

Must embrace all indigenous languages
Urges UN special rapporteur on minority issues

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

UN Special Rapporteur on minority issues, Fernand de Varennes, has called for the states to be more inclusive in the treatment and use of minority and indigenous languages.



In a statement marking International Mother Language Day yesterday, he said languages are essential tools to communicate and share knowledge, memory, and history, but they are also key to full and equal participation.

"One of the most effective ways of empowering minorities and indigenous peoples is to guarantee the use of their language in education -- particularly as medium of instruction -- as long as it is practical, and to provide public services and employment opportunities in these languages."

Fernand de Varennes said language rights are also important human rights matters for both minorities and indigenous peoples.

"Special Rapporteurs, including my own mandate, SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

A new hope for Manipuri script

Language centres in Moulvibazar working to preserve history of Manipuri language



PHOTO: STAR

Children taking lessons in Manipuri script and alphabets at a language centre in Moulvibazar.

MINTU DESHWARA

Moulvibazar district has one of the largest Manipuri communities in the country. While everyone in the community can speak Manipuri, the language's script and alphabets were at risk of extinction.

However, that has changed in the last eight years after the non-governmental organisation Ethnic Community Development Organization (ECDO) established the first Manipuri Language Center (MLC) in 2015 at Bhanubil Majhergaon village -- where there is a large Manipuri community -- in Kamalganj upazila of the district.

Thounaojam Lakshmiakanta Singh, executive director of ECDO, said under the project funded by a donor agency in Norway, activities are currently going on at three MLCs in the Manipuri-dominated areas of Alinagar and Adampur

union in Kamalganj.

At these centres, Manipuri students from classes 1 to 5 receive education on the Manipuri alphabet and language six days a week.

The response among the community has been immense. Each centre was supposed to accommodate 25 students at a time but sometimes there are 35 to 40 students in each batch.

According to the Integrated Manipuri Association and ECDO, around 10,000 Manipuri-speaking people live in 14 villages in Kamalganj upazila. They communicate mainly in Manipuri.

While almost all of them can read and write in Bangla, many cannot read and write the Manipuri alphabet.

Since its inception, nearly 500 students have received training on the Manipuri alphabet and

language at these centres.

One such example is 15-year-old Laboni Sinha, a former student of Bhanubil Majhergaon Manipuri Language Centre (MLC) who can now read and write fluently in Manipuri. Her younger sister Aparna Sinha also knows Manipuri script.

Bidyadhan Singha, Laboni's father, said his daughter always did very well at the language centre. He also expressed his pride at his daughter's excellent grasp of the Manipuri alphabet and overall language.

ECDO has developed three different textbooks with the help of experts -- Manipuri Lomam Lyric Chapter-One, Manipuri Lomam Lyric Chapter-Two, and Manipuri Lomam Lyric Chapter-Three for training at the centres and is used as textbooks for the first year, second-

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Slow construction work obstructs traffic movement

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

Durgabari Road is the biggest medicine market in the Mymensingh region where both retail and wholesale buyers throng every day.

However, this important road is currently unusable due to the slow pace of drain construction work there. The construction firm who's been delegated the job is taking their sweet time to complete the work, ignoring the public nuisance caused, said some medicine traders while talking to this correspondent.

Jahid Hossain, a medicine trader on Durgabari Road, told this correspondent that the construction company needs to hire more workers because only a few are seen working on the site.

Besides, the construction work goes on during the busy hours in the daylight, creating serious inconvenience for the customers and commuters here.

It is also uncertain how many days will require to complete the total of the drain, lamented Sujit Barman, a medicine shopper in the area.

The road also leads to the city's biggest kitchen and grocery markets and again, commuters and customers are the worst sufferers since it is difficult to walk alongside the road.



During a recent visit to the site, this correspondent found a few workers working at the site. Denying the "slow pace" of work, Firoz Mia, a labourer representative at the site, said they engaged around 20 more workers to speed up the work.

Firoz claimed it would take a few days to finish the total drain work. But no representative of the firm was available at the site.

Contacted, MCC Executive Engineer Md Rafiqul Islam said, "Masud High-tech Engineering Limited, a construction firm from Dhaka, is responsible for constructing the drain as part of the city's package construction programme."

The engineer also agreed that the firm cannot keep its materials on the road causing sufferings for the people.

Contacted, Syed Mahbubur Rahman, traffic inspector in Mymensingh, said although the SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

Shaheed Minar vandalised in Narsingdi

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Narsingdi

Unidentified miscreants vandalised a bamboo and wooden made Shaheed Minar at KSA Public Academy in Narsingdi yesterday.

The incident took place between 12:00am and 6:30am, locals said.

As they have no permanent Shaheed Minar at the school, in a combined effort, students and teachers of the school built it on its premises using wood, banana trees, bamboo and paper on Monday evening, said Rakibul Islam, 12, one of the students.

After completing their task, they returned home about 12:00am, he said, adding that they found it broken when they went there to pay respect to the language martyrs in the early morning.

As no CCTV camera was installed at the spot, no one was identified, said campus sources.

Aklima Akter, headteacher of KSA Public Academy, said, "I went to the school with flowers about 7:00am and SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

12 hurt in BCL factional clash at CU

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Cg

At least 12 people were injured when two groups of Bangladesh Chhatra League clashed over occupying a room of Aloo Hall at Chittagong University yesterday.

Police and witnesses said two factions of "Bijoy Group" chased each other over the issue on the campus, triggering the clash.

Around 12:00am, one group attacked another in front of Suhrawardy Hall, when the latter went to Shaheed Minar to pay tributes to the language martyrs, they said.

Shubashis Chowdhury, a doctor at the CU medical centre, said they treated the 12 injured and sent one of them to Chattogram Medical College Hospital for better treatment.

Al Amin, leader of a faction, said, "We were going to Shaheed Minar, but suddenly the other SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

'Hatekhori' for 106 children



OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

A total of 106 children received their first lesson on Bangla letters during "Hatekhori" at Central Shaheed Minar in Pabna yesterday, on the occasion of Shaheed Day and International Mother Language Day.

Pabna Gonoshilpi Sangstha, a cultural organisation in the district, organised the traditional Hatekhori (initiation to writing) programme.

Children aged between three and five from different areas of Pabna participated, said Simanto Azad, secretary of Pabna Gonoshilpi Sangstha. Four-year-old Mariam Azad,

daughter of Saiful Islam, wrote Bangla letters on a slate for the first time in her life. She was mentored by eminent educationists of the district.

"My daughter will be admitted to pre-primary school next year. This is a different experience for her to receive lessons on writing Bangla letters on the Shaheed Minar premises," said Saiful Islam, father of Mariam Azad.

Urmi Afroz, mother of a three-year-old, said such initiative will encourage the children to learn Bangla.

Gonoshilpi has been organising Hatekhori marking International Mother Language Day for the last few decades.

Official notice from Bangladesh Police regarding procurement of uniforms and accessories. Includes details of items, quantities, and contact information for the procurement office.

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh e-Tender Notice 02(Re)/2022-2023. Details the procurement of furniture and fixtures for smart class rooms at Bhola Govt. College, Bhola. Includes tender ID, dates, and contact information for Professor Md. Golam Zakaria.