

Lothians MSP calls for a memorial to be established in Edinburgh

A Lothians MSP has called for a Shaheed Minar to be established – a permanent memorial to the 1952 Bengali Language Movement.

Cities including London, Birmingham, Cardiff, Tokyo, and Sydney hold permanent Shaheed Minars – yet, despite its rich cultural landscape, Edinburgh still lacks this “vital landmark” according to Foyso Choudhury, MBE, MSP.

He said that it would recognise the struggles of those who have fought for linguistic recognition. and that “the time for change is now”.

In the capital of Bangladesh, Dhaka, the Shaheed Minar is a tower commemorating those people who died during the Bengali Language Movement protests in 1952. The Pakistani police fired at protesters demanding that their language, Bengali, would receive official status. It was four years before the language was given official status in Pakistan sitting alongside Urdu. Each year on 21 February International Mother Language Day is observed.

Mr Choudhury said: “I have engaged with The City of Edinburgh Council and cultural organisations to make this vision a reality. We must recognise that language is more than communication – it embodies identity, history, and heritage. A permanent tribute would honour those who fought for linguistic rights and reaffirm Edinburgh’s commitment to

multilingualism”.

A City United in Cultural Celebration

He believes that International Mother Language Day on 21 has become a powerful platform for language preservation. He explained: “In London, the Persian Language Festival at Westminster University showcased poetry and music from Persian-speaking communities. In Scotland, I chaired a parliamentary roundtable on language extinction, where experts highlighted the need for digital representation of lesser-known languages. Studies show early education in native languages boosts academic success and strengthens cultural identity, yet languages like Gaelic and Scots face survival challenges.

“At the heart of Edinburgh, Edinburgh and Lothians’ Regional Equality Council hosted an International Mother Language Day celebration at The City Chambers with diverse performances, where a temporary Shaheed Minar symbolised unity in language. The Scottish Bangladeshi Welfare Association also marked the occasion with a multicultural festival in Portobello, reinforcing social cohesion and cultural awareness. While these events allow us to celebrate linguistic diversity, Edinburgh needs a permanent reminder of its diversity and the survival struggle of mother languages.”

Shaheed Minars across the UK and worldwide – from Paris to Toronto – stand as universal symbols of linguistic rights and Mr Choudhury said Edinburgh must join this movement.

He concluded: “A permanent Shaheed Minar would provide a dedicated space for multilingual communities to celebrate their heritage and educate future generations on linguistic diversity.

“With discussions underway, the push for a Shaheed Minar in Edinburgh is not just about honouring the past – it’s about shaping a future where every language is valued. It’s time for Scotland’s capital to solidify its place in the global movement for linguistic rights and cultural preservation.”



Foyso Choudhury MSP centre in the quad at The City Chambers with Cllr Pauline Flannery and others attending an event laying a wreath at the temporary Shaheed Minar on International Mother Language Day.



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