

**BANGLADESH WILL
PROTECT ALL
MOTHER LANGUAGES
IN THE WORLD**







বিশ্বের সব মাতৃভাষা রক্ষা করবে বাংলাদেশ
The world will be the safeguard of all the mother languages

মহান শহিদ দিবস ও
আন্তর্জাতিক মাতৃভাষা দিবস ২০১৮

শ্রদ্ধাঞ্জলি

অবস্থানরত বিশ্বের বিভিন্ন দেশের শিল্পী

Echoing Ekushey:

Shilpakala Academy observes Int'l Mother Language Day with ensemble of foreign nationals residing in Dhaka

The 21st of February is known internationally as the International Mother Language Day, chosen because of the tragic yet catalysing events that transpired on that day in 1952, in Bangladesh. The 21st February is observed throughout the country simultaneously with due solemnity and fervour. It is an event of loss and achievement. This was the first ever in the history of the world that people sacrificed their lives for the rights of own Language. The nation can never forget the sacrifice made by Salam, Barkat, Rafiq, Jabbar, Shofur and other unknown martyrs who dared to establish Bangla as the state language at any cost.

The Bangla Language Movement was a socio-politico-cultural movement in the then East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) advocating the recognition of Bangla as an official language of Pakistan. Such recognition would allow Bangla to be used in government affairs. In fact, the Language Movement 61 years ago catalysed the assertion of Bengali national identity in the then Pakistan, and became a forerunner to Bengali nationalist movements, including the emergence of self-rule consciousness in 1954 general election, student movement in 1962, 6-point movement, uprising in 1969 and, subsequently, the Bangladesh Liberation War in 1971.

The supreme sacrifice of the martyrs of the language movement on February 21 (1952) became an

epitome of the inspiration for sustaining self-consciousness and dignity as a nation. It established the only nation in the globe which is named after its language, Bangladesh. February 21 was such an epoch-making event that it has been immortalized by global recognition as International Mother Language Day. In 2000, UNESCO declared February 21 as International Mother Language Day for the whole world to celebrate, in tribute to the Language Movement and the ethno-linguistic rights of

THE BANGLA LANGUAGE MOVEMENT WAS A SOCIO-POLITICO-CULTURAL MOVEMENT IN THE THEN EAST PAKISTAN (NOW BANGLADESH) ADVOCATING THE RECOGNITION OF BANGLA AS AN OFFICIAL LANGUAGE OF PAKISTAN. SUCH RECOGNITION WOULD ALLOW BANGLA TO BE USED IN GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS

people around the world. We as a nation feel proud today that Bangladesh, Bangla and the supreme sacrifice of our language movement are being pronounced, much-admired, gratefully remembered and honoured worldwide.

At its roots, the Bengali Language Movement sought to have the linguistic and cultural rights of an entire population recognized and respected. In that same vein and in honour of it, on the 17th November 1999, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) declared February 21st as International Mother Language Day—

and was ratified by the UN General Assembly a decade later—“to promote the preservation and protection of all languages used by peoples of the world”.

To commemorate the International Mother Language day, Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy organized a program featuring performances by officials of different diplomatic missions operating in Bangladesh at Central Shaheed Minar in the afternoon on February 21, 2018. At 3 pm, wreaths have been placed at the National Shaheed Minar with participation of foreign nationals living in Bangladesh and all the employees from Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy.

At the beginning of the cultural program at the National Shaheed Minar, Liaquat Ali Lucky, DG, Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy gave his speech followed by the members from different embassies stationed at Dhaka. Cultural groups and artists from Philippines, Denmark, Nepal, France, Iran, Indonesia, Spain, Korea, India, Japan, India and Bangladesh have performed in the cultural program.

Music and dance performance were presented by artists from the cultural troupe of Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy, Dhaka Sangshkritik Dol and Iranian Cultural Centre. They danced and sang in the languages from the following countries: Arabia, Morocco, Sri-Lanka, Netherland, Afghanistan, Fiji, South Korea, Nigeria, Maldives, Mozambique, Australia, Myanmar, Nepal, Mexico, Bhutan, Singapore, India, Columbia, Japan, Brunei, Egypt, Vietnam, Russia, Mongolia, Ukraine, Switzerland, Thailand, Papua New Guinea, Cuba, Brazil, Pakistan, East

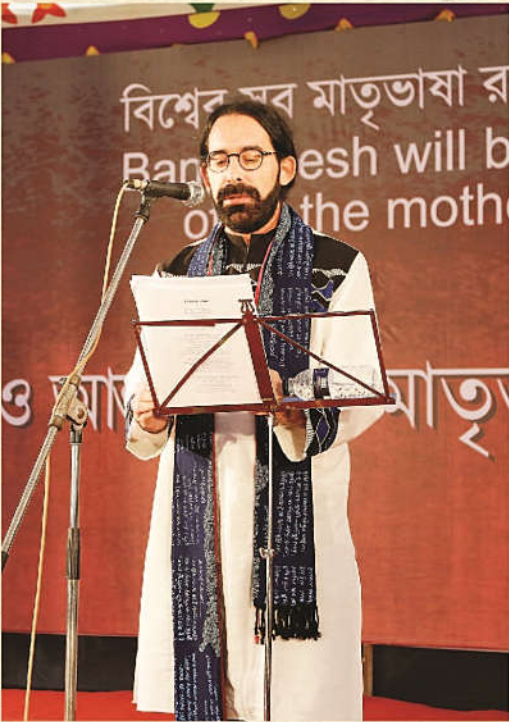


Timor, Italy and Bangladesh. Members from Philippines embassy, Denmark embassy, Russian Cultural Centre took part in musical performances. Australian High Commissioner James Dillon, along with Ms. Jane Hardy also performed in the program. Participation of these beautiful people from around the globe turned the program into a cross cultural extravaganza. The programs organized by Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy every year have created a pristine significance as they entire world observes, venerates and remembers about the sacrifices of our martyrs. The key message of the program was to pay tribute to every language of the world and promoting the freedom of language breaking all the cultural barriers. Language is not only the principal representative of a culture of one nation but it also creates sense of patriotism and nationalism in people's mind. Bengali and Bangla language are an appropriate example of that. Bengali people created one of the greatest political and cultural histories in the 20th century. The events of 21st February 1952 proved that a nation which is strong and powerful politically cannot destroy a spirited civilized nation if they have a unifying language like Bangla. Pakistani leaders forgot that Bengali people and Bangla have a history of thousands of years behind them. The Bengali Language Movement had a major cultural impact on Bengali society. The movement has redefined the Bengali culture by inspiring the development and celebration of the Bengali language, literature and culture. Language is not only the principal representative of a culture of one nation but it also creates sense of patriotism and nationalism in people's mind. Bengali and Bangla language are an appropriate example of that. Bengali people created one of the greatest political and cultural histories in the 20th century. The events of 21st February 1952 proved that a nation which is strong and powerful politically cannot destroy a spirited civilized nation if they have a unifying language like Bangla. 21st February is the symbol of grief, strength and glory in the life of every Bangalee.



Bangladesh Shilpakala ACADEMY's Director General Liaquat Ali Lucky, cultural personalities and artists with performers pose after a cultural programme at Central Shaheed Minar to celebrate International Mother Language Day. The academy also arranged a programme where foreign nationals living in Dhaka performed in their mother language at the National Theatre Hall.





Bangali and its bond with Ekushey: A language earned with blood

Language Movement occupies the most glorious chapter in the history of Bangladesh. The importance of the movement lies in the fact that it was this Language Movement which provided socio-politico-psychological basis on which subsequent movement for regional autonomy grew in the then East Pakistan leading ultimately to the emergence of the separate sovereign nationhood of Bangladesh in 1971.

When the Dominion of Pakistan was formed by the partition of India in 1947, it was composed of various ethnic and linguistic groups, with the geographically non-contiguous East Bengal province having a mainly Bengali population. In 1948, the Government of the Dominion of Pakistan ordained Urdu as the sole national language, sparking extensive protests among the Bengali-speaking majority of East Bengal. Despite constituting a majority of the Pakistani population, Bengalis constituted a small part of Pakistan's military, police and civil services. Ethnic and socio-economic discrimination against Bengali people aggravated and agitations arose in East Pakistan over sectional bias, neglect and insufficient allocation of resources and national wealth. The language movement was one of the first movement against the

discrimination against Bengali people.

Dhirendranath Datta, a member of the Pakistan Constituent Assembly, first raised the demand for making Bengali an official language of Pakistan along with Urdu. It was as early as February 25, 1948, that Dutta had raised the question during a session of the Pakistan Constituent Assembly drafting a constitution for newly created Pakistan.

However, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the

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First Governor-General of Pakistan, in a meeting in Dhaka, on 21st March 1948, declared that Urdu and only Urdu shall be the official State Language of Pakistan. Bengali people strongly resisted this declaration. Students and intellectuals of East Pakistan protested and demanded that not Urdu alone, but Bangla also should be one of the state languages. That is how the Language Movement began in 1948 in the province known as East Pakistan.

Students formed the 'State Language

Action Committee' and worked tirelessly to make Bangla one of the state languages of Pakistan. The immediate starting point of the tragedy of 21st February was that on 27th January, 1952, the then Prime Minister of Pakistan Khawaja Nazimuddin announced at a public meeting that Urdu alone should be the state language of Pakistan. The students were infuriated at the announcement because Nazimuddin as chief minister of East Bengal in 1948 signed an agreement with the leaders of State Language Action Committee with a commitment to adopt a resolution of having Bangla as the other state language of Pakistan by the provincial Assembly.

Subsequently students of the Dhaka University and Dhaka Medical College took a robust role in the cause of the Language Movement and took a crucial decision and defied the wishes of politicians to violate Section 144 on 21st February 1952. On their way at the site of the Medical College students' hostel number 12, at 3-30 PM, the police opened fire on the peaceful procession of students by an order of a Magistrate (a West Pakistani). Barkat, Rafiq, Jabbar, Shafiu and Salam, among others, sacrificed their precious young lives for honour and preservation of their mother language, Bangla.

This movement ultimately ended in the adoption of Bangla as one of the state languages of Pakistan in 1956. However, the movement was not isolated to this as it sowed the seeds for the independence movement of the Bangladesh which resulted in the



Foreign nationals living in Bangladesh place wreaths at Central Shaheed Minar as a tribute to the brave souls to sacrificed their lives for mother tongue. Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy later arranged a cultural program with participation of different nationals to celebrate International Mother Language Day



liberation of Bangladesh as an independent state in 1971. The great Language Movement had been a historic and significant event in our national history. This movement was aimed at establishing the rights of our mother tongue as well as protecting self-identity and culture. Being a source of ceaseless inspiration, 21st February inspired the people of Bangladesh to achieve the right to self-determination and sovereign

IN LINE WITH THE SPIRIT OF LANGUAGE MOVEMENT, BANGLADESH ACHIEVED ITS LONG-CHERISHED FREEDOM THROUGH A NINE MONTH LONG ARMED STRUGGLE UNDER THE CHARISMATIC LEADERSHIP OF FATHER OF THE NATION BANGABANDHU SHEIKH MUJIBUR RAHMAN WHO PROCLAIMED THE COUNTRY'S INDEPENDENCE ON MARCH 26, 1971

state. In line with the spirit of Language Movement, Bangladesh achieved its long-cherished freedom through a nine month long armed struggle under the charismatic leadership of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman who proclaimed the country's independence on March 26, 1971.

To mark the Bengali Language Movement, famous author and columnist Abdul Gaffar Choudhury wrote the song "Amar Bhaier Rokte Rangano Ekushey February" which means "My Brothers Blood Spattered 21st February". The tune of the song represents Ekushey February in the hearts of every Bangladeshi as it plays in every corner of Bangladesh throughout the month of February. The song was first set to music by Abdul Latif, but later the composer Altaf Mahmud changed the tune to the present version. It is regarded by the listeners of BBC Bengali Service as the third best song in Bengali.



Artistes from different culturally groups and foreign nationals living in Dhaka commemorate Language Martyr' Day







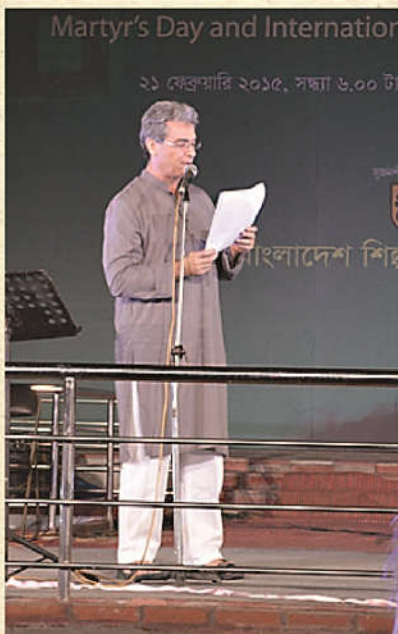
Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy observed Intentional Mother Language Day with due solemnity. Later in the afternoon, a fascinating cultural programme was staged by artistes and performers from Bangladesh and other nations residing in Dhaka. It was an initiative of the academy to foster cultural exchange among the nations and celebrate all Mother Languages. From dance to musicals to band performance and recitations, the programme featured everything.



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Bangladesh will protect every mother language in the world”

- Liaquat Ali Lucky



HOW DID YOU CONCEIVE OF A PROGRAMME THAT WOULD MARK THE INTERNATIONAL MOTHER LANGUAGE DAY EVERY YEAR?

We started it in 2012. International Mother Language day is a very special day with utmost cultural significance. We think that Bangladesh has an opportunity to observe and celebrate this day with a global audience. There are almost seven thousand languages in the world. It has been said by the researchers that almost 25 languages are being extinct every year. We can sync and coordinate our plans with the International Mother Language Institute which is a great initiative by our honourable Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. As a part of celebrating this day, we bring all the artists from various embassies located in Bangladesh and gather at Central Shaheed Minar. They perform at Central Shaheed Minar and National Theatre Hall at the Shilpakala Academy. We received huge responses from the artistes and the audience alike. Especially, the foreign dignitaries participate in this program with immense

enthusiasm. I think other organizations should arrange this sort of programs too. I also think that we can start 'International Mother Language Award', like other prestigious awards like 'Ekushey Padak' or 'Shadhinota Padak'. We have already proposed this idea. I think, by doing this, our mother language would get more international exposure and we will have one more occasion to celebrate every language on the planet.

Since, it will be a cultural award

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and it is a vast area to explore, how are you planning to initiate this award?

This will be an international award and it will be given to the prominent linguists and scholars who are dedicated to the research, development and enrichment of language. For example, if we start our journey with linguists like

Noam Chomsky, it would receive an immediate international recognition. Bangladesh could play an authoritative role in this.

WE HAD SO MANY LANGUAGES IN OUR COUNTRY. MANY LANGUAGES SPOKEN BY SMALL ETHNIC GROUPS HAVE ALREADY LOST. DOES BSA HAS ANY PLAN FOR RESTORING AND RESURRECTING THOSE?

In this specific program, we have special emphasize on these small ethnic groups. Our government has a keen eye for preserving the indigenous heritage. When I visit international festivals, I see that these indigenous heritages are very much neglected. Even in Australia, I saw aboriginal people regretting about their lost linguistic heritage. When I was in Germany, they really appreciated our initiative. I have always seen our honourable Prime Minister taking measures of preserving these heritages. There was an initiative started in 2010 with 27 small ethnic groups in Bangladesh. A national committee was formed, and I was elected the President of the committee. Later we found that we have more than 50 small ethnic groups in Bangladesh. Recently, we had a meeting was chaired by Asaduzzaman Noor, Minister of Cultural Affairs regarding this matter. I have a publication coming up on this also. We are also arranging an art camp featuring their lifestyle. We will do three paintings on each group and there will be 150 paintings in total. This will help them having a key position in national and international stage.

SO MANY FOREIGN DIGNITARIES ATTEND THIS EVENT EVERY YEAR. HOW DO YOU MANAGE THEM AT THE SAME TIME?

We invite them a few months earlier and request them to



provide us the list of performers. Most of them send us the list immediately. They appreciate the program very much. On every 21st

WHAT THEY USUALLY PERFORM ON THIS OCCASION?

They perform whatever they feel like presenting. We coordinate provide them a multinational podium where people from different countries performs a wide variety of cultural representation. On International Mother Language Day, we are not only celebrating our own language but also uplifting all languages in the world

February, at 3 PM, we gather in front of Central Shaheed Minar and perform and later we go to Shilpakala Academy premises.

WHAT ARE YOUR PLANS FOR 2019?

We have some special projects in 2019. We are working to develop 'Zila Shilpakala Academy' in all districts. We have another project

of building Cultural Complexes in the name of on 12 great Bengali personalities. Moreover, we have plans for building Cultural Centres in 70 Upazilas. The 'Cultural Complex' project has already been submitted and awaiting approval. But our most exclusive project will be 'Dhaka Opera House'. The budget of this project is BDT 6000 crore. We will start this project in 2019. This will be an iconic cultural centre of international standard. We are very excited about this project.

ON INTERNATIONAL MOTHER LANGUAGE DAY, BANGLADESHI EMBASSIES IN DIFFERENT COUNTRIES ARRANGE CULTURAL PROGRAMS? DO THEY RECEIVE ANY GUIDANCE FROM BANGLADESH SHILPAKALA ACADEMY?

We proposed to open Shilpakala Academy branches in different countries. The proposal hasn't been approved yet. But, it would be a great if we have this plan implemented. The good thing is, government has a plan of constructing four cultural centres in London, New York, Delhi and Kolkata. We hope that this plan will be implemented soon.



BANGLADESH SHILPAKALA ACADEMY