

JALLADKHAHA KILLING FIELD

A haunting reminder of the tragic past

ARAFAT RAHAMAN

It was just a regular water-pump house, but in 1971, the Pakistan army transformed into an embodiment of horror -- a mass killing field, where the officers killed and dumped countless bodies.

The epicentre of this horror are the wells that saw many martyrs' bodies fall into them.

For years, this dark chapter in history remained ignored, and its significance was almost lost into oblivion. It only gained attention in 1999, when several mass graves were discovered in the capital's Mirpur.

To uncover the truth, the Liberation War Museum collaborated with Bangladesh Army and conducted excavation work at the site that year. This later led to the establishment of Jalladkhana Killing Field Memorial in 2007.

During excavation, the remains of numerous victims were found.

KM Nasir Uddin, in-charge of the memorial, shared his memories with The Daily Star.

"Before excavating, we found that a family was still staying at the abandoned pump house. However, they

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This is one of the wells that witnessed the massacre carried out by the Pakistan army and its local collaborators in 1971. The Jalladkhana Killing Field Memorial in the capital's Mirpur sheds light on the crimes committed during the Liberation War, through many of the items displayed at the establishment.

PHOTO: STAR

SEDITION LAW

Lahore HC invalidates Section 124A

Petitions cite govts used it against rivals

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Lahore High Court yesterday invalidated Section 124A of the Pakistan Penal Code [sedition law] calling it inconsistent with the country's constitution, reported Pakistan daily Dawn.

Justice Shahid Karim of the High Court invalidated the sedition law while dealing with a batch of petitions seeking to annul Section 124A of the PPC, on the ground that the law was being used by the governments in power against their rivals.

Justice Karim is the same judge who convicted Pakistan's former president General Pervez Musharraf in 2019 and sentenced him to death in absentia in the high treason case for subverting the constitution in 2007.

The petitions challenging Pakistan's sedition law argued that

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PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

SHOE STORES OF WEST DHANMONDI

Where quality meets BUDGET

FEDA AL HOSSAIN

Road 8/A of West Dhanmondi, a bustling area in Dhaka, is an amazing place for those in search of quality shoes at affordable prices, and hence, worthy of paying a visit for your Eid shopping.

The road beside Kears Plaza leads to an area where a large number of shoe shops are found on both sides



If you can show us the photograph of the shoe's design and specify any other modification, we will make that for you within Tk 3,000 to 4,000!

SHONJOY, shop employee

of the street. Whether it is for formal occasions, casual outings, or just daily wear, the outlets have a plethora of footwear options.

"There are around 15 shops in this hub," said Shonjoy Robi Das, a sales representative of New Babul Shoe Store. "We have our own factory, and from there, we make shoes with locally sourced leather. Cost of everything has increased, and we aren't immune from this either. But still customers can get good deals here compared to products of different prominent brands, as we try to give people the best value for money."

The unique thing about New Babul Shoe Store and others in that cluster is the fact that they offer custom-made shoes too.

This means customers can get footwear tailored to their specific measurements and preferences. The

process involves selecting the type of shoe, leather, colour, and design, which is then crafted by skilled artisans.

Shoe prices in the area range from Tk 500 for casual sandals to over Tk 5,000 for high-quality leather formal shoes or sneakers. Most stores specialise in leather shoes for both men and women, but some also offer artificial leather or alternative materials.

At a time when many people are struggling with the living cost, finding quality products at a reasonable price has become a top priority. As Eid approaches, these shops can be a boon for those who want to maintain their standard of living without breaking the bank before the festival.

"Let's say you have seen this really fancy pair of leather shoes at an upscale store that is priced around Tk 10,000. If you can show us the photograph of the shoe's design and specify any other modification, we will make that for you within Tk 3,000 to 4,000!" Shonjoy claimed. "We would just need at least seven days to make the shoes for you from scratch."

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PREVENTING DEATH BY DROWNING

Ministry project sees little to no progress

NILIMA JAHAN

To address children's death by drowning, the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs in February 2022 approved a childcare development and safety project with a budget of Tk 271.82 crore, with an implementation period of January 2022 to December 2024.

The project, titled "Integrated Community Based Center for Child Care, Protection and Swim-Safe Facilities", aimed to set up 8,000 childcare centres for two lakh children under the age of five in 16 districts, initiate parenting sessions through the centres, and introduce 1,600 swimming facilities for 3.6 lakh children between the ages six and 10, in partnership with the high-quality instructional programme "Swim-Safe".

Bangladesh Shishu Academy (BSA) and the ministry received the responsibility to implement the project nationally. But BSA, which works under the ministry, has not yet been able to complete preparatory works, including selecting NGOs for collaboration. Meanwhile, more than one-third of the implementation duration has passed.

Contacted, Tariqul Islam Chowdhury, project manager at BSA, stated that despite receiving approval in February 2022, they received the government order from the ministry in May last year, for which they were unable to commence work.

"We have started our work in July 2022 and expect to commence full-scale operations once the NGOs are selected. The project may receive a total of 18 months to complete all works," he said.

Tariqul also mentioned that the project hired 16 assistant project managers last November to oversee the work of NGOs in 16 districts, and they have undergone a two-day orientation in two batches.

"In mid-February 2023, we hired a procurement specialist to draft the terms of reference for selecting NGOs. This process took time due to advertising in newspapers for the recruitment," he said.

On March 20, a cost-estimation committee was formed to approve the cost for eight packages in 16 districts, and upon its approval, the "expression of interest" will be released in April, he added.

The project received an allocation of

The responsibility of running the centres should be given to village mothers who can divide the work among themselves, as they know their kids best. Appointing salaried employees based on political favouritism is not an ideal solution to this, and is also destructive to our social capital.

GOWHER NAYEEM WAHRA
Disaster management specialist

Tk 10 crore for this fiscal year, and Tk 1.87 crore was spent in the first quarter of 2023.

Asked whether the money would remain unspent at the end of this fiscal, he stated that most of the funds would be disbursed to the selected NGOs by June this year.

According to Mir Masrur Zaman -- director of SoMaSHTE, an organisation that regularly analyses deaths by drowning based on national and local media reports -- said given the current circumstances, meeting the project's deadline seems unlikely.

"Extending the deadline and budget

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Exhibition on 1971 genocide being held at UN headquarters



STAFF CORRESPONDENT

For the first time in history, an exhibition displaying images and stories of the 1971 genocide started at the United Nations Headquarters in New York for three days.

The Permanent Mission of Bangladesh to the UN organised the exhibition, titled "Remembering the victims of 1971 genocide in Bangladesh", in collaboration with Liberation War Museum, stated a press release.

The exhibition kicked off on Wednesday, featuring 27 photographs of the 1971 genocide along with a corresponding historical narrative, in commemoration of National Genocide Day on March 25.

Inaugurating the exhibition, Bangladesh Foreign Secretary Masud Bin Momen said, "It's a historic step in our efforts to garner international recognition of the horrendous genocide that was committed by the occupation army and their collaborators against our people in 1971."

Ambassador Muhammad A Muhith said, "We need more efforts to share the stories of our great Liberation War and the genocide among international audience."

"This will not only help us secure the much-needed recognition of the 1971 genocide but also raise awareness on the need to prevent genocide and other atrocity crimes," Muhith added.

Ambassadors, UN officials, eminent persons from the Bangladeshi community, including the family members of the freedom fighters and the martyrs, were present during the inaugural ceremony. The exhibition will end today.

DHAMRAI RAPE
BMP demands punishment

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

In a statement released yesterday, Bangladesh Mahila Parishad (BMP) voiced its outrage and concern over the rape and captivity of a female worker at the hands of a top official at Kalampur in Dhamrai, Dhaka.

They demanded the arrest of the criminals, an impartial investigation, and harsh punishment.

The statement mentioned the woman was allegedly held captive by the Gram Unnayan Karma's accounting officer for two days before she was raped.

The area manager supported the rapist, as evidenced by the statement.

Moreover, the organisation leaders stated that violence against women inside and outside

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Journalists and social activists of Savar and Dhamrai yesterday formed a human chain in front of the National Martyrs' Memorial, demanding immediate release of Prothom Alo reporter Samsuzzaman Shams, and withdrawal of cases filed against him and the daily's editor.

PHOTO: STAR