



Language Movement heroines Chhomela Begum, Zaheda Khanam, and late Foujia Begum.

PHOTO: STAR

1952 LANGUAGE MOVEMENT

Glorious role of female activists in Nilphamari

EAM ASADUZZAMAN, Nilphamari

The then sub-divisional town Nilphamari wrote a glorious chapter in the Language Movement of 1952 as a large number of female activists participated in the forefront along with males, in spite of the conservative outlook of the people.

They not only organised processions and meetings but also inspired people by arranging cultural programmes where they sang patriotic songs, recited self-composed fiery poems and urged the people to protest the conspiracy against the Bangla language.

Language Movement veteran Chhomela Begum, 80, said many girl students took active part in the movement. Their participation created enthusiasm and drew large numbers of people to the agitation programmes as it was a new dimen-

sion in the context of the then conservative socio-political context, she added.

"Prominent female activists of the movement in Nilphamari were Foujia Begum, Jakia Sultana, Feroja, Halima, Rabeya, Saleha, Sufia, Bulu, Lebu and many others. Most of them have died," the language veteran said, adding that most of them were students of Nilphamari Government Girls' High School.

A strike was observed in all educational institutions of Nilphamari on February 21, 1952. A big rally was held in Muslim Hostel premises of Nilphamari Model High School, where activists Foujia and Feroja spoke alongside the male participants.

The scenario changed overnight when news of the killing of Rafiq, Salam, Barkat, Jabbar, Shafiq and others on February 21 reached Nilphamari.

Thousands of people, with girl students at the forefront, brought out an angry procession on February 22. At one stage, 10 to 15 female activists led by Zaheda Khanam locked in a scuffle with police and snatched their batons, forcing them to retreat.

Three girls were injured in the scuffle. Lebu and Zaheda took the injured to a nearby house and gave them treatment secretly with the help of local physicians.

Agitation intensified further when the Pakistan government arrested Khairat Hossain, a local opposition member in the then East Pakistan Provincial Assembly, on February 23 as he walked out from the assembly along with Moulana Abdur Rashid Tarkabagish, protesting the killing of February 21.

Thousands of people, including girls, staged a series of agitations on February 24, 25 and 26. Police

arrested local Awami Muslim League convener advocate Dabiruddin Ahmed and educationist Abu Nazam Mohammad Ali on the night of February 26 to suppress the movement.

After the arrest, the remaining leaders went into hiding, creating a vacuum in the leadership. Undaunted, female activists like Foujia, Chhomela, Halima continued arranging people's gatherings in the name of street corner cultural functions, where messages for the movement were given indirectly.

Police issued arrest warrant against Foujia and Halima, forcing them to go into hiding.

Foujia, daughter of a local landlord, continued financing the agitation programmes from her hiding place till the Pakistan government was compelled to declare Bangla as one of the state languages.

50 hurt in clash with cops in Bhola

The mayhem followed police action to clear road occupied by vendors

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

At least 50 people, including eight policemen and a journalist, were injured in a clash between local street vendors and police in Hajirhat area under Monpura upazila of Bhola yesterday.

The injured include Officer-in-Charge of Monpura Police Station Md Sahin Khan, Assistant Sub-Inspector Pradeep and Constables Junayed, Arif Billah, Jasim, Abdul Halim and Nayeem. They were admitted to the upazila health complex.

The clash took place when the OC asked

the traders to free the main road in the area, easing traffic congestion and they refused, said police.

At one stage, law enforcers charged batons on the traders when they threw brick-bats targeting the law enforcers, said locals.

Police fired several blank shots to bring the situation under control, said Md Sahin Khan, officer-in-charge of Monpura Police Station.

On the other hand, bazar committee secretary Md Mohiuddin said the incident erupted as the OC misbehaved with them.



Some of the victims of yesterday's clash at Hazirhat Bazar in Bhola's Monpura upazila.

PHOTO: STAR



Students of Ramchandrapur Government Primary School in Indurkani upazila of Pirojpur attend classes in a makeshift house as the concrete school building has turned too risky. Inset, iron rods of the ceiling of the building of Uttar Chandipur Government Primary School in the same upazila have become exposed, marking its awful condition.



PHOTO: STAR

Classes of primary kids hampered as school buildings risky

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pirojpur

Students at Uttar Chandipur Government Primary School under Indurkani upazila of the district are afraid to attend classes as the school-house has become dilapidated and risky.

Tamanna, a student of Class IV, said, "It seems that concrete from the ceiling will fall at any time," adding that she and the other students cannot concentrate on their studies because of the fear.

Like Tamanna, other students of the school are anxious too.

"As students of three classes sit together, it hampers our studies," said Meem, a student of Class III, adding that the parents also feel anxious when the children are at school.

Headmaster Sohrab Hossain said they sometimes take classes in the corridor due to fear of accidents.

The school building, which was built in 1995, began to break down around four years ago. Iron bars are protruding from the columns and plaster falls from the ceiling.

"As there is no alternative place, we take classes in the risky building," said Md Fakhru Alam, headmaster of Maddhya Kalaron Government Primary School, which was constructed in 1995.

The authorities of Ramchandrapur Government Primary School abandoned the building around three years ago, though it was built only 16 years ago. Classes are held in a temporary shed erected in the school play-

ground.

Recently, five students of Uttar Gaokhali Government Primary School under Nazirpur upazila of the district were injured when concrete from the ceiling fell on them. The school was built in 1994.

The school buildings, most of which are built by the Local Government Engineering Department (LGED), start breaking down within 15 years of construction.

This correspondent could not talk to the Executive Engineer of LGED in Pirojpur Md Rafiqul Hassan as he did not receive the calls.

According to the department of Primary Education (DPE), there are around 150 decrepit and risky primary schools in seven upazilas of the district.

Cattle rearing brings her solvency

Saleha earns Tk 40-45 thousand a month by selling milk

ZAHANGIR SHAH, Manikganj

Cattle rearing finally alleviated her poverty.

Wife of rickshaw puller Meher Ali of Dashora village in Manikganj municipality, Saleha Begum wanted to bring solvency but there was no way out to make her family happy.

Family's poverty made the 45-year-old woman depressed and she was determined to do anything to bring family's solvency.

With the help of her neighbour, she became a member of Muslim Aid Bangladesh, a Non Government Organisation (NGO) in June 2005 and after a week, she got Tk 6000 interest free loan. Adding her Tk 4 thousand with the loan money, Saleha purchased a cow for Tk 10

thousand.

"I repaid the loan money and took another loan of Tk 20 thousand which was spent for buying two more cattle in July 2006," Saleha said, adding that she took loan of Tk 50 thousand for buying an Australian cow the following year.

"Now I am owner of 15 cattle, including eight cows, five calves and two buffalos. I get 70-80 litres of milk everyday," she added.

Saleha's son Saidur Rahman is a second year student of BSS at Government Devendra College and daughter Barsha Akhter Amena is a Class IX student of Khan Bahadur Awlad Hossain Khan School. Her elder daughter Sharmin Akhter got married two years ago.

The woman has now become an icon for other villagers who want to change their fate.

Her rickshaw puller husband said he helped his wife for caring cattle in the farm in his leisure time.

"I sell the produced milk in the local market," he said, adding that their present earning is Tk 40-45 thousand per month.

"My dream could not have been fulfilled if the NGO did not help me by giving interest free loan", Saleha said. Now her dream is to educate their son and daughter, she added.

Manikganj Branch Manager of Muslim Aid Bangladesh Zahedul Islam said "We salute Saleha Begum as she achieved success through properly utilising our small loan."

Saleha Begum takes care of her cows in her farm at Dashora village in Manikganj municipality. Below, she shares her experience to inspire other women to take similar initiative.



PHOTO: STAR

