



Clockwise from top: Children, wearing colourful outfits, flag bandanas hold up cutouts of Bangla letters at Sylhet Central Shaheed Minar; members of Chattogram Charu O Karu Shilpi Sangathan bring a wreath in the shape of a monument itself at Chattogram Central Shaheed Minar; a little girl adds flower petals on a map of Bangladesh at Barishal Central Shaheed Minar; police personnel buy small flower bouquets at Dhaka Central Shaheed Minar; members of the diplomatic core place floral wreaths at the Dhaka Central Shaheed Minar in the first hour of February 21.

PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR, RAJIB RAIHAN, TITU DAS, RASHED SHUMON, SK ENAMUL HAQ



Rich homage to language martyrs

STAR REPORT

The nation yesterday observed Amar Ekushey and International Mother Language Day in a befitting manner, paying rich tribute to the Language Movement heroes for their supreme sacrifice for Bangla as state language.

Maintaining health guidelines, hundreds of people in bare-foot and wearing black througed Central Shaheed Minar in the capital and placed floral wreaths at the monument.

They stood silent in remembrance of the heroes who embraced martyrdom in 1952.

The day was also observed across the globe as Unesco in 1999 recognised February 21 as International Mother Language Day.

Taking part in different programmes, including discussions and cultural sessions across the country and in Bangladesh missions abroad, people reminisced the sacrifice made by the Language Movement martyrs.

President Abdul Hamid and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina paid rich tributes to the Language Movement heroes in the first minute of the day.

On behalf of the president, his military secretary Maj Gen SM Salahuddin Islam placed a floral wreath at the Shaheed Minar.

The PM's military secretary Maj Gen Naquib Ahmed Chowdhury placed a floral wreath on her behalf.

In his message, President Hamid said Ekushey is a unique remembrance in protecting mother tongue as well as own culture and heritage, reports UNB.

"I firmly believe that observing International Mother Language Day will play a positive role in the development and preservation of our own language as well as building a sustainable future through multilingual education," he said.

In her message, the prime minister said, "We've established the right to language and in the same spirit, we've achieved our independence. In the last 12 years, we've made tremendous progress in every area of the socio-economic sector of the country, embracing that particular ethos and the logos of the Father of the Nation. Bangladesh is a role model of development in the world today."

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Children of Rasulpur build their own Shaheed Minars

SUSHANTA GHOSH, Barishal

In line with its tradition for the last couple of years, school children from Barishal city's Rasulpur Char wrapped the area with Language Day fervour by constructing 30 Shaheed Minars.

As part of a competition, the children handmade the replica monuments with brick, wood, bamboo, paper, and 10 even with Banana trees! The pieces were later exhibited by the competition's organisers Samajtantrik Chatrafront Barishal district and city units.

This unique way of paying homage to the Language Martyrs has been running for the last seven years, said Rejwan, one of the organisers.

Dr Manisha Chakraborty, another organiser, said around two thousand people live in the area, but most of them are too poor to spend money on entertainment or tributes.



For seven years, Rasulpur Char dresses up for Ekushey February when its children build their own replica Shaheed Minars with local materials. This year, they made 30! This photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: TITU DAS

FEBRUARY 21 Diplomats mark the occasion at home, abroad

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Call for building inclusive and multicultural societies is growing strong globally as International Mother Language Day, which was proclaimed by Unesco in 1999 in recognition of Bangladesh's 1952 Language Movement, was observed yesterday.

As observed by people of all walks of life in Bangladesh, the day was celebrated across the globe with vigour by Bangladesh embassies, Bangla-speaking people, and at foreign missions in Bangladesh.

The day this year bears special significance given the Covid-19 pandemic that has largely affected education, and the 50th anniversary of Bangladesh's independence, the seed of which was planted through the 1952 Language Movement.

"This year's observance is a call on policymakers, educators and teachers, parents and families to scale up their commitment to multilingual education, and inclusion in education to advance education recovery in the context of Covid-19," says Unesco.

Members of Diplomatic Core, including Vatican Ambassador Archbishop George Kocherry, US

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Withstanding the test of time

Storied history of Shaheed Minar at Cumilla Victoria College

KHALID BIN NAZRUL, Cumilla

For the unassuming, Cumilla Victoria Govt College's Shaheed Minar may seem like a customary tribute to the Language Movement. That the monument itself has been a battleground between the region's people and the then East Pakistan administration is thus a history worth retelling.

It's a history that ran for quite a long time too -- from February 21, 1953 all the way up to 1962, and then again during the Liberation War. In this time, the site has seen quite a few iterations.

According to college records, the monument was demolished at least thrice from 1953 to 1962, all in the dark of the night. Finally in 1963, the present form of the black pillar of the Shaheed Minar was built, before it was taken down again in 1971 and re-erected the following year.

Local historians inform that the first temporary Shaheed Minar was built at the college premises at Ranirdighirpar on February 21, 1953. On the day, students and residents of the city offered floral tributes at the Shaheed Minar and sang protest songs against the continuing oppression of the Pakistani administration.

Ahsanul Kabir, a historian of the district, said, "According to Language Movement veteran Mohammad Ullah, locals and eminent personalities gathered at the Victoria College programme in '53. Renowned anthem singer Sukhendri Chakraborty, Farida Mirza, sister-in-law of Shaheed Munier Choudhury; Saleha Khatun, wife of Bangla film director Salahuddin; and Fatema Khayer, wife of Prof Abul Khayer, were there to sing the protest



The Shaheed Minar at the government college stands in defiant pride, after being demolished and rebuilt a number of times.

PHOTO: STAR

songs."

As the programme was going on, members of the student wing of Muslim League tried to foil it with the help of police. Then college principal Dr Akter Hamid Khan took a bold stance to fend them off.

The college saw its first permanent Shaheed Minar on 1954, but an Ekushey February programme still had to wait for a couple more years. On February 20, police imposed section 144 to prevent any such event from taking place, Kabir said.

The next day, activists did break the curfew and gathered at Cumilla Town hall, but their rally towards the monument was intercepted by a barricade at Liberty Mor (then "Picture Palace").

The programme could not be observed for the next two years too, as in both 1954 and 1956, most of the language activists were in jail, historian Ahsanul Kabir said. Following this, a few years of relative peace ensued.

"On February 21, 1971, Chhatra League members painted alphas and Bangla alphabets at the Shaheed Minar premises for the first time," he added.

But as the war broke out, the iconic structure again became a site of contention. In an urgency to crush the locals' spirit, the Pakistan army in 1971 ordered to demolish the Shaheed Minar. In an attempt to save the monument, the then principal of the college, Dr Sirajul Islam, proceeded

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Food safety top priority

LAW DESK

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, while addressing a programme recently marking National Food Safety Day-2021, stressed the need for taking effective actions against food adulteration.

This year's theme of the day is "Bangladesh: A country of sustainable prosperity and safe food".

The premier urged the National Food Safety Authority to be proactive in tackling food adulteration and conduct awareness campaigns.

She also mentioned that a central food testing laboratory is being set up.

The issue of food safety has received significant attention in recent times -- the High Court Division, in the recent years, has issued orders to relevant stakeholders directing them to take stringent actions against food adulteration.

Mobile courts have been particularly active in this regard and have been seen to conduct inspections of restaurants and stores.

The government also has in place the Food Safety Act of 2013 under which complaints may be made to the Food Court regarding violation of the provisions of the act.

Another significant legislation relevant in this regard is the Consumer Rights Protection Act 2009 under which both civil and criminal remedies are available.

The Bangladesh Standards & Testing Institution (BSTI) Act of 2018 is also significant in this regard.

In 2019, the High Court Division issued orders directing the National Food Safety Authority to remove certain products for not meeting requirements under the BSTI Act 2018 and urged the government to declare a "war on food adulteration".

However, despite having laws in place, food adulteration remains a rampant issue, raising the need for concerted efforts on all fronts. Public awareness regarding the impact of adulterated food on health is crucial in reducing the prevalence of these practices.



A seller holds up two geese he brought to the weekly haat at Tongi yesterday, where poultry birds and pigeons, inset, are in high demand among buyers. Each geese weighing between four to five kg, sells for Tk 1500-2000.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Road crashes kill 2 in Dhaka

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two persons were killed in road accidents in the capital's airport and Shyampur areas early yesterday.

The deceased are Mohammad Kibria (16), a motor mechanic from Uttarkhan, and Kabul (25), a bus helper, said police.

Kibria and his friend Sumon were returning home when a truck hit their motorcycle around 1am near the airport, said Sub-inspector Saiful Islam of Airport Police Station.

With critical injuries, pillion Kibria was rushed to Dhaka Medical College Hospital where doctors declared him dead, he said.

Sumon received minor injuries, said police.

Meanwhile, Kabul was hit by a waste-carrying covered-van while crossing a road in Shyampur's New Iron Road area on Saturday night.

He was rushed to DMCH where doctors declared him dead around 12:15am yesterday, said SI Samares Kumar Das of Shyampur Police Station.

Both bodies were kept at the hospital morgue for autopsy.