

Dhaka city environment: Count down to catastrophe?



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VVIPs of other countries, or even for ministers in the country who are supposed to serve the people, then why can't it do the same for the commonman?

Perhaps, because we have allowed our VVIPs in the country to develop an inflated sense of their own importance by allowing them to think in VIP terms. Perhaps, because we are used to living in the Third World, third-rate conditions, we expect no better. Or, more probably, because we have

embarrassment for the government. It is unfortunate that the present ruling coalition so vocal in its condemnation of the past regimes for their alleged role in different shady deals, is also seen to be allowing its party functionaries to collect funds in the most sleazy fashion. It looks bad, very bad indeed even if the LGED minister has assured the World Bank that the guilty would be punished.

Visibly, there is a feeling of disgust and disenchantment about

thrown into it at will. Because of the excessive toxic effluents drained into this lake fishes of different varieties cultured there are dying everyday. Despite complaints lodged with the Environment directorate no remedial measure to stop this menace has been taken. Most of these dead fishes laced with toxins like cadmium and chromium might have gone to market without anybody's knowledge.

It is not a pretty sight: poisoned lakes, fouled river, murky air and so

residential quarters and apartment blocks. Alarmed citizens know they are being slowly poisoned but seem helpless.

Often activists or even high officials fired by ideas, social and ecological concern act as catalysts and can nudge the government or agencies concerned to come up with solutions. It so happened in Nainital in the Uttarakhand province of India. Naini lake, prime attraction of the tourists considered a summer resort was dying with silt and refuse was called the Lady of the lake.

Along with Uttara lake, Gulshan and Baridhara lakes have the same tale to tell. Could there be some one from the industrial conglomerates, business community and public leaders who would come forward to save these water bodies, the essence of life in a polluted city?

With land grabbers filling up the lakes for commercial interest on one side and pollution and effluents

W on one side, roads cleared of pedestrian and traffic movements and sidewalks and adjacent buildings decorated and illuminated, Dhaka had gone mad for hosting the 13th SAARC Summit that went off smoothly in mid November. During the short interlude the dignitaries stayed here, a normally drab Dhaka turned ecstatic with the ruling party high-ups enjoying the dance of light and shadow themselves only. In fact, the vast populace of the city had no share or had no idea of what was going on in a virtually walled city made so by the law enforcers. People only feel that if the ruling party could commit themselves to development activities in the country in the way they did to make the SAARC summit a spectacular show, many of our leaders would have qualified for national award! Sadly, it was not for us citizens that they worked so hard or spent so much money. Street vendors selling odd things or the homeless with their pathetic bedding of plastic sheets and waste cardboard were pushed away from human sight. Most comforting at least for some days, the garbage heaped around the street corners were swept away as an army of City Corporation workers and other agencies moved in for the beautification work.

The

magificent

sight

of the

city

that

looked

like

a

newly-wed

bride's

necklace

at

night

was

a

rare

spectacle

But

behind

the

euphoria

aura

and

bonanza

lay

hidden

the

suffering

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of

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Why

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government

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