



CHUKNAGAR

A shocking savagery

Remembering one of the biggest massacres on this day in 1971

AHMAD ISTIAK

It was around 11:00am on May 20, 1971. A truck and a jeep, full of Pakistani soldiers, reached the Jhautala area of Malotia intersection of Chuknagar, a small village back then in Atolia union under Khulna's Dumuria upazila.

A farmer was working in his jute field nearby. Before he could understand anything, the Pakistan army fired at him, killing him on the spot. As the occupation troops approached the village, they found a demolished culvert, which connects two parts of the village.

From that point, the platoon got divided into three raiding parties -- one of which entered Chuknagar bazaar, another went towards Malopara-Raypara area along the Bhadra river, and the remaining group strode towards Patkhola Beel.

A huge number of refugees took shelter at that time at Patkhola Beel. As one of the marauding groups found the refugees gathered there, they started firing indiscriminately. Another group coming from Malopara-Raypara area soon joined the army.

People started running frantically for life, but most of them were gunned down. The entire marsh turned into a sea of bodies.



A memorial built for those killed in the 1971 massacre at Chuknagar in Khulna's Dumuria upazila.

PHOTO: STAR

"When they started firing, I ran to a nearby mosque. A girl from our neighbouring house covered me with a mattress to hide me. Although I survived, eight of my family members -- my father, uncles, cousins, aunts -- were killed by the Pakistan army on that day," said Nitai Gain, now in his mid-70s, recalling the brutal massacre.

On that day, more than 10,000 people, mostly belonging to the Hindu community, were slain by the Pakistan army at Chuknagar in only six hours, according to "Bangladesher Shadhinota Juddho: Dalilpatro".

The genocide of Chuknagar was the most brutal and extensive massacre committed by the Pakistan army during the Liberation War. They started the massacre at 11:00am and stopped at 5:00pm on May 20 only due to the fact that they ran out of ammunition. Most of the bodies were dumped into the Bhadra.

"Nobody will believe what happened that day. No words can describe the unimaginable horror. There were so many bodies all around the field that it was impossible to bury them or burn them in accordance with the ritual," Abul Kalam, a merchant of Chuknagar bazaar and a witness to the massacre, told The Daily Star.

"So, the bazaar committee decided to dispose of the bodies into the river as the nearby Bhadra and Ghangrail rivers were quite torrential. We hired 40-45 labourers from the jute warehouses to take care of the bodies. They

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Fatema, a homemaker from Khulna's Dumuria upazila, fishes in the Salta river during low tide as her four-year-old son Rakibul looks on. The low-income families in the area are dependent on small fish from the river as they cannot afford to buy fish from markets. The photo was taken on Thursday.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

800,000 affected by Cyclone Mocha in Myanmar: UN

AFP, Geneva

At least 800,000 people in Myanmar need emergency food aid and other assistance after Cyclone Mocha slammed into the conflict-torn country earlier this week, the United Nations said yesterday.

Mocha brought lashing rain and winds of up to 195 kilometres (120 miles) per hour to Myanmar and neighbouring Bangladesh on Sunday, with Myanmar's junta saying 145 people had been killed and media reports suggesting the number was far higher.

The UN's World Food Programme described "a trail of devastation" across Myanmar's Rakhine State, a region that is home to hundreds of thousands of Rohingya refugees who live in displacement camps following decades of ethnic conflict.

The cyclone left "houses flattened, roads cut off by uprooted trees, hospitals and schools destroyed, and telecommunications and power lines severely disrupted," Anthea Webb, WFP's deputy regional director for Asia and the Pacific, told reporters in Geneva via video-link from Bangkok.

"There are at least 800,000 people in urgent need of emergency food assistance," she said, adding that "greater needs for food, shelter, water, health and other humanitarian aid are expected to be revealed as we reach more areas."

And while Bangladesh was spared a direct hit, "nearly half a million Bangladeshis and thousands of Rohingya refugees have lost their homes and assets", she said.

Webb said that WFP had started its response to Mocha before the storm hit, reaching 28,000 people in Bangladesh near the Myanmar border with advance cash aid to help them prepare.

And, she said, as soon as the worst of the storm passed, the agency had reached thousands of refugees with emergency food assistance, and were working "around the clock" to resume their regular food support.

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BANGLADESHI WORKERS

Two Malaysian high officials transferred over migrants' plight

STAR REPORT

The Malaysian human resources ministry transferred two of its top officials in connection with the recent recruitment of Bangladeshi and Nepalese workers, who arrived in Malaysia with valid permits but without jobs, reports Malaysian media.

Labour Director-General Asri Ab Rahman was one of the two officials, and he was issued the transfer orders on Thursday, according to reports.

A report in Malaysiakini said Muhd Khair Razman Mohamed Annuar, the ministry's deputy secretary-general of operations, has also been transferred.

The swift personnel changes come under the direction of the ministry's newly appointed Secretary-General Zaini Ujang, who assumed his position in April amid a growing number of foreign workers stranded in the country without work, Malaysiakini quoted ministry sources as saying.

The report also said it was understood that there has been an internal investigation into foreign labour quota approvals.

"The scrutiny into the approval process was prompted by concerns about the treatment of Bangladeshi and Nepalese workers, who have

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'Mini kangaroos' hop back in South Australia



AFP, Sydney

The brush-tailed bettong -- a rare, very cute marsupial resembling a rabbit-sized kangaroo -- is bouncing back on the South Australian mainland, more than 100 years after disappearing from the region.

Bettongs, which leap with their hindlegs much like a full-sized kangaroo, populated over 60 percent of Australia before falling victim to cats, foxes and land-clearing after European settlement more than two centuries ago.

Now they are making a comeback in South Australia's Yorke Peninsula, after wildlife scientists released 120 of the animals over a two-year period to see if they could survive outside of predator-proof enclosures or islands.

New monitoring shows they are thriving, researchers said yesterday.

Scientists said they had trapped 85 brush-tailed bettongs, finding that 40 percent of them were new animals born in the peninsula and 42 of the 45 females had young in their pouches.

"It's fantastic to see so many new animals in the population," said Derek Sandow, ecologist for the Northern and Yorke Landscape Board.



PHOTO: REUTERS

President Joe Biden and other G7 leaders pose for a photo during a visit to the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park in Hiroshima, Japan yesterday.

G7 agrees to step up sanctions on Russia

Pledges financial support for Ukraine, calls for a 'world without nuclear weapons'

REUTERS, Hiroshima

Leaders of the world's richest democracies yesterday agreed to stiffen sanctions against Russia and pledged financial support for Ukraine as its president, Volodymyr Zelensky, prepared to join them in the Japanese city of Hiroshima.

The Group of Seven leaders are also expected to address growing tension between their economies and China during their summit that runs until Sunday. Officials said Zelensky would attend in person over the weekend.

The leaders said in a joint statement existing measures against Russia would be broadened and any exports that could help it in its 15-month war against Ukraine would be restricted across the G7 countries.

"This includes exports of industrial machinery, tools, and other technology that Russia uses to rebuild its war machine," they said in a joint statement, adding that efforts would continue to restrict Russian revenues from its trade in metals and diamonds.

Amid evidence that existing sanctions were being weakened by circumvention,

they said the group was "engaging" with countries through which any restricted G7 goods, services or technology could transit through to Russia.

"We note and encourage commitments made by these countries to ensure our measures are not circumvented and have the intended effect," they said, without naming any territories.

Breakdowns of German trade data show that its exports to countries bordering Russia have risen sharply, fuelling concerns that about the re-exportation of goods from those neighbouring states.

The group of rich democracies reaffirmed their condemnation of what they called Russia's aggression and promised further support for Ukraine, in terms of military help and financial aid for its war-shattered economy this year and next.

The members of the G7 -- the United States, Japan, Germany, Britain, France, Canada and Italy -- also called for a "world without nuclear weapons," urging Russia, Iran, China and North Korea to cease nuclear escalation and embrace non-proliferation, a statement released by the White House showed.