

Grabbers' eye on war-time killing fields, mass graves

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Though 40 years have elapsed, the country is yet to preserve its war time killing fields, mass graves and the torture cells in the port city that bear the testimonies of cruelty and tortures on Bangalees by the Pakistani occupation forces and their local collaborators in 1971.

Many memorial places of these kinds have been damaged due to lack of proper measures or management and negligence by the successive governments and the authorities concerned.

Freedom fighters and relatives of the martyrs have blamed the lack of initiatives of the governments for preserving the historic places of the War of Liberation.

They said the evidences should be preserved to disseminate the true history of the struggle of freedom of the country among the future generations. They demanded the present government preserve the places on priority basis.

The mass graves and memorial sites of 1971 are gradually being grabbed for lack of support and proper direction from the government, they said.

The persons, who are involved in research on the War of Liberation, told The Daily Star that of 114 war-time killing grounds, 46 have already been grabbed by unscrupulous people.

Sixty-eight sites have been lying uncared for and are gradually being grabbed. Of them, 19 are situated on government land and 40 on private lands.

Many business organisations, educational institutions and non-government and government organisations constructed buildings on the sites.

The Awami League government, in its last term, took initiatives to preserve the killing fields and torture centres and directives were also given to the district administrations from the Prime Minister's office in this regard, sources said. But the initiative was stopped with the change of the government.



A dilapidated memorial at Modhyam Nath Para of Halishahar in the port city.

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The AL-led grand alliance government with the support of district administration prepared a list of torture centres, memorial places and killing grounds.

Prof Gazi Saleh Uddin of Chittagong University said the list is at final stage.

"We are trying to make the list perfectly. It would be included in the list if anybody gives

information about any killing ground or place related with cruelty, torture by the Al Badar, Razakar or Pakistani occupation forces," said Prof Saleh, convener of the committee to make the list.

Pahartali Badhyabhami, Circuit House, Halishahar Nath Para, Bimanbandar area, Lalkhan Bazar Highway Plaza and Dalim Hotel

were the big killing centres and torture cells during the War of Liberation in the city, he said.

According to a book titled "Muktijuddha and Chittagong Port" published by Chittagong Port Authority (CPA), there are at least seven war-time killing places in the Chittagong port area. They are Bandar Rest House, Bandar

Republic Club, Bandar Bhaban, Bandar Balak Ucca Bidyalya, Kamantila area adjacent to Chittagong Airport, new mooring power house area and bank of river Karnaphuli in jetty area of Chittagong port. The Pakistani occupation forces used the said areas as torture centres where many people and many port employees and officials were killed.

Prof Saleh said they enlisted 111 killing fields in the district. Of them, 34 have been located in city's Agrabad, 21 in Sadar, 12 in Chandgaon and one each in Bayezid, Paharta and Halishahar areas.

He said of them, five places have been selected for preservation. He said many important and big torture cells and killing grounds like Lalkhan Bazar have already been grabbed through the construction of high rise buildings and markets.

Terming it a matter of disgrace for the nation, Begum Mushtari Shafi, spouse of a martyr, said the governments were not able to preserve the memorial sites in the past 40 years.

"Negligence of the governments and disagreements between the two big parties are the main causes of losing our achievements in the War of Liberation", she said. The war-time prisons, concentration camps, mass graves and other historical places are preserved by all countries of the world so that the future generation can learn about the history of the country.

Blaming the successive governments as well as the district administration, Dr Mahfuzur Rahman said the reason for not preserving the important places related to the history of the War of Liberation is "bureaucratic complexity".

Due to lack of preservation, commercial centres have been constructed on many places. Educational institutions are being constructed on a graveyard of Fayez Lake where hundreds of people were slaughtered during the War of Liberation by Biharis, said Dr Mahfuz, a researcher on the War of Liberation.

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Proper urban planning stressed

The important cities like Dhaka and Chittagong are facing series of problems due to lack of proper planning and management, speakers said at a seminar on Tuesday.

They also stressed the need for formulating an effective urban plan for building modern, pollution-free and livable cities in the country.

They were speaking at the seminar titled "Urban Design: Two Case Studies in Chittagong and Dhaka" organised by Urban and Regional Planning Department of Chittagong University of Engineering and Technology (Cuet) at its auditorium in association with Bangladesh Institute of Planners, Chittagong chapter.

Dr Adnan Morshed of School of Architecture and Planning Department of The Catholic University of America, Washington, presented the keynote paper as chief guest at the programme.

Dr Adnan said modern urban planning stresses the environment-friendly city designing as well as an effective town management where land use, transportation, water supply, sanitation and waste disposal get priority.

Bangladesh Institute of Planners (Chittagong Chapter) President Ali Ashraf and Prof Israt Jahan spoke as special guests with Cuet Vice-Chancellor (in charge) Dr Tazul Islam in the chair.

Positive role of media underscored

Speakers at a roundtable said media could play a vital role in bringing positive change in the society through reporting issues related with development.

They said important social issues like education and health should be addressed properly in media.

Community Development Centre (Codec), a non-government organisation (NGO), in association with Gono Swaksharata Ovjian arranged the roundtable titled 'Media strategy for campaign' at a city hotel on Monday.

"The goal of the media is not only to inform but also educate the people," they said, adding that media should set development-oriented agenda.

Codec Deputy Executive Director Kamal Sen Gupta, The Prothom Alo Resident Editor Abul Momen, media personality Manjurul Ahsan Bulbul, Chittagong Union of Journalists (CUJ) General Secretary Najim Uddin Shyamal and journalist Hasan Ferdous spoke at the programme.

2 vessels to be exported to Germany

Country's leading shipbuilding company Western Marine Shipyard launched two ocean-going vessels for export to Germany.

The launching of these two vessels was held on December 23 and 25 respectively. The two with the total capacity of 10,400 DWT will be handed over to the German buyer, Grona Shipping GmbH Germany in February, 2012.

Saiful Islam, chairman of Western Marine, lauded the government for giving special care and importance to help grow further the burgeoning shipping industry in Bangladesh. Cooperation and good team management of the shipyard production team had helped the company launch the vessels timely and safely, said Managing Director Sakhawat Hossain.

CU participates in world debate contest

Two debaters of Chittagong University (CU) under the initiatives of Chittagong University Debating Society (CUDS) participated in an international debate competition titled 'World University Debate Championship (WUDC)-2011' organised by De La Salle University Debating Society of Manila, said a press release.

On the occasion, debaters Badruddoza Jewel and Khalil Zibran Swakshar left Chittagong on Saturday to participate in the competition that began on December 27 at Manila in the Philippines.

Vice-Chancellor Prof Anwarul Azim Arif expressed hope that it must uphold image of the university as well as the country.

The two debaters, who also participated in Asian British Parliamentary Debate Championship this year, are participating in the competition under the patronisation of Lions Club of Chittagong Khulshi, Director of Nurjahan Group Tipu Sultan, CUDS Adviser Altaf Mohammad Hannan and Lion Hasina Khan.

Award giving ceremony held

The award giving ceremony of robot race competition titled 'Roborace-2011' was held at a hotel in the port city on Tuesday.

IUT-CYBORGS from International Islamic University of Technology (IUT) clinched the championship while Cuet-Bedouin from Chittagong University of Engineering and Technology (Cuet) and Buet-Sparkles from Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (Buet) got the first runner-up and second runner-up position respectively.

The competition was the first of its kind across the country was arranged as a part of the International Conference on Mechanical Engineering and Renewable Energy (ICMERE) which was held at Cuet from December 22 to 24.

The Conference was organised by the Mechanical Department of Cuet.

Cuet Vice-Chancellor Dr Shyamol Kanti Biswas and Mechanical Department Head Dr Tazul Islam distributed the awards among the winners.

A total of 24 teams from different universities took part in the competition.

Former students of Chittagong Collegiate School take out a procession in the city on December 23 marking the institution's 175th founding anniversary.

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Floating people reel under biting cold



Members of a poor family shiver in the biting cold and dense fog in the port city.

PHOTO: ANURUP KANTI DAS

ARUN BIKASH DEY

Sitting on his makeshift bed under the shed of a gallery of Chittagong Parade Ground, Ariful Islam was trembling under biting cold in the morning. His eyes turned red while water was frequently dropping down from his reddish eyes.

"I could not sleep for a moment last night due to severe cold," Ariful said.

Ariful, a middle-aged man wearing shabby clothes and only a worn-out blanket, drew attention of local youths in the morning as he was shivering with cold. A group of local youths brought some old warm clothes for him to protect him from the cold. But they could not provide him with a safe shelter where he could pass these dreadful nights of cold.

Ariful who came to the port city from Jhenidah in search of work few months ago, sells old newspapers to earn livelihood but cannot earn enough even to rent a space even in a slum to live in.

Like Ariful, thousands of floating people in the port city are now suffering from the biting cold of early winter season.

Meanwhile, the warm clothes distribution programme in Chittagong

on behalf of the district administration is going on very slowly due to a shortage of warm clothes.

Ehsanul-e-Elahi, additional deputy commissioner (general), told The Daily Star that they distributed 300 blankets to different upazilas.

"We have distributed just 50 blankets among the poor people in the city," he said, adding that they asked the ministry concerned to send 20,000 blankets.

The official concerned could not give the actual number of floating people in the port city.

Not only the floating people but also the people from all walks of life in the port city have been suffering from cold wave since the first day of Bangla month of "Paush." Children and elderly people are suffering much from cold borne diseases.

Dr Aparup Kanti Das, assistant registrar of Pediatrics at Chittagong Medical College Hospital (CMCH), said children are likely to be more vulnerable to severe cold in winter season as their antibody is not so strong.

Prof Dr Mahmud A Chowdhury Arzu, head of the department of Child Health at Chattagram Maa O Shishu General Hospital, said most of the

patients they are receiving are suffering from respiratory distress.

"We received a hundred patients on Sunday and 70 percent of them are suffering from respiratory problem," he said. Children are vulnerable to cold-related diseases in this weather and the elderly people suffer from respiratory diseases, he added.

The dense fog descended over the surroundings of the city that hinders the view of passersby. Vehicles were seen moving slowly with their headlights turned on through the dense fog to avoid accidents.

Office-goers, trembling under the biting cold, are to wait for vehicles at the bus stops.

Jahur Hawkers' Market, the hub of the port city where warm clothes can be found at low cost, is now abuzz with the footsteps of people from middle and lower-income group.

Jahangir Hossain, proprietor of Famous Tailors, said the rush of the people for warm clothes are increasing as the severity of cold is increasing.

The rich people rush to different shopping malls but the floating people who do not have ability to buy warm clothes are just looking for government's help and are praying for the severity of the cold to decrease.



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