

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ



PRIME MINISTER  
GOVERNMENT OF THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF  
BANGLADESH

08 Falgun 1427  
21 February 2021

## Message

On the occasion of the great Martyrs' Day and International Mother Language Day, I extend my sincere greetings to the people of all languages and cultures of the world, including Bangla. UNESCO has been celebrating this day with due dignity since 2000 with Bangladesh. Like every year, they have set a theme for this day- 'Fostering multilingualism for inclusion in education and society', which I think is very timely.

The importance of the language movement in the history of the Bangali liberation struggle is immense. Through this movement, the foundation for the inception of a non-communal, democratic, language-based nation/state system was laid. 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 Bangla. Today, I pay my deep tributes to the memory of the martyrs of all languages, including Bangla. I remember with the utmost respect all the language hero, including the greatest Bangali of all time, Father of the Nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, who led the struggle for the dignity of the Bangla language, whose visionary historical decisions and supreme sacrifices have saved the existence of our mother, land, and people.

The turbulent days of the language movement in the glorious historical records of the Bangali from 1947 to 1952 have been serving as a source of inspiration in our national life from time and again. Behind every achievement in the protection of the interests of the peace-loving people of this region lies the history of blood-shedding struggle and the sacrifices of countless lives. The Father of the Nation has been repeatedly imprisoned for leading the language movement. At the Education Conference held in Karachi on 27 November 1947, a recommendation was accepted to make Urdu the state language of Pakistan. When the news reached Dhaka, the students of Dhaka University immediately protested in front of Khawaja Nazimuddin's residence. Shortly afterward, Sheikh Mujib, a law student of Dhaka University, used his organizational experience to play a very key role in the establishment of the Chhatra League in Dhaka on 4 January 1948. In the first session of the Constituent Assembly on 23 February, Dharendra Nath Datta of Comilla moved an amendment proposal demanding the inclusion of Bangla as the language of the Assembly. Rejecting the proposal, Khawaja Nazimuddin declared in the Legislative Assembly that the people of East Bengal would accept Urdu as the state language. But to counter the reckless decision of Nazimuddin, an all-party Chhatra Sangram Parishad was formed on 2 March at Fazlul Haque Hall of Dhaka University comprising Chhatra League, Tamaddun Majlish, and other parties. Many language hero, including Sheikh Mujib, were arrested in front of the Secretariat for leading the strike on 11 March and were released on 15 March. The day after their release, on 16 March, the students again besieged the provincial council building under the leadership of Sheikh Mujib, and many were injured by police baton charges. On 21 March, Jinnah spoke out boastfully against the Bangla language and in favor of Urdu at the Dhaka Racecourse Ground. When Urdu was declared the state language of Pakistan at the students' convocation on 24 March at Curzon Hall, the students immediately protested.

To transform the language movement into a national campaign, Sheikh Mujib organized a nationwide tour plan and participated in a massive campaign, and addressed rallies. He was arrested from Faridpur on 11 September and released on 21 January 1949. He was arrested again on 19 April and released in July. He was arrested on 14 October 1949 and released on 27 February 1952. Undoubtedly, Sheikh Mujib has been in touch with language heroes and Chhatra League leaders from 1st January 1950, in Dhaka Central Jail and has given various suggestions to add momentum to the movement. He sent news through three messengers on 3 February, called for a nationwide strike on 21 February, and marching around the meeting venue of the executive council. That announcement was made after the students' procession on 4 February. When Sheikh Mujib declared a hunger strike at this stage, on 16 February the jail authorities transferred him from Dhaka to Faridpur Jail.

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The budget session of the East Bengal Executive Council was scheduled for 21 February 1952. On the advice and instructions of Sheikh Mujib, a general strike was called all over the country on that day. To deal with the situation, the Muslim League government had issued Section 144 for one month in Dhaka city from 20 February and banned all kinds of meetings, rallies, processions, etc. Students gathered at Dhaka University violated Section 144 and when the police fired indiscriminately, some lives were lost in the blink of an eye, many were injured and many were arrested. Several members of the provincial council walked out of the session room. The next day, on 22 February, a spontaneous strike was observed in Dhaka. The government called for the army, imposed curfew, and the Bangla language resolution was passed in the provincial assembly.

On 8 March 1954, the Awami League-led United Front won the election with the boat symbol. Awami League members started pressuring to make Bangla the state language. Meanwhile, on 30 May, the Governor of Pakistan dissolved the United Front cabinet by issuing Section 92(a). All the leaders including Sheikh Mujib were arrested. In 1956, the Awami League reconstituted the cabinet, gave Bangla the status of the state language, declared 21st February as Martyr's Day, and declared it a public holiday. It was that the government took up the first projects to build the Shaheed Minar, publish literary and science books from the Bangla Academy and invent Bangla typewriters. Unfortunately, with the imposition of military rule on 7 October 1958, those aspirations were no longer fulfilled.

In independent Bangladesh, the Father of the Nation directed the use of Bangla in all official activities. He made Bangla the state language in the constitution. He delivered a speech at the United Nations in Bangla and placed our mother language to a dignified position in the world assembly. During the 1996-2001 term of our government, Rafiq and Salam, two Bangladeshi expatriates from Canada, along with some members of the international community formed the 'Mother Language Preservation Committee'. They sent a proposal to the United Nations to celebrate International Mother Language Day on 21st February. Since the UN does not take cognizance of any personal proposal, they suggested sending the proposal to UNESCO from the state. When we knew, we did not have much time; we contacted the Committee for the Preservation of the Mother Language and sent our proposal to UNESCO through a quick fax message on 9 October 1999, while we had to decide within 24 hours. We seek the supports of member states through our embassies. As a result, on 17 November 1999, UNESCO recognized 21st February as 'International Mother Language Day'. We have established the International Mother Language Institute. We have taken initiatives to preserve endangered languages and protect their dignity. We have ensured the use of the Bangla language in the ICT. We have introduced textbooks for ethnic groups in five languages at the primary level. We are trying to get Bangla recognized as the official language of the United Nations. A particular group of people is found always active in denigrating the contribution of the Father of the Nation in the flourishing of Bangali identity and establishing the dignity of the Bangla language. With the publication of the Unfinished Memoire of the Father of the Nation and the Secret Documents of Intelligence Branch of Pakistan, it has been possible to frustrate all such malpractices.

Based on a particular spirit, we have established the right to language and on the same spirit, we have achieved our independence. In the last 12 years, we have made tremendous progress in every area of the socio-economic sector of the country, embracing that particular ethos and the logos of the Father of the Nation. Bangladesh is a role model of development in the world today. We are celebrating the year 2020-21 as Mujib Year. Next month we will celebrate the golden jubilee of independence. We have prepared the second perspective plan, 2021-2041 for the next 20 year period and have adopted the 8th Five Year Plan. Insha Allah, soon we will establish the developed, prosperous and non-communal 'Golden Bangladesh' as per the dream of the Father of the Nation.

**Joi Bangla, Joi Bangabandhu.**  
**May Bangladesh live forever.**

**Sheikh Hasina**