



KAMANNA TRAGEDY

They went to sleep never to wake up



AZIBOR RAHMAN, Jhenidah

Throughout the day, they carried out guerrilla operations against the Pakistan army in different areas and went to sleep without any food at night. As the dawn approached, the occupation forces came stealthily and killed them all when they were asleep.

On the night of November 25, 1971, 27 freedom fighters and two locals were gunned down in a dastardly attack by the occupation army in Kamanna village of Jhenidah's Shailakupa upazila.

Village elders said that upon returning to Bangladesh after training in India, 42 freedom fighters set up their camp in two tin-roof houses in the village. They used to carry out their operations from this camp. On the night of the attack, 15 freedom fighters went someplace else.

On the night of 25 November, some young boys collected rice and vegetables from the village and cooked meals for the freedom fighters. However, 15 of the 42 freedom fighters left the camp after an argument broke out, while the 27 went to sleep without taking any food, he added.



The tin-shed house where freedom fighters were shot dead in their sleep.

Deep inside the village, the camp was attacked around 4:00am. Villagers heard the gunshots and took shelter in the west side of the village fearing attacks. The next morning, they found 29 bodies -- 27 of the freedom fighters and two of villagers, including a woman.

The villagers dug five mass graves, wrapped the bodies with banana leaves and buried them.

Right beside the tin houses is a memorial now, built in honour of the freedom fighters. A plaque there lists all 27 martyrs.

They are Momin Hossain, Abdul Kader, Shahidul Islam, Solaiman Hossain, Abdur Razzak (1), Wahed Ali, Riat Mondol, Alamgir Hossain, Motleb Ali, Ali Hossain, Shariful Islam, Anisur Rahman, Md Amimuzzaman, Tajul Islam, Md Moniruzzaman, Masim Mia, Abdur Razzak (2), Kawsar Ali, Salek Hossain, Abdul Aziz, Akbor Ali, Selim Hossain, Hossain Ali, Rashed Ali, Goljar Hossain, Adhir Kumar and Goura Kumar.

The two villagers are Fani Bhusan Kundo and Rango Bibi, both of them elderly persons.

Dr BM Rezaul Karim, former principal

of Jhenidah Government KC College, was 10 at the time.

He said villagers knew that some freedom fighters, mostly from the neighbouring district of Magura, were staying in the two old houses. The houses were originally owned by Madhab Chandra Bhuiyan, who fled to India after the war began.

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"Irony is, they never woke up to have their meals," he said.

According to him, Fani Bhusan Kundo and Ranga Bibi were killed as they saw the Pakistan army marching towards the freedom fighters' camp.

Citing family members, he said Ranga Bibi went to the Kumar river to wash rice.

At the time, Shailakupa upazila police station was under the occupation of the Pakistan army. They also occupied another big house owned by child specialist Dr Khademul Islam of the town.

On information from the local corroborators, the Pakistan soldiers from Shailakupa, Jhenidah and Magura camps formed a group and attacked the freedom fighters in Kamanna village.

Local freedom fighters observe this tragedy every year to commemorate their sacrifice, said Monowar Hossain, who was a commander of a group of freedom fighters during the Liberation War.

This year, they staged a drama named Kamanna Tragedy, written by Prashanta Halder and directed by Tanvir Nahid Khan, right beside the mass graves.

"The drama has been written based on real events. And we staged the drama by the mass graves so the locals come to know about the massacre in their village," said Prashanta Halder.

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