



Immortal Ekushey Martyrs' Day and International Mother Language Day



Special Supplement

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



پیوند اللغات الزخيم
PRESIDENT
PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF
BANGLADESH

Message

Today is *Amar Ekushey* (immortal 21 February), the great Shaheed Day (Language Martyrs' Day) and the International Mother Language Day. Under the auspices of the United Nations, this day is being observed across the globe including Bangladesh with due fervour and in a befitting manner. On this occasion, I extend my sincere thanks and felicitations to all multilingual people of the world along with Bangla-speaking people. At the same time, I pay my deep tribute to the un fading memory of the martyrs of the Language Movement.

Today, I recall with deep reverence the language martyrs namely Salam, Barkat, Rafiq, Jabbar, Shafiq and so many unknown and unsung language heroes who laid down their lives for the cause of mother tongue. I also remember with profound respect, Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, Dhirendranath Dutta, the then Member of *Gonoparishad* (Constituent Assembly) and all the language heroes for their immense contributions towards language movement. Their supreme sacrifices, unmatched valour, able organizing capacity and rapid steps in this regard facilitated the Language Movement to reach its ultimate culmination on February 21, 1952. Consequently, the Bangali achieved their right to mother tongue.

The great Language Movement was a historic and significant event in our national history. This movement was aimed at establishing the rights of our mother tongue as well as protecting self-identity and culture. Being a source of ceaseless inspiration, *Amar Ekushey* inspired and encouraged us to a great extent to achieve the right to self-determination and struggle for freedom and war of liberation. With the spirit of Language Movement, we achieved our long cherished independence through a nine-month long armed struggle under the charismatic leadership of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman who proclaimed country's independence on March 26, 1971.

It is, in fact, an unprecedented event in the world history to embrace martyrdom for the sake of mother tongue. It is a matter of pride that February 21 has been recognized as the International Mother Language Day by the UNESCO in 1999 with the spontaneous attachment and sincere endeavour of Hon'ble Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina along with the primary efforts of some expatriate Bangla-loving Bangladeshis. As the Bangali, it was our great achievement. The United Nations, in the light of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), has set the theme of the International Mother Language Day 2017 as "Towards Sustainable Futures through Multilingual Education", which I believe is time worthy in the context of time. I firmly believe that it would be easier to attain the sustainable future through using multilingual education along with developing and protecting languages of multilingual people of the world.

The spirit of *Amar Ekushey*, transcending the boundary of our country, is now inspiring the people of different languages of the world to protect and preserve their own languages and cultures. Language Martyrs Day, therefore, has now been appeared as an indomitable source of inspiration for protecting languages and self-identity of people around the globe. Let the multilingual people be united, let the almost defunct languages of the world be revived in their respective communities and let the globe be coloured with diverse languages and cultures- it is my expectation on the great Shaheed Day (Language Martyrs Day).

May 'Language Martyrs Day' and 'International Mother Language Day' be emerged as the symbol of unity and victory for preserving the respective languages and cultures of all nations and people of the world.

Khoda Hafez, May Bangladesh Live Forever.

Md. Abdul Hamid
Md. Abdul Hamid

From Language Movement to International Mother Language Day The Pragmatism of Women

Selina Hossain

The Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman had written in his book *'Unfinished Memoir'* on the language movement when he was in jail: 'We were kept at a place inside the jail. The ward in which we were accommodated was called 'number four ward'. It was a three-storey building. Outside the wall stood the Muslim Girls' School. During the five days we were in jail, the school-girls used to start shouting slogans after climbing on the roof-top at ten in the morning, which ended at four in the afternoon. The small girls did not tire the slightest. There were different types of slogans - 'We want Bangla as the state language', 'We seek release of our jailed brothers', 'Police tortures should stop'. At this juncture, I told Mr. Shamsul Haque, "Mr. Haque, look at them, our sisters have come out. They cannot now say 'no' to Bangla as the state language." Mr. Haque told me, "You have spoken correctly, Mujib."

Based on his political wisdom, Bangabandhu had evaluated the contributions of women in the language movement - in a clear voice and within the larger perspective, from the standpoint of equality between men and women in achieving goals. But today, it is an inevitable reality that the contributions of women are not recognised properly by the mainstream history. In most cases, the historians side-track the contributions of women; even when they are acknowledged, the recognition is not accompanied by an extensive analysis. As a consequence of this token coverage, history displays a pattern of linearity due to patriarchal outlook. In the same vein, the womenfolk has also not been accorded due honour by the history of language movement. But the role of women in this movement ranged from that of housewives to member of constituent assembly. The womenfolk had discharged active roles in all relevant spheres.



Access of women everywhere was not an easy matter under a conservative state apparatus in the new land of Pakistan, which came into being in 1947 on the basis of religion. Even then, the women did not sit idle on the pretext of mere religion during the language movement that was launched in December 1947.

After the formation of the state language council, the female students of Dhaka University were given the responsibility of collecting funds for running the movement. Alongside discharging this responsibility, they carried out another important task purely out of alertness. While reminiscing, language movement veteran Rawshan Ara Bachchu said, "We went from house to house at that time. Most of the women were not job-holders. They gave us their ornaments, and those who had ability gave money. We used to convince them about the honour of mother language. We used to explain why making Bangla a state language was urgent for preserving our self-esteem. In this way, we built up awareness in favour of the slogan "We want state language Bangla". It was the principal reason why the masses had joined that movement spontaneously. She also said, "The girls often came to the processions by wearing Burqa because of resistance from their families. Once, a mother cut

(Continued to the next page)



پیوند اللغات الزخيم
PRIME MINISTER
GOVERNMENT OF THE PEOPLE'S
REPUBLIC OF BANGLADESH

Message

I extend my good wishes to the Bangla-speaking people 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 Bangali. On this day in 1952, many valiant sons of the soil, including Rafiq, Shafiq, Salam, Jabbar and Barkat, sacrificed their lives for protecting the dignity of the mother tongue.

I pay my deep homage to the memories of the martyrs. I also pay my deep respect to all language veterans, including the greatest Bangali of all time, Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, who had led the Language Movement from the forefront.

In 1948, State Language Movement Council was constituted comprising Tamuddin Majlish, Student League and other student bodies as per a proposal of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. The council called a general strike on 11 March to realise the demand for recognising Bangla as the state language. Bangabandhu along with a number of student leaders was arrested on the day from in front of the Secretariat. They were released on 15 March. The Father of the Nation chaired a public meeting at Amtola on the Dhaka University campus on 16 March. The movement spread all over the country.

On 11 September 1948, Bangabandhu was arrested from Faridpur. He was released on 21 January 1949. He was again detained on 19 April and released at the end of July. On 14 October, Bangabandhu was again arrested from Dhaka and confined to jail. 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 21 February, 1952 while breaking Section 144 imposed by the rulers.

The resonance of the pride of immortal Ekushey is now resounded in the hearts of the people of 193 countries surpassing the boundary of Bangladesh. The day has been reached to a new height when the UNESCO gave recognition to 21 February as the International Mother Language Day on 17 November 1999 at the initiative of the then Awami League government and with the help of some expatriate Bangladeshis, including Salam and Rafiq. The International Mother Language Day is now a source of inspiration to all people of the world in establishing the truth and justice.

We have taken initiative to make Bangla, spoken by about 25 crore people of the world, as one of the official languages of the United Nations. I have already placed the demand before the UNGA. We have established International Mother Language Institute to preserve the languages of the world and carry out research on those.

The greatest Ekushey is the symbol of our democratic values, Bangali nationalism, spirit of liberation struggle and secularism. Awami League government has relentlessly been working to develop the country being imbued with the spirit of the great Ekushey and liberation war.

During the last 8 years, our government achieved desired progress in all sectors. Bangladesh is now a 'Role Model' for development in the world. We will turn Bangladesh into a middle-income country by 2021 and a developed one by 2041, Insha Allah.

Let us join our hands with the spirit of the immortal Ekushey sinking all petty differences for the development of the country and upholding the democratic values. Let us build a non-communal, hunger-poverty free and happy-prosperous 'Sonar Bangla' as dreamt by the Father of the Nation.

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
Sheikh Hasina

The Digital Journey of Bangla

Mustafa Jabbar

A big challenge in the more-than-a-thousand-year history of the Bangla language and its alphabet was to use Bangla by machine. Until the machine age, the Bangla language, like all other systems of writing in the world, continued to flourish in the hand-written form. The ancient documents in Bangla were found in manuscripts. But since the machine age of Bangla started much later, and although the printing machines and typewriters were introduced in the whole world, we did not see Bangla enter the machine age.

Bangla Printing & Lead and Phototypesetter: Even before the printing with Gutenberg moveable types of Germany was started in 1454, various methods of printing had been in vogue. We come to learn from the history of Bangla printing that the task of making Bangla letters was very difficult and complex. It is a matter of sorrow for the Bangla printing that although the printing technology of Germany came to Goa in India in 1556, it came to Bengal in 1778. Apart from the delayed arrival of the printing machine, the challenge of creating Bangla letters was also very big. The British citizen "Wilem Boltson appointed some famous London artists in the task of creating a font of Bangla letters. But as the task of making Bangla types was very difficult, complex and expensive, Boltson's attempt did not proceed far" (Publication in Computer, 2nd edition, Mustafa Jabbar p. 41).

Although people speak of Boltson's success, he and Jackson were successful in their first step of creating Bangla letters. But the first book in Bangla was first printed with the alphabet designed by Charles Wilkins. To this was also an extraordinary contribution of a Bangali named Ponchanon Kormokar.

With the development of printing technology the multinational companies "Linotype" and "Monotype" worked for making Bangla letters until the age of phototypesetter. Specially as a result of Lino and monocasting machines being created by these two companies, the typographic backwardness of Bangla printing was almost over. In the same way, particularly the Linotype company developed the extraordinary beauty of the Bangla letters on their phototypesetter. However, it is good to remember that in the development of the Bangla typography the contribution of the Indian Anandabazar community and the British lady Fiona Ross was undeniable.

Bangla Typewriter: Although the typewriter for Roman letters was introduced in 1870, the Bangla typewriter was introduced in Bangladesh in 1972. In the light of the keyboard made by martyr Munir Chowdhury in 1969 the Optima Company of East Germany made the Optima Munir Typewriter and with the help of that typewriter the Bangladesh Government introduced Bangla in offices and courts. As the Remington company had the patent of the Roman keyboard, they made the Bangla typewriter and with this typewriter a weekly called "Jonomol" (Public Opinion) was known to have been published from London in the 1970s. The Bangla Department of Dhaka University also had a Remington Bangla typewriter. The Remington typewriter was also known to have been used in India. As the Pakistan government did not use Bangla in offices, it did not come to Dhaka from India.

Bangla and its Alphabet in Information Technology: The information so far received says that the first initiative for the use of Bangla in computer in Bangladesh was taken by Bangladesh Engineering University. As the former Head of the Department of Computer Science at Bangladesh Engineering University Syed Mahbubur Rahman stated in an article published in the newspaper "Bits" (April '88), his department initiated a research for the use of Bangla in computer. Later, stating the progress of the different phases of the research he

said, "We finished the work of making the electronic circuit in the second half of 1985 to demonstrate the letters of different width. The work of making keyboard and code was finished in 1986". According to Mr. Rahman's statement, they had finished everything to use Bangla in computer but what happened later was not known. Nobody could see that achievement of theirs (source: Muhammad Jalal, The Monthly 'Sanko', December 2004).

But as I know, the 'Shahidlipi' published in 1986 was the first Bangla software with which Bangla could be fully written in computer. It was the operating system of the Mackintosh Computer manufactured by the Apple Computer and the Bangla translation of the Application Program named MacWrite. Mr. Shahid first made Dot Matrix and then he also made the Bangla font of the laser printer. This software made by Saifuddin Shahid for the Mackintosh computer was marketed on 20 January 1984 and it was first used by NIMC (National Institute of Mass Communication).



However, today's system of using Bangla in computer was started on 16 May 1987 when I edited and published the weekly "Anandapatro" (Paper of Joy). I published "Anandapatro" in the Bankim Font made by Gautam Sen and Swati Bondopadhyaya of an Indian institution named Rahul Commerce which was situated in Kolkata, West Bengal and the Mynul Lipi edited by Syed Mynul Hasan. On my request Mr. Mynul Hasan made the Mynul Lipi according to the first two layers of the Munir keyboard (which was made by changing the keymapping of the Bankim font) and the third and fourth layers made by me.

In comparison with Charles Wilkins' Bangla letters and the excellent letters made by Anandabazar Community on the phototypesetter, the Bankim/Mynul Lipi font of Gautom-Swati or Mynul was utterly disappointing. The peculiar (or ugly) appearance of the only-300 DPI Laser printer font could not at all satisfy the hungry mind of the Bangalis. But surprisingly, the font expressed the Bangla Lipi almost undistortedly by using 188 codes on a 256-Code computer. Although the design was faulty and those letters lacked professionalism, printers and publishers were optimistic about the future to see the font.

Within only four months after that event I introduced my first font "Ananda". This font wonderfully overcame the faulty design of the Bankim font and soon became the vehicle of not only the weekly or monthly magazines but also of the daily newspapers. It was accepted by one of the ancient dailies "The Azad" and thus gave birth to a new history. It may be remembered that the designer of that font was Hamidul Islam.

But the birth of Bangla on the modern computer was in the real sense on 16 December 1988. I introduced the keyboard 'Bijoy' and the font "Tanni Sunanda" on that day. Thanks to Bijoy keyboard, I was able to use 220 letters instead of 188. As a result, the Bangla language appeared more pleasantly on the computer screen.

However, during this time many other attempts were made to use Bangla on the computer. Utilizing the graphics facility of the Mackintosh computer, Mahmud Hossain Raton and Dr. Muhammad Zafar Iqbal created fonts on it. Before the arrival of the Mackintosh computer of the Apple computer company a software called 'gutenberg' was available for computers of the Apple series and Bangla could be written on it. Hemayet Hossain, a Bangali who lives in Australia, also worked on the use of Bangla on the computer.

On the other hand, softwares like 'Doan Jan', 'Aboho', 'Borno', 'Onirban' and so on revealed themselves on PC under Doss. As PCs were used in almost all offices and courts, these softwares of the typewriter standard were used at these places until 1993. On the other hand, since the printing quality did not go with the quality of the written documents, a monopoly of Bijoy-Mackintosh was going on in printing, publications, periodicals and newspapers. In fact, before the introduction of Bijoy Keyboard and Software on PC windows on 26 March 1993, there was a clear difference between Mack Bangla and PC Bangla. PCs were not usually used in printing and publications. But the 'Bijoy' on windows broke down the dividing line like the Berlin Wall. The same font, the same keyboard, the same way of writing Bangla and even the same encoding bridged the gap between the Mack and PC. After the introduction of Bangla on Mack and Windows, Bangla was also available on free O.S. Linux. Later on, in the new century the Unicode encoding installed ASCII specially on the internet and through a gradual evolution the Unicode encoding of Bangla became useable from its 4th edition and by the end of 2004 it accepted our Bijoy Unicode as a different encoding system.

In the present world both the traditional ASCII encoding of Bijoy and the Unicode encoding are in use. Bangladesh government, on the basis of Unicode, has declared BDS 1520 : 2011 to be a standard. On 23 February 2012 a request was made to people to follow this standard in a meeting of Bangla Language Standardization Committee. The new edition of Bijoy also supports this standard. In the mean time Bijoy has supported all the operating systems. Side by side with this expansion of Bijoy some other softwares were born including 'Ovro' for the use of Roman letters in the Unicode system and "Mayabi" and "Rhythmic" for Android smartphones. The institutions like Google, Apple and Microsoft also introduced the input method and font for Bangla writing in the Unicode system. It is worth mentioning that we could not present the Indian attempts to apply Bangla in the information technology. Although the Bangladeshi softwares like Bijoy and Ovro are used in India, Bangladesh has no connection with their own keyboard and font.

Crisis of Bangla in IT and its Solution: Although we have attained an equality of the use of Bangla and its alphabet with many other languages of the world in the field of information technology in the very first quarter of the 21st century, we have still much more to do for Bangla. Specially, the Bangla language and Bangla letters have not yet been able to achieve the abilities that have been achieved by the Roman letters and languages associated with them. The tasks we are yet to do include correcting Bangla spelling and grammar, converting speech into writing and vice versa, reading the internet screen, making a standard Bangla keyboard, building a Bangla corpus, creating an optical character reader and adding many other technological facilities to Bangla language and letters. Unfortunately, even so long

(Continued to the next page)