

Letters will only be considered if they carry the writer's full name, address and telephone number (if any). The identity of the writers will be protected. Letters must be limited to 250 words. All letters will be subject to editing.

Ekushey and Mamtaj Begum

Women had played an important role in 1952 Language movement. Unfortunately, their contributions were overlooked. Among the participants, Mamtaj Begum (Kalyani Roy Choudhury, b.1930) - the then Headmistress of Narayanganj Morgan Girls' School - demonstrated extraordinary courage. In Narayanganj, she organised one of the largest women's demonstration in protest of the killings of 21st and 22nd February (1952) in Dhaka. She was immediately jailed,

condemned and dubbed as a 'communist'. Strength of her character was tested when jailed Mumtaj Begum refused to sign the 'mercy petition' (admitting her mistake) prepared by the Pakistan government. She spent over a year in jail. Due to the dirty tricks of the then government she ultimately lost her job and family. Away from family, friends and the loved ones, Mamtaj Begum died in Armanitola, Dhaka in 1967.

There is almost no mention of

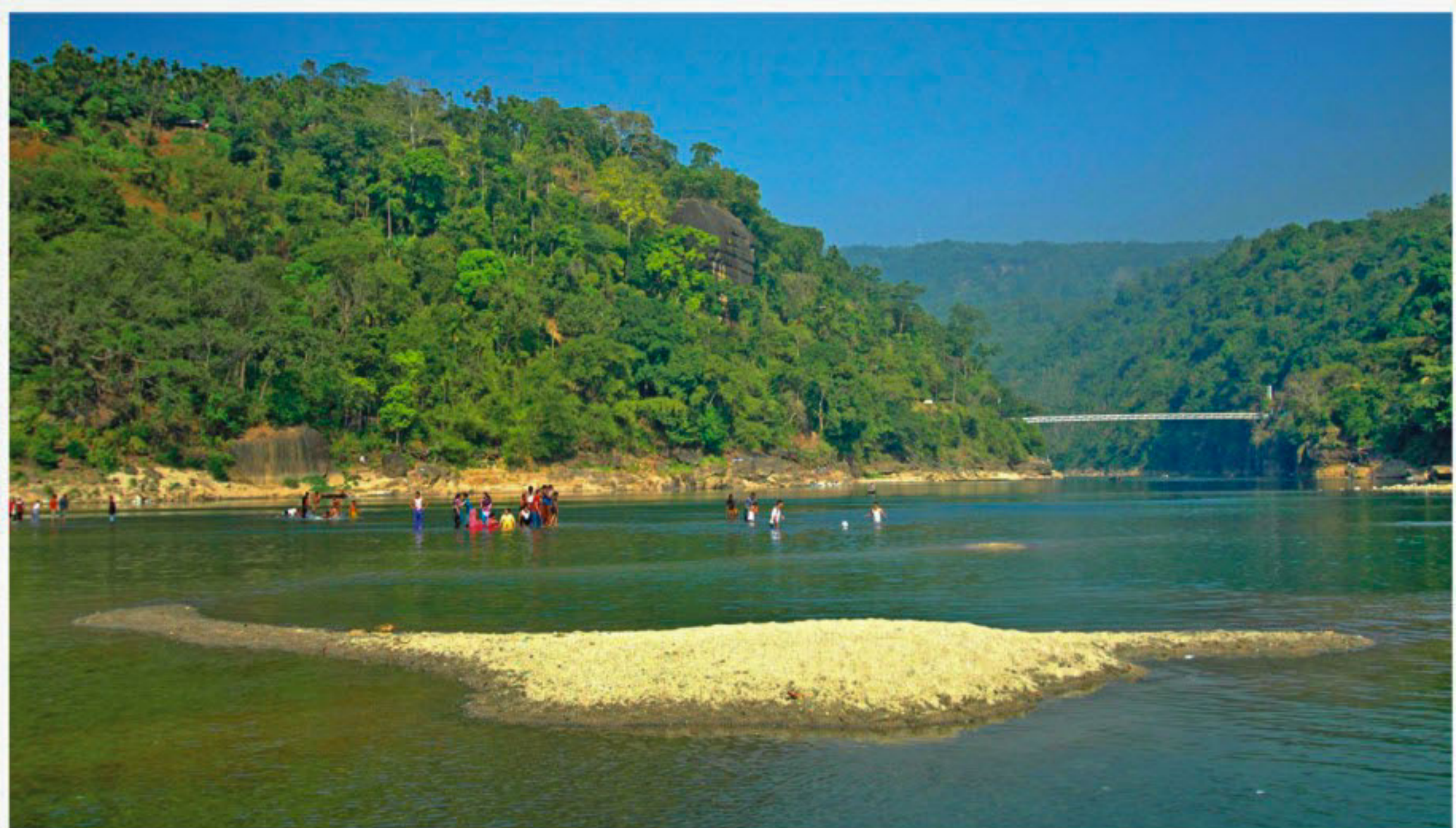
the role of women in Language movement in books, media and internet and I see no effort to pass their legacy on to the future generations. A few people in Bangladesh know about the contribution of Mamtaj Begum. Only after 57 years (July 2009), the first portrait of Mamtaj Begum was handed over to Narayanganj Morgan Girls' High School and recently (August, 2010) a road in Narayanganj was named after her by the city mayor Dr. Selina Hayat Ivy in presence of Mamtaj Begum's only daughter Shahana Islam. I was shocked to learn that last year the 'Ekushey Padak' proposal for Mamtaj Begum was turned down as the minister concerned 'never heard' of Mamtaj Begum.

I request the president and PM of Bangladesh to (1) immediately confer Ekushey Padak to Mamtaj Begum, (2) name a road in Dhaka after her, and (3) include women's roles in Language Movement in textbook.

M. Emad
Oxford, UK



PHOTO: AMIRUL RAJIV



R S CANJAN / DRIKNEWS

Sylhet- a paradise for tourists

The Sylhet valley is formed by a beautiful pair of rivers named Surma and Kushiara, both of which are fed by innumerable hill streams from the north and the south.

Sylhet is a land of gardens, forests and shrines. The forests here abound with birds of different species. The orange groves of Chhatak with humming bees add to the beauty of the region. Sylhet has a good number of haors. During winter these haors become

vast stretches of green land, but in the rainy season turn into turbulent seas. These haors are sanctuaries for the millions of migratory birds. The tea gardens spread over the slopes of the hills miles after miles like a green carpet are a feast to the eyes of the travellers. In Sylhet a tourist can spend a week to have a glimpse of the whole tourism circuit.

Ziaul Haque
DM, BPC

Illegal commission to get business!

An informative and interesting front page lead report on the matter was published by a local financial daily on 4th January. It only indicates that instead of paying due taxes on premium income, insurance companies avoid it, to sweeten the palm of the insurers, and possibly themselves too, through clever play of financial figures and supporting paper, making their black deed white! Instead insurance company authorities show it as fictitious costs, and create a 'slush fund', and to satiate the insurer's greed, you pay more and more illegal commission on premiums, beyond the limit set for it!

It seems from the report that our 'general insurance' managers have developed considerable skills and expertise to generate and manage such shadow 'slush funds'! It only adds one more 'feather of defame' in the caps of all our experts (?) who manage these "number two" funds successfully, without anyone being the wiser!

All said and done, the matter was an eye-opener for this reader, an ordinary citizen. It is up to the authorities, to take the time and trouble, to get to the roots of the matter; identify the players involved in this "commission game" and take them to task, which should be their just due!

Old & uninsured
Dhaka

Special supplement on 6th January

I read it in a few English dailies on 6th January issued by PID of our Ministry of Information, with three lead articles. The first one on the left; written by Syed Abul Hossain and translated by Sahana Akhtar, had grammatical mistakes, both in the 'heading' and the 'sub-heading' too! The heading stated "The Communication Infrastructure is being Changed." Here the definite article "The" was totally superfluous before the expression "Communication Infrastructure" which is a collective noun here. The sub-heading was totally confusing, grammar wise. It was: "Changes will there be in Bangladesh"! Was it not totally confusing? It really takes the cake! What was in the mind of the translator? Did

she just substitute suitable (?) English words for 'Bangla' as set in the 'Bangla' expression? I just cannot fathom the reason for this 'original' mistake!

Did no one see or scrutinize the English translation? May be all were busy to enjoy the long weekend; which possibly began on Wednesday 5th. and all were in a hurry to leave office! Or may be I am totally wrong, and this is the new style of English 'grammar' and 'composition'; of which I am ignorant, having said good-bye to English language at the then I.Sc level, way back in 1950! As far as I could make out, it was pure "Banglish"!

S.A. Mansoor
Dhaka

A separate health care strategy?

The article entitled "Health care in slums: No strategy works" published in The Daily Star on 31st December 2010, is an immature research in health care. Although at present Bangladesh don't have any prudent health policy, government and private health care facilities are accessible from rural to urban area either in the form of primary health care or primary to tertiary care. Important aspects are public awareness and education.

Slum people are poor and most disadvantaged. Different NGOs are working to provide them with health care and education since the birth of Bangladesh. Rural people are no longer neglected; qualified doctors are posted in all rural settings. Specialised care is available in all districts. Food security and nutritional value depend on the level of income and education.

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TIB's corruption survey

I was quite surprised to read the list of the corrupt in the TIB Survey. Not the ones named, but the undoubted 'champion' who once again got away unscathed. This department of the government operates far from the capital, has the largest area under its control and has institutionalised and refined the art of corruption. Yes, it is the

Forest Dept.

In the 1980s I took them head-on to try to benefit from the 100,000 trees, bushes, herbs that I had planted since 1976 on my 30 acres of barren hilly land, with my own money and hard work near Chittagong. I was told bluntly "You can plant all you want, but if you try to harvest even one, you have to take our permission". I refused to comply and between 1987-1992, published nearly a 100 letters in the English press, naming names and ridiculing the laws. Late Bobby Islam's The Morning Sun and all others supported me to the hilt. But all in vain. After threats and attacks on my small family, I have become a 'refugee' in Dhaka since 1993.

Bangladesh's pioneering venture into Agro-Forestry, nominated for the prestigious Swiss Rolex Award for the Environment in 1984, was decimated within 3 months after I was run out of Chittagong. This year the winner won the Corruption Stakes with 79%. Had the Forest Dept been included, it would have been 99.5%. Include them next year, TIB, and see for yourself.

Sikander Ahmed
Niketon, Gulshan-1, Dhaka

Desert turned green!

Agriculture together with livestock, fisheries and forestry is a rapidly flourishing potential economic sector in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). The UAE government has attached priority to invest more in the agriculture sector with a view to increasing food production. In the recent days massive agricultural development has put 723738 hectares of barren land under the plough. Greening the country with planting trees is also going on in full swing. Agriculture is being done in green house and in absence of enough water for irrigation hydroponics technique has been adopted to produce vegetables. In fact, UAE has so far achieved a remarkable progress towards modernising its agriculture as reflects in the saying of Late President Sheikh Zayed Bin Sultan Al Nahyan "They used to say agriculture has no future, but with God's blessing and our determination we have succeeded in transforming the desert into a green land."

Professor M Zahidul Haque
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Traffic jam in Dhaka

There have been many talk-shows, seminars, expert opinions on traffic jam of the capital city Dhaka and the traffic management has been taking numerous steps and measures and doing different experiments to solve the problem but with no success. We listen about big plans of elevated express ways, underground metro rails etc., but in reality it is hard to believe that these plans can ever be materialised by this poor nation having massive corruption in all sectors, from judiciary to education.

A few days ago I traveled with my family in a private car from Khulna to Dhaka. It took us six hours (including about three hours to cross the Padma river via Mawa) to reach the suburb of Dhaka city. But we had to spend about three hours more to reach my residence at Rampura from the end point of the second Buriganga bridge. During this tiring journey, I was just pondering on the followings:

-- Why so many young and middle aged people kept seating inside over-crowded buses for hours to travel a distance they can easily pass on foot, thus saving money as well as doing healthy exercise.

-- Is it really an impossible task for the government / Dhaka City Corporation to keep the footpaths clean and obstruction-free so that people can use those for the purpose they are meant for?

-- Why the traffic department is failing to implement the traffic rules.

Engr. Md. Aminul Hoque
Khalishpur, Khulna



WAHID ADNAN / DRIKNEWS

Forty years of success



12th January is celebrated as University Day in Jahangirnagar University, as the university was established on this day 40 years ago.

This year the university has celebrated its 40 years of success. Students of 40th batch have started their classes in the 1st week of January. The university authorities have arranged a 3-day long festival which started on 12th January and continued till 14th January. The programmes included rally, concert and other entertaining events.

As Jahangirnagar University is the country's only residential university, the bond between the senior and junior students is very deep compared to other universities.

Fahim Ibne Sarwar
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Cyber crimes

Md. Asadullah Khan has aptly stated: "We have borrowed the gloss, but not the ability to fight a crisis" [The Looming Threat of AIDS, published in The Daily Star on 11th December, 2010].

Undoubtedly, the government's pledge to build a digital nation is a commendable one, but I wonder if it is prepared to tackle cyber crime. Fake accounts on social networking sites, uploading inappropriate materials and hacking are already prevalent in this country. Higher levels of cyber crimes can easily creep in. It is very disturbing if hackers gain access to private information and send obnoxious or misleading mails to contacts.

With a fast-paced lifestyle that a digital nation promises, an irreversible damage can be done within seconds if the hacker sends a wrong quotation, article or presentation. Before a person can clarify that, his/her account has been compromised, a wrong mail will have already reached the contact, for

example, an employer; and although it may not result in sacking, it will still cause a great loss for the company.

I request the government to pay attention to this issue.
A concerned citizen
Dhaka

Be aware of taxicabs

It is very sad to say that taxicabs are being used to snatch vanity bags or luggage from the passengers of rickshaws. One of our neighbour had this bad experience. She and her relative were going by a rickshaw and she was aware that her vanity bag might be snatched. So, she held her bag strongly. But a taxicab followed them and a man in the cab snatched away her bag. As she was holding her bag strongly, she fell on the street and broke one of her ankles. She was admitted to a hospital for 2 weeks. The question is- is it not possible for our law enforcing agencies to stop such crimes?