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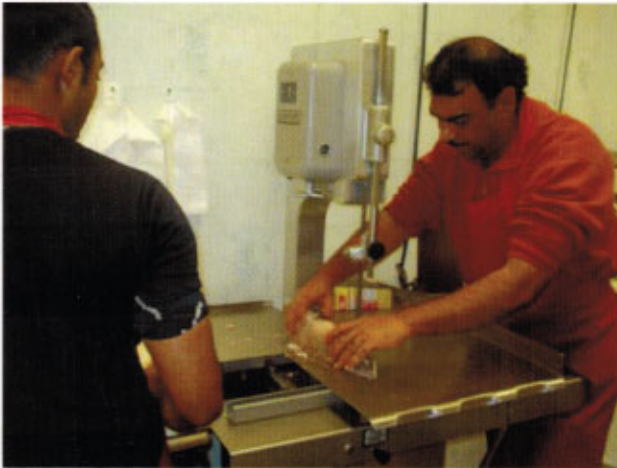
**International Mother Language Day Magazine  
Edmonton Edition**

*A Publication by the Bangladesh PressClub Centre of Alberta*



**21st February 2015**

প্রবাসে বসে পাচ্ছেন বাংলাদেশের মাছ, শাক-সবজী, মসলা এবং রকমারী রান্নার উপকরন। চাহিদার সাথে আমরা নিয়ে আসছি আপনাদের পছন্দের পণ্য। সপরিবার আসুন, পছন্দের জিনিষটি বেছে নিন। হালাল মাংস এবং সুস্বাদু মাছের নির্ভরযোগ্য প্রতিষ্ঠান।



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## Message from BPCA's President



*Delwar Jahid*

Ekushey - February 21st is a unique event in world history where a number of Bengali people have made the ultimate sacrifice, giving their lives for the recognition of their mother language Bangla.

The 21st of February is recognized through UNESCO's declaration as International Mother Language Day. This has brought fresh glory and respect to Bangladesh as a country, which is making a noteworthy pace towards peace, progress and success.

International Mother Language Day celebrates the linguistic and cultural diversity together with multilingualism as a force for peace and sustainable development. On the eve of that day we are committed to work towards achieving the goals on the maintainable agenda of development, diversity, open dialogue, mutual understanding, and innovation.

We are encouraging all types of media, be it print, audiovisual or electronic to pick up and distribute the message on 21st February and to support the research on preservation of native languages of Canada. The Bangladesh media has published numerous articles



on how this day is celebrated in various parts of Canada.

The focus on awareness in form of activities and the celebration of the events surrounding International Mother Language Day in the media will help to increase and highlight the value of multi-linguistic learning here in Canada.

Any type of publication and the increasing number of information available in the Internet dedicated to International Mother Language Day (e.g. our Initiative at

[www.motherlanguageday.ca](http://www.motherlanguageday.ca)) may become a spark of inspiration for our younger generations and our children to cherish our cultural heritage and languages.

Let us join together to promote everyone's mother language, to show respect to linguistic diversity and multi-lingualism as a key component in our struggle to build a better world for all.

*Delwar Jahid,  
President of BPCA*

### **Who is the Bangladesh PressClub Centre of Alberta (BPCA)?**

The Bangladesh PressClub Centre of Alberta is a not-for-profit organization founded in April 24, 2014 by a group of interested journalists led by the editor of Samajkantha Online Inc., Delwar Jahid.

The organization is dedicated to creating a cohesive and effective voice of journalists, and make positive differences in the lives of media people and our community.

Our mission is to help and assist the media community in general, and to

provide our members with professional, educational, social, cultural and recreational activities. We strive to build a strong community with focus on professional enrichment, peace, progress and prosperity.



## Editors' Note from Andy Strohkirch



*Andy Strohkirch, Shores Canada Ltd.*

The way we define our culture, heritage and the way we develop our language is determined not only by the past and traditions of our people, and by our physical area, but moreso it is defined by the individual perception of our environ-

ment, be it what we hear, see, experience or feel. A major influence on our development of these values is based and shaped by the behaviour and traditions of the people who accompany us through life and especially at the early stages, when we grow up.

As a result the bare definition of our culture and heritage may in some points substantially differ from the understanding of other generations, like e.g. our grandparents, parents, children or grandchildren. The "world", and with it our environment is constantly changing and evolving, and so is the impact on us, our education, opinions, deeds, our way of life, arts, and so on. With it comes a constant development and even change in language.

If we accept the impact of the different perceptual worlds between people as given fact, we need to be aware that the definition of culture and heritage of an



ethnic group is really a sum of the definitions of many individuals, and that we should strive to include the different characterizations between generations into our own definition of culture and heritage to gain a greater understanding of ourselves and our people.

When I take a brief look on today's community structures, and the offer these communities are holding for their people, I cannot but notice two developments which are worth a thought.

Many communities are segmented into different subgroups or -communities to address a distinct group of people within their cultural and ethnic group. Why did these groups build in the first place, and why is there no unity between groups? I think, this might underly upon the different definitions of culture and heritage our people carry.

The second development I noticed is that an often practiced conduct may be the almost overrepresented inclusion of ageold traditions into cultural groups and organizations, and in some circumstances the most likely accidental oblivion to include most modern aspects of culture into the mix. Culture, which is lived, maintained, or developed by our young generations. It could be a nice

thought that bestowing attention to these circumstances could bring unity to our people!

Our current task at hand, the preservation and celebration of our culture and heritage, is holding the wonderful opportunity to consider new ways of understanding our people, and the influence of our physical and temporal environments.

Andy Strohkirch,  
Shores Canada Ltd.

### **BPCA's Mission on International Mother Language Day**

Our mission is to bring the people of all nations together, to celebrate each and everyone's mother language, because we think the importance to take care of this heritage is one, which affects us all.

We also want to strengthen the day of celebration, the International Mother Language Day on February 21st, by reaching out to our political and philosophical pioneers.

## Editors' Note from Syfur Hasan



Syfur Hasan

### I recommend it...

আমি কি ভুলিতে পারি।

সাইফুর হাসান

অমর একুশে ফেব্রুয়ারি, আমি কি ভুলিতে পারি। আশুনবারা  
দ্রোহ আর বাঙালির জাগরণের এ দিনটি. ভাষা আন্দোলনের

স্মারক মহান এ দিনটি. যে দিনটি আবার বিশ্ব দরবারে উচু  
করেছে আমাদের বাঙ্গালী জাতির শির. রক্তস্নাত ভাষা  
আন্দোলনের স্মারক মহান শহীদ দিবস. সারাবিশ্বে আজ  
আন্তর্জাতিক মাতৃভাষা দিবস হিসেবে স্বীকৃত।

মুক্তিযুদ্ধের ভিত- ভাষা আন্দোলন ইতিহাসের অনন্য গৌরবের  
দিন. মাতৃভাষার জন্য রাজপথে বুকের তাজা রক্ত ঢেলে  
দেওয়ার পৃথিবীর ইতিহাসে অনন্য এদিন। বাংলাকে রাষ্ট্রভাষা  
করার দাবি নিয়ে যে সংগ্রামের শুরু তা পৃথিবীর সকল মানুষের  
প্রান ছোয়া ভাষা মাতৃভাষার অধিকারকে সমন্বিত করেছে।  
জাগরণের মহাশক্তির প্রেরণার প্রতীক হয়েছে এ দিন।  
আমার ভাইয়ের রক্তে রাঙানো একুশে ফেব্রুয়ারি, আমি কি  
ভুলিতে পারি এ গানে উদ্বেলিত হবে বাঙ্গালী শুধু দেশ নয়  
প্রবাসে ও।

যারা বায়ান্নের একুশেতে ঢাকার রাজপথে প্রাণ উৎসর্গ করেছেন  
সেই সালাম, জব্বার, সফিউদ্দিন, রফিক, বরকত সহ বাংলার  
বীর তরুণদের স্মরণ সালাম। সেই মহান শহীদ দিবসে  
আমাদের অঙ্গীকার শুভবোধের, জুলুম ও অন্যায়ের বিরুদ্ধে  
প্রতিবাদ, পশ্চাৎপদতা-তুচ্ছতা-গোঁড়ামি আর সংকীর্ণতার  
বিরুদ্ধে আমরা সকলেই ঐক্যবদ্ধ।

একুশেতে বাঙালি জাতিসত্তা বিকাশের যে সংগ্রামের সূচনা  
হয়েছিল, মুক্তিযুদ্ধের গৌরবময় পথ বেয়ে স্বাধীন বাংলাদেশের  
অভ্যুদয়ের মধ্য দিয়ে তা চূড়ান্ত পরিণতি লাভ করেছে, নিজস্ব





ভাষা ও সংস্কৃতি রক্ষার সংগ্রামে বিশ্বের সব জাতিগোষ্ঠীর মাঝে একুশে এক অভূতপূর্ব প্রেরণা। সে চেতনাকে তুলে ধরতে বাংলাদেশ প্রেসক্লাব অব আলবার্টার পতাকাতে আমরা সকলে ঐক্যবদ্ধ।

একুশে আজও স্বহিমায় সমুজ্জ্বল। ভাষার জন্য বাঙালির বিরল এ আত্মত্যাগকে আমরা প্রবাসেও যথাযোগ্য মর্যাদায় তুলে ধরবো।

“The limits of my language mean the limits of my world.”

*Ludwig Wittgenstein*

### **BCPA's Initiative "Celebration of Mother Language in Canada"**

In the same way that biodiversity is important for the balance of life on our planet, language diversity may be important for the balance of cultures. An imbalance of cultures would result in the loss of some cultures. The fact that each high culture before us has come to an end, could be a warning that the diversity of culture itself is needed for mankind's sole survival.

Mother Language Day, a date that was proclaimed by UNESCO in 1999, could function as a reminder to us, how important the appreciation of our own culture and origin is, and that it's important to honour and celebrate everybody else's heritage

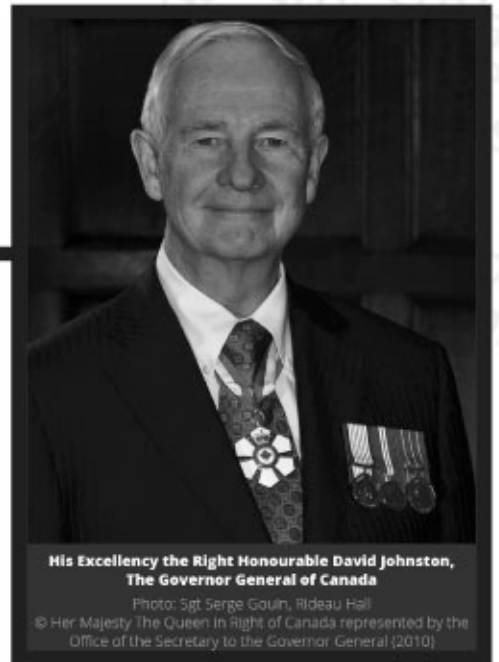
and culture as well.

Our mission is to bring the people of all nations together, to celebrate each and everyone's mother language, because we think the importance to take care of this heritage is one, which affects us all. We also want to strengthen the day of celebration, the International Mother Language Day on February 21st, by reaching out to our political and philosophical pioneers.

BCPA understands its organization as a hub for information about the International Mother Language Day. We invite every-one interested in this cause to connect with us.



THE GOVERNOR GENERAL - LE GOUVERNEUR GÉNÉRAL



**His Excellency the Right Honourable David Johnston,  
The Governor General of Canada**

Photo: Sgt. Serge Gouin, Rideau Hall  
© Her Majesty The Queen in Right of Canada represented by the  
Office of the Secretary to the Governor General (2010)

I am delighted to extend my best wishes to everyone marking International Mother Language Day.

One of Canada's greatest strengths is its rich diversity. We are known throughout the world as a shining example of a truly multicultural society, where respect for others is paramount. I am filled with tremendous pride when I visit communities across the country and meet with citizens whose origins are as varied as the languages they speak.

Today—and every day, in fact—Canadians are free to celebrate their native languages and to share their traditions and customs with one another. In doing so, we can all learn how much we have in common.

I wish all of you the very best.

David Johnston

February 2015



The Rt. Hon. Stephen Harper,  
Prime Minister of Canada



PRIME MINISTER • PREMIER MINISTRE

*I am pleased to extend my warmest greetings to everyone celebrating International Mother Language Day.*

*Canada's own linguistic diversity is represented by two Official Languages — English and French— together with the mother tongues of Aboriginal Canadians, and the ancestral languages of newcomers to our country.*

*Observed since 2000, International Mother Language Day promotes linguistic and cultural diversity and multilingualism. Today's special event, complete with exhibitors, vendors and performances by musicians, storytellers and other artists, offers a chance to celebrate and to increase awareness of our diverse linguistic traditions.*

*I would like to commend the members of the Bangladesh PressClub Centre of Alberta for their efforts in bringing this celebration to the community and for their commitment to promoting respect for our linguistic heritage.*

*Please accept my best wishes for an enjoyable and memorable day of activities.*

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to be "Stephen Harper".

The Rt. Hon. Stephen Harper, P.C., M.P.

OTTAWA  
2015



### Message from the Lieutenant Governor of Alberta



As Her Majesty the Queen's representative in Alberta, it is my pleasure to join in marking the annual celebration of International Mother Language Day.

I have had the good fortune during my lifetime to travel around the world, encountering and learning from many different cultures and lifestyles. This exposure to other nationalities opens your eyes and your heart to endless possibilities, meaningful relationships, and to promoting and fostering a more inclusive, happier and peaceful world.

We are lucky to have this diversity at home, right here in Alberta, in Canada. As a multicultural and inclusive nation, we allow ourselves the opportunity to learn about each other, preserving each of our cultures and developing a deeper understanding of not only others, but ourselves also. Our range of languages – spoken, written and physical – are abundant and plentiful. They are our most powerful instruments in relating with each other. Nelson Mandela once said,

*"If you talk to a man in a language he understands, that goes to his head.  
If you talk to him in his language, that goes to his heart."*

Our mother language is an important part of our identity, our history and our future, and deserves to be celebrated. Thank you to the Bangladesh PressClub Centre of Alberta and its members and volunteers for highlighting and observing this important event.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'D. Ethell'.

His Honour Col. (Ret'd) The Honourable Donald S. Ethell OC OMM AOE MSC CD LLD  
Lieutenant Governor of Alberta



**Message From  
Honourable Gene Zwozdesky**  
Speaker – Alberta Legislative Assembly  
MLA – Edmonton Mill Creek



## International Mother Language Day Message

*for the Bangladesh Heritage and Ethnic Society of Alberta:*

International Mother Language Day, also known as *Shohid Dibôsh*, advocates for multilingual education and tolerance, acknowledging the significant role that language plays within society.

Language is a critical component of one's identity and culture. By recognizing mother languages, we cultivate understanding – which in turn helps create more inclusive societies and a world richer in cultural experiences.

Throughout the course of history many individuals have fought to protect linguistic rights and freedoms; so today, as we celebrate linguistic diversity, we also honour their struggles for language preservation.

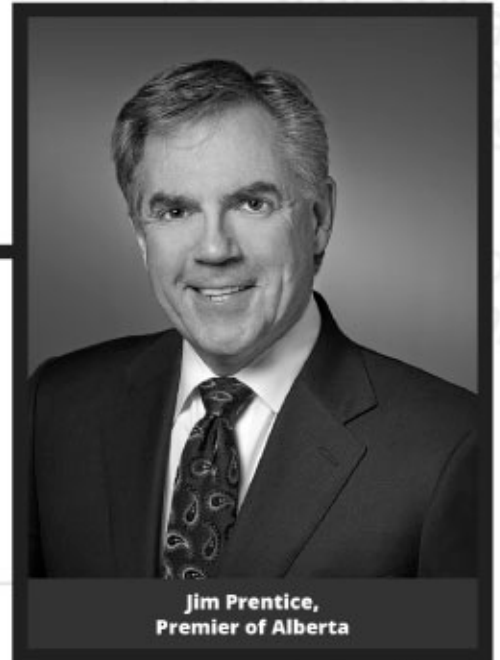
On behalf of all Members of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta, I want to congratulate and thank the Bangladesh Heritage and Ethnic Society of Alberta for marking this important occasion. Thank you for your continued support of language and cultural diversity in Alberta.

Honourable Gene Zwozdesky  
Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta



Premier of Alberta

Office of the Premier, 307 Legislature Building, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada T5K 2B6



**Jim Prentice,**  
Premier of Alberta

### Message from Honourable Jim Prentice Premier of Alberta

*On behalf of the Government of Alberta, I am pleased to extend greetings to all those observing International Mother Language Day 2015.*

*Our province is very fortunate to have people from various cultural backgrounds call Alberta home. This diversity gives our province great strength, as it provides us with many different perspectives, enabling us to foster an environment of opportunity while promoting cross-cultural understanding. The mother language of each of these cultures is a crucial part of their history and traditions, and learning and preserving these languages is a powerful way to reinforce the empowering diversity of Alberta.*

*My sincere thanks go out to the Bangladesh PressClub Centre of Alberta for the work they have done to promote International Mother Language Day in our province. You are helping Albertans protect and promote their rich ethnic history.*

Jim Prentice

February 21, 2015



February 21, 2015

**Thomas Mulcair**  
NDP + NDP

HOUSE OF COMMONS  
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES  
OTTAWA, ONTARIO | K1A 0A6

thomas.mulcair@parl.gc.ca

Dear Friends,

I am pleased to offer my warmest greetings to members of the Bangladesh PressClub Centre of Alberta (BPCA) and the Bangladesh Heritage and Ethnic Society of Alberta (BHESA) on International Mother Language Day 2015. Thank you for your continuous work to promote the importance of this day, and for fostering community spirit on behalf of Bangladeshi Canadians.

Canada is proud of its rich cultural and linguistic diversity, we value the importance of preserving mother languages in our multicultural society. International Mother Language Day inspires us to work towards building an even more inclusive and welcoming community for all.

I would also like to pay tribute to Canada's Bangladeshi community, I applaud your community's efforts to ensure Bangladesh heritage continues to flourish in our country.

Please accept my best wishes for a wonderful celebration!

Sincerely,

Thomas Mulcair  
Leader of the Official Opposition \ Chef de l'Opposition officielle



**Maureen Kubinec,**  
Minister of Culture and Tourism



ALBERTA  
CULTURE AND TOURISM  
Office of the Minister  
M.L.A. Sarbad-Mercutio-Wislock

**Message from Honourable Maureen Kubinec**  
Minister of Culture and Tourism

As Minister responsible for culture and tourism in Alberta, I am pleased to extend greetings to everyone observing International Mother Language Day.

The value and importance of preserving mother languages is vital to enhancing the vibrancy and diversity of our province. It is a way to connect us to our past, to highlight the traditions and customs of our parents and to preserve the cultural heritage of our ancestors. Commemorating this day is an opportunity to nourish those roots. Not only will this help nurture a deeper appreciation for the past, but it will help inspire continued interest in mother languages, helping to preserve them for the future.

I want to thank the members of the Bangladesh PressClub Centre of Alberta for your work raising awareness and promoting Bangladeshi culture and traditions. Your commitment to raising the profile of International Mother Language Day exemplifies how multiculturalism continues to enrich our province's cultural identity.

Maureen Kubinec  
Minister



**Thomas Mulcair,**  
Leader of the Official Opposition



Flor Marcelino,  
Manitoba Minister of Multiculturalism and Literacy

### Greetings

Warm greetings to everyone participating in the International Mother Language Day 2015.

I thank the organizers of this event for encouraging people to play an active role in promoting awareness of mother language and cultural diversity. Language is one of the most powerful ways to preserve and promote one's culture for future generations to learn and appreciate. We are blessed to live in a society where multiculturalism is encouraged and celebrated.

Through International Mother Language Day, we have an opportunity to gain knowledge, share and raise awareness about respecting and celebrating our differences. Let us rejoice in the rich diversity Mother Language brings.

I wish you continued success.

**Flor Marcelino, Minister  
Manitoba Multiculturalism and Literacy**



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY  
ALBERTA


December 19, 2014



Sohail Quadri, MLA  
Edmonton-Mill Woods  
Legislative Secretary to the Premier

### Greetings for Mother Language Day

On behalf of Premier Prentice and all of my colleagues at Alberta Legislature, I wish you glad tidings during this festive season! I am so honoured to be a part of your celebration for International Mother Language Day, with the Bangladesh Press Club. This day was created to promote the preservation and protection of all languages used by peoples of the world. A mother tongue is more than just an accent, dialect, or language; it is an identity. A mother language is the most powerful instrument a speaker has to preserve, develop and share their cultural heritage. We are able to learn and carry on the teachings of our elders, allowing us to pass on the traditions and lessons that we originated from our home countries. By taking part in this day we are embracing linguistic diversity and multilingual education here in Alberta in order to develop a fuller awareness for cultural traditions throughout the world. THANK YOU – SHUKRIA and DHANYAWAD.

  
Sohail Quadri  
MLA Edmonton-Millwoods  
Legislative Secretary to the Premier  
#101, 9807-34 Ave, Edmonton, AB, T6E 5X9  
Ph: 780-414-1000 | [edmonton.millwoods@assembly.ab.ca](mailto:edmonton.millwoods@assembly.ab.ca)



Sohail Quadri,  
Legislative Secretary to the Premier





# *A Brief History of International Mother Language Day*

*by Delwar Jahid*

Ekushey - the 21<sup>st</sup> of February is a name of a movement, a name of the day of mourning, of a day of pride, of a day of reflection, and action, which advocates a greater socio-cultural cooperation among the nations of the world. A day that benefits cultural diversity of the world and creates a unique opportunity to celebrate different cultures, opposing to monoculture in the global arena. In Bangladesh the day is known as the Language Martyr's Day. Sixty three years ago on this day of February 21<sup>st</sup> among others, Salam, Barkat, Jabbar, Shafiur and Rafiq, sacrificed their precious lives for the honor and protection of mother language, Bangla in Bangladesh.

At the initiative of the Bangladesh government, it was first announced by Paris-based United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) on November 17, 1999 adopting 21<sup>st</sup> February as International Mother Language Day. For the first time since

2000, 21<sup>st</sup> February has been observed as International Mother Language Day. The observance of the day formally recognized by the United Nations General Assembly in its resolution establishing 2008 as the International Year of Languages.

Ekushey - the 21<sup>st</sup> of February is a milestone in recognition of linguistic rights, those are also the human and civil rights concerning the individual and collective rights to choose the language or languages for communication in a private or public atmosphere. Other parameters for analyzing linguistic rights include the degree of territoriality, amount of positivity, orientation in terms of conservation, and obviousness.

Linguistic rights became more and more prominent throughout the course of history as language came to be increasingly seen as a part of nationhood.



Although policies and legislation involving language have been in effect in early European history, these were often cases where a language was being imposed upon people while other languages or dialects were neglected. Most of the initial literature on linguistic rights came from countries where linguistic and/or national divisions grounded in linguistic diversity have resulted in linguistic rights playing a vital role in maintaining stability. However, it was not until the 1900s that linguistic rights gained official status in politics and international accords.\*

\* Wikipedia: Linguistic rights: History/  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Linguistic\\_rights#Language\\_rights\\_2B\\_human\\_rights\\_3D\\_linguistic\\_human\\_rights\\_28LHR.29](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Linguistic_rights#Language_rights_2B_human_rights_3D_linguistic_human_rights_28LHR.29)  
retrieved on February 11, 2015.

Before the making of Pakistan in 1947, there had been strong demands from an intellectual level that Bangla be made the state language of Pakistan. Dr. Muhammad Shahidullah, an eminent academic, suggested in July 1947 that, after the departure of the British from India, Bangla could be made as the state language of the new state.

Shortly after the creation of Pakistan, at the first session of the Pakistan Legislative Assembly Dhirendranath Datta's made it clear that Bangla should be made as the state language of Pakistan..

Dhirendranath Datta's speech on February 23, 1948 to the Pakistan Constituent Assembly in Karachi, presided over by Mohammad Ali Jinnah, was the first formal articulation of the demand for Bengali to be made one of the state languages of Pakistan. This culminated in the Language Movement of 1952 and the martyrdom of the Language Heroes. This movement is regarded by many as the first step towards the Liberation Movement leading to independence of Bangladesh in 1971. For this reason, Dhirendranath Datta's speech is regarded as one of the most important events in the history of East Pakistan and Bangladesh.

*"Sir, in moving this — the motion that stands in my name — I can assure the House that I do so not in a spirit of narrow Provincialism, but, Sir, in the spirit that this motion receives the fullest consideration at the hands of members.*

*I know, Sir, that Bengali is a provincial language, but, so far our state is concerned, it is the language of the majority of the people of the state. So although it is a provincial language, as a language of the majority of the people of the state it stands on a different footing. Out of six crores and ninety lakhs [69 million] of people of people inhabiting this State, 4 crores and 40 lakhs*



*44 million of people speak the Bengali language. So, Sir, what should be the State language of the State of Pakistan? The State language of the State should be the language which is used by the majority of the people of the State, and for that, Sir, I consider that Bengali language is a lingua franca of our State.*

*It may be contended with a certain amount of force that even in our sister dominion the provincial language have not got the status of a lingua franca because in her sister dominion of India the proceedings of the Constituent Assembly is conducted in Hindustani, Hindi or Urdu or English. It is not conducted in the Bengali language but so far as the Bengali is concerned out of 30 cores of people inhabiting that sister dominion two and a half crores speak the Bengali language. Hindustani, Hindi or Urdu has been given an honoured place in the sister dominion because the majority of the people of the Indian Dominion speak that language.*

*So we are to consider that in our state it is found that the majority of the people of the Indian Dominion speak that language. So we are to consider that in our State it is found that the majority of the people of the State do speak the Bengali language then Bengali should have an honored place even in the Central Government."*

[The Pakistan government never forgot Dhirendranath's continued rebelliousness of state insight and dictatorship. At the beginning of the Bangladesh Liberation War, he was arrested from his Comilla house on 29 March 1971, three days after the arrest of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, and taken with his son, Dilip Kumar Datta, to Comilla Moynamoti Cantonment and tortured to death. He is also often referred to as "Shaheed" (martyr) as a sign of respect]

### **Chronology of Language Movement**

September 15, 1947:

Tamuddun Majlis (cultural society, an organization by scholars, writers and journalists) demanded Bengali as one of the state languages of Pakistan.

November 1947:

Educator Fazlur Rahman opposed Urdu as the only national language in the Pakistan Education Conference.

February 23, 1948:

Dhirendra Nath Dutta, a Bengali opposition member, moves a resolution in the first session of Pakistan's Constituent Assembly for recognizing Bengali as a state language along with Urdu and English.

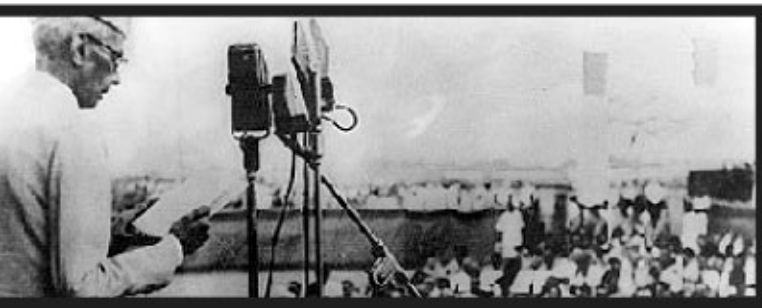


March 1948:

A committee of action of the students of Dhaka University is set up with the objective of achieving national status of Bengali.

March 21, 1948:

Mohammad Ali Jinnah, the founder of Pakistan and its first Governor General, declares in Dhaka University convocation that "The State language of Pakistan is going to be Urdu and no other language. Anyone who tries to mislead you is really an enemy of Pakistan." This remark evoked an angry protest from Bengali youth.



*Muhammad Ali jinnah in Dhaka on March 21, 1948*

January 26, 1952:

In a public meeting at Paltan Maidan (Paltan Field), Dhaka, Prime Minister Nazimuddin declares that Urdu alone will be the state language of Pakistan.

January 31, 1952:

A broad-based All-Party Committee of Action (APCA) is constituted with Kazi Golam Mahboob as Convener and Mau-

lana Bhashani as Chairman, and with two representatives.

February 3, 1952:

In a protest meeting, the committee of action decided to hold a general strike on 21 February.

February 20, 1952:

An order was promulgated under Section 144 of the Criminal Procedure Code prohibiting processions and meetings in Dhaka City.

February 21, 1952:

The students of Dhaka University decided to defy the official ban in a meeting and decided to protest in peaceful procession. The police opened fire on students in front of the Medical College Hostel. Mohammad Salauddin, Abdul Jabbar, Abul Barkat, Rafiquddin Ahmed, Abdus Salam were among those who became martyrs.

May 7, 1954:

The Pakistan government recognizes Bengal as a state language.

Nov 17, 1999:

UNESCO proclaimed 21 Feb as International Mother Language Day. It is an honor bestowed by the international community on the language movement of Bangladesh.



(Note: Consulting sources: A Thesis by Mohd. Jubayer Shahadat Submitted to the Graduate School of the University of Massachusetts Amherst in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of MASTER OF ARCHITECTURE in September 2011. <http://scholarworks.umass.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1780&context=theses>)

Until 2000, the celebration of the mother language day was limited to Bangladesh and Bangla speaking peoples around the world. With the proclamation of the day as the International Mother Language Day by the United Nations in 1999, the day has been given its due universal height and it has become a pride of Bangladesh. The essence of the Ekushey will always give us inspiration to forge ahead as a self-governing nation that refuses to obeisance its head to unholy and diabolical powers trying to suppress identity of a nation.

The idea of the day came from a BC, Canada based Organization named "Mother Language Lovers of the World". Including Bengali, English, Kutchi, Cantonese, German, Filipino, and Hindi language speaking members are in that organization. In 1999 they urged the UNO and the UNESCO to declare 21<sup>st</sup> February as the International Mother

Language Day. The UNESCO in reply informed them that such proposal could only be considered if it had come from the National Commission for UNESCO by any member-state. The said organization immediate after informed The Ministry of Education of Bangladesh over telephone and as a result the then government sent a Proposal to UNESCO from Bangladesh maintaining all the procedural formalities and after necessary review UNESCO has adopted the historic resolution.

Through the recognition International Mother Language Day has opened linguistic and cultural rights for all speakers of all languages all over the world now it caught the eyes of the world, and created an opportunity to explore Bangladeshi history and culture. The sacrifices made by Rafiqul Islam and his team from Mother Language Lovers of the World and the then Bangladeshi Ambassador to France Syed Muazzem Ali, Dr Sadat Hossain, Education Minister ASHK Sadek, Dr Sayedur Rahman Khan, High Commission for the People's Republic of Bangladesh, London, who was then the VC of Rajshahi University and many other individuals and organizations. The efforts and dedication contributed a lot towards the recognition of this day.



The Bangladesh Liberation War was rooted to the language movement of Bangladesh, Ethnic and linguistic discrimination was a key factor in the rise of Bengali nationalist sentiment that led by Bangabandhu Sheikh Muzibur Rahman. Language controversy, disparities, political differences, poor response to the humanitarian concern and a planned military action carried out by Army curbed the movement into a war

of Independence.

The Message for the International Mother Language Day is to join forces to promote linguistic diversity and promote multilingualism by the all nations of the world to build a terror free society and a life of dignity for all.

*Writer: Delwar Jahid, President of Bangladesh PressClub Centre of Alberta, Canada.*

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# Bengali Language and Culture Abroad

by Sheikh Jalil

## প্রবাসে বাংলা ভাষা ও সংস্কৃতি চর্চা

-শেখ জলিল

একটি দেশের সংস্কৃতি সেই দেশের সামগ্রিক জীবনচর্চারই প্রতিচ্ছবি। জাতির ইতিহাস, ঐতিহ্য, মানুষের জীবনধারা, তাদের সাহিত্য, সংস্কৃতি, দর্শন, ধ্যান-ধারণা, তাদের সুখ-দুঃখ, আশা-আকাঙ্ক্ষা, মন-মানসিকতা-- এক কথায় সমগ্র সমাজ জীবনের চেহারা একটি পরিশুদ্ধ আয়নায় প্রতিফলিত হয়ে ওঠে। সংস্কৃতি কি? ইংরেজি শব্দ কালচার(ঈশংৎব)-এর প্রতিশব্দ হলো সংস্কৃতি। সংস্কৃতি হলো ঐতিহ্যেরই ঐতিহাসিক ও ধারাবাহিক রূপ। পরিশীলিত ও পরিশুদ্ধ জীবন চেতনাই সংস্কৃতি। অন্যদিকে সংস্কৃতির মূলকথা হলো- ব্যক্তিসত্তা ও জনসত্তার প্রাণময় ও গতিময় বিকাশ সাধন। আর এ কারণেই বলা হয়েছে- মানুষ হিসেবে মানুষের আসল পরিচয় পরিচয়ই সংস্কৃতি।

আমাদের মাতৃভাষা বাংলার ইতিহাস ও ঐতিহ্য হাজার বছরের বেশি পুরনো। খ্রিস্টীয় প্রথম সহস্রাব্দের শেষ প্রান্তে এসে মধ্য ভারতীয় আর্য ভাষাগুলোর বিভিন্ন অপভ্রংশ থেকে যে আধুনিক ভারতীয় ভাষাগুলোর উদ্ভব ঘটে, তাদের মধ্যে বাংলা একটি। কোন কোন ভাষাবিদ তারও অনেক আগে, ৫০০ খ্রিস্টাব্দের দিকে, বাংলার জন্ম হয় বলে মত পোষণ করেন। তবে এ ভাষাটি তখন পর্যন্ত কোন সুস্থির রূপ ধারণ করেনি; সে সময় এর বিভিন্ন লিখিত ও ঔপভাষিক রূপ পাশাপাশি বিদ্যমান ছিল। যেমন, ধারণা করা হয় ৬ষ্ঠ শতাব্দীর দিকে মাগধি



Sheikh Jalil

অপভ্রংশ থেকে মাগধি অবহট্টের উদ্ভব ঘটে। এই অবহট্ট ও বাংলা কিছু সময় ধরে সহাবস্থান করছিল। বাংলা ভাষার ইতিহাসকে সাধারণত তিন ভাগে ভাগ করা হয়:

প্রাচীন বাংলা (৯০০/১০০০ খ্রিস্টাব্দ- ১৪০০ খ্রিস্টাব্দ) লিখিত নিদর্শনের মধ্যে আছে চর্যাপদ, ভক্তিমূলক গান; আমি, তুমি, ইত্যাদি সর্বনামের আবির্ভাব; ত্রিন্মাভিভক্তি -ইলা, -ইবা, ইত্যাদি। ওড়িয়া ও অসমীয়া এই পর্বে বাংলা থেকে আলাদা হয়ে যায়।

মধ্য বাংলা (১৪০০- ১৮০০ খ্রিস্টাব্দ) এ সময়কার গুরুত্বপূর্ণ লিখিত নিদর্শন চণ্ডীদাসের শ্রীকৃষ্ণকীর্তন; শব্দের শেষে “অ” ধ্বনির বিলোপ; যৌগিক ক্রিম্যর প্রচলন; ফার্সি প্রভাব। কোন কোন ভাষাবিদ এই যুগকে আদি ও অর্ড্য এই দুই ভাগে ভাগ করেন।

আধুনিক বাংলা (১৮০০ খ্রিস্টাব্দ থেকে) ক্রিয়া ও সর্বনামের সংক্ষেপন (যেমন তাহার ? তার; করিয়াছিল ? করেছিল)।

সপ্তম শতাব্দীতে লিখিত ‘চর্যাপদ’ বাংলা ভাষার সবচেয়ে প্রাচীনতম নিদর্শন হিসেবে স্বীকৃত। মধ্যযুগে বাংলা ভাষার মূল উপজীব্য ছিলো কাব্য, লোকগীতি ও পালাগান। ঊনবিংশ ও বিংশ শতাব্দীতে এসে বাংলা কাব্য ও গদ্যরীতির ব্যাপক উৎকর্ষ সাধিত হয়। নোবেলজয়ী বিশ্বকবি ‘রবীন্দ্রনাথ ঠাকুর’ ও আমাদের জাতীয় কবি ‘কাজী নজরুল ইসলাম’ বাংলা ভাষার উন্নয়নে ব্যাপক ভূমিকা রাখেন। বাংলাদেশের লোকগীতির ভাণ্ডারও বিশাল। বিশেষ করে ‘মৈমনসিংহ গীতিকার’ নাম এক্ষেত্রে উল্লেখযোগ্য।

আজকের পৃথিবীতে চতুর্থ ভাষা হিসেবে চর্চিত কিংবা উচ্চারিত হয়ে এক উঁচু আসনে আছে আমাদের মাতৃভাষা। বীরত্ব আর সাহসের প্রতীক এই ভাষা আজ উচ্চারিত পৃথিবীর দেশে দেশে অর্ধকোটি বাঙালির মুখে মুখে। ব্রিটেনের অর্ধমিলিয়ন বাঙালিসহ ইউরোপ-আমেরিকায় অভিবাসিত বাঙালিদের পরবর্তী প্রজন্মের কাছে এ ভাষা আদৌ উচ্চারিত হবে কি হবে না এ প্রশ্ন এখন আমাদের ভাবায়। যতই সময় গড়াচ্ছে, ততই যেন শেকড়মুখী হওয়ার প্রবণতা কমছে বৈ বাড়ছে না। আর তাই শেকড়ের সন্ধানে থাকা এই সময়ের মানুষদের অর্থাৎ আমাদেরই ভাবতে হবে। সংগ্রামের ইতিহাস আর ঐতিহ্যকে সময়োপযোগী করেই রাখতে হবে, তথ্য সম্রাজ্যে নিজেকে বিস্তৃত করতে হবে। তবেই না গবের ইতিহাস উচ্চারিত হবে যুগ থেকে যুগান্তরে, প্রজন্ম থেকে প্রজন্মান্তরে।

বাঙালি মাতৃভাষাগত প্রাণ। ভাষার জন্য রক্ত দেয়া জাতি আর

আছে কিনা আমার জানা নেই। বাঙালি জাতির পরিচয়টাও মূলতঃ ভাষার কারণে, রক্তের মিলের কারণে নয়। অনেক জাতির লোকেরাই বিভিন্ন উপলক্ষে বাংলায় এসে বসতি স্থাপন করে। আস্তে আস্তে তারা এখানকার ভাষা ব্যবহার করতে করতে বাঙালি হয়ে গিয়েছেন। এজন্য বাঙালিরা বিভিন্ন রক্তের, রঙের, আকৃতির এবং উচ্চতার। শুধুই ভাষাতেই একতা। তাই এ ভাষার প্রতি তাদের বিরাট ভালবাসা। বাঙালিরা যেখানেই থাকেন না কেন ভাষার প্রতি দরদ তাদের সবসময়ই থাকে। যারা বিদেশে স্থায়ীভাবে বসবাস করার জন্য চলে এসেছেন তারাও চান মাতৃভাষার নিয়মিত চর্চা করতে। তারা চান তাদের সন্তানরাও যারা অনেকেই বাংলাদেশের নাগরিক নয় বাংলা শিখুক। কিন্তু বিদেশে সন্তানদের বাংলা শেখাতে গিয়ে তারা পড়েন বিরাট চ্যালেঞ্জের মুখোমুখি। এ ক্ষেত্রে যে বিষয়গুলো গুরুত্বপূর্ণ সেগুলো হলঃ বাংলার আঞ্চলিক ভাষার বিভিন্নতা, অনেক প্রবাসী বাঙালির বাংলা সম্পর্কে যথার্থ জ্ঞানের অভাব, বাংলা শিখানোর প্রতিষ্ঠানের অভাব, আর সর্বোপরি পরিবেশের প্রভাব।

ভাষা শেখার সবচেয়ে ভাল সময় হচ্ছে জীবনের প্রথম কটি বছর। এ কথা আমার নিজের নয়, বরং ভাষাতাত্ত্বিক ও শিক্ষাবিদদের কথা। ভাষাবিদরা তাদের গবেষণার মাধ্যমে প্রমাণ করেছেন যে, শিশুরা বেশ কটি ভাষা একই সাথে শিখতে পারে যদি তাদের বুদ্ধিবৃত্তিক মতা স্বাভাবিক থাকে (বার্কো গিডসন, ২০০৫)। কিন্তু সেজন্য প্রথমেই প্রয়োজন মাতৃভাষার উপর দক্ষতা। কিন্ডারগার্টেন শুরু করার আগেই শিশুরা যদি তাদের মাতৃভাষায় দক্ষতা অর্জন করতে পারে ও অনর্গল বলতে পারে, তাহলে তার পাশাপাশি অন্য ভাষা শেখাও তাদের জন্য অনেক সহজ হয়ে যায়। ছেলেমেয়েদের বয়স যতো বাড়তে থাকে তাদের পক্ষে অন্য ভাষা শেখা তত কঠিন হতে থাকে। অনেক অভিভাবকরা ভাবেন, বাংলা শিখলে তাদের ছেলেমেয়েরা ইংরেজী বা বিদেশী ভাষায় পারদর্শী হতে পারবে না। তারা যে শুধু ভুল করছেন তাই না, বরং তারা নিজ হাতে ছেলেমেয়েদের একাধিক ভাষা শেখার সুযোগকে একেবারেই বন্ধ করে দিচ্ছেন। তাই ভাষার ব্যাপারে



বাবা-মায়ের সচেতনতার খুব প্রয়োজন। ভাষা শেখার জন্য স্কুলের প্রয়োজন আছে, কিন্তু তাকে এগিয়ে নিতে হলে দরকার বাবা-মা ও পরিবারের সবার একাত্ম অংশগ্রহণ।

বাংলা ভাষা শেখার জন্য অনেকেই বাংলা স্কুলে আসেন। তাদের বাংলা শেখার চেষ্টাকে আরও অর্থবহ করে তুলতে হলে ভাষা শিক্ষার জন্য প্রযুক্তি ও প্রচার মাধ্যমের ব্যবহার করতে হবে। বাংলা শিখতে হলে বাংলা চর্চার আবহ তৈরী করতে হবে। বাসায় বাংলা বলুন। বাইরেও ছেলেমেয়েদের সাথে বাংলায় কথা বলুন। বাঙালি আত্মীয়-স্বজন ও বন্ধু-বান্ধবদেরকেও বাংলায় কথা বলতে অনুপ্রাণিত করুন। বাংলা নাটক ও ছোটদের অনুষ্ঠান দেখতে দিন এবং তাদের সাথে যোগ দিয়ে অনুষ্ঠান উপভোগ করুন। ভাষা শেখার জন্য ফনোলজিকাল এওয়ারনেস তৈরী করতে একটি সমন্বিত কর্মসূচী দরকার। এতে সবার অংশগ্রহণ দরকার। যারা কানাডা ও আমেরিকায় বড়ো হচ্ছে তারা ইংরেজী শিখবে খুব সহজে, কিন্তু তাদেরকে বাংলা শেখানো অনেক কঠিন হবে যদি না আমরা সবাই মিলে অংশগ্রহণ না করি।

সন্তানদের বাংলা শেখানোর ক্ষেত্রে অন্য আরেকটি সমস্যা হলো অধিকাংশ পিতামাতার নিজেদেরই বাংলা সম্পর্কে অজ্ঞতা। কিছু এলাকার লোক আছেন যারা মনে করেন তাদের ভাষাটাই বাংলা থেকে আলাদা। ফলে তারা বাংলা শেখানোর পরিবর্তে ছেলেমেয়েদের তাদের নিজস্ব আঞ্চলিক ভাষাই শুধু শেখান। তাদের মতে তাদের অঞ্চলের ভাষা এক আর সারা বাংলাদেশের ভাষা অন্য আরেকটি। ফলে তারা নিজেদেরকে বাঙালিই ভাবেন না। সুতরাং শুদ্ধ বাংলা শেখানোর কোন প্রয়োজনীয়তা তারা উপলব্ধি করেন না।

সবচেয়ে বড় যে বিষয়টি প্রবাসীদের ছেলেমেয়েদের মাতৃভাষা চর্চার পেছনে অন্তরায় হয়ে দাঁড়ায় তা হলো পরিবেশ। অনেক বাচ্চারা কথা বলতে শুরু করে সুন্দর বাংলা দিয়ে, কিন্তু একটু বড় হলেই আর ওরা বাংলা বলতে চায় না এবং এতে অনভ্যস্ত হয়ে পড়ে। এ সমস্যাটা সবচেয়ে বেশী প্রকট হয়ে পড়ে যখন

তারা স্কুলে যেতে শুরু করে। স্কুলের ভাষা, যা অধিকাংশ ক্ষেত্রেই ইংরেজী, বলেই বাচ্চারা সাচ্ছন্দ্যবোধ করে। তাদের বন্ধু এবং শিক্ষক-শিক্ষিকাদের সাথে ঐ ভাষায় কথা বলতে তারা এত বেশী অভ্যস্ত হয়ে পড়ে যে তারা আর কোনভাবেই বাংলা বলতে পারে না। বরং বাংলা বলতে জোর করার মানে হয় তাদেরকে আযাবে নিষ্ক্ষেপ করার মত।

কিছু কিছু অভিভাবক আছেন যারা বাংলা শেখা বা বলার জন্য সন্তানদের কোন পরিবেশই দেন না। তাঁরা তাদের সন্তানদের মাতৃভাষাই বানিয়ে দেন ইংরেজী। কারন তাদের বাচ্চারা কথা বলতে শুরু করলেই তাঁরা তাদের সাথে ইংরেজীতে কথা বলা পছন্দ করেন, যদিও বাচ্চারা বড় হয়ে তাদের বাবা-মায়ের ইংরেজী উচ্চারণ নিয়ে হাসাহাসি করতেও দ্বিধা করে না। এশ্রেণীর অভিভাবকরা বুঝেন না যে এখনকার বাচ্চারা স্বয়ংক্রিয়ভাবেই ইংরেজী শিখবে। ইংরেজী তাদেরকে বলে শেখাতে হবে না; বরং তাদের যা বলে শিখিয়ে অভ্যেস করাতে হবে তা হলো মাতৃভাষা।

প্রকৃত ব্যাপার হল বিদেশে সন্তানদের বাংলা শেখানো অত্যন্ত কঠিন একটি বিষয়। তবে আন্তরিকতা এবং নিষ্ঠা থাকলে এবং যথাযথ পদক্ষেপ নিলে সন্তানদের মোটামুটি চলনসই বাংলা শেখানো সম্ভব। এক্ষেত্রে পিতামাতাকে সচেতনভাবে পারিবারিক পরিবেশে বাংলার চর্চা করতে হবে। আঞ্চলিকতা বাদ দিয়ে শুদ্ধ চলিত বাংলায় সন্তানদের সাথে ঘরে নিয়মিত কথা বললে তারা তখন অন্য বাঙালি ছেলেমেয়েদের সাথে বাংলা কথা বলার সমস্যায় পড়বে না। ফলে বাংলা বলতে তারা উৎসাহিত হবে। নাহলে তারা বাঙালিদের ভাষার বিভিন্নতা দেখে এ ভাষা বলা থেকে বিরত থাকবে।

বাংলা ভাষা শেখার সুযোগ দিন দিন বাড়ছে। এজন্য বাবা-মায়েরা কম্পিউটার ও ওয়েববগ ব্যবহার করতে পারেন। ইদানীং বাংলা বগ তৈরী করার খুব সহজ ব্যবস্থা হয়েছে, এ ব্যাপারে বিভিন্ন বাংলা বগ ব্যবহার করা যেতে পারে। শিশুদের বিনোদনের জন্য উপযোগী বাংলা বগ তৈরী করতে হবে যাতে



ছেলে-মেয়েরা উপযোগী বিনোদনমূলক গল্প-ছড়া হাতের নাগালে সবসময়ই পেতে পারে। এধরণের ব্যবস্থা সহায়ক রিডিং রিসোর্স তৈরী করবে যা সহজে অভিভাবকরা ব্যবহার করতে পারবেন। মনে রাখতে হবে, বাংলাদেশ আর বাংলা

আমাদের ভাবনায় ও চর্চায় অবিচ্ছেদ্য। তাহলেই হবে বাংলা চর্চা সার্থক এই সুদূর প্রবাসে।

তথ্যসূত্র: বিভিন্ন বাংলা বগ ও ইন্টারনেটের লেখা

## *Interview with Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21*



*(ltr) Darryl Leblanc, Delwar Jahid, Emily Burton*

The cause of the Celebration of Mother Language and the importance of lingual diversity have found recognition in a recent interview between Delwar Jahid, President of the Bangladesh PressClub Centre of Alberta (BPCA) and the Bangladesh Heritage and Ethnic Society of Alberta (BHESA), and Emily Burton, historian of the Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21 located in Halifax, Nova

Scotia.

Ms. Emily Burton expressed her opinion in a communication with BPCA, that the Celebration of Mother Language in Canada is a wonderful initiative to be playing a leading role in.

The Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21 understands itself as an inspiration for Canadians by providing the base for a conversation about immigration in Canada. The purpose of the Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21 is to explore the theme of immigration to Canada in order to enhance public understanding of the experiences of immigrants as they arrived in Canada, of the vital role immigration has played in the building of Canada and of the contributions of immigrants to Canada's culture, economy and way of life.

# MAHMOODUR RAHMAN

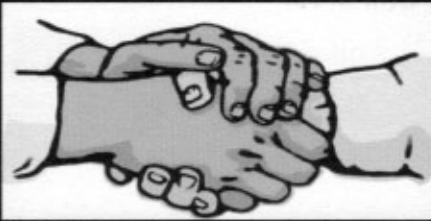
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 Arabic

# Implementation of International Mother Language Day in Canada

by Andy Strohkirch

International Mother Language Day has been introduced to the Canadian Parliament for recognition by Mr. Matthew Kellway on February 5, 2014. The introduction has been made in form of a Private Member's Bill, Bill C-573, the International Mother Language Day Act.

you can follow the discussion at Open Parliament, Bill C-573<sup>[1]</sup> or read the publication of the bill by the House of Commons at Parliament of Canada, Bill C-573<sup>[2]</sup>.

[1] <http://openparliament.ca/bills/41-2/C-573>

[2] <http://parl.gc.ca/HousePublications/Publication.aspx?Language=E&Mode=1&DocId=6406360&File=24#1>

The recognition of International Mother Language Day for all Canadian provinces could make a statement for the commitment to linguistic diversity and preservation. Canada is home of over 60 individual First Nations languages [Census 2011], and the trend of declining languages can also be seen in Canada. Statistics Canada found in a national household survey in 2011, that only 17.2% of the population with an aboriginal identity responded to be able to conduct a conversation in an Aboriginal language. Further Canada is home to languages spoken all over the world.

If you are interested in the development



*Proclamation of International Mother Language Day for the Province of British Columbia, issued by Hon. Judith Guichon, Lieutenant Governor of British Columbia*



# BHESA

## *Ekushey Heritage Award*

The Bangladesh Heritage and Ethnic Society of Alberta (BHESA) introduced its "Ekushey Heritage Award" in 2014. BHESA awards a Medal of Honor for people who achieved outstanding results in the fields education, social work, and community services in Alberta.

Last year BHESA honored the language movement veteran Rajshahi Mohammad Siddique Hossain, Prof. Dr. Nurul Islam (education), Dr. Hafizur Rahman (community service), Tajul Ali (community service), Shahid Hassan (community service), Mohammad Ismail (community service). The Medal of Honors were awarded on February 21, 2014 during a ceremony held at the MacEwan University.

For the "Ekushey Heritage Award 2015" BHESA nominated three dedicated volunteers in recognition of their contributions to their fields or significant organizational endeavors. This years' nominated recipients are: Kausar Khondokar (MacEwan University), Noor-e-Alam

(Bangla Bazar) and Mohd. Zakaria (Former Executive of BHESA).

The awards are open to all Albertans, and the candidates are selected through an executive meeting at BHESA. Considered are the activities and contributions of the candidates over a time period of the entire year. The names of the current nominees will be announced annually prior to the 21st of February and the awards will be handed out during the next public program at BHESA.



*(ltr) Kausar Khondokar / Noor-e-Alam / Mohd. Zakaria*



Bangla English  
Vietnamese  
Portuguese  
Italian  
Lithuanian  
Croatian  
Arabic  
Serbian  
Tamil  
Tibetan

# *Celebration of International Mother Language Day in 2014*

Last year there was a colorful celebration of International Mother Language Day in Alberta by numerous community organizations.

At the beginning of the day the President of the Bangladesh Heritage and Ethnic Society of Alberta (BHESA), Delwar Jahid laid flowers with the members of the society on the martyrs' monument at MacEwan University's downtown campus premises. BHESA organized a discussion meeting followed by patriotic songs of Natasha, presided over by Delwar Jahid.

In that program The associate minister Hon. Naresh Bhardwaj (MLA Edmonton-Ellerslie) was present as chief guest while

Hon. M. Sohail Quadri (PC) MLA (Edmonton-Mill Woods) and the city councilor Amarjeet Suhi were present as guest of honor. The guests also laid flowers to the monument in respect to the language martyrs of 1952.

The meeting was addressed by the guests, and Dr. Rick Lewis, director of MacEwan International, who readout a message from Professor Dr. Olenka Bilash, member of North American representative, advisory board, UNESCO's Linguapax in support and solidarity to BHESA, and juvenile speaker Mirza Navid Alam, who pointed out the language struggles of 2<sup>nd</sup> generation kids. The guest of honor M. Sohail Quadri (PC)



**SIDDIOUE HOSSAIN**

**DR. NURUL ISLAM**

**DR. H RAHAMAN**

**SAHID HASSAN**

**TAJUL ALI**

**MD. ISMAIL**



MLA and city councilor Amarjeet Suhi distributed BHESA's "Ekushey Heritage Award 2014" to a language movement veteran Mohammad Siddique Hossain, Prof. Dr. Nurul Islam (education), Dr. Hafizur Rahman (community service), Shahid Hasan (community service and organizational) in the ceremony. A colorful souvenir on International Mother Language Day was distributed.

Vote of the thanks were given by BHESA Vice-President Tomal Islam, in the event voluntary activities the recognized members are: General Secretary-Ahsan Ullah, Cultural Secretary Anar Miah, Taief, Masud, Nurul Huda, Syfur and Sabrina.

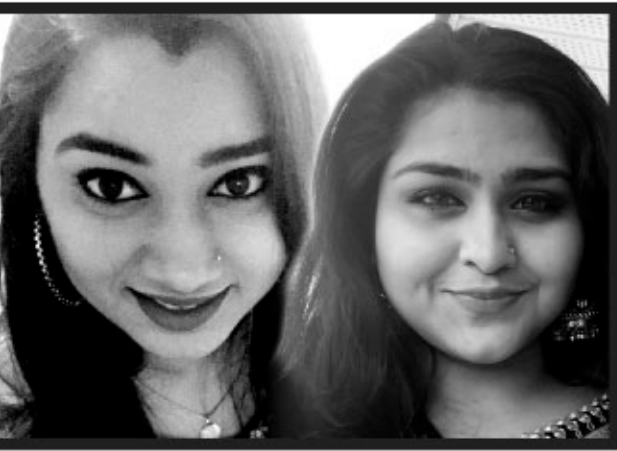
Bangladesh Canada Association of Edmonton (BCAE) (<http://www.bcae.ca>) also celebrated International Mother Language Day in association with the Bangladesh Students Association at University of Alberta (BSAUA). BCAE Established in 1979 as a cultural, social and non-profit organization that services primarily to the people of Edmonton who immigrated from Bangladesh, the descendents of the Bangladeshi immigrants, and to those who have interests in art, culture, people and society of Bangladesh. BCAE supports Bangladeshi Edmontonians, to integrate with other communities in Canada and offers pro-

grams and services to its members as well as non-members. BCAE is a member-run organization and anyone living in Edmonton or its vicinity, believing in its cause, and / or being interested in social and cultural norms of Bangladeshi people may become a member.



*Blood Donation Event*

The Bangladesh Students Association at University of Alberta (BSAUA) [<http://www.ualberta.ca/~bsaua>] was founded on November 6, 2001. At that time five members volunteered to form an Executive Committee, whose purpose was to organize socio-cultural activities within the community. Currently, large number of Bangladeshi students are associated with BSAUA and celebrate International Mother Language Day every year.



Riya Karin / Shoha Islam

Over the past fourteen years, a number of countries like Bangladesh, Maldives, Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Hungary, Romania, Serbia and Slovak, Morocco, France, Canada, Spain, United States of America, Mexico, South Africa, Congo, Russia, Malaysia and Australia have been celebrating International Mother Language Day.

A number of debates, special events and forums have been organized at local, national, regional and international level. Since 2000, there are significant initiatives taken by the ministry of culture and other respective departments to advance the evolution of mother tongue languages, and the promotion of tolerance and to show respect towards the languages of other populations. Programs included heritage exhibitions, photographic shows, concerts, literary

# Journey to Inclusion in & through Education: Language Counts

by Riya Karin & Shoha Islam

and theatre evenings.

Through the celebration of Ekushey more information is readily available, like e.g. academic research, posters, promotional materials, and brochures containing guidelines and suggestions for the celebration.

UNESCO member states are increasingly getting involved through cultural activities, helping to change the way. The significant development is opening spaces for discussion and information exchange.

**“When the world loses a language we lose part of ourselves.”**

*Shashi Tharoor*

The celebration of International Mother Language Day is encouraged through arts & culture and commissioning stud-



ies on the importance of mother languages, focusing on the impact of globalization and minority rights.

Mother Language means something to us; it is a language that is used to express our ideas, thoughts, feelings and emotions to others. So, the 21<sup>st</sup> February (International Mother Language Day) is rooted to our feelings and thoughts.

The Bengali Language Movement was a political movement in former East Bengal (now Bangladesh) supporting the recognition of the Bengali language as an official language of Pakistan in order to allow its use in every spares of life, e.g. government affairs, use as a medium of education, media, currency and stamps, and to maintain its writing in the Bengali script.

For Bangladesh, the celebration of 21<sup>st</sup> February (Language Martyr's Day) is the day of murmuring, when all Bengalis dress in black and white, murmuring songs of crying. People, especially young men and women with artistic skill, draw special themes known in Bangla as "alpana" on the roads. Silent mourners dressed with all white go out on the roads, walking bare feet towards the graves of the Martyrs, holding a bouquet in their hands.

"My Brothers Blood Spattered 21<sup>st</sup> February", a tune of the song represents the day in the hearts of every Bangladeshi, playing in every corner of Bangladesh throughout the month of February. Most



of the schools and cultural institutions host programs, plays and concerts based on the culture of commemoration. We pay respect to all the martyrs of the historic movement.

The Adherence of Mother Language Day has brought fresh glory and respect to Bangladesh, which is making a significant pace towards peace, progress and prosperity.

**“We may have different religions, different languages, different colored skin, but we all belong to one human race.”**

*Kofi Annan*

In 2014 UNESCO's position towards multilingual education was to promote global citizenship education and the theme of the year was "Local languages for Global Citizenship: Spotlight on Science". UNESCO believes - "contrary to popular wisdom, local languages are perfectly capable of transmitting the most modern scientific knowledge in mathematics, physics, technology and so on. Recognizing these local languages also means opening the door to a great deal of often overlooked traditional scientific knowledge... Linguistic and cultural diversity may be our best chance for the future: for creativity, innovation



and inclusion”.

The theme for International Mother Language Day Celebration 2015 is "Inclusion in and through education: Language counts". Its focus is on one of the main challenges that cuts across many of the goals, e.g. inclusion (equity/quality).

The world is on a journey to ensure education for all, to make it possible for all children, including the poorest and

most marginalized, to attend school and receive a quality education through out the world in using their own language and while keeping their culture and to support the developing countries to maintain a universal design of their education. The participation of UN member states is very important for making plans of how to provide funding, for the implementation, and evaluation.

As the martyrs' day steps into the 63<sup>rd</sup> year since the day of February 21, 1952, we take a moment to mirror on what inspired those who came before us, who have defended the mother tongue with their lives and fulfil their dreams.

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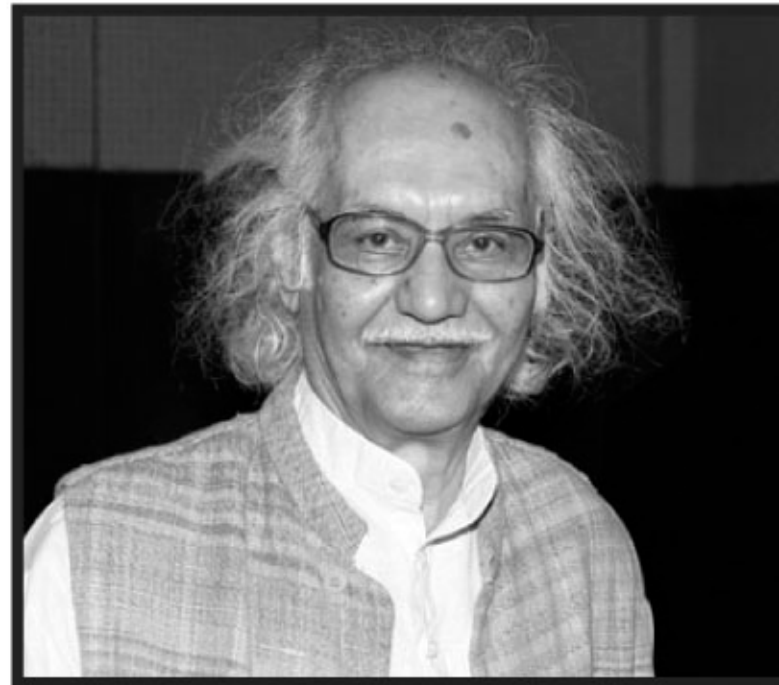


# 21<sup>st</sup> February: International Mother Language Day

by Professor Kabir Chowdhury

UNESCO's declaration of 21st February as the International Mother Language Day has brought fresh glory and prestige to Bangladesh which is making significant strides towards peace, progress and prosperity at home and discharging international obligations abroad. After 1952, the people of Bangladesh have been observing every year the 21st day of February as their glorious and unforgettable Language Martyrs Day. What happened on 21st February 1952 is widely known. Still let me very briefly recount the fateful happenings of that day and the circumstances that led to and followed them.

In August 1947, a new state called Pakistan, comprising two far-flung wings in the west and east, separated by 1600 kilometers of foreign territory, emerged on the world map. The ideological basis of that strange phenomenon was the absurd and pernicious two nation theory of Mr. Jinnah that ignored such basic



Professor Kabir Chowdhury

elements as language and culture and considered religion as a bond strong and sufficient enough to transform a people into a nation.

The language of the people of eastern wing of Pakistan, and they were the majority, was Bangla. It had a rich tradition of literature of over a thousand



years. The Bangalees also had a highly developed culture that had little in common with the culture of the people of western wing of Pakistan. The Bangalees' love for and attachment to their language and culture were great and when in 1952 the neo-colonial, power-hungry, arrogant rulers of Pakistan declared that 'Urdu and Urdu alone would be the state language of Pakistan, they sowed the seed of its future disintegration.

The people of the then East Pakistan, particularly the students, rose in angry protest against the vicious undemocratic designs of the government. Those designs really amounted to the destruction of Bangla language and culture and imposition of the language and culture of the people of western wing on the people of eastern wing. The reaction was strong and spontaneous.

The government decided to quell protests by brute force. The police opened fire on 21st February 1952 on unarmed peaceful protesters, most of whom were students, resulting in the death, among others, of Rafiq, Barkat, Jabbar and Salam. As the news of those deaths spread, the entire people of the eastern wing felt greatly involved emotionally. Those who lost their lives to uphold the

prestige defend the rights of their mother-language became hallowed martyrs.

Their sacrifice at once tragic glorious and the indignation of the people against an autocratic government had far reaching effect. 21st February became a symbol and attained mythic properties, it nourished the concepts of democracy and secularism. It also contributed significantly to the flowering of Bangalee nationalism. It led to the dawning of the realization in the minds of the Bangalees that they constituted a separate nation and their destiny lay not with Pakistan but elsewhere as an independent country. The subsequent democratic mass movements of the late fifties, throughout the sixties and the seventies, and finally the struggle for independence and the war of liberation owed a great deal to 21st February.

From 1953 onwards, starting from 21st February 1953, the immortal 21st February has been observed as a great national event all over Bangladesh, and also beyond the frontiers of Bangladesh: in several places of India, UK, USA, Canada and elsewhere, wherever there is a sizeable concentration of Bangla speaking people. Yet so long, it has been mainly a national event of Bangladesh.

But with the declaration of 21st February as the International Mother Language Day, it has transcended the national borders of Bangladesh and acquired an international significance and a global dimension.

At the initiative of the United Nations and its various organs, a number of specific days have been declared over the years as international days for observance by the people of the whole world. All these days highlight some values, events and issues and are intended to generate a healthy awareness in the people of the world about them with the ultimate aim of making this world a better place to live in for the entire human population. Thus we have the international literacy day, international women's day, international children's day, the international day for eradication of racial discrimination, international day for ensuring pure drinking water, inter-

national habitat day, international day for preservation of environment and many others.

Some of these international days are linked with certain specific events that took place in some specific countries. While observing these days, the people of the world recall those events and those countries as a matter of course. The world is thus brought closer providing peoples of the world with the chance to get out of their insularity.

International Mother Language Day is particularly significant in the sense that it has a cultural importance. From now on, 21st February — so long observed in Bangladesh as the Bangla Language Martyrs' Day — will be observed here simultaneously as the Bangla Language Martyrs' Day and the International Mother Language Day. And in nearly 200 countries of the world, various peoples speaking various languages and belonging to various national cultures will observe 21st February as the International Mother Language Day. They will naturally celebrate their own mother languages, but while doing so, it is more than likely that they will refer to Bangladesh and the Language Movement launched by her people that reached a climactic point on 21st February 1952.





The declaration made by the UNESCO in November 1999 designating 21st February as the International Mother Language Day has placed Bangladesh on the cultural map of the world with a highly positive image. We, people of Bangladesh, should now do all that we can to further develop our mother language Bangla in all branches of knowledge so that it can play a worthy role in the community of world languages. We shall love, cherish and promote Bangla, our own mother language, but we shall not indulge in any kind of chauvinism.

While devotedly serving our own language, we shall respect the languages of all the peoples of the world make 21st February - The International Mother

Language Day - a great day, to be observed worldwide in the new century and the millennium that we have recently stepped into. Long live 21st February the International Mother Language Day!

*(Note: UNDP under the Sustainable development Networking Programme, Bangladesh published an article on 21st February: International Mother Language Day in its BANGLADESH QUARTERLY, MARCH 2000, the reprint of this article is to show the progress of the celebrations with the Global Solidarity through Linguistic Diversity-Legacy of the Martyrs of Bangladesh-Editor)*

**Source**

[http://www.sdnbd.org/21st\\_february.htm](http://www.sdnbd.org/21st_february.htm)



Statue "21 February", Photo by Mohammad Jobaed Adnan

# *The Loss of Languages and why Mother Language is important*

*by Andy Strohkirch*

The term mother language can have different meanings by definition. Sometimes it is used alongside mother tongue, to address the language that a person learned from birth and that is passed on from generation to generation. Mother language is that language you are given by your mother. Sometimes, e.g. in a bilingual home, that can be more than one language.

You also may hear or read the terms first language and native language used in connection, but in our understanding there is a slight difference in the meaning.

First language is the language one chooses to speak frequently or first, especially if that person has knowledge of more than one language. Oftentimes the first language is part of personal, social and cultural identity. Native language on the other hand may be understood as the language bound to the geographic

region the speaker of that language is residing, and also bound to the ethnic group the speaker is belonging to. Oftentimes the native language is set equal to first language e.g. in the use on CV's (curriculum vitae).

Did you know that our civilization currently has to offer more than 7,000 living languages worldwide, from which the most widely spoken languages are Mandarin Chinese, Spanish, English, Hindi, Arabic and Portuguese? An interesting fact is about 1.2 billion people in 33 countries use Mandarin Chinese as first language, and in comparison about 335 million people in 99 countries use English.\*

\* Statistics by Lewis, M. Paul, Gary F. Simons, and Charles D. Fennig (eds.). 2014. *Ethnologue: Languages of the World*, Seventeenth edition. Dallas, Texas: SIL International. Online version: <http://www.ethnologue.com>.



## Why is mother language important?

We all have at least one mother language, a language that has been passed on to us since birth. It is the first language we have learned to express ourselves and gained experiences and knowledge. Languages carry a vast repository of knowledge, information about the natural world around us like plants, animals, ecosystems, and information of cultural traditions and the collective history of an entire people. When a language is lost, much of this knowledge may get lost with it.

In language education research has shown that skills, that have been acquired in the mother tongue can be transferred to another language. For example learning to read provides a base of knowledge of the world that can be applied to foreign language texts and make them more comprehensive to understand. As a result learning a second language will be accomplished more quickly and effectively when the student is proficient in his or her mother tongue.

Mother language gives us the ability to communicate with our ethnic group in a more distinct and subtle way. It allows

us to transport feelings, expressions, experiences and thoughts more clearly, though language itself is never unequivocal.

## We are losing languages around the world!

Around the world there are an estimated 7,100 languages that are being spoken. It has been observed, that the diversity of languages is decreasing and that this trend will continue during the next years and decades, a loss of valuable heritage and information for our civilization.

According to the US based organization Ethnologue, who are holding a global database of languages, about 21% of all languages are considered as "threatened". An additional 915 languages are currently considered "dying", which means that the young generations are no longer able to speak these languages fluently. The database dates back until 1950, and since then 373 languages have been extinct [Nov. 2014], which means that not a single person has retained a sense of ethnic identity with these languages.

What is language loss?

The loss of a language can happen on two different levels. Language or parts of



the language can become forgotten by the speakers when the linguistic environment is changing, per example through immigration into a different country.

Language can also be forgotten when its use becomes less relevant, per example through globalisation of language.

A language loss results in a loss of information, e.g. information about the native environment and local historic events. Expressions, e.g. for humour, love and life may differ, especially for languages from societies outside of the modern industrialized world. When a language gets lost, a cultural heritage gets lost with it.

The problem of losing lingual diversity is complex, because language and culture evolves and is among others shaped by progress, inventions, changes in behaviour, and the simplification of communication.

### **What can be done to prevent further loss of languages?**

Many specialists and people working in the field have noted that our linguistic diversity is threatened by the loss of languages. To fight the problem, a number of promising projects have emerged; projects that document, revitalize and maintain languages, both in remote areas and in urban environ-

ments.

As a great local example, the Department of Canadian Heritage has created the Aboriginal Languages Initiative (ALI), which has the objective to support the preservation and revitalization of Aboriginal languages for the benefit of Aboriginal peoples and other Canadians. The program supports and funds projects and activities that support the preservation and revitalization of Aboriginal languages and cultures.

Another interesting development is the Endangered Language Alliance (ELA) in New York City. It is unique in the way, that it focuses on the linguistic diversity of urban areas, languages which have been brought into the area through immigration, and that are threatened by lack of education or speaking opportunities.

On the contrary National Geographic is maintaining a project called Enduring Voices, which strives to document the most endangered languages on our planet. The documentation takes place through audio (and video) recordings, which are compiled to talking dictionaries. Subject are languages spoken in remote areas all over the globe, which are threatened to die by lack of native speakers.



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