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The colour of protest

Once confined within the inner courtyard, Bangladeshi women have emerged as a major socio-political force. No longer afraid to speak up, their voices of protest are heard loud, even when threats from religious bigots hang heavy in the air. When would-be assassins attempted to murder poet Shamsur Rahman, these women joined hundreds of their fellow in the Shaheed Minar this week to protest (also see page 10 for photo feature)

—Star Photo: Zahedul I Khan

Dhanmandi lake in doldrums

Development on target, but no plan yet for management

By Morshed Ali Khan

The authorities are yet to chalk out a detailed management plan of the income generating components of the Dhanmandi lake development project.

According to Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) sources, although the project is progressing smoothly and likely to be completed as scheduled in June 1999, there is no plan yet as to how the entire set-up would be managed.

There will be at least 17 income generating components in the lake area after the project is completed. These include swimming and health clubs, kiosks, public toilets, souvenir shops, skating arena, sand pool, boat club, restaurant, hawkers' plaza, amphitheatre and angling club.

Local residents and officials

fear that the lack of management planning might have an negative impact on the entire atmosphere of the area.

There are instances in the city where the government allotted or leased out such lucrative business installations, which ended up in mess. In many cases, the beneficiaries of the allocations or leases had "political blessings" and did not have any prior experience in running businesses, they say.

Other sources, involved in implementing the scheme, said that the consultants Vitti Sthapat Brindo Ltd submitted a detailed management plan at a meeting with top officials more than a month ago. An official source said that a five-member committee had been formed in the meeting to scrutinise the

plan but the committee never sat down together to work on it. "As a matter of fact so far we do not know how the lake and its infrastructures would be managed and there is no initiative from the authorities," said one source.

Meanwhile, mayor Mohammad Hanif has recently said that all illegal encroachment would be removed from the Dhanmandi lake. At least 40 influential residents are illegally occupying more than two acres of public land in the lake area. Several earlier attempts by the government to recover this land failed.

At present, work on the project is progressing "very smoothly" and "right on schedule" as the DCC has reinforced its monitoring wing on

the scheme, DCC sources say. But with the encroachment, several components of the project are now in question. There are areas in the lake which are already known as "dead zones" because access to these places have been cut off by the encroachers.

Another source said although relocation of almost all the kitchens and sewerage drains flowing into the lake has been done, only two houses are still refusing to cooperate with the authorities. Both owners are so influential that DCC officials cannot even approach them. The houses nos. 48 and 50 (new) on road 13/2 (new) have ignored several requests and are continuing to divert their wastes into the lake, the source said.

Opposition parties have rejected outright an invitation from the Chief Election Commissioner for dialogue before the municipal elections scheduled for February 23-25.

A senior Election Commission official sent out letters to the leaders of the opposition parties inviting them for discussion ahead of the municipal polls, which these parties have vowed to boycott.

The EC proposal was turned down by the central liaison committee of the BNP-led opposition alliance that met at 29 Minto Road with BNP vice chairman M. Shamsul Islam MP in the chair.

After the meeting, the liaison committee members had a brief meeting with BNP Chairperson and Leader of the Oppo-

sition in Parliament Khaleda Zia.

Sources said Khaleda Zia agreed with the decisions taken by the liaison committee.

Briefing newsmen, BNP leader Ataur Zahid, who attended the meeting, said the members of the committee rejected the EC invitation outright. He said resignation of CEC Muhammad Abu Hena is the number one demand and that "therefore no dialogue can be held before his resignation".

"Question does not arise at all to sit with the CEC at any stage or any circumstances," he said.

On municipal polls, he said the meeting found that a handful of the opposition leaders have submitted nomination

papers. "But these do not reflect the real situation inside these parties."

The liaison committee also asked the central committees of BNP, JP, Jamaat and IOJ to take effective measures for withdrawing the nomination papers submitted by their partymen.

It also decided to take punitive measure against the persons who would not withdraw. The liaison committee also instructed leaders at division, district and thana levels to persuade the partymen in this regard.

Replies to a question, Zahid said the liaison committee did not discuss the issue of joining the parliament session by the opposition parties.



Police 'probe' shotgun show

By Staff Correspondent

Police said that they were trying to identify both the man and the gun that figured in a photo caption of The Daily Star on January 27. However, none has been arrested or no police personnel suspended till yesterday.

Police sources said that a special team of police has launched a probe into the reported incident.

The photo showed an anti-hartal activist during Tuesday's 18-hour hartal was chasing opponents wielding a shotgun.

The incident occurred in the afternoon near Purana Paltan police box in the presence of a large number of on-duty police personnel.

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday, Inspector general of Police AYB Siddiqui said, "We are making every effort to identify the man and the gun."

Asked how a gun was snatched from a policeman, he replied, "We did not lose any gun."

It was learnt that Rammamtha OC Ragibul Islam and a special Detective Branch team headed by AC Baten have been given the responsibility of finding out the errant persons and policemen.

Prayer Timings

January 29

	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5-23	5-27
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-00	4-15
Maghrib	5-42	5-45
Esha	7-10	7-20

Expulsion twist in JP plot

By Staff Correspondent

After Wednesday's expulsion drama, the Jatiya Party yesterday stripped Tasmima Hossain (Projpur-2) and Golam Faruque Ovi (Barisal-2) of their primary membership on charges of violating party instruction.

On Wednesday, JP faxed three separate press releases to newspapers. The first one expelled five MPs, the second one withdrew the first, while the third one claimed that JP Chairman HM Ershad had not taken any decision to expel the five party MPs.

The five MPs were Anwar Hossain Manju, Tasmima Hossain, Tajul Islam Chowdhury, Ahsan Ahmed and Ovi.

Giving his reaction on yesterday's decision, Ovi shrugged off the expulsion order.

"The decision of expulsion is Ershad's and Ershad will have to bear its consequences. I am feeling relieved today as I am no longer with a university acting member like Ershad," he told The Daily Star.

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