



HOMAGE TO LANGUAGE MARTYRS

"Ekushey" or the 21st of February is the day when the Bangalees rose up and shed first blood against the tyranny of Pakistan in 1952. The word "Ekushey" has ever since become a synonym for standing up for rights. Bangalees on this day gather at Shaheed Minars to pay their solemn tribute to the language martyrs who made supreme sacrifice to establish the right to speak in own mother tongue. The day is also observed as International Mother Language Day around the world to protect all mother languages. On the day yesterday, every stratum of the society including students, family members of the language martyrs, injured freedom fighters, speaker of Jatiya Sangsad, socio-political and cultural organisations, vice chancellors of universities, eminent personalities, foreign diplomats, armed forces and police paid homage to the martyrs. The photos were taken from Central Shaheed Minars in the capital and the port city.

PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ, RASHED SHUMON, PALASH KHAN, COLLECTED



Heroes honoured

STAR REPORT

Bare-footed, wearing black and white and holding flowers, thousands of people from all walks of life thronged the Central Shaheed Minar in the capital and elsewhere of the country to pay homage to the Language Movement heroes yesterday.

On February 21, 1952, students and people from all walks of life took to the streets in Dhaka to protest the erstwhile Pakistan government's refusal to recognise Bangla as one of the state languages and imposition of Urdu as the only official language of Pakistan.

Salam, Barkat, Rafiq, Shafiur, Jabbar and a few others were killed when police opened fire on their procession.

Unesco in 1999 declared February 21 as the International Mother Language Day. The day is

being observed worldwide since then.

Yesterday in the capital, people had started gathering at the Shaheed Minar before the midnight.

President Abdul Hamid and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina led the nation in paying the homage by placing wreaths at the Central Shaheed Minar at the first minute of the day, reports UNB.

They stood in solemn silence for some time as a mark of profound respect to the memories of the heroes.

In Chittagong city, the day was observed with placing floral wreaths at the Central Shaheed Minar.

People from all spheres of life including politicians and members of different socio-cultural organisations took part in the "Probat Pheri" (procession).

Housing and Public Works Minister Engineer Mosharraf

Hossain, State Minister for Land Saifuzzaman Chowdhury Javed, Chittagong City Corporation Mayor AJM Nasir Uddin and Chittagong City BNP Acting President Abu Sufian, among others, offered flowers, reports our Chittagong correspondent.

Teachers and students of Chittagong University also observed the day by placing flowers at the Shaheed Minar on the campus.

In Gazipur, several hundred people in Shreepur upazila marked the day through placing wreaths at an age-old Shaheed Minar in Kewa Bazar area.

They urged the authorities concerned to renovate the Shaheed Minar and expand its premises, reports our Gazipur correspondent.

Meanwhile, Cadet College Club Limited marked the day with arranging special programmes and a book fair at its premises in the capital's

Gulshan, says a press release.

In Nilphamari, two rival groups of Jubo League locked in a clash in Kishoreganj upazila, allegedly over offering floral wreaths, leaving two activists injured.

Witnesses said the factions engaged in a clash with arms and sharp weapons at the Shaheed Minar premises around midnight after the announcer called one group to pay homage before the other.

As the police intervened, both the factions left the venue chanting slogans, reports our Nilphamari correspondent.

Bazlur Rashid, officer-in-charge of Kishoreganj Police Station, said the situation could not deteriorate as the police brought it under control.

In Patuakhali, miscreants ransacked a makeshift Shaheed Minar

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

The heart beats for Bangla

MATHEWS CHIRAN

Areza Tamiha got up early yesterday morning.

Excited, the second grader got ready quickly. She wore a black and white dress with Bangla alphabet imprinted on it, which her mother had given her.

Areza wanted to head out right away. Her mother, Ferdousi Akter, assured her that they would spend the whole day together.

In the morning, the family went to the Central Shaheed Minar to pay their tributes to the language martyrs.

Not just them, yesterday people from all walks of life paid homage to the Language Movement martyrs, who laid down their lives for the recognition of Bangla as a state language on the day in 1952.

their spirits.

The Bangla Academy and Suhrawardy Udyan premises were crowded as people who came to pay respect at Shaheed Minar also dropped by to buy books. The crowd kept on growing larger as the day rolled on. Book sales too shot up yesterday.

Children were seen running around cheerily, requesting their parents to buy books for them while their parents were also busy picking their own favourites.

"I went to the Shaheed Minar first to pay respect...", said Areza, whom this correspondent met at the book fair.

Her mother, Ferdousi Akter, said, "My daughter knows the history of the Language Movement. I made sure she knew about the sacrifices the language heroes made."

Protect dignity of Bangla: PM

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday put utmost importance to greater practice and use of mother tongue Bangla as it is one of the world's richest languages earned through the sacrifice of blood.

"We had to shed blood to protect the dignity of our language. We have earned international recognition of this language which is a matter of pride. We must not forget the practice and the use of Bangla," she said while inaugurating a four-day-long Amar Ekushey programme arranged by International Mother Language Institute (IMLI) on the institute premises in the capital's Segunbagicha.

The prime minister said the Bangalee nation will have to maintain its tradition and everything it has in its culture.

Ekushey means not to bow down to anyone, she said. "Following the path of Ekushey, we attained our independence."

Hasina mentioned that to destroy a nation, conspirators always strike its culture, language and literature. "The Pakistani rulers did the same."

Greeting the Bangla-speaking people across the globe and other small linguistic groups on the occasion of the International Mother Language Day, the prime minister said the international recognition of February 21 is a matter of great pride for the people of

Bangladesh who set an example of supreme sacrifice to protect the dignity of their mother language.

She paid rich tributes to the martyrs of the Language Movement and recalled the memories of the movement veterans as well as Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, who also had played a significant role in organising the Language Movement in 1952.

The premier said her government established the IMLI in Dhaka, creating facilities for researchers from home and abroad to conduct their research on mother languages.

Secretary of the Ministry of National Coexistence, Dialogue and Official Languages of Sri Lanka WMPG Wickramasinghe presented the keynote paper at the programme with Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid in the chair.

State Minister for Technical and Madrasa Education Division Kazi Keramat Ali, IMLI Director General Prof Dr Jinnat Imtiaz Ali, Head and Representative of Unesco in Dhaka office Beatrice Kaldun and Secondary and Higher Education Division Secretary Sohrab Hossain also spoke on the occasion.

At the beginning of the discussion, a one-minute silence was observed as a mark of profound respect to the memories of the martyrs of the Language Movement.

Settle Teesta issue as promised

Obaidul Quader urges India

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader yesterday urged India to settle the Teesta river water sharing deal before the next general election in Bangladesh.

He said Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi had assured of resolving the Teesta issue by the end of the current parliament tenure of both India and Bangladesh.

"We're still hoping for a solution. With seven to eight months in hand ahead of the national polls...", the minister said urging a quick solution to the Teesta issue.

Quader, also Awami League general secretary, sought steps to convince the West Bengal chief minister to work positively with New Delhi on the issue.

He was addressing the closing session of Bangladesh-India Media Dialogue-2018 at Radisson Blu hotel as the chief guest.

"We want to further strengthen our ties with India and media can play a very strong

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1



The Amar Ekushey Granthamela saw a huge rush yesterday. Visitors after paying tribute to language heroes thronged the book fair. The photo was taken in front of the "Moder Garob" sculpture at Bangla Academy.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Humming "Amar Bhaiyer Raktey Rangano Ekushey February...", thousands thronged the Shaheed Minar from the early hours.

The Ekushey spirit surrounded the Amar Ekushey Granthamela too. Imbued with it, people started visiting the book fair since morning. Even the tight security and long queues at the venue gates did not dampen

She bought books by Muhammed Zafar Iqbal for her. "I always encourage her to read Bangla books," said the mother.

Yesterday, the book fair was aglow with the Ekushey spirit.

"I bought a science book. In the morning, my family and I also placed a wreath at the Shaheed Minar," said eighth grader

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1