

## Desolated Rayerbazar and the same old 'annual cleaning'

The martyred intellectuals' mausoleum appears as 'grazing field' at day hours and 'criminals' den' at night

RIZANUZZAMAN LASKAR

The place appears to be a grazing field for cattle, a picnic spot for locals or a yacking and lurking site for hoodlums and vagabonds.

This is Rayerbazar Martyred Intellectuals Mausoleum -- a memorial to pay homage to the Bangalee intellectuals who were brutally killed by the collaborators of the Pakistani occupation army two days before the Liberation War victory.

The 6.5 acres area is dotted with wild plants, feet long grass, half buried sewer pipes, litters and pieces of bricks scattered all over. Local slum dwellers lay their clothes on the red brick structures to dry them out in the sun. This place reportedly has become a den for anti-social activities despite the presence of security guards.

At this place 36 years ago, renowned university professors, writers, poets, doctors and journalists were taken blindfolded to be killed cold-bloodedly in the dead of night on December 14, the day now we observe as Martyred Intellectuals Day.

The red-bricked memorial premises remain littered with empty packets of potato chips, biscuits, peanut shells, waste paper and dirt. Only one cleaner assigned by Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) for keeping the mausoleum premises clean is not enough.

"We have borrowed another cleaner from the local neighbourhood to help us keep the premises clean," said a supervising officer at the mausoleum. But still it is very difficult for only two persons to clean the vast area.

The iron fence marking the

boundary appears to have little purpose. It generously allows cattle to trespass and graze in the tall green grass, which visibly has not been trimmed for a long time.

All flora on the mausoleum premises fall under the responsibility of the Arbouriculture Department. However, the department seems to remember their responsibilities only once a year, just before the Martyred Intellectuals Day, the December 14th.

"They would send some of their people to cut the grass, get rid of the wild plants and do some other maintenance works with the plants," said an on-duty staff. "However, it would not be before another year when they would pay attention to this mausoleum."

Greasy green moss has grown on the steps leading to the black marble structure, making the path dangerously slippery for visitors. The stone monument

itself has been damaged because of chemical reaction amid pollution by nearby tanneries.

In 2005 some cracks were found in the cement base. Although repaired, the cracks have again popped up after a long interval in maintenance.

"The Public Works Department usually send some workers to repair the stone monument during the first week of December. Although it keeps things on bay for a while, they

should consider taking long-term preservation measures," an official said.

Locals alleged that anti-social elements carry out their criminal activities from the memorial area, putting at stake even the safety of the security guards.

"A number of local hoodlums have made the memorial their base especially during certain hours at night," said Keramat Ali, a local resident.

During a visit to the mauso-

leum, this correspondent could not find any of the two security guards who are supposed to watch over the mausoleum.

"They perform their duty in plain clothes, so they are quite hard to distinguish," said an on-duty staff when asked about the absence of any security personnel.

Later, this correspondent found several peddlers, including peanut and pickle sellers, entering the mausoleum ignoring signs that read: "no peddlers allowed." However, no plain-clothes security personnel came forward to shoo them away.

Despite the large signboards advising the visitors to keep the lawns clean and not to sit on walls, visitors are seen littering and dirtying the premises.

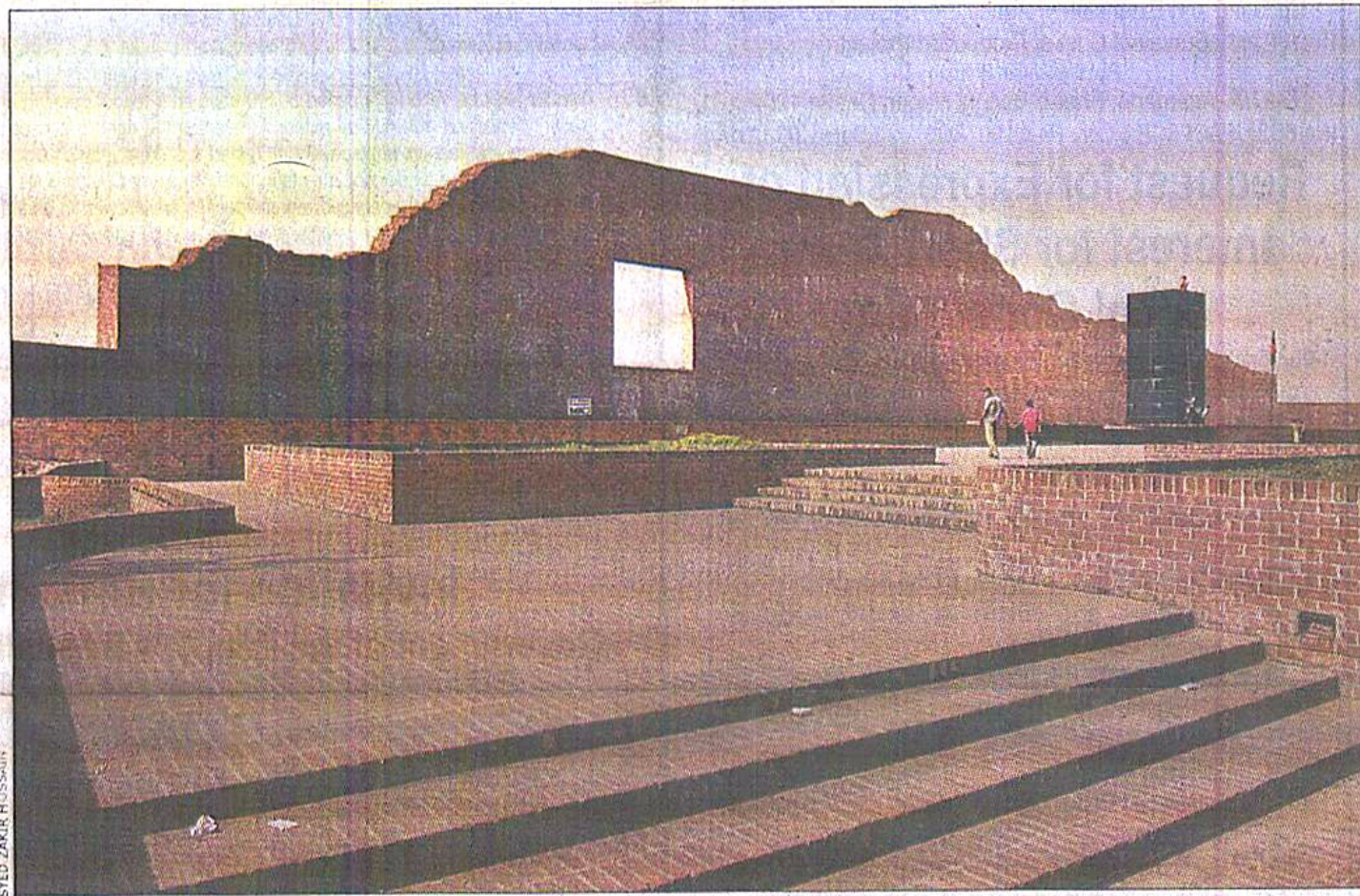
"We try to discourage this kind of practices. When we see someone sitting on the walls or the monument structures we ask them to come down. However, it is not easy to keep vigil over such a large space," said a mausoleum staff.

For the whole year, the memorial tends to be a monument to no one. Most people do not even know what it is.

All these are about to change this week with the Martyred Intellectuals Day ahead -- the only day in a year that the monument and its history seem to be remembered.

"The whole mausoleum will be spruced up before December 14," said Mohammad Kawsar, sub-divisional engineer of PWD who is responsible for the job.

"We usually revamp the mausoleum once a year. However, any extensive repairs would not be initiated until the Ministry of Liberation War Affairs allots the required funds."



## Rab dog squad: Daring, dashing and dogged

DURDANA GHILAS

It was 6 in the morning. Max was walking in the open field in front of his office at Mirpur Section 14. He was doing light exercise with his colleagues. While jumping over the hurdles he gave a suspicious look at one person or two who were not familiar to him or were not his colleagues.

"Who are you and what are you doing here? I have never seen you here before! Have you taken my clearance before entering the premises?" he thought. He did not bark but fixed that person with his looks.

Inside his head he was busy managing the tight schedule that he was going to maintain that day. After an hour he will have to go to a slum to look for arms, then to join a 'block raid' and then to a state programme to search for explosives. It depends on him whether the state programme will be held or

cancelled. So Max takes his duties very seriously.

Max is a trained arms and explosives dog of the Rab Dog Squad.

If he finds any explosives he scratches the ground with his paws, wags his tail and rubs his nose. Later the bomb disposal unit takes out the explosives.

"He is one of our smartest dogs in searching arms and explosives," said Captain Mizanur Rahman, in-charge, Rab Dog Squad.

Danger, Night, Rex, Wolf, Rocky, Booty and Dusty are Max's colleagues.

The main duty of them is sweeping an area before an important state programme where VIPs will be present. The site can be the Prime Minister's Office, Rab Headquarters or the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban, venues for important national or international events.

"It takes 20 minutes to two hours to sweep a field depend-

ing on the area. The area is segmented and each dog is tasked with searching in one segment. The place is declared safe after we give the clearance," he said.

"This is a very sensitive job. Many important things depend on our clearance so we don't make haste," he added.

There are four teams of dog squad -- arms and explosive search, narcotic search, biting dog and training dog -- chosen from Labradors and German Shepherds. German Shepherds are ferocious, aggressive and agile. They are mostly used for biting and manning an area. Labradors are comparatively docile and used in arms, explosives and narcotic search.

Tracker dogs apprehend criminals during raids. The dogs are used to search and rescue the injured or find the dead from under collapsed buildings.

"Our dogs were used in searching the dead and the

injured in the garment factory collapse in Savar. In the recent Yaba drives the dogs played a key part in finding the drugs," said Rahman.

"During the disaster of Sidr we could not use them for searching because we need more manpower and more dogs to carry out a massive work like this."

In 1998, twenty-five dogs were brought from England in the first batch to form the squad under Bangladesh Police. Among them 12 were German Shepherds and 13 Labradors. On average one dog cost Tk 25,000.

In 2006, 10 German Shepherds were imported from India. In August 2004 when the squad was handed over to Rab it had 40 dogs.

For puppies a basic training is given when they turn six to nine months. It is a two-month training where the puppies' intelligence, agility, aggressiveness and smelling capacity are

assessed.

The dogs are made familiar with basic commands, the smell of gunpowder, explosives, narcotics and related elements during training. They are given further training according to their capabilities and if they pass the basic training.

The dogs remain most active up to the age of eight or nine years.

Asked whether local dogs can be used in place of them, Rahman said, "The local breeds cannot be compared with the high standard of the pure breeds. Sarail dog, found in Sarail of Brahmanbaria, are the best among the local breed that are used in guarding residential houses. But they are far from what we need for searching arms, explosives and narcotics."

The efficiency of the dogs also depends on the weather.

"If the sun is hot or the wind is strong, then it affects the working capability of a dog. It

becomes tired quickly and needs more rest," said a handler.

Md Afazuddin, working as the dogs' vet since 2004, said that a combined vaccine is given to the dogs every year to prevent six viral infectious diseases like rabies, canine distemper, canine hepatitis, Pseudo rabies, Leptospirosis 1 and 2. The dogs are groomed regularly to prevent them from seasonal skin diseases like external parasites and tick and lice.

The dogs also have a hospital of their own, which has a well-equipped operating theatre, where minor injuries are treated, diseases diagnosed and minor surgeries done. For major operations they are taken to the Central Veterinary Hospital on Kazi Alauddin Road.

When they grow old some of them die naturally. Some of them are drugged with chemical to ensure their peaceful death. This is called euthanasia. They are buried with due honour at a certain place.

The squad now has 51 dogs -- 41 Labradors and 10 German Shepherds. These include 29 arms and explosives dogs, 4 narcotics dogs, 5 biting dogs and 5 trackers. Seventy-five persons are engaged in taking care of them.

After the warm-up session in the morning breakfast is served to the dogs at 8:00am. Then the dogs on duty are sent to their respected sites. Other dogs go back to warm-up sessions from 8:30am to 11:30am so that they remain fit and agile. They are groomed from 11:30am to 12:00pm.

The dogs have lunch at 3:30 in the afternoon before going back to their cages. The meal contains a 50-gram slice of bread, egg, cod liver oil, boiled meat and vegetables.

Around Tk 130 to 150 is spent on each dog daily. Each dog has one handler who has at least 2 months' basic training on how to handle dogs. Trainers from army have 6 months' training on it.



Dogs display their agility, intelligence and aggressiveness at a demonstration on the compound of Rab Dog Squad office at Mirpur recently.

## city express

The latest crop of quotes from the city's press -- words worth repeating, we feel, for their humour, insight or sheer outrageousness. Star City does not necessarily support the opinions expressed in this column.

"It was a mistake I didn't address the issue earlier."

-- Ayub Quadri  
Cultural Adviser

Said at a press conference at the PID after first consignment of the invaluable artefacts were sent to the Guimet Museum of France for exhibition amid protests by art connoisseurs, on Wednesday. Source: The Daily Star

"We have to learn how to collect relief."

-- Anwar Hossain

Union Parishad Chairman of Southkhali

Told at a gathering of deprived villagers while many were returning home empty handed, on Tuesday. Source: The Daily Star

"The judgement suffers from a lack of strict scrutiny of the oral evidence inasmuch as the conviction seems to be based on oral evidence of a single witness. The learned magistrate ought to have noticed that the prosecution failed to produce any corroborative evidence and therefore he should not have relied on the un-corroborative evidence."

-- Justice Ghulam Rabbani

Former judge of Supreme Court Appellate Division

Told a reporter on the verdict sentencing four teachers of Rajshahi University to two years imprisonment, on Wednesday. Source: The Daily Star

"We have seen the protesters against the daily Prothom Alo. None of them was arrested or convicted. It does not matter now if we are punished on this charge."

-- Prof Anisuzzaman

Professor, Dhaka University

Told a reporter when asked if he thinks they broke the emergency power rules by holding a silent demonstration protesting the imprisonment of four RU teachers, on Thursday. Source: The Daily Star

"Government can publish a constitution for all political parties and distribute it among them."

-- Gayeshwarchandra Roy

Pro-Khaleda BNP Leader

Told reporters, on Sunday. Source: Bhorer Kago

"It has become tiresome for me. In March and December every year journalists come to me and I have to describe the painful incident how my husband was martyred in 1971. After these months are over everyone forgets the issue."

-- Hamida Begum

Widow of Shaheed Khabibuddin

Told a reporter when she approached her to know about her martyr husband, on Saturday. Source: The Daily Star

Compiled by Durdana Ghilas

## RANGS FLOOR COLLAPSE

### A witness paints the gruesome picture

TAWFIQUE ALI

It was 9:45 at night. Firoy Mian was working along with a dozen others to demolish the Rangs Building. The labourers on the 19th floor felt a sudden jerk of the building.

"We got panicked. We stopped work and clutched on to a nearby column. In the blink of an eye we saw the floors on the western side caving in one after another," said Firoy Mian, a witness to the collapse of the floors of the 22-storey building Saturday night.

"We started running helter-skelter to save our lives and get out of the building amid a thick layer of dust and electric sparks," he said.

"Finding rest of our co-workers nowhere around, a few of us went up again. We found a couple of them badly injured and bleeding from head. Soon I found Abul, my close co-worker, trapped under concrete slabs. His legs, hands and most part of body got sandwiched with only

the back visible. We tried hard to get him out but to no avail."

Security and fire service personnel soon forced the labourers to go downstairs for safety. They said nothing could be done until the daybreak.

On Sunday morning, this correspondent found the legs of two ill-fated labourers, one hanging from the 7th floor and other from the 6th.

Firoy, who hails from Phulchhari of Gaibandha, said he had been working for the last two weeks under the supervision of one Lal Mian, who leads a group of 40 labourers engaged in demolishing the building. Around 15 of them used to work at night shift.

According to Firoy, two labour contractors Harun Majhi and Nasir Majhi have taken contract of demolishing the floors of the building. At least 11 labourers of Harun Majhi group were asleep on the 8th floor on that night.

The fate of them could not be known immediately.