

with uniforms built their base for more than 10 hours, road 79 was always a silent road – a handful of street lights working and some even forever flickering. Today, one will find the road to be all the more silent and darker yet, even during the day time. A certain feeling of restlessness and distress looms over the road. The resident-buildings, the one embassy and the massive gates built in the early 90s, seem repulsive. In fact, one is reminded of the famous song by the Eagles – programmed to receive, but one can never leave.

The frightening darkness of road 79, however, seems to give in to the love and light pouring in from all over, at the memorial built for the Holey victims.

All day and all night, barricades and uniforms guard the junction where road 79 meets the lane going towards Holey Artisan and Lake View clinic. On the footpath near the junction, people place flowers, light candles and leave little notes of love, hope and encouragement. One of the notes, most probably written by a child, reads 'We are sorry!' adorned with sad smileys and sketches of tearful eyes.

"I could not sleep for nights," says 45-year-old Selina Ahmed. "I live in Chittagong, but I could practically hear the screams and visualise the brutal murders that took place at the restaurant. Oh those poor, innocent souls! They did not deserve this! This is not my Bangladesh!" Selina Ahmed, a school teacher in Chittagong, was seen standing in front of the memorial for a long time. Her lips were moving silently, maybe in prayer, when suddenly she broke down in tears. "They did not deserve this! Nobody deserved this!" she kept on mumbling to herself. "I did not bring any flowers or candles with me. I will bring some tomorrow and place them here."



PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

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Selina arrived in Dhaka to celebrate Eid with her older sister and her family in Baridhara DOHS. She, along with her son was supposed to arrive by bus, on July 1. But because of the shoot out and the roads getting blocked, she arrived a few days later. "We were not sure what was happening," she says. "Everything was so uncertain. My sister kept telling me that the whole of Gulshan and Baridhara were locked down. I grew up in Dhaka, but never did imagine that my Dhaka would have to experience this!"

"The flowers have not been removed, right from day 1!" says one of the officials, as one tries to move the stagnant flowers and replace them with fresh ones. "All the flowers, starting from the first one that was placed, are still here. We did not see anyone removing them, or cleaning up the place to make space for fresh flowers. In fact, some of the notes are still here as well." Indeed – the ink was probably all washed up by the rain, but one could make out the words – 'sorry' and 'love' on papers strewn here and there amongst the massive stoop of flowers. Large banners speaking out against terrorism are also seen peeking out amidst all candles and petals.

On chaand raat (night before Eid) and on Eid day as well, residents living in and around Gulshan made it a point to place flower, light candles and say prayer for the victims, by the memorial. Cars had lined up by the road sides, rickshaws were seen waiting for their passengers, as families dressed in their Eid fineries were seen silently standing in front of the junction holding onto gifts of love. "This year, Eid was not a happy event, at least not in Gulshan and the nearby areas," says Dr Anika Rahim, a dentist and a mother of two young sons.

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"We live right across road 79 and we spent a night in terror." Referring to the tragedy that occurred on July 1, Anika says that the whole family was thinking of leaving for Uttara for her parents' place, when they discovered that all the roads were blocked by the authorities for security purposes. "We heard the gunshots, the grenades – everything. We could do nothing but pray for the victims and their families!"

Abir Ehsan Kabir visits road 79 almost every day. "I don't understand how people believe that time will heal this pain," he says with tears in his eyes, holding on to white and blue chrysanthemums. "Every time I come here to place flowers, I start crying and can't seem to stop." Abir, who lives in Eskaton, arrived in Dhaka on June 30 from Japan. He works in Tokyo in a publishing agency. "I wasn't supposed to come to Dhaka this year, but my uncle passed away. As soon as I heard the news, I let my boss know. We are a very close knit family and my Japanese boss was aware of it. He told me not to worry about applying for a leave and that he would



PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

take care of the paper work later. He just asked me to book a flight immediately and leave for Dhaka. When I was leaving my office, all my colleagues stood up in

respect and said a small prayer for my uncle. The day after I arrived, this tragedy occurred! How do I return to work and face my Japanese colleagues? Some of the

greatest minds of Japan were brutally murdered that night!" Nine Italians, seven Japanese, three Bangladeshis and an Indian were killed at the Holey Artisan café that night.

One remembers the poem 'Landscape with the Fall of Icarus', where William Carlos Williams, beautifully grasps the reality of the painting 'The Fall of Icarus' by Pieter Brueghel. Carlos speaks of life, death and how life never stops even after death. Life moves on and so do people. When Icarus was drowning to his death, the farmer would not stop ploughing his field; maybe somewhere nearby the baker was baking breads while the gardener was tending to his flowers. The death of Icarus, unfortunately, goes unnoticed.

As life moves on for most of us, let us not wait for super heroes to emerge from nowhere and rescue us. Let us take steps to 'right' what we had 'wronged', notice what we had chosen to ignore and love this country from the core of our heart. This just might be another war that Bangladesh is fighting, and we are the soldiers.



PHOTO: PRABIR DAS