

DOWN TO EARTH

Morning Walkers Face Snag

By A S M Nurunnabi

Craze for physical fitness is a growing credo these days. In the recent past the awareness of its need was not as pervasive as it is nowadays. Not that its need was not felt before. The big difference is that previously it was confined to isolated groups of youths devoted to the ideal of development of brawn and motley groups of old timers keen on extending their life span. The present trend is more of a general nature inspiring both young and old.

As the popular saying goes, a healthy body helps to create a healthy mind. In the context of present day reality in society where all established values seem to be falling apart, the need for a healthy mind can hardly be exaggerated.

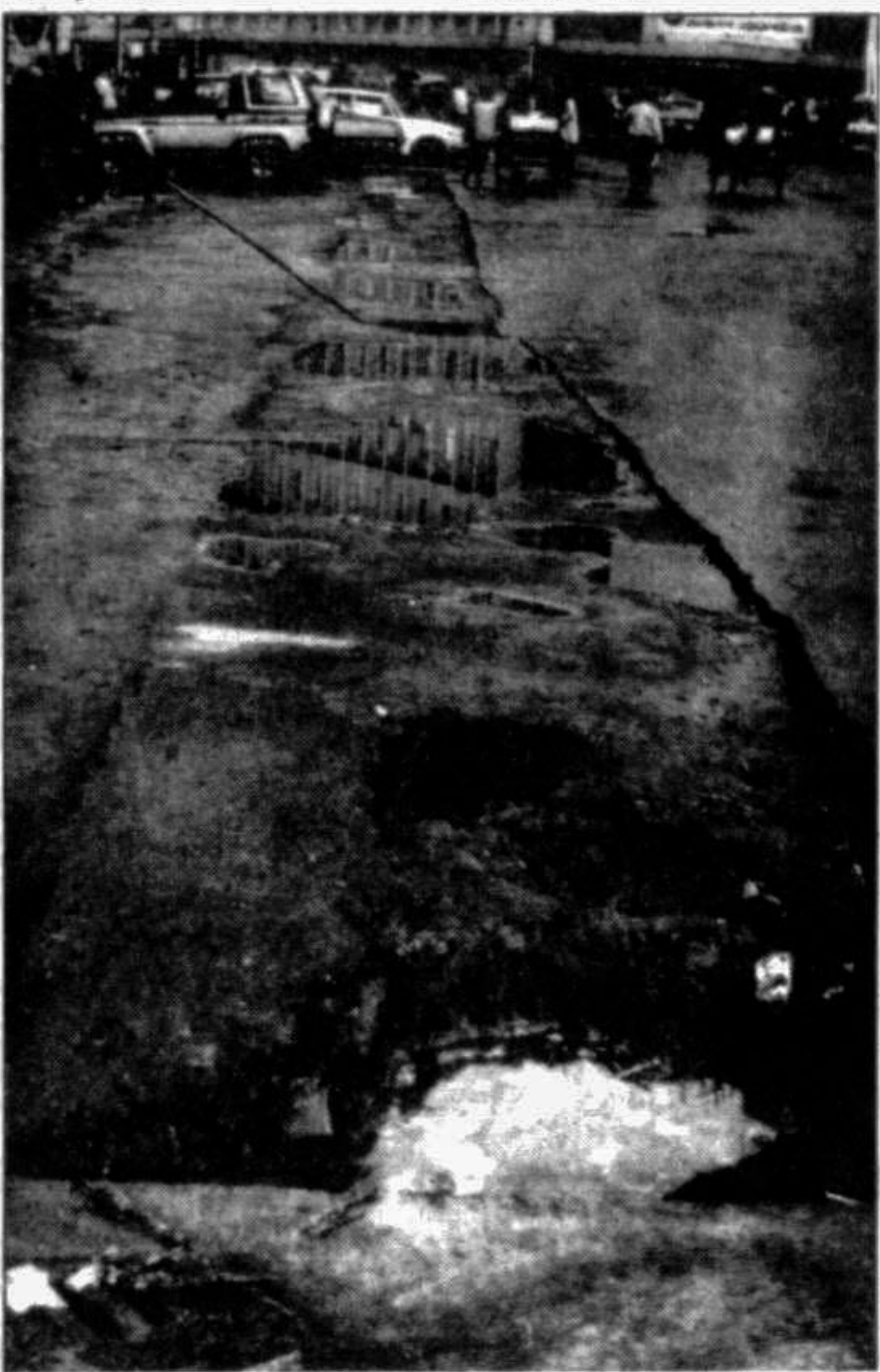
Against this backdrop, it may be interesting to view the kaleidoscopic scenario that meets the eyes of one who can manage to rise early in the morning. Among the things he will come across are first the variegated gear the energetic health seekers don on their rounds. The younger and comparatively affluent among them bedeck themselves in track suits with gleaming sneakers; some venture out in shorts and trousers with half-sleeve shirts or vests. Others, mostly the old timers, are less fastidious in draping themselves.

The fields of their activities cover a wide range. In new Dhaka, the favourite haunts are the Shuhrawardy Uddan, the Ramna Park, the Dhanmandi Lake area, the wide and beautiful avenues in Sher-e-Bangla Nagar. The Shuhrawardy Uddan, however, seems more crowded with these enthusiasts. Other city dwellers living some distance away from these ideal spots make do with traffic-free roads and lanes. The more common of their dawn-time activities is jogging, the current fad among the young and the middle-aged. Free hand exercises are another common sight. The older ones limit themselves to fast or easy-paced walking depending on age and health condition.

Lately some reported incidents of mugging have ruffled the quiet tenor of dawn-time activities. There was even a recent case of shooting of one business man who was taking his morning walk. These are symptoms of lawlessness which has lately been on the

increase in the society. Most of the people who take their morning walk are aged. They fall easy victims to the muggers who snatch away wrist watches, spectacles or whatever cash there may be in the purse. The muggers do their job without any fear of resistance, because at the early hours in the morning, any hue and cry if raised by the victims may go unheeded.

In this situation, some observers suggest certain preventive steps. Interested people should avoid taking their walk early at dawn along deserted routes. They should preferably move in groups to the points where there are more people around. The security situation may be much improved if the police on their part make rounds of the areas routes which morning walkers mostly use.



The road-digging operations, undertaken in some important road network in the city prior to the close of the last financial year, now appear to be complete. During these operations, a lot of traffic tangles occurred, adding to the suffering of the public. With the completion of the operations, it was hoped that the situation would ease substantially. The hope has not been fully realised. The tunnels that were dug for pipelines have since been refilled with sand, earth, brick chips, etc. But the road alignments do not appear to have been properly compacted. The result is that road surfaces are still uneven and marked with potholes. It behoves the WASA and the City Corporation to take early steps for proper carpeting of the affected road alignments in the interest of smooth flow of vehicular traffic.



Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia talking to the visiting SARTUC delegation at her Sugandha office yesterday. —PID photo

Freedom Party may split soon

By Sohail Manzur

A new political party, comprising of a faction of Freedom Party and some other pro-Islamic parties, is likely to be floated soon, according to concerned sources.

Freedom Party (FP) is now on the verge of split on the question of accumulating all the powers in one hand, the Chairman of the party, the sources say. Major (Rtd) Bazil Huda, who was the Vice-Chairman of the former Central executive Committee (CEC), has already resigned from the party, the sources informed.

Co-Chairman of the former CEC Col (Rtd) Khandaker Abdur Rashid is now outside the country and the split in FP and formation of a new one may take effect immediately after his return the sources say.

Another factor that has contributed to the split is the question of forming an alliance or a single political party uniting the pro-Islamic political parties.

Col (Rtd) Syed Faruq Rahman, who has reportedly strong reservation about Jama'at-e-Islami, was dead against such unity.

Party insiders say that he has also accumulated all the powers in his own hand by amending the constitution of the party in the last council held on August 3 and 4.

Rashid abstained from attending the council, although he sent a written note from abroad to be read out in the council.

Major Huda resigned at the concluding day of the council. The resignation is however,

yet to be accepted.

Out of total five members of the former CEC, only two members are in the new seven-member National Executive Committee (NEC). They are Col (Rtd) Faruq, Chairman and Mia Abdur Rashid, Vice-Chairman. Chowdhury Mohammad Faruq, Chief Staff Coordinator of the former CEC and Editor of the Dainik Millat, is also likely to join with Rashid and Huda.

According to the new constitution of FP, Chairman is the only person to take any decision and he is elected by the councillors for six years.

The constitution also provided, the Chairman with the authority to form a National Executive Committee (NEC) to assist and execute his decisions.

The pro-Islamic parties, which are likely to be merged in the new political party include, Muslim League led by Aminuddin, Jamir Ali Alhaj Sirajuddin and Ataul Huq, National Democratic Party of Anwar Jahid, Progressive Nationalist Party (PNP) of Sheikh Shawkat Hossain Nili, Muslim Nationalist Party of Sirajul Huq Gora, Pragatishil Ganotantrik Shakti of Shahrier Rashid Khan and Waheduzzaman, Bangladesh Democratic Party of Abdur Razzak Chowdhury, Islami Oikya Andolan of Shahidur Rahman and Nezame Islami Party of Maolana Abdur Latif.

The parties met several times earlier with the leaders of Freedom Party to discuss about the unification in the form of alliance or a single political party.

Khaleda

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recommendations of the ongoing SARTUC meeting in the next ministerial level meeting of SAARC. She also stressed the need for maximum utilisation of domestic resources of SAARC member countries to change the lot of their peoples.

Labour Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan was present during the meeting.

Members of the delegation included SARTUC General Secretary Gopewar, India — Subrata Mukherjee, MLA, Thampam Thomas and Novinchandra Barot, Nepal — Luxman Basnet, Sri Lanka — Harry Sandrasekera, Pakistan — Mohammad Sharif, Mia Mohd Muneer and Choudhury, Mohd Talib Nawaz, Bangladesh — Ekander Ali, Nazrul Islam, Mojibur Rahman Sarwar MP, MA Gafur, SM Rumi, Mijibur Rahman Bhuiyan, MS Alam (Mendu Mia), Mamun-Ur Rashid Chowdhury.

Hidayatullah dead

BOMBAY, Sept 18: The former Vice-President, Justice M Hidayatullah, died here this morning following a massive heart attack, reports PTI.

The 87-year-old Hidayatullah, who was the Chief Justice of India for two years from 1968, is survived by his wife Pushpa and lawyer son Arshad.

Hidayatullah, who had announced the prestigious Jannat-ul-Hajj Foundation awards at a press conference here three days ago, complained of chest pain around 0230 hours today and breathed his last within 15 minutes before doctors could attend on him.

The former vice-president will be given a state funeral tomorrow.

Green Belt plan soon

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forestation, industrial a pollution control, alternative use of CFC gas, monitoring the secretion of Mithen gas from the paddy fields of the Ganges-Brahmaputra-Meghna basin, and conservation of the water ways in the country.

Noman said the government had prepared the national environment policy, examining the terrestrial and marine environment, inland water resources and the situation in urban and rural areas. The environment policy, he said, looks at the implications of global environmental problems such as the depletion of the ozone layer, climatic changes, the Green House effect and the rise in the sea level.

It explores the response to environmental problems via a development in institutions and legislations, education, communication and social awareness and participation of the people, technology and planning.

We have to meet the environmental challenges of the 1990s, the Minister said, adding that along side policy

decisions, the government was now fostering public awareness of environmental issues and ensuring participation at all levels, especially at the grass-roots.

Stressing the urgent need to incorporate new technologies in the development process, designed to conserve resources and to protect the environment, Noman said, the present government was now striving to achieve environmentally sound and sustainable development to safeguard valuable natural resources and ecosystem for the benefit of the 112 million people of the country.

The Environment Minister, said BNP government was pledge-bound to ensure a better quality of life for the people of the country. He urged the people to cooperate with the government to achieve environmentally sound and sustainable development.

Listing the measures, steps and programmes undertaken by the new BNP government, he said the living standard of the people would improve sharply with the full implementation of the development programmes.

The Minister said the government was also preparing programmes for a massive development in the country with the assistance from the 150 billion US dollar global environment facilities fund, created at the Rio earth summit.

Noman said the United States of America also had expressed readiness to finance bilaterally Bangladesh's environment programmes.

Barisal Polytech :18 outsiders held
BARISAL, Sept 18: Some firearms and explosives were recovered and 18 outsiders detained when police raided the hostel of Barisal Polytechnic Institute today, police sources said. Police surrounded the hostel of the Polytechnic Institute in the early hours of the day and searched different rooms which continued till 9 in the morning. Two pipe guns, five crackers and one Chinese axe were recovered, reports BSS.

'Democracy is a difficult practice'

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succeed.

He discouraged political confrontation in the streets in the interest of sound growth of democracy in Bangladesh.

"In Bangladesh, ... political confrontation should be in the Parliament, in the press and in the legal system - not in the streets."

He said, "There is no longer a need to use those means which were necessary in an undemocratic setup."

"Government and opposition are both necessary for a democracy. Both have roles to play", Milam pointed out.

He said other agencies and institutions, apart from political parties, should have contribution to flowering the democratic spirit.

The US Ambassador greeted the Bangladeshis who fought to the last for establishing democracy in the country.

He outlined seven generally accepted requirements to make the democratic order a success:

- Elected officials must have control over government decisions about policy,
- Elected officials must be chosen frequently and fairly,
- All adults should have the

right to vote in the election of these officials,

- All adults should have the right to run for elective office,
- Citizens should have the right to express themselves without danger of arbitrary punishment,
- There must be way to seek out alternative sources of information,
- There must be the right to form independent associations or organisations in particular political parties.

Milam, in his speech "Democracy - Is it Irreversible, Is it Irreversible", also focused on various aspects of democracy in different parts of the world, particularly in Eastern Europe, Central Asia and developing countries.

Dr Kamal Hossain urged the parliament to play a positive and constructive role in tackling the urgent problems facing the society.

He also called for practising democracy within the political parties saying, "We can't expect parliamentary democracy as provided in the Constitution to work if party leaders seek to concentrate powers in their own hands as in presidential system."

Transition from long years

of authoritarian rule to democracy is a difficult and uphill task, said Dr Kamal, a member of the Awami League Presidium and Convenor of Democratic Forum.

"Emergence of multi-party democracy following long years of authoritarian regime brings about intense political competition between the government and the opposition."

Recalling the events of the past, Dr Kamal said it was a misfortune that the nation could not retain democracy that it had won at great cost. "Democracy was time after time supplanted by authoritarian regimes."

He also asked why the political parties were patronising armed cadres in their student organisations, unleashing acts of terrorism and vitiating the environment of higher education.

High Commissioner Imray lauded the success of democracy in Bangladesh and said it had an enviable record of achievement from the very beginning.

He appreciated press freedom in the country but emphasised on more freedom for state-run TV and Radio for smooth functioning of democracy.

The Midnight File

Flood submerges 1000 Sindh villages

ISLAMABAD, Sept 18: Flood waters roared through Pakistan's southern Sindh Province today, submerging about 1,000 villages as the Indus river jumped its banks at several places, an official source said. Most villages were evacuated, but a reporter from the Dawn newspaper who flew over the northern portion of Sindh told of hundreds of people still stranded on rooftops and trees. They risked being swept away if not rescued by late Saturday the reporter said, reports AFP.

Hekmatyar-Rabbani accord

ISLAMABAD, Sept 18: Dissident Afghan leader Gulbuddin Hekmatyar has reached a peace accord with President Burhanuddin Rabbani at their first meeting since fighting erupted last month, officials said today. The fundamentalist chief of Hezb-i-Islami and the President reached a peace accord after three hours of talks in the town of Paghman, outside Kabul, on Thursday afternoon, a Hezb official said by telephone from the Pakistani border town of Peshawar. The two sides agreed to withdraw from Kabul all formerly Communist militia, now integrated into armies loyal to Rabbani's government, ANA said, reports Reuters.

AL council session

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year leadership of Sheikh Hasina.

The conference, like other past council sessions, will feature speeches of leaders and delegates, organisational problems, possible changes in the party's manifesto and constitution.

Awami League leaders and rank and file expect this council to revitalise the party both politically and organisationally.

"We have been in the opposition for long. Now it's time to prepare the party to win back the state power we lost because of a coup in 1975," said an Awami League councillor, who arrived on Friday.

To gain this objective, analysts say, the Awami League will have to adopt new socio-economic programmes that touch the people's minds. Gone are the days of criticizing the government for the sake of criticizing only, they say.

The expected endorsement of the party's new economic policy that replaces socialism with free market economy manifest the party's tilt towards realism.

It's almost certain that Hasina's proposal for appointing an advisory council will sail through the conference which will also elect a new central working committee. New faces

are also likely to come in the presidium.

But the council's focus will be on who becomes the next General Secretary. The current competitors are: Abdur Razzak, Amir Hossain Amu, Tofael Ahmed, Abdul Jalil and Mohammad Nasim. The incumbent Begum Sajeda Chowdhury is certain to be dropped.

Awami League sources indicated that if the race for the office of General Secretary became too stiff among the competitors, Hasina may opt for Zillur Rahman, currently a Presidium member or she may even bring in a dark horse.

The issue of the expulsion of Mostafa Mohsin Mantu will create a ripple in the council if not a storm.

Though the council is set for two days, it may be extended if the businesses turn too heavy to tackle.

According to programmes the opening ceremony will be simple featuring hoisting of national and Awami League's party flags in the premises of Engineers' Institution, placing of wreaths at the portrait of Bangabandhu, recitation from Holy Quran, Geeta, Bible and Tripitak, obituary references, speech by the convenor of the Reception Committee, goodwill speeches by guests and Hasina's inaugural speech.

The opening ceremony will end with a cultural function.

Stock turnover ALWC okays

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per cent Jamuna bridge levy was withdrawn, he added.

"The moment the government allowed repatriation of the capital gains in January this year, the foreign investors started streaming in," the DSE chairman said, adding "they are more interested in capital gains than dividend income."

An estimated Taka six crore was invested in the stockmarket by the foreign investors during the period.

At present there are 142 listed securities with DSE, of which, there are 131 companies, six mutual funds and five debentures.

The total number of listed shares stands at 16,97,69,998 while the total amount of listed capital of all securities is about Taka 578.18 crore with a total market capital of about Taka 1,315 crore.

Originally set up in 1954, initially as a secondary market behind Karachi, the DSE was shut down in 1972 when industries were nationalised.

Following the establishment of the Investment Corporation of Bangladesh in 1976 with an emphasis to develop the private sector, DSE was revived with only 9 listed companies at the end of the same year.

In 1986, the stock-market was boosted when the ongoing privatisation drive was taken up and 12 public sector units including Rupali Bank was partially privatised with 49 per cent of the shares put up for public subscription.

There are currently 195 members in the DSE acting as brokers in buying and selling shares, of them only about 50 are active.

Some observers criticised a section of the brokers for their lack of expertise and inactivity which is hindering the development of a proper market mechanism.

A recent study conducted by two Korean experts recommended the conversion of the individual membership at the DSE into corporate ones.

Initiated by the Asia Foundation, the study also recommended banning DSE members from engaging in other professions for ensuring future development and expansion of the stock market in the country.

The chairman of the DSE also acknowledged that internal reforms in the stock exchange and regulatory changes may be needed to deal with the rapidly expanding stock market.

(Related story on Business page)

amendments to constitution

By Staff Correspondent

The Awami League Working Committee (ALWC) Friday okayed the proposed amendments to the party constitution and the manifesto for approval by the council during its two-day session beginning today (Saturday).

The ALWC began at 5 pm and continued until 9 pm with AL chief Sheikh Hasina in the chair. Held at her official Minto Road residence, the meeting was adjourned until 2.30 pm today (Saturday).

Party sources said that the major amendments proposed for consideration of the council included formation of an advisory council with at least nine members. The numbers may go up to 15.

The members of the council will be nominated by the party president, they said.

The advisory council would be composed of technocrats, intellectuals and experts from various fields to assist the party chief, they said, adding that the members of the advisory council would not be members of the AL Working Committee.

The Working Committee meeting also proposed increasing the strength of the AL Presidium from 13 to 15.

Each member of the Presidium will be entrusted with specific responsibilities in the concept of a shadow cabinet.

The number of the members of the Working Committee will be raised to 65 from the existing 59, while two more posts of secretaries will be created.

The tenure of the Working Committee will be raised to three years from the existing two.

Meanwhile, a hectic lobbying for the post of the party General Secretary was on Friday, one day ahead of the council session.

A source close to AL president Sheikh Hasina said that she had appeared cautious against her leaning towards any of the four known aspirants.

However, party insiders hinted that Tofael Ahmed might withdraw in favour of Abdur Razzak but would surely go on to contest Amir Hossain Amu.

Party top notches said that eventually no polls might take place and appointment of the General Secretary be left to Hasina who would try to shake all hands.

Search for oil

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and the Bangladesh Oil, Gas and Mineral Corporation (BOGMC) were consulting similar production sharing contracts (PSC) of some other countries like India, Pakistan and Burma.

Sounding a note of optimism, they said that the terms and conditions of the contracts would vary depending on the "risks and prospects involved in a particular case."

The BOGMC or Petrobangla experts are also working on certain necessary amendments to the 1988 model production sharing contract prepared by Dr Kamal Hossain and his associates.

An authoritative source at the Petrobangla said that the 1988 model was basically "oil-based" and spoke nothing about gas discovery.

The officials are also thinking about changes in the taxation system that reduces the possibility of IOCs coming for risky exploration jobs.

Meanwhile, the Occidental, popularly known as Oxy, is interested in two blocks in the Sylhet basin, one in which Scimitar was operating and an adjacent block. Last month, the Cabinet decided against the extension of the scandalous Scimitar deal signed in 1987.

The Occidental indication came when the world renowned company's president David Martin met Energy Minister early last month. Martin, accompanied by an Arab investor Hany M Salam, came to Dhaka and also held talks with the Energy Ministry and Petrobangla men.

Officials quoted the Oxy chief executive as saying that a formal proposal would be made later this month.

The TEXACO-UNOCAL team that had been in Dhaka September 13-15 reiterated their old proposal for two blocks.

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Kamal off to France

By Staff Correspondent

Dr Kamal Hossain, an Awami League top-notch, Friday left home on a three-country tour ending wide speculations over his participation in the AL council session beginning today (Saturday).

Dr Hossain, an eminent lawyer and member of the AL Presidium, left Dhaka for France to attend the biennial conference of the International Bar Association in Cannes.

From France, Kamal will fly for the United States to undertake a lecture tour in New York and will attend a meeting at the Washington DC. Then he will go to the Hague in the Netherlands.

However, Awami League sources said that Dr Kamal had decided not to attend the council meeting to avoid criticism for his stance on different "controversial" issues including that of his support to Mostafa Mohsin Mantu, a dissident AL leader.

Kamal Hossain had attended the AL Central Committee meeting but remained almost silent during the four-day session.

Meanwhile, Salahuddin Yusuf and Zohra Tajuddin, two other presidium members, will also remain absent in the council session, third after the country's independence and viewed as "most crucial" by the partymen because of the changed political situation.

Zohra Tajuddin, a close ally of Kamal, is now staying in the US while Yusuf is now undergoing eye treatment in Germany.

SAARC experts for legalisation of abortion

COLOMBO, Sept 18: A South Asian technical group today recommended abortion, condoms and other contraceptives be encouraged to prevent sexually transmitted diseases and small families in one of the world's poorest regions, reports AFP.

An expert report on 'child survival and safe motherhood' recommended to a ministerial meeting of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) which ended here today that abortion should be provided where contraception has failed.