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In search of the forgotten killing fields



AHMAD ISTIAK

"Every night, the Pakistan army and their Bihari collaborators would bring truckloads of people on that bridge," Mohammad Ali said, pointing to the Gabtoli-Aminbazar bridge in Dhaka, "We heard sounds of shooting and bodies falling off the bridge one after another in the Turag river. I cannot remember a single night during the war when the military did not kill people on that bridge."

Mohammad Ali, 75, is a boatman from Isakabad village of Kaundia union in Savar. He has been ferrying passengers across the Turag for six decades, including during the war. The Gabtoli-Aminbazar bridge is clearly visible from his village, just opposite Gabtoli, along the northern bank of the Turag.

Even three years ago, an old steel bridge used to connect the two banks of the river. The old bridge has now been replaced by an eight-lane concrete bridge that connects Dhaka with the southern districts. But back in 1971, the bridge served a whole different purpose for the Pakistan army and their local collaborators: it was turned into a killing field.

Freedom fighter and Liberation War researcher Dr MA Hasan gave a similar account of the killings on the bridge during the 1971 war.

"Pakistan army and their Bihari collaborators killed an estimated 15,000 people on that bridge," he said.

More than five decades after independence, the bridge is not officially recognised as a killing field.

MARTYRED INTELLECTUALS DAY

Gabtoli bridge is just one of many such killing fields scattered all over Mirpur.

According to Liberation War and genocide researchers, the entire Mirpur neighbourhood was turned into a massive killing field in 1971. Immediately after the war, researchers identified 76 killing fields in Dhaka, 27 of them in Mirpur alone.

But the government did not include any of these killing fields in official records, genocide researchers MA Hasan, Prof Muntassir Mamoon and Prof Shahriar Kabir told The Daily Star. SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

Yet to be nationally recognised

BAHARAM KHAN

The Martyred Intellectuals Day is observed every year on December 14, with the nation paying its deepest respects to the brightest minds, who were massacred towards the end of the 1971 Liberation War.

The prime minister and the president issue statements in memory of the martyrs, while the Liberation War affairs ministry takes initiative to commemorate the day.

The same is happening today as well.

However, though five decades have gone SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

THIS IS PART 1 OF A 5-PART SERIES. PART 2 & 3 COME OUT TOMMORROW.

No bar on peaceful political events

Says Election Commissioner Alamgir

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Political parties' rights have not been curtailed because the Election Commission asked the government to restrict political events, according to Election Commissioner Md Alamgir.

There is no restriction on peaceful programmes by political parties, he told reporters yesterday evening.

"They [political parties] can organise such programmes with the authorities' permission. However, the government has been asked to stop events that create obstacles to a fair election," he said.

The EC had not asked for stopping all political rallies and meetings, but if speakers at a programme say those who go to cast their vote will face consequences, then they will face legal action, he said.

The EC recently asked the government to take measures from December 18 to stop political programmes like rallies

SEE PAGE 2 COL 6

127 more BNP, Jamaat activists sentenced to jail

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Another 127 leaders and activists of BNP-Jamaat and their front organisations were sentenced to different jail terms yesterday in seven cases filed between January 2012 and November 2018 over political violence in Dhaka.

With this, at least 850 BNP-Jamaat men have been jailed since November 7 this year in 47 cases filed on charges of illegal gathering on the streets; rioting; damaging properties; arson attacks on vehicles; vandalism; and assaulting police and obstructing them from discharging duties.

In a case filed with Dhanmondi police in July 2018, 22 leaders and activists of the BNP and its front organisations were sentenced to three years' rigorous imprisonment each by a Dhaka court yesterday.

Of them, nine were present in the courtroom when Dhaka Metropolitan Magistrate Md Mehedi Hasan delivered the verdict. Four prosecution witnesses testified.

President of Dhanmondi BNP Sheikh Rabiul Alam Rabi and president of the party's Hazaribagh unit Majibur Rahman Mazu and its General Secretary Abdul Aziz are among the convicts.

According to the case statement, a group of leaders and activists of BNP and its front organisations gathered in Sat Masjid Road area in Dhanmondi on July 13, 2018 and assaulted police and obstructed them from discharging duties. They also threw brickbats at on-duty police personnel.

The next day, Sub-Inspector Mostofa Kamal filed a case with Dhanmondi Police Station in connection with the incident.

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At least 850 BNP-Jamaat men have been jailed since November 7 this year in 47 cases.

P7 Gaza rain worsens misery

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P12 Reserves can hit \$24.3b this fiscal

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উন্নয়নের অগ্রযাত্রায় বাংলাদেশ

কোটালীপাড়া, গোপালগঞ্জ-এ ১৪০০-এর অধিক কৃষক ও নারীর ক্ষমতায়নে এবি ব্যাংক

স্মার্ট কার্ডের মাধ্যমে প্রান্তিক কৃষকদের মাঝে ঋণ বিতরণ

এবং নারী উদ্যোক্তাদের ঋণ প্রদান- স্বরণে বঙ্গবন্ধু

সভাপতি: জনস্বাস্থ্য সচিব ড. ফজলুল হক

এবি ব্যাংক পিএলসি, মহান বিজয় দিবসের প্রাক্কালে গোপালগঞ্জ জেলার কোটালীপাড়া উপজেলায় ১২০০-এর অধিক ক্ষুদ্র ও প্রান্তিক কৃষকদের নিজস্ব তত্ত্বাবধানে স্মার্ট কার্ডের মাধ্যমে কৃষি ঋণ বিতরণ করেছে। একই অনুষ্ঠানে নারীদের আর্থিকভাবে স্বাবলম্বীকরণের লক্ষ্যে ২০০ নারী উদ্যোক্তাদের মাঝে স্মার্ট কার্ডের মাধ্যমে সহজ ঋণ- "স্বরণে বঙ্গবন্ধু" প্রদান করা হয়।

গোপালগঞ্জের কোটালীপাড়ায় বঙ্গবন্ধু দারিদ্র্য বিমোচন ও পল্লী উন্নয়ন একাডেমী (বাপার্ড)-তে এ উপলক্ষে এক অনুষ্ঠানের আয়োজন করা হয়। এবি ব্যাংক পিএলসি, -এর প্রেসিডেন্ট ও ব্যবস্থাপনা পরিচালক জনাব তারিক আফজাল অনুষ্ঠানটির সভাপতিত্ব করেন। অনুষ্ঠানে উপস্থিত ছিলেন স্থানীয় প্রশাসন, কৃষি সম্প্রসারণ অধিদপ্তরের উর্ধ্বতন কর্মকর্তাবৃন্দসহ ব্যাংকের অন্যান্য কর্মকর্তাগণ।

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