



# Mother Tongue day.

Exploring what we mean by your  
Mother Tongue and why it is  
important.

# What is your Mother Tongue?

Your Mother  
Tongue is the  
language that you  
speak and learn  
during your  
childhood.



International Mother Language Day observance in Bangladesh









February 21, 2025

The day highlights the role of mother languages in  
fostering inclusive societies,

improving education,

and ensuring the preservation of indigenous  
cultures.

# Keeping languages going!

At least **43 per cent** of all languages are endangered, and fewer than 100 of the world's languages are used in the digital world.

Most internet communication is in one of the following languages: English, Chinese Mandarin, Spanish, Arabic, Portuguese, Indonesian, Malayan, Japanese, Russian and German.

Everyone has the right to use their own mother language, and to keep the memories, traditions and ways of thinking that their language represents.

And this is what International Mother Language Day is all about.





An interview with Mari  
about speaking Welsh.

**Nelson Mandela** - former  
President of South Africa.

'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**.'



# What is the history behind the day?

- Multilingual and multicultural societies exist through their languages, which transmit and preserve traditional knowledge and cultures in a sustainable way. International Mother Language Day is observed every year to promote linguistic and cultural diversity and multilingualism.
- At the partition of India in 1947, the Bengal province was divided according to the predominant religions of the inhabitants. The western part became part of India and the eastern part became a province of Pakistan known as East Bengal and later East Pakistan. However, there were economic, cultural and linguistic frictions between East and West Pakistan. These tensions were apparent in 1948 when Pakistan's government dominated by the West Pakistanis declared that Urdu should be the sole national language.
- This sparked protests amongst the Bengali-speaking population who were the majority in entire Pakistan.
- The government outlawed the protests but on February 21, 1952, students at the University of Dhaka and other activists organized a protest. Later that day, the police opened fire at the demonstrators and killed four students.
- The unrest continued as Bengali speakers campaigned for the right to use their mother language. Many more people died demonstrating in solidarity with the demand to establish Bengali as one of the national languages of Pakistan.

The International Mother Language day has been observed since 21 February 2000 to promote inter-cultural understanding. So, this is its 25 anniversary.