

# Language is the bridge

## People from Bangladesh, West Bengal observe Ekushey at Benapole, Hili

STAR COUNTRY DESK

It was a different day at Benapole no-man's land as thousands of emotion-filled people from Bangladesh and India, carrying banners, festoons and placards, gathered there to mark Language Martyrs' Day and International Mother Language Day yesterday.

Away on Hili border under Hakimpur upazila of Dinajpur, nationals of Bangladesh and India jointly observed the day at zero point.

Border Guard Bangladesh and Border Security Force of India greeted each other with flowers at Benapole, where a makeshift Shaheed Minar was erected to pay homage to the martyrs of the 1952 Language Movement, reports our Benapole correspondent.

Distinguished guests from India and Bangladesh placed flowers at the temporary Shaheed Minar on no man's land at 9:00am.

People of both countries donated blood at the function.

"I have come here to respond to the call of the mother tongue. I'm overwhelmed to see the friendly people of both countries observing the day together. The Language Movement led to the independence of Bangladesh," said West Bengal Food Minister Jyotipriyo Mallick.

The people of this soil had set a rare example of sacrificing their lives for their mother tongue, Indian poet Shirshendu Mukhopadhyay said.

He hoped that such a gathering would bring the people of the two neighbouring countries closer.

The nation will remember the heroes of the soil who sacrificed their lives to establish Bangla as the state language, said Pijush Kanti Bhattacharya, presidium member of Awami League.

Artistes from Bangladesh and India rendered

songs at the function.

Our Dinajpur Correspondent reports: Nationals of Bangladesh and India jointly observed International Language Day at zero point of Hili border under Hakimpur upazila of the district yesterday.

Hakimpur unit of Bangladesh Muktijoddha Sangsad Command and Teor Ujjiban Society of Dakkhin Dinajpur of West Bengal in India jointly organised the programme. A temporary Shaheed Minar was also built there to mark the day.

Minister of Primary and Mass Education Ministry Mostafizur Rahman attended the programme as the chief guest.

A 10-member team from India, led by Suraj Das, secretary of Teor Ujjiban Society, came to Bangladesh territory at around 10:00am yesterday. Upazila Muktijoddha Sangsad Commander Liakat Ali, and Jamil Hossain Chalanta, mayor of Hakimpur municipality, gave them a warm reception. Later, they jointly placed flowers at the makeshift Shaheed Minar after hoisting the Bangladesh national flag.

"February 21 is a proud achievement of Bangladesh because it is being celebrated across the globe every year as International Mother Language Day," Minister Mostafizur Rahman said.

Suraj Das in his speech urged the people of the two neighbouring countries to observe the day with due respect.

Liakat, who chaired the meeting, said such programmes marking the day should be arranged every year so that a large number of people of India and Bangladesh can attend.

The programme ended with a vibrant cultural show performed by the artistes of Bangladesh and India.

Cross-border trade through the Hili Land port remained closed yesterday.



Participants hold the national flags of Bangladesh and India at a programme with people from the two neighbouring countries on Benapole border marking International Mother Language Day yesterday. PHOTO: STAR

## Mystery shrouds death of college boy

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

Mystery shrouds the death of a college boy in Debiganj upazila of Panchagarh on Tuesday.

The deceased, Al Rafiu Rafi, 22, son of Mominul Haque Prodhan of Mistripara in the upazila, was a first-year honours student at Sayedpur Degree College in Nilphamari.

On suspicion, police detained deceased's two friends Ibrahim Bepari, 22, son of Kamal Bepari of Patwarypara, and Sharif Khan, 22, son of Shahabuddin Khan of Munshipara, the same evening. Officer-in-Charge of Debiganj Police Station Md Aminul Islam said.

Quoting deceased's family members, police said Rafi and his friends Ibrahim and Sharif went for a boat ride in the Karatoa river near Maynamoti Char around 4:00pm on Tuesday.

While returning home, Rafi stepped down to the river bank to bring the boat back to the shore as the boatman was nowhere near at that moment.

After stepping a couple of yards Rafi suddenly slipped into the river and drowned, police said, adding, his two friends could not save him as they didn't know how to swim.

Hearing screams, a local fisherman rescued Rafi before his two friends took him to Debiganj Upazila Health Complex where the doctors declared him dead.

Upazila Health Officer Dr Hasinur Rahman said no injury mark was found on the deceased's body.

## Schoolgirls take freehand self-defence training

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Faridpur

Fifty girl students of Gerda AF Mujibur Rahman Secondary School in Sadar upazila of the district have been taking month-long training in self-defence to protect themselves from harassment by stalkers.

"It is a unique step for protecting the girls," said Kulsum Begum, 30, a housewife of Kafura village in the upazila. She heard about it from her daughter, who is a student of Class X and is taking the training, she added.

"I am taking this training to protect myself and also my friends from stalkers," said Anju Akter, a Class X student.

"It takes 35 minutes to reach the school from my house on foot, so I think this training will help me to protect myself," said, Aisha Akter, a Class IX student.

"Three stalkers had teased me two months ago while I was going to school. Now I can protest against it as I am taking this training," Said Hima Akter, another Class IX student.

"AF Mujibur Rahman Foundation has been giving financial support for this training. We urge our girl students to take part so that they can protect themselves from stalkers. The training started on February 18 and runs for two hours after classes," headmaster Nazrul Islam said.

He added that it will encourage parents to send their daughters to school.

"My daughter is a Class X student. It takes 30 minutes to walk from our house to the school, so I think the training will be very helpful for her," said Rabeya Begum, 40, of Bilmamudpur village.

"We have arranged this training for girls as they have been facing different kind of problems on the way to school. We are giving training to 50 students and we will train more students in future," said Mahfuzur Rahman, coordinator of AF Mujibur Rhaman Foundation.

*"Three stalkers had teased me two months ago while I was going to school. Now I can protest against it as I am taking this training," said Hima Akter, a Class IX student.*

## AMAR EKUSHEY OBSERVANCE IN DISTRICTS



From top, people pay homage to the Language Movement martyrs at Mymensingh central Shaheed Minar, children take part in an art competition on the premises of a Shaheed Minar at Gaibandha, and students and teachers of Adarsha Muslimpara Nurani Hafizia Madrasa at Chandpur take part in a procession on the Language Martyrs' Day and International Mother Language Day yesterday. PHOTO: STAR



People who can speak, left, maintain solemn silence for 21 minutes, sitting opposite to a row of speech impaired people at Handial Bazar in Pabna's Chatmohar upazila yesterday. Gen YZ, a youth and cultural organisation, arranged the programme marking the Language Martyrs' Day and International Mother Language Day. PHOTO: STAR

## Sharing the feelings of speech impaired people

### Those with natural ability observe 21-minute silence along with the challenged ones on Int'l Mother Language Day

AHMED HUMAYUN KABIR TOPU, Pabna

Twenty-one people who can speak kept silent yesterday along with 21 speech disabled people to feel the struggle of those who cannot speak because of their disability.

Gen YZ, a youth and cultural organisation of Handial, organised the programme to observe Language Martyrs' Day and International Mother Language Day yesterday.

People from all walks of life joined the programme.

"The experience of keeping silent for 21 minutes made me realise the sorrows of the speech disabled people," said Ram Prasad Mahato after observing 21 minutes silence along

with speech disabled people at Handial Bazar in Pabna's Chatmohar upazila.

Twenty-one normal people sat with 21 speech disabled people in front of RN Plaza at Handial Bazar to observe 21 minutes silence on the occasion of Language Martyrs' Day and International Mother Language Day.

"Through this programme we are trying to honour speech impaired people and feel their sorrow," organiser of the event Humayun Kabir said.

As they cannot speak, they cannot share their feelings with others, which is sorrowful for them, he added. He demanded recognition of sign lan-

guage to help them.

A discussion programme held on the occasion was addressed, among others, by Faridpur upazila Awami League secretary Ali Ashrafur Kabir, journalist Helalur Rahman Jewel, Chatmohar business community president Belal Hossain Shwapan and freedom fighter Golzar Hossain.

The speakers highlighted the spirit of the Language Movement.

Bangalees established the right of the mother language through the movement and are proud of that, the speakers said. Militancy can be abolished from the society if the spirit of the movement is upheld, they said.