



PHOTO: RAJIB RATHAN

A tribute to war heroes

War Graves Week taking place in Bangladesh for first time

ARUN BIKASH DEY

This year's War Graves Week, an annual event organised by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC), is being held for the first time in Bangladesh from May 20 to May 28.

With the theme of "Discover, Learn, and Remember," the week-long event aims to raise public recognition and awareness of the CWGC and the Commonwealth War Grave Foundation.

In a statement, Hillol Sattar, country manager of CWGC, Bangladesh, said, across the United Kingdom and around the world, a myriad of captivating events will take place, including guided tours, and other immersive experiences.

"This year, we have expanded our reach, hosting events for the first time in Bangladesh, Egypt, India, Israel, Kenya, Pakistan, Tunisia, and Turkey," he announced.

"Through War Graves Week, we invite participants to delve into our work and understand the profound significance of commemorating those who made the ultimate sacrifice," Hillol said.

The week coincides with the anniversary of the Commission's formation through a Royal Charter on May 21, 1917.

"We encourage everyone to join the conversation surrounding the CWGC, spread the word about our events, and inspire others to visit our website and sign up for our CWGC newsletter," Hillol added.

CTG COMMONWEALTH GRAVEYARD

Chattogram Commonwealth War Cemetery has emerged as a captivating destination not only for local residents but also for visitors from far and wide. Established in 1945, the cemetery stands as a solemn tribute to the brave Commonwealth soldiers and others who lost their lives during World War II, with the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) dutifully maintaining the site, according to CWGC officials.

The cemetery, located on a picturesque seven-acre plot at Badshah Miah Chowdhury Road, opposite to the Art Institute of Chittagong University, has been attracting a significant number of visitors on a daily basis.

Upon entering the cemetery through the main gate, visitors are greeted by a large cross, which stands at the heart of the ground, evoking a sense of reverence and spirituality. Each burial is marked with the name, nationality, age, and date of death of the deceased.

Many of the graves also feature heartfelt epitaphs, accompanied by meticulously tended small gardens.

There are 755 graves of war victims in the lush parkland.

Of them, 731 are Commonwealth graves, while there are graves of 20 more foreign nationals -- 19 Japanese soldiers and a Dutch Navy seaman, informed Hillol.

These soldiers fought against the Japanese army in the Burma front during World War II. There are also four non-war British military personnel buried there.

While visiting the cemetery, this correspondent met Asad Haider, who was accompanied by his curious seven-year-old daughter. "I wanted my daughter to learn about history, so I brought her here," he said.

Tamanna Binte Karim, a student at Government Hazi Muhammad Mohsin College in Chattogram, said, "Situated amidst the serene embrace of a hill, the cemetery offers a tranquil setting. We have gained a profound understanding of the Commonwealth soldiers who fought in World War II."

Multi-storey car parking lies idle

SIFAYET ULLAH

The port city's first multi-storey car parking, located in New Market area, is lying idle for around a year due to a mechanical failure and a shortage of operators. This has led to regular traffic congestion in front of the market.

Chattogram Development Authority built the multi-storey car parking at a cost of more than Tk 2 crore to reduce traffic congestion in front of the market in 2017. Built with technical assistance from China, this seven-storey parking lot has the facility to accommodate 29 cars at the same time.

During a recent visit to the area, this correspondent found that most cars have to wait in line on the street before entering the market as the parking lies inoperative.

Azher Uddin, a driver who parked on the road after failing to find a parking space, said, "We would not have parked the car on the road if there were ample parking spaces."

Syed Khurshed Alam, a shop owner in New Market, informed this correspondent that the parking has remained closed since June last year.

"During the first two years of its construction, we benefited from the facility as it was being operated properly," he said.

Mohammed Sagir, president of the Bipani Bitan Merchants Welfare Committee, expressed his frustration regarding the issue and said, "We have informed CDA both verbally and on paper regarding the issue but to no avail. Now, it has become our liability."

"Both customers and traders will benefit from it if the parking space goes into operation



again," he added.

Contacted, Mesbah Uddin, executive engineer of CDA, said, "The high-end technology required for this expensive parking space has become impossible for us to operate due to its existing mechanical faults and lack of adequate management experience."

"However, we are in discussions with the market shopkeepers' association to reopen the parking. Hopefully, we will decide on the matter soon. We are also trying to lease this parking lot to private companies for

maintenance purposes," he added.

Meanwhile, experts and urban planners said the parking lot has now become a burden as CDA constructed it without proper planning.

Shahinul Islam Khan, former chief city planner of CDA, said, "CDA built this expensive parking lot to make a show out of development projects, despite being inexperienced in such operations. There has been no supervision from CDA's end due to its lack of a maintenance unit, leading the parking facility to remain inoperative."

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MOHAMMED SAGIR
President of the Bipani
Bitan Merchants Welfare
Committee

CARP EGGS IN HALDA RIVER

Fishers worry over salinity, experts brush aside fear

ARUN BIKASH DEY

Kamal Uddin Sawdagor has been collecting carp eggs in Halda river for around 50 years. However, this season, he has been frustrated as the carps are yet to release their eggs in the water.

"Brood fishes released some sample eggs on May 18. Several hundred egg collectors were in the river all night to collect some. However, none of us got any," he told this correspondent recently.

"Egg collectors believe that salinity in the water and the adverse impacts of climate change are responsible for the delayed spawning. We are uncertain whether the brood fish would release eggs in this season," he added.

However, researchers and experts have said there's nothing to worry about.

The salinity level indeed increased in Halda before Cyclone Mocha as there had been no rain for a long time in this region, said



Halda researcher Dr Shafiqul Islam, also head of the department of biology, Chattogram Cantonment

Public College.

"However, the salinity level has decreased after the cyclone due to the rain. When I tested the salinity of the river water around a month ago, I found

the level 2 ppt (parts per thousand) in the spawning zones of the river. When I tested again on Saturday, I found the level 0.5 ppt in the same zones," he added.

The normal reference value for salinity

in freshwater is either equal to or less than 0.5 ppt, said Dr Shafiqul.

"Research found that carp, including Rui, Katla, Kali Baush can survive and release eggs in rivers with salinity level 5 ppt. Even in an adverse atmosphere, they can survive in water with a salinity level of 14 ppt," he mentioned.

Echoing Dr Shafiqul, Prof Manzoorul Kibria of the zoology department at Chittagong University, said, "Earlier, we saw the brood fish releasing eggs in the first and second week of June. I don't believe there is anything to worry about regarding the salinity level in this matter."

"Every year, indigenous carp species like Rui, Katla, Mrigel and Kali Baush from different rivers like the Karnaphuli and the Sangu come to the Halda and release eggs within the period from April to June (Bangla month Chaitra to Ashar). Different natural factors, such as the water temperature, strength of the current and thunderstorms and rain determine the environment best suited for the purpose," he added.

After collecting the eggs, they are nurtured for 18 hours in the traditional small mud ponds, and after 96 hours the eggs transform into fries, said Dr Kibria.