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Independent University, Bangladesh (IUB) has signed two memorandums of understanding (MoUs) with Bandarban University (BU) and Lumbini Limited to facilitate research on endangered languages and foster exchange of educational and professional resources. The MoUs were signed on April 13 at the Bandarban University campus in Bandarban.

The Minister for Chittagong Hill Tracts Affairs Bir Bahadur Ushwe Sing, MP attended the program as the chief guest. IUB VC Tanweer Hasan, BU VC Prof. Dr A. F. Imam Ali, and



respected organisations. Lumbini Limited Chairman Shahadat Musharraf Khan was also present at the program.

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According to the first MoU, IUB will provide BU with opportunities for training and technical assistance to strengthen leadership, faculty development and institutional capacity. The two universities will also work to resurrect some of the endangered languages and cultures of the local ethnic communities through IUB's Center for Endangered Languages, which is a division within the Sasheen Centre for Multilingual Excellence of IUB.

The other tripartite MoU, signed between IUB, BU and Lumbini Limited says that the three organisations will establish an exchange program through which two students from BU will spend two semesters of a particular year at the IUB campus in Dhaka. At least one of those students will come from an ethnic community. They will be called "Lumbini Fellows" and will be offered internships at Lumbini Limited. For this purpose, Lumbini Limited has allocated a grant of BDT 2,50,000 per student per year for a four-year period.



Bir Bahadur Ushwe Sing said, "Young men and women from the hill tracts region are very keen about education. But sometimes it is difficult for their families to back them up financially. Bandarban University was established with an aim to bring affordable education to their doorsteps. However, those of us who are involved with the operation of

this university, we do not have too much experience in this field. That is why, we believe it would make a world of difference if renowned universities like IUB come forward in sharing their experiences with us."

Tanweer Hasan said, "Education is the backbone of a nation and ideally, it should be given in one's mother language. The Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh has already established Marma, Chakma and Tripura languages as the medium of education. This is a fantastic achievement and speaks loudly for the government's intent for preserving these languages. However, there are many other languages spoken by the ethnic communities in Bangladesh that could not yet be established as the medium of education. As a result, there are fears that these languages might be lost. That is why, Independent University, Bangladesh has set up the Centre for Endangered and Lost Languages to foster research and education to preserve some of the endangered languages spoken in different parts of the country."

Prof. Dr A. F. Imam Ali said, "Bandarban University is very much aligned with IUB's concept of inclusive education. We do not just want to give away certificates to our students. Instead, we want to develop them into skilled human resources with human qualities so that they feel a sense of responsibility towards the society."

Sha Md. Sultan Uddin Iqbal, who is also a trustee of Bandarban University, said, "The vision behind signing these memorandums is to open a new horizon for women empowerment in Bandarban."

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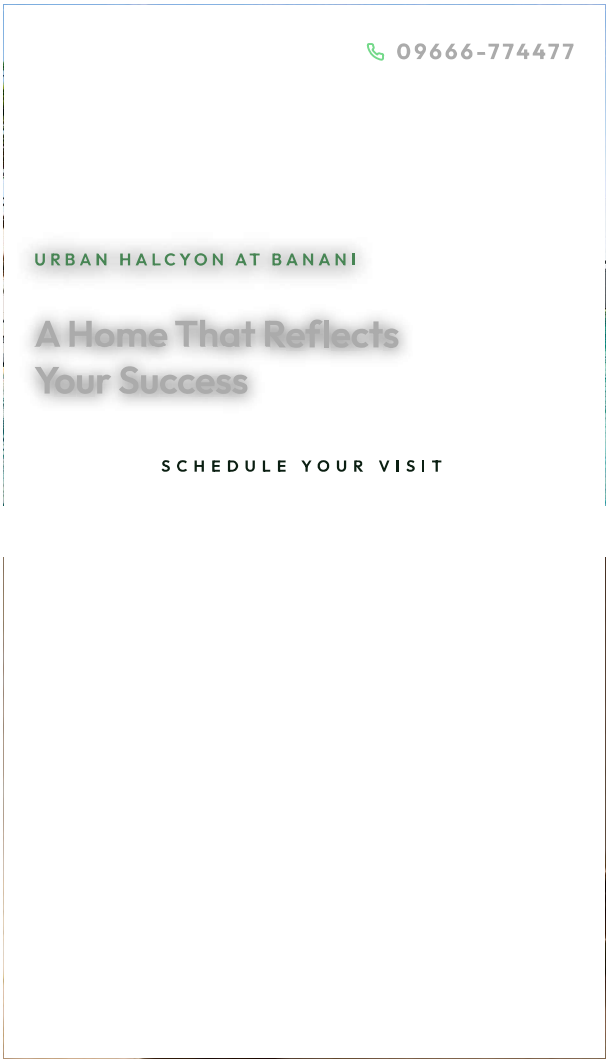



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