

IUB launches 'Mahale Voices'

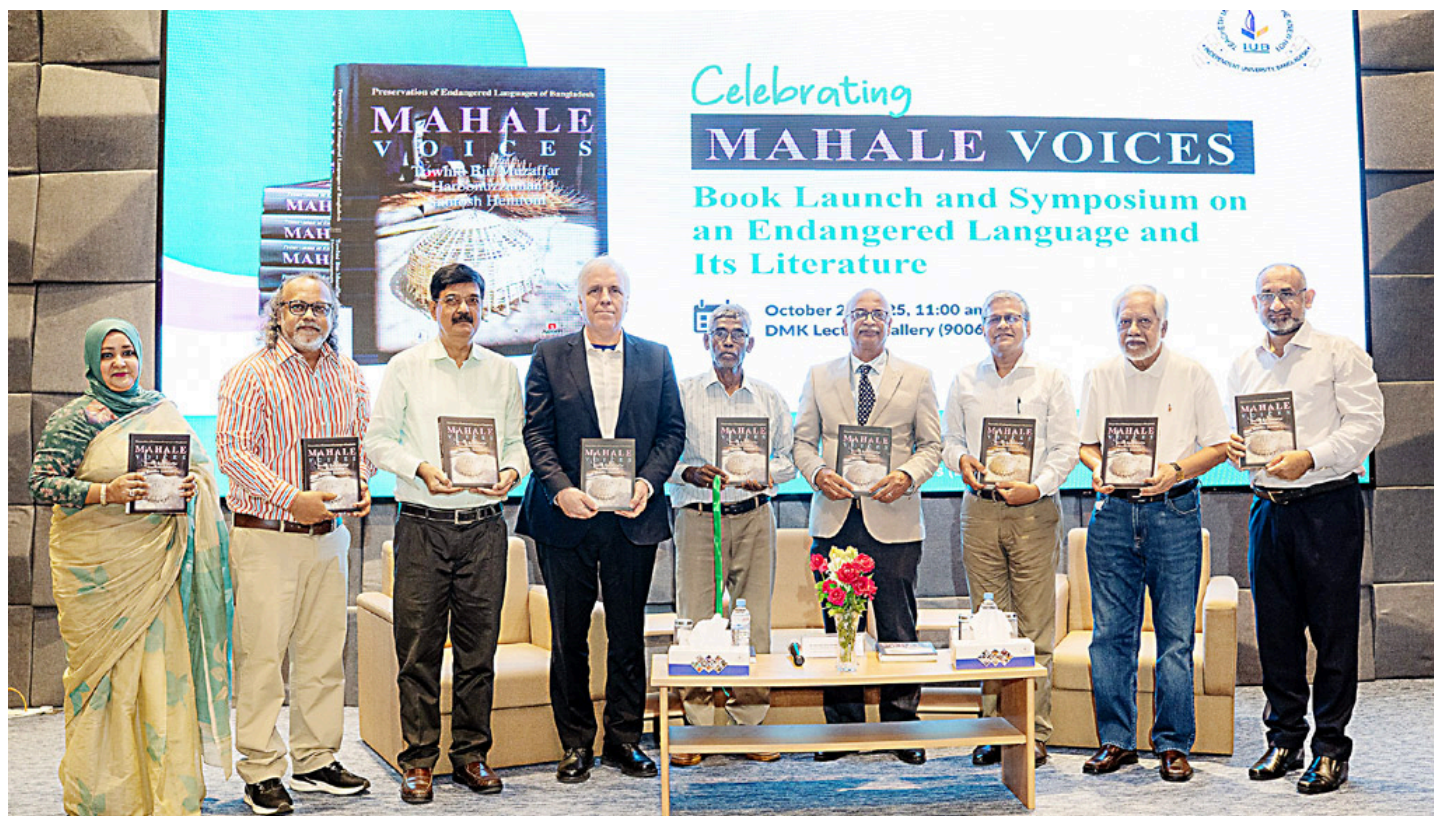
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Guests, organisers and writers hold the copy of a book titled Mahale Voices at the DMK Lecture Gallery at the Independent University, Bangladesh in Dhaka on Wednesday. | Press release photo

Independent University, Bangladesh has launched a research-based book titled Mahale Voices to support the preservation of the endangered Mahale language, spoken by the Mahale community in the Rajshahi region.

The book was unveiled at the DMK Lecture Gallery on the IUB campus in Dhaka on Wednesday, said a press release.

The book, jointly published by the IUB and Adorn Publication, is authored by Towhid Bin Muzaffar, assistant professor in the department of English and modern languages at IUB, with co-authors writer and researcher Haroonuzzaman and Mahale community member Santosh Hemrom.

The unveiling event was organised by IUB's Sasheen Centre for Multilingual Excellence and the department of English and modern languages.

SCMLE works on documenting and preserving endangered and lesser-used languages of Bangladesh.

Mahale Voices features 26 folk stories and 24 poems of the Mahale community, compiled in Mahale, Bangla and English. As the Mahale language has no alphabet, the researchers used Roman letters to document the texts. The compilation and translation work took more than three years.

Author Towhid Bin Muzaffar said, 'Our work ensures that the Mahale language is documented through the voices of its own people. The stories and poems in this book come directly from the community, reflecting their lived experiences rather than interpretations by outsiders. By bringing these original narratives to light, we are making them accessible not only in Bangladesh but also internationally.'

Haroonuzzaman said, 'I hope this book serves both as a celebration and a call to action to nurture, protect and carry forward the Mahale language and its literature. Preserving languages is preserving our shared humanity. I encourage readers to explore Mahale Voices and recognise the value of safeguarding linguistic heritage for future generations.'

Santosh Hemrom said, 'If you read this book, you will know about the Mahale community's living conditions, house patterns and socio-economic background. When we wrote this, we had no alphabet, so we tried our best to develop one for this work. It is a matter of pride for our people, as the Mahale community now has its first book in three languages for the world to know.'

Professor Bokhtiar Ahmed, UNESCO chair in Language Ecology and director of SCMLE, said, 'This book is an attempt to build a bridge among languages. I believe works like this will help the community, especially the younger generation, connect their language with more widely used languages like Bangla and English.'

IUB vice-chancellor Professor M Tamim; pro-VC Professor Daniel W Lund; Naureen Rahnuma, head of IUB's department of English and modern languages; Samar Soren, member of UNESCO's Global Taskforce; Mahale community leader Sisti Tudu; Professor Mustafa Kamal Akand, University of Rajshahi; and Syed Zakir Hussain, chief editor, CEO and publisher of Adorn Publication, also spoke at the event.

Mahale Voices is available for purchase online on the website of Rokomari and BanglaREADS