

News Bulletin



Bengali Wikipedia 10th Anniversary celebrations & International Conference

9th and 10th January, 2015



In collaboration with
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Fourteen years back, a website with a rather curious name sent out an unprecedented call-to-arms to the people of the world: “Come, let us together create and open encyclopaedia.” In the beginning, Wikipedia was a rather modest affair, boasting of entries like “Astronomer: Scientist whose area of research is Astronomy” and “Sweden: Country in Northern Europe. Inhabitants are called Swedes. Language spoken is Swedish. Capital is Stockholm.” Within a month, however, more than a thousand articles had been written for Wikipedia, and its illustrious history was already in the making. In the space of the next five years, Wikipedia became available in more and more languages, and expanded steadily, becoming the unrivalled one-stop source for quick and handy information on everything under the Sun, as well as the repository for a rapidly increasing number of in-depth well-researched entries on a broad variety of topics. And a simple secret lies behind all this remarkable success: anyone can write for Wikipedia.

At present, more than 400 million users access Wikipedia every month. Its popularity is hardly surprising, given that its content is both deep and widespread, extremely easy to access, completely free and open, and ad-free to boot. Over the past fourteen years, Wikipedia has gathered around it a community of volunteers from all over the world, featuring over 73,000 active editors as of May 2014. Today, with over 34 million articles distributed over 287 language editions, Wikipedia can be rightly said to have liberated knowledge and information and brought it to the common man.

Wikipedia is funded by the Wikimedia Foundation, a voluntary organisation founded in 2003 by Jimmy Wales, co-founder of Wikipedia. Wikimedia runs entirely on voluntary donations, and has so far had historic success in public funding, with donations of over 16 million dollars from over 500,000 volunteers.

The Bengali edition of Wikipedia (bn.wikipedia.org) came to life eleven years back in January 2004. It presently hosts over 33,000 articles, accessed by about 500 active users each month. Ten volunteers from Bangladesh and West Bengal work as administrators for the Bengali Wikipedia. Though reasonably successful so far in its own right, it is dwarfed in growth and popularity by its English counterpart, mostly because of a lack of awareness about it among the general populace of the two Bengals. Our main aim here is to change this situation by improving the quality and reach of its content and spreading the word, so that more and more volunteers come forward to help take this edition of the Wikipedia to a level of popularity comparable to the English Wikipedia.





January 2015 is an important month for the Bengali Wikipedians all over the world. In this month the Wikipedia community from both Bengals are getting together to celebrate its tenth anniversary. With the active cooperation of Jadavpur University, the School of Linguistic Studies, Faculty of Interdisciplinary Studies have organised this two-day conference. The events planned for this occasion include discussions, essay writing and photography competitions, and photo walks.

The conference has been possible because of the efforts and enthusiasm of Wikimedia India and a large number of volunteers from the Wikipedia community of Kolkata. Anyone can participate in this conference by registering for it, which holds up the pluralistic philosophy of Wikipedia. Registration can be done on Doattend at the following link: <http://bn10.doattend.com>.

Right now, twenty editions of the Wikipedia are in Indian languages, while twenty more are awaiting approval. However, Indians have so far contributed about 1.3% of the overall edits of Wikipedia, and only 4% of Wikipedia users are from India. Thus the anniversary celebrations are, in addition to being an international conference, a golden opportunity for taking this treasury of open knowledge to the masses. Wikipedians believe that knowledge cannot be the property of a privileged few, and strive to liberate knowledge from the clutches of copyright laws and intellectual property rights, and serve it to the people. To make the sumtotal of human knowledge of human knowledge easily accessible to the common man, regardless of his nationality or religion, is the sacred mission of Wikipedia.

