Star city

DHAKA SUNDAY SEPTEMBER 16, 2007

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Weekly weather forecast for the city

source: accuweather.com

Today	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Low: 28 °C High: 31 °C Cloudy, thunderstorm	Low: 28 °C High: 31 °C A.M. t-storms; cloudy, humid	Low: 28 °C High: 34 °C Cloudy with a t-storm or two	Low: 28 °C High: 33 °C Cloudy with a t-storm or two	Low: 28 °C High: 35 °C Cloudy with thunderstorms	Low: 28 °C High: 35 °C Cloudy with thunderstorms	Low: 28 °C High: 35 °C Mostly cloudy, a t-storm; hot

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Getting the adrenalin going

Elderly citizens laugh off their days of ageing at monthly gathering

SHAHNAZ PARVEEN

"I refuse to live an inactive life just because I am ageing," said Sonnyamot Samsul Hoque, a retired government official.

Though in his sixties, Hoque embraced the process of ageing with a positive outlook while most people in his age stay indoors and live a passive life.

"My bones may be rusty, but I still like to stay active. I have always been an outgoing person all my life. My ageing will not change that," he said confidently during a senior citizens' gathering at Probeen Nibash organised by the Bangladesh Association for the Aged and Institute of Geriatric Medicine (BAAIGM).

BAAIGM organises a senior citizen get-together or "Probeen Adda" at its Agargaon Probeen Nibash (home for senior citizens) premises on the first Friday of each month from 4:00pm to 6:00pm.

The Adda is open for all -- members and non-members of the association, and even the young and the restless. Anyone can share personal views with each other there. It is also an opportunity for the young ones to mingle with the members of older generation.

During the Probeen Adda last Friday, residents of the Probeen Nibash and members of the association along with other participants indulged in reminiscing pleasant memories of their lives, performed songs to entertain all and joked with each other. Snacks and tea were also arranged for the participants of the Adda.

"In our country, people become docile during the ageing process. The elderly simply cease to live. They think that they are not needed anymore," said ASM Atiqur Rahman, secretary general of BAAIGM.

"While the younger generation leave them in a corner and ignore their needs, the senior citizens accept the fact that their time is over and they wait for death in their prayer mattress," he added.

"We want to break this common outlook. Purpose of this Adda is to convey a message that ageing is a phase of life and the elderly can have fun too. It is still possible to live a life full of verve after 60," he added.

"At the same time, this monthly Adda can add a little spice to the lives of the elderly. We want to give them a chance to mingle, to help them pass their remaining days with delight."

"Growing old does not mean that our life is over with it. Our wishes and desires do not disappear with age either", said Sonnyamot Samsul Hoque.

"Ageing is just a normal stage of life. We have to accept it and learn to enjoy it. Staying active is the best way to stay healthy. This gathering can be one of the ways to salvage our lost spirit," he said.

There are around nine million senior citizens in the country -- about seven per cent of the total population.

For the elderly women, their social status, lack of income and longer life expectancy put them in a situation that is much worse than that of the elderly men.

Senior citizen Lutfunnessa Harun, a former family planning trainer, said, "Our society usually excludes the older generation, especially women, from all activities. They [the society] term us inactive"

"Eventually, we become inert. As we grow old, we become insignificant. Our need is no longer felt important. We get less attention," she added.

Lutfunnessa wants to make a difference by staying active. However, she pointed out, "I can say this openly with confidence because I still have an income source from my pension. My heart goes out to the elderly who are less fortunate and do not have a choice."

Another participant, Hosne Afroz Banu, a former teacher of Tejgaon Govt High School, was happy to be at the Probeen Nibash. "This is the place where I fit in perfectly. I can be free amidst all the people of my age. Here I can let loose again," she said.

Located at Agargaon, Probeen Nibash now has 26 residents -- 11 women and 15 men.

BAAIGM currently has 711 members. It is serving the senior citizens of the country through its 50 branches in 46 districts.

SYED ZAKIR HOSSAIN

Senior citizens holding their monthly get-together at Probin Nibash at Agargaon.

Iftar too hot for poor pockets

SYED ZAKIR HOSSAIN

There was no dearth of iftar items at the traditional city points such as Chawkbazar, Lalbagh, Kaptanbazar on the first of Ramadan on Friday. But the prices of all the items doubled this year with most of them going out of the reach of common people. People of the low and middle-income groups had to curtail their menu, as they had to save their pockets for other essentials, prices of which were also soaring every day.

POLLUTING GULSHAN-BARIDHARA LAKE

Stringent law to punish the violators, but who cares?

DURDANA GHIAS

Despite public outcries over the deplorable state of the Gulshan-Baridhara Lake, no tangible step has been taken by the authorities to save it from pollution.

Industrial and domestic wastes as well as sewage are discharged regularly into its water.

Sources at Dhaka Wasa said sewage of the residential houses are released directly into the lake's water as there is no sewerage system in the area.

Besides, factories in Biswa Road and Khilkhet areas discharge untreated effluents while residents dump household waste into the lake water.

Abdur Rauf, secretary general, Baridhara Society, said, "We have requested Wasa several times to lay sewer lines here but they did not listen to us."

"Wasa officials say it would take Tk 100 crore. DCC's pipes for draining rainwater into the lake are being used as sewer lines in the area for the last 30 years," he said.

On a visit to the lake this correspondent saw residents were dumping their kitchen garbage on the edge of the lake, gradually encroaching on the water body. A big drain from a nearby residential house was pouring wastewater into it.

Dirty and blackish water is a silent proof of the lake's dying aquatic life. Earth filling and dumping garbage in the lake are a common practice. Chips packets, cigarette boxes, fish scales, and all kinds of household waste float on the water.

One can smell a faint odour from the water. "You can walk by the lake because it is rainy season and the water level is high. The water stinks so much that it is not possible to walk without covering your nose," said a resident walking by the lake.

"The big pipes carrying chemical effluents are now underwater," he added.

Makeshift latrines at Shahjadpur slums are seen on the fringe of the lake dumping excreta into the water. Most of the people living in tin-shed and makeshift houses along the lake in Badda also use the lake as their septic tank.

Md Shah Alam, chief engineer, Rajdhani Unnayan Kartripakkha (Rajuk), said they have posted advertisement in newspapers and wrote to Wasa for not pouring sewage into the lake and suggested setting up surface drain and sewerage system.

Asked what action they can take in case Wasa does not respond, Alam said they can stop the sewer lines leading to the lake.

Admitting the lack of sewer lines in the area, Zahirul Islam, chief of Drainage Circle, Dhaka Wasa, said they have submitted a project to Rajuk in this regard.

"We have submitted a project to Rajuk. They are now developing the lake. After that we will set up main line beside the lake walkways," he said.

"At present the surface drains made by DCC are taking sewer into the lake," he added.

The secretary general of Baridhara Society said they have applied to Rajuk to handover the lake to the society for maintenance. The application is under consideration, said sources at Rajuk.

At present Baridhara Society has employed 50 cleaners to clean the Baridhara portion of the Gulshan-Baridhara Lake.

According to a government notification issued on November 26, 2001 under Environment Conservation Act 2000, Gulshan-Baridhara Lake was declared an Ecologically Critical Area and a fine of Tk 10 lakh and/or imprisonment of 10 years can be imposed on those taking a bath in the lake, washing cloths, dumping garbage, sewage, solid and liquid waste; destroying natural habitat, collecting aquatic creatures etc.

Same punishment will be imposed on the surrounding residential houses, foreign missions, industries and other organisations for dumping solid or liquid waste into the water.

Officials at the Department of Environment said that unless there is a sewerage system in the area there is very little they can do to implement the law.

COURTESY: BARIDHARA SOCIETY

Big pipes carrying chemical effluents empty into the Gulshan-Baridhara Lake.