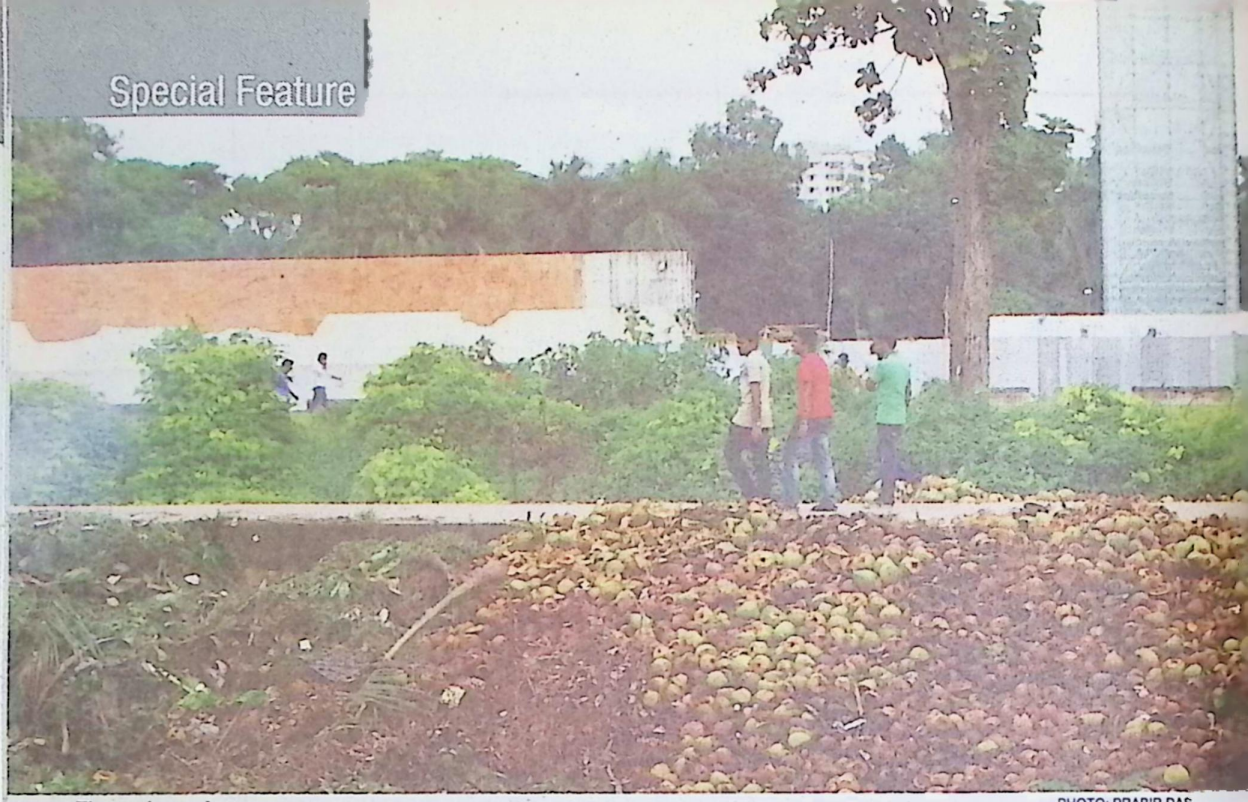


PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

The garbage dump near the monument where Bangabandhu delivered his historic 7th March Speech.

# HISTORY WILL TEACH US NOTHING

**MD SHAHNAWAZ KHAN CHANDAN**

It wasn't long ago that a friend of mine who is a foreigner had asked me, "Do you have any place in your country where you can feel the essence of your history?" My knowledge of the history of our Liberation War made me answer rather proudly, "Of course, we have. It's the campus of Dhaka University." In fact, every inch of it is swathed with the memories of our fight for emancipation. Of late, I decided to revisit these places to feel the sacrifice of our martyrs and the leaders who guided our nation in those days of turmoil.

On a merry day of autumn I went out to re-explore the good old DU campus. The most significant place near the campus that is related to our nation's history is the Suhrawardi Uddyan, the former Ramna race course, where Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman made his epic speech on March 7. It is also here that the Pakistani army surrendered to the allied command and Bangladesh became a free country. It is also the resting place of three of our national leaders: Khwaja Najimuddin, Hossain Shahid Suhrawardi and Sher-e-Bangla AK Fazlul Huq. In fact, the entire Suhrawardi Uddyan is a national memorial.

But as soon as I entered the park, I felt a crushing blow. When I reached the spot where our Father of the Nation had addressed his fellow countrymen, my eyes and nose were overwhelmed with the stench of rotting garbage. A memorial has been erected on the spot. It is surrounded by a pool of water, and waste and garbage of different shades and smell are dumped in another shallow pool, also a breeding ground for insects and mosquitoes. Beside the pool, the thicket and the benches near the memorial are used as secure places for the modern day Romeo-Juliets. My presence was a disturbance to these busy lovers.

Seeing one pair covered their faces with an umbrella to hide from my presence, I thought it would be better to move and to let them enjoy the "freedom" to love, ironically in the same spot where as a nation we achieved the taste of freedom. I moved to explore more of Suhrawardi Uddyan but the visit was really distasteful. When I reached the beautifully built amphitheatre, the