (Mandarin) as the Chinese language after experimenting with various modifications of the language; the Chinese pictographs were made easier with the help of pinyin. As a consequence, the literacy rate in China improved rapidly.

Even before Bangladesh emerged as a sovereign nation, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman had said while inaugurating the Ekushey programme at Bangla Academy on 15 February 1971, "I am declaring the introduction of Bangla at all strata of the state from the day power is reposed on us. It cannot be that the pundits of Bangla language will prepare terminologies and only then Bangla will be launched. The terminologists can do research as much as they like, but we shall introduce Bangla language immediately after assuming office; even if that Bangla contains errors, so be it, those will be corrected later on."

Effective reform and language is not possible and fortitude, in the uncertainties and political killings.

Today, the Supreme the English language. The delivering verdicts in However alarmed the common law may become, country's language in the essential. The literatures of were greatly enriched after English and Hungarian The language and will flourish if we practice apparently difficult and

The resolution to the International Mother adopted by the UNESCO following the preliminary Rafiqul Islam, Abdus of the Vancouver, Canada-of the World', and the Bangladesh government countries had supported Bangladesh. No country fourth committee of the General Assembly resolution on 3 November 2010 with the objective of observing 21 February all over the world as International Mother Language Day. We have also raised the issue of making Bangla an official language of the United Nations. We have to put in hard labour and do some home-work for justifying that demand.

As 21st February is now the International Mother Language Day for the speakers of all languages, all concerned including those pundits and researchers of different countries who are working for the preservation and development of languages should work together. Our prime minister has already inaugurated an international language research centre. We are now supposed to start our work.

February 21 is such a day when people from across the globe show respect to all the languages jointly. We all feel a certain pride due to this universal culmination of the language movement of Bangladesh. Today, the 21st of February is a priceless and common heritage for the citizens of all countries.

Translation: Helal Uddin Ahmed



extensive adoption of a without attaining stability backdrop of economic unrest, murders and secret

Court is the last refuge for current chief justice is Bengali language. adherents of British the incorporation of the judicial branch is England and Hungary the introduction of languages in their courts. literature of Bangladesh Bangla language in serious areas.

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PRIME MINISTER
GOVERNMENT OF THE PEOPLE'S
REPUBLIC OF BANGLADESH



Message

I extend my best wishes to Bangla-speaking people at home and abroad, and people of all languages and cultures across the world on the occasion of the glorious Martyrs and International Mother Language Day.

The greatest Ekushey is the symbol of grief, strength and glory in the life of every Bangalee. On this day in 1952, many valiant sons of the soil, including Rafiq, Shafique, Jabbar, Barkat, Shafuiddin and Salam, sacrificed their lives for protecting the dignity of our mother tongue.

I pay my deep homage to the memories of the martyrs. I also pay my deep respect to the greatest Bangalee of all time, Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, who had steered the language movement. I also recall with great respect the contributions of all other language veterans.

In 1948, the Bangalee youths raised their voices against the attempt to impose Urdu as the lone state language of Pakistan by the imperialist rulers. Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, who had been leading the people's movement against the move, was thrown into jail. However, his undaunted inspiration from inside the jail provided new impetus to the people's movement. In continuation of the movement, the language martyrs sacrificed their precious lives on the 21st February in 1952 while breaking Section 144 imposed by the rulers.

The resonance of the pride of Amar Ekushey is now resounded in the hearts of the people of 189 countries surpassing the boundary of Bangladesh. The International Mother Language Day is now a source of inspiration for all people of the world to establish truth and justice.

The day has been reached to a new height when the UNESCO gave recognition to the 21st February as the International Mother Language Day on 17 November 1999 at the initiative of our the then Awami League government with the help of some expatriate Bangladeshis living in Canada.

I have already placed the demand in the UNGA to make Bangla, spoken by 25 crore people of the world, as one of the official languages of the UN.

We have established International Mother Language Institute for carrying out research on all languages of the world and preserving those.

The greatest Ekushey is the symbol of our democratic values, Bangalee nationalism, spirit of the Liberation War and secularism. We have made a good progress in implementing the pledges made to the people to build a modern digital Bangladesh free from hunger, poverty, terrorism and illiteracy in last two years.

Let us take a fresh vow to work together to improve the lot of the people sinking all differences.

I pray to the Almighty Allah for salvation of the departed souls of the Language Martyrs.

Joi Bangla, Joi Bangabandhu
May Bangladesh Live Forever

Sheikh Hasina

Language Movement: Some Issues and Perspectives

Selina Hossain

Sacrificing lives for language is such an everlasting and unique phenomenon for the Bangalees of Bangladesh which a nation proudly glorifies as a source of having her cultural spirit illuminating. February 21 is an inspiration that lies at the root of Bangalee nationalism. 'The Day' has strengthened the identity of our heritage, upheld the dignity of mother language and has placed Bangladesh at a glorious position in the world. Tagore, the poet of this language was awarded 'Nobel prize' in 1913. His song is our national anthem. The extraordinary talent of Bangla language, Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman had his address in Bangla at the United Nations in 1974. Having been declared by the UNESCO as the International Mother Language Day our 'Amar Ekushey' today has become the symbol of protecting the languages of the small ethnic groups all over the world.

Barkat, Rafiq, Salam, Jabbar, Shafur and many more became martyred through sacrificing their lives for mother language. Besides, many were injured. Both male and female students took part in the movement. All, irrespective of men and women, were there among the mass.

As the State Language Movement Council was formed, the responsibility for collection of fund for operation of movement fell on the female students of Dhaka University. Apart from performing this responsibility, these female students had performed another important task being imbued with their own awareness. They had all men and women realized the dignity of mother language. The people then realized what a shameful and head-bowing dishonor it was to lose the dignity of mother tongue. The luminous spirit derived from this realization worked as the driving force throughout the movement.



The state formation after '47 was based on two-nation theory. There was also a sense of aggressiveness linked with religious spirit. Even though, people were not addicted to religious fundamentalism. They were not lagging behind at all in the movement on establishing their own rights with religious beliefs kept intact. Women assisted female students with money. When money was not available they donated their ornaments. This was the clear proof of attaining the objective of equality in the thoughts of both men and women at the early 50's.

Many women took part in the procession defying the families' protest. Some women participated in the procession wearing 'Burkha'. Because, going out of home was not a big obstacle for men. But it was really a challenge for women. Even then the situation of women was quite important in our history especially from its social and political perspectives. It is because the women had to proceed through breaking their 'bondage'. The women had performed this difficult task from the realization of their cultural values. They had done it from the strong urge of getting relieved of the very existential crisis. History, really, advances in this way. Thus, the collective endeavors of both men and women are glorified in the history. No big achievements were attained without women in the history. Rather, women are destined to severe sufferings of any big achievements.

On 31 January, 1952 the All Party State Language Movement Council was formed at the Dhaka Bar Council Hall. The Council announced that there would be programs like meeting, procession and hartal on 21 February. The general assembly was scheduled at 3 pm on that day. There was also the program of advancing with procession towards general assembly with a view to submitting 'Memo' regarding the declaration of Bangla as the State Language. The govt. became mentally weak with such programs of the student. Then Nurul Amin was the chief Minister of East Pakistan. His govt. imposed a month-long section 144 from 20 February to foil the movement.

The students got gathered at the Aamtala (the mango tree premises) of the university defying the hartal. It is learned from the reminiscence of the women
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21st February: International Mother Language Day

Dr. Mohammad Hannan

The sincere passions and motivations of the Bengali nation over 21st February led to its being vested with international status. In 1992, Tripura, the Bengali-speaking state of India, declared its plan of observing 21st February as the *Banglabhasha Dibas*. In West Bengal also, 21st February has for a long time been observed in an unofficial manner.

History behind History

But, the demand for securing international prestige for 21st February was first raised from Gafargaon of Bangladesh. At a program of observing 21st February in 1997, an organization named 'Gafargaon Theatre' raised demand for securing international status for 21st February. In on *Sankalan* of Ekushey, this organization raised their demand again. In addition to publishing essay on this theme in the *Sankalan*, titled *Arghya*, they inscribed the slogan, "We want International Mother Language Day: We want International Recognition of 21st February" on its cover. The same year the theatre activists of Gafargaon brought out procession, mounted poster on the walls of the town and pasted sticker on bus and train demanding international status for 21st February. It is mentionable that Jabbar, one of the Language martyrs of 1952, was born at Gafargaon.

On 30th November, 1999, *The Bangladesh Observer* published a letter of M. Enamul Haque, an Engineer, of Water Development Board, writing from Chuadanga. He claimed in that letter that in 1998, he had sent a proposal to Mr. Kofi Annan, UN Secretary General, Calling upon him to confer international status on 21st February. In a letter, of November 22, 1999, written to the Education Minister of Bangladesh, Mr. Enamul Haque sent a document regarding this. In the number of April 6, 1994 of the *Dainik Bangla*, one person, using the pseudonym of 'Sunagorik', published a letter in the *janomat* column urging upon people to take initiative for declaring 21st February to be the International Mother Language Day.

First Effective Initiative

But, result in this regard principally came from the initiative of the multilingual and multinational group of Canada. Sending a proposal to

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