

The language movement at both of these stages was not a mass uprising by any standard. Yet the restive student community and the intelligentsia in the formative phase of the language movement were able to garner more mass support throughout the then East Bengal for making Bengali as one of the State languages of Pakistan. Those initial reactions against the unilateral imposition of Urdu as the only State language of Pakistan had also prepared the progressive forces of the eastern province of the then Pakistan for launching an effective Bengali language movement in early 1952.

Although the ferocity of the formative phase of the Bengali language movement had waned during the years between the middle of 1948 and early January 1952, the Bengali language activists and the progressive political forces had remained vigilant against the ulterior design of the anti-Bengali Pakistani political elite of the Central Government and the pro-Urdu provincial Government of the then East Bengal. The final phase of the Bengali language movement began in early 1952 after Khwaja Nazimuddin, the Prime Minister of the then Pakistan and a lifelong anti-Bengali collaborator, declared in a public meeting at Paltan Maidan on January 26, 1952, that "Urdu would be the only State language of Pakistan." There is no doubt that his provocative speech can be singled out as the immediate cause of the 1952 phase of the Bengali language movement. Yet any credible assessment of the organized efforts toward establishing Bengali as a State language of Pakistan would add credence to the fact that the language protests and demonstrations in the early years of Pakistan had a clear bearing on the extent and magnitude of the historic Bengali language movement in February, 1952.

The Bengali Language Movement was not the making of any single individual or a political party. Many student leaders spearheaded the language movement in all of its phases. Although the marginal roles of some of the participants of the language movement have often been magnified through systematic distortions, exaggerations, manipulations and invented memories, there had been ample opportunity in those turbulent early years of Pakistan for many patriots for participating in that defining struggle for establishing Bengali as one of the State languages of Pakistan. Indeed, there were many actors who were involved in the making of different phases of the Bengali Language Movement in East Bengal (East Pakistan, now Bangladesh). Of those genuine language activists, **Dhirendranath Datta's** (1886-1971) name can be singled out as the illustrious forerunner (Agraphathik) of the Bengali language movement for establishing Bangla (Bengali) as one of the State languages of Pakistan. Indeed, he was the harbinger (Agradoot) of the Bengali language movement in the early years of Pakistan. He made history on February 25, 1948 by demanding Bengali to be recognized as one of the State languages of Pakistan even though his amendment was a proposal for adopting Bengali as one of the official languages of the central legislature of Pakistan.



BAN's Picnic 2006