

MY DHAKA

VOICES OF REMORSE

A New Perspective

TANZIRAL DILSHAD DITAN

The Liberation War Museum has recently hosted a special screening of the documentary "The 1971 War: In the Eyes of Pakistanis", an emotional exploration of the 1971 genocide through the realisations and reactions of the Pakistani people.

The film serves as a bridge across a painful past, attempting to analyse the modern understanding of the cruelty and massacres that marked the path to Independence. It brings to light the harrowing humanitarian disaster that resulted in the loss of millions of lives and the systematic torture of women, framing these events as a dark chapter the world must never forget.

The visionary behind this project is Amirul Arham, an internationally acclaimed Bangladeshi filmmaker who has lived in Paris since 1985.

Arham began his cinematic journey at the Dhaka Film Archive before training under world renowned filmmaker Jean Rouch, eventually gaining global recognition for works such as his documentary on "Social Business". The film was selected for the "Cinema Positive" category at a major international festival and garnered widespread acclaim.

Reflecting on his work, Arham notes that his journey into this subject is an attempt to understand the tragedy from a fresh perspective, analysing the realisations and reactions of the



PHOTO: COURTESY

Pakistani people toward the cruelty and genocide of 1971. Millions of lives were extinguished, and the systematic abuse of women left scars that remain unhealed in Bangladesh's collective memory.

The film asks what ordinary people in Pakistan saw, what they were told, and how today's youth evaluate these events.

In this latest work, he captures perspectives from a wide array of individuals, from Pakistani labourers and businessmen who were present in then-East Pakistan to today's politicians and youth re-evaluating their history. Perhaps the most poignant moment

features the late Rowdad Khan (1923–2024), a former influential bureaucrat and politician. In a rare and deeply moving interview, Khan offers a heavy-hearted testimony and a formal apology on behalf of the people of Pakistan for the atrocities committed during the 1971 war.

Arham's connection to the subject dates back decades. In 1996, he worked on a film on the Bihari population, titled "Lost Souls of Bangladesh", which was broadcast on French National Television in 2000.

Witnessing their lost dreams of a stable life in Pakistan sparked his curiosity about civilians who remained

there, including those who witnessed the horrors of 1971. This led to a clandestine journey of research and archival work to reach the right voices without drawing the attention of authorities.

Reflecting on a process that began in 2022, Arham notes the immense challenges of documenting a history five decades later, as many witnesses have passed away or are affected by ailments such as Alzheimer's. Yet, he found that many Pakistani civilians today admit they remain poorly informed about the genocide committed by their army in then-East Pakistan.

The Film Center is a division of the Liberation War Museum, where activities related to the Liberation War are conducted. Under the supervision of founding trustee Mofidul Hoque, the division organises film screenings, workshops, and research activities.

As part of this effort, the Film Center arranged the screening to provide a new perspective on the country's history. Naasehun Ameen, CEO of the museum, said the screening was organised as part of its continued commitment to preserving and promoting the history, values, and sacrifices of 1971.

Such initiatives help engage wider audiences, especially younger generations, and encourage deeper reflection on the Liberation War and its enduring impact.

Drug trade thrives despite crackdowns

FROM PAGE 1
imprisonment no longer serves as a deterrent.

OPEN TRADE
Drugs worth over Tk 1.5 crore are sold there every day, attracting a new, more aggressive generation of dealers, according to camp sources.

The scale of the trade is reflected in past recoveries. In two drives in June and August last year, army personnel seized Tk 1.13 crore from a group of dealers and Tk 2.45 crore from another group.

In February this year, police seized 1.5kg heroin valued at roughly Tk 1.5 crore from the camp. But it hardly impacted the illegal trade.

Sources said marijuana became available in the camp in 1972, a few months after its establishment, but its sales rose after 2000. Yaba was first brought to the camp in 2010, and its trade peaked in 2022.

These correspondents recently visited several drug spots and saw dealers selling drugs openly. Along the footpaths of Humayun and Babar roads, they traded purias or small packets of marijuana, yaba and heroin.

In nearby alleys,

transactions took place swiftly. Some buyers arrived on motorcycles, handed over cash, collected purias and left, while several others walked up slowly to sellers to buy heroin and yaba.

During one of the visits, a man in threadbare clothes was seen buying two purias of heroin from a dealer for Tk 400.

Identifying himself as Muklesur Rahman, the man said he has been addicted to heroin for 28 years.

"Back then, I used to buy a puria for Tk 12 and share it with another addict," said the 55-year-old man in a raspy voice.

Muklesur, who is from Munshiganj, said he has a wife and two daughters, but is no longer in touch with them. He now sleeps on the streets, and begs to fund an addiction that already consumed more than half his life.

Many of the sellers are also trapped in a similar cycle.

Seeking anonymity, a 27-year-old cannabis dealer, who once worked at a clothing store, said he got addicted to marijuana about a decade ago.

During a raid on the camp several years ago, he

was arrested for possessing cannabis. But he was sent to jail on drug peddling charges. To facilitate his bail, he borrowed Tk 10,000 with interest. As he failed to pay the loan in time, he was approached by a drug trader who advised him to sell narcotics for a few days.

The man claimed that he was later implicated in two other cases and now faces at least 10 cases.

"Life in the camp or in jail is almost the same... But if you have money, you can live better in jail. People like me are not much afraid of landing in jail."

The profit margins explain why sellers like him take the risk. They buy heroin for Tk 160 per puria and sell it for Tk 200. For yaba, the profit margin is up to Tk 100 per puria and for marijuana it's Tk 60.

Some sellers said they earn between Tk 10,000 and Tk 15,000 a day. The trade runs round the clock, with activities peaking between 10:00am and 2:00pm, and again from 7:00pm to 10:00pm.

Sources said around 500 people inside the camp are directly involved in drug trade, while the ringleaders operate from outside. Over

50 lookouts have been set up near Suhrawardy Hospital, Shishu Mela and Residential Model School, where informants observe law enforcers' movements and alert dealers. They get Tk 1,000 to Tk 2,000 each per day.

THE NETWORK
About a decade ago, two drug kingpins – Ishtiaq and Nadim alias "Pochish" – largely controlled narcotics trade in the camp.

Nadim was killed in a gunfight with Rab members in 2018, while Ishtiaq died of Covid while receiving treatment in India in 2021.

Following their deaths, the illegal trade fell into the hands of small groups that now operate under two major rival gangs, locals said.

One is run by Sohel, locally known as "Buniya Sohel" and "Popla Munna", while the other by Selim, known as "Chua Selim", "Pichhi Raja", and "Par Monu".

Locals said that since August 5, 2024, groups led by Raja, Monu and Selim have been trying to take control of the trade from Sohel-led groups. The two sides fought on many occasions over the last 19

months.

In separate operations, Rab personnel arrested Sohel on November 1, 2024, and Selim on January 9, 2025, but both were released on bail within a few months of their arrests.

In September last year, joint forces raided two of Sohel's hideouts and seized narcotics and weapons. A couple of months later, army personnel carried out multiple drives and recovered nearly 200 crude bombs and five kilograms of bomb-making materials from one of Sohel's hideouts.

Law enforcers seized 77 crude bombs, 400 grammes of gunpowder, four samurai swords, yaba, heroin and Tk 4.25 lakh from Sohel's den on November 26. Sohel and his associates escaped.

Three days later, 50 members of rival groups attacked Sohel and his accomplices in Block-4 and 7, leaving him critically injured. Upon receiving information, joint forces rushed to the spot and took him to hospital. Police later showed him arrested in a narcotics case.

Hours later, two of his associates were arrested inside the camp with two

pistols and six rounds of ammunition.

With Sohel behind bars, groups led by Raja, Monu and Selim now control the drug trade, said locals.

Over the past few weeks, police conducted several raids in and around the camp and arrested dozens of suspects. The drug trade, however, continues.

When contacted, Abdullah Al Mamun, assistant commissioner of DMP's Mohammadpur Zone, said police are conducting raids in the Geneva Camp area almost every day. Many have been detained, and a number of them are now in jail.

Asked why the ringleaders have not been caught, he said the key operators stay outside the camp. They visit the camp secretly for a brief period and leave unnoticed. Several of them have been identified and efforts are underway to arrest them.

Regarding allegations that some law enforcers tip off ringleaders about raids in exchange for bribes, he said, "We also hear such allegations, but we have yet to get any evidence to support those."

Shirin Akther

FROM JACKET 1

letter from Bangladesh Kriya Shikha Protishtan arrived in her name, it brought not just opportunity but a storm of emotions: joy for the village, fear for her parents, and an unshakable resolve within her. She cried, she resisted, she refused to give up her dream, and that courage carried her forward. Even when she collapsed mid-race, she rose to the sound of victory. Today, as she lifts her 16th title as the nation's fastest woman, the feeling remains the same – not just triumph, but a reminder of every struggle she outran to get there. Beyond medals, she has become a story that travels from village to village, inspiring countless girls to believe that no matter where they begin, they too can run toward something bigger.

BNP men assault

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noon and demanded money for a local gathering and financial records related to the former principal's tenure.

Aleya began recording the incident on her phone. Shahad tried to stop her, and she slapped him. Shahad then took off his sandal and hit her with that.

Another video shows the teacher assaulting Afaz on the college ground later on.

Shortly afterwards, BNP leaders and activists assaulted Principal Abdur Razzak and several other teachers and vandalised the office room, Aleya told The Daily Star.

At least five people, including the principal, Aleya, and Prof Rezaul Karim Alam, were injured.

Aleya claimed that the group had repeatedly demanded financial accounts as part of extortion attempts. "They attacked me because I stood by the principal and protested."

Talking to this newspaper, Shahad, seen in the viral video, said, "I have leased a pond from the college for fish farming. I went to the college to pay the lease money. As the situation there was tense and there had already been an ongoing conflict between the college teachers and some other people, I wanted

to leave. At that point, Aleya got into an argument with me for no reason and slapped me. After being slapped, I lost control, took off my sandal and hit her several times."

Akbar, vice president of Joynagar union BNP, claimed that they sought accountability over alleged irregularities and corruption. He also alleged that Aleya first attacked them, leading to escalation.

After the incident, Akbar was expelled from all party positions, including primary membership, for engaging in activities deemed against party discipline and principles, according to a press release signed by BNP Senior Joint Secretary General Ruhul Kabir Rizvi yesterday.

Principal Razzak told this correspondent that the BNP group had been demanding money since he joined the college four months ago. The group got infuriated as he refused to pay the money.

Rafiqul Islam, investigation officer of Durgapur Police Station, said police had been present anticipating unrest and tried to restrain both sides. "However, some people entered the college premises forcibly and carried out the assault and vandalism," he said, adding that no complaint has yet been filed.

Heatwave to linger

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According to the BMD, yesterday's highest temperature was recorded at 37.3°C in Rajshahi, while Dhaka experienced a high of 37°C.

Shaheenu explained that temperatures between 36°C and 37.9°C are classified as a mild heatwave; 38°C to 39.9°C are moderate; 40°C to 41.9°C are severe; and temperatures above 42°C are a very severe heatwave.

The hot and humid weather is severely affecting residents. Low-income people, especially those living on footpaths or under open skies, are among the worst affected.

People who spend long hours outdoors are also struggling under the intense heat, particularly motorbike riders and passengers of vehicles without air conditioning.

Many individuals are experiencing health issues such as asthma, tonsillitis, and fever due to the extreme weather conditions.

"I felt nauseous in the morning and suffered from diarrhoea due to the intense heat, though it subsided after taking oral saline," said Anwar Hossain, a resident of the capital's West Razabazar. He added that rainfall is essential to bring relief from the ongoing heatwave.

In Khulna, the heatwave continues to intensify, with Jashore recording the country's highest temperature on Thursday.

The Met Office reported that Jashore recorded 38°C, followed by Khulna at 37.5°C and Mongla at 37.4°C. Temperatures in Chuadanga, Satkhira, and Kumarkhali hovered around 37°C, while Koyra recorded 36.8°C.

Meteorologists said the rising temperatures have

significantly increased discomfort, making daily life increasingly difficult.

Day labourers and rickshaw pullers reported a sharp decline in income due to the extreme heat. Monsur, a rickshaw puller who travels from Tala in Satkhira to Khulna city, said, "I have been pulling a rickshaw for nearly a decade, but I have never experienced such extreme heat. After dropping a passenger, I need to rest under a tree before continuing. Sometimes I cannot find passengers, and my daily earnings have dropped."

At a road construction site, around 30 to 35 women were seen working under the blazing sun. One of them, Ruksana Parvin, said they earn Tk 450 a day and rely on saline water to cope with dehydration.

Samridhi Swasty, a ninth-grade student of Khulna Government Girls' High School, said commuting to after-school coaching classes has become exhausting due to the heat.

Frequent power cuts have further worsened the situation. According to the West Zone Power Distribution Company Limited, at 1:00pm on Wednesday, power supply stood at 607 megawatts against a demand of 810 megawatts, resulting in a deficit of 203 megawatts.

A similar shortfall occurred later that evening, when demand reached 765 megawatts but supply was only 601 megawatts, leaving a gap of 164 megawatts.

Md Mizanur Rahman, in charge of the Khulna Meteorological Office, said the heatwave is likely to continue for the next few days. However, rainfall is expected today or tomorrow, which may bring some relief.

Billal Hossain

FROM JACKET 1

modern techniques like a polynet house and built his nursery into a thriving business. Today, he earns around Tk 40 lakh annually, creates jobs

for others, and supplies quality seedlings across multiple districts, proving that even from the harshest beginnings, persistence and courage can rewrite one's destiny.

Rahima Khatun

FROM JACKET 1

she became a trusted figure known as "Doctor Apa", working tirelessly to improve maternal health, raise awareness about family planning, and stand beside women in their most difficult moments. Her personal

pain has, in many ways, become the foundation of her compassion, driving her not only to serve but to uplift, often going beyond her duties and even bearing costs herself, leaving a lasting emotional and social impact on her community.

Nagina Najnin Banu

FROM JACKET 1

efforts carved a path for her in an industry few could have imagined thriving in rural Bangladesh. Her courage became contagious. Women from surrounding villages saw in her a reflection of what was possible for themselves. Inspired by her journey, many stepped out of financial dependence and into meaningful work, learning skills, earning an income, and discovering confidence they had

never known before. For them, she was more than an entrepreneur; she became proof that one woman's resilience can spark transformation in hundreds of lives. Today, as women across Thakurgaon shape mozzarella cheese that reaches markets far beyond their villages, they also carry forward the legacy of the woman who showed them that empowerment can begin with a single bold step.

Hope rekindles for US-Iran peace talks

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Araghchi "will hold meetings with Pakistan's senior leadership to discuss the latest regional developments as well as ongoing efforts for regional peace and stability", Pakistan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs said in a statement, without directly referencing talks with Washington emissaries.

Vice President JD Vance is not currently planning to attend, but he will be on standby to travel to Islamabad if negotiations progress, according to CNN, which first recorded the travel plans.

Islamabad was the venue for the first round of talks between the US and Iran.

Meanwhile, US Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth, speaking around the same time the news emerged, told a briefing that Iran had a chance to make a "good deal" with the United States.

"Iran knows that they still have an open window to choose wisely ... at the negotiating table. All they have to do is abandon a nuclear weapon in meaningful and verifiable ways," he said.

Reports on Araghchi's trip in Iranian state media and the Pakistani sources made no mention of Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf, the speaker of Iran's parliament, who was the head of its delegation at the only talks held so far, earlier this month.

Pakistani sources had said earlier that a US logistics and security team was already in place in Islamabad for potential talks.

The second round of peace talks had been expected on Tuesday but never took place, with Iran saying it was not yet ready to commit to attending, and a US delegation led by JD Vance never left

Washington.

President Donald Trump unilaterally extended a two-week ceasefire on Tuesday at the 11th hour indefinitely to allow more time to reconvene the negotiators.

Oil prices fell yesterday over the prospect of more talks.

Equities traded mixed, however, although the tech-heavy Nasdaq Composite set a fresh record high in New York, thanks to a surge in stocks of chip manufacturing firms like Intel, which saw its shares rocket 25 percent higher after it smashed quarterly earnings expectations.

Oil prices had been climbing earlier in the day as investors worried about a lack of progress in ending the Middle East crisis, with Tehran keeping the Strait of Hormuz closed and the US maintaining a blockade of Iranian ports.

But they dropped as

reports of the possible talks came in. Brent crude, the international benchmark contract, fell back below \$100 a barrel.

The positive news from the market also came as Israel and Lebanon on Thursday extended a separate ceasefire for three weeks at a meeting at the White House brokered by Trump.

Trump said on Thursday he was in no rush to reach an agreement with Iran and wanted it to be "everlasting," while asserting that the US had an upper hand in a standoff in the Strait of Hormuz.

Trump also said that he would not use a nuclear weapon in the war against Iran.

"Why would I use a nuclear weapon? We've totally, in a very conventional way, decimated them without it," Trump told reporters at the White House when