IT was the most brutal genocide ever known in the history of mankind. History has never seen such a large number of people wiped out in such a short period of the nine months of the Bangladesh liberation war. Between March 25, 1971 and December 16, 1971, Pakistani occupation army and their local collaborators killed 3 million innocent, unarmed people, violated more than a quarter million women; destroyed most of the factories, roads, bridges and culverts, burned houses, engaged in indiscriminate arson and plundering and created such an unbearable situation that 10 million people were forced to leave their country.

The Pakistani military junta headed by General Yahya Khan carried out a genocide in Bangladesh, which has no comparison. Systematic killing, rape and other barbaric methods were used on the Bengalis in the name of 'protecting the integrity of Pakistan' and 'to protect Islam'.



RASHID TALUKDAR

On March 25 midnight, the Pakistani forces suddenly cracked down on the sleeping people of capital Dhaka. Their first target was the residence of teachers, officials and employees and student dormitories of Dhaka University, once known as the Oxford of the East. The police and East Pakistan Rifles (EPR) headquarters followed. Then came the slums, markets and Hindu-populated areas in Dhaka, most of which were torched. They killed university teachers, employees and students either in their rooms or by firing squad in the campus gardens. Some were taken away and remained missing. They sprayed bullets as people fled from burning homes. These people died without knowing their crime. It is estimated that around 60,000 people of the city were killed on that single night.

The Pakistani occupation forces followed similar methods across the country and the genocide continued during the next nine months or until the country was freed from their clutches. Apart from mass killings, systematic killing of identified personalities or professionals was carried out under a blueprint. This process started with the slaying of Dhaka University teachers and reached its peak ahead of the Victory Day on December 16, 1971, as they realised their defeat was imminent.

In conducting the killings, there was a priority list. They had identified five sections of the populace as their main enemies: 1) leaders, activists and supporters of Awami League, 2) communists and socialists, 3) freedom fighters and their associates, 4) the Hindu community irrespective of sex or age and 5) students, intellectuals and professionals.

There was no specific type of killing. The Pakistanis at first shelled by tanks and mortars to kill a large number of people of a locality. Then they killed innocent ones lining them up after taking them away from their houses. Some were put to death by bayonets or burnt alive by the barbaric Pakistani army. They also slaughtered people like animals. In some cases, people were tortured for months until death emancipated them. The last method was followed especially for the freedom fighters. There are many people who witnessed that freedom fighters being dragged on the streets pulled by army jeeps, which would only stop to confirm whether or not their prey was dead.