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The World on Time

Down to Earth

Of City's Lakes and Open Spaces

By ASM Nurunnabi

Lately we have been observing an ominous trend set in motion by the authorities concerned for conversion of lakes into building areas. Green areas, parks and lakes are considered essential elements for ensuring a healthy environment in cities all over the world. For the fast growing city of Dhaka, we seem to be forgetting or rather neglecting this basic environmental concept.

Instead of developing new building areas and preserving the natural embellishments of the city lakes, the planners appear to be involving themselves in dubious deals which go against the environmental needs of the city. We were given assurance by the LGED Minister last year that all the lakes of the city would be cleaned and beautified. But so far we have found little reflection of his words in the shape of concrete measures. On the contrary, we find disquieting evidence of deteriorating situation in this regard.

Take the instance of Dhanomdi lake. The lake was intended to add to the scenic beauty of the Dhanomdi Residential Area. Such intention has been belied by the present state of the lake. The main problem is large-scale pollution of water of the lake. The pollution is so acute that it has caused a disastrous effect on the fish resources of the lake. There are quite a good number of drains connecting the adjoining houses with the lake. The sewage and waste waters coming through these drains are primarily responsible for water pollution.

In its present state, the lake has almost become a body of stinking water. The paved pathways along the banks of the lake have become dilapidated. The trees which were planted to enhance the beauty of the area are neglected. The banks of the lake are overgrown with wild shrubs and plants with wild hyacinths spreading over parts of the lake. Its immediate environment has become so adverse that morning and evening walkers tend to avoid the vicinity of the lake.

Similarly, there is no arrangement at the moment to ensure proper management of the Ramna, Gulshan and Uttara lakes. For absence of public baths and scarcity of readily available water, numerous people of various kinds take baths and wash their clothes in these stagnant bodies of water, which are made progressively dirty allowing scope for environmental hazard.

A recent opinion poll conducted by a non-governmental organisation (NGO) has shown that the overwhelming majority of the respondents are in favour of preservation of the lakes and against leasing them out to private real estate developers. Reportedly, plans are being considered for leasing out some of the lakes for construction of housing complexes on the ground that they are not being 'maintained properly'. This has given rise to widespread concern among city dwellers, because such lakes not only comprise the 'beauty spots' of the city, but also offer fresh, open air places where people can go for recreation and easing of tension.

Dhaka's population is expanding fast. But the expansion remains unplanned. The necessity of open spaces for a breath of fresh air is being seriously undermined on account of adverse circumstances in several spheres. Open space for the public is dwindling sharply in the capital city with the aggression of the so-called real estate developers who are now even eyeing the marsh lands and lakes around the city. Thus while city's open spaces are shrinking, multi-storied housing and shopping complexes keep mushrooming. It is sad to note that all the requisite features of a well-designed growing city of the future is not receiving due attention. As a result, the regions that are the pride of the city like Gulshan lake, Ramna Park and Uttara Park are under serious threats of encroachments.

In the opinion of knowledgeable quarters, development projects in the public sector must be in harmony with the other needs of a capital city. In view of the imperative needs for planning which is required to be thorough and far-sighted, the rising trend of construction of high-rise apartments poses a serious cause for concern, because there is absence of any obligatory open space around them. The Rajuk's role in this sector, instead of being custodial, appears to be far from satisfactory.

Spaces of many a small-size park, meant for children of the locality, have been so wrongly selected that parents don't find it safe to send their children there. As a result, many such parks are being used for cattle rearing or other anti-social activities. Moreover, the majority of schools in the city don't even have playgrounds which are mandatory for some high schools. In this unsatisfactory situation, citizens' initiative is a must if civic bodies like DCC and Rajuk are to preserve immediately the remaining free spaces, besides establishing others as needed.



Moulana Azizul Haq speaking at a rally of Islami Oikya Jote at The Manik Mia Avenue in the city yesterday.

10 injured in clash

From Page 1

Manik Mia Avenue while the MSP supporters were holding their rally at the Panthapath.

Later, the IOJ supporters held a demonstration against Maghrib prayers protesting what they said attack on their supporters. They set out from their office at Furana Bagan and went up to Dainik Bangla crossing. But police dispersed them near National Sports Council. One person was detained but was later released.

Earlier, at the rally, IOJ leaders alleged that police prevented their supporters travelling to Dhaka from outside from attending the gathering by stopping a number of vehicles.

Several trucks carrying IOJ supporters were stopped at Madhabdi in Narsingdi district by a Magistrate, ordering the truck drivers to off-load them saying it was forbidden for trucks to carry people. Police used batons to clear the trucks, Maulana Abdul Rauf Yusufi, an IOJ leader alleged. During the baton charge, Ishaque, a student, fainted and was taken to Sonargaon hospital leading to spread of a rumour that he was dead. Ishaque was later brought to a Dhaka clinic for treatment of his broken arm.

A number of vehicles carrying IOJ supporters were stopped at Kancheng-Dhaka highway. Police did not allow them to come to Dhaka by putting buses and trucks on the highway, creating a traffic jam, Maulana Yusufi alleged. Even their supporters were not allowed to get down, he claimed.

Police denied the allegations.

IOJ leaders also alleged that their supporters came under attack at different places on their way to the rally. One bus

Cyclone hits WB coast: 200 fishermen missing in Bay

CALCUTTA, Aug 22: Two hundred fishermen who went deep sea fishing in the Bay of Bengal were reported missing after a cyclone hit the coast in the eastern Indian state of West Bengal, domestic news agencies said Friday, reports AP.

Tidal waves 20 feet high washed away six kilometres of sea beach in Digha town and caused fissures in the dike, the Press Trust of India reported.

The waves destroyed 2,500 homes and submerged miles of land in the area.

Authorities rescued 2,000 people from the swirling waters but 25,000 people were still marooned in and around the coastal town, the report said.

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Make hartal a success

From Page 1

tors of the country are on the verge of ruin due to failures of the government.

"People have lost their buying capacity and economy has been ruined. Farmers are not getting fair price of their products and hundreds of mills and factories are being closed," she said.

She said the government is also showing reluctance to implement the pay-scale.

Begum Zia said the ruling party has started capturing educational institutions like forcible occupation of char land. "Even mills, factories, mosques, madrasahs and other religious institutions are being captured by the ruling party."

Besides, she said, the government has resorted to the politics of vengeance and filing of false cases against political opponents while murder, attacks, arrest and all sorts of harassment have become regular phenomena.

To get rid of this 'suffocating situation', it is the duty of all patriotic citizens of the country to join the anti-government agitation.

Begum Zia called upon the students, workers, employees, farmers, businessmen, teachers, cultural activists, journalists, youths, women, physicians and all other professional groups to make Sunday's hartal a success.

She also called for unity of the people of all walks of life to resist government activities to jeopardise the country's independence and sovereignty.

Sec 144 imposed on Khatkhotiya in Rangpur

RANGPUR, Aug 22: The district administration imposed Section 144 in and around Khatkhotiya High School in Kotwali thana today to avoid a possible clash between two rival groups, reports UNB.

The restriction was imposed as sitting chairman of Poshuram Union Ekramul Haq and some of his opponent co-villagers convened rallies at the same venue at 3 pm today.

Police were deployed at the school ground in the morning to avoid clash, and no untoward incident occurred till late this evening.

Students, bus workers clash in Pirojpur

From Staff Correspondent

BARISAL, Aug 22: At least ten people were injured, three of them seriously, in a clash between students and bus workers at Saturia under Kaulkhal thana of Pirojpur district today.

Witnesses said the clash occurred over the payment of bus fares.

DCC garbage carriers

From Page 1

sistent engineers, one executive engineer and about one hundred mechanics, assistant mechanics, electricians and helpers at the workshop, they said.

When asked what took them so long to repair the trucks, an official said, "As soon as a vehicle arrives for repair we check it and sent a requisition to the central depot at the Nagar Bhaban for spare parts. More than hundred of such requisitions are lying with the central depot for over six months."

An engineer said, "By the time we receive the parts the vehicle becomes rusted and many more spare parts are then needed to put it on the road. Again we have to ask for more parts and the process continues."

He said, when a vehicle needs to be repaired outside the workshop, the repair cost is estimated and sent it to the Nagar Bhaban. "The estimate is approved only by the Mayor. In nearly eight months, we received 60 such approvals from the Mayor. Some 35 estimates

5 boys return 30 hurt as villagers clash in Pabna

From Page 1

in the nearby Taltola Jheel.

Munna, one of their friends in the locality, said the seven had been preparing for an 'adventure' for last few days.

On Tuesday night, some of them told Munna that they were leaving their houses the next day and asked him if he would like to be with them. But they did not fix any plan or destination.

Jalal, a boatman in Taltola Jheel said that the seven boys had hired his boat for two hours with Taka 45. They got on his boat at about 12:30 pm with chips, ice-cream and some junk foods.

One of them, Sumon, who seemed to be their leader, had a few hundred taka notes, the boatman said.

But Sumon's mother Nurjahan told this correspondent that she did not give her son any money.

Roni's cousin Abdul Aziz, a student of class nine, said the seven deposited small amounts of money with him during last few days. But on Wednesday, all of them took their money.

Meanwhile, police questioned the boys yesterday.

Baridhara plots

From Page 1

ing at Rajuk, heard the grievances of the allottees of J-Block and directed the Rajuk authorities to hand over the plots to the allottees by November. Rajuk sources said the local MP was now negotiating a deal with occupiers.

A Rajuk official source said several attempts to evict the occupiers in the past had failed. "In 1993, the Chairman of Rajuk was transferred in a matter of two days when he tried to forcibly evict the occupiers," said an official.

"About fifty allottees of J-Block were given plots either in Gulshan or in Banani as Rajuk failed to recover the land they had paid for," he said.

Emergency treatment

From Page 1

relative in Dhaka from Myseningsh.

A police official from Cantonment thana arrived at the clinic soon after he received a wireless message about the accident. The driver of the minibus was sitting in the police truck.

The Sub-inspector, Moklesur Rahman, enquired about Joy-nal. Attendants at the clinic took him to the small room where Joy-nal was kept. "The patient should be immediately removed to DMCH," the doctor told the police official.

The patient's mother requested the four youths to help them reach DMCH. "Please help me," she appealed. "I do not know where is DMCH."

A clinic transport was there but no driver. The clinic management seemed to take no interest in Joy-nal's case. No one even looked for the driver.

Later, Joy-nal was taken to the DMCH by an autorickshaw, but his fate could not be known despite repeated search for his name in the record book of the DMCH emergency section.

The doctor at the clinic had said Joy-nal's injury was very serious, even might fatal. There are many such clinics where emergency cases like Joy-nal's are simply refused indirectly or directly because the poor patients, in most cases, are unable to pay for the treatment.

When Joy-nal's story was brought to the notice of Dr. Moniruzzaman Bhuiyan, secretary general of Bangladesh Private Clinic Association, he said, "It is regrettable if a patient requiring emergency treatment does not get medical service in a clinic. Every clinic owner should at least have sympathy for poor patients like Joy-nal."

The existing rules in the Medical Practice and Laboratories (Regulation) Ordinance, 1982 do not specify anything about compulsory treatment for such patients.

When asked if the association has any plan for emergency treatment for the poor in clinics, Bhuiyan said, "No, we have no such plan. But the new Health Policy may include rules providing for emergency medical service for the poor."

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Let's make things better

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Water Resources Minister Abdur Razzak addressing a rally of the Jatiya Samannaya Committee at Shabbagh in the city yesterday.

'BNP to call off hartal only if fuel price hike withdrawn'

By Staff Correspondent

BNP is ready to withdraw tomorrow's hartal only if the government withdraws the price enhancement of fuel before it goes for the hartal.

This was said by BNP Vice President MK Anwar at a meeting organised by Jatiyatabadi Ulema Dal at the BNP office premises yesterday, according to a press release issued by the party yesterday.

Referring to Commerce and Industries Minister Tofael Ahmed's appeal to withdraw the hartal which, the minister said, coincided with the official visit of the Asian Development Bank President to Bangladesh, Anwar reminded the Awami League that it had deliberately called hartals when top foreign dignitaries visited Bangladesh during BNP rule.

Meanwhile, in support of the hartal tomorrow, Tejgaon BNP and its allied organisations held street rallies at Farmgate, Kawnar Bazar, Agargaon, Nabisco Road and Lucas Crossing.

A huge procession brought out from New Market area by BNP, JCD and Juba Dal, in support of the hartal, paraded different city streets.

Killers of Zia

From Page 1

Referring to religion-based politics, the Foreign Minister said the fundamentalist groups had tried time and again, even during the War of Liberation, to do politics in the name of religion, but they never succeeded.

In future also, he said, the fundamentalists will never be successful because people of this country do not like religion-based politics.

He urged the people to unite and resist the evil politics initiated by the religion traders. In this context, Azad blamed BNP and Begum Zia for instigating fundamentalism and communalism in the country.

The Foreign Minister urged the Leader of the Opposition to leave her cantonment residence to keep the army above politics.

"You have taken a house in cantonment and another at Gulshan by showing a broken suitcase. Moreover, you have been given a government house and an office in Parliament as the Leader of the Opposition. How many houses do you need by showing the broken suitcase?" Azad said.

The days of misguiding the people in the name of religion are over, he said and asked BNP to withdraw the August 24 hartal in the interest of development of the country.

"Why this hartal...people are not aware of Sunday's hartal," he added.

Azad called upon all pro-liberation forces to unite and work to implement the ideals of Bangladesh and the spirit of the War of Liberation.

Presided over by Mukti-jodha Sanghati Parishad president Col (Retd) Shaukat Ali MP, the meeting was also addressed by Awami League leader Abdul Mannan, Khan Tipu Sultan MP, Chhatra League president Enamul Haq Shamim and general secretary Ishak Ali, Khan Panna, Shafi Ahmed, Ashim Kumar Ukil, Bahauddin Nasim and Shah Alam.

Refinery

From Page 1

According to Energy Ministry, the country's demand for petrol is around 2 lakh tons a year. Of this, Eastern Refinery provides 80,000 to 90,000 tons. The rest is imported and marketed by the BPC.

Petrol and other petroleum products produced by the refinery are of high quality. The refinery follows the methods prescribed by American Petroleum Institute and the ASTM to produce petroleum products of international standard.

However, the petrol produced there is not totally lead-free as it contains 0.05 gram of lead per litre. Although it is a negligible level, the refinery mixes imported lead-free petrol with its own product to minimise the level further.

The BPC has been importing better quality lead-free petrol from January last. The petrol imported now is much better than those in the past as the level of sulphur has also been reduced. Now, sulphur content in petrol is about half per cent (previously it was one per cent).

The expansion of Eastern Refinery will also aim at improving the quality of oil it produces, the sources said.

"The demand for petrol, diesel, kerosene and octane is growing rapidly. The BPC now imports 12 lakh tonnes of crude and 18 lakh tonnes of refined light oil from Malaysia and Kuwait."

Although the expansion of Eastern Refinery will allow us to refine more crude and saving a lot of money, we will be still needing to import refined petroleum because the demand will exceed 4 million tons per year after 2000. This is why the government has opened its door for private refinery now," the BPC source noted.

ULFA, Bodo

From Page 1

hours in Sonitpur district.

The police today said that the top ranking Ultra, Satish Thelamara Gayari, was nabbed at Telamara in the Dhakajuli police station area yesterday. He is suspected to be connected with the killing of seven army personnel in a bomb explosion in the Udalguri area of Darrang district in the first week of July.

One of the three other NDFB extremists was picked up from the Baptist Christian hospital, near here, where he was undergoing treatment for bullet injuries, the police said. His two attendants were also nabbed.

'Khaleda out to bring Razakars under one banner'

Eminent freedom fighters at a grand rally in the city yesterday accused BNP chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia of organising the anti-liberation forces against the spirit of Liberation War, reports BSS.

"Inshallah, the trial of Golam Azam and his fellow colleagues will be held in Bangladesh," he said and demanded removal of khatib Obaidul Huq from Baitul Mukarram Mosque.

The Mayor said the khatib of Baitul Mukarram Mosque committed a serious crime on the holy day of Miladunnabi instigating the anti-liberation forces to insult the country's President. He must be punished for his crime, the Mayor maintained.

Hanif said the nation also wanted to see the trial of the killers of four great leaders, Col (ret'd) Taher and even the killers of Ziaur Rahman.

JU officers, employees continue strike

By JU Correspondent

Stalemate continues at the Jahangirnagar University (JU) as the 9-day strike called by the officers and employees enters seventh day today.

Attendance of the students in the classes was thin on Thursday though the transport was exempted from the strike following a request by the JU Syndicate on Wednesday.

All the JU officers and employees have been agitating since August 7 demanding implementation of four-point demand, including change in office timing and raising retirement age from 60 to 65.

The Syndicate also sought time till August 26 to settle the issues with the officers and employees by this period. The VC Prof Amirul Islam Chowdhury is scheduled to hold a meeting with the striking officers and employees on Tuesday.

Meanwhile, officers and employees yesterday threatened an all-out strike from September 7 to 23 if their demands were not met by August 26.

1 killed, 19 hurt in Barisal road accident

From Staff Correspondent

BARISAL, Aug 22: One person was killed and 19 others were injured in a road accident at Batajore under Gournadi thana of Barisal last night.

Witnesses said, a Barisal bound passenger night coach from Khulna met with the accident when it fell into a roadside ditch after hitting a tree at about 1 am at Batajore.

One Delwar Hossein, 60, was killed on the spot while 19 others, including four women passengers, were injured. The seriously injured passenger Abdul Motaleb, 55, was admitted to Barisal Sher-e-Bangla Medical College Hospital.

Ctg clash

From Page 1

were deployed to bring the situation under control. Some Ansar members were later closed on charge of firing, port sources said.

To protest firing, the truck drivers stopped delivery of cargo from Chittagong port immediately after the incident and put up barricades on the port road, they said.

The truckers also organised a protest rally on the port road and demanded trial of those responsible for opening fire.

New KU VC

From Page 1

Prof Islam also served in different universities abroad. He was dean of the faculty of Engineering in the University of Maiduguri of Nigeria and Professor of Al-Fateh University of Libya.

Prof Islam is a former director of Centre for Energy Studies of BUET.