



Bangladesh News

Bangladesh observes "Mohan Shaheed Dibosh" and the International Mother Language Day



Thousands of people clad in black and white dresses especially traditional sharees and panjabees, thronged the Central Shaheed Minar in capital Dhaka since midnight to pay their glowing tributes to the valiant sons of the soil.

President Md. Abdul Hamid and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina paid their tributes to the martyrs of the historic Language Movement by laying wreaths at the Central Shaheed Minar in Dhaka while the immortal song composed on Amar Ekushey --"Amar Bhaiyer Rakte Rangano Ekushey February, Ami Ki Bhulite Pari"-- was being played on the loudspeaker.

They stood in solemn silence for some time as a mark of profound respect to the memories of the language heroes.

Later, on behalf of ruling Awami League, its President Sheikh Hasina paid homage to the language martyrs by placing a wreath at the Shaheed Minar.

Later, National Parliament (Jatiya Sangsad) Speaker Dr Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury, the chiefs of three armed forces and leaders of different political parties and sociocultural organizations placed wreaths at the Shaheed Minar.

In line with the national programmes, the day was also observed at all educational institutions, city corporations, pourasabhas, the district and upazila administrations and Bangladesh missions abroad.

Marking the day, the Central Shaheed Minar and its adjacent areas of the Dhaka University campus were decorated with street paintings and graffiti with Bangla alphabets and selected verses of eminent poets about the mother languages on the walls.

On February 21, 1952, students and the common people in Dhaka under the All-Party Students Action Committee took to the streets in protest against the then Pakistan government's denial of Bangla as the national language and imposition of Urdu as the only official language of Pakistan.

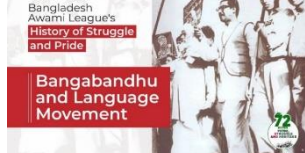
Salam, Barkat, Rafiq, Jabbar and a few other brave sons of the soil were killed in police firings on this day in 1952 when students came out in a procession from the Dhaka University campus breaching section 144 to press their demand for the recognition of Bangla as a state language of then Pakistan.

The movement for Bangla, however, did not stop and the Pakistan government on February 29, 1956 was compelled to recognise Bangla as one of the state languages of Pakistan besides Urdu.

Being a source of ceaseless inspiration, "Amar Ekushey" (Immortal Shaheed Day) inspired and encouraged the nation to a great extent to achieve the right to self-determination and struggle for freedom and the Liberation War.

With the bloodshed of Language Movement, the nation got the recognition of Bangla as its mother tongue and attained its long cherished independence under the charismatic leadership of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in 1971.

Bangabandhu & Language Movement



Professor Dr Mozharul Islam, the first biographer of Bangabandhu, said in his book 'Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib' that Sheikh Mujib took part in a campaign in 1948 with the Rashtrabhasa Sangram Parishad to collect signatures in support of the Bangla language demand. During the meeting of the Muslim League Working Committee at the residence of Khawaja Nazimuddin on 5 December 1947, he participated in and led a procession demanding that Bangla be made the state language.

In December 1947, for the first time, 14 leaders including contemporary politicians, drafted a manifesto with a 21-point demand, including a language movement and other demands. It was published in the form of a small pamphlet, entitled 'State Language - 21 Point Manifesto - Historical Document'. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's contribution in the formulation of this manifesto was undeniable and he was one of the key signatories.

Chhatra League was formed on 4 January 1948. The role of this organization in the history of the language movement is very impactful. One of the 10-point demands of the organization established under the leadership of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was to make Bangla one of the state languages of Pakistan and to recruit Bengalis in the army and ensure their compulsory military education.

March 11, 1948, is a unique and unforgettable day in the history of the language movement. On this day an all-out general strike was observed demanding the state language to be Bangla. This was the first successful strike in the history of the language movement in Pakistan. Sheikh Mujib led the strike and was arrested after being tortured by the police. He was released on 15 March.

On 17 March 1948, a meeting was held at Battala of Dhaka University under the chairmanship of Naimuddin Ahmed at the invitation of the East Pakistan Muslim Chhatra League. Sheikh Mujib participated in that meeting. As a result of the hard work of Sheikh Mujib, Tajuddin Ahmed, Mohammad Toaha, Naimuddin Ahmed, Shawkat Ali, Abdul Matin, Shamsul Haque and other young leaders, the language movement spread all over East Pakistan as a mass movement. The whole of Bangladesh seemed to be trembled by the public meetings, processions and slogans. In the streets, on the walls, on the posters - the Bhasa Sangram Committee started working tirelessly to realize the demand for 'Bangla as the state language'. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was arrested twice in 1949 for his involvement in the movement.

Sheikh Mujib was in jail in 1952 during the eruption of the language movement. Although he was personally absent from the political arena, he kept in touch with the agitators on a regular basis while in jail and gave necessary instructions.

Language movement leader, eminent journalist Abdul Gaffar Chowdhury in his article 'Some Memories, Some Words About Ekush' said Sheikh Mujib sent notes to several Chhatra League leaders before and after being sent to Faridpur Jail on 16 February 1952.

A meeting was held at Dhaka University on 19 February demanding the release of all political prisoners, including Sheikh Mujib. And on 21 February, ignoring all the obstacles, the students took out the procession. When the Pakistani junta opened fire on the procession, Salam -Barkat-Rafiq-Jabbar's blood was shed on the streets.

Bangabandhu also played a significant role in celebrating the first anniversary of the Language Movement in 1953. Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was at the forefront of all movements, processions and leadership that day. At a public meeting held at Armanitola Maidan, he called for declaring 21 February as Martyrs' Day and demanded that Bangla be made the state language immediately.

Later, in the session of the Legislative Assembly held on 17 January 1956, Bangabandhu demanded that the daily proceedings of the Parliament be printed in Bangla. He also demanded in another session of the Legislative Assembly on 16 February to make Bangla the state language.

Bangla was recognized as one of the state languages of Pakistan on 7 May 1954 after the Jukta Front won the provincial assembly elections that year. The Constitution was amended on 29 February 1956 by recognizing Bengali as the second state language of Pakistan. Bangabandhu also has a special contribution to this.

In the Constitution of 1972, he adopted Bangla as the state language. This was the first constitution in the history of the world to be written in Bangla. On 12 March 1975, Bangabandhu issued the first government directive to introduce the Bangla language in offices and institutions instead of English.

Source: Bangladesh Awami League website

President Abdul Hamid, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina pay homage to Language Heroes



Both the Head of the State and the Head of the Government paid their homage by placing wreaths at the Central Shaheed Minar in Dhaka at one minute past midnight on February 21.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina arrived at the Shaheed Minar premises six minutes before the clock struck 12 midnight, while President Abdul Hamid reached the Central Shaheed Minar three minutes before the zero hour of the day.

President Abdul Hamid and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina proceeded to the altar of the Central Shaheed Minar together in slow pace while playing the historic immortal song on the Amar Ekushey "Amar Bhaiyer Rakte Rangano Ekushey February . . . Ami Ki Bhulite Pari?"

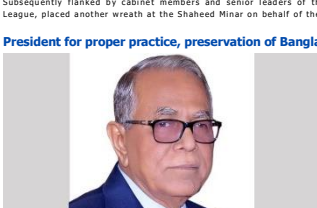
The President was the first to lay the wreath at the Central Shaheed Minar. Just after the President, the Premier placed the wreath at the Shaheed Minar.

They stood in solemn silence for some time as a mark of profound respect to the memories of the Language Heroes.

Speakers, ministers, advisers to the Prime Minister, parliament members, chiefs of the three services, senior Awami League leaders, freedom fighters, foreign diplomats, high civil and military officials were present on the occasion.

Subsequently flanked by cabinet members and senior leaders of the party, Sheikh Hasina, also the President of ruling Bangladesh Awami League, placed another wreath at the Shaheed Minar on behalf of the party.

President for proper practice, preservation of Bangla language, culture



President M Abdul Hamid has emphasized the need for proper practice and preservation of the Bangla language and culture saying that the spirit of Amar Ekushey is the incessant source of inspiration for protecting own languages and culture of the people of different languages across the world.

"We have to be more attentive to properly practice and preserve Bengali language and culture," he said in a message on the eve of 'Shaheed Day' and 'International Mother Language Day 2023'.

With the blessings of information technology, Bangladeshi people are also now the inhabitants of a single global village, the President said, "Therefore, to maintain the pace of advancement with the developed world, our present generation has to attain necessary skills in different languages which are recognized as international communication media".

He believed that observing International Mother Language Day will play a positive role in the development and preservation of "our own language as well as in building a sustainable future through multilingual education - this is our expectation".

Abdul Hamid recalled Salam, Barkat, Rafiq, Jabbar, Shafiur and many anonymous language martyrs, who laid down their lives to establish the right of their mother tongue Bangla, with deep homage.

On the occasion of International Mother Language Day 2023, he extended his sincere greetings and congratulations to the people of various languages of the world, including Bangla and other ethnic groups.

The President said the great Language Movement is an unforgettable event in our national history. Today, I remember with profound respect, Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, who led Sarbodhilo Rashtrabhasa Sangram Parishad (All Party State Language Action Committee), formed in 1948 and consequently was imprisoned," the President said.

"As the Bangalee nation, it is one of our great achievements. It is a unique celebration in protecting mother tongue as well as own culture and heritage," he added.

Embracing the spirit of Amar Ekushey, the President said, "Let mutual respect be awakened among the people of different languages and cultures of the world and let a colourful world without discrimination be developed - it is my expectation on Shaheed Day and International Mother Language Day".

PM greets all on International Mother Language Day



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has extended her sincere greetings to the people of all languages and cultures of the world, including Bangla, on the occasion of the great Martyrs' Day and International Mother Language Day-2023.

"UNESCO and Bangladesh have been jointly celebrating this day with due dignity since 2000. I think this year's theme of the day- 'multilingual education- a necessity to transform education'- is perfect," she said in a message on the eve of the day.

Noting that the importance of the language movement in the history of the Bengali liberation struggle is immense, the Premier said the foundation for a non-communal, democratic, language-based state system was laid through this movement.

"On this day in 1952, Abul Barkat, Abdul Jabbar, Abdus Salam, Rafiquddin Ahmad, Shafiur Rahman, and many others sacrificed their lives to protect the dignity of our mother language. I pay my profound respects to the memory of the martyrs of all languages, including Bangla; I remember with deep tribute all the language Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, whose leadership was the added blessing."

Sheikh Hasina said the glorious history of the language movement of the Bangla from 1947 to 1952 is a source of inspiration in "our national life time and again".

The Father of the Nation was repeatedly imprisoned for leading the language movement, she said, adding at the Education Conference held in Karachi on November 27, 1947, Urdu was decided to be the state language of Pakistan.

When the news reached Dhaka, the students of Dhaka University immediately protested in front of Khawaja Nazimuddin's residence, the Prime Minister said, adding shortly afterwards, Sheikh Mujib, a law student at Dhaka University, used his organizational experience to play a vital role in establishing the Chhatra League in Dhaka on January 4, 1948.

Mentioning that Bengali nationalism was established through the language movement, she said, "Following the ideals of Bengali nationalism and the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib, we have made Bangladesh a role model for development in the world in the last 14 years".

Sheikh Hasina added: "We will transform the country into Smart Bangladesh by 2041 by building Smart Citizens, Smart Government, Smart Economy, and Smart Society".

Since the government is implementing Bangladesh Delta Plan-2100, she said, "I firmly believe that we will be able to establish the developed, prosperous, and self-esteemed 'Sonar Bangladesh' as dream by the Father of the Nation".

PM distributes Ekushey Padak-2023



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has distributed the "Ekushey Padak-2023" to 19 eminent persons and two organizations for outstanding contributions to different fields in the country.

She handed over the Ekushey Padak, the second highest civilian award in Bangladesh, at a ceremony at Osmani Memorial Auditorium in Dhaka on February 20.

The Ekushey Padak was introduced in the memory of the martyrs of the Language Movement in 1952.

The award is given to individuals and organizations in recognition of contributions to a number of fields including the War of Liberation, literature, music, education, journalism, poverty reduction, research, and visual arts.

Earlier on February 12, the government announced the names of 19 eminent citizens and two organizations for the "Ekushey Padak-2023" for their outstanding contributions to respective fields.

This year three persons got the award in the Language Movement (recitation, arts and painting), two in politics, one person and one institution in education, one person and one institution in social service and one each in journalism, research, and language and literature.

Khaleda Manzur-e Khuda, valiant freedom fighter AKM Shamsul Haque (posthumously) and Haji Mohammad Majibur Rahman were given the award in the Language Movement category.

Masud Ali Khan and Shimul Yusuf received the award in the category of Shilpakala (acting) while Monoranjan Ghoshal, Gazi Abdul Hakim and Fazel-e-Khuda (posthumously) were named for the award in the category of Shilpakala (music) and Javanto Chattopadhyay in Shilpakala (recitation) category, Nawazish Ali Khan for Shilpakala, and Kanak Chanpa Chakma for Shilpakala (painting).

Momtaz Uddin (posthumously) was given the award in the Liberation War category, Md Shah Alamgir (posthumously) in journalism, Dr Md Abdul Majid in research, Professor Dr Mazharul Islam (posthumously) in education, Md Saiful Haque in social service, Advocate Manjurul Imam (posthumously) and Akhter Uddin Mia (posthumously) in politics, and Dr Maniruzzaman in language and literature.

Bangladesh National Museum received the award in the category of education while Bidyanondo Foundation in social service.

Till 2022, a total of 543 distinguished individuals and reputed institutions were awarded "Ekushey Padak" in recognition of their contributions to various fields in national life.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina stresses research to preserve, revitalize, develop mother languages



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has laid emphasis on the necessity of research on languages, saying that International Mother Language Institute (IMLI) has the responsibility to preserve all the languages existing in the world.

"I think IMLI has the responsibility to preserve all the languages prevailing in the world as well as conduct research on those languages and know their history. I think it can be done," she said.

The Premier said this while addressing as the chief guest the inaugural ceremony of the four-day programme marking the International Mother Language Day-2023 at International Mother Language Institute (IMLI) auditorium in Dhaka on February 21.

Mentioning that fellowship is needed to be introduced in the IMLI for researchers, she said "I will arrange the fund (for introducing fellowship) if it is required."

"I want that IMLI to put emphasis on the research as attaining excellence is not possible without it," she said, stressing the need for research to preserve, revitalize and develop the mother languages of the world.

"Many languages in different countries are getting lost... We want the endangered languages of the world to be preserved here and research to be conducted on those. We're giving the utmost importance to research. I want the International Mother Language Institute to make

a huge contribution to preserve the languages," she added.

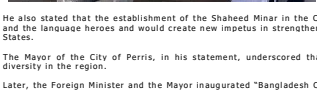
The Prime Minister mentioned that her government had raised the literacy rate to 65.5 percent from only 45 percent during the 1996-2001 tenure and got an award from UNESCO for this achievement. Then her government formed a fund with the award money to provide stipend for higher education, she said.

The Prime Minister recalled the contribution of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman to the Language Movement.

In the event, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, also chief patron of the IMLI, handed over the international mother language national awards and the international mother language international awards to four recipients.

Habibur Rahman and Ranjit Singha were given the national awards, while Mahendra Kumar Mishra and Mother Language Lovers of World Society, Vancouver, Canada were conferred with the international preservation, revitalization and development of mother languages.

Foreign Minister inaugurates Shaheed Minar in California



Foreign Minister Dr A K Abdul Momen MP unveiled the permanent Shaheed Minar, replica of the Central Shaheed Minar in Dhaka, in the City of Perris of the California State of the United States, on 21 February, 2023.

Mayor of the City of Perris Mr. Michael M. Vargas and Bangladesh's Consul General in Los Angeles Ms. Samia Anjum were present, among others.

The Shaheed Minar has been built at the sincere effort of the "International Mother Language Day Celebration Committee" - a Bangladesh Community-led organization, and the Consulate General of Bangladesh in Los Angeles.

Floral wreath was placed and one minute silence was observed during the unveiling of the Shaheed Minar. A documentary on the Great Language Movement was also screened.

In his statement on this occasion, the Foreign Minister recalled with deep respect the historical background of the great Language Movement, including the leadership role of the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, and the role of expatriate Bangladeshis in earning the recognition of 21st February as the International Mother Language Day by the UNESCO.

He also stated that the establishment of the Shaheed Minar in the City of Perris would be an occasion to pay tribute to the language martyrs and the language heroes and would create new impetus in strengthening cultural bondage and cooperation between Bangladesh and the United States.

The Mayor of the City of Perris, in his statement, underscored that Shaheed Minar would act as a symbol of multilingualism and cultural diversity in the region.

Later, the Foreign Minister and the Mayor inaugurated "Bangladesh Corner" in the Cesar E Chavez Public Library in the City of Perris.

International Mother Language Day observed in Bangladesh Embassy in Washington: Language Movement is like a lighthouse for Bengali nation, says Ambassador Imran



The Bangladesh Embassy in Washington DC observed "Mohan Shaheed Dibosh" and the International Mother Language Day on February 21 by paying glowing tributes to the martyrs of the 1952 Language Movement.

The Embassy arranged an elaborate program to commemorate the supreme sacrifice of the language heroes who laid down their lives in Dhaka 71 years ago to establish Bangla as the state language.

The day-long program started with placing of a floral wreath at the altar of the Shaheed Minar by the Bangladesh Ambassador on the embassy premises at one-minute past zero hour.

The immortal song composed on 'Amar Ekushey' --" Amar Bhaiyer Rakte Rangano Ekushey February, Ami Ki Bhulite Pari" -- was played at that time. Embassy officers and employees and members of their families were also present on the occasion.

In the morning, the Ambassador hoisted the national flag at half-mast in front of the Chancery in the presence of the Embassy officials. A 'Probhat Ferry' was arranged to commemorate the day.

A floral wreath was also placed at the bust of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman at the Bangabandhu Corner of the Embassy to pay respect to the Father of the Nation.

The messages issued on the occasion by the President, Prime Minister, Foreign Minister and State Minister for Foreign Affairs were read out by Deputy Chief of the Mission Ferdousi Shahriar, Minister (Economic) Md Mahadee Hassan, Minister (Press) AZM Sajjad Hossain and Counsellor (Public Diplomacy) Arifa Rahman Ruma.

Later, two documentaries on the history of great Language Movement were screened. A special prayer was offered seeking divine blessings for the martyrs of the Language Movement as well as continued peace, progress and prosperity of the nation.

In the evening, the Embassy arranged a discussion meeting followed by a cultural event by Bangladeshi artists and performers from different embassies to demonstrate the diversity of culture around the world.

In his remarks, Ambassador Muhammad Imran termed the spirit of great Language Movement was like a lighthouse for Bengali nation and said that Bangladesh is now advancing fast to become a developed and prosperous country as dreamt by Bangabandhu under the leadership of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

He called upon the Bangladesh diaspora in the USA to contribute unitedly towards development of Bangladesh and encourage the new generations to know more about the rich Bangla language, culture and heritage.

Performers from Bangladesh, India, Paraguay, Ghana, Nepal and a cultural group comprised of East European countries performed captivating the audience with their songs and dances at the packed Bangabandhu Auditorium.

Ambassadors and diplomats from various countries, senior officials of the US State Department and the government, political leaders, journalists, representatives of social and cultural bodies and members of Bangladeshi diaspora attended the event.

Counsellor Md Moniruzzaman and First Secretary (Passport & Visa Wing) Md Abdul Hye Milton conducted the program.

Foreign Ministry observes International Mother Language Day



The Ministry of Foreign Affairs organized a discussion meeting and cultural program at the Foreign Service Academy in the capital on February 21 on the occasion of the "Mohan Shaheed Dibosh" and the International Mother Language Day.

In the morning, a 'Probhat Ferry' was brought out from the Sugandha end of the Academy and concluded in front of temporary Shaheed Minar built in front of the main building of the academy.

State Minister for Foreign Affairs Md. Shahriar Alam, MP, Foreign Secretary (Senior Secretary) Masud Bin Momen, senior officials of the ministry and Foreign Service Academy, foreign diplomats took part in the morning rally.

On behalf of the Foreign Minister, the State Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Foreign Secretary placed a wreath at the altar of the Shaheed Minar. Besides, foreign diplomats, officials of the international organizations, the rector of the Foreign Service Academy and the President and members of the Foreign Service Association paid tributes to language martyrs by placing wreaths at the Shaheed Minar.

Later, a discussion and cultural function was held at the auditorium of the Foreign Service Academy.

State Minister for Foreign Affairs Md Shahriar Alam was the chief guest at the function, while French Ambassador to Bangladesh Ms. Marie Masdupuy also spoke. Rector of the Academy Mashfi Binte Shams gave the welcome address.

Shahriar Alam expressed gratitude to the international community for recognizing the spirit of the great Language Movement. The declaration of the 21st February as the International Mother Language Day was the contribution of Bangladesh's strides to spread linguistic diversity around the globe in the backdrop of the Language Movement, he said.

UN Bangla font now in Unicode



United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), on International Mother's Language Day, has launched the Unicode version, with seven different iterations, of the UN Bangla font to ease access to internet for Bengali language users.

The UN Bangla font was first released on 21 February 2020 with a single version for offline use, a UNDP press release said today.

The Unicode version was launched by UNDP Resident Representative Stefan Liller and Goodwill Ambassador Jaya Ahsan at the agency's office in Dhaka on February 20 last.

"We first launched the font in 2020 as a tribute to the Bengali language. Since the use of Bengali on the internet is on the rise, we decided to launch the Unicode version for everyone. I hope this Unicode version will help uncover new grounds in Bengali writing," UNDP Resident Representative Stefan said.

"Now people who write on their cell phones and computers will have more diversity when they write," he added.

UNDP's Goodwill Ambassador Jaya Ahsan, who was also present during the launch, said: "It's a great thing for those of us who write in Bengali. I am very happy to be part of this UNDP initiative for the International Mother's Language Day."

UNDP's Head of Communications Md Abdul Quayyum said: "We will soon launch the Bengali version of our UNDP Bangladesh website using this font. All our other publications will use this font as well."

The Unicode font package includes seven iterations of the font, including a bold, regular, thin, light versions of the font with italics.