

February 21<sup>st</sup> for a while has been a day of celebration only for Bengali-speaking people of Bangladesh as we struggled to save our mother language on this very day, but now it is a day of respect, pride, protest and festivities for people around the globe, as they now observe the day as 'International Mother Language Day', to honor the sacrifices made by our language martyrs of 1952. We have another remarkable day in this February for which we may feel proud of. And the very remarkable day is February 26, the founding day of Bangla Wikipedia. Accordingly last February 26 was the 10<sup>th</sup> founding anniversary of it. The local branch of the Wikimedia Foundation, Bangladesh recently has celebrated the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Bangla Wikipedia. Daffodil University was the co-organizer of this event here in Dhaka. Junaid Ahmad Palak, State Minister for ICT inaugurated the event, while Prof. Dr. Lutfur Rahman, vice-chancellor of Daffodil International University and Munir Hasan, chairman of Wikimedia Foundation were also present in this function. Nurunnabi Chowdhury Hasib, Administrator of Bangla Wikipedia and Director at Wikimedia Bangladesh moderated the event. The day-long event hosted workshops and seminars for volunteers and contributors on improving the information, entry editing, adding images and many more. There was a special seminar for the women too. These workshops were conducted by Wikimedia Bangladesh



Bangla is one of the 20 Indian languages to have a Wikipedia Presence. Calcutta University registrar Basab Chaudhuri said in this gathering, "We hear of digital divide all the time. Here it is about digital inclusiveness. The University Grants Commission talks of four factors to make a good university - access, equity, quality and employability. What a teacher cannot give in class, he can offer on the

## A decade of Bangla Wikipedia

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treasurer Ali Haider Khan, members Shabab Mustafa, Nasir Khan, Tanvir Murshed, diector Nahid Sultan, Mohin Ryad and Wikipedia contributor Afifa Afrin. Bangla Wikipedia contributors from Kolkata also participated in this event. At the concluding session winners of image competition was awarded and top Wikipedians were honored by Journalist and writer Anisul Haque Daffodil International University dean IA.S.M Mahbubul Haque Mojumdar. Subrata Roy, Yahia, Afta-uz-Zaman, Intequb Alam Chowdhuey, Ankab Ghosh Dastidar, Protya Ghosh, Masum Ibne Musa, Md. Sheik Sadi, Asif Mukhtadir and A.k.M Sahadat Hussain were honored as the top ten contributors. The winners of image competition were Sumon

Mallik, Jubair-bin-Iqbal and Md. Galib. It may be mentioned here that to celebrate the 10<sup>th</sup> founding anniversary of Bangla Wikipedia events were also organized earlier at Dhaka, Khulna, Rajshahi, Barisal,



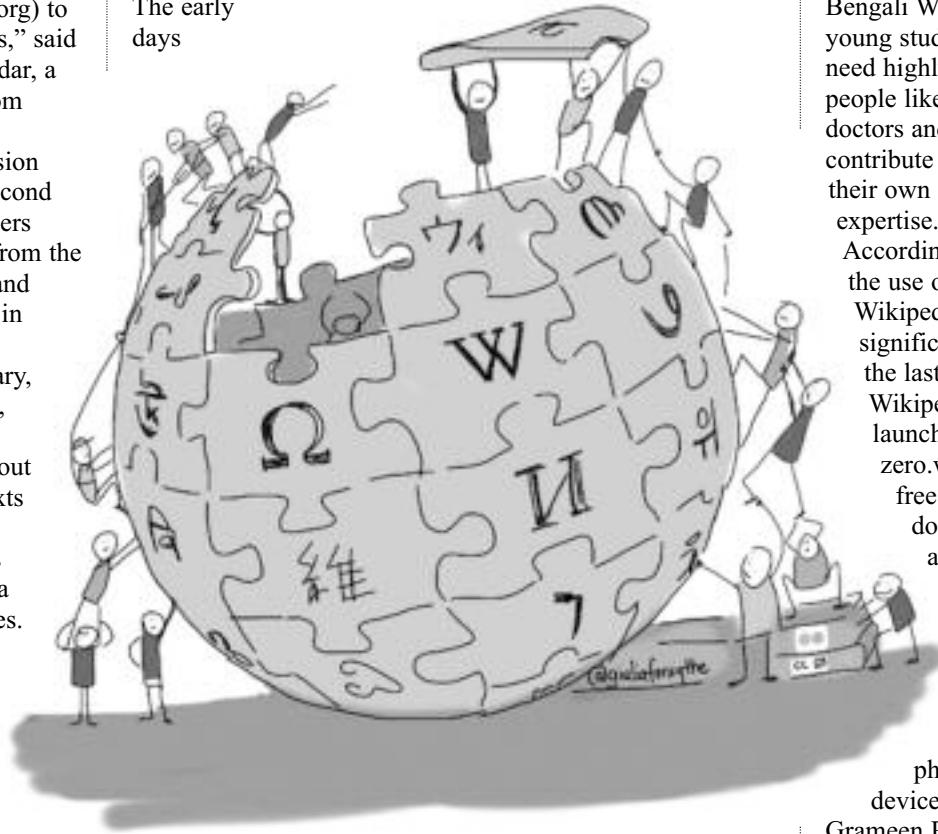
Sylhet and Rangpur. The 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Bangla Wikipedia was also celebrated recently in India at Jadavpur University with a gathering of Bagla-speaking Wikipedians across India, as we know well that

world wide web. The question of quality in Wikipedia can be addressed through workshops like this," Wikimedia Foundation trustee Bishakha Datta spoke of the uneasy relationship between Wikipedia and academia, especially over authenticity. Joint registrar Sanjay Gopal Sarkar argued in favour of the existence of Wikipedia articles in the vernacular. "It is a part of the empowerment of my mother tongue." He said. "It is not enough to have 33,000 articles (the English version has 4.7 million). Workshops need to be held in Bengal and Assam on how to write articles. If Wikipedia and the universities join hands, a battalion of writers and editors can be created." The Bangladeshi delegates ▶

revealed how Wikipedia's mission of making knowledge free was getting a technological boost back home. "Grameenphone and Bangla Link, two of our biggest mobile service providers, have made Facebook and Wikipedia free. Subscribers just have to log on to specific domains (0.facebook.com and zero.wikipedia.org) to see picture-less texts," said Ankan Ghosh Dastidar, a Class XI student from Dhaka.

A group editing session took place on the second day with 15 volunteers translating articles from the English Wikipedia and adding new articles in Bengali. Some also worked on Wiktionary, an online dictionary, and others on Wikisource, typing out pages of seminal texts outside copyright. Over a decade of its journey have faced a number of challenges. Now Bangla Wikipedia exclusively for the Bengali language readers across the world ranks third among the 287 different language Wikipedia sites, based on depth. In 2004, this Bengali version of Wikipedia began its journey with an article titled 'Bangladesh'. The article was initiated by a young boy named Hemayet from Bangladesh. The article was later enriched by many other Wikipedians from Bangladesh. From then onwards, we are actually being facilitated by the Bangla Wikipedia. More contributors are joining hands with it and enriching the Bangla Wikipedia with 34,907 (till March 3) contents or

articles on different topics from history to science and politics to nature. Currently, around 77 thousand plus freelance contributors are enlisted with Bangla Wikipedia, to enrich the Bangla Wikipedia, with a aim to bring the knowledge to the people from all walks of life. The early days



of Bengali Wikipedia was not as smooth as there were only a few contributors, still the main problem of the Bengali Wikipedia is the lack of active contributors. Beyond its large number of contributors, there are around 3,400 people who actively write for the encyclopedia today. According to the official data of Bengali Wikipedia, since February, only 494 contributors were active in writing for the contents in it. As reported in a local daily, Wikipedia co-founder Jimmy Wales said on

February 26, 'There is a great scope for the Bengali Wikipedia and its users to become one of the most useable in the world, if the contents number increase properly. And to increase the number of the contents of Bengali Wikipedia we need more and more writers.' He also says that

according to depth, a mathematical method used to evaluate articles written in different languages, Bengali Wikipedia is now standing in the third position after the English and Macedonian Wikipedia sites. 'The English language is globally used. So it is a very tough competition between Macedonian and Bangla Wikipedia for the second position. And I do believe Bengali Wikipedia has the opportunity to do well in future to entitle 2.5 lakh content,' he says. Currently, there we have 13 administrators for Bengali

Wikipedia, and six of them are Bangladeshis, while others are not. Basically the main authority of the encyclopedia is Bangladesh Wikimedia Foundation, although the Bengali language using people from other countries can contribute with their articles. . It may be noted that most writers of the Bengali Wikipedia are young students. But we need highly-educated people like teachers, doctors and others to contribute their articles in their own areas of expertise.

According to the officials, the use of Bengali Wikipedia has been significantly rising since the last year, when the Wikipedia Zero was launched. The website-zero.wikipedia.org is a free website that does not require any internet data to log in. To log in to the website, one just needs an internet enabled mobile phone or any other devices. Currently,

Grameen Phone and Banglalink provide the services for the consumers, while two other operators are planning to follow suite in future. Currently many poor people from the distant parts of Bangladesh are getting knowledge freely through Bengali Wikipedia Zero. On a January day in 2004 was born the domain, *bn.wikipedia.org*, giving readers access to an online open-source encyclopaedia in Bengali. Its English cousin was already three years old. Closer home, the Punjabi, Assamese, Odiya domains were a year and half 