



Galleries in the Language Movement Museum remain empty for the most part.

PHOTOS:  
KAZI TAHSIN AGAZ APURBO

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The original press release issued by the Dhaka University Central Students Union (DUCSU) protesting Jinnah's proclamation, rare photos of Dhaka University students preparing to break Section 144 on February 21, 1952, photos of the first Shaheed Minar and the mourning processions remembering the sacrifice of the language martyrs, all reflect the fiery spirit of the language movement. A movement that shook the entire country and forced the Pakistani rulers to ultimately recognise Bengali as the state language.

The museum also has a rich archive which contains some precious historical

documents that give day to day descriptions of the language movement.

Among these, some of the notable documents are—a diary of Tajuddin Ahmed in which events related to the language movement were vividly described; cartoons drawn by Murtaza Bashir depicting the language movement and the police brutality; weekly magazine 'Sainik' and 'Naobelal' which elaborately covered the events of the language movement, pages of the first published Bengali book, a standard Bengali calendar devised by Dr Muhammad Shahidullah; manuscripts of poems written by renowned poets such as Mahbub Ul Alam Chowdhury and Alauddin Al Azad; the first bulletin published in a clandestine

press on the evening of February 21, 1952 protesting the police action against the language activists which contains articles written by Hasan Hafizur Rahman, Fazle Lohani, Alauddin Al Azad etc. These documents have been stored chronologically—from 1948 to 1952—which give a complete picture of the language movement.

The museum remains open from 10am to 4:30pm on all working days. However, in the last 10 years very few people have actually seen the rich collection. When we entered the museum, we found nobody except those journalists who were desperately trying to find and interview a visitor. The galleries of the museum were occupied by several children of the Bangla Academy staff who were playing hide and seek using the curtains and display tables. Thanks to glass protected tables and perhaps due to its isolated nature, the artefacts are still intact, although they remain unguarded throughout the day with its only occupants being children.

Saera Habib, assistant director, department of museum, folklore and archive, Bangla Academy says, "We have been planning to expand the museum. Families of the language martyrs want to give us more artefacts but we cannot accept those because of space shortage. We also have manpower shortage in this department. Since it's a very busy month, due to Ekushey Book Fair, our new director will sit with us regarding the expansion of this museum in the next month."

Habibullah Siraji, director general of Bangla Academy also agreed that this museum is neglected and promised better maintenance in the future. "I have joined Bangla Academy less than a month ago. After the Ekushey Book Fair, I shall definitely look into this matter and take every step to expand, publicise and protect this museum."

We never forget to take pride in the fact that we staged one of the first movements to establish our nation's ethno-cultural rights, but it is truly unfortunate that we have forgotten to preserve and share the artefacts of that historic movement.

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Biography of language martyr Shafiur Rahman.



Family photos of language martyr Shafiur Rahman.