

Down to Earth

The Tragedy of Dhanmondi Lake

By A S M Nurunnabi

Originally a long canal, the Dhanmondi Lake came into being as a result of the development works carried out in connection with the Dhanmondi Residential Area at its beginning. It covers a total area of roughly 50 acres. The lake is under the management of several authorities looking after its various aspects. The Ministry of Works has its ownership; the Fishery Department looks after the aspect of fishery development; the Dhaka City Corporation, being the principal civic body, exercises some responsibility in the matter of improvement and maintenance of the lake. The Department of Environment (DOE) looks after the aspects of proper environment and protection of aquatic resources of the lake. Though there are so many authorities to look after the different aspects of the lake, it seems to have become a victim of utter lack of care and proper upkeep.

The lake was intended to add to the scenic beauty of the residential area. Such intention has been grievously belied as it appears from the present state of the lake. During the last 35 years, no major work of renovation is understood to have been undertaken. The result has been a gradual deterioration of the fish resources and the surrounding flora of the lake. Some perfunctory attempts at improvement were, however, made from time to time, say, for instance, under an Integrated Fisheries Development Scheme, which expired a couple of years ago. All this brought about no significant improvement in the condition of the lake.

On the other hand, the process of pollution steadily increased in the lake causing depletion of oxygen in the water. On a number of occasions in the past, the situation in this respect took such a serious turn that the fish of the lake came up to the surface gasping for oxygen. To

meet such contingencies, steps were taken, which proved not very effective in the wide expanse of water, to improve the quality of water by sprinkling lime and by churning up water with the help of a speed boat so as to augment the water's oxygen content. Among other attempts made to improve the lake, mention may be made of a scheme taken up under the auspices of the Asian Development Bank which sought to block out waste substances from the Hazaribagh tanneries.

Steps to improve the fish wealth which possessed great potentialities, were inadequate and half-hearted. In spite of this, angling was widely practised in the lake previously on payment of fees. For facility of the anglers, wooden platforms were constructed on the edge of the banks. A large number of people used to visit the place for a breath of fresh air.

Now all this is a thing of the past. The trees which were planted to enhance the natural beauty of the area are neglected. The paved pathways along the banks have become dilapidated. The banks of the lake are overgrown with wild shrubs and plants. Water hyacinth grows profusely in some areas of the lake. Most morning and evening walkers avoid the immediate vicinity of the lake in course of their rounds.

Now the greatest threat to the environment of the lake is posed by the accumulation of highly toxic wastes in the lake water. According to tests done by the Department of Environment, the oxygen content of the lake water, as a result of the toxic waste, stands at zero mg per litre, whereas the minimum requirement of oxygen for aquatic life is four mg per litre. The existence of other highly toxic substances like coliform is now producing poisonous gases which threaten to create a health hazard in the area.

Apart from the existing 48 drainage connections to the lake from the adjoining areas of the lake, its water was recently polluted as sludge from one of the city sewerages near Sukrabad was pushed back into the lake by the floods in the upstream. All types of fish in the lake particularly in the Sukrabad part died after the sudden inflow of toxic substances.

The tragedy of the lake is further compounded by the reported move of the Works Ministry to fill up part of it to build housing units for government officials. The local inhabitants are now vociferous in their protests against the impending housing encroachment on the lake property.

It is a cruel irony that the lake which, at its inception, held out bright promise of becoming an attractive site of scenic beauty as a tranquil island when surrounding neighbourhoods are plagued by mounting congestion of people, should come to the present tragic state. The earlier dreams of turning the lake into a tourist spot with provision of restaurants and boating facilities have come to naught.

For the last 35 years, the lake has been the sole eddy girdling and sustaining the wooded section of the Dhanmondi area. But now, as some observers commented, the balance of ecology, the breathing space and recreation enclave of Dhanmondi zone is facing threats from the mounting volume of toxic wastes without any immediate hope of relief besides the looming danger of a government-sponsored housing project.

The present City Mayor and also some of his predecessors held out high hopes of salvaging the lake from the continuing degradation. It now behoves the agencies concerned to save the lake from being a cesspool of stinking wastes and an environmentally hazardous area.



Flood waters have inundated the city's low-lying areas again. This picture was taken from Razarbagh in Basaboo area yesterday.

Floods hit more areas

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rooned, reports said. The fresh spate of flood have damaged about 10,000 "kuthcha" houses.

A teenaged girl, Roushanara of Omarpur village of Chowdhali thana drowned yesterday in the Jamuna, while bathing, police sources said.

Our Gaibandha correspondent adds: Thousands of people in the district have been in miserable condition due to extensive damages caused by the devastating floods.

The rivers Brahmaputra and Ghagot continued to swell due to onrush of waters from across the border and were flowing above their danger levels yesterday.

The worst hit areas in the district are Sundarganj, Sadar, Fulchar, Gobindganj, Palashbari and some parts of Sadullapur and Saghatathana. The floods damaged standing crops in about 47 unions of the district.

Our Manikganj correspondent reports: The flood situation in the district has turned alarming the Jamuna was flowing 53 cm above danger level near Aricha ghat yesterday. District administration sources said 1100 villages under seven unions of the district have been severely affected. Twenty-seven culverts and bridges have been completely damaged.

Our Munshiganj correspondent adds: While visiting the flood affected areas, Minister for Commerce and Information Shamsul Islam said that government was taking measures to set up relief and rehabilitation camps for the flood victims.

Our Rajshahi correspondent reports: The dam along the river Shiva at Tengraghat near Shinga of Manda thana was cut by miscreants, which

led to inundation of 130 square km area in Tanore. Mohanpur and Bagmara thanas of Rajshahi and Manda thana of Naogaon, according to district administration sources.

The rivers Padma and Mahananda and Chota Jamuna continued to swell inundating more areas and damaging crops worth about Tk 25 crore. Relief goods were yet to reach the affected as officials claimed that they were still assessing the damage.

Our Chapainawabganj correspondent adds: Three more unions of the district were hit by floods. About 225 square km area of Narayanpur, Altuli, Joar, Bagdanga, Barogharia, Sundarpur and Jhilim of Sadar thanas was inundated. The Padma, the Mahananda, the Pagla and the Punarbhaba continued to swell.

Diarrhoea has broken out in some flood affected areas of the district. A medical team started working in Shibganj thana to control the situation.

The flood information centre in a bulletin yesterday, said the Ganges rose almost at all points. The Buriganga also recorded further rise by 14 cm in Dhaka, the Lakshya rose by 10 cm at Narayanpur, the Turag rose by 12 cm at Mirpur and 7 cm at Tongi and the Kaliganga rose by 33 cm at Taraghat, yesterday.

According to the bulletin, the Brahmaputra at Bahadurabad, Sirajganj and Aricha, the Ganges at Rajshahi, Goalundo and Bhagyakul, the Kushiara at Amalshid and Sheola, the Meghna at Bhairab Bazar and the Kaliganga at Taraghat were flowing above their danger levels. However, the Brahmaputra had recorded fall in its upstream areas.

Shahriar acting Nirmul convenor

By Staff Correspondent

Shahriar Kabir has been made acting convenor of the Ekatturer Ghatok Dalal Nirmul Committee following removal of Begum Mustari Shafi from the post of convenor of the organisation, a press release said here yesterday.

The press release, signed by Prof Kabir Chowdhury, president of the central advisory council of the Nirmul Committee also said the Kazi Mukul and Zulfikar Ali Manik would discharge the duties of chief coordinator and member secretary respectively.

Prominent litterateur Shakwat Osman would be acting president of the advisory council as Prof Kabir Chowdhury leaves for US and Canada today, the release said.

An emergency meeting of the steering committee of the Jatiya Samannay Committee yesterday endorsed the decisions. Actor Hasan Imam, Prof Abdul Mannan Chowdhury, Abdul Razzak, Kazi Aref Ahmed, Principal Ahad Chowdhury, Nurul Islam Nahid and Nasir Uddin Yusuf attended the meeting, the press release said.

Meanwhile, the Sadek-Hashem faction of the Nirmul Committee has convened a joint meeting of the central executive committee, and the Dhaka city unit of the Nirmul Committee and different professional bodies supporting it in the city today. Begum Mustari Shafi will preside, said another press release.

TM Giasuddin

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A large number of leaders and workers of the Jatiya Party from Kotalipara and Naria of Gopalganj and Sariatpur districts, led by former state minister TM Giasuddin Ahmed and former Upazila Chairman Kazi Mahmud Hossain (Kazi Mantu) respectively, joined the BNP at the function.

She further said that BNP had introduced multi-party democracy and restored parliamentary system in the country.

Afghan diplomat dismissed for drunkenness

NEW DELHI, Aug 18: The Afghan embassy in New Delhi said today it had dismissed a senior diplomat for drunkenness and indecent behaviour and asked India to assist in his deportation, reports Reuters.

First Secretary Sultan Mehmd Dehdar "committed an act of gross indecency" which violated the values of Islam and the principles of the Afghan government, the embassy said in a statement.

Croats capture Drvar

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the offensive actions could be launched within days.

On the diplomatic front, US Assistant Secretary of State Richard Holbrooke met for five hours with the Serbian leader on Thursday. They met for another two hours today before Holbrooke headed to Zagreb, where he held talks with Croatian President Franjo Tudjman.

Holbrooke had said Thursday's talks were "extremely useful" but declined to give details after today's session.

Milosevic later met Spanish Foreign Minister Javier Solana, in Belgrade representing the European Union. A subdued Solana admitted he was not optimistic about the latest peace initiative.

UN peacekeepers began pulling back from Gorazde today. But the United Nations said NATO war planes would be able to protect the UN "safe area" from Serb attack even after the withdrawal was completed next month.

Meanwhile, United

KCC commissioner arrested

KHULNA, Aug 18: Mohammad Hossain Mukta, ward commissioner of Khulna City Corporation (KCC), was arrested by Kotwali police late last night on charge of assaulting an SI of police and a havildar.

According to police, the ward commissioner "masterminded an organised attack on Labonchora police outpost" Thursday night, but failed to do so due to police resistance.

Garments factory

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from entering the factory premises," complained some workers in the factory yesterday. "A sense of insecurity looms large in the minds of the workers."

A police official said that the local terrorists often create problem in the garments factories as these are the places from where they can get good amount as toll.

The Garments Workers' Federation in the city brought out a procession in the city and held a rally in front of the Jatiya Press Club demanding security of their lives.

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3-yr old girl with high IQ

LONDON, Aug 18: A three-year old girl has become Britain's youngest member of Mensa, the international organisation for people with high IQs, the group said on Thursday, reports Reuters.

Rhiannon Linington-Payne from Shropshire, western England, who has an IQ of 155, scored the maximum rating in the group's intelligence tests and is in the top one per cent of intelligent people in the country.

Road accidents

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admitted to Jhenidhad Sadar Hospital.

However, the driver and helper of the bus fled the scene.

UNB adds: Two people, including a bus conductor, were killed and 20 others injured in a road accident at Borodargar Math in Miresarai thana under Chittagong.

The Chittagong-bound bus from Noakhali met the accident when it tried to give side to another bus coming from opposite direction at about 2pm.

Bus conductor Jashim Uddin, 28, and an unidentified passenger were killed on the spot. Seriously wounded passengers were admitted to Mirsarai Thana Health Complex.

Hostages

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tourists?" Al Faran said. "The government is, adamant in getting the other four killed so that on the international level it can present the Kashmir problem in the wrong way," the group added.

It said freeing the 15 imprisoned militants was the only way to end the hostage crisis and a rescue operation would only end in bloodshed.

"There is no other way to secure the release of these foreigners and once a military offensive begins the hostages will be killed," it said. "Internal or international condemnation will not make use back down from our demands."

The Al-Faran statement followed reports of the arrival in Srinagar of US and British anti-terrorism experts to help secure the release of four hostages.

Saddam's plan to attack KSA, Kuwait

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missed Western concerns as "merely a frog's croaking" and "a balloon full of lies."

"The American administration creates unfounded stories to consolidate its presence in the (Persian) Gulf and to terrorise the Sabahs," the Kuwaiti rulers, the state-run Iraqi News Agency said.

To forestall what could develop into another US-Iraqi military confrontation, the Pentagon said it decided to take some steps it hopes will deter Saddam and put American forces in position to respond quickly if the need arises.

The new steps are: — Moving ships loaded with weapons and supplies closer to the Persian Gulf. These ships — always on station at various places, including near Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean — can outfit one Marine expeditionary force of 17,000 men plus an army combat brigade of up to 5,000 men. Another set of pre-positioned army equip-

ment for a US brigade is in Kuwait.

— Notifying an unspecified number of troops in the United States that they would be the vanguard of a sudden US deployment to the Persian Gulf. They are being told to stay aware of developments but are not readying.

BAGHDAD, Aug 18: Iraq has revealed new details about its clandestine weapons programme, the top UN inspector said today and the cooperation appears linked to the defection of the country's leading weapons official, Rolf Ekus, a Swedish disarmament expert, said Iraqi officials blamed Lt. Gen. Hussein Kamel al-Majid, who defected to Jordan, for concealing the data, reports AP.

for a deployment. Forces are not being put on alert, one official stressed.

— Keeping the aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln in the Persian Gulf longer than scheduled. It had been planning to leave this week, to be replaced later by the USS Independence. Instead, the Lincoln will remain in place until the Independence arrives.

These moves were outlined by two senior US military officials who spoke at the

Pentagon on condition they not be identified. They said they were concerned but not alarmed by the Iraqi military activity, which they said did not noticeably increase or decrease after the defections last week of top aides to Saddam.

No large military force has

shown up on Kuwait's borders, one official said, adding, "Instead, the posturing of forces in the Baghdad area and south of the Baghdad area were of such a nature as to cause us concern."

As an example, he said Iraqi soldiers were moving out of their garrisons in convoy formations, something they don't usually do for training exercises. This is cause for concern because moving in convoy formations

lets them travel greater distances in less time, thus reducing US warning time if Saddam really plans to invade Kuwait or Saudi Arabia.

"We cannot afford to delay activity or action in response to what we perceive to be challenges by Iraq," one official said.

They said the Iraqi activity involves all elements of its armed forces, including the air forces, the regular Army and the better equipped Republican Guard. They said the activity began about five weeks ago and was continuing Thursday.

The United States already has about 20,000 troops in the Persian Gulf region, including 2,000 Marines engaged in a training exercise with Jordanian troops.

Earlier, the Navy had moved the aircraft carrier USS Theodore Roosevelt to an Israeli port and the commander of US Central Command, Gen. Binford Peay, last Sunday visited Amman to discuss the military situation with Jordan's King Hussein.

The Midnight File

Four more shot dead in Karachi

KARACHI, Aug 18: Four people including two activists of Pakistan's fundamentalist Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) party were gunned down in this strife-torn port city today, police and hospital sources said. All four were kidnapped and tortured before being shot dead, police said, reports AFP.

China refuses visa to women from NGOs

WASHINGTON, Aug 18: China is refusing to issue visas to some women from non-governmental organisations who hope to attend meetings related to an international women's conference next month in Beijing, members of the groups allege, reports AP.

Some women, particularly those representing Tibetan groups that China considers hostile, have been refused visas outright. The Washington Post reported in Friday's editions. Many others wishing to attend the NGO Forum on women are battling bureaucratic obstacles and delays in the visa process to attend the NGO meeting to be held outside Beijing.

Maid succumbs to burn injuries

By Staff Correspondent

A teenaged maid who received serious burn injuries at a house at Dhania in Demra in the city Thursday died at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) yesterday.

It could not be known how the victim, Noorjahan is received burn injuries.

An unnatural death case has been filed with Demra thana in this connection, police said.

JUCSU elections

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final and masters examinations of '92-93 session before the polls are held.

"Students politics is for protective the rights of the students and resolving their problems. So, nothing should be done which will go against the common interests of the students", said Saroar Hossain, president of the JU unit of Bangladesh Chhatra Union.

General Secretary of the JSD-backed Chhatra League Ehsanur Rahman said, that JU unite president of a organisation was beaten up recently and activists of different organisations were being threatened frequently by the arms cadres of a student body. "We demand restoration of peace on the campus and creation of a congenial atmosphere for students union election."

President of the Samajtantrik Chhatra Front Rafiqul Islam also said that a congenial atmosphere was a must for holding of polls.

When asked, many of the general students also did not favour holding of the elections now.

A second year student said "students' union does not bring any benefit to the common students. It only organises its grand installation ceremony and at best a drama. So we are not interested in it".

Talking to The Daily Star, Vice-Chancellor Prof. Amirul Islam Chowdhury said that the poll issue was a matter of discussion of the student bodies and also of the provost committee. "Decision will be taken after having discussions with all concerned". But priority should be given to academic matters, he noted.

Lisa Presley

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"Never believe the tabloid garbage," he said. "Don't waste your time or money."

In a story on page three of Friday's edition, the Mirror said Jackson took 11-year-old Eddie Casio and his 14-year-old brother Frank to a jaunt to Disneyland Paris, and later Switzerland.

Jackson "is an old friend," it quoted their father, Dominic, as saying.

The newspaper published a photograph of Jackson, his face covered with an anti-pollution mask, apparently walking through an airport with two boys wearing track-suits and baseball caps, their heads bowed.

In 1993, a 13-year-old boy claimed Jackson "molested him during a five-month relationship. The pop star denied the allegations and has not been charged. The boy and Jackson settled a lawsuit last year for a reported \$15 million.

Jackson is suing the Mirror for reports it published in 1992 that his features had become "hideously distorted" by plastic surgery. In January, he announced he was suing two other British tabloids, The Sun and Today, over reports there is a videotape showing him having sex with a boy.

Floods kill 73 in Morocco

RABAT (Morocco), Aug 18: Flash floods in the region of Marrakesh early Friday have killed 73 people, the Moroccan Interior Ministry said, reports AP.

Violent storms overnight triggered the floods which carried away homes and livestock.

Sources close to aid workers in the area said there were fears the death toll may go higher.

Help has been sent by the government and local authorities to the area.

BTV tape

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A high official of the EC said yesterday that BTV authorities informed them that the news video tape of December 28 would be made available to the EC when it is found.

Deputy Director General (News) of BTV, Faruq Alamgir, when contacted, admitted that the BTV lacked adequate facilities to preserve all news tapes.

"We have received the letter of EC and are continuing search to locate the news cassette of December 28. We could have preserved the tape with special importance if we knew it would be needed," he said.

Three JP MPs — Mahmudul Hasan, Ebadur Rahman Chowdhury and Partosh Chakrabarty had separately joined the ruling BNP. The JP brought the matter to the notice of the EC and also accused them of floor crossing.

During hearing of the case, the three persons, however, submitted that they did not join BNP and continued to be members of Jatiya Party.

Their joining the ruling party were covered by the state-owned electronic media, news agencies and national newspapers. They, however, did not issue any rejoinder against the news at that time.

The EC is likely to give the verdict on the issue on August 26, sources said.

Back from grave

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boys were putting their catch of fish.

The girl was admitted to the Kutubdia thana health complex by the local people who rescued her. She could not speak, but was seen smiling occasionally.

After the news of the girl's miraculous rescue spread, curious people from different places rushed to the hospital to have a glimpse of her.

Confirming the news of the girl's recovery, Kutubdia thana police, however, said today that the girl's identity was yet unknown.

AL council

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learnt to have decided not to go to the Supreme Court to file any writ petition challenging the legality of the Parliament.

"This is a political issue and it must be resolved on the street through movement," a senior leader of the party told UNB on condition of anonymity.

Turtles

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Turtles of species A hurn, A Gangeticus and Chitra Indica are sold to the middlemen at the rate of Tk 1500 per pound which in turn is sold to the suppliers at the rate of Tk 1800-2000. Another variety Lissemys punctata is bought at the rate of Tk 800 per pound by the middlemen who sell those at the rate of Tk 1000 per pound to the suppliers.

Demand fortnight

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holiday is a 'legal and human right' of the garments workers as they have to work for a long time in a day. Most of the garments workers are women and they are suffering a lot due to this 'inhuman system', he said.

Garments workers' leaders Shamsun Nahar, Kazi Ruhul Amin, Safia Parveen, Afzal Hossain Bepari, Abul Hasan Faruk, Majibur Rahman Montu, Nasima Akter and Jahangir Hossain also addressed the rally.

The rally resented the recent killing of Narendra Sarkar, a worker of Sajib Garments, and demanded immediate arrest and punishment of the killers.