



## Vibrant hues and timely demands

International Day of World's Indigenous Peoples observed at Central Shaheed Minar

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FAHIN RAHMAN AUNGKITA

“We have our own mother tongue, our own music, and a culture we dearly cherish. Why should we call ourselves by anything other than our own identity?” asked Henri Clara Tripura who came in the early hours of the morning wearing her traditional Tripuri dress to celebrate the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples 2022.

On the morning of August 9, the premises of the Central Shaheed Minar was filled with a diverse group of people from indigenous communities from all over Bangladesh. The group wore their traditional attires, wielding banners that shared messages of their existential crises, the rights they are deprived of, and the bare minimum demands they

seek so that they can call this land their own.

Uplifting everyone's spirits, indigenous band, Madol took to stage and made everyone sing along to “Ami adivasi” and expressed solidarity through their melodious songs.

“We shall call the indigenous people what they are: the indigenous people of Bangladesh,” asserted Rashed Khan Menon MP, in his speech.

When Sanjeeb Drong of Bangladesh Indigenous Peoples Forum (BIPF) addressed the protesting audience, igniting a fire amidst all of these individuals from the different corners of Bangladesh. A distinguished panel of speakers then took turns voicing their opinions on the rights of the indigenous people in Bangladesh.

Also present among the speakers were distinguished playwright Mamunur Rashid; Rashed Khan Menon MP; former Minister of Information, Hasanul Haq Inu; Fazle Hossain Badsha MP, and many more.

Academics, journalists, activists, and representatives from different human rights organisations showed solidarity alongside activists such as Khushi Kabir; Shahin Anam from Manusher Jonno Foundation; indigenous leader Anna Minj; Chandra Tripura; Dr Zobaida Nasreen Kona; Dr Mesbah Kamal; Nadira Parvin from Nagorik Uddyog, and many others.

The honoured guest, indigenous leader Basanti Murmu then sang a song

of peace and harmony in her mother tongue, sweeping everybody into a trance.

The presiding speech was delivered by Jyotirindra Bodhipriya Larma.

While the bold voices had their own individual statements, they all emphasised the same cause in hopes of recognising an identity for the indigenous groups of our country. The speakers envisioned a day when this internationally certified occasion would be celebrated with grandiose nationally, and when development would take place in the form of rights that have been long overdue.

The cultural segment of the programme brought with it a flurry of colours, with dance groups from different indigenous communities of Bangladesh putting forward a vibrant display of their traditional festival dance performances. The performances included the Wangala festival of the Garos, Baha festival of the Saontals, and

the Jhum cultivation of the Marmas depicted through dances. Everyone in the crowd were captivated by the performances and grooved to the cultural dances in glee. While all the hopeful words and cultural unity was

observed in a spirited manner, the question remains of how far the implementation will go.

“The indigenous communities look forward to this day every year. And the speeches enlist all the legitimate demands we have every year. However, it is limited to just that. We were allowed to be indigenous once and now suddenly we are being told we can't use the word 'indigenous'. We don't ask for much, and all we ask for are our basic rights,” said Aung Swe Sing Marma, a volunteer at the program yesterday.

The programme concluded with a radiant rally comprising of all the different groups who had come from near and afar to celebrate this wonderful day. The programme was arranged by Bangladesh Indigenous Peoples Forum (BIPF) aka Bangladesh Adivasi Forum.



## Kashful Foundation's efforts to enact SDGs in Bangladesh

AKHLAKUR RAHMAN

Rafid Ariyan, a student of North South University founded Kashful Foundation back in 2017 with a small dream of contributing to the skills development of children. The initial idea behind Kashful Foundation was to arrange fun and engaging events, alongside materials that would aid children in developing their intellect, skills, and mental health.

Since then, the non-profit organisation has been focusing on four Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) namely: SDG 4



organisation working to establish SDGs in Bangladesh.”

“Amongst the four development goals, we are especially focusing on SDG 4.7, which promotes education for sustainable development and global citizenship,” shared the social activist. “We are making creative content which will increase social awareness for multiple issues and reduce inequality.”

Back in 2021, Kashful foundation participated in a social welfare competition called Equality Award 2021, organised by Plan International Bangladesh, and received the “Equality Award 2021”.

“That competition was focused on preventing misinformation and

disinformation,” shared Rafid. “At that time, we created a website named ‘Online Equality Heroes’ featuring web-comics promoting social awareness. Just in three months, we managed to reach over a million netizens and received quite a good response.”

The organisation also bagged the “Youth Connects Youth” digital campaign competition organised by Activista Bangladesh in 2021.

“Our digital campaign for that competition was named Decent Work Warrior,” said the founder. “Using our ‘education through entertainment’ strategy, we created comics featuring contextual knowledge of labour laws, and a

decent work environment to raise awareness.”

The “Decent Warrior” project is active under the joint efforts of Kashful Foundation and Activista Bangladesh.

Kashful Foundation also initiated the “Learn2Protect” project aiming to reduce inequality and protect child rights. “We are especially focusing on the madrasas through this project,” noted Rafid. “The members of Kashful Foundation visited multiple schools under this project holding workshops and seminars.”

“These workshops and seminars were created with the intent to raise awareness concerning sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), bullying, and child protection through a variety of games and activities,” shared Rafid Ariyan.

Recently, Kashful Foundation has also participated in this year's Digital Khichuri Challenge 2022 (DKC) and won the North South University Cohort. “Our idea of creating social awareness through animations was well received by the DKC preliminary selection round,” remarked Rafid, adding, “Next is the national round where all the cohort winners would compete. Right now we are adamant about giving our best at the finals.”



(Provide Quality Education), SDG 5 (Gender Equality), SDG 10 (Reduce Inequality), and SDG 16 (Peace Justice and Strong Institution).

“We started out with a relatively small initiative to help our society,” said Rafid, adding, “Somehow we ended up becoming a versatile

