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## AMAR BHAI-ER ROKTE RANGANO EKUSHEY FEBRUARY...

Clad in black and white and carrying flowers, people thronged the Central Shaheed Minar in Dhaka and elsewhere in the country to honour the language martyrs on the occasion of International Mother Language Day and Martyrs' Day yesterday. Despite fasting during Ramadan, crowds including children and the elderly arrived early to pay tribute, while Dhaka University students staged a commemorative street play as part of tradition.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON, PALASH KHAN, SHEIKH NASIR

### Brinda's fight to save a fading script



MINTU DESHWARA, Moulvibazar

On Friday mornings, the otherwise quiet veranda of a house in Haktiarkhola village under Kamalganj upazila in Moulvibazar turns into a classroom.

Around 30 children from the Manipuri community sit on plastic mats, their eyes fixed on Brinda Rani Sinha — a retired schoolteacher and poet — as she carefully writes the alphabet of the Manipuri script, Meitei Mayek, on a blackboard.

The children repeat after her, learning letters, words and sentence structures in their mother tongue.

Manipuri, the mother tongue of the community, has a rich literary and cultural heritage and its own script.

While the language remains alive in daily conversations and festivities, literacy in the script has declined sharply. Many can speak Manipuri, but only a few can read or write it.

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## INT'L MOTHER LANGUAGE DAY Nation pays homage to language martyrs

### STAR REPORT

From midnight yesterday, people from all walks of life thronged Shaheed Minars across the country to pay homage to the martyrs of the 1952 Language Movement, observing Martyrs' Day and International Mother Language Day. Barefoot mourners joined pre-dawn processions — "probbat ferries" — singing in chorus the timeless "Amar Bhai-er Rokte Rangano."

In the capital, floral tributes poured in at the Central Shaheed Minar from 12:01am until the sehri hours. Many dressed in black and white stood in quiet lines to place wreaths.

After the pre-dawn break, processions resumed around 6:30am, drawing students, professionals, public and private officials, and members of social, cultural and political organisations, BSS reported.

At the zero hour, President Mohammed Shahabuddin laid a wreath at 12:01am, followed by

Prime Minister Tarique Rahman at 12:07am, according to BSS.

In his first tribute at the Central Shaheed Minar as prime minister, Tarique stood in silent homage, offered prayers for the martyrs, and placed wreaths alongside cabinet colleagues and family members.

The chiefs of the three armed services also paid tribute, as did



opposition leaders — including Jamaat-e-Islami Ameer Dr Shafiqur Rahman, NCP Convener Nahid Islam and leaders of the H-party alliance — along with representatives of various political, social, cultural and sports organisations.

The president and prime minister

issued separate messages marking the day. National flags were flown at half-mast at government offices and educational institutions, and the day was observed as a public holiday.

The observance drew a strong public presence. From early morning, families were seen heading towards the Shaheed Minar, many accompanied by young children, and dressed in black-and-white attires. Some children carried paper flowers and placards. Young people, including students of schools, colleges, and universities, were especially noticeable.

Wreath laying ceremonies, black badge observances and pre-dawn processions were also held at Azimpur graveyard and other locations in the capital, BSS reported.

Across the country, district administrations, political parties, freedom fighters, educational institutions and cultural organisations observed the day with due respect.

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## Absence of Ekushey songs sparks outrage in Lalmonirhat



S DILIP ROY, Lalmonirhat

On the occasion of the International Mother Language Day and Language Martyrs' Day, no patriotic songs were played on the central Shaheed Minar premises in Lalmonirhat district yesterday, drawing flak from local eminent citizens and cultural activists.

Even the song "Amar Bhai-er Rokte Rangano Ekushey February, Ami Ki Bhulite Pari..." — considered an inseparable part of the day — was not played in the official programme arranged under the supervision of the district administration to pay tributes to the martyrs of the Language Movement.

Although two sound systems were installed at the venue, they remained practically unused, leaving people from all walks of life — who came

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## Shoal children build temporary Shaheed Minars

### OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barishal

A competition was held yesterday on making temporary Shaheed Minars on the occasion of the Martyrs' Day and the International Mother Language, featuring children from local marginal families in Rasulpur shoal within Kirtankhola river in Barishal.

More than 100 children and adolescents participated to construct 15 temporary Shaheed Minars as part of the daylong event. Special prizes were awarded to encourage the participants.

The event was jointly



organised by Samajtantrik Chhatra Front and the Shaheed Altaf Mahmud Smriti Pathagar.

The competition has been held consistently for the past 15 years with children from working-class families, said Dr Manisha Chakraborty, one of the organisers.

The event also included a free medical camp, a discussion meeting and the honouring of a

freedom fighter, she added. Using bamboo, paper, cloth and other temporary materials, the children built their Shaheed Minars blending imagination with creativity.

"I feel very happy to have participated in the competition," said Mim, one of the young participants.

Sujon Ahmed, convener of the Barishal metropolitan unit

of Samajtantrik Chhatra Front, presided over the event, and physician Dr Ahida Sultana, cultural figures Arup Gautam and Arup Roy, and cultural activist Mostafizur Rahman attended, among others.

Comrade Khalequzzaman Bhuiyan, veteran freedom fighter and chief adviser of the Bangladesh Samajtantrik Dal (BSD), spoke among others.

The children's efforts would help nurture historical consciousness and patriotism, the speakers said.

Participants demanded government initiatives to construct a permanent Shaheed Minar at the local primary school in Rasulpur, establish libraries and expand cultural programmes in low-income colonies.

Freedom fighter and cultural personality Nazrul Islam Chunnun was posthumously conferred the Shaheed Altaf Mahmud Memorial Award at the event.

## Rajshahi gets long-awaited Shaheed Minar

### OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Rajshahi city residents have finally received a permanent Shaheed Minar to pay tribute to the heroes of the 1952 Language Movement.

At 12:01am yesterday, marking Language Martyrs' Day and International Mother Language Day, the long-awaited monument — built under the initiative of the Rajshahi City Corporation — was opened to the public.

Land Minister Mizanur Rahman Minu, along with local government officials, placed floral wreaths at the altar before it was formally opened for all.

This is the first time residents have been able to collectively pay homage at a single, central Shaheed Minar. Previously, tributes were offered at separate monuments in Bhubanmohan Park, Rajshahi College, and Rajshahi University.

Constructed on nearly one acre at Sonadighi Mor, on the site of the former Survey Institute, the permanent structure was built at a cost of around Tk 7.80 crore under the Rajshahi District Council's initiative. The design follows the architectural style of the Central Shaheed Minar.

The foundation stone was laid on December 16, 2020, by language

movement veteran and freedom fighter Golam Arif Tipu under the management of Rajshahi City Corporation.

The opening has been welcomed enthusiastically by residents.

Kamrul Islam, a student of Rajshahi College, said the monument holds special significance as it enables people from all walks of life to gather and pay tribute at one place.



Hasan Mehdi, a local resident, described it as a long-standing demand. Mohammad Habibur Rahman, administrator of Rajshahi District Council, said there was no formal inauguration ceremony; instead, the monument was opened at the first hour of February 21 to allow the public to pay their respects.