

Reading Materials

for BCS Written Candidates

21st February: In Global Perspective

"I am delighted to convey my greetings on the occasion of the launch of the first International Mother Language Day. This day will help to raise awareness among all peoples of the distinct and enduring value of their languages. In an age of globalization and international cooperation where a few languages have become global languages, it is imperative that we uphold the diversity of local languages."-

Kofi Annan, Secretary General, UN

Message on International Mother Language Day 21 February 2000

Depending on the "Two nation theory" Indian sub-continent was divided as two independent states, one of them was Pakistan, it also included our mother land (Bangladesh) as a province called East Pakistan. The distance between East and West Pakistan was more than thousand miles. Not only that there was no similarity except religion Islam. Soon after this so called independence, Bangladesh could realize that they were considered as a second-class citizen and were being extorted by the new colonial ruler of Federal Pakistan. The result was continuous agitations and finally for the second time Bangladeshi people achieved independence in 1971. The first and foremost but significant step towards our independence was language movement in 1952.

Though more than 55% people were living in East Pakistan but the central leaders liked to ignore and abuse Bangladeshi in every steps of life. With the time the shameless discrimination became unbearable.

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Some of the discrimination chart is given below:

Chart-1: Job Discrimination in Pak regime:

Discriminating Fields	East Pakistan %	West Pakistan%
1. Central Public service	16	84
2. Foreign service	15	85
3. Land force	5	95
4. Naval force (Technical)	10	90
6. Pilot (Air force)	9	91
8. Civil Services	16	84

Chart-2: Welfare Discrimination:

Discriminating Fields	E. Pakistan	W. Pakistan
Population	7.50 Lakh	5.5 Lakh
Rural Health centre	88	325
Urban social Development centre	52	81
Colleges	42-162	40-271

History of Language Movement: Even before the creation of Pakistan in 1947, there had been demands that Bangla to be made the state language of Pakistan. In July 1947, Dr. Muhammad Shahidullah suggested that, after the departure of the British, Bangla could be made the state language of the new state. Shortly after the creation of Pakistan, at the first session of the Pakistan Legislative Assembly on 23 February 1948, Dharendra Nath Dutta proposed that Bangla should be made one of the languages of the Assembly along with English and Urdu. The proposal was rejected by the Pakistan Government.

After the independence we were treated as second-class citizen in Pakistan. It was seemed that this part was the colony of West Pakistan. In 21 March 1948, Governor General Mohammed Ali Jinnah arrived in East Pakistan. On 21 March 1948, at a public meeting in Dhaka, he declared that Urdu alone would be the state language of Pakistan. Subsequently Khwaja Nazimuddin, who had become Prime Minister of Pakistan following the assassination of Liaquat Ali Khan, visited East Pakistan in January 1952. On 27 Jinnah's pronouncement that Urdu would be the only state language of Pakistan. In January, at a public meeting at Paltan Maidan, he reiterated language of Pakistan. In protest, the Dhaka University National Language Committee called a token strike on January 30. A meeting was held on the day at Amtala, on the university campus,

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where students pledged to carry on the Language Movement Forming "All Party State Language Movement Council".

A decision was also taken to observe a strike in all educational institutions of the province on 4 February. The next day, an all-party meeting was held at the Dhaka Bar Library at which Maulana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhasani presided. At the meeting a 40-member All-Party National Language Action Committee was formed. The meeting supported the strike called on February 4, 1948.

In 1948 Jinnah died, so noticeable change of state's men was witnessed. Khawaza Nazimudding was made Governor General and in 1951 he became Prime Minister of Pakistan. That man was known to create problem rather than to solve it. He repeated the speech of Jinnah on 30 January in 1952 at Dhaka in a public meeting. His speech fuelled the language movement, agitation, protesting, strikes, hartal were resumed in full scale. All Students Union took the leadership as well. They declared 11th February as preparing day and also decided to observe hartal on 21 February in 1952. The provincial puppet govt. also took steps to stop the agitation. Govt. imposed section 144 from 20 February. Protesting, agitations were absolutely forbidding in the declared area but on the 21 February. All Students Unity decided to disobey it and carry on all programmes peacefully. The agitation was chanting slogans like your language my language Bengali language, Bengali language, students were carrying banners in support of their legal demand. But Nurul Amin govt. (Provincial Government) ordered police to shot down on peaceful student rally. Many people were seriously injured and Barkat, Salam, Rafiq, Jabbar were left dead on the spot. At last in exchange of some of our most valuable lives, we got our mother tongue as state language in 1956. And from then every year we observe the Martyr day or Ekusey February with due respect.

It is needless to say that the 21st February of 1952 was the starting day of our independence movement by the Bangladeshi against Pakistan. In fact from that very day the war of independence was started. So the role of the language movement in the liberation war has been immense. From that movement Bangladeshi nation could realize that Bangladesh should be separated as early as possible from Pakistan. In course of time that movement turned into Bangalee political movement. So language movement contributed in many ways in our liberation war of 1971.

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Influences of Ekushey on Liberation War:

- a. That successful language movement inspired the then East Pakistani people to fight unitedly against the colonial West Pakistani rulers. First time they could realize that unity is power. That idea helped them to construct Bengali Nationalism, which helped the Bangalee nation to achieve their independence.
- b. That was the first blood bathed protest in the life of Bengali nation. Through that movement they learnt to donate lives and blood. It also provided determination, bravery and inspiration for liberation war.
- c. Through that language movement intellectuals and public came in the same platform. So all the nation has been inspired. That type of unity pulled the nation to their goal of independence.
- d. The strong feeling of unity took away the ethnic ill feelings because communal harmony was much more stronger than ever before.
- e. The language movement affected on the provincial election of 1954. All Bangalees without any hesitation voted United Front because they kept language issue at first of their 21 points demands. So it directly helped United Front to get into political power.
- f. That language movement gave students an influential power. Students could discover their power. And from that they contributed to all public uprising like 1969 & 1971. The entire nation reinvented their future generation.

Besides, it contributed to our literature, culture and history. Today Bangladesh feels proud as a free and independent nation. Among the countries of the world she has a special status, because we are the only nation who sacrificed their valuable lives for their mother tongue. Today the meaning of 21st or Ekushey of our national life has spread far more. Ekushey means not to give in, it teaches us not to be defeated. It also inspires us to go ahead without any fear for rights. When any national crisis arises we feel encouraged by it. In fact the inspiration of 21st keeps us awaken against any evil deeds of the state and persons. It will inspire us as far as the Bangalee nation survives.

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International Mother Language Day: The valiant sons of this soil have been spread all over the world for long. Silently they remember their heroic deed in 21 February 1952 for their mother language.

In 29 March, 1998 Mother Language Lover of the world and Mother Language Movement of Canada, a multi-Lingual group fighting for the states of their respective mother language, wrote a letter to UN secretary general Mr. Kofi Annan about the cost the respective nations have paid for their mother tongue. In that letter they expressed how long and heroic was Bangladeshi struggle for mother language. They described the sacrifices of valuable lives for our mother tongue. They perfectly underline our mass uprising and fall of the then govt. At last the Bangalee over threw the Pakistani Regime. Mother language movement seriously influence anti-Pakistani movement or liberation war.

They also emphasized that no nation in the world have sacrificed their lives for their mother language.

If UN declares the 21 February as International Mother Language Day, then it will be a respect to the Bangalee Martyr of that aspect. In the same time the other depressed language shall have a privilege to fight against the enemy of their language. In a new dimension, it will strengthen the language movement all over the world to fight.

10 members of different Languages (Philippine, English, Chase, Kasha German, Huidi) including Mr. Rafiqul Islam and Abdus Salam of Bangladesh continued their sincere efforts to add respect and prestige to their mother tongue.

Mr. Kofi Annan received the application and sent it to UNESCO and advised the applicant to contact with Mrs. Ana Marie, Project Specialist of Education Division. Mrs. Marie said that UNESCO couldn't address such demand of a non-govt. or private organization. If concerned Govt. applies, UNESCO can consider it. The two Bangladeshis contacted to Education Ministry. Ministry took the proposal very seriously and made the request at the UNESCO General Conference in Paris on 17 November 1999 to declare 21 February as an International Mother Language Day. With the support of 28 other countries, Bangladesh tabled a resolutions in 30th session in General Assembly of UNESCO. The International Mother Language Day began being observed from 21 February 2000 throughout the world to commemorate the martyrs who sacrificed their lives on this date in Dhaka in 1952.

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Conclusion: It is the greatest achievement on the part of Bangladesh. The International Mother Language Day is not only for Bangladesh; rather it is for all speakers of all languages all over the world. In spite of that, Bangladesh cannot but feel proud when 21 February has been chosen as the International Mother Language Day.

Ekusey February played an important role in making Bengalis aware of their cultural and national heritage and ultimately led to the creation of Bangladesh in 1971.



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