



IMMORTAL EKUSHEY MARTYRS DAY AND INTERNATIONAL MOTHER LANGUAGE DAY

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**PRESIDENT
PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF
BANGLADESH**

Message

On the occasion of the great 'Shahid Day' and 'International Mother Language Day' I extend my sincere thanks to all the people of different languages of the world. At the same time I pay tribute to the unfading memories of the martyrs of the Language Movement. The great language movement is a historic and significant event in our national history. This movement was aimed at establishing the rights of our mother tongue and side by side it was to save our ethnic entity and own culture too. Being a source of eternal inspiration the language movement later helped us to achieve the right to self-determination. We achieved our long cherished independence in 1971 through an armed struggle. On the eve of Amar Ekushey and International Mother Language Day, I recall with profound reverence the memories of the language martyrs namely Barkat, Rafiq, Salam, Jabbar, Shafiur and other unknown martyrs who made supreme sacrifice. At the same time I also recall with deep respect Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the then Gonoparishad Legislative Member Dharendra Nath Dutta and all the language activists. Their valour, organizing capacity and activeness helped the language movement reach its culmination. The spirit of the language movement is rested in honouring others' languages and cultures being imbued with own language and tradition. We feel proud that Ekushey February is no longer a glory for the people of this land alone. Being 'International Mother Language Day' it is also a source of inspiration for the people of all languages. Let the people of the globe of all languages be united, let the world's almost defunct languages revive in their own communities - this is my expectation on this great 'Shahid Day' and 'International Mother Language Day'. I wish all the programmes in respect of the great 'Shahid Day' and 'International Mother Language Day' a grand success. Khoda Hafez, May Bangladesh Live Forever.

Md. Abdul Hamid
Md. Abdul Hamid

Bangla Language should be at the Core of Bangladesh

Dr. Muntasir Mamun

We do not love Bangla language like our sweetheart; otherwise there was no need to repeatedly write about the necessity of Bangla. Our desire is instantaneous, but its longevity is momentary; it is love without faith. Occurrences similar to what was perpetrated by the ruling classes and their associates with Bangla language during the Pakistani colonial era are taking place even today. But there are no protests. May be the mindsets of the then youths were not engulfed that much by the colonial mentality as is observed now. There were therefore protests. There have been discussions galore on the movement that was waged for Bangla language then and what was the significance of Twenty-first February; there is no need to restate those. Rather, discussion on why that significance has become less important appears to be more relevant.

Bangla first achieved the status of state language as the language of the Bengalis on 4 November 1972 after Bangladesh's independence. In the third article of the Constitution adopted on that day, it was stated: "The state language of the Republic is Bangla". Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib rightly took the initiative to properly introduce Bangla at all levels. One of the reasons why he delivered his speech at the United Nations in his own language was that he wanted to create an example and enhance the self-esteem of his nation. Those nations who do not suffer from inferiority complex feel proud to speak in their own language.

Various hindrances were put up against introduction of Bangla at all levels even during Bangabandhu's rule. He had to issue special instructions a number of times for introducing Bangla language. What was the reason? The reason was none other than the comfort felt by the elite classes comprising of different professional groups in using clerical English, not in Bangla. Bangla was the language of the poor. Those who were experts in foreign languages - mostly the children of elites - were given preferences in jobs. This advantage would have diminished if Bangla was in vogue, and they could not agree to happen that.



The blood shed by the poor for Bangladesh was much more than those spilled by the elites. There were differences in their unflinching love for Bangladesh. They could not eliminate their colonial mentality.

This anti-Bangla language resistance emerged victorious during the tenure of General Ziaur Rahman. I do not know whether Zia knew good Bengali; but he used to speak Bangla in Urdu style. It was he who removed Bangla from the Constitution. In the fourth schedule (article 150) dealing with transitional and temporary provisions, it was stated in section 3/A/9: "In the event of any conflict, contradiction, discrepancy or inconsistency between the Bengali and the English text of the Constitution, in so far as it relates to any amendment, addition, modification, substitution or omission made in any of the texts or in both the texts by the said Proclamation, the English text shall prevail".

That stipulation was consistent with the main objectives and ideals of Ziaur Rahman. He was installed in power so that he could give birth to Banglali-Pakistanis. There would be Razakar-Al-Badar ministers in the independent Bangla, the Jamaatis and anti-liberation elements would do politics, ISI would be the driving force in the country; so it was not proper that Bangla should maintain such a status. He would have been happy if Urdu could be introduced, but he could not gather such courage. It did not take long for the elites to gauge his hint. That trend was maintained more or less for 35 years subsequent to the military ruler. Efforts are on to make this issue a normal affair.

As a result, Bangla language is being distorted consciously. Regional Bangla dialects have been in vogue in FM Radio, mobile phone advertisements and even in plays broadcast over television; they still exist and
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that a state emerged as a result of social contact among stakeholders. Therefore, a standard language is to be a reflection of unanimous collective decision of the speech communities from different regions of a country.

Second, *Prestige*: It is natural that if any particular dialect gets the status of standard language, speech communities of other dialects may get hurt. They can foster a feeling that their language is either nonstandard or inferior to other dialects. A strong motivation is then necessary to dispel such idea. Speech communities irrespective of their variation should be shown an equitable behaviour to give them the impression that this does not mean disrespecting or dishonouring any language. Standard language is prestigious in the sense that it is mutually intelligible to all speech communities.

Third, *Prescriptivism*: Standard language is codified. It has a dictionary, it has got its own sound systems, rules of formation of words and rules of construction of sentences, rules of conveying meaning of words and sentences. A standard language has as prescribed writing-system.

Fourth, *Yardstick or benchmark*: In a situation of language varieties, standard form is considered as point of reference not only for its codification but also maintaining its rich tradition of literature and history of culture.

The development of a standard language is a continuous process and it is rendered by institutional patronization. World's two renowned institutions responsible for language planning include *Academic francaise* and *Real Academia Espanola*. In Bangladesh, there is no institute officially assigned for this. Our experience shows that Bangla Academy in its routine work, discharged some functions of language planning or standardization. International Mother Language Institute (IMLI), meanwhile, has been established. The chartered responsibilities and duties of the Institute are in tune with language planning agencies. The Institute, in one sense, is the sole institute of the government for language policy-planning, language management, language documentation and language revitalization. The Institute may be assigned with the task of codifying the country's standard Bangla language.
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**PRIME MINISTER
GOVERNMENT OF THE PEOPLE'S
REPUBLIC OF BANGLADESH**



Message

I extend my best wishes to the 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 for every Banglali. Many valiant sons of the soil, including Rafiq, Shafique, Jabbar, Barkat, Shafiuddin and Salam, sacrificed their lives for protecting the dignity of the mother tongue in 1952.

I pay my deep homage to the memories of the martyrs. I also pay my deep respect to the greatest Banglali 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, State Language Action Council comprising Chhatra League, Tamuddun Majlish and other student organisations was constituted. The council called a hartal on 11 March 1948 to press home the demand for making Bangla as the state language. Bangabandhu along with many other student leaders was arrested from in front of the Secretariat on that day. They were freed on March 15. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman presided over a meeting on Dhaka University campus on March 16. The language movement had spread across the country.

Bangabandhu was again arrested from Faridpur on 11 September 1948. He was freed on 21 January 1949. He was again detained on 19 April and freed at the end of July. On 14 October 1949, Bangabandhu was again put into prison. Under his directives from prison, the language movement had got momentum. In continuation of the vigorous movement, the language martyrs sacrificed their lives on the 21st February in 1952 while breaking Section 144 imposed by the rulers.

The blood-stained resonance of Amar Ekushey is now resounded in the hearts of the people of 193 countries surpassing the boundary of Bangladesh. A number of Bangladeshi expatriates, including Salam and Rafiq, in Canada took initiative to recognize the 21st February as the International Mother Language Day. Later, the then Awami League government placed a proposal in the UN in this regard. Subsequently, the UNESCO declared the day as the International Mother Language Day on 17 November 1999. We have established International Mother Language Institute for carrying out research on all languages of the world and preserving those.

The International Mother Language Day is now a source of inspiration for all the people of the world to establish their rights of language and culture. We have already taken initiatives to make Bangla, spoken by over 250 million people of the world, as one of the official languages of the UN.

The greatest Ekushey is the symbol of our democratic values, Banglali nationalism, spirit of liberation struggle and secularism. We started our journey with the pledges to build a modern digital Bangladesh free from hunger, poverty, terrorism, communalism and illiteracy and made desired progress in every sector. The period 2009 to 2013 is the golden era in the history of the socio-economic and cultural development of Bangladesh.

Let us take a fresh vow being imbued with the spirit of the great Ekushey to work together for improving the lot of the people sinking all difficulties.

Joi Bangla Joi Bangabandhu
May Bangladesh Live Forever

Sheikh Hasina
Sheikh Hasina

The Practice of Standard Bangla Language in Bangladesh: Expectations and Reality

Dr. Jinnat Imtiaz Ali

The synonyms for the word *standard* is guideline, norm, paradigm, ideal, etc. We usually say 'the thing is of standard quality'. We very often say, 'it has standard size' or 'the measurement is quite standard'. There is nothing to create ambiguity in such contexts. But it is not so easy to describe the concept of *standard language*. It should be considered in different perspective or disciplines. In search for unfolding the norm and realm of standard language it is found that the greatest status is bestowed on such variety of languages. It is used in all print and electronic media, educational purposes, government services, trade and commerce. The educated community use standard language in their intellectual practices and creative talents take recourse to this norm in their writings. This standard language is the medium of political and cultural debate. There is a dictionary of standard language. The art of its usages has been described in grammar books.

Language is mainly a biological phenomenon and falls into a human discipline. Each of the human beings uses at least one language. The knowledge of language performance and competence is programmed in human brain since a child is born. We express our emotion, merriment and paths through language. Then a process of selection of certain language form as standard is not so easy. But we have to do so for larger and national interest. For identification of standard language four factors are considered important.

First, *Commonality*: there is vertical or geographical distribution of language. There is a variety of Bangla language. These varieties are popularly known as dialects. In Bangladesh, almost every district has its own dialect. A dialect differs from other one in many aspects such as - phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics and pragmatics. Dialects sometimes create linguistic deviation among the speech communities. This sort of problem prevails in Bangladesh also. Our regional speeches are not mutually understandable. To get rid of these linguistic complexities, the only way is to accept the standard variety in communication. The renowned thinker and political scientist Rousseau stated

Rafiqul Islam and His Friends' Contribution to the Making of the International Mother Language Day

Dr. Mohammad Hannan

There was a time (from 1953 onward) when 21 February was observed as 'Shaheed Dibash' (Martyrs' Day). Later on, the day began to be observed at some places as 'Language Day' and at other places as 'Mother Language Day'. After the independence of Bangladesh, 21 February began to be celebrated at the state level simultaneously as 'Mother Language Day' and 'Martyrs' Day'. Since 2000, 21 February has been observed in Bangladesh as 'Great Martyrs' Day and International Mother Language Day'.

Many national and international language lovers have contributed to this colourful international dignity of 21 February. But the contribution of Rafiqul Islam, a freedom fighter who was born in Comilla in Bangladesh (1953), exceeds everyone else's contribution. Rafiqul Islam, his friend Abdus Salam and the members of "Mother Language Lovers of the World" gave birth to International Mother Language Day about 50 years later with the same inspiration and motivation with which the Language soldiers created 21 February in 1952.

One day there will certainly be some research on how much effort, how many sleepless nights, how many sheets of paper, how many letters, how many meetings and above all how many hundreds of dollars went into establishing the great martyrs' day, 21 February, as the international mother language day. But the pages of history will immortalize ten language lovers of the world speaking seven different languages. Rafiqul Islam met them all in Canada and it is with their help and cooperation that he founded the association of "Mother Language Lovers of the World". Not theoretically, while living in Canada Rafiqul Islam practically learnt that a person becomes rootless if he cannot speak or write anything in his mother tongue. He realized that the mother tongues of many nations had already disappeared under the dominance of many aggressive languages like English, French, Spanish, Portuguese and others.

In this background, the main spirit of the 21 February 1952 Language Movement of the Bangalis appeared before him. When the Bangalis started their language movement in '52, the Bangalis in Pakistan, in spite of being the majority language community, demanded that "Bangla should be one of the
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