

# Language

# Movement.

Chronological history



# 1947

- **May:** Muslim League leader Chowdhury Khalequzzaman on 17 May in Hyderabad said Urdu will be the national language of Pakistan. Litterateur Abdul Haque wrote four articles in 'Ittehad' and 'Azad' in June and July challenging the views. He wrote, "Bengali will, undoubtedly, be the state language of East Pakistan."
- The then prominent newspaper Dainik Azad opens up discussion on state language of East Pakistan from 30 June.

# 1947

- **July:** Aligarh University vice chancellor Ziauddin Ahmed in July said “As Hindi is going to be the state language of India, so Urdu should be the state language of Pakistan.” **Professor Dr Muhammad Shahidullah** of Bangla department at DU instantly challenged the opinion in a newspaper article “**Pakistaner Bhasha Samasya**” published in Dainik Azad on 29 July. He said, “As the language of the majority of people, Bangla should be the state language of Pakistan. If the need arises to adopt the second language, Urdu can be considered for that purpose.”

- **August:** The British India divided into two nations Pakistan and India on 14/15 August annexing East Bengal with Pakistan based on the religious identity of most of its dwellers.

# 1947, august

- the region of Bengal was divided along religious lines. The predominantly Muslim eastern half was designated East Pakistan and made part of the newly independent Pakistan while the predominantly Hindu western part became the Indian state of West Bengal. Pakistan's history from 1947 to 1971 was marked by political instability and economic difficulties. Almost from the advent of independent Pakistan in 1947, frictions developed between East and West Pakistan, which were separated by more than 1,000 miles of Indian Territory. East Pakistanis felt exploited by the West Pakistan-dominated central government. Linguistic, cultural, and ethnic differences also contributed to the estrangement of East from West Pakistan.

# September 15, 1947, Tamuddun Majlis

- **September:** Islamic cultural organisation Tamaddun Majlish was formed under the leadership of professor Abul Kashem of physics department at Dhaka University on 1 September. On 15 September, it published a pamphlet “**Pakistaner Rashtra Bhasha: Bangla Na Urdu?** (“Pakistan’s State Language: Bengali or Urdu?”).
- Tamaddun Majlish adopted other resolutions Bangla should be used as the medium of education, as the language of courts and language of offices in East Bengal. The central government of Pakistan shall have two state languages – Urdu and Bangla.

# Purba Pakistan Sangbadik Sangha

- **November:** On 4 November, Purba Pakistan Sangbadik Sangha (East Pakistan journalists association) gave a memorandum, signed by almost all the prominent writers, poets, government and non-government high officials in Dhaka, to chief minister Khawaja Nazimuddin demanding an announcement of Bengali as state language.
- But things were moving in the opposite direction in West Pakistan. In December, a resolution was adopted in an Education Conference in Karachi to make Urdu the only state language of Pakistan. It was also decided Bangla would be dropped from all government stationeries, including money-order forms, envelopes and post cards, which would be printed in Urdu and English.

# Minister of Education Fazlur Rahman

- November 1947, In Karachi, the representatives of East Bengal attending the Pakistan Educational Conference, called by the Minister of Education Fazlur Rahman, a Bengali, propose Urdu as the only national language.

# sharp criticism from East Pakistan

- **December:** The resolution drew sharp criticism from East Pakistan. A protest meeting was **organised on DU campus with professor Abul Kashem in chair on 8 December**. At the later part of December, State Language Action Committee was formed with professor Nurul Haque Bhuiyan as convener.

# 1948, Birth of East Pakistan Students League

- **January:** Birth of East Pakistan **Students League**. **Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was its first president**. The activists of the organisation vowed to fight Muslim League propaganda to depict Bengali as a language of Hindu community.

# 1948, Direndra Nath Dutta

- **February:** The state language issue was first tabled by **Comilla's MP Dhirendranath Datta in the Assembly on 23 February.** Muslim League MPs opposed the move though Abdul Hamid Khan Bhashani and a section of Bengali-speaking MPs supported it. The then prime minister Liaqat Ali Khan said, "Pakistan is a Muslim state and it must have as its lingua franca the language of the Muslim nation... and that can be no other language but Urdu."

# State Language Action Committee

- **March:** As a reaction to that, the direct action programme for state language started in Dhaka. Teachers, students and intellectuals formed “**State Language Action Committee**” at the office of Tamaddun Majlish. The committee on 6 March called for a general strike on **11 March demanding announcement of Bengali as state language.**
- Police made futile attempts to suppress the protest by baton-charge and **indiscriminate arrests on 11 March.** The arrested include Shamsul Haq, Shawkat Ali, Kazi Golam Mahbub, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, Oli Ahad.

# 15 March, signing 8-point agreement

- **On 15 March**, students called for a non-stop strike. Chief minister Khawaja Nazimuddin staged a retreat signing 8-point agreement with the State Language Action Committee. Student leader Kamruddin Ahmed signed on behalf of the action committee. Later Jinnah cancelled the agreement.

# Two most important clauses of the agreement were:

- In the April (1948) session of the East Bengal legislative assembly a special resolution will be moved to propose to the constituent assembly of Pakistan to make Bengali one of the state languages of Pakistan and to give Bengali the same status with Urdu in the competitive examinations of the central services of Pakistan.
- In the month of April another resolution will be moved in the East Bengal legislative assembly to make Bengali the official language of the province of East Bengal in place of English. Besides that, Bengali will be the medium of instruction.

- শেখ মুজিব, শামসুল হক, অলি আহাদসহ ৬৯ জনকে গ্রেপ্তার করলে ঢাকায় ১৩-১৫ মার্চ ধর্মঘট পালিত হয়। এ অবস্থায় বাধ্য হয়ে পূর্ব পাকিস্তানের মুখ্যমন্ত্রী খাজা নাজিমুদ্দিন ১৫ই মার্চ ৮ দফা চুক্তিতে স্বাক্ষর করেন। চুক্তিগুলো ছিল-
  - ভাষার প্রশ্নে গ্রেপ্তার করা সবাইকে মুক্তি প্রদান করা হবে।
  - কোলকাতা ভাষা শহীদ মিনার
  - পুলিশি অত্যাচারের বিষয়ে তদন্ত করে একটি বিবৃতি প্রদান করা হবে।
  - বাংলাকে অন্যতম রাষ্ট্র ভাষা করার জন্য পূর্ব বাংলার আইন পরিষদে একটি বিশেষ প্রস্তাব উত্থাপন করা হবে।
  - সংবাদপত্রের উপর হতে নিষেধাজ্ঞা প্রত্যাহার করা হবে।
  - আন্দোলনে অংশগ্রহণকারীদের বিরুদ্ধে কোন ব্যবস্থা গ্রহণ করা হবে না।
  - ২৯ ফেব্রুয়ারি হতে জারিকৃত ১৪৪ ধারা প্রত্যাহার করতে হবে।
  - পূর্ব বাংলার সরকারি ভাষা হিসাবে ইংরেজি উঠে যাবার পর বাংলাকে সরকারি ভাষা হিসাবে প্রবর্তন করা হবে।
  - রাষ্ট্র ভাষা আন্দোলন " রাষ্ট্রের দুশমনদের দ্বারা অনুপ্রাণিত হয় নাই" এই মর্মে মুখ্যমন্ত্রী ভুল স্বীকার করে বক্তব্য দিবেন।
- পাকিস্তানের গভর্নর জেনারেল মুহাম্মাদ আলী জিন্নাহ ১৯৪৭ সালের ১৯ মার্চ ঢাকায় আসেন। ২১ মার্চ সোহরাওয়ার্দী উদ্যানে ঘোষণা দেন " উর্দুই হবে পাকিস্তানের একমাত্র রাষ্ট্র ভাষা। "। এরপর ২৪ মার্চ তিনি ঢাকা বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ে একই ঘোষণা দিলে ছাত্ররা তার উক্তির চরম প্রতিবাদ জানায়। তবে সোহরাওয়ার্দী উদ্যানে এর ব্যতিক্রম হয় নি।

# On 21 March, Mohammad Ali Jinnah

- **On 21 March**, Mohammad Ali Jinnah addressed a huge rally at **Racecourse Maidan (now Suhrawardy Udyan)**. He said, “I would like tell you in clear terms that the state language of Pakistan shall be no other language but Urdu. If anybody tries to mislead you, he shall be an enemy of Pakistan.” The students leaders, present at the rally, protested the

# Jinnah at Curzon Hall in Dhaka University

- **On 24 March**, Jinnah repeated his stance in the Convocation Address at Curzon Hall in Dhaka University. The movement became stronger after Jinnah's support for Urdu.
- **On 26 March**, a delegation of the action committee met Jinnah and gave him a memorandum demanding Bangla as one of the state languages, which was turned down.
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# April 8th, resolutions were passed

- **April:** On 8 April, two resolutions were passed in the East Bengal Executive Council, **recommending that Bangla be treated as a provincial language.**

# 1949

- **February:** Education minister Fazlur Rahman proposed the introduction of **Arabic alphabet for all the languages**, including Bangla, spoken in Pakistan “in the interest of national unity and solidarity and the rapid advancement of general education in Pakistan.”
- **Dr Muhammad Shahidullah** and other linguists of East Bengal **rejected** it.

# 1950

- **March:** On **11 March**, **Dhaka University State Language Movement Committee** was formed under the leadership of left-leaning student **Abdul Matin**.
- **April:** The proposal to the introduction of **Arabic alphabet for all the languages spoken in Pakistan is formally tabled in parliament**. Dhirendranath Datta and leaders of newly formed Awami-Muslim League **protested** at it.

- **December:** On 7 December, the **16-member East Bengal** Language Committee, headed by **Maulana Akram Khan**, submitted **final report saying the proposal to use Arabic alphabet for writing Bangla language as bizarre**. The committee also put emphasis on using Bangla in all the offices and educational institutions of East Bengal. But the government did not publish the report until 1958.

# 1951

- **March:** On 11 March, The Dhaka University State Language Movement Committee sent a memorandum to all newspapers and legislative council members demanding announcement of Bangla as state language with Urdu.
- In a conference of university and college teachers in Comilla on 16 and 17 March, **Dr Muhammad Shahidullah asked people to raise their voice against imposition of any language other than Bangla as medium of education.**

- **On 27 March**, the proposal to write **Bangla in Arabic script** was tabled in the legislative council again.

# 1952

- **January:** On 26 January, **Nazimuddin re-opened the debate** on language by announcing in a meeting of All Pakistan Muslim League that “Only Urdu shall be the state language of Pakistan.’ On 27 January he reiterated the stance at Paltan Maidan.
- **On 30 January,** rejecting the speech of Nazimuddin, **State Language Action Committee** observes general strike in Dhaka University area. After that they held a rally and decide to hold a protest meeting on 4<sup>th</sup> February and to hold a general strike on 21 February in east Pakistan, when the East Bengal Assembly is due to meet for its budget session.

- **On 31 January**, an All-party worker meeting, chaired by Maulana bhasani was held in Dhaka Bar Library Hall. **All Party State Language Action Committee was formed** here. Kazi Golam Mahbub was made convener. The committee convened a general strike on 21 February.

# February

- **4 February:** Students organised procession in Nababpur area demanding Bangla as state language. All the educational institutions observed general strike on the day.

- **18 February:** The government enforced **section 144** in Dhaka University and adjoining areas centring general strike on 21 February.
- **20 February:** A **meeting**, convened by the All-party State Language Action Committee and chaired by Abul Hashim, was held. Most of the members opined **against breaking section 144 fearing violence.**

- **Abdul Matin and Gaziul Haq opined in favour of violating section 144** but could not come up with specific directions. At this stage, the **students spontaneously decided to defy section 144 and police line.**
- Police fired **tear gas shells** towards the gate to warn the students. A section of students ran into the Dhaka Medical College while others towards the university premises cordoned by the police. The vice-chancellor asked police to stop firing and ordered students to leave the area. However, the police arrested several students for defying section 144 as they attempted to leave.

- Enraged by the arrests, the **students met around the East Bengal Legislative Assembly and blocked the legislators' way**, asking them to present their insistence at the assembly. When a group of students sought to storm into the building, **police opened fire and killed a number of students, including Abdus Salam, Rafiq Uddin Ahmed, Abul Barkat and Abdul Jabbar around 4:00pm.**

- As the news of the killings spread, disorder erupted across the city. Shops, offices and public transport were shut down and a general strike began. Leaflets were distributed in mosques and clubs asking to gather on DU campus on the next day.
- The government press note acknowledged **3 deaths and 2** injured although the actual number was much higher.
- Poet Mahbubul Alam Chowdury wrote a poem “**Kandte asini, fansir dabi niye esechi**” in memory of the martyrs in the evening.

- **On 22 February**, black flags were hoisted atop the Arts Faculty building and all the student halls. The students black badges as a sign of mourning for the killed ones. The EPR and the army took control of Dhaka. A namaz-e-janaza was held in the Curzon Hall area. The participants brought out a procession but **police opened firing on it killing Shafiur on the spot.**

- Widespread agitation took place in the city throughout the day. The EPR, police and army lobbed teargas shells, firing upon them, killing and injuring many at different places of the city. Many bodies were scurried away by the security forces never to be found again.
- According to a report published in Daily Azad on 23 February, four people were killed on 22 February.

- Overnight the Dhaka Medical College students built a 10-foot Shaheed Minar in the memory of the language martyrs, according to the plan of the Medical College student Sayyid Haider and bearing the inscription by Badrul Alam. The Daily Azad editor Abul Kalam Shamsuddin inaugurated it on 23 February. Scores of people visited the Shaheed Minar on 24, 25 and 26 February until the police demolished it in the afternoon on 26 February.

- Seeing no alternative, Nurul Amin proposed in the legislative council to give Bangla state language and passed unanimously.
- **On 25 February**, authorities closed the Dhaka University for an indefinite period. The university however was opened on 16 April.
- **On 26 February**, poet Alauddin Al Azad wrote a poem “Smritisthambha” protesting the destruction of first Shaheed Minar at Iqbal Hall of Dhaka University.

- **1953**
- **21 February:** Hundreds of thousands of people pay respect to the language martyrs on the first anniversary of martyrdom at a temporary Shaheed Minar. The government banned all types of rally and procession on the day though.
- First language movement-based song – Bhulbo na, bhulbo na, ekushey February bhulbo na -- was written by language veteran ANM Gaziul Haque. The song was first sung in a rally at Armanitola on 21 February 1953.

# 1956

- **21 February:** East Bengal prime minister Abu Hossain Sarker laid the foundation stone of Shaheed Minar.
- **26 February:** National assembly passed the constitution recognising Bangla and Urdu as state languages.
- **3 March:** The Pakistan constitution was implemented.

- **1963**
- **21 February**, martyr Abul Barkat's mother Hasina Begum inaugurated the Shaheed Minar.
- **1999**
- **On 17 November**, UNESCO declared 21 February as the International Mother Language Day, thus bringing worldwide recognition of the sacrifices.

- **21 February:** Students started to gather near the gate of Dhaka Medical College around 9:00am. Around 11:00am, the students rally began in presence of Kazi Golam Mahbub, Oli Ahad, Abdul Matin, Gaziul Haq and other leaders. The student and political leaders could not reach in a consensus about violating section 144. Awami Muslim League general secretary Shamsul Haq asked the students not to violate section 144. DU VC SM Hossain also asked the students to do so.

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- Police fired tear gas shells towards the gate to warn the students. A section of students ran into the Dhaka Medical College while others towards the university premises cordoned by the police. The vice-chancellor asked police to stop firing and ordered students to leave the area. However, the police arrested several students for defying section 144 as they attempted to leave.

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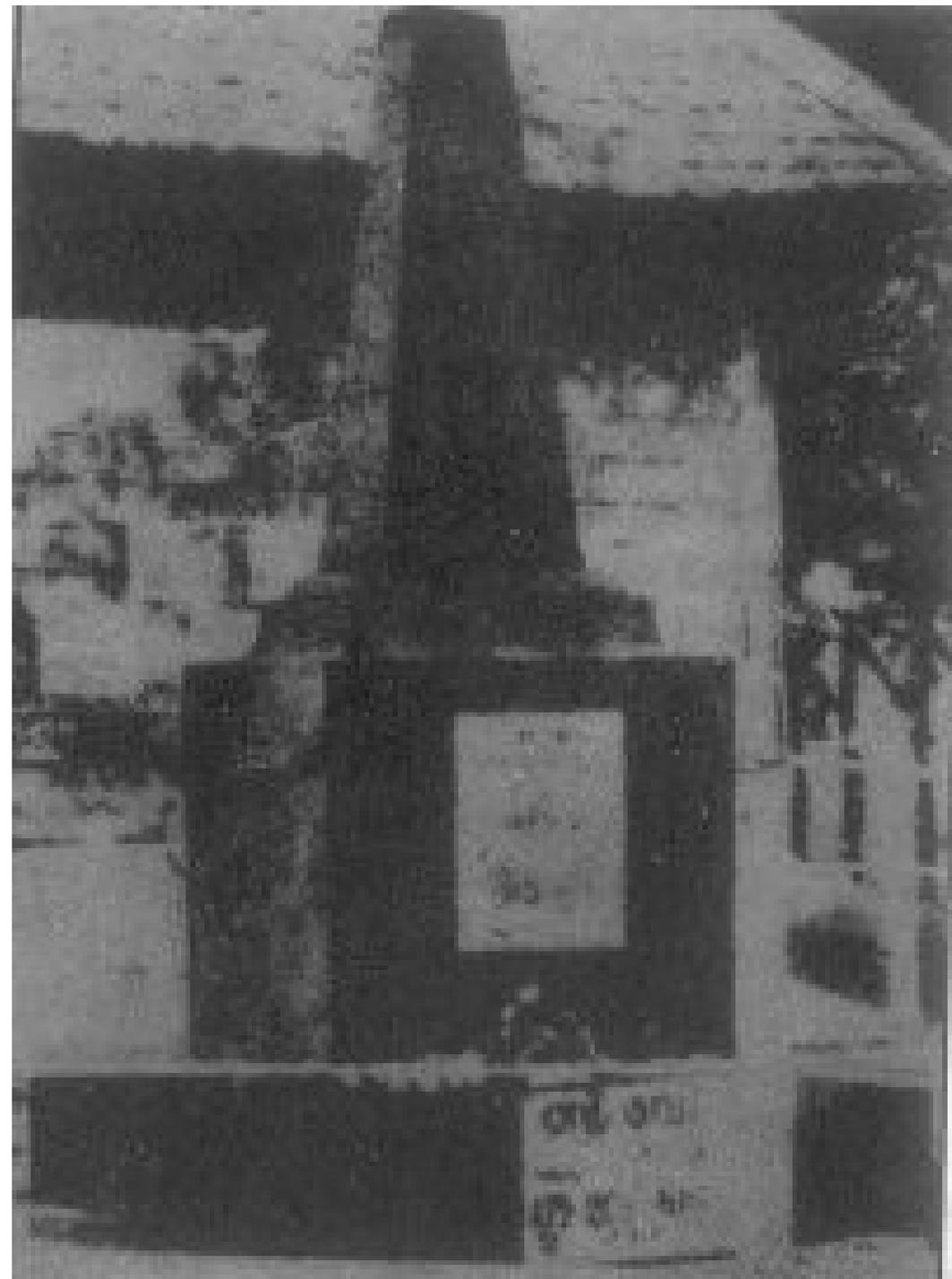
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# 23 February, Shaheed Minar

- Although curfew was in place, students started building the Minar in the afternoon of 23 February. They worked through the night and finished it at dawn. A hand written paper was attached to the Minar with "Shaheed Smritistombho" written on it.
- The Minar was inaugurated by the father of Sofiur Rahman, Molvi. Mahabubur Rahman, who killed during the massacre. It was demolished on 26 February by the police and Pakistani Army.

# First Shaheed Minar



- **February 24, 1952**, the government gives full authority to the police and military to bring the situation in Dhaka back to normal within 48 hours. **During these 48 hours the police arrested almost all the student and political leaders associated with the language movement.**

- **On 25 February**, authorities closed the Dhaka University for an indefinite period. The university however was opened on 16 April.
- **On 26 February**, poet Alauddin Al Azad wrote a poem “Smritisthambha” protesting the destruction of first Shaheed Minar at Iqbal Hall of Dhaka University.

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