



The beautiful Star Mosque at Mahuttuly was built in Mughal style architecture. Mirza Ghulam Pir, a highly respected Zamindar, built the mosque with three domes in the early 18th century. Presently five-domed the surface decoration of the mosque is many twinkling stars created by setting pieces of chinaware on white cement and the front view from afar looks as if they were shining above the earth.

## Mosquitoes make life a misery

City fathers say they lack sufficient manpower to combat the menace

SHAHNAZ PARVEEN

Mosquitoes are making life of the city dwellers a misery. Just with the fall of dusk, swarms of mosquitoes come out of their hideouts to launch desperate attacks.

"The menace has become intolerable in the last two weeks as the flying insects attack in hundreds causing a kind of muscular pain," said Sirajul Haque, a resident of Rampura.

"They spare none. They invade both slums and posh areas," said a resident of Dhanmondi R/A.

Residents of the densely populated areas such as Mirpur, Pallabi, Maghbazar, Rampura, Mohammadpur, Rayerbazar, Jigatola, Badda, Khilgaon, Basabo, around Farmgate, in parts of Uttara and old town told this correspondent their tales of

tortured nights. "With the rise of temperature the mosquitoes increased overnight like a nightmare. Frequent loadshedding added to the situation as the insects become desperate at the smell of sweat. On the other hand you spend sleepless night inside net because of power cut," said a Khilgaon resident.

Meanwhile, grocery shop owners at different parts of the city reported brisk business as prices of mosquito coils and repellants went up.

But the wholesalers at Karwan Bazar alleged that the most retailers are taking advantage of sudden rise in mosquito menace. However, they did not rule out price increase in the near future.

A trader in Mohammadpur town hall area said, "It has become unbearable even during

daytime. My daughter is an SSC examinee. Her exams starts in a few days but she cannot study without a mosquito net as the repellants do not work these days."

People in shanties mostly bear the brunt of the menace. A slum dweller at Rupnagar, Mirpur said, "We cannot afford mosquito coils. We are now having hard time buying food for our family"

Abul Kalam Azad, a resident of Dilu Road, Magbazar said, "We start using mosquito net from the evening. It is impossible to pass a peaceful moment without mosquito repellants draining huge money of our monthly budget"

Mojibor Rahman, a resident of North Road, Dhanmondi said, "Surface drains are rarely cleaned in my area, making it a heaven for mosquitoes. We have-

n't seen any activities in the recent days to control the pesky insects."

However, the officials at the Dhaka City Corporation said they lack sufficient manpower to combat mosquitoes. Only around 400 spraymen under 193 supervisors are employed for more than one crore city dwellers in its 90 wards. In that case only 6 spraymen to do the job in each ward. At least 4 more personnel are needed in each ward to carry out the task, officials said.

Chief entomologist Naseem-uj-Seraj at the Mosquito Control Wing (MCW) of DCC said, "Cleaning drive is going on regularly. We are focusing on controlling larvae by spraying larvacide on the stagnant water in the city. Our sprayers are also working to rid the citizens of flying adults in the afternoon"

"However, there are some pockets where we do not have access. Privately owned ponds, drains and ditches inside various industrial compounds and some government agencies are beyond our purview," he added.

Seraj pointed out that the general public must come forward to share the job as well.

"With this inadequate workforce it is not possible for DCC alone to control mosquito. People has to share the responsibility by cleaning their own surroundings", he said.

Seraj also pointed out that a large number of houses in the city are so ill-designed that some parts become unreachable. "For instance, the ramp of a garage, which most of the times covers the drains, make it impossible to clean anything under it," he said.

Seraj said mosquitoes also invade from areas adjacent to the city. They do not fall within the Dhaka City Corporation territory. For example, Demra, Mugdapara, parts of Uttara and Jatrabari are yet to become part of DCC.

Officials at DCC mosquito control wing said, modern equipments have been procured for mosquito control. Currently 38 wheel mounted spray machines and 10 power sprays are in operation. The corporation has another 18 ultra low volume (ULV) sprayers in its possession, but they are lying idle in the store.

Besides 297 fogger machines, 941 manual spray machines are also used in the 90 wards of the city corporation, they said.

At the moment, the DCC has 21,500 litres of adulticide and 18,400 litres of larvacide in its stock. Officials said, these were purchased in February last year. Move is on to procure another 12,766 liters of chemicals, the officials informed.

For mosquito control, monitoring and surveillance of larvae the DCC has earmarked Tk 15 crore. Another Tk 1.5 crore will be spent for purchase of new equipments.

"Every year they spend a lot of money after mosquito control. But every time it ends in a mock battle. So God knows if at all we are going to enjoy a moment's respite," remarked an elderly resident of Tejgaon.



An ideal mosquito breeding ground at North Mugdapara in the city.

## 'Restore killing field at Mirpur Bangla College'

Students form human chain demanding punishment to war criminals

SHAHNAZ PARVEEN

A day before the Independence Day, students of Bangla College paid homage to the brave sons of the soil who were martyred or tortured on the college campus by the Biharis and the Pakistani army during the War of Liberation.

They formed a human chain yesterday demanding punishment to the war criminals, proper restoration of the killing grounds across Bangladesh and building a memorial on the mass grave at the college in city's Mirpur area.

Freedom fighters, members of the guerrilla groups and cultural activists joined the human

chain expressing solidarity with the students' demand.

Md Zahiruddin, a second year BSS student of the college, said, "The mass graves of the country are subject to negligence by the authorities. These killing fields are witness to the most important episode of our history."

"We simply cannot ignore the fact that many Bangalees embraced martyrdom on our college campus during the liberation war. We want to show them our deep respect and gratitude by establishing a memorial here," he said.

Anwara Begum, known as 'Nani buri' among the college

students, is one of the witnesses to the gruesome killings that took place 37 years ago. "They killed several young men right beside the hostel under a gaab tree," she recalled.

"I still remember the stench of the decomposed bodies lying scattered on the campus," said Anwara who used to work as an ayah at the college in 1971.

"The only reason they spared me because I was saying my prayers when they came to torch my hut," said the old woman now living in a slum opposite to the college.

Syed Shahidul Haque Mama, commander of then 'Mama guerrilla group' said the demand for trial and punishment of the

war criminals has come to the limelight once again.

"None of the previous governments punished the war criminals. It is a shame that the killers are roaming freely on the land of independent Bangladesh. They should be punished for their heinous act," said the freedom fighter.

Mama Bahini led many guerrilla assaults on the Pakistani soldiers and Biharis stationed in Mirpur, Mohammadpur, Lalmatia, Dhanmondi and Rayerbazar areas.

Before independence Mirpur was predominantly a Bihari area where the Urdu-speaking people maintained control even up to January 1972 -- 45 days into

the surrender of the Pakistani forces and the Biharis on December 16, 1971.

After the war was over, human remains were found at many places in Mirpur. Six killing fields were located in this area including the one on the Bangla College campus.

During the nine-month war many Bangalees were tortured, shot and beheaded in these killing grounds and later buried in mass graves in and around Bangla College.

Md Lutfor Rahman, a member of Mama Bahini said they had started assault on the Biharis first at Bangla College. "We entered the campus in the afternoon of 16th December and found many beheaded bodies all around."

Bangla College was founded in 1962 at Bakshibazar in old Dhaka. In 1965, the campus was relocated in Mirpur on a 19-acre land.

In the beginning the campus had only one building surrounded by barbed wires with vast fields, trees and small villages. During the War of Liberation the campus was closed and used by the Pakistani occupation army and Biharis as a camp.

Today the campus has a large field in front of the academic buildings, a pond and a small lawn at the back. Around 15,000 students are studying in the college currently.

Apart from forming the human chain, the students have opened a website www.banglacollege.com to upload information about the killing grounds. The sought help from the witnesses to killings and torture in 1971.



Students stage a human chain in front of Mirpur Bangla College yesterday calling to restore the killing ground on the campus and punish the war criminals.



The Swadhinata Stambha, now being built at Suhrawardi Udyan, was designed without keeping in mind the exact location where the Pak army surrendered in 1971.

## A historic spot getting erased from history

It will be difficult to locate now the exact spot where the Pak forces surrendered in 1971

RAIHAN SABUKTAGIN

Although a huge independence monument is being built in Suhrawardi Udyan to preserve the memories of the martyrs and glorify independence, the exact spot where the surrender document was signed will be a difficult task to locate now.

So far, there has been no step to identify the historic spot and build a memorial there, sources said.

Freedom fighters said the spot where the Pakistani forces signed the document of surrender after the liberation war in 1971 has been obliterated from the map due to lack of necessary measures by the authorities concerned.

The project for building the independence monument is also tottering for more than a decade. The second phase of the project is now at the design stage.

AK Khandakar, deputy chief of the liberation forces and an eyewitness to the surrender, said, "How people can know the spot if it is not preserved? I can just assume the area but it is now quite impossible for me to pinpoint the spot after 36 years."

"Identifying the spot is very important, otherwise it would be a historic mistake," he said.

Akku Chowdhury, a trustee of the Liberation War Museum, said he heard the spot is somewhere near a banyan tree inside the Shishu Park, which is part of the udyan.

This correspondent talked to some old employees of the Shishu Park and enquired about the spot but they could not give a clue.

The banyan tree still exists in the park. Under the tree, this correspondent met one Golam Mustafa, who claimed to be a war-injured freedom fighter, said the spot is near the corner of the park's canteen, around 50 yards from the tree.

"How painful! The nation has lost the place where they achieved victory," a frustrated

Mustafa said. "We took only nine months to snatch independence but could not complete the independence monument in 10 years. Is it believable?"

The Ministry of Liberation War Affairs is supervising the work on the independence monument named 'Swadhinata Stambha'. The work started in 1997 but its design was changed several times with the change of the government.

An official of the project said the difference in mindset of the two major political parties -- Awami League and BNP -- has obstructed quick and smooth implementation of the project, cost and size of which were cut and revised several times.

The project has been a victim of political changeover and it remained almost stalled after BNP-Jamaat coalition government assumed power in 2001.

Asked about the surrender spot, the project officials said there is no mention of the spot in the design of the independence monument. "But there are scopes [in the project] for pointing out the historic spot in order to conserve it," said an official.

"In fact, none thought about the spot," admitted the official when asked why it was not in the design of the independence monument.

Mostaq Ahmed, secretary of the Ministry of Liberation War Affairs, said, "Now we are constructing the independence monument and we should give priority on completing the project first, instead of extending or conserving that spot."

He said the ministry hopes to preserve all the memories of the liberation war but presently it does not have a concrete plan to conserve the spot.

The secretary said conservation of the spot requires different kinds of initiatives. But before taking such initiative, the spot must be identified.



Long row of rickshaw-vans occupies a part of the road and a part of the pavement near the Fakirapool water tank. The pullers usually use the spot as a stopover stand but these days many of them stay there for hours because of a slump in the job market.