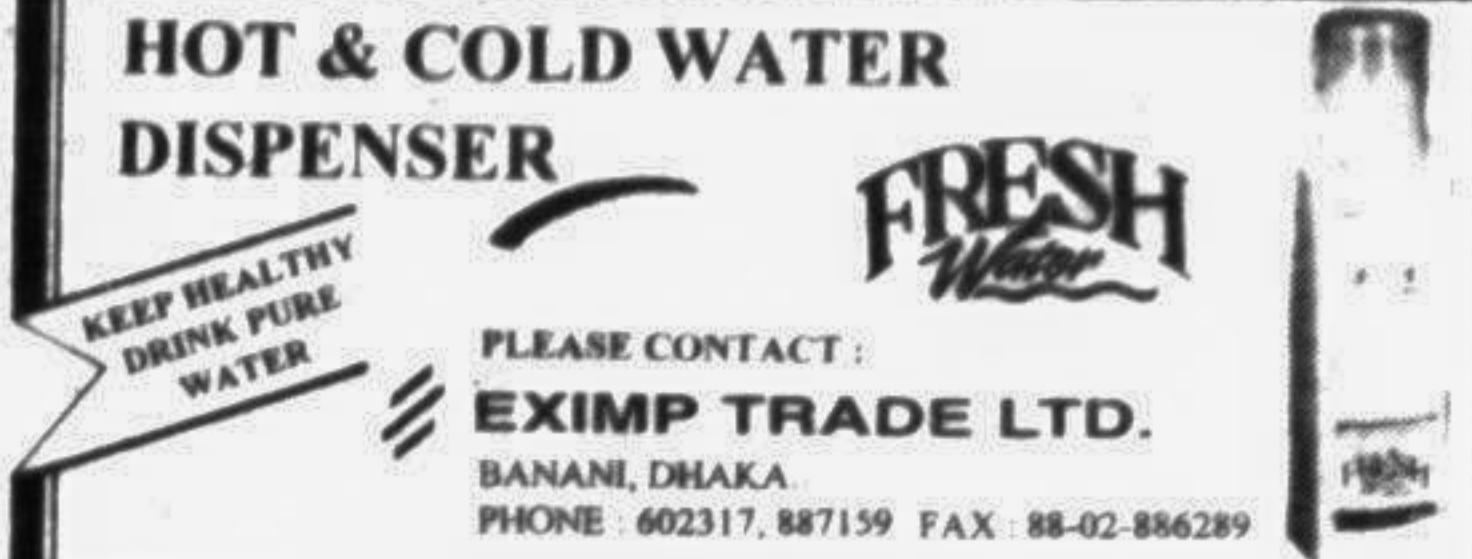
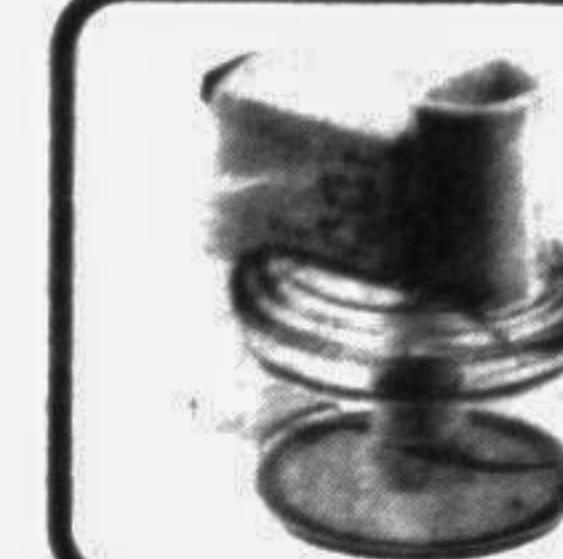


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DOWN TO EARTH

An Emerging Mega City's Nightmare

By A S M Nurunnabi

According to a recent government report, Dhaka will be one of the Mega Cities in the next century. Keeping in view, the question may naturally arise what the future may hold for us in the run-up to this city's status. The city is already in the grip of serious civic problems. Among the conspicuous ones, we may mention the problem created by overcrowding. In the opinion of experts, although in theory, the combination of a rapidly growing urban population means an increase in consumers, which should bring about an era of prosperity in an increase in trade. There are so many difficulties associated with rapidly increasing urban population, particularly in our case, that they will stand in the way of extracting any of the economic potentials of a larger city.

The foremost of such difficulties is the present infrastructural insufficiency plaguing the city life. Recently it appears that the power supply position has deteriorated further, so much so that, whereas it was understood previously that the process of load shedding is applied not to all areas of Dhaka, it was later reported the programme would now be applied to all localities without discrimination, as and when required. In these circumstances, the important question is whether the authorities concerned have any precise plan to rebuild a system that has all but turned obsolescent. Since the main problem lies in the generation side, as a result of which the output is far short of the overall civic and industrial needs, it is felt that the tax-payer has a right to know what plans, if any, the authorities have to bridge the big gap in supply, keeping in view the future perspective.

The second issue of critical

importance in the water supply shortage. The current supply covers about two thirds of the actual need of the city. The malaise lies in the fact that this utility service has been staying practically where it had been 20 years ago although there has been a tendency to increase in population during the period. Even the present impossibly short and irregular supply is reported to be compounded by the questionable quality of the water supplied.

These days, an entire system of roads has been turned into inaccessible territory through the various public works in progress; a number of roads have turned into veritable danger or inaccessible zones for vehicles and pedestrians alike. None question the necessity of activities meant for improvements in the quality of civic life. But what one finds galling is the very slow pace at which such works are carried on.

Along with this, we may note the poor road transport system of the city which is a shambles.

Another serious problem affecting city life is the present extremely poor waste disposal and sanitation system. Drainage, roads and lanes and by-lanes, connected with this civic problem stay still as ramshackle as ever. The garbage carrying trucks still continue to ply at peak traffic hours spreading unbearable nauseating stench all around. The newly introduced big-size garbage containers which are hauled away by a special type of vehicles has proved to be a greater source of environmental pollution. As usual, some people continue to dump their garbage outside the confines of these containers. On this account and because of the larger

contents of these containers which are not hauled away regularly, the sanitation situation nearby is seriously threatened. One wonders why the City Corporation authorities can't devise arrangements for garbage clearance during late hours at night or very early hours in the morning, as is done in many other cities.

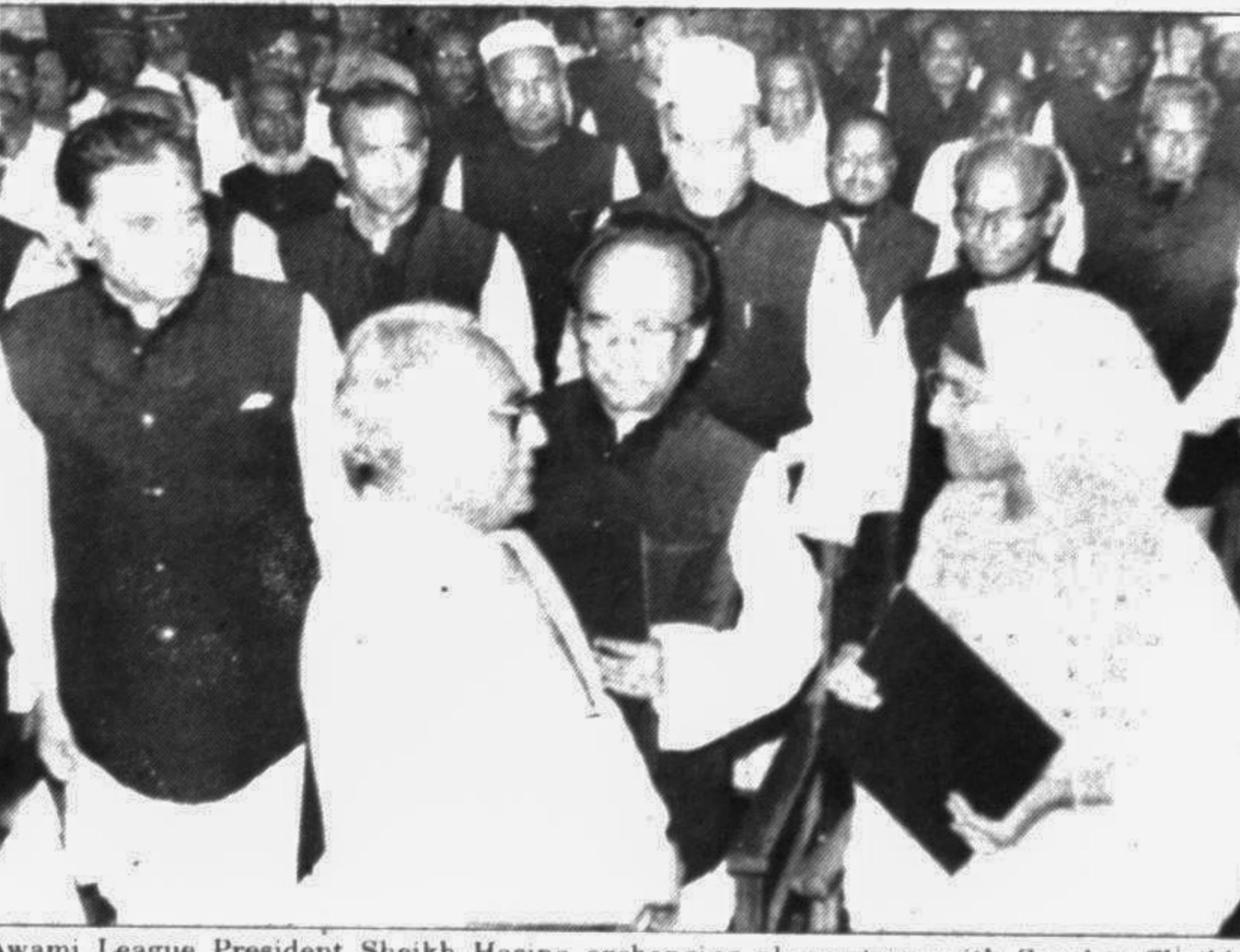
In the eyes of servers, the whole range of these public services reflect a state of chronic neglect and spreading abuse. The lack of care-most important, accountability has over the years been the largest single factor in bringing performance and results to an all time low.

In view of the present nightmarish situation in the city, the BBC has reportedly wished lately none to have the misfortune of being condemned to live in Dhaka. According to observers, the strange part of the story is that the election manifesto of all the parties do not see any problems in the cancerous growth of the city population seriously lacking in some of the basic civic facilities.

It is felt by some observers that the government in office at present may at least launch the first positive step in attempts to improve the situation. This may put the citizens at some advantage over the party government that will emerge from the next election.

The demand for accountability will acquire more strength in the process.

Since the big question before us how we can adequately meet the challenges of the 21st century when Dhaka will be a megacity, every onerous responsibility will devolve on future governments to make the city a better place to live in, belying the sad comment of the BBC.



Awami League President Sheikh Hasina exchanging pleasantries with Speaker Shaiikh Razzak Ali after taking oath as MP yesterday.

— Star photo

Hasina to take oath

From page 1

132 MPs-elect

From page 1
retaining only one each.

Sheikh Hasina retained Gopalganj 3, Abdur Razzak Sharifpur 2, Tofael Ahmad Bholi 2 and Mohammad Nasim Sirajganj-2.

Sheikh Hasina said that she would run the affairs of the state with the notion that "It is a government of the people and not a government of Awami League."

The oath taking over Hasina stood up with a happy smile and turned to the audience and raised her hand saying, 'Assalamu Alakum' which was duly reciprocated.

Later, the MPs went to the office of Parliament Secretary to sign their names in the register book and posed for photographs to be taken for their identity cards.

A list of 273 MPs-elect has been gazetted so far. Of them, 134 are from the AL. Gazette notification on the results of repolling in 26 constituencies held on June 19 are yet to be published. Repolling in another constituency takes place today.

We should remember and keep it constantly in mind that we are the government of all the people of the country. Who voted in favour of our party or not is now immaterial, she told the party MPs. In fact our government will be the government of 12 crore people of the country, she added.

Sheikh Hasina also sought cooperation of her party MPs to establish a total corruption-free society.

Reiterating her earlier pledges to run the government through a national consensus,

Sheikh Hasina also sought cooperation of her party MPs to establish a total corruption-free society.

On the eve of formation of government, the Awami League MPs, on the occasion, would also take renewed pledges to translate the ideals and spirit of War of Liberation and the dream of Bangabandhu into reality in its true perspective to establish an exploitation-free and a self-respected nation.

Jatiya Party chief H M Ershad, who won five seats vacated four seats through a signed letter delivered by his lawyer to the EC. Party general secretary Anwar Hossain Manju, elected from two constituencies was yet to vacate his seats until last night.

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